



European
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Freedom of Religion in Turkey between Secular and Islamic Values

The Situation of Christians

Anna Maria Beylunioğlu Atlı

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

Florence, January 2017

European University Institute
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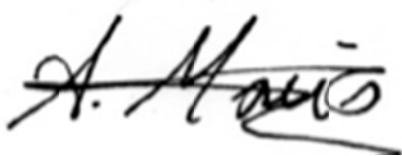
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ABSTRACT

Freedom of religion has been a delicate issue since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, despite the principle of secularism stated in the country's constitution since 1937. This is especially evident in considering the status of non-Muslim minorities. After decades marked by assaults aimed at the non-Muslims of Turkey and confiscation of properties belonging to their communities, several reform packages were adopted by the Turkish government in order better to secure their religious freedoms. Recent developments signaled a change may be underway with regard to state's approach to religion in general, and non-Muslims in particular.

Despite the growing body of literature focusing on the recent democratization process in Turkey, only a few studies found the case of non-Muslims worthy of including in their analysis, as they are often perceived to be insignificant due to their small share among the general population. In accounting for recent developments visible in various fields such as civil-military relations, Kurdish issue and religion-state relations, a vast majority scholarship has perceived the European Union accession process as the main anchor of this democratization process. Considering, however, that the recasting of freedom of religion has continued even after the stagnation of EU conditionality, alternative explanations must be explored.

I argue that the recent process of recasting the parameters of religious freedoms can be solely explained by neither the role of EU conditionality nor the reading of developments through separate alternative models. Though recent years have witnessed several significant attempts combining various models in explaining the democratization process, no analysis to date has paid particular attention to religion and religious preferences, and I believe this leads to an insufficient understanding of recent developments in relation to freedom of religion.

In order to gain a comprehensive perspective, I have adopted an analytically eclectic approach benefitting from *External Incentives*, *Social Learning* and *Lesson Drawing* models and demonstrated how together they have interactively shaped the parameters of freedom of religion throughout different time periods in the Turkish state. I have employed a within-case-comparison methodology of three time periods (1999-2005/ 2005-2010/ 2011-2015), embracing a *process-tracing* method. Taking the results generated by applying these models to the context in Turkey, I contend that EU conditionality was the initial motive behind the reform process in the first time period analyzed, while growth of social dynamics has been observed only during the second period. Finally, the lesson drawing model, *aka* the *AKP's* preferences, have played a decisive role throughout all of the time periods examined.

Acknowledgements

It is gratifying to see the fruits of years' efforts; I have to admit, it has been a long exhausting journey! But it would not be possible to materialize it without the support of my professors, colleagues, family and friends. There are several people among them whose guidance enabled me to complete this dissertation. First and foremost, I would like to thank to the members of my dissertation committee, Prof. Göle, Prof. Alpay, and Prof. della Porta for their invaluable and constructive criticisms. However, I owe particular gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Roy, who had been a great mentor to me from the beginning of my PhD process and who provided me both with intellectual and psychological support during the writing process. I also owe sincere thanks to my interviewees for their trust in me; this thesis would not be completed without the insightful information they provided. A very special thanks goes to Luiz Bakar and Boğos Silahlı at this point, sharing their experience with me as senior members of Armenian community, also Cems Beylunioglu for enabling most of the interviews conducted for this thesis.

There are also several fellow doctoral students for whom I am grateful for their friendship as well as helpful discussions we held during our coffee and lunch breaks at the EUI. Milan Obaidi and Piotr Kisiel not only were my colleagues; at times they supported me during my hard times and always made me smile. A special thanks goes to Simon Watmough, apart from his encouragement, I am indebted to him for his great work in polishing my thesis. I am particularly thankful to Lotta-Liina Mustonen. I learned a lot from our debates on secularists vs. Islamists in Egypt and in Turkey. I am also indebted to Özgür Kaymak both for her friendship and academic contribution to this thesis by sharing her insights on socio-political behavior of non-Muslim communities in Turkey.

I owe, however, my deepest gratitude to Dr. Güliz Dinç, who is both an expert on Islam and Islamism in Turkey and my dear friend from the early days of my academic career. Her constant emotional and academic encouragement as well as our fruitful discussions on religion, politics and society guided me during the writing process. Not to mention, her invaluable criticism and comments on the earlier versions substantially contributed to the final version of this dissertation.

Without the moral and financial support of my parents, however, it would be difficult to complete this challenging task. I am especially thankful to them for their patience and never stopping believing in me. I feel lucky to have Fuat Can Beylunioglu, a bright academic, as a brother and my father İbrahim Beylunioglu who supported me morally and financially but more importantly provided profound contributions for this thesis with his intellectual knowledge. I am also indebted to Helen Bolşen, my mother, for her patience and limitless financial support. I also wish to thank Nesrin Mete, Seval Aygün, Güliz Dinç (one more time) and her daughter Nevin Belcher, who have become my second family, for their friendship, joy and support.

Finally, I have numerous reasons to be forever indebted to my beloved husband, Altay Atlı; most important of all, for being with me through thick and thin and for his endless love and support. He always believed in me, reminded me my potentials as a non-Muslim academic. He also, being a successful academician himself constantly reminded me that significance of PhD is not limited to the end-product, the thesis, but it is more about the experience and the process of producing it.

January 2017
Florence-Istanbul

In loving memory of my grandmother Zekiye Bolşen (1943 -2011) who passed away the day I got accepted to PhD program at the EUI.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>AKP</i>	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
<i>ANAP</i>	Motherland Party (<i>Anavatan Partisi</i>)
<i>CHP</i>	Republican People's Party (<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (<i>İttihat ve Terakki</i>)
<i>DİB</i>	Presidency of Religious Affairs (<i>Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı</i>)
<i>DSP</i>	Democratic Left Party (<i>Demokratik Sol Parti</i>)
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EEC	European Economic Community
EIM	External Incentives Model
EU	European Union
EUSG	Secretary General for EU Affairs
<i>HDP</i>	People's Democratic Party (<i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i>)
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
LDM	Lesson Drawing Model
<i>MEB</i>	Ministry of National Education (<i>Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı</i>)
<i>MGK</i>	National Security Council (<i>Milli Güvenlik Konseyi</i>)
<i>MHP</i>	Nationalist Movement Party (<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i>)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<i>RUMVADER</i>	Association of Rum Foundations (<i>Rum Vakıfları Derneği</i>)
SLM	Social Learning Model
UN	United Nations
<i>VGM</i>	Directorate General of Foundations (<i>Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü</i>)
WWI	First World War
WWII	Second World War

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1. Introduction

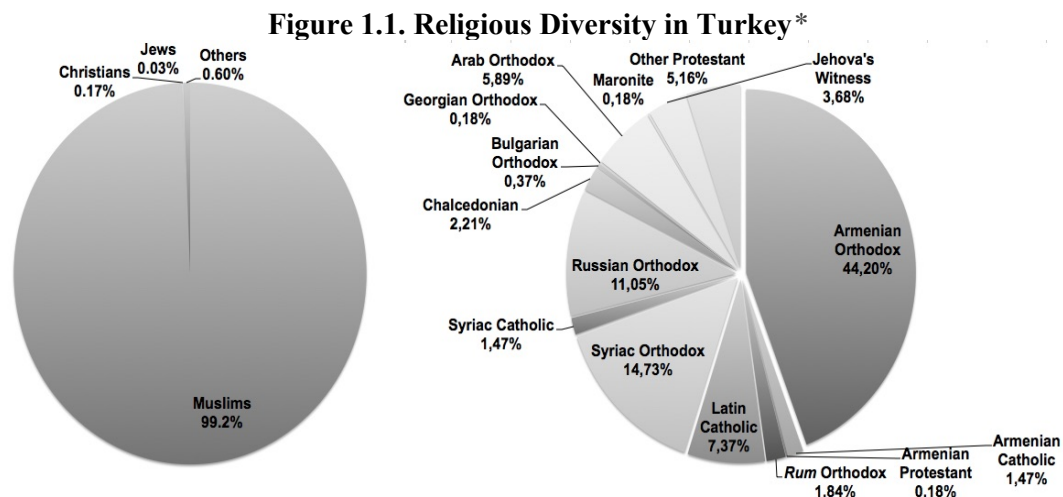
Freedom of religion has been a delicate issue since the founding of the Turkish Republic. The delicate nature of the matter has been closely related to the state's conventional approach to religion and the place in society allocated to religion from the early days of the republic. Turkey was built around the principle of secularism; consequently, the activities of religious groups and individuals have remained restricted not only in political, but also in social – and sometimes even in private – spheres. Paradoxically, the state continued to control religion through Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı - DİB*). This is a bureaucratic organization under the Prime Minister's Office, which has reinforced a version of Hanefi/Sunni Islam controlled by the state, and thereby excluded other denominations of Islam and the non-Muslim faiths outside 'state Islam.' This selectively secular approach to religion has resulted in extreme restrictions of religious freedoms for some religious individuals and groups such as select Muslim groups, Alevis and non-Muslims and individuals belonging these communities.

However, it is fair to argue that, as with other related government programs, this state-led policy towards religion has seen the greatest negative effect on the non-Muslim minorities of Turkey from the early years following the establishment of the republic. Despite guarantees made by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 – the founding treaty of the Republic of Turkey – concerning the rights of religious minorities to manifest their belief in practice, worship and teaching, religious minorities in general, and non-Muslims in particular have encountered severe difficulties and extrajudicial practices since the founding of the republic. Consequently, these groups have been subjected to a series of physical assaults and property confiscations.

This process of assault towards non-Muslims and confiscation of their properties has resulted in the gradual decrease of their population. The share of non-Muslims in the country's total population drastically declined from 1/5 to 1/40 following the First World War (WWI) and the foundation of the republic (Keyder, 1987, p. 79). This trend continued until the late 1960's and, as a result of this process, religious minorities remaining in Turkey are estimated at less than one percent of today's population.

Despite the common misconception widely embraced by Turkish authorities, recognized religious minorities in Turkey are not limited to Armenian Orthodox, *Rum*

Orthodox¹ and Jews (Oran, 2005b). Tracking official figures for the non-Muslim population is not possible after the 1970's as from this time it was found unnecessary to ask questions on religious affiliation since 99.2% of the population claimed to be Muslim (Dündar, 1999, p. 55). However, according to the latest reports, the body of non-Muslims living in Turkey today is a diverse group composed of Armenian Orthodox Christians, Latin Catholics, Jews, Syriac Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Baha'is, Yezidis, Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants, Chaldeans, and *Rum* Orthodox (DOS, 2013) along with smaller minority communities whose populations cannot be estimated but include Armenian Catholics, Armenian Protestants, Bulgarian Orthodox, Melkit Catholics, Arab Orthodox², Nestorians, Syriac Catholics, and Maronites. The following figure is an attempt to demonstrate the religious diversity both in Turkey in general and of Christians of Turkey in particular.



¹ The author acknowledges the interchangeable use of *Rum*, Greek, Hellen, Byzantine and Grec. In a recent conference titled '1964 Expulsions & the Istanbul Rum: a turning point in the homogenization of Turkish society' held at Istanbul Bilgi University on October 31, 2014, a useful discussion took place concerning how these terms have taken on different meanings throughout history in different geographies and highlighted the need of contextualization before usage of any of these terms. *Rum* Orthodox is used here in differentiation with the Greek Orthodox (denoting those who belong to Greek nationality) to refer to those who stayed in the Ottoman Empire after 1821 and then automatically became, first, Ottoman subjects and then citizens of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

² The origin of Arab Orthodox community is, in fact, controversial. Their religious denomination is *Rum* Orthodox. However, unlike the *Rum* Orthodox living mainly in Istanbul belonging to the Patriarchate in Istanbul, they belong to the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch located in Damascus, Syria. They are also said to be of Syriac Orthodox origin and to have converted to *Rum* Orthodoxy during Byzantium times, a theory that has not been officially denied by the Arab Orthodox community (anonymous, personal communication, March 23, 2013; November 21, 2015).

* The 99.2% of the population that is Muslim includes 500.000 Jafaris and 15-20 million Alevis (DOS, 2013) (though diverse numbers are claimed in respect to Alevis: the Alevi Federations claim their numbers are as high as 20-25 million (DOS, 2013), while some researchers place their number at only 4,5-6 million (Bozbuğa, 2013)) – as well as the Sunni/Hanefi majority. The author also acknowledges that numbers for some Christian communities may not be reliable. Concerning the figure of the Arab Orthodox community, for example, the data referenced is from information included in an article by Fadi Hurigil, a representative of the community in Hatay (Hurigil, 2015). A senior inhabitant of *Altınözü* village in Hatay claimed that number of Arab Orthodox people in Turkey should be higher, noting that in their village alone there are 1500 Arab Orthodox. In addition, a cleric from the Arab Orthodox community stated that the population of their community is around 12.000 according to their statistics (anonymous, personal communication, March 23, 2013). Similarly, the International Religious Freedom report counts 25.000 Latin Catholics in Turkey; however, an interview with a senior cleric indicates that this number is not realistic, and the real figure cannot be more than 10.000 (anonymous, personal communication, March 26, 2013).

Source: Data compiled from Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK, 2014); International Religious Freedom Report (DOS, 2013); Minority Rights Group International (MRGI, 2015); Religious Life in Turkey Report (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2014); data provided by the KONDA research center (Radikal, 2015d); other web portals including the statements of Christian minorities estimating their population (Aktif Haber, 2014; Hürriyet, 2012a; Şalom, 2013); and the author's interviews with representatives of the various Christian communities (anonymous, personal communication, March 23, 2013; March 26, 2013; July 14, 2015).

Lately, despite their relatively small population, non-Muslim minorities have drawn academic interest in terms of their treatment in recent developments pertaining to freedom of religion in Turkey. As it seems the decrease in their numbers is a result of the official approach to religion-state relations – commonly known as secularism (*laiklik*), one of main pillars of *Kemalist* ideology introduced by and named after the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – which included restricted freedom of religion, the reform process which started in Helsinki in 1999 and gained momentum with the election of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP*) has been a turning point for non-Muslims. The accelerating reform process under the *AKP* - a party with roots in Islamist movement- and the party's reconciliatory attitude towards non-Muslims have aroused particular interest and paved the way for research on the possible shift from the *Kemalist* approach to religion to a new approach to the status of religion in general (and Islam in particular) under the *AKP*.

Since the founding of the republic, the state has embraced a restrictive attitude towards religion. There has been no attempt to meet the demands of religious individuals and communities, and both religiosity and religious communities were generally seen as a threat by the *Kemalist* ideology. Muslims, for one, were marginalized by a state that did not welcome Islam's appearance in both the public and the political sphere (Yavuz, 1997). Alevis, on the other hand, though they compose approximately 15% of the population (Özdalga, 2008) have not been fully embraced by the state and have been subject to discrimination. They have been excluded from the *DİB* apparatus, which has continuously

denied the possibility of a separate Alevi identity (Gözaydın, 2006). Despite their complete support of the *Kemalist* state, massacres in *Dersim* (1936-38), *Maraş* (1978), *Sivas* (1993) and the *Gazi* events of 1995 have obviously shaken Alevi confidence *vis-a-vis* the *Kemalist* state. Within this picture, non-Muslim minorities have also received their share. Over the decades their properties have been confiscated, and they have also been assaulted, forced to emigrate and subjected to extrajudicial practices.

This restrictive approach towards religious minorities has led to debate within the country in conjunction with its opening up to the world following the introduction of liberal policies into the Turkish political system from the 1980s. As Kıvanç Ulusoy argues (2007) Turkey's political transformation process had started even before its membership application to the European Union (EU) when it was granted the right to individual petition to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 1987³. Since then the issues faced by Sunnis, Alevi, and non-Muslim minorities, along with the general lack of religious freedom, have been subject to debate. Turkey's ascendancy to EU candidate status during the Helsinki Summit in 1999 was a turning point in terms of the enhancement of religious freedoms. The reform process has begun and has been monitored through progress reports prepared by the European Commission. Within this context, between 2001 and 2003 Turkey introduced three reform packages enhancing human rights standards following the Copenhagen Criteria.

The transformation process continued when the *AKP*, a party with political roots embedded in Islamic identity, came to power in November 2002. As soon as they took office, they guaranteed the continuation of EU accession process (Hürriyet, 2002a). The momentum of the reform process continued with five more reform packages passed in parliament before 2004 despite opposition from the *Kemalist* political elite which perceived the democratization process as a mechanism weakening the pillars of *Kemalism*⁴ (Baç, 2005, p. 25). Intense democratization took place between 1999 and 2005, a period that some scholars described as the 'golden age of Europeanization' (Öniş, 2008), which also had positive outcomes for the rights of non-Muslims. These reforms enabled the establishment of associations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sect, region, or

³ It is also possible to argue that Turkey has begun the transformation process, even before this date, in 1949 when Turkey became a member of Council of Europe. See section 1.2.2 of this chapter for more detailed information on relations between Turkey and Europe.

⁴ *Kemalism* refers to the authoritarian secular nationalist state ideology developed and named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey.

minority group affiliation (Official Gazette, 2004a); the construction of sanctuaries other than mosques (Official Gazette, 2004); and aimed to address issues concerning the board elections in Christian foundations (Official Gazette, 2004c).

Although the pace of the democratization process slowed after 2005 in parallel to the deceleration in EU accession talks, the government continued to pursue reforms relating to the rights of non-Muslims. The new *Law on Foundations*, passed in 2008 and amended in 2011, for example, paved the way for religious communities to re-acquire, register, and restore their properties (Official Gazette, 2008a; 2011). Furthermore, new regulations were issued in order to handle issues related to the private schools affiliated with religious minorities (Official Gazette, 2007). In addition to these legal arrangements, a change in the state's approach towards non-Muslim minorities has also been observable through a dialogue process initiated with non-Muslim minorities and aimed at seeking solutions for their state-related problems. Soon after his party secured more power in the parliament, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan started a democratic initiative process aimed at achieving consensus over unsolved issues in Turkish society, including the religious freedoms of non-Muslim Turkish citizens (Radikal, 2009a). Non-Muslims came to be described as 'first class citizens' (Agos, 2012c) and 'equal citizens' (Radikal, 2012c); the restitution of their properties became a matter of 'rights' (Agos, 2012f); and they were encouraged to apply for public service positions (Hürriyet, 2013c). For the first time since its founding, the Director of Religious Affairs undertook a visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and showed his support for the reopening of the *Halki* Seminary, stressing that, 'every faith should train its own clergy.' (Agos, 2012g). Moreover, the *AKP* has emphasized the importance of citizenship against Turkishness (*Türklük*)⁵ (Agos, 2012e), 'diversity as richness,' and 'pluralism' against 'monologism' across various platforms (Taraf, 2011a).

Initiation of such a dialogue process with non-Muslims combined with steps taken to enhance their conditions no-doubt created a positive atmosphere. However, various factors have since undermined the positive steps taken within the last decade. First of all, the transformation process has remained extremely limited. For example, the legal personality of the religious communities of Turkey and the issue of the board elections continues to be

⁵ Here Turkishness refers to an ethno-religious identity category embedded in the Turkish state's conventional discourse, as argued throughout this thesis.

a barrier for their religious establishment (Radikal, 2004c). Shortcomings in private school regulations, the persistence of the religion section on national identity cards, and the frequent undermining of judicial procedures in the investigations and hearing of cases related to the murder of Christian citizens signifies an ongoing restrictive attitude towards freedom of religion, and has thus raised concerns among Turkey's non-Muslim communities. Moreover, the government's positioning of Islam as a superior religion has evolved into an obstacle to true freedom of religion. The *AKP* began to adopt a discourse of the superiority of Islam over other religions in the years following its ascent to power. In 2012, for example, Prime Minister Erdoğan contended that Muslim youth are the real descendants of the Turkish nation (Radikal, 2012d). His 'one religion' emphasis alluding to the Turkish nation – although later declared to be a slip of the tongue – also drew reactions from Christians in Turkey (Agos, 2012i). Moreover, the insistence on converting the identically named *Ayasofya* (*Hagia Sophia* hereafter) museums in Istanbul and Trabzon into mosques created ripples of discontent among the Christian population. Though converted into mosques following the Ottoman conquest, and used as museums during the republican era, these structures had been Christian sanctuaries for centuries.

In brief, two different aspects of the transformation process – on the one hand, continuation of the reform process despite the slowdown; on the other, the assumed superiority of Islam voiced in the speeches of government representatives – have led to a debate among both Christian communities and academics over the authenticity of the reforms undertaken by the *AKP* government. While support for the *AKP* has increased among non-Muslim citizens⁶ who consider the transformation process as a result of a 'change in mentality' (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2013), those who question the implementation of the reform process and attribute the positive developments to the EU accession process are not few in number (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013). These two different aspects of the transformation process have also been subject to academic debate. Several studies have made an attempt to establish concise analysis of recent developments. Almost all of these academic publications have concluded that the status of religious minorities in Turkey had been worsening over the past decades and the political stage in the *AKP* era is very different (Karaosmanoğlu, 2010; Kılınç,

⁶ The support of the Armenian and Rum Orthodox communities has been greater by comparison to the Jewish community (Soner, 2010, p. 25). See also (Nor Zartouk, 2007).

2012; Sandal, 2013; Soner, 2010; Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). The transformation process is obviously limited in nature; however, as highlighted above, the positive approach adopted towards non-Muslims by the *AKP* government as opposed to that of previous governments cannot be ignored (Kılınç, 2012; Soner, 2010; Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). Moreover, some of these academic works have cited the *AKP* as the trigger for positive change (Karaosmanoğlu, 2010) and as a ‘strong supporter of religious rights for Christian minorities’ (Kılınç, 2012). The willingness of the ruling party to include different voices, including those representing non-Muslims, has been an important indicator of this assessment (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). Drawbacks in the process and the slowdown of the reforms were attributed to constraints placed by vetoing powers and the bureaucracy (Kılınç, 2012; Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). From Karaosmanoğlu’s (2010) perspective, however, the government has been a barrier to the transformation process due to its unwillingness and being ‘not entirely free from the conspiracy mentality...as any other political party in Republican Turkey to address the chronic problems of the country.’ Sandal (2013) also stressed that is too early to take an optimistic stance, emphasizing her concerns over the ongoing perception of non-Muslims as foreigners and the superiority of Islam in *AKP*’s discourse (Sandal, 2013). Previous academic research, therefore, has included diverging point of views on recent developments in respect to religious freedoms and non-Muslim minorities.

1.1. Statement of the Problem and the Research Question

These varied views of current developments concerning freedom of religion and the rights of non-Muslim minorities leave us with the following paradox. On the one hand, we see that a dialogue process between the government and representatives of the non-Muslim communities has gone forward despite the debate on the authenticity of the reforms. Indeed, the representatives of the minority communities have highlighted a relatively different approach taken towards them by the current government compared to the dominant *Kemalist* mindset at the time (anonymous, personal communication, March 23, 2013). On the other hand, the government’s conservative identity, which places Islamic values over other religions, raises concerns among the members of non-Muslim communities (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013).

This raises several questions. First of all, how is it that a party with Islamist roots has been more open to non-Muslim's religious practices than the other parties acting within the *Kemalist* framework? To answer this question, however, one has to define the shift from the *Kemalist* paradigm with reference to religious freedoms of non-Muslims in Turkey. Can we consider this shift as a transformation of the parameters of freedom of religion in Turkey towards a European understanding of freedom of religion? If so, can we fit this notion of Islam being constructed as 'superior' over other religions into a European model? What exactly is happening, and who are the actors and mechanisms facilitating this recasting of the policies, practices, and discourses in relation to religious freedoms? Can this phenomenon be explained solely as an effect of the push power of the EU accession process with the EU's legitimacy in Turkish democratization continuing since the late 1980s? What are the possible domestic factors enabling these shift? And, accordingly, how should we perceive the impact of the *AKP*'s regulatory framework on religion when analyzing the recasting of the rights of non-Muslim minorities?

To clarify these questions, this study will focus on the implications of the recent developments that are germane to non-Muslim minorities in relation to the parameters of religious freedom in Turkey. This dissertation will seek to answer the following two-pronged research question:

How can we explain the recasting of the parameters of religious freedoms for Turkey's non-Muslims over the last decade? To what extent are external Europeanization theories adequate in explaining the domestic shift in Turkey with regard to the freedom of religion?

An attempt to solve this empirical puzzle would reveal the general picture for religious minorities residing in Turkey; furthermore, it would induce more general questions such as: What are the limits of external Europeanization models in explaining domestic policy change? The problems of Turkey provide a convenient context for testing the effectiveness of Europeanization on member states. This is because domestic policy change in Turkey has been conventionally ascribed to the country's participation in the EU accession process, and specifically to the EU conditionality mechanism. Likewise, analysis of the recent transformation process of the rights of religious minorities has centered on the EU as the anchor of domestic change. Indeed, substantial academic research has been published underlining the role of the EU as a main motivating factor behind domestic change in Turkey (Kalaycıoğlu, 2011; Müftüler-Baç, 2005; Öniş, 2008; Schimmelfennig, 2009).

Without any intention of ruling out the EU as an actor triggering domestic policy change, this study will draw attention to the importance of domestic actors, particularly the government and civil society.⁷ Here I will investigate the role of the *AKP*'s religiosity in recasting the freedom of religion in Turkey as well as the impact of an emergence of civil society on the reform process. This thesis will contribute to the broader body of research by answering the following two questions: 1) To what extent has civil society acted as an agent of change; 2) What is the impact of religion in shaping the interests of policy makers? Specifically, does this factor trigger or decrease the focus on EU accession?

Before diving into the analysis necessary to answer the research questions, however, the remainder of this chapter will cover prior research focusing on the dynamics of the domestic policy transformation. I will explain why it falls short in explaining the dynamics of freedom of religion in Turkey, particularly in relation to the reform process targeting the non-Muslim minorities. Then, I will introduce my approach, centering on the preferences of the government as an important internal actor of change, as well as reflecting on the impact of the expanding civil society organizations, albeit without ignoring the interaction between these two actors and the EU, which still functions as a strong external anchor in Turkey's democratization process. Finally, I will provide an outline for this dissertation.

1.2. Literature Review

Sharing policies and institutional knowledge, as Dolowitz and March expounded in their article published in 1996, is not something new but, due to the recent increase in communication tools, has seen an uptick over the past decades (Dolowitz & March, 1996). A number of scholars from the disciplines of political science and international relations, therefore, have been posing questions similar to those central to this study, likewise aiming to develop a clear perspective on how domestic policy change occurs and how different models practiced in other countries affect changes in domestic policies.

In that sense, the existing literature provides us with different angles of analysis, including constructivist, institutionalist and rational choice approaches revealing the actors and mechanisms contributing to policy change at the domestic level. While some of these

⁷ The importance of local governments with regard to the transformation of religious freedoms has been revealed in the fieldwork and it is acknowledged by the author as a potential future research topic; but it is beyond the scope of this study.

approaches underline the importance of self-interest, others stress institutions, history or norms. Taking a realist perspective, for example, individual states act in order to maximize their interests and, 'it is the self-interest of the states, in the pursuit of power, which motivates behavior' (Savigny & Marsden, 2011, p. 74). The institutionalist approach, in contrast, focuses on the relevance of the institutions. For institutionalists, institutions determine social and political outcomes by setting the rules of the game (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Rational choice institutionalists remain in the institutional framework; in the face of new institutionalist theories they interpret state actions as being based on a 'logic of consequentialism' wherein political actors assess the possible results of their action and decide accordingly (March & Olsen, 1998, p. 949). In other words, states 'engage in interaction using their sources to maximize their utilities on the basis of given, fixed preferences' (Börzel & Risse, 2003, p. 63). Self-interest is key to gaining a perspective on how actors fulfill their needs (March & Olsen, 1989).

Historical institutionalists, on the other hand, underscore the role of path dependence in institutional development (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 938), considering policy makers' preferences to be shaped by the policy decisions that were institutionalized at the time (Montpetit, 2000) with the legacies of existing policies being evaluated in accordance with their compatibility with the newly-introduced policies (Schmidt, 2001). Unlike those adhering to the institutionalist and rational choice camps, those following the constructivist approach maintain that norms, ideas, and knowledge impact change and stability (Katzenstein, Keohane, & Krasner, 1998). They generally perceive 'structure/agency relations in continuously ongoing identity construction process' (Flockhart, 2010, p. 788) and evaluate the change in the actors' behavior and norms 'in the process of policy formation and implementation' (Jepperson, Wendt, & Katzenstein, 1996). For liberal intergovernmentalists, however, it is not social norms that shape preferences, but political realities in domestic arenas. In the negotiation process with international institutions, governments also take domestic politics into account (Montpetit, 2000). For sociological institutionalists, norms are introduced by institutions (Checkel, 2000). They tend to see actors as acting with a 'logic of appropriateness' (March & Olsen, 1998, p. 951) and 'guided by collective understandings of what constitutes proper... socially accepted behavior in a given rule structures' (Börzel & Risse, 2003, p. 65). Overall, the historical

path of institutional structures, norms, and identities, along with current self-interest are given as the possible motives behind domestic change.

1.2.1. Europeanization and Domestic Policy Change

Mainly driven by the new institutionalism theory, the Europeanization literature has enormously benefited from these approaches in explaining ‘the development of formal and informal rules, procedures, norms, and practices governing politics at the European, national, and subnational levels’ (Cowles, Caporaso, & Risse, 2001, p. 3). While adherents to Europeanization have developed tools to understand developments in member states, many scholars of external Europeanization have also benefitted from these instruments in their attempt to explain the EU-ization⁸ of ‘formal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, appropriate behavior and shared belief and norms’ (Radaelli, 2000, 2003) in the domestic politics of non-member states in question.

As scholars of Europeanization suggest, there are several conditions that must be met for domestic change through Europeanization to take place. First of all, there has to be a ‘misfit’ between the policies, processes, and institutions of the EU and the state in question (Börzel & Risse, 2000). Second, there have to be responsive domestic agents available to facilitate the change (Börzel & Risse, 2000). The presence of these conditions, however, is not sufficient to explain the transformation of policies. As Börzel and Risse (2000) argue, there are two different theoretical approaches explaining the mechanism of change providing us with two different sets of mediating factors. To begin with, according to the rationalist institutionalist perspective, ‘Europeanization leads to domestic change through a differential empowerment of actors resulting from a redistribution of resources at the domestic level’ (Börzel & Risse, 2000, p. 3). Whether it is the empowerment of ‘national executives’ as liberal intergovernmentalists suggest (Moravcsik, 1993) or strengthening of ‘societal and subnational actors’ as neo-functionalists emphasize (Marks, 1993), actors adopt changes only if they can maximize their benefits after taking into account the impact of ‘multiple veto points’ and ‘formal institutions’ as these will affect the possibility for domestic change. Unlike this ‘logic of consequentialism’, sociological institutionalism

⁸ The author acknowledges that Europeanization and EU-ization are two related but different concepts as it is referred in the literature. While the former concept involves a broad focus including the historical dimension, the later deals specifically with the domestic adaptation of ‘institutional and organizational processes and practices’ through the interaction of the EU and member states (Flockhart, 2010, p. 791).

adopts a ‘logic of appropriateness’ to anticipate change in order to decrease incompatibility of policies, norms, and practices between the EU and the states (Börzel & Risse, 2000, p. 8). Two mediating factors can explain the change in this case. While the active participation of ‘norm entrepreneurs’ may enable change in the interests and identities of the states, political culture may also lead to ‘consensus building and cost sharing,’ therefore enabling change ‘through a socialization and collective learning process’ (Börzel & Risse, 2000, p. 8).

Despite the explanatory capacity of each framework, a growing body of scholarship is calling attention to the insufficiency of arguments based solely upon one of the aforementioned paths to provide a comprehensive perspective on domestic policy change; rather, these scholars suggest an approach integrating several different frameworks (Börzel & Risse, 2000; March & Olsen, 1998). Following this trend, the external Europeanization literatures have developed three models that we can use to explain change in EU candidate states. The External Incentives Model (EIM), the Social Learning Model (SLM), and the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM) developed by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) all indicate different aspects of domestic change.

External Incentives Model (EIM)

From the perspective of Europeanization scholars, Europeanization may introduce adaptational pressures to a member or candidate state, thereby ‘enlarging the scope’ of policy that is subject to change (Börzel & Risse, 2014) through three mechanisms: by suggesting an ‘institutional model’ to be adopted domestically; by changing opportunity structures and redistributing power and resources; and by shaping domestic beliefs and expectations (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 1999).

For the non-member states, however, the EU enforces these adaptational pressures through the conditionality mechanism. The studies that evaluate the democratization process for CEE countries stress the conditionality mechanism as the most effective strategy of accession process (Dimitrova, 2005; Grabbe, 2006; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Vachudova, 2005). From Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier’s (2004) perspective, the External Incentives Model (EIM) is the most effective in explaining the legal transformations in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Rooted in rational choice institutionalism, the drive for domestic change is attributed to the EU as the external actor

of change. EIM indicates that rationalist bargaining takes place either directly/top down from the government or indirectly through domestic actors based on a logic of consequences (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). Accordingly, the conditionality mechanism establishes the following external incentives: the EU sets 'the rules as conditions' to be applied to the domestic context in exchange for reform (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Vachudova, 2005); if the targeted government succeeds in adopting the rule, the EU gives the promised reward. In the words of Kubicek (2011), states 'do x to get Y'.

However, there are several essential factors shaping the effectiveness of the conditionality mechanism. First, as the vast majority of scholars in the field of Europeanization agree, the conditionality principle only works if the rewards are higher than the costs of compliance (Kubicek, 2011; Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2013). That is, the probability of change increases when the benefits of applying the reforms are higher than the related costs. As suggested by the EIM, these related costs of adaptational would include such as the existence of alternative paths of change offering potential rewards, the likelihood of losing power or the strength of opposition/veto powers. The presence of high adaptational costs may decrease the possibility of a successful policy transfer. Second, the rules and conditions should be clear and 'determinate' as well as 'powerful'. Strong conditionality increases the chances of a domestic policy transfer (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2013; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). The third consideration is the credibility of conditionality. The credibility assumption suggests that the promises should not be costly for the EU itself; however, if the promises are later revealed to have 'internal disagreements' or inconsistent signs this can decline the likelihood of transfer (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2013; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). Last but not least, it is also important to add another mediating factor included in Börzel and Risse (2000)'s explanation of domestic change through the logic of consequentialism - the existence of formal institutions which will enable domestic change to occur.

Taking into account these factors facilitating policy transfer through conditionality, one obviously cannot label the process as voluntary transfer. In fact, existing literature reflects different perspectives pertaining to the notion that conditionality is actually a coercive strategy. Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2005) stands among those do not think conditionality is a coercive strategy noting that, if the states cannot comply with the EU

conditions they are not punished and ‘inflicted extra costs’; rather, they are ‘simply denied assistance for accession.’ On the other hand, as Dolowitz and March (Dolowitz & March, 1996) suggest, this is a coercive policy transfer because it only proceeds/takes place when a government or a supranational institution forces a government to adopt a policy. Adopting this perspective, this study approaches the conditionality mechanism suggested by EIM as a coercive tool when compared with other alternatives provided; namely, the Social Learning Model (SLM) and the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM).

Table 1.1. Factors Enabling External Incentives Model

Clear, determinate and powerful rules
Credibility of conditionality
Non-existence of alternative paths
Unlikelihood of losing power
Non-existence of strong opposition or veto powers

The Social Learning Model (SLM)

The Social Learning Model (SLM) is one of the two non-coercive alternatives to the EIM developed in the existing literature. Carrying tenets of both social constructivism and sociological institutionalism, this model highlights the importance of norms in the transformation process. Therefore, with SLM the analysis of the relationship between the EU and the target state and society requires careful attention to the resonance between their identity and the appropriateness of the norms subject to change.

Unlike the conditionality mechanism, SLM suggest that domestic change occurs through the normative power of the EU. As Schmidt suggests, the EU creates a constructivist account of change (Schmidt, 2001). The EU strengthens civil society, transforms the power of actors and creates institutional adaptation (Featherstone & Kazamias, 2001) by spreading European norms, policies, and procedures (Diez, Agnantopoulos, & Kaliber, 2005). These norms and policies are constructed, diffused, and institutionalized within the logic of the domestic structure (Radaelli, 2000).

SLM argues that the likelihood of the adoption of EU rules depends on several conditions. Unlike EIM, this model argues that EU norms should be considered appropriate by the target state 'in terms of collective identity, values, and norms' (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, pp. 18-20). Therefore, as its main proposition suggests, 'a government adopts EU rules if it is persuaded of the appropriateness of EU rules' (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, pp. 18-20). If the rule maker is convinced of the appropriateness of the EU norms and rules, these norms can be internalized 'through processes of arguing, persuasion, and social learning' (Börzel & Risse, 2003). The socialization will be only effective, however, if certain factors are in play. First of all, norms and values involved in the process should be legitimate. Clarity and consistency of the norms - meaning that they are implemented similarly in different contexts - appears to be the fundamental factor increasing legitimacy. On the other hand, the way in which the rules are transferred is also significant. If the rules and procedures are imposed on the target state, this would be less efficient than trying to be more persuasive while taking the considerations of the target state into account and employing a deliberative argument basing on higher principles (Checkel, 2000). From this perspective, one would expect rules internalized in this manner to hold international legitimacy. Second, the government and society in question should identify with the external norm provider. This will also affect the degree of domestic resonance. If the EU rules are perceived as 'good policy,' the willingness to change the state of 'absent' or 'delegitimated' domestic policies increases. If, in contrast, they are seen to conflict with 'national political culture,' the likelihood of policy change diminishes (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, pp. 18-20). Following the logic of appropriateness, it would be fair to argue that – in addition to norm legitimacy, resonance, and the identity of the norm provider – the existence of norm entrepreneurs and

institutions such as civil society organizations and policy makers are necessary for SLM to function efficiently.

Table 1.2. Factors Enabling Social Learning Model

<p>Legitimacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate • Clear & Consistent • Internationally legitimate norms
<p>Identification with the norm provider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the policy maker • Identification of societal actors
<p>Domestic resonance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissibility of norms in certain policy field
<p>Norm entrepreneurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy makers • Civil society actors

Lesson Drawing Model (LDM)

Unlike the EIM and SLM, the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM) places emphasis on the policy maker rather than the external actors of domestic change. The main assumption of the LDM is that states ‘can learn from their counterparts’ and ‘draw lessons that will help them deal better with their own problems’ (Rose, 1991, p. 4). Lesson drawing particularly underlines the voluntary transfer of policy by ‘actors who choose rational response to a perceived process’ (Dolowitz & March, 1996; Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). The model suggests that, ‘a government adopts EU rules if it expects these rules to solve domestic policy problems effectively’ (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, pp. 20-25).

The main drive in the search for an alternative is not simply speculative, as Rose (1991) observes. In order for a policy maker to feel it necessary to search for an alternative

policy on a particular issue, there should first exist a clear shortcoming in a certain policy that needs to be addressed (Rose, 1991; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, pp. 20-25). However, finding an alternative policy is not sufficient in itself to implement a change. Whether the policy in question is transferable is also of importance (Rose, 1991). That is, the likelihood of adaptability of the EU policies to a certain policy area should be high. This includes suitability of the policies on the domestic platform as well as the acceptability of new policies by different societal actors and the relative absence of veto powers (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, pp. 20-25).

Table 1.3 Factors Enabling Lesson Drawing Model

Failure/dissatisfied policy area
Existence of a transferable alternative policy
Acceptability by different societal actors
Non-existence of strong opposition or veto powers

There is not, however, a single path for lesson drawing. According to the works of Rose (1991), and, later, Dolowitz and Marsh (Dolowitz & March, 1996; 2000), policy change can take place in various ways. The ideal and ‘simple’ version of lesson drawing is literally copying the policy from another context without any modifications. Even if states aim to copy certain policy structures elsewhere, however, the alternative policy is inevitably filtered through their particular history and culture during the process. Therefore, perfect emulation is almost impossible. Where perfect emulation is not feasible, states can choose

to make modifications to the policy to be transferred. It is also possible to create a hybrid or synthesis from two or more alternatives; however, this may cause the likelihood of success to diminish. Finally, instead of analyzing the policy to be transferred abroad carefully, the states may draw on it for inspiration for possible outcomes in their countries, a type of lesson drawing Rose calls speculation (Rose, 1991).

1.2.2. Domestic Policy Change and Freedom of Religion in Turkey

Taking the legitimacy of the European Community in Turkey since the early 1950s into account, it is not surprising that the EU has been considered one of the main facilitators of domestic policy change in many policy areas. Therefore, in explaining the recent developments in terms of the democratization process in general, the vast majority of previous research focuses on external Europeanization theories. This inclination is mostly due to Turkey's long-standing relationship with the EU. Turkey's 'European vocation' dates back to the country's membership to Council of Europe in 1949⁹, continued with its 1959 application for associate membership to the European Economic Community (EEC) and later continued with the 1963 Ankara Agreement signed between Turkey and the EEC intending to initiate the Customs Union process. Although the Ankara Agreement's primary aim was to establish economic ties between Turkey and Europe, it also signaled possible future EU membership (Saatçioğlu, 2013). The country's standing with the EU has always been considered important for the democratization and economic well-being of Turkey (Öniş, 2008) in addition to the fact that association with the European Community has come to be seen as indicative of holding a Western identity (Ugur, 2000). Turkey has become more integrated upon recognition of the right to individual petition to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 1987 and its mandatory judicial power afterwards in 1990. After a series of slowdowns in the process,¹⁰ Turkey finally applied for EEC membership under the government of Turgut Özal in 1987. Turkey's initial application was rejected by the European authorities, which suggested that Turkey is not

⁹ There is confusion with the date of Turkey's membership to Council of Europe. While, the information in the website of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggests that Turkey is a founding member of Council of Europe since 9 August 1949, according to the website of Council of Europe Turkey is a member since 13 April 1950.

¹⁰ After the Additional Protocol was signed in the 1970's, Avcı (2002) points out that there was a period of deterioration. This was due to the effects of global economic and political instability in Turkey as well as the later request by the Ecevit government to freeze commitments under the Additional Protocol. Although this request was withdrawn in 1979, the 1980 military coup led to a five-year period of stagnation.

ready to start accession negotiations for full membership (EC Commission, 1989). However, following the end of the Cold War the EU held further talks with Turkey. At this time, ‘the transformations set in motion’ and relations with the EC began to affect political decision makings in Turkey (Sofos, 2000). However, as Yeşilada (2002) clearly expressed, the EU ‘neither shut the door nor granted the Turkish accession.’ As a ‘reference point’, the EU was the anchor of the reforms initiated in 1990s (Ugur, 2000). Later, in 1995, the signing of the Customs Union agreement led to the expectation of eventual EU candidacy, but Turkey’s was not accepted as a candidate at the Luxemburg Summit in 1997. Moreover EU set up additional conditions in this summit such as settlement of disputes with Greece particularly on Cyprus issue (European Parliament, 1997). After a two-year freeze in relations, during the Helsinki Summit of 1999 the Commission declared a future Turkish candidacy possible, pointing out the need for further reforms before negotiations could commence (Commission of the European Communities, 1999). In this context, Turkey adopted eight reform packages by 2005 when accession talks finally began. Presently, despite a discernible slowdown in the pace of reforms, the negotiation process between Turkey and the EU has not been frozen.

The reform process offered significant returns for the freedom of religion and the protection of non-Muslim minorities. A considerable number of studies focusing on freedom of religion in Turkey have particularly underlined the fact that, although the reform process did not lead to a ‘major revision of its minority regime’ (Toktaş, 2006b, p. 513), substantial progress has been achieved in regards to the rights and freedoms of non-Muslim minorities (Grigoriadis, 2008; Soner, 2010; Türkmen & Öktem, 2013; Ulusoy, 2007, 2011; G. Yılmaz, 2014).

The main motivation behind the general democratization process is often believed to be the prospect of EU membership in parallel with the arguments suggested by the External Incentives Models (EIM) (Baç, 2005; Çınar, 2006; Kalaycıoğlu, 2011; Öniş, 2008; Özçürümez & Şenses, 2011). Indeed, the Europeanization effect on domestic change in Turkey came to be described as the ‘pre-accession association characterized as motivated by the conditionality linked to the prospect of eventual membership’ (Özçürümez & Şenses, 2011). It has acted as an effective means for parties to legitimize reforms (Avcı, 2011). Therefore, for many scholars focusing on domestic policy change, the EU has played an essential role as an external actor in the transformation process (Baç,

2005; Göksel & Birden-Güneş, 2005; Kalaycıoğlu, 2011; Özçürümez & Şenses, 2011). In Müftüler-Baç's assessment, Turkey's association with the EU and the prospect of membership have had a direct impact on the reform process (Baç, 2005). Analyzing the last two years of the reform process in 2005, she explains the importance of the Europeanization process as follows:

All in all, in the last two years, the prospective EU membership has provided a very strong incentive for adopting major political change in Turkey, and one can confidently claim that without the EU incentive, those changes would have been much harder to adopt (Baç, 2005).

As for freedom of religion and the rights of religious minorities, the relevant literature is likewise dominated by studies attributing a central role to EU conditionality in the transformation process in Turkey. As suggested in previous scholarly work, the EU's conditionality strategy is considered to be the facilitator of reforms in regards to religious freedoms. As Karaosmanoğlu and Soner contend, the *AKP* initiated the reform process pertaining to religious minorities rather 'half-heartedly' (Karaosmanoğlu, 2010) but, 'EU conditionality has forced government to reform Turkish political and legal structures including non-Muslim minorities' (Soner, 2010). Furthermore, in their article assessing difference and equality in the Turkish minority rights regime, İçduygu and Soner (2006) reflect the ties between the transformation towards a European minority rights regime with 'Turkey's integration with the EU.'

The role of the EU appears to be vital considering the stagnation of reforms following the developments emerging after 2005. Most scholars in the field interpreted the post-2005 slowdown in the process as related to the perceived decrease in the credibility of the EU in Turkey (Eralp & Torun, 2013; Öniş, 2008, 2009a; Schimmelfennig, 2009). While some pointed to 'reform fatigue' within the *AKP* due to continuous struggle with the veto powers (Patton, 2007), it is also commonly held in this literature that EU leverage declined and relations between Turkey and the EU froze due to 'mixed signals' as certain member states began to express objections towards Turkey's full membership in the EU (Çınar, 2006; Hale, 2011; Kubicek, 2011; Özbudun & Türkmen, 2013; Patton, 2007; Zaras, 2013). Beyond EU questioning of Turkey's credentials, deflated high Turkish expectations that the EU would collaborate in solving the Cyprus issue have also provoked anti-EU reactions and 'sour' Turkish society's EU accession dreams (Öniş, 2008; Patton, 2007). Nevertheless, the decrease in trust towards the promise of membership in the EU after

2005 has limited the ability of the EU to be a ‘real anchor’ in the reform process (Uğur, 1999). As recent surveys points out, even if the credibility of EU as an external trigger has had a positive influence on the democratization process, ‘perceived national economic conditions and national identity’ have limited its affirmative impact (Avcı & Çarkoğlu, 2011; Çarkoğlu & Kentmen, 2011). As the belief in possible EU membership – and matching public support – has seen a decline reflected in public opinion polls (Euro-Barometer, 2007), the adaptation costs of EU conditions have accordingly increased (Kubicek, 2011), electoral concerns have taken a prominent role leading to the search for new alternatives has become inevitable.

While the stagnation of reforms post-2005 depicts the vital role of EU conditionality in explaining the democratization process in Turkey, it would be a mistake to attribute all impact on the conditionality principle in explaining domestic change. Though relevant academic studies are few, several do acknowledge that the reforms relating to non-Muslim continued after 2005 (Karaosmanoğlu, 2010; Ulusoy, 2011) leading us to question alternative explanatory paths. Indeed, for some scholars studying Europeanization in the Turkish context, conditionality is not the exclusive tool making transformation possible in Turkey. Parallel to the Social Learning Model (SLM) arguments, it is possible to oppose those who tend to disregard the capacity of Europeanization in framing domestic beliefs and expectations (Ulusoy, 2011) and argue that the ‘European argument’ established among Turkish elites in fact initiated the social learning process and has seen it through the decades (Grigoriadis, 2008; Ulusoy, 2007). Moreover, the EU has also been perceived as a supporter of pre-existing civil society, such as NGOs, think tanks, and interest groups in Turkey (Göksel & Birden-Güneş, 2005; Kubicek, 2011). It has supported these groups by mobilizing various domestic societal actors and making space for their actions in relevant political spheres (Ulusoy, 2011). Civil society, in return, has ‘instrumentalized’ the EU and created domestic pressure in favor of reforms accompanied by a push effect through their support of the EU-related reform process (Diez et al., 2005; Öniş, 2007; Ulusoy, 2007).

Since the 1980s, minority-related change has also been perceived as an indicator of the ability of the EU and EU-related institutions at work. One such institution is the ECtHR, which empowers civil society and ‘liberate[s] the minds’ of people (Türkmen & Öktem, 2013; Ulusoy, 2007). Samur (2009), in analyzing the return of the Syrians to Turkey after decades of living in Europe as an example, concludes that the hopes created

in the EU accession process formed an ‘atmosphere of change [that] helped prepare a psychological environment dominated by the Syrians’ optimistic mood regarding their return migration.’ Hence, Türkmen and Öktem (2013) consider the EU as one of the actors of the social learning process. According to their assessment, a substantial change in the treatment of non-Muslim minorities has occurred due to both top-down strategies of conditionality and a bottom up approach through the empowerment of non-Muslim minorities as sub-national groups.

The literature also indicates an exaggeration of the role of the EU as the main anchor of change and suggests that EIM and SLM may fall short of comprehensively explaining change. First of all, for many scholars the EU’s role has not been unlimited and the role of endogenous factors have tended to be downgraded (Diez et al., 2005; Tocci, 2005; Ulusoy, 2007). Although Müftüler-Baç underlined the impact of the EU in enabling internal actors by adaptational pressures against the importance of the argument for endogenous factors (Müftüler-Baç, 2005), Hale underscored the difficulties of arriving at conclusions easily because, ‘we have no way of knowing whether some reforms would not have taken place anyway thanks to the domestic pressures or other general effects of economic and cultural globalization’ (Hale, 2011).

Other authors have also drawn attention to the challenges of the EU anchor argument in the Turkish context. Özçürümez and Şenses’s (2011) assessment, for example, confirms the ‘EU impetus’ at the same time reveals the limited nature of the extent and speed of Europeanization in various fields. The effectiveness of the EU’s normative power on civil society, as suggested through SLM, is also highlighted as problematic in Turkey’s case. İçduygu (2011) and Zihnioğlu (2013) remark upon the failure of the EU’s civil society policy. İçduygu argues that the ‘EU’s impact was highly ambivalent’ in this particular field, while Zihnioğlu finds it a ‘dead duck’ in the Turkish context.

Indicating the limited nature of the EU as an explanatory factor in the transformation process in Turkey, several studies highlight the importance of various endogenous factors and encourage us to consider the simultaneous role of external and the internal actors in developing a more comprehensive perspective of domestic policy change. As Noutcheva and Aydın-Düzgit argue, EU conditionality is not sufficient in fully apprehending the transformation process; ‘partial or non-alignment of ruling elites’ domestic incentives’ are also necessary (Noutcheva & Aydın-Düzgit, 2014). Ulusoy (2007), while denying neither

the EU's role as an external actor nor conditionality as its main tool, also stressed the historical process dating back to the late 1980s in explaining the transformation process. Kılınç (2008), on the other hand, highlights the 'characteristics of historical institutions' and 'domestic power setting' as additional conditions for institutional change. Finally, in her recent work, Yılmaz (G. Yılmaz, 2014) integrated the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM) into her analysis to draw attention to the combination of external and domestic factors in the adaptation of minority-related policy changes in Turkey:

Both the push by EU conditionality and the pull by domestic dissatisfaction prove to be influential in promoting change. Without one or the other, domestic change remains incomplete, as it is either shallow or selective (G. Yılmaz, 2014, p. 2).

Few studies in the body of recent literature, however, foreground domestic dynamics when accounting for the transformation process in Turkey. For example, in examining the role of Europeanization in Turkey's transformation process as an anchor or trigger for reform Nathalie Tocci argues that current changes are:

...largely driven by endogenous factors. However, the precise form and timing of domestic change is intricately linked with the launch of Turkey's accession process. In other words, 'policy Europeanization' is occurring also because 'political Europeanization' is taking place. The latter in turn is occurring because the endogenous process of change within the Turkish institutional, political, economic and social context is interlocking with the external dynamics embedded in the accession process (Tocci, 2005).

Tocci, in a study with Narbone (2009) also argues that the preferences of the political parties and party politics in Turkey along with national security concerns and the state of the economy following the 2001 financial crisis are the endogenous factors that have had the greatest impact on domestic transformation. Ruling out the conditionality principle as the main facilitator of change, Saatçioğlu (2010) argues that EU conditionality is not 'credible in the eyes of *AKP*'. She highlights the continuing reform process despite the decreased public support for EU accession in the post-2005 period and points out domestic politics as the 'key' in putting the current developments into perspective. Her recent work with Elbasani (2014) demonstrates that shifting organizational capacities, and not the carrot and stick principle provided in the conditionality model, is the main explanatory factor determining the motives behind the change. Likewise, the *AKP*'s Islamic tendencies can be seen as the base for this shifting domestic motivation as they seek to consolidate

power in Turkey's secular political system (Saatçioğlu, 2010; Saatçioğlu & Elbasani, 2014).

Alternative perspectives can also be found in the literature centering domestic change in the following recent studies published in recent years. Focusing on the transformation of police forces Piran (2013) emphasizes Turkey's reform potential as being in existence since the Ottoman period. Zaras (2013), also taking into account the historical dimension, focuses on the conception of change as an action against traditional structures; in the Turkish case, this is manifested against *Kemalist* ideology. Finally, Oğuzlu's (2012) contribution to the literature places the state as the main actor of domestic transformation in coping with global challenges such as the Arab Spring.

The literature also provides us with explanations centering on domestic actors in explaining the current stalemate. Explaining the slowdown of the reform process after 2005, some academics note that the EU no longer plays an essential role in Turkey's democratic transformation and the decline in the EU's credibility is not the unique factor behind this situation. Özbudun and Türkmen (2013) for example, stress the 'unwillingness of Turkish judiciary,' which has been characterized by a statist and nationalist approach, as a domestic actor resisting change. Resistance among bureaucratic cadres against the implementation of reforms and 'cooperation with the political elites' have also prevented EU leverage from taking effect in the Turkish context (Grigoriadis, 2008). Çınar (2006), on the other hand, indicates the conservative identity of the ruling party, whose approach to European values has changed after confronting the anti-Islam approaches in Europe, as a major factor. He argues that perception and definition of democracy among *AKP* leaders has also affected the nature of the reform process.

There are also a considerable number of studies highlighting the limited capacity of the EU and the importance of domestic factors at work in recent developments concerning the freedom of religion in Turkey. Many scholars prefer to explain the recent changes as resulting from a combination of different factors. Examining the Alevi demands in the reform process, for example, Ali Çarkoğlu and Nazlı Çağın Bilgili conclude that, despite the 'help' they received from the EU, the conditions of the Alevi community is in the hands of 'domestic power circles' (Çarkoğlu & Bilgili, 2011). Kılınç's (2008) argument also points out the importance of domestic actors in the Turkish case. Although he maintains that the main motivation behind the reforms in respect to non-Muslim minorities

comes from the EU, his thesis describes the extent of the effectiveness of the EU as an external anchor in terms of the configuration of the domestic power settings (Kılınç, 2008). Kılınç's work suggests that the role of the EU is instrumental to domestic actors rather than being central to the transformation process. Kılınç's argument becomes most explicit in the arena of religion-state relations. As many academics have argued, the leverage for the *AKP* against the EU reform process was high due to the *AKP*'s strategy of consolidating its power in order to overcome dissatisfaction against the conventional approach to religion. This vision has motivated the government towards 'a religion-friendly public sphere' (Kılınç, 2012; Sandal, 2013). Moreover, the sensitivities of the current government due to owning a past marked by oppression by the *Kemalist* state, have led them to center their religious identity on a version of Islam controlled by the state which acts as a dynamic domestic factor facilitating the recasting of religious freedoms. Considering the dissatisfaction of supporters of the Muslim religious groups towards the strict *Kemalist* approach towards religious freedoms, it is worthwhile taking the *AKP*'s sensitivities into account in order to have a clear perspective on the recent recasting of religious freedoms in Turkey. As Ter-Matevosyan rightly argues, both minorities and the *AKP* shared the common fate of being oppressed and constrained by limitations (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). Along with the *AKP*'s dissatisfaction with the past, their distinctive perspective on the Turkish nation as a continuation of the Ottoman Empire causes them to take a more flexible stance with the non-Muslim citizens of the republic (White, 2013). However, this instrumentalization of the EU agenda for the need of domestic actors does not necessarily lead to positive developments. As the *AKP*'s religious identity and its possible hidden agenda continues to be debated across academic platforms, many finds this concern absurd and unrealistic (Casanova, 2006; Toprak, 2005).

1.3. Approaching The Problem

The research reviewed above has mainly focused on Europeanization theory and provided different explanations for why and how domestic policy change has occurred in Turkey since the turn of the century. Some research also aimed at establishing a framework for acknowledging the transformations specifically relating to religious freedom and non-Muslim minorities. The vast majority of this literature, benefitting from the factors suggested by EIM and SLM, have featured the EU as the primary actor in the process and contended that the conditionality principle and/or the identification of the Turkish

government and/or society with EU norms enabled the changes that have taken place; very few studies strove to highlight the importance of the domestic context and domestic actors. There is certainly much truth in all of these explanations. However, the research question brought forward in this study brings is still puzzling because the literature includes only partial explanations for the recasting of freedom of religion in Turkey.

There are several reasons not discussed in existing literatures that might account for the absence of focused research on domestic change in reference to freedom of religion, particularly for non-Muslim minorities. For one, despite the abundance of academic interest in the recent democratization process in Turkey, few studies have focused on non-Muslims. Due to their fewness in number, non-Muslim minorities have often been perceived as insignificant and hence unworthy of academic analysis.¹¹ Therefore, contrary to the studies on Muslims, Kurds and Alevis, there are only a handful of studies focusing on non-Muslims in their analysis of the democratization process in Turkey. Contrary to the general perception, however, non-Muslim communities in Turkey constitute an important group with reference to the recent transformation process particularly *because* they have a small share in the population and therefore they are not attractive to those in or vying for political power in terms of their vote potential (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). The interest in improving their conditions may rather be symbolic (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010), for some, and pragmatic (Avcı, 2011) for others. In any case, non-Muslim minorities are one of the groups intersecting with the *AKP*'s interest (Soner, 2010) in expanding the freedoms of religious people (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010). Taking this together with the fact that minority-related change in general has been perceived as the 'least-likely area for reform' (G. Yılmaz, 2014), a transformation process including changes pertaining to a very small fraction of the population should be perceived as important enough for analysis.

Nevertheless, few studies in the existing literature have focused on the situation of the non-Muslim minorities within the general transformation process, and those studies that focused on non-Muslims or included non-Muslims in their analysis of democratization process have centered their arguments on EU-related explanations drawing from the factors suggested mainly by EIM. They have also foregrounded Europeanization and EU

¹¹ This point is sometimes discussed during the Q/A sessions accompanying academic conferences. See, author's notes in the Secularism and The Minority Question Across the Mediterranean Workshop at the Fourteenth Mediterranean Research Meeting organized by the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Mersin University, Mersin, Turkey, March 20-23 2013.

conditionality as the main motive for the transformation in the parameters of freedom of religion and non-Muslim rights in Turkey (İçduygu & Soner, 2006; Soner, 2010). However, previous research arguing that complete stagnation of the EU reform process immediately followed – and resulted from – the commencement of the accession negotiations is not plausible in examining reforms concerning non-Muslim minorities (Karaosmanoğlu, 2010; Ulusoy, 2011). The continuation of law adaptation benefiting, as well as behavioral transformation towards, non-Muslims even after 2005, when the democratization process faced a slowdown, has given ground for taking alternative explanations into account.

A number of explanations mentioned in the literature review are inadequate for providing a full insight of the case of non-Muslims. Few of these studies focus on the domestic anchors of change through stressing the importance of various domestic factors. Basing their arguments on SLM, they have contended that already existent civil society independent from external actors benefitted from the European framework and became the facilitator of change (Ulusoy, 2011). However, considering the weak – indeed, non-existent – nature of civil society organizations in Turkey (İçduygu, 2011; Zihnioğlu, 2013) centered on demands from the religious communities up until recent years, this argument does not appear to provide a solid explanation for the recasting of freedom of religion in Turkey. While Alevi communities have been organizing civil society groups for decades, it is debatable to what extent they can be considered a religious minority, as they have recently began to define themselves as a religious community (Özdalga, 2008). Another possible domestic factor that needs to be considered is based on the line of argument propounding both affirmative and adverse effects of the religious identity of the ruling party on the transformation process. For some authors, the ruling party's religious identity and its dissatisfaction with the conventional approach to religion has facilitated the reforming of non-Muslim rights (Zaras, 2013). The *AKP*'s willingness to listen to the problems of non-Muslim communities as compared to that of previous governments makes this argument persuasive. This view, however, falls short in explaining the still-lacking legal framework for non-Muslims. For other researchers, on the other hand, the religious identity of the ruling party has dominated the developments (Saatçioğlu & Elbasani, 2014) and has been the main obstacle blocking religious freedom reforms in Turkey (Sandal, 2013). Saatçioğlu & Elbasani's work is notable in how it details the impact of preferences

of the ruling party on the transformation process. Despite its significance, however, the choice of the time frame in their study – underlining the importance of the year 2007 as a cornerstone for *AKP*'s consolidation of power – does not overlap with the developments relating to non-Muslims, which continued after 2007.

Instead of focusing on one explanatory model, examining different factors from alternative models enables us to comprehend the whole picture. In this sense, Gözde Yılmaz's work is remarkable in its path of explaining minority-related domestic change in Turkey and suggesting an interactive reading of the external impact of the EU conditionality combined with the domestic impact of the government's dissatisfaction with existing policies which together form a 'pull and push' model (G. Yılmaz, 2014). Yılmaz's approach presents a view that is applicable for the field of religious freedom for religious minorities. Although her work establishes a framework, it is very broad and lacks the details for understanding the paradigm shift with regard to freedom of religion, something which is especially observable at the discourse level. Therefore the identity and preferences of domestic actors are left unexplained and still require detailed analysis.

Following the logic constructed in Yılmaz's study, I believe borrowing from alternative models will be highly beneficial. Although Yılmaz ruled out the SLM due to 'lack of drastic change' in the weak domestic resonance and the identification of both society and government with the external norm provider (G. Yılmaz, 2014), this study will include SLM in the analysis of religious minorities, though acknowledging its inadequacy in explaining the dependent variable on its own, simply because few changes observed in the factors indicated by SLM will impact the result of the total study. Therefore, in this sense LDM and SLM will be treated as equally important as EIM. Concerning the LDM, it is appropriate to stress an important aspect that has been ignored in the literature and that will give direction to this study. It is generally assumed that change will occur according to the model accepted and expected by the international community; in the Turkish case, this would be in line with EU norms. However, there are always other alternatives based on the identity and preferences of the domestic actors. The LDM itself also suggests that copy and pasting of external norms is not applicable 'in the real world; policies are generally emulated, combined, or inspired taking historical, cultural, and institutional circumstances into account (Rose, 1991). Therefore, this study will consider other non-EU norms in sourcing ideas that political authority might draw a lesson from. While exploring the other

alternative norm models, I intentionally prefer the term ‘recasting’ as ambiguous in terms of the direction and the content of change over instead ‘transformation’, which refers more specifically to a ‘positive’ change towards the perception of religious freedom accepted by the EU, the assumed main norm provider in the Turkish case.

In sum, the question of how to explain the recasting of policies, practices, and discourses referring to freedom of religion over the last decade in Turkey still merits a detailed analysis. This is because it is not possible to comprehend the recasting process through exclusively using one of the models suggested in the literature. Only by taking the insights generated in the EIM, LDM, and SLM into account, I contend, can the recasting of the parameters of religious freedom that has taken place over the last decade in Turkey be fully explained. The omission of investigation into domestic actors’ interests and identity from analysis and the exclusive focus on external triggers of change is a serious barrier that must be overcome if we are to fully understand the motives and limitations of the recasting process related to freedom of religion and non-Muslims citizens of Turkey.

This thesis, therefore, will employ an analytically eclectic approach that will allow it to benefit from various insights offered by different perspectives in order to grasp the full picture of the recasting process in the last decade. It will contribute to previous research by stepping back from EU-centered explanations (without denying their importance), while presenting a detailed analysis of the government’s identity and preferences and the role of societal dynamics along with the impact of the external actor - the EU in the case of this study – in isolation from each other. I will take advantage of EIM by focusing on the impact of conditionality in the incorporation of laws, practices, and discourses in regard to religious freedom. Thus, I will try to comprehend the degree of adaptational costs and the credibility of the EU as well as the clarity of the conditions for freedom of religion. SLM, on the other hand, will guide me in detecting the legitimacy of the norms provided by the EU for both societal actors and the ruling party playing the part of domestic actors in the recasting process. Finally, LDM will be useful in enabling a focus on the preferences and identity of the ruling party and assist in realizing the reasons of its dissatisfaction with the conventional approach to freedom of religion that have led it in search for an alternative. Moreover, LDM will allow me to comprehend possible outcomes of adopting alternative norm models in the domestic context.

For the purposes of this analysis, the weight and importance of these factors indicated by different perspectives will be investigated through periodization of the overall time span. In my formulation the process of recasting the parameters of freedom of religion will be divided into three consecutive time periods each holding distinguishing characteristics.

1999-2005: This period starts with the Helsinki Summit in 1999 and ends with the commencement of accession negotiations on October 3, 2005. It is cast as the ‘golden age of Europeanization’ since the adoption of eight harmonization packages continued even after the November 2002 elections when the *AKP*, a party with roots in Islamist movement, came to power. It is also a period for which reforms related to non-Muslims and their religious freedoms are predominantly framed through the prospect of EU membership.

2005-2011: This period covers the start of the accession negotiations until the June 12, 2011 general elections in Turkey. It is a term during which credibility of EU conditionality for the democratization process in general is assumed to be weak by the previous literature. Remarkably, however, the recasting of freedom of religion is still observable; this time, emphasis on prospect of EU membership is balanced through a debate over the meaning and the scope of the freedom of religion, often expressed at the discursive level.

2011-2015: Starting with its victory in the 2011 general elections, the *AKP* began to demonstrate authoritarian characteristics. The government’s decreased emphasis on the prospect of EU ascension and increasing employment of references to Islamic values, which overshadowed references to religious freedoms for non-Muslim minorities, are characteristics of this term and still mark official discourse at the time of writing.

The factors suggested by the three major models – namely EIM, SLM, and LDM – and their weight on and importance for the recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion will be investigated in three sub-chapters of this thesis following this periodization explained above. The methods of analysis and case selection will be explained in the next section.

1.4. Methods of Analysis and Case Selection

The aim of this study is to explain the recasting of freedom of religion in Turkey and to show the motives and limitations behind the transformation process over the past decade. Given this purpose, the study will focus on religious minorities as the most disadvantaged fraction of society. In the Turkish context, Alevis, Christians and Jews all seem to fall into this category.

However, for the purpose of the research question at hand, the cases should be ultimately relevant: they should define themselves as religious minorities and have demands from the state directly or indirectly concerning their religious freedoms. Therefore, this study will exclude Alevis and Jews. Alevis, although increasingly defined as a religious minority, themselves hold ambivalent feelings towards this categorization (Savigny & Marsden, 2011). Jews, on the other hand, are different than the Alevis. Considered as ‘the silent minority’ (Bali, 2013), Jews do not want to be labeled as a minority. Moreover, they claim to be the non-Muslim community most loyal to the state and prefer not to be perceived as Jews in the public sphere as much as possible (Toktaş, 2006a, pp. 121-131). The Christians of Turkey, on the other hand, have come forward today with substantial demands on the Turkish state (Vingas, 2014). Therefore, Turkey’s Christians comprise an ideal subject group for examining the motives and limitations of freedom of religion in Turkey.

In order to fulfill this task, this study will employ a qualitative methodology, which is more suitable for research dealing with concepts that are difficult to quantify (Christou, 2004) and investigating actors that are not visible at first glance. Qualitative methodology also enables the researcher to benefit from a wide range of sources. In particular, this study will employ within-case-comparison of the three time periods mentioned above while benefitting from the process-tracing method allowing the researcher ‘to assess dynamics of change within each case’ (Collier, 1993).

I draw on four basic sources:

- a. **Interviews:** This study will make use of semi-structured interviews with current and former representatives of Christian minorities who have been affiliated with given churches such as the Roman Catholic, the Armenian Catholic and Orthodox, the *Rum* Orthodox, the Arab Orthodox, the Syriac Catholic and

Orthodox, the Bulgarian Orthodox, the Chaldean, and the Protestant churches to elucidate their perception of the process. The sample was formed using the researcher's already existent connections to religious minority groups and extended through the snowball sampling method. In total, I conducted 32 interviews with members of Christian communities who personally took part in the negotiation process with policy makers to enlarge religious freedom.¹² Research does not necessarily require interviews with the policy maker since their views can easily be traced through official declarations, speeches, and interviews that were made publically available through media. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to use open-ended questions to shape the conversation. Guiding questions in the interviews were constructed through the themes extracted from the conceptual background and analytical model, which provided the tools for measuring our dependent variable: the scope of religious freedom. The interview scheme also took into account the problems and barriers experienced by each community, such as the Law on Foundations, Legal Personality, Education of the Clergy, religious education, Religion section on ID cards...etc.¹³

- b. **Observations:** Freedom of Religion and the case of religious minorities inform a lively debate and there are meetings and conferences held that address this topic. In addition, spending time with the subjects in the field, participating in religious ceremonies, and listening to debate over daily politics offer the researcher a ground for direct observation that cannot be found in the written literature.
- c. **Institutional Documents:** These consist of parliamentary records of the debates over draft regulations, legal documents, official information found on the official websites of state institutions, and national and international reports pertaining to the Christians of Turkey. Together, these allowed me to trace the changes involving non-Muslims and interpret how the relationship between change and the actors has been constructed.
- d. **Newspapers and online platforms:** Newspapers offer a great wealth of information. The study benefitted from analysis of certain newspapers in tracing the view of the policy maker. *Radikal*, *Hürriyet*, *Taraf* and *Agos* were the

¹² See references for the list of personal communications.

¹³ See Appendix B for guiding questions in interviews.

newspapers, and *Bianet* and *T24* were the news portals that most frequently covered non-Muslim related issues. In addition, *Zaman* and *Milliyet* newspapers; direct news provided by the news agencies such as the IHA; and news portals such as *Demokrat Haber* were used on occasion. Apart from these news platforms, other data were extracted from websites run by Christian communities, such as *Nor Zartonk*, *HyeTert*, etc. Using the discourse analysis of the data drawn from these news platforms, it will be possible to reflect the shift in the government's perception of freedom of religion.

The data collected will be analyzed through the process tracing method and will reveal the dynamics contributing to the recasting of freedom of religion as seen through the case of Turkey's Christians.

1.5. Chapter Outline

The remainder of the thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter two explores the evolution of the concept of freedom of religion throughout history in relation to debates on secularism and multiculturalism. In addition to revealing the alternative conceptualization of freedom of religion in historical perspective, the chapter also provides tools to measure freedom of religion in its European form in order to be use this as a guide in analyzing the independent variable, i.e. the religious freedoms of Christians of Turkey, in the analysis chapters.

The objective of chapter three is to establish a historical context for the analysis. The chapter commences by examining the traditional, i.e. *Kemalist*, approach to freedom of religion and its impact on religious communities - including Muslim communities - that not only remained excluded from the state definition but were also seen as a threat to the system. Then the chapter's focus will turn to the status of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, paying particular attention to Christians from the founding of the Republic of Turkey roughly until the start of the EU accession process. This section will also address the list of measures drawn in chapter two. After providing a history of discrimination against non-Muslim minorities, this chapter will examine the discriminatory laws and practices against non-Muslim minorities in which enhancements are expected today in four sub-sectors: Recognition of non-Muslim minorities and issues related to their existence; freedom of worship; teaching of religion; and other areas subject to discrimination.

Chapter four takes an objective look at the present situation. It puts forward the demands of non-Muslim minorities along with the demands of the EU and analyzes the recasting of the legal framework and practice of freedom of religion, i.e. the dependent variable of this thesis. The chapter traces the process of transformation thematically, following the guidelines set forth in chapter two. Based on the interviews with the representatives of the non-Muslim minorities and the reports of relevant institutions (including EU progress reports), it measures the scope of the transformation.

My analysis of the data unfolds over the fifth chapter. In this chapter, the relevance of the factors indicated by EIM, SLM and LDM will be investigated. An eclectic analysis of the data on Christian minorities in Turkey will reveal the weaknesses and strengths of the existing theories of Europeanization in different periods of time. The first section of chapter five will mainly focus on the years 1999-2005 and in attempt to reveal alternative explanations for the transformation through Europeanization argument. Analysis of the period between 2005 and 2011 will reveal the dynamics behind the ongoing recasting process of the parameters relating to religious freedoms despite the frozen relations between the EU and Turkey. Here I will also trace the process of reconstruction of the parameters of religious freedoms. The last section of chapter five will test the explanatory capability of the three models proposed in the literature for the time span 2011-present. Analysis through these distinctive time periods will reveal the weight of each theoretical model in explaining the recasting of freedom of religion in Turkey.

Chapter six presents the conclusion of the thesis. It brings together the analysis chapters and presents the main findings in the light of the analytical framework proposed in previous sections of this chapter. It also provides implications of this study on existing research and how this can be used to direct future research.

2. Conceptual Framework

This chapter aims to establish a conceptual perspective for understanding recent developments in Turkey pertaining to freedom of religion and non-Muslim minorities. To create this framework, it is important to demonstrate what one should understand as comprising ‘freedom of religion.’ Within this context, revisiting the concepts that have emerged in history of protection of religious minorities is an appropriate starting point. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will use frameworks from various academic disciplines such as Law, Sociology and Political Sciences in discussing notions of religion, religious minorities and religious freedom and present them as shaped through debates on secularism and minority rights over time. Later parts of this chapter will exhibit what constitutes freedom of religion, in commonly accepted form today and introduce four necessary components of it in order to shed light on the subject of this study.

2.1. Conceptualization of Religion, Religious Minorities and Freedom of Religion: From Minority Rights to Human Rights

The principle of freedom of religion has been a fundamental parameter in evaluating the democratic credentials of contemporary states. It has been described as the ‘oldest and deepest of the rights embedded in modern constellations of liberty’ (Danchin, 2002), ‘the basic human right’ (Little, 2001) and even ‘the ultimate freedom’ (Hasson, 2003). Guaranteeing the one’s right to practice (or not to practice), promote and change his faith ‘without hindrance, molestation and discrimination’ (Wood Jr, 2004, p. 739), it is therefore a fundamental freedom which has been shaped through the liberalization and secularization processes.

Freedom of religion, however, has never been a stationary concept. Nor has its meaning been clear in various contexts. The idea of ‘freedom’ it embodies obviously evokes ‘positive’ connotations but its definition has been shaped according to different contexts throughout history and the precise parameters have been subject to academic debates. The scholarly debate discussing its definition and scope has occupied the agenda of social sciences in parallel to the term’s shift from an association with minority groups towards perception of freedom of religion as a human right after World War II. While supporters of strict secularism and neutrality suggested that freedom of religion can only be ensured through exclusion of religion in the public sphere (Ackerman, 1980; Audi,

1989; Dworkin, 1977; Macedo, 1998; Rawls, 1972), multiculturalists have insisted on the public recognition of identities of religious groups (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2000). This intellectual debate, therefore, has forced the leading scholars who work on secularism and multiculturalism to redefine the concept of freedom of religion and freedom of religion for religious minorities in order to make it compatible with today's democratic values and human rights. The rest of this section will zoom in on this debate on the content of freedom of religion in relation to the notions of religion and religious minorities in order to sketch a general framework for analyzing freedom of religion for religious minorities in contemporary societies.

It is appropriate to begin analysis of the freedom of religion debate by demonstrating what one should understand concerning the debate's implications for religious minorities, since the notions of freedom of religion and religious minorities are closely related and in order to have a clear comprehension of freedom of religion, one has to acknowledge the history of protection of religious minorities. However, since it is difficult to differentiate cultural, religious, and linguistic identities from one another in today's world, we must first clarify exactly what is meant by 'religious minority' with reference to the concept of minority itself.

Religious identity is arguably the oldest type of belonging and religious minorities form the basis of the concept of the minorities (Akgönül, 2013, p. 1). Francesco Capotorti's definition of the minority concept is also useful in establishing the concept of religious minority:

A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Capotorti, 1979, p. 96).

As the above definition of minority suggests, religious minorities have a small share in the general population, possess an inferior status, and are distinguished from the majority of the population by unique religious characteristics which they strive to preserve. Additionally, this willingness to keep distinctive characteristics alive requires preservation of a 'minority consciousness', which should be counted as the crucial component of the definition of the concept of religious minority (Oran, 2004b, p. 26).

At this point it is also important to note that the clear definition above is sometimes not sufficient in resolving the perplexity of acknowledging a minority group as a religious minority group. David Little (2002) argues that religious minorities can be separated into two categories. On the one hand, one can voluntarily join a 'belief group' which prescribes a belief system and a world view in order to pursue a particular way of life. They are 'expected to assume a strong sense of personal responsibility' in establishing and maintaining strong ties with the community. Affiliation with 'Ethno-religious groups' on the other hand, begins at birth. Though, they are formed on the basis of ethnic identification, they yet preserve a conspicuously distinctive sense of religious belonging. Both types of religious minorities, however, shares the same ground in being vulnerable to possible discrimination by the 'official national faith' (Little, 2002, pp. 34-38). Despite the lack of clear recognition at first glance, ethno-religious minorities should be included in studies that address the question of freedom of religion.

Another important point in discussing freedom of religion is its relation to the perception of religion. As one scholar argues, 'one's concept of religious freedom cannot be divorced from one's concept of religion itself' (Sharma, 2011). Indeed, freedom of religion and treatment against religious minorities has been shaped through the ever-changing understanding of religion in the society. Even today it is difficult to find an umbrella definition embracing all religious traditions but we can agree more or less that it is related to the supernatural beliefs which provide human beings with sacred and ultimate conditions of existence (Haynes, 2006, p. 538). In other words, religion offer adherents 'a world view or set of beliefs, along with a value system and a way of life embodying and expressing these beliefs' (Danchin, 2002, p. 4). Religion accomplishes this aim by spreading 'a sense of power' and offers 'an interpretation of experience, a view of life and death, a guide to conduct, and an orientation to meaning and purpose in the world' (Sharma, 2011, p. 18).

While using this contemporary definition, however, religion has taken different forms in the past. Remarkably, religion as we understand it today was once associated with absolutist religions, which paved the way for restrictions towards minority religions well into the later periods of the middle ages (Bader, 1999, p. 611; Wood Jr, 2004). The peace of Westphalia (1648) is a milestone representing a change in the status of minority religions. While the peace treaties signed as a part of Westphalia paved the way for

individual states to determine the religion of the state; it also established equality between Protestant and Catholic states in Europe. Contrary to general belief, however, this did usher in freedom of religion for minority groups. The rights of religious minority groups continued to be dependent on the will of the sovereign (Preece, 1997). In this respect, a number of treaties signed concerning freedoms for religious groups in territorial conflicts should be seen as concessions given by the sovereign in order to perpetuate international stability (Knights, 2007; Preece, 1997).¹⁴ Arguably instead of religious *freedom*, religious *tolerance* became the norm of national confessional states. Religious tolerance, as Murray explains:

takes its start from the statement... that error has no rights, that only truth has rights and exclusive rights... Therefore, error is to be suppressed whenever and wherever possible; intolerance is the rule. Error, however, may be tolerated when tolerance is necessary by reason of circumstances, that is, when intolerance is impossible; tolerance remains the exception. Tolerance therefore is 'hypothesis,' a concession to a factual situation, a lesser evil (Murray, 1965, p. 134).

This approach has transformed over time in parallel with the effects of focus on scientific reasoning developed after the enlightenment era in Europe which culminated in the industrial revolution and later the modernization era. Rawls's seminal book *A Theory of Justice* (1972) is a good example of this trend, in that it presents public reason as the basis of contemporary liberal democratic societies. During this period, public reason has predominantly taken a position against intolerant absolutist religions (Bader, 1999; Wood Jr, 2004). Consequently, the influence of religious reason, which had left no place for atheists and believers of other religions, began to wane at the beginning of 20th century (Chavez, 1994; Dobbelaere, 1981; Shiner, 1967; Wilson, 1982). The Secularization theory, which was the dominant theory at the time, in addition to declaring the death of organized religions (Bruce, 2002), also predicted that religion would become increasingly privatized (Luckmann, 1967) and subsequently decrease in importance (Berger, 1967). We can witness the reorganization of the relationship between religion and state under the dominance of the legacy of secularization theory up until the late 20th century.

¹⁴ Among those treaties, there are the Treaties of Königsberg (1656), Marienburg (1656) and Labiau (1656) providing freedom of worship for Lutherans; the Treaty of Berlin (1878), which guaranteed religious liberties of the Jews; the Confession of Augsburg (1624,) which granted specific rights to Protestants; the Treaty of Nijmegen (1648), Treaty of Ryswick (1697), Treaty of Oliva (1650), Treaty of Hubertusburg (1763), Treaty of Paris (1763) and Treaty of Dresden (1745), all of which guaranteed the rights of Christians. See: (Knights, 2007; Preece, 1997)

The most distinct characteristic of this period, beyond any doubt, is the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. For prominent scholars of this school of thought this has been an essential condition for the maintenance of order in society (Ackerman, 1980; Audi, 1989; Dworkin, 1977; Rawls, 1972). In *Political Liberalism* (1993), Rawls also suggested that any 'unreasonable comprehensive doctrine' including religion must be excluded from the definition of public reason. For scholars of political liberalism, '[v]alues of freedom, equality, toleration' are best sustained 'if religion is removed from public affairs' (Thiemann, 1996, p. 75). They argue that the separation of religion and the state as well as neutrality are essential. In a religiously diverse society, separation of religious and secular reasoning has been perceived as inevitable (Audi, 1997; Casanova, 1994). The principle of neutrality, on the other hand, has been required to ensure the state's 'blindness' towards religions and disbelief (Ahdar & Leigh, 2005, p. 88). Besides the fact that the neutrality principle restricted states' favor of one religious tradition over any others, it prohibited any support or finance of religious organizations as well (Laycock, 1990).

Implementation of these principles as seen in domestic constitutions and their practice in different contexts led to various judicial models of religion-state relations in the 20th century. While some states continued the legacy of established churches and respective autonomy between state and the religious authority (Stephan, 2000) others preferred separation of state and the 'church' either in the form of negative (or passive or pluralistic) secularism or positive (or assertive or combative) secularism (A. Davison, 2003; Kuru, 2007). In those states where politics is dominated by negative secularist, states are indifferent towards believers and non-believers, are more tolerant and adopt an inclusionary approach towards public expression of religion; whereaas, states embrace positive secularism, tends not only to exclude religion from public space, but also keep its control over religion both in public and private sphere and intervene, if necessary, in order to organize the relationship between religion and the state (Kuru, 2007, p. 571). This division in the implementation of secularism commonly observed in comparison between US secularism, which, despite the accomoditionalist and seperationalist parties, always supported non-exclusion of religion from the public sphere (Kuru, 2007, p. 581); and French *laïcité* that remained hesitant to be inclusionary and if not exclude it, preferred to keep religion under the control of the state, which have led to debates centering restriction of religious freedoms as it appeared in headscarf controversty (Göle, 2007). As it is

observed through these examples, negative secularism ‘was designed to free religion from state interference (and vice versa)’ whereas with positive secularism, the aim was ‘exclu[sion of] religion from public space and... promot[ion of] the supremacy of the state over religious organizations’ (Roy, 2007). It is important to note, however, that between these ‘religiously friendly,’ and ‘religiously hostile’ ends of the spectrum (Stephan, 2000), it was also possible to observe association (or concordat) between religious and secular reasons, in other words selective cooperation between church and state (Torfs, 1996).¹⁵

These examples of various relations established between state and the religions suggest that (organized) religions lost a significant degree of political influence over time. However, this does not mean that religious beliefs and freedom of religion became of little contemporary relevance. While the shift in the perception of religion and its place in the society have led to reorganization of religion and state relationships in different contexts, the related ideas of freedom of religion and the status of religious minority groups have undergone substantial transformations.

The first phase of this transformation – in which the status of organized religions began to be undermined by the minority rights regime- could be traced back to the Vienna Final Act (1815).¹⁶ Although a minority rights regime had become official under League of Nations after World War I (WWI), it is possible to observe its initial steps taken in the Vienna Final Act (1815). The Vienna Final Act provided religious freedoms for those ‘transferred from one sovereign authority to another’ (Preece, 1997, p. 79). It ensured, for example, equal political and civil rights to the Bishopric of Basle with the rest of the inhabitants of the said cantons regardless of their religious affiliations. Moreover, the Treaty of Berlin convinced Montenegro and Serbia to ‘recognize the religious freedom of Muslims, and gave assurances that religious affiliation would not be used as grounds for discrimination within their new jurisdictions’ in exchange for granting them independent status (Preece, 1997, p. 79). Along with the treaties that ended the WWI, these treaties included articles in regard to religious groups and the prevention of possible discrimination

¹⁵ For example, the Concordat of 1801, signed between Pope Pius VII and Napoleon Bonaparte (Torfs, 1996, p. 2); the Concordat of 1953 signed between the Church and the Spanish state which regulated the relationship between the Church and the State (Moran, 1995, pp. 1-2).

¹⁶ Vienna Final Act is a concrete product of Congress of Vienna held in order to set balance of power among European states. General Treaty was consist of articles redrawing the lines of sovereignty in Europe and defined its content. These definitions included earlier examples of civil and political rights as well as guarantees for certain groups to free exercise of their religions (Preece, 1997, p. 79).

directed at these groups within the newly established borders.¹⁷ After the war, minority groups (including religious minorities) were taken under the protection of the International Minority Rights Regime of the League of Nations (Berman, 1993).¹⁸ Scholars argue, however, that the system was designed to protect the stability of nation-states and perceived minority protection as a tool to this end (Akgönül, 2015, p. 213). Indeed, despite the creation of treaties after the war and the existence of the League of Nations, in leaving the responsibility for the protection of religious minorities to the states, this system failed to create an effective system for ensuring minority protection.

It was only after WWII that a new international minority rights regime was developed under the United Nations (UN) system. This development of this regime was critical as it began to shape the principle of freedom of religion under the category of universal human rights; that is, religious freedom came to be perceived as a basic human right. Murray summarizes this new perception of freedom of religion as follows:

[Freedom of religion is] an exigence of human dignity... an immunity, a freedom from coercion, whether legal or extralegal... in what concerns religious worship, observance, practice and witness – in all cases, both private and familial and also public and social (Murray, 1965, p. 135).

A series of acts have passed since the forming of the UN to establish protection of religious freedoms as an international human rights norm. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹⁹ the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights²⁰, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),²¹ the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief²² as well as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)²³ and the Helsinki

¹⁷ Although the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which ended WWI, did not have much content regulating religious freedoms (1919) several texts, including unilateral declarations declared and bilateral and multilateral treaties signed after the war (Akgönül, 2015, p. ft.7), regulated the rights of the minority communities.

¹⁸ Covenant of League of Nations, Article 22: Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defense of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League. See: (LeagueofNations, 1919)

¹⁹ Article 18 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948).

²⁰ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN, 1966a).

²¹ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (UN, 1966b)

²² Declaration on elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (Art.1) (UN, 1981).

Final Act of the OSCE²⁴ in various ways reflect the magnitude of this shift. However, it is important to note that the new system also served to attenuate the Minority Rights concept and replace it with individual Human Rights. Although these documents referred to the minority concept in their attempts to create binding rules for freedom of religion, some scholars contend that they either mentioned it in few articles only when referring to prevention of discrimination against minorities,²⁵ or left the definition of minorities to the sovereign state.²⁶ The individual rights regime therefore was incapable of reinforcing protection of religious minorities (Akgönül, 2015). It was only later that a series of legally and/or politically binding documents – such as the Copenhagen Document by the OSCE,²⁷ the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1995), the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (UN, 1992) and annual country reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)- began to include the minority concept in referring to freedom of religion to be guaranteed by the signatory states. This system combining a Minority Rights regime with Human Rights (Akgönül, 2015, p. 222) with prioritizing the religious rights of the individuals over that religious groups thus also regulated the rights of individuals belonging to religious minority groups (Berman, 1993; Knights, 2007). This system offered by religious individuals and those belong to minority groups guarantee of a secure environment in circumstances where the regular process is not enough to prevent minorities from ‘biased perceptions’ or discrimination (Knights, 2007, p. 2).

Constitutional and international guarantees for the protection of religious minorities and their religious freedoms, however, have not been sufficient for resolving difficulties faced in practice. While societies have become religiously diverse with the uptick in global migration, secular domestic policies remain incapable of securing religious freedoms, especially in relation to religious minorities. Therefore, interpreting the right to the free exercise of religion has remained a subject both of political and academic debate.

²³ The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 and developed common principles in Europe under the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950 prohibiting discrimination against ‘national minorities.’ See: (Council of Europe, 1950).

²⁴ Article 7 of the Helsinki Final Act of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, 1975)

²⁵ Article 14 of the ECHR (Council of Europe, 1950)

²⁶ Article 7 of the Helsinki Final Act (OSCE, 1975); Article 27 of ICCPR (UN, 1966b).

²⁷ Para. 32 (OSCE, 1990).

It is not surprising that secularization theory has remained at the center of this debate. While the importance of religion has not faded away, as the secularization thesis had predicted, scholars began to point to the West, where the secularization thesis have proved most valid (Casanova, 1994), as an example demonstrating the important role played by religion in the form of ‘civil religion’: providing a set of symbols and values around which to build and maintain the social cohesion of a nation-state (Bellah, 1992; Ferrari, 2010). In addition to this, as states have increasingly gained a religiously diverse character, religious minorities have increasingly demanded public recognition and free exercise of their religion. It became almost impossible to disregard the demands of religious minorities. Olivier Roy underlines this fact by criticizing the attitude towards Muslims in Europe. In his words:

Instead of dealing with Islam as a religion among others, most governments, while advocating ‘integration’ of Islam, are still dealing with it as if it was a foreign religion... Whatever the pressures and limitations (bans on minarets, veil, burqa), Europe cannot ignore freedom of religion, and is pushed by Muslim believers to accept the visibility of religious practices, while forcing the same believers to adjust and format their practices to something ‘acceptable’ (Roy, 2010).

Within this contemporary context, both the secularization thesis and ‘strict’ or assertive versions of secularism have been revisited. For many intellectuals the restrictive perception of religion touted by the liberal school of thought has been an obstacle to ‘the development of liberal democratic societies’ (Bader, 1999). First of all, liberalism’s ‘standard view’ of religion has received criticism. Habermas, in his essay on the role of religion in public sphere, questioned Rawls’ ‘restricted’ definition of public reason in *Political Liberalism* (1993) and criticized his restrictive approach to the role of religion in the public sphere (Habermas, 2006). Without criticizing ‘public reason as a gatekeeper’ (Fraga, 2012), Habermas also stressed the need for differentiation between ‘justifiable’ and ‘unjustifiable’ religious arguments in public space. In his perspective, religious arguments which are ‘compatible’ with secularist impression of liberal democracies could be allowed in political liberalism (Habermas, 2006). Unlike Habermas, however, many scholars responded to the secular vein in the liberal argument through examining the exclusion of religious reason from the public debate (Bader, 1999; Parekh, 2000). In his critique of strict liberalism Veit Bader, for example, clearly points out the lack of the connection between the ‘ideal’ and the ‘real’ world. For him, the liberal model has not been successful in operating in practice

for today's societies, especially in terms of preventing inequalities that may occur among religious traditions (Bader, 1999, p. 600).

The principle of neutrality and strict separation of religion and state suggested in secularization theory and implemented through positive secularist practices such as *laïcité* have also been seen as features limiting religious freedoms in contemporary societies (Monsma & Soper, 1998). The main argument of those opposing the neutrality principle is that non-neutral results may emerge as a result of a neutral attitude 'punishing religious behavior' (Laycock, 1997). In other words, the neutrality principle itself has not led to equal treatment of various groups within diverse populations in contemporary societies (Bader, 2003; Kymlicka, 1995; Modood, 1996; Monsma & Soper, 1998; C. Taylor & Maclure, 2011). Though defending liberal neutrality, Kukathas has also argued that the liberal state may interfere in individual and group conflicts in reference to their identities with the intention of 'peace' (Kukathas, 1998, p. 691). However, for many scholars this attempt to integrate religion into liberal theory only when it is needed has signified the maintenance of a 'strict' approach to regulation of religion in religiously diverse societies (Bader, 1999) where it may not always be possible to isolate religious arguments (Wood Jr, 2004, p. 764). As Veit Bader eloquently puts it, in certain cases the 'hands off' principle may not be handled 'even-handedly' (Bader, 1999). Moreover, disregarding theological arguments and historical facts of cooperation between church and state (Bader, 1999), strictly neutral policies may indicate a preference for secular beliefs over religious belief (Monsma, 2002, p. 3), or they may be seen as an imposition of majority values on the rest of the society (Modood, 1996).

In the light of these criticisms, scholars have come up with a variety of solutions to the problem of regulation of religion and securing religious freedoms in contemporary societies. Some scholars have pointed out that the very fact that secularization theory does not hold in practice as the source of problem, and that it acts as an obstacle against freedom of religion for all. These scholars stress the need to abandon it (Berger, 2000; Martin, 2008; Stark, 1999). Others, meanwhile, have maintained that it is premature to talk about burying it, and that, conversely, it should be updated according to the needs of today's religiously diverse societies (Casanova, 1994; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Alternative propositions can be found in the literature in this regard. Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure (2011), for instance, urge us to rethink the meanings of the concepts of

secularization and *laïcité* (or secularism). Instead of holding that secularization refers to an observable secular decline in the impact of religion in social and individual choices, they contend that one should continue benefitting from *laïcité* as a system that is needed for the state to hold its independence from religion (p. 15). From their perspective, *laïcité* should be understood in its broadest sense; namely, as dependent equally on the principles of equal respect and freedom of religion (p. 20). In order to facilitate enactment of these two principles, however, the neutrality of the state is necessary.

On the other hand, the neutrality principle itself has been the source of great academic debate, with many arguing that a reconceptualization of neutrality principle is needed. Approaching the debate from the liberal frame, Will Kymlicka suggests that liberal neutrality should accommodate ‘group differentiated rights’ beyond the common rights of citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995). From the perspective of Taylor and Maclure, however, equal respect and the neutrality principle should be in balance with the principle of freedom of religion; that is to say, an effort should be made in order to prevent the violation of freedom of religion while implementing neutrality, or vice versa (C. Taylor & Maclure, 2011, p. 21). For multiculturalists, however, the call for ethno-cultural, linguistic, and religious distinctions takes prominent position. They have emphasized that the need for recognition of identities in face of the domination of the majority culture is essential, and contend that equality in the society can only be achieved through a ‘politics of difference’, where the state recognizes the identity of individuals or groups without making any distinction among them (Modood, 1996; C. Taylor, 1994). Parekh stresses the importance of the equality principle. The notion of equality here includes equating similarities as well as taking differences into account (Parekh quoted in (İçduygu & Soner, 2006)). Bader, on the other hand, highlights the need for the ‘priority of democracy’ to achieve equality. Rather than seeing neutrality as a process – as it is in its ‘difference-blind’ approach – it should be seen as a principle that should hold in practice and ensure a fair result. In Veit Bader’s words neutrality should be understood in a ‘relational way prohibiting moral particularism and precluding injustice,’ otherwise it is not desirable (Bader, 2003).

Revisiting the boundaries between religion and state is also necessary in order to create a comprehensive approach to freedom of religion. Besides ‘difference blind neutrality,’ strict separation of religious and secular institutions has also been subject to

criticism for not being a practical approach for contemporary societies increasingly populated by people of different faiths who do not feel integrated into the societies of their resident country. While some argue that separation of religion and state is necessary to prevent the state's association with a particular religious tradition (C. Taylor & Maclure, 2011, p. 20) others argue that a 'strict separationist' approach may lead to restriction of religious freedoms (Monsma & Soper, 1998). These contenders point out the need of putting aside the concept and reformulating the 'wall of separation' (Stephan, 2000; Thiemann, 1996). While abandoning the concept must be put on hold until an alternative emerges, reformulation of the term has been subject to debate. Stephan, for example, points out the need for reconstruction of the boundaries between religion and state by minimizing the limitations to religious groups beyond just providing freedoms for the secular sphere. Moderate secularism is presented as another option. In the words of Modood, 'historical compromises between the state and a church or churches in relation to public recognition and accommodation' is also possible based on this model's potential as a public good (Modood, 2011).

2.2. Measuring Freedom of Religion

As the above discussion indicates, the concept of freedom of religion and the status of religious minorities have been shaped through legal and political debates within concrete historical processes. Although this is an ongoing debate and its scope and dimension are limited with significant differences observed in practice, it would be fair to argue that the strict interpretations of secularism (such as *laïcité*) are subject to debate in a world where religious identities can no longer be ignored. It follows that, it has become necessary to create a room for religious groups and individuals belonging to a religious communities. Building from this conceptual background, therefore, the remainder of chapter will establish the contemporary definition and scope of freedom of religion as a concept benefitting from the arguments derived from the political debate as well as its reflections in the international law.

To start with, the discussion benefits from two main documents – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) – in order to set down a clear definition of freedom of religion. Freedom of religion requires freedom to 'manifest (one's) religion or belief in teaching, practice,

worship and observance'²⁸ both alone and also with others in either public or private.²⁹ The principle also extends to one's right change their religion freely.³⁰ Possible restrictions of religious freedoms are further prohibited in the following article in the ECHR:

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.³¹

Similar clauses were also included in and reinforced by other politically binding documents, such as the UN General Assembly's Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Declaration of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities (UN, 1992), and the Copenhagen Document (OSCE, 1990). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), for instance, guarantees the prevention of pressure against religious minorities in article 18:

No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

Although these international legal documents created before the 1990s generally focused little on religious minority groups, with the exception of preventing discrimination towards them, since then religious minorities have been regaining acceptance within the framework for freedom of religion. The UN's Declaration in 1992 (UN, 1992), for example, reflects this shift by adopting the term 'persons belonging to religious minorities.' In a similar vein, the Copenhagen Criteria included protection of minorities as one of its political criteria, although it left the definition of national minorities to the states in referring to the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1995).

Simply examining these legally and/or politically binding documents, however, is not sufficient for establishing a fuller framework addressing the contents of freedom of religion. Concrete components of religious freedom still require clarification. The rest of

²⁸ Article 18 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948); Article 9 of European Convention on Human Rights in 1950. See: (Council of Europe, 1950).

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Article 18 of European Convention on Human Rights. See: (Council of Europe, 1950)

this chapter will address the issues related to freedom of religion derived from both legal text and political debate in order to build a comprehensive conceptual framework suitable for measuring religious freedom as the term relates to religious minorities in contemporary societies.

2.2.1. Recognition of Individuals and Communities As Religious Entities

The international community generally agrees on a certain core of minimum requirements for the recognition of individuals affiliated with religious groups. This recognition refers to a certain legal status that would make space for religious individuals and/or groups to operate in private, public, and political space; obtain properties, run humanitarian institutions, and possess internal autonomy.

The public recognition of religious identities is currently a widespread debate as each state establishes an individual system for the regulation of religious diversity. Hence securing freedom of religion by providing belief systems with legal status has become an urgent contemporary matter. Against this backdrop, states are expected not to involve themselves in setting the criteria for differentiating between legal and illegal religions. Scholars argue any attempt to do so on behalf of the state would violate the impartiality of the state and thus not comply with contemporary understanding of freedom of religion (Fox & Sandler, 2003; M. Yildirim, 2012). Article 32 of the Copenhagen Document (OSCE, 1990) and Article 8 of the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1995) require states to allow religious minorities to establish or maintain institutions and organizations. Article 8 of the Framework Convention posits it explicitly:

The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations.

Though in some cases, proof of the plausibility of the religion has been required, it would be a violation of Article 9 of the ECHR not to give legal status for Abrahamic religions such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism as well as new beliefs or non-beliefs such as atheism (M. Yildirim, 2012). Religious institutions are expected to be free ‘within the bounds of the constitution and human rights’ (Stephan, 2000, pp. 39-40). For that matter, some also argue that liberal democratic societies should take this principle as far as to not

prohibit religious groups from establishing political parties (Stephan, 2000, pp. 39-40). Despite the secularized nature of frameworks upon which current societies are founded, recognition of religious traditions is essential and securing their existence through granting legal personality has become a necessity.

Accordingly, any act imposing restrictions on religious communities' ability to own property is against freedom of religion. The right to own property could be found under the clauses against discrimination of all the treaties and declarations mentioned above, for instance, Article 14 of the ECHR and the UN Declaration on Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. These documents clearly discourage states from prohibiting religious individuals and communities efforts 'to make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief.'³² Additionally, possessing 'voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions'³³ has also gained recognition as a component of religious freedom.

Apart from property ownership, the right to freedom of religion and belief also covers the right 'to establish and maintain charitable or humanitarian institutions.'³⁴ Although the UN Declaration of 1981 does not recognize the rights specifically granted to the minority communities, one article in the declaration paves the way for minority communities to establish humanitarian institution such as hospitals, schools... etc. According to the same declaration of the UN, children also have the right to obtain education in line with their parents' wishes.³⁵

Last but not least, freedom of religion extends to the internal autonomy of religious communities in matters concerning their faith. The UN declaration guarantees the right of religious communities to be free to appoint leaders or hold elections for their selection according to 'the requirements and standards of (their) religion or belief.'³⁶ Indeed, without the adequate religious clergy, holding religious practices would be difficult - if not impossible (P. M. Taylor, 2005).

³² Declaration on elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (Art.1) (UN, 1981).

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.* Article 6c

³⁵ *ibid.* Article 5.2

³⁶ *ibid.*

2.2.2. Freedom of Worship

Complete freedom of worship for individuals and individuals belonging to a religious community is yet another component of freedom of religion. As some scholars have argued, it wouldn't be wrong to call it one of the minimum requirements of religious freedom (Stephan, 2000, pp. 39-40). Though it is a minimum requirement, the scope of this right is broad; it may extend from building and maintaining places of worship to performing religious practices including liturgy itself and other religious practices concerning individuals and religious communities.

The limitations placed on places of worship are a primary concern within the scope of freedom of worship. Places of worship are direct extensions of beliefs and therefore religious individuals and communities must be free to build and maintain places of worship. Any restriction on the building, repairing and/or maintaining places of worship are strictly discouraged.³⁷ Limitations on access to places of worship are also considered indicative of a lack of freedom of religion (Fox & Sandler, 2003).

Within this framework, everyone has the right to freedom of religion or belief (or nonbelief) of their choice³⁸ and they cannot be withheld from or arrested for religious activities (Fox & Sandler, 2003). Any restriction of the manifestation of one's belief in liturgy and other religious activities has been disallowed under international law. In their study quantifying freedom of religion Fox and Sandler provide a list of these religious practices recognized as falling under the umbrella of freedom of religion:

Public observance of religious services, festivals and/or holidays... religious public gatherings that do not coincide with other types of public gatherings... the ability to make and/or obtain materials necessary for religious rites, customs, and/or ceremonies... on public religious speech, including sermons by clergy... the publication or dissemination of written religious material (Fox & Sandler, 2003).

The UN Declaration of 1981 both guarantees the right to worship and establish or join in congregations with religious purposes and provides a similar list of practices considered as manifestation of religion.³⁹ These religious purposes include 'make(ing), acquir(ing) and us(ing)...the necessary articles and materials', 'writ(ing), issu(ing) and disseminat(ing)

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Article 18 of the ICCPR (UN, 1966b)

³⁹ Declaration on elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (Art. 6) (UN, 1981).

relevant publications,’ as well as to ‘observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief.’⁴⁰

Furthermore, everyone has the right to change or proselytize one’s religion and, accordingly, restrictions on conversions and proselytizing inhibit the full freedom of religion (Fox & Sandler, 2003). Article 18 of the UDHR and Article 9 of the ECHR explicitly assert that freedom of religion includes freedom to change religion. While proselytizing is not directly protected in international law, the ability of individuals and groups to publicly advance their values in civil society is perceived as a minimum condition for freedom of religion (Stephan, 2000, pp. 39-40). Indeed, Article 6 of the UN declaration expressly states that religious individuals are free ‘to establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion and belief at the national and international levels.’⁴¹ Moreover, the international community largely recognize restrictions against proselytizing as violating the principle of religious freedom (M. Yıldırım, 2012). Freedom to disseminate religion or belief, however, does not legitimize any coercive action undertaken with the aim of changing another’s religion, as the application of any pressure to change an individual’s religion is discouraged.⁴²

2.2.3. Religious Education

Another subfield which applies in freedom of religion is teaching. Pursuing religious education and teaching is perceived as another indispensable component of freedom of religion as well. Within this scope, the ability of religious communities or individuals belonging to those communities to run or attend schools providing religious education or training of religious personnel for a specific community is expected to be secured in the states in question (Fox & Sandler, 2003).

The right to pursue an education in conformity with certain belief systems is secured both in the ICCPR and the ECHR.⁴³ Article 5 of the UN Declaration gives more details of this right:

Every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, and shall not be compelled to receive teaching on

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Article 18 of the ICCPR (UN, 1966b)

⁴³ Article 2 of the ECHR (Council of Europe, 1950), Article 18 of the ICCPR (UN, 1966b).

religion or belief against the wishes of his parents or legal guardians, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.

Religious education, however, is not only limited to the right of individuals to access to education on religion. Training religious and ecclesiastical personnel according to the standards required by a religion or belief system is an indispensable component of the freedom of religion.⁴⁴

2.2.4. Discrimination

Apart from the above-mentioned restrictions, all types of religious discrimination should be avoided in order to guarantee full freedom of religion. Despite the fact that UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination has not yet developed into a convention, the international community has produced documents referring to the prohibition of discrimination on different grounds, including that of religion. Everyone is 'entitled to equal protection against any discrimination'⁴⁵ such as 'race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.'⁴⁶ In addition to this, the UN Declaration specifically stresses religious discrimination in the following clause: 'no one shall be subject to discrimination by any state, institution, group of persons, or person on grounds of religion or other beliefs.'⁴⁷ Moreover, harassment of religious individuals or communities is cast as a discriminatory act (Fox & Sandler, 2003). Incitement to hatred as well as insults and threats on the basis of religion and belief is another form of violation of freedom of religion.⁴⁸

2.3. Conclusion

This chapter has offered a conceptual background for the analysis of the transformation of religious freedoms for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. First it covered conceptual debates on freedom of religion and religious minorities including the impact of changing perception of religion over the decades. Beyond revealing how organized religion had been

⁴⁴ Article 2 of the ECHR (Council of Europe, 1950), Article 18 of the ICCPR (UN, 1966b), Declaration on elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (Art. 6) (UN, 1981).

⁴⁵ Article 7 of the UDHR (UN, 1948).

⁴⁶ Article 26 of the ICCPR (UN, 1966b). See also Article 14 of ECHR (Council of Europe, 1950).

⁴⁷ Declaration on elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (Art. 2) (UN, 1981).

⁴⁸ Article 20 of the ICCPR (UN, 1966b).

perceived as a threat and excluded from political debate throughout the 20th century, this discussion also demonstrated how the influence of religion was actually expected to fade from contemporary societies over time. The chapter also covered the rights of the religious minorities and how freedom of religion has become a contentious subject following the resurgence of religion within the last decades. Within this context, as the importance of religious freedom has grown, states have begun seeking to meet the needs of diverse societies and consequently review their approach to religion and its role in public space. Consequently, abandoning the 'strict' notions of separation and neutrality has become inevitable in accommodating diversity with 'justice' and 'evenhandedness'.

In the light of this debate, the second section of this chapter elaborated the components of freedom of religion. Deriving from politically and legally binding international documents as well as the insights provided by certain scholars, we can come up with four distinct categories that can be used to measure freedom of religion. First, the attitude of the current international community is not in favor of the adaptation of a restrictive attitude towards the recognition of religious traditions of individuals and members of religious communities that: 1) deprive them of their legal personality and internal autonomy, and; 2) prevent them from property ownership and establishing institutions such as hospitals, schools, etc. Second, people and groups holding religious identity are expected to be able to perform their religious practices alone or within a community; in either public or private. Correspondingly, they should also be able to establish, maintain, and renovate their worship places according to the needs of their communities. States in question are furthermore expected to sustain an environment for conducive to minority religions freely exercising their religious practices, including benefiting from religious laws in private issues, conversion, and proselytizing. Since freedom of religion includes teaching religion, religious education – both one's access to instruction in their faith and training of religious clergy - could be counted as the third pillar of religious freedom. Finally, any other act discriminating against persons and their communities on the basis of religion, such as institutions and laws prioritizing the needs of one religion over another, or hate speech directed at members of a particular religion could be categorized under other discriminatory acts. Attainment of freedom of religion as measured by international and European standards requires eliminating barriers in each of these four categories.

3. Historical Background: Freedom of Religion and the Status of Christian Minorities in Turkey

The rights of religious individuals and communities has been a sensitive issue since the founding of the Republic of Turkey. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey embraced a new state ideology i.e. *Kemalism* in which the principle of secularism occupied a principal position. While this principle aimed at separating religion and state, its pursuit in the Turkish context had a devastating impact on religious minorities. On the one hand, the strong emphasis on secularism in the constitution placed extreme limitations on the activities of religious individuals and groups; on the other hand, the creation and promotion of controlled version of Hanefi/Sunni Islam resulted in the unequal treatment of religious faiths then excluded from the official state religion. Over the decades, the state-led policy has thus disadvantaged some religious individuals and groups, such as Muslims (including Sunni and Sufi orders), Alevis and non-Muslims.

Arguably, non-Muslim groups have been more disadvantaged than others. They have suffered from a series of discriminatory policies as well as assaults, which together have led to a gradual decrease in their representation among the general population, from 25% of Turkey's total population in 1892 (Güler, 2001) to less than one percent of the population today. Despite their fewness in numbers today, however, this thesis suggests that taking a close look at the status of non-Muslims and their religious freedoms is necessary in order to understand the recent democratization process during which a departure from the *Kemalist* mindset in regard to the approach to religion has been observed.

This chapter, therefore, will first give an overall picture of how the *Kemalist* ideology constructed freedom of religion in a religiously and ethnically diverse society, including how it dealt with the demands of religious individuals and groups such as Alevis, non-Muslims, and also Muslims, who were excluded from official definition of Islam shaped by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı – DİB*) apparatus. Second, this chapter will explore the impact of this state approach to religion on non-Muslims with a particular focus on the Turkey's Christians by analyzing the status of their religious freedom through four categories established as guidelines in the chapter on conceptual framework.

3.1. Limits of Freedom of Religion in Turkey under the *Kemalist* Approach

The sensitivity of the issue of the protection of religious minorities and the debate over the boundaries of their religious freedom in Turkey dates back to the *Kemalist* revolution. This revolution aimed to create a new republic from the ashes of Ottoman Empire. *Kemalism*, as the state ideology developed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk⁴⁹, sought to decrease the significant influence exercised by Islam during the Ottoman era by introducing secularism (*laiklik*)⁵⁰ as one of the main pillars of *Kemalism*. Besides the fact that it failed to completely separate affairs of religion and state in deciding to promulgate the superiority of Islam over other religions, the *Kemalist* formulation of secularism fell short in formulating a regulatory system responding to the demands of Turkey's diverse population, particularly in regards to the individual right to freely choose and practice one's religion.

The controversial approach of *Kemalism* towards religion can only be understood within a comprehensive view of developments in respect to the role of religion in the late Ottoman Empire (Özdalga, 2012, p. 206). The Ottoman Empire handled the regulation of religious minorities divergently. The empire considered non-Muslims as second-class subjects of the empire (Oran, 2005a; Özkırımlı & Sofos, 2008, p. 44) and grouped them under the *millet* system (Zürcher, 1993). Religion was the defining element of the *millet* system. Within this system the population of the empire was composed of different communities distinguished in terms of their religion, rather than by ethnic identity (Zürcher, 1993). Under this system the Ottoman population was classified into two categories: Muslims were the dominant nation (*millet-i hakime*), while the rest were relegated to the role of subordinate nations (*millet-i mahkume*) (Oran, 2010). Although this system provided the non-Muslim communities with an autonomy allowing them to organize their internal religious and educational affairs (Özkırımlı & Sofos, 2008, p. 44), it reinforced inequality across religious groups (Oran, 2010). Indeed, Islam had a greater impact on political decision-making processes when compared to the influence of other

⁴⁹ Here it is appropriate to define *Atatürkism* (*Atatürkçülük*) since it is generally confused with *Kemalism*. *Atatürkism*, in the words of Ahmet Kuru, refers to those who 'reinterpret and update *Kemalist* principles regarding changing conditions as means to achieve the end: the level of universal civilization' See: (Kuru, 2006, p. 154 (ft152)).

⁵⁰ The others are nationalism (*Milliyetçilik*), republicanism (*Cumhuriyetçilik*), statism (*Devletçilik*), populism (*Halkçılık*) and reformism (*Devrimçilik*).

groups. This system established the superiority of the office of *Şeyhülislam* – as an Islamic institution - over representatives of other religious communities. Moreover, the *Şeyhülislam* was more than a representative of Islamic communities; it was also political actor leading the community through its release of *fetva* approving – and legitimizing – laws issued by the sultan. Thus, the *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire reinforced both tolerance and inequality over the minority religions.

However, by the end of the 19th century this system began to change. The superior role once occupied by Islam was undermined. This change began with the rise of local nationalism and the declaration of independence by internal communities, such as Serbians and Greeks forcing the Ottoman Empire to implement a number of reforms known collectively as the *Tanzimat*. Although the *Tanzimat* accorded new rights for non-Muslims, it was still far from providing equality for minorities (R. Davison, 1954). However, the early nineteenth century reform process gradually decreased *Şeyhülislam*'s influence in 'secular' sphere (Berkes, 1998). The transformation process began with the first attempt at creating a constitution (1876) which gave the empire's non-Muslim subjects the right to be represented in parliament. Although this secularist attempt was seized by nationalist movements (Özdalga, 2012, p. 208) when Sultan Abdulhamid II decided to close the parliament and pursue pan-Islamist politics during his reign, after the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* - CUP) came to power with the reintroduction of the 1876 Constitution in 1908 (Özdalga, 2012) the process of separation of religion and state continued to spread across the country. Though the CUP carried on the reform process⁵¹, they had limited capacity to prevent the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which would further weaken after aligning with the central powers in WWI.

During the war, the Ottoman Empire embarked upon an inevitable downward spiral and collapsed, which led to the emergence of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The modernization and secularization process that began during the late Ottoman Empire was maintained in the new Republic of Turkey (Toprak, 2005) through the vision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - who had also been a prominent actor in the CUP movement that was formed by Young Turks who were educated in Western schools of the 19th century Ottoman Empire and deeply impressed and inspired by scientism, materialism and social

⁵¹ The reform process involved the local administration, police, transport, education, and the legal system. See: (Lewis, 1961)

Darwinism as well as French positivist thought (Zürcher, 1993). Being fully committed to the modernization project (Gellner, 1994), and following the CUP tradition, *Kemalist* principles introduced after the war aimed to ‘bring the nation state of Turkey to the level of advanced states of the world’ (Kili, 1969, p. 40) through top-down imposition of ‘Western secular reason’ (Keyman, 2007).

For this purpose, the Republic of Turkey was established as ‘a democratic, secular and social state governed by the rule of law.’⁵² The new regime intended to ground itself upon secular principles and took action to disestablish Islam immediately after the foundation of the National Assembly in 1920. First, the office of *Şeyhülislam*⁵³ and the Caliphate were abolished in 1924. In 1925 religious brotherhoods (*tarikats*) were banned, the promotion of religious ideas for political interests was prohibited (Özoğlu, 2009) and ‘those publicly [displaying] piety were marginalized politically, socially and intellectually’ (Toprak, 2012). Moreover, the call of the prayer was changed from Arabic to Turkish, and religious schools for training Imams (Muslim religious clergy) were closed. In addition to the achievements of the earlier period, the 1928 Constitutional amendment also removed the reference to Islam as official religion, which had been kept in 1924 constitution (*Teşkilât-ı Esasîye Kanunu*) until it was removed in 1928 constitution. Later the secularism principle (*laiklik*) took its place in the constitution with the 1937 amendments (Official Gazette, 1937). Through these reforms the leaders of the republic sought to relegate religion to the private sphere.

However, considered an elitist project with roots in Westernization (Karakaş, 2007, p. 2), the *Kemalist* project has also been associated with authoritarian characteristics. In the words of Hakan Yavuz:

- 1) Its uncritical modernization ideology prevents open discussion that would lead to a new and inclusive social contract that recognizes the cultural diversity of Turkey;
- 2) it does not tolerate the articulation of different identities and lifestyles in the public sphere since they undermine the Kemalist vision of an ideal society; and, 3) it treats politics as a process of guiding political development and engineering a new society (Yavuz, 2000, p. 25).

These authoritarian characteristics were founded in the principle of *laïcité* (*laiklik*), which has been both the most essential and the most controversial pillar of *Kemalism* and

⁵² See the 1982 Constitution in English (TBMM, 1982)

⁵³ The office of *Şeyhülislam* was abolished and replaced by a ministry called the *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti*. Therefore, in a sense, *Şeyhülislam* continued in the ‘new regime’, albeit under a different name.

depicted tendencies towards ‘didactic’ and exclusionary politics especially towards regulation of religion (Göle, 2006). Defined as separation of state and religious affairs, this principle’s target was to purge religion from ‘educational, cultural and legal spheres’ (Kili, 1969, p. 103). However, perceiving organized religion as ‘anachronistic’ (Kaylan, 2005, p. 269), *Kemalism* adopted a ‘militant’ version of secularism (Lewis, 1961) that could even be defined as ‘hostility’ to religion (Özdalga, 2012, p. 215 (ft215)). Through the principle of secularism, *Kemalism* intended to reduce the role of religion ‘in all spheres of society including religious communities’ with the influence of Enlightenment (as a part of the process of Westernization) and a focus on security concerns after the Independence War (Özdalga, 2012). In addition to excluding religion from the public discourse, *Kemalism* also became the ‘official dogma of irreligion’ (Adivar in Yavuz, 2000, p. 24). Therefore both the traditional Islamic culture (Mardin, 2005) and non-Muslim faiths were excluded from the public sphere. During the first decade of the new republic, there was an observable decline in worship and celebration of religious days (Reed, 1954, p. 269). These steps taken by the *Kemalist* regime to pursue a strict secularist approach that would leave no room for *any* religious activity considerably restricted the religious freedoms of those who adhered to non-state endorsed religious beliefs.

While *Kemalist* policies aiming to displace religion from its former position in both political and social spheres is in line with the concept of secularization in the literature, the *Kemalist* decision to keep religion under state control contradicts both secularism and secularization as generally understood. In conjunction with this, in replacing the office of *Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* – the ministry that replaced the office *Şeyhülislam* after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire- the *DİB* was placed in charge of religious affairs in the new republic. However, instead of representing the religious diversity of the Turkish society within its body, in practice this state apparatus promoted a certain interpretation of Islam (Çakır & Bozan, 2005; Gözaydın, 1995, 2009a; Kara, 2003; Smith, 2005), excluded both select muslim groups and non-Muslim faiths, and established a controlled version of the Hanafi/Sunni denomination within Islam as the predominant religion of the new nation (Dink, 2005; Dündar, 2008; Oran, 2005a). Despite a legal framework claiming to secure ‘equality before the law regardless of one’s language, race...religion, sect...etc’⁵⁴ and ‘the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction’ as well as ‘free exercise of

⁵⁴ Article 12 of the 1961 Constitution (TBMM, 1961) and Article 10 of the 1982 Constitution (TBMM, 1982).

worship, religious services, and ceremonies'⁵⁵ for all, religious freedoms of individuals belonging to certain religious groups, such as select Sufi orders, Alevis and non-Muslims were remained restricted as they were not only excluded from *DİB*'s scheme⁵⁶ but were also subjected to discrimination.

This version of secularism in which the state controlled and defined the boundaries of religious activities, first, restricted freedom of religion of practicing Muslims; therefore paved the way for a struggle between secularists and devout Muslims; consequently encouraged the politicization of Islam in the coming decades (Yavuz, 1997, p. 65) and formed the basis of Islamist movements in Turkey.⁵⁷ Though the introduction of the Turkish – Islamic synthesis post-1980 paved the way for the practical use of Islam in reinforcing Turkish nationalism against leftist ideology, expression of Islam in public space was not still welcomed and even strictly prohibited as it contradicted the secularist principles of *Kemalism* (Tank, 2005). Indeed, apart from the discouragement of publicly-held religious activities many religious people, mostly those publicly displaying their Islamist tendencies such as those who wear headscarf, were suspended from public institutions such as public offices, the army and the universities.

The first body of opposition was formed in 1924 by the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) which 'opposed the centralist, radical and authoritarian tendencies of the *Kemalists*' (Zürcher, 1993, p. 168). However, this opposition offered little challenge to the secular policies of the *Kemalist* state. The Sheik Said (1925) and Menemen rebellions (1930) also took place against the secular policies of the young republic; both rebellions were suppressed (Yavuz, 2003, p. 140).⁵⁸ Despite the appearance of slight movements foretelling the state's future approach towards religion's place in the public sphere (Reed, 1954), it is safe to conclude that Muslim groups including select Sufi orders remained underground until the introduction of the multiparty system (Narlı, 1999).

⁵⁵ Article 19 of the 1961 Constitution (TBMM, 1961) and Article 24 of the 1982 Constitution (TBMM, 1982).

⁵⁶ For more information about the *Diyanet* see: (Gözaydın, 2009a).

⁵⁷ It is important to note that Muslim and Islamist are not synonymous. As Browers contends: "Islamism is a distinctly modern phenomenon, tending more toward political activism than theology and proving more selective in emphasizing portions of the Qur'an and Sunna that serve present purposes" (Browers, 2005). While Muslim refers to a religious identity, Islamist preserves a "political consciousness" which can lead to political action (Göle, 1997).

⁵⁸ Though the Sheik Said rebellion appeared to be a reaction against the secular policies of the state, it was also a Kurdish uprising.

With the introduction of the multi-party system in the 1950s, one part of the opposition to the state evolved into a movement scholars describe as adhering to a pro-Western, pro-market, right wing identity (Dinç Belcher, 2012). The Democrat Party (DP – *Demokrat Partisi*) – and later its successor the Justice Party (AP – *Adalet Partisi*) – established a particular center-right tradition in Turkey, with a manifesto based on ‘conservative’ populism in order to attract the votes of the religious populace. These parties introduced changes by allowing the call of prayer back to be in Arabic once again; lifting the ban on religious education, training and broadcasting; as well as introduction of Koran Courses that later evolved into the *Imam Hatip* Schools.⁵⁹ Despite this loosening of ‘strict secularism’ in favor of allowing the growth of moderate Islam, however, suppression of radical Islamist groups continued in the multi-party period (Poulton, 1997, p. 171).

A remarkable rise of political Islam occurred during the 1970s. As AP began to embrace “proindustrialist and state centric policies”, Islamically sensitive populace began to search for alternatives (Yavuz, 1997, p. 66). The National Order Party (*MNP – Milli Nizam Partisi*) became the first party labeled by political Islamist tendencies, but it did not survive long as it was shut down after the 1971 military coup. The following decades saw the further development of Islamic parties continued by the establishment of the National Salvation Party (*MSP - Milli Selamet Partisi*), the Welfare Party (*RP - Refah Partisi*), the Virtue Party (*FP- Fazilet Partisi*), all of which were shut down either by military coups or constitutional court decisions which found the activities of the parties to be against the principles of secularism. All of these parties defined themselves as a part of National Vision (*Milli Görüş*) ideology, formulated as opposed to parties adhering to Western values (Toprak, 2005). *Milli Görüş* movement proposed “anti-secularism, anti-Westernism, anti-neoliberalism, ambivalence towards political pluralism, vision of religious nationalism guiding political, social and economic policy, and its exclusionary and confrontational rhetoric, claim of monopoly of salvation both in this world and in the afterlife” (Dinç Belcher, 2012, p. 4). After the closure of *MSP*, *RP* continued to mobilize Islamic groups under this political ideology, which aimed to reconfigure sociocultural and economic order in Turkey (Yavuz, 1997, p. 67). In the words of Hakan Yavuz, *RP*

⁵⁹ See the works of Prof. Binnaz Toprak (Toprak, 2005) for more on the changes implemented in the Democrat Party period.

“represent(ed) a platform for those who seek a change of the secular system as well as for those who demand reforms in the system, within the bureaucratic state structure” (Yavuz, 1997, p. 63). As a part of the National Vision, *RP* proposed an economic program called “just order”, an “idealized Islamic order” although rarely mentioned after they became part of the coalition government (Tanıyıcı, 2003) and a change in the legal structure suggesting different legal structures for different religious groups (Toprak, 2005). *FP* followed *RP* after the party was closed down by the Constitutional Court a year after 28 February Decisions declared by the military demanding measures to be taken against rising political Islam. However, *FP* abandoning “just order” began to adopt a discourse of democracy and human rights and support Turkey’s EU membership (Tanıyıcı, 2003; Toprak, 2005). Despite this change in the discourse, however, the party failed to consolidate “an ideological and institutional identity” (Dinç Belcher, 2012, p. 126) which led to emergence of renewalists against traditionalists, who continued to follow the *Milli Görüş* tradition and remain the devout followers of Erbakan, the founder of the party. Upon the unsuccessful trial of Merve Kavakçı, a female MP wearing a headscarf to take the oath in the parliament, the constitutional court outlawed *FP* on the grounds that it was a continuation of *RP* (Tank, 2005). After the closure of *FP*, two parties, Felicity Party (*SP – Saadet Partisi*) and the *AKP* emerged. While traditionalist gathered under *SP* and signaled return to National View principles, renewalists established *AKP*, cutting the ties with the *Milli Görüş* movement, declared itself as a conservative-democrat party which allowed them to meet both the demands of the West and Muslim electorate on the basis of human rights and freedoms (Dinç Belcher, 2012) and later to challenge *Kemalist* approach to freedom of religion.

The strict secularist principles of *Kemalism* restricted the religious freedoms of the Alevis as well. While their role in Turkish society as a non-Sunni community has been ignored in the public discourse (Vorhoff, 1998, p. 227), Alevis in fact compose a considerable proportion - approximately 15% - of the population (Özdalga, 2008).⁶⁰ Although they were disregarded by public policies, Alevis prefer not to be designated as a ‘religious minority’ (Özdalga, 2008). In fact, most Alevis were supportive of the Republican founder *Atatürk* and his secularizing reforms after being exposed to Ottoman

⁶⁰ It is also important to repeat here that divergent numbers are claimed with regard to the total number of Alevis. See the notes under Figure 1.1 in the Introduction.

Empire-led persecutions in the 16th century (Çarkoğlu & Bilgili, 2011; Özdalga, 2008; Vorhoff, 1998). As some argue, this strong level of trust in the *Kemalist* regime has led to a voluntary assimilation of Alevis into the Turkish culture (van Bruinessen, 1996). However, the strict implementations of secularism have also given rise to skepticism among some Alevis. As Massicard points out, the support of Alevis during the rebellions of *Koçgiri* (1921) and *Dersim* (1936-38), though neither erupted in the name of Alevism, indicates that their support for the secular ideals of *Kemalism* was not unconditional (Massicard, 2013, p. 23). Despite their substantial share in the population and considerable support for *Kemalist* policies, they have been subject to discrimination since the early years of the republic.

However, the vast majority of the Alevi community continued to support the *Kemalist* regime in a stance that persisted, as some argue, ‘despite the historical persecution by the same regime’ (Çarkoğlu & Bilgili, 2011). Although it is possible to understand this attitude only if one considers the fact that the secular principles of *Kemalism*, *Kemalist* policies, in addition to failing to resolve the demands of the Alevis, also paved the way for Alevi-Sunni clashes by allowing the emergence of a negative Alevi image among the Sunni populace (van Bruinessen, 1996). Following the 1925 closure of religious brotherhoods and lodges, Alevis were deprived of legal personality; consequently any demand for their religious freedom, including freedom of worship in their places of worship (*Cemevi*) and equal representation at the *DİB*, was avoided. Moreover, the state maintained a silence concerning the Alevi massacres that took place during the Alevi-Sunni conflict in *Maraş* (1978) and *Çorum* (1980) (van Bruinessen, 1996).

In the 1980s Alevis increasingly began to define themselves in religious terms. This is mainly due to the rise of political Islam and the introduction of the Turkish-Islam synthesis after the 1980 military coup, which led to a new system both allowing political Islam to operate within the limits of the *Kemalist* secularist principles and downplaying diversity in the expense of ‘nationalist universalism’ (Vorhoff, 1998). In this period the state condoned the Alevi massacres in *Sivas* (1993) and the *Gazi* District in Istanbul (1995); and continued the denial of Alevi religious practices. Accordingly, the Alevi faith was excluded from public school textbooks for the religion class that became a compulsory component of state education after 1980. Moreover, mosque constructions increased in Alevi villages. These developments pushed the Alevi communities to define themselves

increasingly in religious terms against the perception of threat to their unique cultural-religious identity (Erman & Göker, 2000).

In sum, by excluding religion from public debate and suppressing the demands of some religious groups in the name of secularism, *Kemalism* obviously fell short of responding to the needs of Turkey's diverse society. Allowing certain interpretations of Islam to be promoted above others in practice contradicted the strict 'secular' ideal and clearly lacked the characteristics essential for guaranteeing freedom of religion. This had consequences for traditional Islamists, Alevis and non-Muslims. Indeed, since the founding of the Republic of Turkey, religious groups including those mentioned above have directly or indirectly complained about the *Kemalist* secular regime which failed to offer them a legal framework for free exercise of their religion. Arguably, the lack of a regulatory framework for religious communities had the most devastating effects on non-Muslims. In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, I will focus on the case of non-Muslims and reflect upon their diminishing status and the lack of freedom of religion within the boundaries of the *Kemalist* secular mindset which has preserved a preferential status for Islam in its definition of the nation.

3.2. The Legal Status of non-Muslim Minorities in Turkey

The status of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey has been based on various legal texts. Apart from the articles guaranteeing the equality of all citizens regardless of their religion and faith alongside freedom of religion and worship, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923)⁶¹ which was signed right after the Independence War following WWI, procured significant achievements relating to the rights of the non-Muslims. The treaty, first of all, guaranteed the life and the liberties of the people living in Turkey, including non-Muslims who were provided the right to use all the same services as other [Muslim] Turkish citizens (Article 38). It has also assured that non-Muslims had the same political and civil rights as Muslims and would be able to use their own language (Article 39). Furthermore, according to the treaty religious activities of non-Muslims required by their faith would be treated the same as Muslim religious practices (Article 40) and members of non-Muslim religious communities would not be prevented from the right of education in their own language, and would receive the same provisions of funding as Muslim communities (Article 41).

⁶¹ For the full text of Treaty of Lausanne see: (MFA, 1923).

The treaty also provided for the privileges of non-Muslim minorities to implement their own family law and personal status (Article 42.1). It further allowed them to establish and maintain charitable institutions (Article 42.3). Moreover, non-Muslim days of religious practices would be taken into account in any legal business (Article 43). The above-mentioned articles of the treaty grouped under the title of ‘minority rights’ aimed at guaranteeing the protection minorities as a group under the system of the League of Nations. Nevertheless, it is also possible to perceive it as an International Human Rights agreement which, for many, ‘was signed ahead of its time’ (Akgönül, 2011b; Oran, 2004b). Therefore, if fully applied, the agreement could have easily led to results compatible with the idea of protection of human rights along United Nations guidelines. Whether considered as a ‘minority rights’ document or ‘human rights’ document compatible with contemporary perception of religious freedoms, it is fair to argue that the Turkish state has not interpreted the Treaty of Lausanne as a human rights document and has indeed reduced its scope as much as possible. Moreover, the ensured positive rights aspects of the treaty⁶² fell into abeyance by the state; consequently, non-Muslims have encountered numerous difficulties, such as systematic assaults and extrajudicial practices, since the founding of the republic, which led them to remain less than one percent of the population at large (see figure 1.1).

Within the violation of religious freedoms of non-Muslims in general, those against Christians in particular can be observed in two separate but related dimensions. *Turkification* policies, as an extension of the *Kemalist* mindset, could be defined as systematic discrimination and physical attacks mainly aimed at non-Muslims citizens. Although *Turkification* indicates ethnicity rather than religion, one can easily observe characteristics of Turkishness aligned with a controlled version Islam that has gained approval through the official discourse over time. These policies posed a major restriction on religious freedoms by aiming to eradicate non-Muslims from their homeland; they therefore constitute an important aspect of regulation of religion in Turkey. The extrajudicial practices applied to non-Muslims is another aspect particularly revealed in

⁶² Despite the possibility that positive rights may affect minorities in a negative way, which has been used as one of the defenses given for this contradiction of the law, in the absence of a democratic-liberal approach, the implementation of the relevant articles in the Treaty of Lausanne is vital for minorities in Turkey. See: (Anderson, 2004).

recognition of non-Muslims along with the manifestation, teaching, and exercise of their religion. The remainder of this chapter will examine these two aspects.

3.2.1. *Turkification* Policies

If examined thoroughly, the history of religious minorities in Turkey is full of events that forced non-Muslims to leave their homes, properties, and neighborhoods and move to other territories where they were once again treated as foreigners and became ‘twice a stranger’ (Clark, 2006). This process has substantially interrupted their religious practices and restricted religious freedoms. It is possible to trace these restrictions through the policies of the Turkish state from the foundation of the republic until today.

Despite the fact that these events have been kept out of the Turkish public eye and non-Muslim have often been presented as a threat to the national project (O. Yıldırım, 2006, p. 58), the motivations and consequences of these policies have drawn scholarly interest (Aktar, 2000; Oran, 2005a). As many scholars points out, the unfortunate events non-Muslims were exposed to have to be considered within the bigger picture. This picture is a comprehensive mindset with the goal of excluding non-Muslim minorities not only from the public sphere, but also from the definition of Turkishness. This approach provided the framework for *Turkification* policies, which did not leave any space for those who were not ‘secular, Sunni, Hanefi, Muslim Turks’ (Oran, 2005a). Ayhan Aktar provides us with more detailed description of *Turkification* policies. From his perspective, *Turkification* policies are:

Uncompromising domination of Turkish ethnic identity in every sphere of life from the spoken language in the streets, history learnt in schools; from education to industry, from trade to state personnel administration, from private law to settling policies (Aktar, 2000, p. 101).⁶³

Implementation of *Turkification* policies for non-Muslims could be traced back to the period before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. As Baskın Oran (2005a), contends attacks on the non-Muslim population started with the deportation of Armenian subjects at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Despite the war conditions and the theories of the German involvement in the events (Gust, 2005), Oran maintains that the

⁶³ All the translations from the Turkish documents belong to the author; For the original quotation see Q1 in Appendix A.

1915 deportation ('genocide') of Armenians marks the beginning of the capital transfer (dispossession of non-Muslims) from the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Followed by similar events later in the Republic of Turkey, the deportation of Armenians constituted the very first step of the *Turkification* policies which together resulted in gradual decrease of non-Muslim minorities in the Republic of Turkey.

The state's WWI and Independence War-era perception of a Turkishness composed mainly of Muslim subjects also significantly impacted the *Rum*-Orthodox minorities. Consequently, in 1923, the Greek and Turkish governments agreed to implement a population exchange between the Muslims of Greece and *Rum*-Orthodox of Turkey. In fact, *Rum*-Orthodox minorities had already been forced to migrate even before the population exchange took place. As Alexis Alexandris stresses, there was a tremendous decrease in the size of the *Rum* Orthodox community - a loss of around 300,000 residents - prior to 1922 (Alexandris, 1992, p. 87). Most of these emigrants were forced to move during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 (O. Yıldırım, 2006). The Greco-Turkish military confrontation resulted in the expulsion of the *Rum* Orthodox, and war conditions induced a great suspicion of Turks from the *Rum* Orthodox population. Apart from inter-religious strain felt following the protests against the Patriarch of Constantinople, an escalation of tension was also felt in the systematic arrests of *Rum* Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire during the founding of the Republic of Turkey as well (Alexandris, 1992, p. 82).

The implementation of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey after the signing of the convention in 30 January 1923 have caused extreme social commotion as well as individual difficulties experienced by the people who were forced to leave their homeland during the war. As a result of this policy, between 1922 and the end of 1924 1,200,000 *Rum* Orthodox were expatriated in exchange with 400,000 Muslims from Greece (Aktar, 2004). The *Rum* Orthodox who did not escape from the country during the War of Independence also experienced considerable difficulty due to the ambiguity in deciding which census should be consulted to determine who would be included in the population exchange (Alexandris, 1992, p. 113). On top of the complexity of the implementation of the convention, there was further confusion with regards to the *Karamanlides*, Turkish-speaking Orthodox who wrote with Greek letters and were also included in the population exchange (İbar, 2010). Moreover, The *Rum* Orthodox, who had been living in Istanbul since 1918 and were forced to leave in 1922 due to war conditions

were not readmitted back into Turkey because they left the country without a Turkish Passport, even though such a passport was non-existent in wartime (Alexandris, 1992, p. 113). By the time Republic of Turkey was founded, the non-Muslim population had been decreased from 1/5 to 1/40 of the population (Keyder, 1987, p. 79).

Following the population exchange, the National Turkish Commercial Union was established in 1923 to create a 'national' economy, in other words, for the *Turkification* of capital. By forcing non-Muslims to pull out from the market, it aimed at keeping non-Muslim entrepreneurs away from the economy (Alexandris, 1992). As revealed by the report of British ambassador Sir Lindsay, companies were forced to employ 75% Muslim Turks in their factories (Aktar, 2000). Although this policy is in violation of Article 38 of the Treaty of Lausanne (which gives the equal chance to live and provide liberty and services to all inhabitants of Turkey), *Turkification* of capital was supported by the government along the policy measures taken by the Commercial Union.

Turkification policies continued with a series of measures taken against the existence of non-Muslims within Turkey's borders. The 1921 foundation of a Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate with a cabinet decree aimed to balance the legacy of the *Rum* Patriarchate. State support led to the occupation of several churches formerly belonging to the *Rum* Patriarchate (Macar, 2003). The restrictions and settlement policies implemented on Imbros (*Gökçeada*) and Tenedos (*Bozcaada*), which had been given autonomous status with Article 14 of the Treaty of Lausanne, are other early examples of policies against non-Muslims. Although the law was adopted in 1927 in order to incorporate the measures demanded in the Treaty of Lausanne regarding these islands, it was disregarded by the state in practice, and many other measures such as settlement and education policies ensured that it was difficult for non-Muslims to continue living there. Within this context, the demographic structure of the island was changed through settlement policies leading to a mass immigration of Muslims from Anatolia and the ban on teaching in Greek - despite the explicit guarantee of the rights of minorities to freely exercise their education in their own language found in Article 40 of the Treaty of Lausanne, thereby forced non-Muslims to leave their homeland (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009). The law passed by the Turkish parliament in 4 June in 1932 paved the way for unequal treatment of the non-Muslim citizens of the republic, and thus also contradicted Article 39 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which gave the non-Muslim minority equal treatment and opportunities equal with those of

their Muslim counterparts (Oran, 2005a, p. 114). According to the law, non-Muslims had to quit their jobs in six months. As a result, within two years after implementation of this law, 15,000 *Rum* Orthodox had to quit their jobs and were effectively forced to leave their historical homeland. This resulted in only 17,642 *Rum* Orthodox remaining in the republic by 1935 (Aktar, 2000, p. 126). In a similar vein, the campaign of ‘Citizen! Speak Turkish’ took place in 1937, directly following the 1934 events in Thrace which had resulted in the displacement of the Jewish population that had resided there for centuries. Although the campaign was organized to encourage people to use Turkish in their daily lives, at the same time it also aimed to prevent citizens from speaking languages other than Turkish and thus oppressed ethno-religious minorities, again in violation of Article 41 of the Treaty of Lausanne (Alexandris, 1992, p. 140).

The state’s discrimination against the non-Muslim population continued through the Capital Tax implemented by the government during WWII in order to cover military expenditures at a time when existing taxes barely covered one third of the expenditures (Aktar, 2000). However, the tax ‘indirectly’ targeted the non-Muslims of Turkey and, specifically, residents of Istanbul, where the population was mostly composed of religious minorities. Faik Ökte, who was working in the financial office in Istanbul at the time, also revealed that the Capital Tax was intended to be a tax against the non-Muslim citizens of the republic in addition to being used to cover the country’s wartime military expenditures (Ökte, 1951). According to Ökte, during the implementation of the tax one of the ministers in the government asked the financial office to prepare a report of the people who owned extensive property and ask these individuals to state their ethno-religious backgrounds. The authorities benefitted from this report; consequently the tax that non-Muslim minorities were asked to pay was on average 5-10 times more than the amount that was asked of Muslim citizens (Ökte, 1951). In a sense the Capital Tax aimed to replace non-Muslim capital with the Turkish-Muslim bourgeoisie (Aktar, 2000). It is also possible to consider the Capital Tax as an example of the practices by the Turkish state that ‘had shown signs of sympathy with discriminatory attitudes towards minorities’ (Alexandris, 1992, p. 213).

The events of the 6th and 7th of September, 1955 also targeted non-Muslims. Some newspapers announced that the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki, at the same time the house Atatürk was born, had been attacked, sparking a flame that spread through Istanbul.

As the news dispersed across the city a pogrom against the properties of non-Muslim citizens began. As is now widely known, the attack in Thessaloniki was a provocation served to create a reaction against non-Muslims and, as indicated by the targeting of the minority prior to events of September unfolding, the pogrom was planned in advance (Güven, 2005). The passive attitude of the police towards those attacking properties during the two-day pogrom further confirms this argument. All in all, the result was devastating for the non-Muslims. According to the listing provided by Dilek Güven, 4214 houses, 1004 workplaces, 73 churches, 1 synagogue, 2 monasteries, 26 schools and 5317 other establishments such as factories, hotels, pubs, etc., were attacked. 59 percent of workplaces and 80 percent of houses belonged to *Rum* Orthodox citizens, 17 percent belonged to Armenians; three percent were owned by Jews. Within the economic loss of 150 million Turkish Lira, Greek citizens experienced a loss of 28 million TL *Rum* Orthodox citizens of Turkey lost 68 million TL, churches lost 35 million TL, and other groups lost 18 million. Although the government tried to cover the loss, the very small amount actually paid by the state was not enough to recover the total economic loss of the non-Muslim citizens (Güven, 2005).

The 1964 Cyprus events had the most significant consequences on the *Rum* Orthodox population in Turkey. These events led to the deportation of some Greeks who had permission to settle in Turkey according to an agreement signed between Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Eleftherios Venizelos in October of 1930 (Alexandris, 1992, p. 281). The İnönü government, however, unilaterally abrogated the act in response to the conflict on Cyprus where the Greek Government supported the Makarios Government. This resulted in the deportation of 6,000 Greeks resident in Turkey after they were made to sign a declaration that they were leaving the country of their own free will (Alexandris, 1992, p. 284). However, the tragedy of events was increased by the fact that most of the *Rum* Orthodox citizens of Turkey who were related to the expelled Greeks inhabitants were left with no choice but to leave the country with their kin (Oran, 2005b, p. 732).

The above-mentioned practices that forced non-Muslims to leave their homeland caused a drastic decline in the share of non-Muslim within Turkey's total population. The diminishing of the population obviously had an indirect negative impact on the practicing, observing, and teaching of religion. In addition to these assaults, non-Muslims also encountered discriminatory laws and extra-judicial practices that directly targeted their

religion, which had destructive effects on their living conditions both in social and private spheres.

3.2.2. Discriminatory Laws and Practices Towards non-Muslim Minorities

Turkification policies led to a decline in the population of non-Muslims so drastic that they became almost invisible in Turkish society. In such a context, it is fair to argue that the articles guaranteeing the rights of non-Muslims in Treaty of Lausanne have been openly violated and fallen into abeyance. For one, although Treaty of Lausanne does not specify any particular non-Muslim community (Oran, 2005a), the common misperception of non-Muslims who are recognized in the Treaty of Lausanne is limited to Armenian Orthodox, *Rum* Orthodox and Jews has been widely embraced by the state authorities. Moreover, the lack of a legal framework regulating religious minorities to compensate for the gap in abeyance of the Treaty of Lausanne enabled the rise of discriminatory laws and practices towards non-Muslim minorities. Consequently, it became more difficult for non-Muslims to voice their demands on issues related to their continued civil existence and freedom of religion. The next section will examine these discriminatory laws and practices closely within four distinct categories: issues related to the recognition and existence of non-Muslim minorities, freedom of worship, religious teaching, and other discriminatory practices.

3.2.2.1. Recognition of non-Muslims and Issues Related to Their Existence

Considering the attitude of the Turkish state towards non-Muslims over the decades following the foundation of Turkish Republic, and taking into account the existence of a considerable number of records concerning the displacing and expatriating its Christians citizens, it would not be difficult to observe that the relationship between government and non-Muslims was very weak, if there was indeed any relationship at all. Under the given circumstances, however, their negligence by the state was not the sole problem facing this group. Non-Muslims were deprived of a framework regulating their existence and actions within the borders of Turkey and, therefore, encountered various difficulties. For one, they encountered complications in not having an established legal personality, which in turn raised difficulties for their recognition within public spheres. Moreover, they were faced with difficulties in terms of keeping and possessing properties, holding elections for both the management of community foundations and the administration of their religious

internal affairs, and in keeping their schools open in order to provide for the continuation of their cultural and religious existence. This discriminatory structure, which was defined by certain laws and practices, has gravely threatened the existence of Christian minorities in Turkey.

3.2.2.1.1. Legal Personality

Legal personality is a basic requirement for religious communities, not only in achieving recognition by the state, but also for dealing with problems requiring legal solutions. Without the provision of legal personality, religious communities have been prevented from representing themselves in bureaucratic institutions, especially in the courts. Despite its importance, however, the Turkish state has avoided establishing a legal framework incorporating the articles in the Treaty of Lausanne aimed at protecting the non-Muslims of Turkey.

The issue of legal personality for non-Muslim communities is, in fact, closely related to community foundations (*cemaat vakıfları*) which were established during the Ottoman Empire. These foundations include institutions such as churches, monasteries, schools and hospitals belonging to non-Muslims and established under the authority of community foundations (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009, p. 9). During the Ottoman period, however, the non-Muslim community foundations were not subject to the endowment system (*vakfiye*) as was the case for their Muslim counterparts. They were established as foundations through the imperial order of the Sultan (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009, p. 9). Although they did not have *vakfiye* documents, religious minorities - even the Catholics who were seen as ‘foreigners’ at that time - did not have difficulties in establishing and maintaining their foundations (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009, p. 10). Nevertheless, Ottoman foundations (those belonging to both Muslims and non-Muslims) were not provided with legal personalities under the imperial system. It was only after adaptation of a new regulation in 1912 that they began to be recognized as legal entities (Hyetert, 2011a).⁶⁴

However, the enforcements restricting the recognition of non-Muslim foundations began right after the founding of the republic. The authoritarian secularism principle of the young republic had a devastating impact on the rights of non-Muslims. While secular

⁶⁴ The law dates back to 1912 and is called: *Eşhas-ı Hükmiyenin Emvali Gayrimenkuleye Tasarrufu Hakkında Kanun*

principles required the prohibition of any public display of religion on one hand, on the other it embraced an official version of Sunni Islam and ignored the demands from non-Muslim communities. Within this system, the Turkish state adopted a restrictive approach to the Treaty of Lausanne and considered non-Muslims in Turkey as identified as either Armenian (mainly Orthodox), *Rum* (Orthodox) or Jews, despite the fact that the Treaty of Lausanne did not make a specification in this regard. Although scholars indicate that this tendency was possibly established in a confidential memorandum by the interior ministry in the 1920s (Oran, 2004b, p. 70), non-Muslim minorities in general have been prevented from benefitting from any of their rights outlined in the Treaty of Lausanne. Having passed in the parliament in 1926, Article 74 of the Turkish Civil Code (Official Gazette, 1926a) also created grounds for restrictions towards non-Muslim communities by prohibiting non-Muslims from establishing new foundations (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009, p. 12). As the law prevented the establishment of new foundations on the basis of religion, those religious communities that were not recognized by the Turkish state attempted to gather under the umbrella of associations. However, Article 5 of the Associations Law had prohibited an association formed on the basis of values such as race, religion, sect, culture or language other than the Turkish language (Official Gazette, 1983). As the establishment of foundations and associations was not permitted in the new republic, most non-Muslim foundations faced closure by the state. Most of the non-Muslim foundations whose communities remained low in numbers were dissolved by the state on the grounds that they were *de facto* ineffective (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009).

In sum, existing laws and regulations deprived religious minorities of legal personality, which is considered the fundamental problem of non-Muslims and an issue in need of immediate solution. The issue of legal personality is also key to understanding the difficulties experienced by religious minorities such as property ownership, ecclesiastical elections and building places of worship, all of which will be examined in the forthcoming sections.

3.2.2.1.2. Ownership of Property

Non-Muslims have encountered various difficulties due to the absence of legal personality. It would be fair to argue that, among those, the restrictions against their property ownership have had the most far reaching consequences. Over the decades, the property

rights of non-Muslim communities have been violated in parallel to the denial of their property rights, which has substantially threatened their existence.

Right after the Republic of Turkey was founded, all the rights of non-Muslims along with the status of their community foundations, both which had been acquired in the Ottoman Empire period, were suppressed with their properties gradually confiscated. Following a series of assaults aimed at religious minorities and occurring up until the mid-1960s, the period of confiscation of property and capital transfer began through the unlawful practices of the Directorate General of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü - VGM*) (Oran, 2005a). Despite the responsibility of the *VGM* to keep the foundations alive⁶⁵, non-Muslim minorities bore witness to the violation of Article 40⁶⁶ and 42.3⁶⁷ of the Treaty of Lausanne and corresponding confiscation of their properties.

The basis of the gradual confiscation was established in 1936 when the ‘proclamation of foundations’ was brought into force as the introduction of the Foundations Law no. 2762 in 1935 (Official Gazette, 1935). The Foundations Law restricted the number of properties that non-Muslim communities could possess and prevented them from legating their properties to religious foundations, regardless of the recognition of their legal right to do so under the Treaty of Lausanne (ibid.). As required by the law, non-Muslim communities declared their properties in 1936 without being asked for further declarations. Indeed, they did not experience any difficulties concerning their foundations until the 1960s (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009). As it is argued, the Declaration of 1936 was even forgotten for a long time by the state (Oran, 2005a). However, beginning in the mid-1960s – in parallel to the crisis between Turkey and Greece (Dink, 2005) - the Directorate General of Foundations began to ask the non-Muslim foundations to declare their foundation certificates, *aka* their *vakfiye* documents. However, having been

⁶⁵ For more information about the Directorate General of Foundations see: (*VGM*, not dated (a)).

⁶⁶ According to Article 40 of the Treaty of Lausanne (MFA, 1923), ‘Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage, and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious, and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.’ For more information see: (Oran, 2004b, p. 45).

⁶⁷ According to Article 42.3 of the Treaty of Lausanne (MFA, 1923), ‘The Turkish Government undertakes to grant full protection to the churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious establishments of the above-mentioned minorities. All facilities and authorization will be granted to the pious foundations, and to the religious and charitable institutions of the said minorities at present existing in Turkey, and the Turkish Government will not refuse, for the formation of new religious and charitable institutions, any of the necessary facilities which are granted to other private institutions of that nature.’

established with the charter of the Ottoman Sultan, minority foundations did not have a foundation certificate. Therewith, the Turkish state tended to recognize religious foundations whose names and properties were included in 1936 Declaration and sought confiscation of properties of those organizations which were unregistered, mis-registered, or had dissolved in the intervening years. Apart from this, the legal ownership of properties obtained between 1936 and 1974 was nullified by court orders (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013) and taken away from the foundations.

Non-Muslims pursued their property rights; however, those cases brought to the Supreme Court and the Council of State⁶⁸ in the 1970s could not rectify this state of unlawful confiscations. In a very short course of time, foundations belonging to non-Muslim minorities, including *Balıkli Rum Hastanesi Vakfı* (1971) and *Tuzla Ermeni Çocuk Kampı* (1979), were confiscated.⁶⁹ As a result of lawsuits led against the closures of these foundations, the Council of the State's approval of the court decision adjudging the closure of *Balıkli Rum* set a precedent for future cases. Within this decision, non-Muslims citizens were also declared as 'foreign citizens' living in Turkey (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009; Oran, 2004b). Yuda Reyna and Ester Zonana quote the 1974 decision by the Council of the State in which non-Muslims are defined as foreigners:

As it is seen, non-Turkish originated legal personalities' possession of property has been prohibited. Because the legal personalities are stronger than real persons, in the case that there are no limitations of possession of property for legal personalities, it is clear that this could result in unfavorable situations. Therefore, although... foreign real persons have the right to possess property in Turkey, legal personalities have been deprived of this (Reyna & Zonana, 2003, pp. 555-556).⁷⁰

In addition to the 1936 Declaration and the Law on Foundations, which was referred to by the judiciary in order to legitimize the dispossession of 'foreign citizens' of Turkey, the municipal law issued in 1930 generated obstacles for non-Muslim communities. Contravening Article 42 of the Treaty of Lausanne, Article 160 of the new Municipality Law of 1580 (Official Gazette, 1930) not only dispossessed and undertook control of the cemeteries of non-Muslim communities, but also laid the foundation for state approval of the practice of burying non-members of the religious community in a manner contrary to the rituals of the relevant community (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009, p. 13).

⁶⁸ For detailed information about these cases see: (Akkaya, 2011; Kurban & Hatemi, 2009).

⁶⁹ For a detailed list of confiscated property of non-Muslim minorities, see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 in (Reyna & Şen, 1994; Reyna & Zonana, 2003).

⁷⁰ For the original quotation see Q2 in Appendix A.

3.2.2.1.3. Election of Foundation Boards and Religious Personnel

Election of religious and administrative authorities of non-Muslim communities comprise another issue in regard to the existence of non-Muslims in Turkey. Since the founding of the republic, the selection procedure of the administrative and religious bodies has been interfered with by the Turkish state, which at times resulted in Christian communities being brought to the edge of disintegration.

The election of board members for the foundations is of vital importance for the continued existence of religious minorities due to the fact that the lack of elections not only threatens their formation under foundations but also resulted in confiscation of their properties. Since the 1935 Foundations Law did make specifications concerning the election of board members, non-Muslim foundations continued to hold elections according to regulations set down during the Ottoman Empire. However, a few years after the law passed in the parliament, in 1938, an amendment authorizing the Directorate General of Foundations to appoint the board members of non-Muslim foundations was added. Though this amendment was never brought into force, regulations governing election procedures remained uncertain (Mahçupyan, 2004, p. 5). To the present day, non-Muslims have frequently encountered various difficulties in the selection of their board members. Up until the 1950s, several foundations encountered intervention from the state, which imposed and/or appointed members of the government's choice.⁷¹ Although they were able to hold board elections every four years under the control of the governor and with the approval of the *VGM*, those elections were subject to extreme restrictions. At times, the governor cancelled the elections or ignored the results on highly peculiar grounds, such as claiming the given foundation does not exist.⁷² The Turkification policies in effect until the late 1960s also had a negative impact on holding board elections. As the number of non-Muslims decreased, the non-Muslim electorate in the surrounding area remained insufficient for elections, resulting in dissolution of foundations and eventual confiscation of their properties.

The process of selection of the patriarchs and other religious personnel is another field which has become subject to state interference and eventual restriction of the freedom of religion. Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the state has attempted to

⁷¹ For an example, see the website for the *Aya Tanaş Aya Dimitri Aya Lefter Rum Ortodoks Kilisesi ve Mektebi Vakfı* (Not dated).

⁷² For an example see the website for the *Özel Surp Haç Ermeni Lisesi*. (Not dated).

control the election process of ecclesiastic personnel of religious communities. In contrast, regulations issued during the Ottoman Empire maintained their legacy and religious communities benefitted from these rules in determining their ecclesiastical personnel. However, before each election was held or new personnel were employed, church administrations were asked to obtain the approval of the governor of Istanbul and/or the cabinet which issued instructions concerning the rules of the election (Hyetert, 2009). Turkish governments have generally interfered with the elections of new patriarchs by insisting on the selection of Turkish candidates.⁷³ Restricting the eligible electorate to Turkish citizens particularly contradicted with the ecumenical organization of the *Rum* Orthodox Church, as it recruits its Orthodox clergy from countries around the world (Macar, 2003, p. 124). The regulations imposed by the state on the election of the ecclesiastical personnel, beyond simply contradicting the secular principles on which the new republic was founded, have also fallen short of meeting the demands and structure of non-Muslim communities and, most importantly, resulted in establishing barriers for the practice of spiritual activities within Christian communities (Hyetert, 2009).

3.2.2.1.4. *Minority Schools*

Christians of Turkey have also faced numerous difficulties in maintaining social institutions, most important among these being their minority schools. Although the maintenance of minority schools is not directly related to the freedom of religion, the fact that these schools were owned by non-Muslim minority communities and the restrictions imposed on these schools after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey have been on the basis of religion makes it an essential issue to address. Indeed, the Turkish state's disregard of the Treaty of Lausanne, which included articles guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities to establish their own schools (Article 40), perform their own language and exercise their own religion, and enjoy an equal amount out of subsidies, along with Turkey's constitution, which guaranteed equality to all citizens regardless of their religious beliefs, has resulted in an atmosphere of limitation in regard to religious freedom.

⁷³ Prof. Elçin Macar provides us with the official letter from the Governorship of Istanbul addressed to the Holy Synod of the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate of Istanbul (Macar, 2013, p. 136).

What lies at the bottom of the issue of minority schools is, in fact, the gradual decrease of the non-Muslims among the general the population during the early decades of the republic in parallel to *Turkification* policies. The consequences of these policies were accordingly devastating for the Christians of Turkey and their religiously-affiliated schools. Students' registration in minority schools has dwindled away in conjunction with the decrease in the country's Christian population, which has led to the inevitable closure of the vast majority of these schools. From the 6437 schools that belonged to religious minority communities during the Ottoman Empire, only 22 remain today (Alkan, 2000). It is also possible to trace this drastic decrease through student enrollment. According to Alexis Alexandris, the number of enrolled *Rum* pupils decreased from 15,000 in 1923 to 816 in 1980 (Alexandris, 1992, p. 287).

Most of the schools inevitably faced closures by losing their primary function as a result of state policies which made it difficult for them to provide education. The fact that the policies implemented contradicted the Treaty of Lausanne did not prevent this state of affairs. These policies led to an increase in closures in the 1960s. Many schools affiliated with religious minorities faced a similar fate: first closedown by the state due to the 'insufficient' number of non-Muslim students in the area of concern, then confiscation of the property. Following this model, the *Rum* primary school in *Imbroz (Gökçeada)* closed its doors in the 1960s (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013) and another *Rum* primary school in Istanbul's *Ortaköy* district belonging to the foundation '*Ortaköy Aya Foka Rum Kilisesi ve Aya Yorgi Kilisesi- Kabristanı ve Mektepler Vakfı*' was closed in 1974 with the property later confiscated by the state in 1994 (Hürriyet, 2013).

Those schools which have not faced closure outright encountered serious administrative barriers that left them at the brink of closure. First of all, with the introduction of the law on unification of education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*) on March 3rd, 1924, minority schools were brought under the control of Ministry of National Education, which then carried through decisions threatening the existence of these schools. Despite being under the control of the Ministry of National Education, however, minority schools were denied a comprehensive law organizing their status until 1965. In the meantime, the administration of minority schools was carried out through temporary regulations. An Ottoman regulation of 1915 (*Mekatib-i Hususiye Talimatnamesi*) continued to have effect until 1934, when it was replaced with another regulation (*Hususi*

Mektepler Talimatnamesi) (Hyetert, 2010). These regulations were then replaced with separate regulations prepared for Armenian, *Rum* and Jewish schools in 1936 (Hyetert, 2010). A comprehensive law regulating minority schools would only come into effect with the introduction of the Private Schools Law in 1965 (*Özel Öğretim Kurumları Kanunu*) (Official Gazette, 1965).

This regulation, however, contradicted the guarantees given to minority schools in the Treaty of Lausanne. While minority schools did not face any particular difficulty until 1964 in registering children born of parents from different ethno-religious background, children of families from different religions, or foreign students with the same ethno-religious background, the regulations brought into force after 1964 made it impossible for children falling under those categories to be enrolled in minority schools. First, children of a non-Muslim mother and a Muslim father were prevented from being educated in a minority school (Hyetert, 2011b). This practice has been justified on the basis of Article 41 of the Turkish Constitution and Article 152 of Turkish Civil Code, both of which emphasize male domination in the family and claim the ‘husband is the head of the family’ (Official Gazette, 1926a). Secondly, the regulations restricted enrollment in minority schools to ‘the children of the members of their own minority community who are citizens of Turkey’, with Article 64 of the Regulation of Private Schools which came into force in 1985 (Official Gazette, 1985b). Thus, not only members of minority communities without their own minority school were prevented from sending their children to minority schools owned by another minority community (Radikal, 2002c) but also foreign and previously expatriated families living in Turkey were denied the chance of receiving education in these schools (Hyetert, 2010) This eventually brought many minority schools the threat of closure, as they did not have sufficient number of pupils to continue education.

Minority schools have also encountered difficulties in maintaining control over the selection of their personnel and the content of their education services, which has had an effect of precluding them from the right to govern themselves. While the 1934 regulations declared it necessary to hire teachers of ‘Turkish’ ethnicity origin in the Turkish, History, and Geography subjects, the 1965 law further stipulated that the deputy headmaster must be of ‘Turkish’ origin (Official Gazette, 1965). On top of this, these ‘Turkish’ deputy headmasters were given the duty of checking every document signed by non-Muslim headmasters (Bianet, 2012). This practice of appointing deputy headmasters of ‘Turkish

origin' (Oran, 2005a) who were endowed with unlimited authorities, such as the checking and approval of correspondences of the non-Muslim headmaster, are against the relevant articles of the Treaty of Lausanne and represent a tendency towards 'control' of religious minorities. In addition, while morning prayers were banned in minority schools following a government decree in 1964, in the same year clergymen and graduates from theology schools were prohibited from teaching religion (anonymous, personal communication, March 20a, 2014) (Oran, 1995). Furthermore, textbooks used by the minority schoolteachers posed yet another difficulty, since their usage was subject to the approval of the state, which often took years to obtain (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013).

Last but not least, minority schools have faced financial difficulties alone. Despite the fact that Article 41 of the Treaty of Lausanne ensures financial support for schools owned by minority communities, the Turkish state has deprived minorities of this right (Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, 2012). Not only has the Ministry of National Education not funded minority schools, even the attempts to renovate school buildings have been strictly restricted and left subject to permission, which has not been granted in most cases (Radikal, 2002c).

3.3.2.2. Freedom of Worship

Non-recognition of religious minorities has not been the sole problem that non-Muslim minorities have been facing. Once the issues related to their existence were neglected by the state, matters in regard to their freedom of worship such as the construction and maintaining places of worship, performing their liturgy, and other religious practices were remained strictly limited, which makes freedom of worship an important component of freedom of religion and worthy for examination.

3.3.2.2.1. Places of Worship

It is not possible to talk about freedom of worship when the conditions for sustaining places of worship are restricted. It would be fair to argue that since the founding of the republic in this regard Christians have encountered extreme measures. Non-Muslims in general, and Christians in particular, have not been allowed to build new places of worship or renovate already existing ones. This is partly due to the absence of the legal status for

the regulation of religion, and partly due to the partiality of certain institutions like *DİB* and *VGM* which have acted in accordance with state policies disregarding demands from non-Sunni Islam religious groups. Within this context, religious minorities have either become helpless or solved their problems in a roundabout way. The Protestant community, for example, has rented apartments as places of worship with the unofficial permission of local governors, which has resulted in occasional closures (Association of Protestant Churches, 2008).

The main difficulty in constructing and renovating places of worship belonging to religious minorities was set down by the Law on Land Development, Planning and Control. The law disregarded non-Muslim sanctuaries and limited their rules as effective only for the construction of mosques; consequently non-Muslims were not allowed to build new places of worship (Official Gazette, 1985a).⁷⁴ The amendment of this law in 1998 did not raised hopes for Christians because, in addition to neglecting standing non-Muslim demands, now the authority for granting approval of any construction was given to the Office of *Müfti*, a representative of Islam (Official Gazette, 1998). Therefore, non-Muslim Turkish citizens have in practice been allowed neither to build nor to renovate sanctuaries. In the words of a community representative, they ‘could not even get permission for driving a nail into the wall’ (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013; November 25, 2013).⁷⁵ In order to restore a church one needed to get permission from *VGM* and the municipality, which was impossible without a certain amount of bribery (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013). This state of affairs has impacted those sanctuaries belonging to non-Muslim communities and having historical roots reaching back to the Ottoman Empire as much as it has affected newly established non-Muslim communities, especially Protestants (Association of Protestant Churches Turkey, 2008). In the 1990s, the Protestant community in *İskenderun*, *Hatay* was forced to close their church when the municipality decided to destroy their church without providing the community with a new church building. The community also encountered difficulties in building a new sanctuary for themselves due to the restrictive approach in the law that restricted the definition of a sanctuary to mosques (Şık, 2002). As similar examples demonstrated, it was almost impossible for Christians to build or renovate their churches unless they managed to receive the permission of the *VGM* and the municipality, which

⁷⁴ Zoning law no 3194 Article 2 (Additional Clause)

⁷⁵ Original excerpt: ‘Eskiden çivi çakmak için bile izin alamıyorduk.’

was not easy to obtain without bribing (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013).

Christians also faced various financial difficulties in maintaining their churches. Although it would be understandable for a secular state not to make exemptions for religious entities, one would expect such practices to be implemented on equal basis. In such a context where Christian communities have been struggling to survive, their being deprived of financial incentives from which mosques can fully benefit, has had vital consequences. For decades churches could not benefit from exemptions from electricity and water expenses, even though mosques were granted unlimited exemption. Although regulations passed stipulating that the water expenses of cemeteries be sustained by the state have been passed (Official Gazette, 1926b), a lack in standardization has led Christian communities to have different experiences in practice; in some municipalities they were exempt from water expenses, while in others, they had to pay.

3.2.2.2.2. Liturgy and Other Religious Practices

Liturgy and other religious practices of non-Muslims have also been under state control since the founding of the republic. The Turkish state's adoption of a restrictive attitude towards the performing of non-Muslim rituals has intervened in the religious structure of church organizations. Last but not least, conversion and the spreading of one's religion (i.e. missionary activities), which many believe to be an individual human right, have been perceived as a suspicious act by the state authorities.

Despite the absence of any law forbidding performance of religious rituals it has not been easy for religious minorities since the founding of the republic. The very first indications of restriction towards religious practices were demonstrated in 1925, when Christian minorities were forced to renounce rights germane to their customs, such as religious marriage ceremonies (Oran, 2010). While the religious practices such as Sunday liturgy, cross-throwing ceremony, Good Friday and Christmas celebrations were performed on many occasions, the conditions for conducting religious celebrations gradually become difficult. This is not only because the population of Christians drastically decreased over decades, but also because they have encountered serious obstacles. While not officially forbidden, the organization of public or private religious ceremonies began to take place under police surveillance; in some cases, they were even cancelled as per

demands by the state (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013; January 14, 2014).

The organization of church structure has been another area which freedom of worship has been subject to interference from the state. The issue of recognition of the ‘ecumenical’ title of the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarch could be considered in this regard. The Treaty of Lausanne limited the authority of *Rum* Patriarch, who had formerly been equipped with both political and spiritual powers by the Ottoman Sultans, to a historical title signifying the office’s duty of coordinating the Orthodox churches (Macar & Gökaçtı, 2009). Although Turkish authorities insisted in removal of the Patriarchate from the Turkish territories, basing their cause on the Patriarch’s siding with the Greeks in the War of Independence, after the Lausanne negotiations the Patriarchate’s continued existence with the limitation of its powers over spiritual activities was accepted by the Turkish authorities (Macar, 2013, p. 132). Despite approval of the Patriarch overseeing spiritual activities, however, Turkish authorities did not recognize the Patriarch’s global spiritual role and related external activities in practice. Moreover, they restricted its internal activities as the head of the *Rum* Orthodox minority in Turkey (Günay, Kastoryano, & Ulusoy, 2008). Over the course of time, Turkish authorities interfered with the organization of the church structure. This extended to a ban on the Patriarch’s dressing in religious attire in daily life and precluding the Patriarchate from performing its religious duties deriving from the position’s ‘ecumenical’ character (Macar, 2013). The rejection of the ‘ecumenical’ title of the Patriarchate can be understood as in parallel to the secular developments in the early decades of the republic, which also saw abolishment of the Caliphate, and diminishment of the political role of the Patriarchate in the War of Independence. The speeches of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and parliamentary debates at the time suggest that the new republic would not tolerate any religious activity in the public sphere. The debate in the parliament also reveals the existence of security concerns arising from the political role of the Patriarchate. Nevertheless, restricting the spiritual activities of the patriarchate contradicted both the guarantees given in the Treaty of Lausanne, and the secular character of the republic (Alexandris, 1992; Macar, 2013), as the republic was expected to respect the autonomy of religious communities in determining their own internal affairs (Özbudun, 2010).

Last but not least, proselytizing or conversion is another religious activity which has suffered from restrictions in Turkey. Although the freedom of religion is a guaranteed right in the Turkish Constitution, and proselytizing or propagation one's religion has not been declared as illegal, any other religious activity except for that representing 'official' Islam has been seen as a threat since the foundation of the republic. Within this scope, missionary activities have always been perceived as a threat against the homogenization of the society through *Turkification* policies. In Esra Özyürek's assessment 'the convert alert triggers the memories of the – by definition – unfinished job of national, religious and cultural homogenization' (Özyürek, 2009, p. 287). The minority communities' gradual decline in numbers and limited space allowed for religious practices could not prevent this perception of threat coming from Christians. Acting against the secularism principle adopted in the constitution, state institutions have taken an active role in raising the awareness of the public against missionaries. Turkish armed forces, for example, prepared reports on the missionary activities in Turkey and around the world (Özyürek, 2009). Moreover, the *DİB* published articles informing the people of - and warning them against - the existence of missionaries in every segment of the society, such as hospitals, schools, and hotels, who seek to convert Muslims 'under the guise of helping people' (White, 2013, p. 81). In brief, Christians in general have been perceived as dangerous and their activities have been subject to extreme limitations.

3.2.2.3. Religious Instruction

Religious Instruction is another aspect of freedom of religion which has been subject to limitation since the founding of the republic in Turkey. The Christians of Turkey have not only been denied the opportunity to learn their religion in schools, but have also been prevented from undertaking the formal training of their clergy.

3.2.2.3.1. Religious Education

One of the very first steps taken after the foundation of the republic was prohibiting religious education in the schools. The law on the unification of education (*tevhid-i tedrisat kanunu*) was introduced on March 3rd 1924 in this regard. While religious education in minority schools was also prohibited after the law entered into effect (Okur, 2005, p. 92), Islamic education – which at times become mandatory, but was most often an optional course – continued to be provided by the state (Yıldız, 2013, p. 145). The fact

that, with the introduction of 1982 constitution religious education has become obligatory⁷⁶, has not had any impact on the ban of religion courses in religious minority schools. Minority attempts to attend religion courses organized in churches has also been thwarted (anonymous, personal communication, December 16 2013).

In secular systems, states are not obliged to provide religious education but, if they do provide such an education, they are expected to design religious education suitable for members of all religious communities. With the introduction of Turkey's obligatory religion course, however, pupils have only been provided with religious education reflecting the Sunni denomination of Islam. The classes were organized to fit into the framework of the controlled version of Islam represented under the *DİB*, and therefore the content of courses excluded religious information on both non-Muslim faiths and non-Sunni Islam. Although Christian students were given the choice to be exempt from attending these religion courses on the condition of documenting their faith (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014), they often faced difficulties in actually achieving exemption. Children belonging to religious congregations not recognized by the state in practice, such as Syriacs, Catholics and Protestants were forced to attend religious classes (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). The textbooks used in these courses have furthermore reinforced prejudices by including biased and misleading information which has often led to the creation of a threat perception concerning Christianity. In several textbooks examined within the scope of this study, Christianity has been presented as inconsistent, implausible and even 'departed from its origins.' (Ayas & Tümer, 1987, pp. 43-57; Tunç, 1982, p. 27).

3.2.2.3.2. Training of Clergy

Training of Christian clergy has been extremely restricted in Turkey. While the *Rum* Orthodox in Turkey was able to train their religious personnel until the 1971 state closure of the Theology School in *Heybeliada (Halki)*; Syriacs (Catholic and Orthodox), Protestants and Catholics have not had a clergy school in the republican period. Except for the Armenian clergy school, *Tbrevank*, which was established in 1953, and remained open until its closure only ten years later in 1963 (Macar & Gökaçtı, 2009), minority communities have met their need for clergy by sending candidates abroad, where they could be provided with religious education appropriate for their denomination.

⁷⁶ Article 24/4 of the 1982 Constitution (TBMM, 1982).

The debate over the closure of the *Rum* Orthodox Theology School in *Heybeliada* (*Halki*) Seminary sheds light on the implementation of the basic rights of the religious minorities pertaining to training of their clergy. After opening its doors in 1844, the *Halki* aimed at training the new priests needed for religious services. In the republican period the seminary was preserved with the guarantee of the Article 40 of the Treaty of Lausanne and continued to provide religious education for clergy, including candidates both from Turkey and abroad.⁷⁷ Later, with the ‘necessary permissions’ given by the Turkish state in 1959, the school began to serve as an academy (Macar, 2003, p. 292). However following a constitutional court decision which repealed the permission for university level private academies, the *Halki* Seminary (the academy section) was closed down in 1971 after 127 years of service. Although the school was subject to guarantees given under the Treaty of Lausanne, not to the statue of university level private academies, they were left with the choice of either becoming part of the state university system or being represented under a faculty of theology. After considering several problems that could arise, such as the limitation of its ability to function as a boarding school and/or servicing non-Orthodox clergy, the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate rejected both options (Radikal, 2009c). Consequently, the seminary was closed with a ‘confidential’ document issued by the state authorities (Macar & Gökaçtı, 2009, p. 13). An appeal by the Patriarchate against this decision was not accepted, justified on the grounds that the legal personality of the Patriarchate was not recognized.

3.2.2.4. Other Discriminatory Activities Against the Non-Muslim Minorities

Apart from the issues mentioned in sections above, religious minorities have also been subject to other discriminatory practices at the hands of state institutions. Taken together, these practices have prevented them from perceiving themselves as equal citizens within Turkish society.

Above all, as one of the prominent state institution representing controlled version of Islam, the *DİB* is the major source of obstacles hindering the equality of diverse religions. Under state control and owning an oversized personnel of around 80,000 employees (İ. Yılmaz, 2005, p. 390), the *DİB*’s existence conflicts both with secular ideal of the republic

⁷⁷ Between 1950-63 the *Halki* Seminary provided education for the clergy from Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia... etc. See (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009).

and the principle of freedom of religion. Nevertheless, state authorities have claimed that the *DİB* has operated as a partly civil institution under the state. From their perspective, considering other principles of the republic, such as (1) the prohibition of religion in public sphere (2) the constitutional guarantee of freedom of individual religious beliefs, (3) the ban on exploitation of religion, the existence of the office has never been in contradiction with secularism and the principle of freedom of religion (Bardakoğlu, 2004, p. 369). However, historical and legal developments have shown the opposite to be true. Since the founding of the republic, the *DİB* has been used as a tool for implementing state policies. Political, social and economic ties between politicians and *DİB* representatives; compulsory religion course under the control of the *DİB*, as well as *DİB* controlled directives (*Fetva*) delivered by imams during Friday prayer have demonstrated the *DİB* to be an apparatus of the state for promotion of ‘the national unity’ (İ. Yılmaz, 2005). The position of the *DİB* has also impacted religious minority communities. Representing the Muslim community in Turkey – in fact solely representing the mainstream body of Islam (Smith, 2005, p. 313) – and being close-minded to alternatives (Olgun, 2005, p. 343), the *DİB* has maintained an environment prejudiced against non-Muslim congregations. The absence of non-Muslim representatives within the *DİB* has also been a major criticism of the organization (Smith, 2005).

The *DİB* is not, however, the sole institution in which discriminatory practices against non-Muslim minorities has been observed. Religious minorities have been subject to discrimination from almost every state institution due to the threat perception developed against them. In the meantime, the social and political activities of non-Muslims have been kept under control, as seen with the establishment of the Higher Council of Minorities – a secret committee monitoring religious minorities of Turkey under the Interior Ministry Regulation in the 1960s (Hürriyet, 2004). Threat perception has also been visible in every level of state bureaucracy, which has in turn developed an informal practice of hampering operations relating to non-Muslim individuals and foundations (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013). Non-Muslims working in the civil and military bureaucracy have even been prevented from seeing correspondences, and thereby seen subject to state control (Ulusoy, 2011). In parallel to this, and along with the perception of non-Muslims as ‘foreigners’ (Hürriyet, 2001b), the number of non-Muslim minorities holding certain positions in the state bureaucracy has gradually decreased. Non-Muslims

are also often barred from taking up high-rank bureaucracy positions such as judge, prosecutor, police officer, etc. (Milliyet, 2012a). While it was possible to see parliamentarians belong to non-Muslim faiths in the parliament and city councils in the early years of the republic, their numbers declined and they eventually disappeared altogether (Radikal, 2004d).

The existence of the religion section on identity cards in Turkey has been another ground for discriminatory practices. The identity card is a document that includes the information necessary for a state to recognize its citizens. Including race, gender, and religion, this card defines citizens in terms of ‘governmentally-defined groups’. However, the inclusion of categories such as race, ethnicity, and religion on identity cards has been used a tool for ‘fixing or reifying group identities’. In the particular case of the religion category, this means encouraging discriminative policies towards a religious minority group (Preventgenocide, 2001). Therefore, the religion category on Turkish identity cards, as an item which forces individuals to declare their religious affiliation, has been subjected to debate. Inclusion of a religion section on identity cards was brought into force and adopted as a part of the Turkish Civil Code in 1926 as a continuation of the Ottoman practice enacted in 1889⁷⁸ and 1914.⁷⁹ The obligation to declare one’s religion on identity cards was preserved under Article 43 of the Law 1587 (Official Gazette, 1972), thus indicating a strong relationship between the Turkish state and Islam, and acting as a source for future discriminatory practices against non-Muslim minorities (Beylunioglu, 2009).

Last but not least, discriminatory practices have taken place in the form of hate speech. Beyond just ignoring and making arrangements for the prevention of hate speech, the state has actually promoted injustice, especially in the realm of education. Minority students have been subject to harassment by their teachers and other students (Kaya, 2007, p. 26). Textbooks taught in both minority schools and public schools have included misinformation about religious minorities in Turkey. Armenians and Syrians, for example,

⁷⁸ It is not clear that there was a religion category on identity documents during the Ottoman Empire, but it is known that there was an unstandardized document and it is assumed that this document included a religion category. See: (General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality. (Not dated).

⁷⁹ Article 3 of the regulation: The population registry will be issued with the names and the titles of men and women, stating the religion of the Muslims and the religion as well as the sect of the non-Muslims and to which community they belong and the name of their father and birthplace (General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality. (Not dated).

felt extremely uncomfortable with the statements implying their collaboration with the Russians and role in ‘stabbing Turkey in the back’ during WWI (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013).

3.3. Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to review the status of Christian minorities in Turkey from the founding of the republic until late 1990s in order to provide a background for the current legal and behavioral transformation process impacting the scale of their religious freedoms. As the discussion above suggests, beyond doubt non-Muslims in general, and Christians in particular, have suffered from discriminatory policies of the Turkish state. Consequently, a gradual decline in the population of non-Muslim minorities has been witnessed; first, as a result of an ‘assault period’ carried out until the mid-1960s (Oran, 2005a) through *Turkification* policies (Aktar, 2000), and then through a legal process in which properties belonging to non-Muslim minorities began to be confiscated (Oran, 2005a). Moreover, the state encouraged ‘a story of alienation’ of religious minorities from Turkish society (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009).

Various scholars have explained this process as a continuation of the policies of Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* - CUP) which acted during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Republic of Turkey to create a Turkish nation composed of a state that is separates religion and state but at the same time unofficially adopts the Hanafi/Sunni denomination of Islam (Oran, 2005a). Since the portion of the population remaining outside this particular definition of the Turkish nation could not be squeezed into the envisioned framework of Turkishness, those who do not fit and could not have been expatriated continued to exist, in a way, under the *millet* system maintained for non-Muslim minorities in the republican period (Dink, 2005; Oran, 2005a).

As a result of this approach, religious minorities have been subject to extrajudicial practices and discrimination at the expense of the violation of their rights acquired with both the Treaty of Lausanne as well as the guarantees given by the constitution of the new nominally secular state. This implies that an informal project of exclusion and elimination of non-Sunni/Hanefi elements from Turkishness has remained in effect. This state of affairs had obvious implications on both their right to practice, teach and maintain their religion, as well as their recognition and continued existence in social and private spheres

as Christians of Turkey. As the historical background suggests, both of these areas have remained extremely restricted.

4. Tracing The Policy Change and Implementation in Regard to The Christian Minorities in Turkey: Reforms and Their Effects

In order to build a framework to analyze the research question at hand, this chapter will present a clear account of the contemporary state of religious freedoms specifically in reference to the rights of Christian minorities in Turkey with comparison to its previous status. To that end, both policy change and implementation will be traced by relying on face-to-face interviews with the representatives of Christian communities complemented by data derived from newspaper articles, legal documents, and reports from international organizations.

As explained in detail in the previous chapter, the existence of the Treaty of Lausanne as a guarantor for the rights of religious minorities did not prevent the rise of restrictions against religious freedoms of non-Muslims. Christians, in addition to having been prevented from exercising their rights in the Treaty of Lausanne, were also subjected to systematic assaults and gradual confiscation of their properties as well as discriminations and limitations of their religious activities by the Turkish state. This attitude of the Turkish state towards non-Muslims began to draw the attention of the international community as the understanding of freedom of religion has been reshaped under the UN and European Human Rights framework. By this I mean the protection of religious people and groups with greater emphasis placed on the free exercise of religion for the individuals belonging to minority groups. In parallel to these developments, Christians in Turkey began to voice their demands in public as well as on the international level, reemerging, so to speak, with their demands for more freedom of religion (Oran, 2004b, p. 70). This pressure increased along with Turkey's opening up to the international market and attempts to strengthen both economic and political relationships with Europe in the 1980s. The very first implications of the transformation process with regard to religious freedoms, however, came right after the 1999 Helsinki Summit, where Turkey was granted candidate status for the European Union (EU). The restrictions against non-Muslims' right to free exercise of religion were noted in the reports and discussed in academic conferences. As Turkey-EU relations intensified, governments were forced to develop policies towards broadening the space allotted to religious minorities. Finally, the recasting of religion-state relations as well as the parameters of freedom of religion in Turkey were

further observed after the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP*) came to power at the 2002 elections.

Between 2001 and 2004 Turkey introduced eight reform packages enhancing human rights standards in light of the Copenhagen Criteria. This was carried out alongside a monitoring process through the yearly progress reports of the European Commission. These reform packages included changes introducing new measures to the laws restricting freedom of expression, minority rights, and freedom of religion. The major amendments concerning Christian minorities were introduced in the Law on Associations, the Law on Foundations, and the Zoning Law, along with other regulations, circulars, and cabinet decrees that were introduced by the government in subsequent years.

While non-Muslims in Turkey have generally welcomed the legal arrangements introduced by the *AKP* government, they have also continued to report serious drawbacks and problems experienced in the implementation phase of the legal amendments. Amendments and the introduction of new laws were perceived as insufficient, though some representatives attributed this inadequacy to the fact that the problems facing Turkey's Christians in need of a solution had accumulated for years (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013). However, the problematic nature of the transformation, which surfaced in January 2007 with the assassination of Hrant Dink, the owner of the bilingual Armenian-Turkish newspaper *Agos*, (Akgönül, 2011a, p. 155) led to confusion among many.

The remainder of this chapter will seek to clarify this confusion by tracing the impact of legislative changes introduced between 1999 and 2014 in each component of freedom of religion indicated in the literature including: the recognition of Christian minorities; their freedom of worship, teaching, and education; and other discriminatory practices levied against them. Such an investigation will reveal the current state and scope of the transformation of religious freedoms for Christians in particular, and will provide us with the dependent variable of this study and a ground for analysis of the possible actors and mechanisms playing a significant role throughout this recasting process.

4.1. Recognition of Christian Minorities and Issues Related to Their Existence

Recognition of religious minorities' legal personality is as important as worship, practice, and teaching of religion where freedom of religion is in question. In the post-Helsinki process, early European Commission reports observed indications of 'increased tolerance towards certain non-Muslim religious communities' (European Commission, 2001, p. 27). Considering the impossibility of making a complete judgement based on an observation of legal adaptation in the incipient stage of the reform process, it is reasonable to assume that there was a change in the government's attitude towards non-Muslims, as seen through political gestures and signs of being open to dialogue, which then led to this perception of a more accommodating atmosphere.

Signs of this reconciliatory attitude towards Christian minorities began to be observed during the term of the coalition government (1997-2002) and intensified under the single party government of the *AKP*. The official invitation to Syriac Orthodox citizens forced to leave their country decades ago to return to their villages in 2001 by the prime minister was a significant step (Official Gazette, 2001b). The circulars later issued by the government in 2007 and 2010 ensuring the religious freedoms of non-Muslim and urging the authorities to implement decisions made by the political and legal authorities to improve their conditions in this regard (Radikal, 2007b; 2010c) indicated existence of a dialogue process taking place between government and minority representatives. Moreover, Turkish authorities' participation in religious events of religious communities and celebration of their religious days since the 2000s bore a decisive meaning. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, for example, issued celebratory messages to Christian citizens over Christmas (Hürriyet, 2000a). The same practice continued during Abdullah Gül's presidency (Hürriyet, 2007a; 2012a) and was followed by other government authorities including the Prime Minister and the Ministry of EU Affairs (Agos, 2012c; 2013i). A direct dialogue was also initiated between the representatives of Christian communities and government authorities. Especially after 2008, according to the representatives of the Christian communities, the government held frequent meetings with Christian communities to discuss their problems, and Turkey's Christians found the opportunity to address their requests to the authorities (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013; anonymous, personal communication, March 24a, 2013; November 21, 2013). As

one example of this dialogue process, Christian representatives were invited to parliament to contribute to drafting the constitution and share their views on its rewriting in 2012 (Radikal, 2012a). The government also initiated a meeting with the Syriac Community living abroad in order to deliberate on the conditions for their return (European Commission, 2013, p. 60) (See Table 4.1 for the full list of meetings between the government and Christian representatives).

Table 4.1. List of Meetings Between the Government and Christian Representatives⁸⁰

September 2003	Joint appeal of non-Muslim communities for a solution to their problems and a dialogue followed with the government representatives.
December 2004	Opening ceremony of the Garden of Faiths in which Prime Minister Erdoğan and spiritual representatives of religious communities participated.
April 2006	Non-Muslim leaders gathered with Ministries of Interior, Education, Foreign Affairs, and Secretary-General of the EU (former Minister of the EU).
June 2007	A delegation of ministers visited the religious leaders of minority communities.
August 2009	Lunch event took place between non-Muslim representatives and government authorities including the Prime Minister, vice-prime minister, ministers of state, education, and culture.
January 2011	The Vice-Prime Minister visited the Ecumenical Patriarch of Istanbul.
July 2011	Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeous paid a visit to the Director of Religious Affairs. Syriac Orthodox Church in <i>Adıyaman</i> opened for prayer following renovation. The Governor and the mayor of <i>Adıyaman</i> participated to the ceremony.
August 2011	Minority representatives gathered with government representatives including the Minister of EU Affairs, the Governor of Istanbul, and <i>DİB</i> representatives over a Ramadan dinner.
December 2011	Armenian Deputy Patriarch visited the Director of Religious Affairs.
February 2012	The Minister of EU Affairs met with representatives of non-Muslim communities. Syriac representatives shared their views on the draft constitution in the parliament. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeous was invited to parliament to share his opinion on the draft constitution.
March 2012	Foreign Minister paid a visit to the spiritual leaders of non-Muslim minorities. Minister of EU Affairs met with the non-Muslim leaders.
April 2012	Catholic representatives were invited to the parliament to share their views on the draft constitution.
July 2012	The Director of Religious Affairs visited the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeous. A meeting took place between President Abdullah Gül and non-Muslim leaders.
August 2012	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the AKP attended a Ramadan dinner with the non-Muslim leaders.
October 2012	The Foreign Minister visited Istanbul <i>Rums</i> living in Athens, Greece.
December 2012	The Minister of National Education visited an Armenian school in Istanbul.
March 2013	The Deputy Prime Minister visited the Syriac community in Germany. The Foreign Minister met with the Syriac representatives.
April 2014	The Deputy Prime Minister contacted the Minority Foundations' representative <i>Laki Vingas</i> upon his resignation and promised the election regulation would pass within a month.
December 2014	The Deputy Prime Minister contacted the Minority Foundations' representative <i>Laki Vingas</i> and apologized for not being able to keep his promise concerning the election regulation.
February 2015	The Prime Minister met with non-Muslim leaders.
July 2015	<i>HDP</i> parliamentarian and a member of the Armenian community Garo Paylan contacted the Minister of National Education concerning removal of the practice of

⁸⁰ Those of which were available to the public.

October 2015	<p>ancestry code and the difficulties raised in appointing Turkish teachers in minority schools.</p> <p>Minority (VADIP) representatives gathered with the Finance Minister in order to find a solution for the of state's demand of taxes from minority schools.</p> <p>The mayor of Istanbul's <i>Fatih</i> district participated in a religious ceremony in an Armenian Orthodox church.</p>
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By and large, Christian communities welcomed this change in attitude and the evolving dialogue process. Although there have been non-Muslims who considered this dialogue process as hypocritical and felt offended by it due to the limited progress made in law enforcements over time (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013) and statements by state authorities either labeling non-Muslims as a threat or disapproving of the Christian-Muslim dialogue (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013), a considerable number of Christians have found this dialogue process important when compared to their past experiences. They contend that working towards finding a middle ground had not been possible in the past (anonymous, personal communication, November 21, 2013). For Turkish Protestants, the meetings held to address their requests with the Human Rights Presidency, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı - DİB*), and the Ministry of Education were perceived as a 'positive step' (Association of Protestant Churches, 2012). A priest in Anatolia also underlined the fact that for the first time in 10 years a government (the *AKP*) was knocking on their doors for political solicitation (anonymous, personal communication, November 11, 2013).

In addition to these symbolic gestures and the expanded dialogue process, one cannot disregard legislation regarding freedom of religion, such as the introduction of new Laws on Foundations and Associations, which aimed to broaden the religious freedoms for Christians who have been organized either under a foundation or an association. Moreover, amendments to certain articles in the Constitution, the Turkish Civil Code, and the Law on Private schools softened the conditions relating to the recognition of Christian minorities and issues related to their continued existence in the public and private spheres.

The amendments to the Law on Foundations and the Law on Associations were mainly intended to solve issues experienced by Christian communities with respect to their recognition by the state in establishing and registering institutions such as hospitals, churches, and schools; easing the conditions for claiming their property rights; and facilitating foundation board elections. The former Law on Foundations (Official Gazette, 1935), which was amended with the third reform package in 2002 (Official Gazette,

2002a), was designed to pave the way for Christian foundations to obtain and restore properties. The new reform also provided foundations with a legal way to register currently owned properties. However, the obligation included in the amended law requiring such foundations to get permission from the cabinet in order to implement these changes, along with the limited time period of six months given for the application of non-Muslim foundations, prevented the reform package from meeting expectations (European Commission, 2003, p. 34). The second attempt to reform the Law on Foundations under the fourth reform package in January 2003 eased the procedure for acquiring, registering, and disposing of property by delegating the right of approval to the Directorate General of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü - VGM*) (European Commission, 2003, p. 34). With this amendment, the process of restituting properties belonging to Christian minorities commenced despite the bureaucratic problems foundations continued to encounter until the introduction of the new Law on Foundations in 2008. The new law enabled registration of existing religious communities as foundations; facilitated their religious, financial, and administrative activities (including election of their board members) and; provided tax exemptions (Official Gazette, 2008). Most importantly, the Council of Foundations representing all religious foundations in Turkey, including 166 Christian foundations, (Vingaz, personal communication, November 20, 2013) was established along with the new law.

The adaptation of the Law on Foundations, however, did not resolve the problems faced by all Christian minorities. The law continued to exclude religious groups that could not establish foundations, and were instead organized as an association. Therefore, the redrafting of the Law on Associations has been essential in terms of religious freedom in Turkey. Article 5 of the former Law on Associations (Official Gazette, 1983) was considered restrictive in regards to freedom of religion (European Commission, 2003, p. 32). Although the amendments to Article 33 of the Constitution and the 7th, 11th, and 12th Articles of the Law on Associations broadened the grounds for establishing associations in 2002, it only became possible for Christian communities to be organized as associations with the introduction of the new Law on Associations in 2004, which allowed for the establishment of associations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sect, region, or any other minority group by removing Article 5 (Official Gazette, 2004a).

4.1.1. Legal Personality

The legal arrangements mentioned above have enhanced the conditions of non-Muslim communities in various ways by enabling registration of most non-Muslim entities under the umbrella of foundations or associations; however, this has not resolved the challenges faced by Christians of Turkey with regard to their legal status. The amendments were far from providing a substantial legal framework for all religious entities in that they left the door open for issues related to their recognition; possession and management of their properties; their ability to raise funds; and obtaining of work and residence permits for ecclesiastic personnel, etc.

The current Law on Foundations enables most of the existing Christian foundations, which were formerly not recognized by the state, to be registered as foundations. Although the new Law on Foundations legislated in 2008 did not provide a solution for the registration of foundations that had been dissolved by the state, amendments made to the law in 2013 (Official Gazette, 2013b) allowed foundations dissolved after 1990 to apply for registration. However, the new law still falls short of providing a comprehensive solution for registration of religious communities. For one, the amendments made in 2013 put a time limit on the registration of dissolved foundations by disregarding those that were dissolved prior to 1990. Apart from this, barriers to establishing new religiously-oriented foundations have been maintained. The renewed version of the Turkish Civil Code in 2001 (Official Gazette, 2001a) continues to prohibit establishments that support any community bound by ethnicity, race, or religion (Official Gazette, 2003).⁸¹

The lack of legal personality is also a critical issue for the religious organizations formed as associations. Although the new Law on Associations issued in July 2004 paved the way for religious communities to establish religiously-oriented associations, those associations are not recognized as ‘congregations’, ‘prayer rooms’, or ‘churches’. The process of associationalism does not bring with it the right of being recognized as a sanctuary since the conditions of worship places have been defined according to the zoning law (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Moreover, the registration

⁸¹ Article 101 of the Turkish Civil Code states: ‘Formation of a foundation contrary to the characteristics of the Republic defined by the Constitution, Constitutional rules, laws, ethics, national integrity and national interest, or with the aim of supporting a distinctive race or community, is restricted’ (TBMM, 2001); for its English Translation: http://www.tusev.org.tr/usrfiles/files/Turkish_Civil_Code.pdf

of several associations has been challenged in court. Although the court cases against the Diyarbakir Protestant Church and Jehovah Witnesses were ruled in favor of these religious communities (European Commission, 2006, p. 15), the practice of the law may still cause registration problems (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). In their regular reports since 2010, while indicating that they face fewer constraints, the Association of Protestant Churches also underlined the insufficiency of the new Law on Associations in terms of making it more possible for their congregations to be legally recognized (Association of Protestant Churches, 2013).

While they have paved the way for the registration of religious communities under foundation or association status, the new laws on foundations and associations have not brought legal status for non-Muslim minorities. The absence of legal status of religious personalities became more problematic when the head of the religious communities i.e. *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate, Catholic Patriarchal Vical and metropolitan bishops were prevented from taking any action for the protection of properties on behalf of their communities. Despite the latest development on the remission of the orphanage in *Büyükkada* and its registration on behalf of the Patriarchate following the ECtHR decision (Ecumenical Patriarchy v. Turkey, 2010) the issue of legal personality is still in need of a constitutional resolution for all Christian communities in Turkey.

4.1.2. Ownership of Property

The amendments made to the Law on Foundations in 2002 eliminated barriers for property ownership for Christian foundations and to a certain extent facilitated reclamation of previously confiscated possessions. Among many impediments still in place in this regard, the legal requirement of approval of the cabinet significantly impeded non-Muslim communities' right to obtain properties until this practice was loosened with the introduction of the fourth reform package in 2003, which shifted the authority of approval from the cabinet to the *VGM*. Despite this development, religious minorities could only take minor steps towards reclaiming their property rights after the introduction of the new Law on Foundations in 2008. The new Law on Foundations gave non-Muslim communities important legal gains, such as possessing and registering properties. Shortcomings in the law, however, prevented non-Muslims from benefitting from these enhancements to their rights until the adaptation of the provisional Article 11 (Official

Gazette, 2011) which made it possible for religious foundations to receive their confiscated properties back and register them in the name of the foundation instead of registering properties under figurative names. According to provisional Article 11 added to Law 5737:

The current value determined by the Ministry of Finance of the immovable properties registered in the property registry office in the name of the Treasury or Directorate General of Foundations despite the fact that they had been purchased by minority (community) foundations or bequeathed or endowed to the minority (community) foundations which are registered in the name of third parties, are paid by Treasury and Directorate General of Foundations.⁸²

In the meantime, the registration of the *Rum* Orphanage in *Büyükkada* and the properties of the *Kimisis Theodokou Rum* Orthodox Church in *Bozcaada* were only possible as a result of the ECtHR rulings against Turkey in 2009 (*Bozcaada Kimisis Theodoku Rum Kilisesi Vakfi v. Turkey* (1), 2009; *Bozcaada Kimisis Theodoku Rum Kilisesi Vakfi v. Turkey* (2), 2009) and 2010 (*Ecumenical Patriarchy v. Turkey*, 2010). However, the 2011 amendment significantly accelerated the process of property transfer to the religious communities. According to the reports of the European Commission, by August 2013, the *VGM* approved the restitution of 253 properties (out of 1560 claimed) and compensation for 18 additional properties (European Commission, 2013, p. 60), while by 2010 131 out of 1410 were to be returned (European Commission, 2010, p. 30). The cemeteries registered in the name of properties have also been returned without problems. The Armenian Cemetery in *Yeşilköy* and the Greek Cemetery in *Arnavutköy* were returned to their legal owners (anonymous, personal communication, November 28, 2013; see also Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, 2012). Although non-Muslim communities continued to face obstacles during the land-registration process (European Commission 2013, p. 60), compared with their previous experiences, religious minorities generally saw the present state of the law as sufficient in terms of granting them ability to possess their properties, though still in need of a few changes to better facilitate the problem (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013; November 11, 2013; November 20, 2013). According to a religious community representative, the process of transfer of the properties could be considered successful, with a re-registration rate of 70% (anonymous, personal communication, November 21, 2013).

Although the recent reforms have enabled a process of partial return of confiscated properties, Christian representatives have repeatedly underlined significant shortcomings

⁸² See: (*VGM*, not dated (b)) ; For the original quotation see Q3 in Appendix A.

of the law which prevent it from providing a comprehensive solution for property issues. From the perspective of a representative of the Arab Orthodox community, the major drawback of the law is that it authorizes registration of properties solely on the basis of 1936 Declaration, which means that it excludes community foundations existing in *Hatay*, as the city joined Turkey only in 1939 (anonymous, personal communication, August 18, 2015). Moreover, difficulties encountered in the implementation of the law are another source of concern. For example, non-Muslim communities do not welcome the judicial proceedings, which in turn slow down the restitution process. While some of the communities acknowledge that the court cases are necessary under some circumstances (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013), others emphasize that the properties should be given to their owners without any obstacle or need for a judicial decision (anonymous, personal communication, November 17, 2013). Similarly, while the Syrian Orthodox Monastery – which had been confiscated by the treasury – has recently been returned to the Syrian Orthodox community (Radikal, 2014), there has been no progress concerning properties on the islands of *Imbroz (Gökçeada)* and *Tenedos (Bozcaada)* or the inheritance rights of expatriated Greeks, despite the recommendation of the Venice Commission in March 2010 (European Commission, 2013, p. 60). In addition, the decision to turn the *Hagia Sophia* museum in Trabzon into a mosque (Hürriyet, 2013a) has been perceived as a negative step regarding the property rights of Christian communities in Turkey (European Commission, 2013, p. 55). Meanwhile, the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate is also demanding return of two of their churches which were confiscated by the state and given to the ‘Turkish’ Orthodox Church (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013). Overall, although the current law paved the way for the restitution of confiscated properties, it has not answered all the calls for property restitution (anonymous, personal communication, November 26, 2013; see also Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, 2012).

4.1.3. Election of Foundation Boards and Religious Authorities

The new regulation of the Methods and Principles of the Boards of non-Muslim Foundations passed by the parliament on June 2004 (Official Gazette, 2004c) aimed to clear the ambiguities encountered in the board elections of Christian foundations over past decades. The same regulation also remained in force in the new Law on Foundations in 2008 and provided for the enlargement of election provinces in order to enable the holding

of elections despite decreased non-Muslim populations. According to the law, in the case of absence of a large enough electorate in the province of the foundation, the voting district will be enlarged to the city borders upon the request of the foundation; in the case of the absence of the electorate in the city, the Ministry of Interior will announce the city with the largest community as the election district (Official Gazette, 2008b).

Despite the existence of these new regulations enabling non-Muslim foundations to hold their board elections, however, elections could not take place due to the refusal of *Rum* and Armenian Orthodox foundations to hold the elections according to these new rules. The main concern of those opposing the new regulations was that their authority would be undermined in the case of the enlargement of the election province. Therefore, they demanded a new regulation (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013; anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013). However, non-Muslims did not welcome the continued state interference in the election process (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013). As a result of these disagreements regarding the existing rules and procedures, board elections of non-Muslim foundations was suspended by *VGM* in January 2013 and will not resume until the approval of a new regulation (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013; Agos, 2014a). The adjournment of the approval of the new regulation *sine die*, however, resulted in the resignation of Laki Vingas, the representative of non-Muslim Foundations at the Council of *VGM*, in March 2014.⁸³ After Vingas issued his notice of resignation, non-Muslims were reassured that the election regulations would be prepared within a very short period of time – by April 2014, to be precise (Radikal, 2014c). Despite this promise, however, a new election regulation has not yet been prepared as of the time of writing, and consequently non-Muslims foundations are once again left with threat of dissolution of their foundations. Although an apology issued by Bülent Arınç, the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, for not being able to keep the promise of revising the election regulations was considered a sign of sincerity by some minority representatives (Radikal, 2014c), Christians have also demonstrated their displeasure with the government for not finding a way to solve this issue (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013).

⁸³ Shortly after his resignation, Bülent Arınç (the government spokesman) called Laki Vingas and promised that the new adaptation of the new regulation would take place within that month. See: (Demokrat Haber, 2014).

Unlike the current situation of foundation boards, it is possible to observe relative improvement in the election of the ecclesiastical personnel in practice. Indeed, non-Muslims report less rejection cases encountered in the state approval of foreign ecclesiastical personnel. The Turkish government began providing either Turkish citizenship or long-term residence permits for these personnel. An interviewee affirmatively stated that they had received Turkish citizenship for 21 bishops upon their request from the state (anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2013). On the other hand, these changes adopted in practice are far from forming a legal framework. The government's rejection of renewal demands by some churches for residence permits for a number of foreign clergy without providing a reasonable explanation (European Commission, 2012, p. 25) serves as the basis for non-Muslim concerns about the lack of a substantive legal structure.

In addition to the employment of ecclesiastical personnel, the election of religious leaders continues to be controlled by the state through the Office of the Governor in Istanbul (Hyetert, 2009). In June 2007 the court of Cassation declared 'that persons who participate and are elected in religious elections held in the Patriarchate should be Turkish citizens and be employed in Turkey at the time of the elections' (Radikal, 2007a). Recent debate within the Armenian Orthodox community in the matter of finding a replacement for the existing Patriarch who have become sick and unable to perform his duty is the recent example of the continuation of the state intervention. An interviewee expresses the displeasure from this state of affairs and reflects the scope of difficulty of conditions for the election of the patriarchate as well as the complexity of situation under the interference of the state with the following words

Our Patriarch is sick. Either a deputy patriarch would be appointed or a new patriarch would be elected... But this is our fault as we applied to the governorship with two different proposals: election of a co-patriarch or new patriarch. The government improperly decided on the appointment of a deputy patriarch. In fact, the government should not have interfered... the founding statute of 1861 defines the procedures for the election (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013).⁸⁴

In sum, despite all the efforts to reform the election procedures for board members and ecclesiastical personnel, the state seems to be far from getting to the root of the problem. The attempts made by Turkish government in smoothening the bureaucratic constraints for

⁸⁴ For the original quotation see Q4 in Appendix A.

the selection the ecclesiastical clergy has been obviously seen as a ‘favor’ and welcomed by most of the Christians; but definitely it is not perceived as a guarantee for the survival of the communities. State control over the election of the board members and ecclesiastical personnel has been regarded as interference in the internal affairs of Christianity (anonymous, personal communication, October 30 2013; November 20, 2013; December 9, 2013), and continue to limit freedom of religion for Christian communities.

4.1.4. Minority Schools

Recently, the Ministry of National Education passed regulations aiming to loosen limitations on minority schools. Although the implementation of the new regulations considerably relieved restraints on the conditions of Christians and minority schools, new regulations have fallen short of getting to the root of the problem, which is the absence of a comprehensive set of regulations for minority schools.

Closure and confiscation of the existing minority schools were among the difficulties faced by religious minorities following the founding of the republic. Within this context, demands for the opening of new minority schools have also been denied. Although the Treaty of Lausanne did not specify any particular religion to be recognized by the state, the request of the Syrian Orthodox Community to open a kindergarten has been repeatedly rejected by the Ministry of National Education, suggesting that Syrian Orthodox is not among the religious minorities recognized in the Treaty of Lausanne (Agos, 2012). However, the proposal of the *Rum* Orthodox community to reopen the primary school in *Imbros* that faced closure in the 1960s has been pending for years. There have, however, been positive developments in recent years in the matter of the (re)opening of these minority schools. As a result of the case opened by the Syrian community against the Ministry of National Education in 2013, the 13th Administrative Court in Ankara ruled that Syriacs could be evaluated within the scope of the Treaty of Lausanne and, therefore, that they have the right to establish a school of their own (Agos, 2013a). Following this decision, the Syriac Orthodox Community began organization for the opening of a kindergarten in the *Bakırköy* district in Istanbul. The decision of the administrative court also encouraged the Federation of Syriac Associations in *Mardin*, Turkey to open a primary school (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013). Furthermore, the persistence of the *Rum* Orthodox community led to the reopening of their primary

school in *Imbros* (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013). This *Rum* primary school, which had been confiscated by the state in the 1960s and became an issue of contention between *VGM* and *RUMVADER* (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013), was finally registered in the name of the *Rum* Orthodox Foundation in May 2013 (Agos, 2013b).

Dovetailing with these positive developments in relation to state approval for (re)opening of minority schools, is the fact that minorities are often left alone with financial difficulties. Although the Ministry of National Education began to allocate a share for minority schools from its budget (Agos, 2015a; 2015f), the amount remains insufficient (Agos, 2015f); moreover, the fact that this allocation is subject to yearly approval indicates a lack of substantial grounds for support and thereby creates insecurity among non-Muslims in regard to continuation of the state's financial assistance for minority schools. In a similar vein, the regularity of tax exemption implemented with regards to minority schools is another concern of the minority representatives who continue to exert themselves in searching for a reasonable solution (Agos, 2015e). Christians only expect to receive an equal share for their schools from public funds for education from the state. The report of the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinople also underlines this expectation and stresses the fact that non-materialization of this expectation and 'non-provision of any financial support by the state' contradicts Article 41 of the Treaty of Lausanne (Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, 2012). As the manager of a minority school emphasizes, 'it is a must for the Turkish state to financially support minority school foundations in order to establish equality' (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013).

Registration difficulties faced by minority schools have been another concern for Christians in Turkey. Foreign and expatriated students, children born to a Muslim father and a Christian mother, and religious minorities that belong to another community have been prohibited from registering in schools run by religious minorities for years. Underlining the fact that these registration problems have persisted since the 1950s, an administrator of a minority school remarked on the relative loosening of restrictions achieved in the state control over minority schools (anonymous, personal communication, March 20a, 2014). Recent legal arrangements have also brought limited improvement in the problems that minority schools have been facing. First of all, the regulation restricting

registration in minority schools to ‘the children of the members of their own minority community who are citizens of Turkey’ in Article 64 of the Regulation of Private Schools (Official Gazette, 1985b) has been removed (Official Gazette, 2012a). Although Christians welcomed this step, the fact that the statement preserved its place in Article 5/c/1 of the Law on Private Schools (Official Gazette, 2007) has caused dissatisfaction. From an administrative personnel’s perspective, while such an implementation could be applicable for foreign schools providing training in Turkey, it is unacceptable for minority schools struggling to keep their doors open (anonymous, personal communication, March 20a, 2014). The new regulation has also paved the way for enrollment of foreign students to be registered as guest students in minority schools (Official Gazette, 2012a). However, one remaining major drawback of the regulation is that it deprives students of the right to receive official graduation papers. Moreover, with the changes in Article 41 of the Turkish Constitution and Article 152 of the Turkish Civil Code, emphasis on male domination in the family (Official Gazette, 1926a) has changed and the statement that the ‘husband is the head of the family’ has been removed (Official Gazette, 2001a). Adoption of an equality principle concerning the respective roles of the women and men in the household has enabled registration of children of Christian mothers in minority schools. The recent ancestry code practice, which was secretly implemented by the state for decades and only disclosed to the public upon the request of a Christian family seeking justification of the state’s disapproval of their child’s enrollment in a minority school, raised serious concerns among Christians in regard to the sincerity of the reforms (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013). Fortunately, persistent requests from notable members of Christian communities has yielded results and, as of writing, the Ministry of National Education ended this discriminatory practice by issuing a circular which also provided broader discretion to managers of minority schools during the registration process (Agos, 2015c).

Minority schools belonging to religious minority communities have also been subject to other administrative obstacles, such as the restrictive control exercised by the state over the employment of teachers and vice-directors in minority schools. The new regulations enacted in March 2012, which kept the requirement to hire Turkish⁸⁵ vice-directors as well as teachers in Turkish, History, and Geography subjects (Official Gazette, 2012a) was not

⁸⁵ *aka* Muslim

welcomed by the directors of minority schools (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2014; see also Agos, 2012b). However, compared to their past experiences, they remarked that there was a visible decrease in state pressure exerted over the selection of the teachers and vice-directors (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013). While the directors think that the superiority of vice-directors in signing the documents remains a restrictive practice, they welcome the changes in the law that allows them to propose a list of teachers for the approval of the Ministry of National Education (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı - MEB*), instead of having all teachers and vice-directors appointed by the state (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013). A minority director compares the past and present practice:

The issue of senior vice-director and culture teachers was problematic last year. Turkish teachers were feeling responsible to the senior vice-director, not us. There has been polarization. The school was divided into two. When the senior vice-director's term of office ended, there was a process for appointing a new one: I send a list of names to the *MEB*. The *MEB* chooses one name from the list and approves it. This is something like a reform for us. In June I suggested the name of our former Turkish teacher for the senior vice-director position. I did not prefer the History teacher, but he applied individually for that position. To guarantee the situation I made some calls. In the end, the ministry approved our choice. The likelihood of our list being approved is 80-90% (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2014).⁸⁶

Another difficulty faced by minority schools is the frequent rotation of appointed teachers. According to the regulation, vice-directors are employed for a maximum of five years (Official Gazette, 2012a). The time restriction, from the perspective of a school manager, decreases the likelihood that these teachers would prefer working in a minority school (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013).

Moreover, the conditions for employing teachers continue to be significantly restricted. According to religious authorities, it is now possible for clergymen and graduates from theology schools to teach in minority schools; however, since the theology schools are closed, it is difficult to find people who match these criteria (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013). In addition, the reciprocity principle is still in effect in regards to employment in *Rum* minority schools. The authorities stress the possibility of a decline in the need for teachers of Greek nationality if they could employ Turkey's Christians in their place, which, as they contend, was impossible in practice in the past, but may pose an obstacle no longer (anonymous, personal communication,

⁸⁶ For the original quotation see Q5 in Appendix A.

December 16, 2013). However, according to the report of the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, ‘the appointment of minority teachers in minority schools has been related to reciprocity between Greece and Turkey.’ The reciprocity principle is generally implemented ‘as an act of punishment of a state against its own citizens because of the attitude of a foreign state’ (Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, 2012). Moreover, both the teachers who teach and the textbooks taught in minority schools are subject to the approval of the state. Although Turkish authorities recently approved the elementary school books of *Rum* minority schools (Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, 2012), approval of the mathematic textbook is still pending (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013).

4.2. Freedom of Worship

Religious minorities interviewed for this study mostly welcomed these recent changes and stressed the visible decrease in pressure on their exercise of freedom of worship when compared to the past, despite the flaws in the implementation process. Examination of the current conditions of places of worship and liturgy, and other religious practices will help us to apprehend the shift that religious minorities refer to when they are comparing the present state of freedom of worship to that experienced in the past.

4.2.1. Places of Worship

Although the obligation that communities must obtain permission from the state in order to restore existing churches was lifted through a circular issued in 1999 (European Commission, 2000), the most significant step in enhancing the conditions of churches was actually taken through an amendment to the zoning law. The changes in the law replacing the term ‘mosque’ with ‘places of worship’, and ‘office of mufti’ with ‘administrative chief’ would only be possible with the sixth reform package enacted in 2003 (Official Gazette, 2003). These minor changes made in the law helped Christian sanctuaries to overcome most of the difficulties they had formerly encountered. Besides allowing sanctuaries such as churches and synagogues to be restored and utilized, and to benefit from the same assistance provided to mosques, including free access to electricity (Official Gazette, 2002c)⁸⁷, by replacing the term ‘mosque’ with ‘places of worship’, the law also

⁸⁷ Law 4736 restricted the discounts for electricity facilities provided by the state (Official Gazette, 2002b).

defined the legal conditions for constructing a place of worship and, consequently, paved the way for the construction of new churches.

Despite this positive development, critical flaws of the law were revealed in its implementation. As a growing religious community, Protestants have mostly suffered from the shortcomings of the law, facing difficulties in maintenance of new churches as well as construction of new ones. The report of the Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey explains the two sources of these problems. First of all, the new regulation does not allow places of worships smaller than 2500m². Although this new provision does not include already existing churches, in practice, Protestant churches smaller than 2500m² face the risk of closure on this ground (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). The second obstacle that Christian communities face is the arbitrary rejections by the administrative chiefs and municipalities upon the request of approval for new churches (Association of Protestant Churches, 2008). In 2011, for instance, the municipality rejected the application of the *Güngören* Protestant Church and, upon the insistence of the community, the application was sent to the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Association of Protestant Churches, 2012).

Despite numerous instances in which state authorities blocked the opening of new churches, the Christian congregations report that there was no attempt at closure of existing churches in 2012 and 2013 (Association of Protestant Churches, 2012; 2013), and that they are not experiencing difficulties with respect to renovation of their church buildings. Approvals for the opening of new churches are also increasing. Reports from Protestant organizations indicate that, following repeated rejections of their church applications, the *Altın-tepe* Protestant Church in *Bostancı* was finally registered as a place of worship in 2005 (Association of Protestant Churches, 2008). Moreover, a Syriac Orthodox Church was opened following an extensive renovation that was carried out after 2006 (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013). Another Syriac Catholic Church was also reopened with support from the government after being used as a warehouse and cinema for almost 40 years (anonymous, personal communication, November 26, 2013). Furthermore, the request of the Syrian Orthodox Community in Istanbul to build a church in *Yeşilköy* was approved by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2012 (European Commission, 2013, p. 61). Finally, Christian

representatives remark a notable shift in government attitudes regarding renovation of their places of worship.

On the other hand, Christian communities continue to experience difficulties in benefiting from the same material assistance given to mosques, such as receiving electricity and water facilities free of charge in their sanctuaries. In fact, amendments made to laws (Official Gazette, 2002b; 2008c) over the past decade have enabled Christian sanctuaries that are registered as places of worship to receive electricity free of charge.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the new law does not provide for Christian sanctuaries to receive water without expense. Contrary to the clear wording of the legal framework allowing assistance to be given to churches, implementation of the law appears to be arbitrary. While some churches do not pay for water and electricity utilities (anonymous, personal communication, March 24a, 2013), others use electricity free of charge but pay for the water facilities. There are also communities that benefit from free usage or a reduced tariff for water utilities (anonymous, personal communication, November 17, 2013). The lack of standardization is also observed in property taxation of some places of worship (European Commission, 2010, p. 24). As the former head of the Foundations Council stresses, there is no standardization in terms of the utilities provided for the places of worship, but they are working on a reasonable solution (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013).

4.2.2. Liturgy and Other Religious Practices

As mentioned in the historical background of this study, until recently the issue of performing religious services – and liturgy in particular – has been extremely restricted in Turkey. Compared to past experiences, however, members of Christian communities in Turkey now remark that they face fewer constraints and stress that they can express and practice their religion freely (anonymous, personal communication, November 11, 2013). This expression includes the traditional cross-throwing ceremony celebrating the baptism of Christ and the rituals performed on Good Friday (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013). The permissions given to the *Rum* and Armenian Orthodox communities in the last three years to carry out Divine Liturgies in *Trabzon* and *Van* have been considered a positive step when compared to the past, when granting of such permissions was not possible (Hürriyet, 2010; Hürriyet, 2013b). According to the

⁸⁸ The complexity of the issue is revealed in the replies of Bekir Bozdağ to two different parliamentary questions: no: B.02.0.004/467, 30.03.2012 (TBMM, 2012a); no: 2/103, 08.05.2012 (TBMM, 2012b).

Association of Protestant Churches, members have been able to celebrate Christmas in public places without any interruption in recent years (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Although police surveillance and attacks on churches continue are still noted in reports (anonymous, personal communication, November 17, 2013)⁸⁹, the frequency of these incidences is decreasing (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014).

Despite the positive state of affairs in terms of individual worship activities, the prevention of the *Rum* Patriarch's using his title of 'Ecumenical' continues to create tension between the state and Christian organization in Turkey. As mentioned earlier, until recently the Ecumenical Patriarch was prevented not only from using his ecclesiastical title of 'Ecumenical' but also from performing his role in respect to the Ecumenicity of the patriarchate. Public officials continue not to recognize the 'Ecumenic' title of the *Rum* Patriarch despite the report from the Venice Commission in March 2010 concluding that prevention of *Rum* Orthodox Church from its Ecumenical activities would constitute a violation of the autonomy of the Orthodox Church under Article 9 of the ECHR (Council of Europe, 2010). In parallel to the official line, in June 2007 the court of Cassation declared that, 'there is no basis in Turkish legislation providing that the Patriarchate is Ecumenical' (Radikal, 2007a). However, according to the religious authorities, despite the disapproval of Ecumenicity of the *Rum* Patriarchate, the Patriarch has not been prevented from performing his ecumenical duties abroad since 2003. Indeed, in January 2008, Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that use of the title 'ecumenical' should not be a matter on which the state should rule (Radikal, 2008a). Despite these positive statements by the government representatives, however, the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate has not been reassured that he may freely use his 'Ecumenic' title (European Commission, 2013, p. 55).

Another source of tension in respect to the religious practices is the discouraging attitude displayed against missionary activities and conversions in Turkey. The most acute consequence of the threat perception developed against Christians in general and the people performing missionary activities in specific is evident in the brutal killings of Father Santoro in *Trabzon* in 2006, of protestant missionaries in *Malatya* in 2007 and of Bishop Padovese in *Iskenderun* in 2010. While there have not been sufficient trials for these murders, a court case was started against two protestant missionaries in *Silivri* in

⁸⁹ See also the reports by the Association of Protestant Churches (2008-2013)

2009. Although they were acquitted for insulting Turkishness, they were found guilty of registering personal data. (Bianet, 2010; European Commission, 2011, p. 30). The notion that missionary and proselytizing activities constitute a threat is also reinforced through media and the publications of several state institutions. The sermons and publications of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which points out that the missionaries are a target, are subject to criticism (European Commission, 2006, p. 16). Moreover, missionary activities are still on the threat list of the National Security Council (anonymous, personal communication, November 13, 2013) and the Turkish Armed Forces encourages a hostile attitude towards missionaries (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Media also continues to portray proselytizing activities as a threat to both Turkishness and the integrity of the state (European Commission, 2007, p. 16).

4.3. Religious Instruction

Since 1999 religious minorities have expressed complaints concerning restrictions on religious education for Christian children, misinformation provided on Christianity in Religion and Ethics classes in school, and the ban on training Christian clergy in Turkey. Despite recent improvements with regard to the elimination of misleading information related to Christianity in religion textbooks and decreasing obstructions for Christian pupils in obtaining exemptions from the compulsory religion course, it is still possible to observe major problems regarding teaching Christianity in Turkey continues.

4.3.1. Religious Education

The ongoing practice of mandatory religious education in Turkey has been subject to criticism over the past decades. Despite several steps taken in order to ease restrictions in this regard, Christian minorities continued to suffer from the implementation of this policy. Continuation of the obligatory Religious Culture and Ethics course, as also mentioned in the 2007 ECtHR decision, which does not take ‘religious diversity which prevails in Turkish Society’ into account (Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey, 2007) has been a major impediment. Although the ECtHR recently ruled that compulsory religious education creates discrimination on religious basis, and asked Turkey to meet conditions ensuring that ‘students and parents would not be forced to declare their religious beliefs without any delay’ (Mansur Yalçın and Others v. Turkey, 2014), religion courses are still mandatory and continue to predominantly present information on Islam and Islamic culture (Gözaydın,

2009b, p. 170). Although Christian minorities are exempt from taking these classes, Christian denominations that are not recognized by the state (as the state insists on a narrow interpretation of the Treaty of Lausanne), have been obliged to attend to religious classes. Thus, Protestant, Catholic and Syriac Orthodox students have been forced to attend the Religious Culture and Ethics class over the course of many years. On the other hand, according to the 2013 Progress Report of the European Commission ‘the Ministry informed schools of their obligation to respond positively to requests from non-Muslims to be exempt from compulsory religious culture and ethics lessons’ (European Commission, 2013, p. 61). It is, therefore, important to note that minorities point to a decrease in the difficulties endured in obtaining exemptions from attending these classes. According to a Catholic representative, for example, they are no longer experiencing such difficulties (anonymous, personal communication, November 11, 2013). On the other hand, remarking on the decrease in the complaints after Ministry of Education informed schools of the new state stance, the Protestant community has stressed the continuing difficulties of affiliated students in obtaining exemptions (Association of Protestant Churches, 2013). From an interviewee’s perspective, the obstacles they have been faced derived mainly from the religion section on ID cards:

According to the declaration of the Turkish Education Board in 1990, Christians and Jews are exempted from the religious classes on the condition that they can document their faith. They call it documentation. When the school takes the ID cards into consideration it applies strict interpretation of this principle. Because Muslim (Islam) has been written in most of the ID cards of the Protestants, the exemption procedure is also problematic because we are forced to declare our religion. In some cases, schools interpret this broadly, by asking for a document from the Church, but this is the exception (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014).⁹⁰

There have been steps taken against the discriminatory structure of the religion course provided. After changes in the law of education were made (Official Gazette, 2012b), the Ministry of Education announced that classes addressing different faiths would be elective under the compulsory class of Fundamental Religious Information (*Temel Dini Bilgiler*). Religious minorities were asked to organize a petition with a minimum of 10 students in order to request the opening of a religious lesson covering their faith (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). However, although this amendment to the law was welcomed by Christians, it was not considered sufficient since it has not created a

⁹⁰ For the original quotation see Q6 in Appendix A.

satisfying solution for religious minority students in schools where adherents to their faith number less than the required minimum of 10 students (anonymous, personal communication, November 26, 2013).

In the absence of a satisfactory regulation covering religious education, religious minorities today continue to learn their religion through the courses organized by churches. Though they encountered difficulties in this regard in the past, in the last decade they have not been prevented from studying their religion. Communities organize religious classes on certain days of the week (anonymous, personal communication, November 25; December 16, 2013). However, 2007 and 2008 assaults on the children camps organized by Protestants to teach religion to members' children (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014) indicate the lack of legal regulations in this field.

Over the past few years there has been considerable progress in removing the negative descriptions of and misinformation on non-Muslim faiths included in the Religious Culture and Ethics textbooks (European commission, 2004, p. 44). However, a substantial amount of misguided and discriminatory information has been preserved. Although the religion textbooks used over the last decade include expressions reinforcing 'respect and tolerance' towards different faiths (Gözaydın, 2009b, p. 171), they continue to present Christianity as a 'wrong belief system' (Çayır, 2014, p. 33) and Christian missionaries as 'exploiters' (Radikal, 2015d). The Ministry of Education's initiative to prepare a textbook providing information on Christianity written in Turkish (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013) led to a commission formed under the leadership of different Christian denominations. This commission then prepared a reference book on Christianity by October 2015 (Agos, 2015g). As of writing, however, no impact has been observed on the religious textbooks used in the state religion course.

4.3.2. Training of Clergy

The training of clergy has also been perceived as a 'cornerstone of religious freedom' by Christian minorities in Turkey (Association of Protestant Churches, 2012, p. 5). Despite the enhancements in other components of freedom of religion, however, the training of Christian clergy remains restrictive in Turkey. While educating Muslim clergy has been possible in the theology faculties under the supervision of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, existing laws have prevented the opening of schools for training non-Muslim

clergy. Although Christians stress that it is now easier to get temporary permission for non-Turkish clergy to be employed in their churches, no legal framework has been introduced. Formally speaking, the nationality criterion in the current law prevents religious communities from employing non-Turkish clergy.

In this situation, religious minorities continue training their personnel in their own way, by either informally educating their clergy themselves and/or sending their members abroad to take seminars for religious training, or by temporarily transferring non-Turkish clergy. Although the informal training of the clergy abroad is not preferred by religious communities (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2013), due to the limited resources of religious minorities (European Commission, 2003, p. 35) and the impossibility of ensuring the continuity of religious training (anonymous, personal communication, March 24a, 2013), the majority of these religious communities send selected members abroad to receive religious training (anonymous, personal communication, March 24a, 2013). The nationality criterion continues to be an impediment for religious congregations who prefer non-Turkish clergy in the absence of clergy candidates of Turkish origin. The Turkish government's recent practices of granting citizenship or ensuring the renewal of the visas for non-Turkish clergy seem to be an improvement in this area when compared to the past (anonymous, personal communication, November 26, 2013). However, this system is not desirable for various congregations, such as Protestants and Catholics, who regularly report cases of experienced difficulty in renewal of visas and resident permits (Association of Protestant Churches, 2014, p. 2; European Commission, 2003, p. 35). Currently, the Protestant community trains the majority of its religious personnel through informal seminars given within the community. As with other Christian communities, however, they continue to seek for a formal solution, such as a theology school for Christianity and its various denominations (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Nevertheless, they have so far been unsuccessful. The proposal of the Armenian Patriarch to establish a theology department for Armenian language and clergy, for example, is now pending due to a disagreement between the government, which would prefer to organize this under the current theology departments dominated by Islamic culture; and the Armenian community, which rejects this proposal (Agos, 2013c).

In this respect, all Christian communities have closely following the current debate on the reopening of the *Rum* Orthodox Seminary in contemplation of whether this will allow them greater latitude in training their clergy (anonymous, personal communication, March 24; November 25, 2013). The Orthodox Seminary of *Halki* remains closed, despite positive signs given by the government since 2003 (Agos, 2013d; European Commission, 2003, p. 35). The government has also indicated that the reopening of the Seminary has been on the agenda within the scope of the democratization package prepared by the government (Radikal, 2013a). However, the state of the Seminary was not included in the democratization package announced on September 9, 2013 and passed in the parliament in March of 2014 (Radikal, 2013b; 2014b), an omission that left religious minorities disappointed (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013).

The exclusion of the reopening of the *Halki* Seminary from the democratization package was received in surprise and considered as an indication of old state reflexes being preserved by the government. Although government authorities had indicated that they were in favor of reopening the school (Agos, 2013d; 2013r), Prime Minister Erdoğan lately made it clear that the opening of the *Halki* Seminary depends on Greece's easing of conditions on the election of head mufti in their territory (Agos, 2013s). While diverse statements have led to a state of confusion among many Christian minorities, in the perspective of Laki Vingas, the former head of community foundations, 'Government wants to open the Seminary... however, they prefer to keep it as a trump within the frame of the reciprocity principle with Greece' (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013).⁹¹ The implementation of the reciprocity principle on issues involving the rights of religious minorities, on the other hand 'would damage mostly the Patriarchate and Turkey' (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013).⁹²

4.4. Other Discriminatory Activities Against non-Muslim Minorities

In 2004 the government underlined the superiority of international law by amending the last paragraph of Article 90 of the Constitution. According to the changes: 'In the case of a conflict between international agreements, duly put into effect, concerning fundamental rights and freedoms and the laws due to differences in provisions on the same matter, the

⁹¹ Original excerpt: 'Ruhban Okulu'nun açılmasını onlar da istiyor... Burada mütekabiliyet kuralı işliyor... Hükümet çözmek istese de elinde siyasi bir koz olarak kullanmaya devam ediyor.'

⁹² Original excerpt: 'Ruhban okulunun açılması en çok patrikhane ve Türkiye'ye zarar veriyor.'

provisions of international agreements shall prevail' (Official Gazette, 2004b).⁹³ In 2010 Prime Minister Erdoğan also issued a circular reminding local authorities that the non-Muslim citizens of Turkey constitute an 'inseparable entity of the Turkish society', and therefore urged them to implement the new legislation (Official Gazette, 2010). Apart from this, there have been amendments enacted to decrease discriminatory activities towards religious minorities. Despite these efforts, however, some areas remained untouched or have fallen short of meeting minority expectations.

Among those untouched areas, the discriminatory policies of the *DİB* doubtlessly occupy an important place. As an institution representing only Muslim citizens, its status continues to be subject to debate. While some suggest it be replaced with an autonomous structure (anonymous, personal communication, December 13, 2014), others demanded outright abolishment of the *DİB* since its very existence is in contradiction with secularism (anonymous, personal communication, December 11, 2013). In the meantime, the *DİB* has targeted Christian missionaries in its publications, presenting them as a threat to Turkish society (Presidency of Religious Affairs; 2003a; 2003b; 2006a; 2006b). It is, however, appropriate to note that when compared to the past, the *DİB* has embraced a relatively positive attitude towards Christian minorities in Turkey, through initiating a dialogue process which has been observable through the reciprocal visits between religious leaders and positive statements issued by the *DİB* appealing to non-Muslims and occasionally reflected in the press (Agos, 2012g; Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2006b; IHA, 2013).

There have been efforts to overcome the discriminatory attitude against non-Muslims observable in other bureaucratic bodies. The circular issued by the government aimed at shifting the perception of bureaucracy at large. However, as critics suggest, the precautions taken have not been sufficient. Although the Higher Council of Minorities was abolished in 2004 following a secret circular issued by the Prime Ministry (Hürriyet, 2004), the Committee for The Evaluation of Minority Communities' Problems replacing the abolished commission has been subjected to serious criticism (HyeTert, 2015). According to critics, the existence of a new committee replacing the previous department indicates the continuation of the activities undertaken in order to 'keep an eye' on non-Muslims (Bianet, 2004; HyeTert, 2015). In addition, recent statements by the Director of Religious Affairs have indicated that the precautions taken against Christianity have not

⁹³ The English version of the Turkish Constitution can be found here (TBMM, 1982).

been remained in the religious sphere, but have been carried over to the realm of state security. According to an authority in the *DİB*, they maintain their cooperation with several ministries and institutions in regard to missionaries (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2003a). The fact that missionary activities continuing to be listed on the threat list of the National Security Council confirms this statement. As Christians have also pointed out, the continued existence of these practices demonstrates the preservation of a restrictive attitude towards religious minorities (anonymous, personal communication, November 13, 2013).

Furthermore, the informal practice of preventing non-Muslims from being appointed as civil servants in roles such as police, judge, prosecutor, etc., is another aspect of discriminatory practices still in need of a solution. Recent calls by authorities encouraging non-Muslim minorities to apply for the positions in Ministry of European Union (Agos, 2012k) and the Turkish National Police Department (Hürriyet, 2013c), along with the appointment of Etyen Mahçupyan, an Armenian journalist, to the position of key advisor to the prime minister (Radikal, 2014d), were welcomed by Christian minorities (Kılıçdağı, 2014). However, in a context where non-Muslims are few in numbers and the attacks on members of Christian communities have been observed in the recent decades, these calls remain insufficient. The brutal killings of Father Santoro in 2006, of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink and missionaries in the Zirve Publishing House in 2007, of Bishop Padovese in 2010, and of Sevag Balıkcı in 2011 compounded by the impediments erected by the state in the investigation processes of these cases has left Christian minorities no choice but to act with deliberation. The law against hate crimes introduced in 2013 (Official Gazette, 2014) has also been cautiously welcomed, as most of the hate speech which has taken place after the law took effect has gone unpunished (Agos, 2015h; 2015i; T24, 2015b).

There have also been steps taken with regard to the existence of the religion section on identity cards, which has been perceived as another source of discriminatory practices. The introduction of the Law on Population Registration on April 25, 2006 allowed the declaration of one's religious affiliation to be optional when accompanied by a written statement. According to the legislation, 'Requests related to the religious affiliation records in the family tree are to be changed, left empty or deleted upon the written statement of the individual.' (Official Gazette, 2006). Although the amendment of the Turkish Civil Code in 2006 made declaration of one's faith optional, according to the 2010 ruling in ECtHR the current provisions are still contravene Article 9 of the Convention because the

existence of the religion category itself continues to be discriminatory (Sinan Isık v. Turkey, 2010). The 2011 progress report of the European Commission also stressed the potential ‘discriminatory practices and harassments by local officials’, during the filing process of voluntary declaration or change of religious affiliation (European Commission, 2012, p. 25). While the reports underline that the act of leaving the section empty is extremely difficult due to societal pressure (European Commission, 2011, p. 30), new converts to Christianity remark upon the hardship of changing religious affiliation in practice. Protestants who have recently converted from Islam, for example, have experienced difficulties in changing their religious affiliation in the Civil Registry. Requests to change religion on individual’s identity cards have regularly been ignored and converts have been forced to keep Islam on their identity cards. A member of the Protestant community even mentioned that officers are trying to persuade converts ‘to stay in the Islam faith, by the officials coming from the Presidency of Religious Affairs’ (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014).⁹⁴

Discrimination towards non-Muslim in educational policies has been another difficulty non-Muslims and their children have experienced on almost a daily basis. Although several steps have been taken to decrease discriminatory practices, problems have largely persisted. Recently, for instance, the state has begun to replace ethics questions in the national exams with questions about Islam, a practice which has raised concerns among non-Muslim communities for member children taking the exam. Although the Ministry of National Education announced that the new format would include ethics questions, Christian minorities who realized that the exemplary questions still included questions regarding Islam expressed their concerns on several platforms and demanded alternative questions to be asked of non-Muslim children (Agos, 2013e). Although religious minorities were later exempted from religion questions, they encountered difficulties in the process of exam evaluations, as students who were supposedly exempt from answering questions on Islam sometimes received lower scores from having these omitted answers marked as incorrect (Agos, 2015j; Radikal, 2014e). The system as is, therefore, continues to perpetuate ‘indirect discrimination’ against non-Muslims (Agos 2013e).

⁹⁴ Original excerpt: ‘Bazı yerlerde diyanete haber yollanıyor, ekip gönderiliyor geri ikna süreci için.’

Despite the positive steps taken against discrimination towards minorities in the textbooks used in public and minority schools, progress in this area seems to remain limited as well. While the Syriac Orthodox community declares their satisfaction in the removal of discriminatory statements in the official history school textbooks (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013), the restrictive attitude exhibited by the state concerning school textbooks continues. While the Ministry approved textbooks for some minority schools, including an Armenian translation of a science textbook for the 2010-2011 academic year (European Commission, 2011, p. 38), math textbooks prepared in Greek are still waiting for approval (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013). An administrator of a minority school in Istanbul explains the reason why the redrafting of textbooks is partially successful:

As for textbooks, our students visited the Minister of Education, Ömer Dinçer, and prepared a report on the discriminative statements in the textbooks at the Minister's request. At the end there was a change, and the statements written were rewritten in a softer way. But the same things remain. The reason why they have not completely changed is the reciprocity principle. When we ask the reason, they say 'In Armenia, Armenians are insulting the diaspora of Turks. That is why they remained' (anonymous, personal communication, March 20a, 2014).⁹⁵

The recent analysis of textbooks also confirms the complaints of Christians interviewed for this study. History textbooks, for instance, continue to include discriminatory statements against Christians, implying that Armenians and *Rums* were 'traitors' as they formerly 'stabbed the Turkish army in the back' and 'aimed to establish their own state'⁹⁶ (Radikal, 2015d). Therefore, despite improvements reported in the past few years, the current state of textbooks has been grounds for discrimination and continues to reinforce hostility against Turkey's Christians.

⁹⁵ For the original quotation see Q7 in Appendix A.

⁹⁶ Original excerpts: '...bölgedeki Ermenilerin Ruslarla iş birliği yaparak ordumuzu arkadan vurması, salgın hastalıklar, açlık ve dondurucu soğuk nedeniyle başarıya ulaşamadı... galip devletlerin işgallerinden cesaret alan Rumlar ve Ermeniler gibi azınlık grupları kendi devletlerini kurmak amacıyla Türklere karşı saldırıya geçtiler.'

Table 4.2. Enhancements of Freedom of Religion for Christian Minorities After 1999

Freedom of Religion		Before 1999	After 1999
Recognition of Religious Minorities and Issues Related to Their	Recognition (General)	Christians were barely acknowledged in the public sphere - often just exclusively on their religious holidays - and could barely catch the attention of authorities in order to find a solution to their problems.	Official celebrations on the occasions of Christian holidays; A number of meetings between Christian leaders and authorities; Circulars addressing the issues related to Christian minorities.
	Legal Personality	No legal framework for non-Muslim minorities. Treaty of Lausanne is mostly disregarded. Certain articles in the Law on Foundations, Turkish Civil Code and the Law on Associations restricted legal personality of non-Muslim entities.	The new Law on Foundations in 2008, along with the amendments made to it in 2011 and 2013 and the new Law on Associations allowed registration of existing foundations (those dissolved after 1990) and associations. However, the Civil Code still prevents establishment of religiously-oriented entities. A complete legal framework for religious communities is still required.
	Property Ownership	Christian foundations were forbidden from possessing properties by themselves or by inheritance. Existing properties were confiscated by court decisions as a result of dissolution of foundation boards.	The Law on Foundations of 2008 and its 2011 amendment led to considerable enhancements in the matter of returning of confiscated properties. However, due to the shortcomings of the law and difficulties faced in implementation, the current legal framework fails to provide a comprehensive solution.
	Election of Foundation Boards and Religious Personnel	Election of foundation boards and religious personnel has regularly been interrupted by the state, thus causing the dissolution of foundations and confiscation of their properties; and betimes blocking the spiritual activities of churches.	Although the regulation of the Methods and Principles of non-Muslims, which came into effect in 2004 was a positive step, its suspension <i>sine die</i> as of January 2013 left Christian foundations vulnerable in possible closure attempts. The selection of the ecclesiastical personnel continues to be regulated by the state. Despite the positive steps taken in practice by the government by approving of churches' preferred candidates, an inclusive legal structure is still needed in this regard.
Freedom of Worship	Minority Schools	Schools belong to non-Muslim communities are left to deal with financial and administrative difficulties alone. This, led to the eventual closure of most of the schools. Those which were not closed were subjected to extreme measures restricting the enrollment of children from families with mixed ethno-cultural backgrounds or foreign children of the same ethno-religious background residing in Turkey, as well as the headmaster practice and control over selection of the personnel and content of education.	Minority schools have begun to be re/opened by getting approved from the government authorities with strong demands from Christian communities. The conditions for enrollment of children of parents from different ethno-religious backgrounds have been eased. Turkish/history/geography teachers and vice-directors continue to be appointed by the state; however, implementation of this practice has softened. There have been developments in regard to the enrollment of guest students; however, this does not meet demand. In general, the vast majority of enhancements exist in practice alone and are lacking legal framework.
	Places of Worship	Construction and maintenance of places of worship was strictly restricted. In the meantime, many churches faced closures, attempts at renovation were obstructed, and construction of new churches was subject to meeting extreme requirements. Besides this, churches faced financial difficulties in having to pay electricity and water expenses, from which mosques were exempted.	Although the restrictions towards places of worship eased with the circular issued in 1999, the most significant step taken was the amendment of the zoning law, replacing the statements of 'mosques' with 'places of worship', and 'office of mufti' with the 'administrative chief'. Since then, numerous new churches have been approved, and the difficulties of renovating existing structures have substantially decreased. However, the law still has shortcomings and has led to closure of existing churches and disapproval of new construction.

Religious Instruction	Liturgy and other religious activities	<p>Christians were forced to renounce some of their rights to conduct religious practices such as religious marriage ceremonies. The celebration of certain religious days was performed either under police surveillance or cancelled on request of the government authorities. Apart from individual restrictions, organization of the church structure was subjected to state interference. Numerous activities of the patriarchates were restricted. Although the laws did not impose restrictions on proselytizing, conversions and other related religious activities, Christians were perceived as a threat to the unity of the republic.</p>	<p>Fewer incidents of police surveillance and cancellations of their liturgy services and other religious activities have been reported by Christian representatives. Religious organization of the churches faces fewer interruptions by the state but tension in this regard remains; in particular, the debate over ecumenicity of the patriarchate continues to create tension. Although authorities have made several symbolic statements condemning any assault on a religious basis, Christians in general, and individuals involved in missionary activities in particular, continue to be perceived and treated as a threat through both media and state institution publications.</p>
	Religious Education	<p>Religion courses in minority schools were prohibited while other schools provided state-led compulsory Religion and Ethics classes mainly focusing on Islamic culture. Many Christians reported that they were forced to attend these classes. The content of the textbooks used in these courses included misleading and discriminatory statements in relation to Christian minorities.</p>	<p>The religion course continues to be mandatory. There have been decline in cases where Christians have encountered difficulties in obtaining exemption papers, though the problem continues due to the persisting religion section on state-issued ID cards. The government announced that they would provide courses addressing alternative faiths upon the demand from particular communities; however, the requirement of minimum of 10 students for opening these courses is far from being realistic considering the population of Christians in Turkey. There have been steps taken in order to remove the discriminatory statements against Christians from textbooks used in Religion and Ethics classes; however, recent reports indicate that a number of discriminatory statements have been preserved.</p>
	Training Clergy	<p>Training of Christian clergy has been extremely restricted in Turkey. The <i>Halki</i> Seminary, which provided clergy for <i>Rum</i> Orthodox churches has remained closed since 1971. Other Christian denominations do not have theology schools; they send their clergy candidates abroad for training.</p>	<p>Training of Christian clergy remains restricted. The <i>Halki</i> Seminary continues to be closed. The reopening is subject to the reciprocity with Greece, from which Turkey demands easing of the conditions of Muslim clergy on their side of the border. Alternatively, the government has offered Christian denominations the possibility of establishing departments under theology faculties in state universities, which generally provide education in Islamic culture.</p>
Other Discriminatory Policies	State discrimination (<i>DİB</i> , threat perception of Christian individuals held by state institutions)	<p>Representing a controlled version of Islam, the existence of the <i>DİB</i> in Turkey was criticized and considered as a major source of discrimination against Christians in Turkey. The threat perception developed against non-Muslims led to a gradual decrease in the number of Christian individuals holding bureaucratic positions in institutions such as the judiciary, police, etc. The Higher Council of Minorities was established in the 1960s in order to monitor the activities of non-Muslim individuals and foundations.</p>	<p>In 2004, Article 90 of the Constitution was amended to underscore the superiority of international law. In 2010, the Prime Minister issued a circular reminding the authorities that non-Muslims are part of Turkish society. However, certain areas remained unchanged. The <i>DİB</i> continues to represent Islam and exclude other denominations. The Higher Council of Minorities was replaced with the Committee for Evaluation of Minority Communities' Problems. Other state institutions continue to list Christian missionaries as a threat to national unity.</p>
	Identity Cards	<p>The practice of obligatory declaration of religious affiliation on ID cards has resulted in discrimination against non-Muslim minorities.</p>	<p>Declaration of religious affiliation on Identity Cards became voluntary with the Law on Population Registration introduced in 2016. However, the existence of the religion category continues to act as a basis for discriminatory activities.</p>

Security Issues	Systematic assault against Christians occurred up until the 1970s as a part of Turkification policies.	A number of Christians have been killed and the derisory attitude of the state during investigation and judicial process has been subject to criticism.
Hate Speech	No legal framework existed to punish hate speech against Christians.	The law against hate crimes was introduced in 2013; however, acts of hate speech have remained unpunished as of writing.
Textbooks	Textbooks included negative misinformation on Christians. They were represented as traitors.	Some discriminative statements in textbooks have been removed or softened. However, Armenians and <i>Rums</i> continued to be presented as traitors.

4.5. Conclusion

The purpose of the above analysis in this chapter was to demonstrate the current status of Christians and their religious freedom in Turkey following the introduction of legal changes in existing laws and regulations. In concluding this section, it would be appropriate to question the extent to which these legal enhancements and their implementations have broadened religious freedoms for Christian individuals and their communities. In order to answer this question and comprehend the full scope of the transformation of religious freedoms, it would be helpful to have a quick look at Table 4.2, which summarizes the debate throughout this chapter and compares areas of religious freedoms in the pre and post-1999 periods.

As the Table 4.2 demonstrates, steps taken to enhance the religious freedoms of Christian are far from complete. For one, Turkey still has not signed the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities and the state preserves its reservations on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights for the rights of minorities of the United Nations. In regards to the recognition of Christians and issues related to their existence, the current framework remains inadequate in correcting damage done to Christian communities in the past. Recent legal adaptations remain inadequate for providing full legal personality for Christian congregations and complete restitution of their confiscated properties. The government continues to control the elections of foundation boards of Christian foundations and religious personnel of churches. The oppressive state policies over minority schools have been maintained. Moreover, difficulties continued to be encountered in regard to securing places of worship as well as activities of religious individuals and communities, especially in regard to missionary activities. Religious instruction has become one of the most restricted fields. Training

Christian clergy remains prohibited and public school religious education continues to be discriminatory. Last but not least, other discriminatory state policies such as the existence of an Islam-dominated *DİB*, a threat perception held against Christians, religion-based discrimination on identity cards and in textbooks, and security threat warnings about and hate speech directed at Christians have largely persisted. The latest international reports also touch on the insufficiency of the reform process. The most recent Commission reports indicated the lack of substantial steps leading to ‘limited progress’ in establishing a legal framework to protect religious minorities (European Commission, 2010). In a similar vein, the reports of the Freedom of Belief Initiative and the US Department of State have argued that a restrictive mindset has been preserved despite positive messages publically issued by the authorities referring to freedom of religion (DOS, 2013; Freedom of Belief Initiative, 2015).

On the other hand, Table 4.2 also demonstrates that, despite the lack of a comprehensive legal framework, there have been enhancements both in to the legal framework and in practice over the past decade. First of all, a dialogue process has been initiated between the government and Christian representatives, laws improving the legal personality of Christian foundations and their property ownership have been introduced, and pressure on minority school administrations have eased. Legal obstacles against building Christian sanctuaries were lifted and fewer difficulties are now observed in the performance of liturgy and other religious practices. Some of the discriminatory statements against Christianity in religion textbooks have been removed, and the difficulties in transferring religious clergy in the absence of Christian theology schools have been eased in practice, if not legally. Finally, a law concerning the punishment of hate crimes was introduced, and a portion of discriminatory statements used in history textbooks has been removed. As the analysis of the reform process regarding religious freedoms over the past decade suggests, the changes that have taken place in *practice* are just as important as the changes made in *law*. As a matter of fact, most of the changes observed in practice exist outside of the legal framework⁹⁷; this situation is one of the main criticisms coming from the Christian minorities. However, the legal arrangements introduced and positive steps taken in practice have been significant and equally welcomed by Christians who compare

⁹⁷ For example see above discussion on Ecumenicity of the Patriarchate.

their present situation with the status of the religious minorities since the founding of the Republic of Turkey.

In spite of all drawbacks, the developments that have taken place since 1999, when compared to the preceding era, gives researchers sufficient grounds for investigating the real dynamics that lie behind these changes. Therefore, having laid out clearly the debate over the scope and content of the transformation process presented throughout this chapter, the remainder of this study will focus on the analysis of actors and dynamics enabling the changes in respect to freedom of religion for Christian minorities of Turkey.

5. Understanding the Recasting of Freedom of Religion in Turkey post-1999

As argued in the previous chapter, though advancements *have been limited* in nature, Christians of Turkey had nonetheless attained considerable achievements pertaining to their freedom of religion and state-granted protection in comparison with their situation pre-1999. This chapter will provide an empirical and analytical exploration of external Europeanization theories in explaining the domestic shift in Turkey with regard to freedom of religion in order to gain a clear perspective of both this broadening of religious freedoms for non-Muslims and the recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion in post-1999 Turkey.

In fact, as discussed in the introductory chapter, the domestic policy shift in terms of the parameters of freedom of religion could be – and, in a few studies, has been – explained through various theories suggested in the literature. Taking into account the External Incentive Model (EIM) – which suggests the European Union (EU) accession process and the conditionality tool can work in a context where EU rules for full membership are clear and domestic costs and veto points for the implementation of change are low (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005) – the empirics outlined in this chapter will also indicate that EU conditionality has been an important (yet insufficient) determinant in explaining the domestic shift in the case of freedom of religion for Turkey's Christians. The absence of clear full membership guidelines combined with the existence of high domestic costs are significant factors explaining the state's inability to surmount the problems faced by the Christians of Turkey in the pre-1999 period. The importance placed on Europeanization was part of a unique path established by the founding cadres of the Republic of Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and, since then, has been regularly addressed as a part of the country's westernization project. Though the EU's legitimacy dates back to the 1950s, its effect on the issues relating to religious freedoms and Christians of Turkey has been minimal, especially in the period prior to Turkey's application for full EU membership in 1987. Understandably, the moderation in the state's approach towards Turkey's Christians observable in the second half of the 1950s while Adnan Menderes was in power did not survive long. This is partly due to the fact that the EEC had an 'inward looking' policy concerning human rights issues until mid-1980s and, partly due to the political instability in Turkey preceding the military coup in 1980 (Uğur,

1999, p. 216). Indeed, the EU did not establish certain and clear guidelines in reference to freedom of religion until the introduction of the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of Religious Minorities which, to an extent, continued to allow each state to set their own definition of 'religious minority' (Council of Europe, 1995). Apart from this, the European Commission deferred Turkey's candidacy status after the country's application in 1987. Therefore, until the very late 1990s there were not sufficient grounds for conditionality to function as Turkey did not have candidate status.

Nevertheless, the lack of resonance between EU and Turkey in terms of the protection of religious minorities had become obvious as the conditions of religious minorities worsened over time as a result of the restrictive interpretation of religious freedoms through the *Kemalist* ideology. The preservation of *Kemalist* principles – specifically, the principle of *laïcité* – resulted in the state ignoring religious communities, and specifically non-Sunni minorities, in public space.⁹⁸ Within this context, governments have not only been reluctant to resolve the problems facing religious minorities, but have also not taken any action to prevent difficulties and beaches of the law encountered by religious minority members and communities. Governments were either discouraged by veto powers to take any action, or became veto powers themselves.⁹⁹ Although Turkey's application for full membership to the European Economic Community (EEC) opened channels of political communication between Turkey and the EEC, the EEC's impact fell short of reaching a concrete outcome (Uğur, 1999, p. 227). The period after 1987 brought some relief for religious minorities, but it did not see a transformation in freedom of religion. Despite the emergence of the neo-Ottoman approach, which promoted positive views of the multiethnic and diverse religious texture of the Ottoman Empire during Turgut Özal's Presidency as of 1989 (Fisher-Onar, 2009; Laçiner, 2004), no concrete steps were taken to actually expand the freedom of religion for Turkey's Christians (Kurban & Hatemi, 2009, p. 13). A number of initiatives, which can be seen as small conciliatory gestures, were started by several policy makers. These included 'toleration' of the *Rum* Patriarch's using his Ecumenical title in an ecclesiastical meeting abroad (Milliyet, 1987) and 'door knocking' of non-Muslim voters during the election campaigns (Hürriyet, 1999). These actions, however, were no more than gestures and, consequently, Turkey's

⁹⁸ See the chapter on historical background.

⁹⁹ The rights granted to religious minorities under the term of the Democrat Party in the 1950s came to an end with the military coup in 1960. See the chapter on historical background for details.

Christians continued to experience restricted religious freedoms. To give an example, the establishment of religious foundations was impeded by law in 1998 (Radikal, 1998); and despite the worsening conditions of Turkey's Christians, government and state representatives continued to deny their ill-treatment, regularly claiming (falsely) that 'Turkey has always respected the implementation of rights granted to non-Muslims' (Hürriyet, 1998).¹⁰⁰

Although the lack of clear and consistent rules along with the lack of resonance relating to religious freedom and protection of minorities decreased the legitimacy of the EU as an anchor of domestic change in Turkey, the identification of societal actors and policymakers with the EU has remained significant since the 1980s, a phenomenon which has led several academic works to argue for the explanatory power of the Social Learning Model in Turkey.¹⁰¹ However, as the SLM suggests, domestic resonance in a particular policy area is as important as the legitimacy and identification hypotheses. As argued in the previous paragraph, the domestic resonance between Turkey and EU in terms of protection of religious minorities was very weak due to the restrictive interpretation of religious freedoms within *Kemalist* ideology in Turkey. In addition, societal demand for change in line with the EU model for freedom of religion, as another indicator of domestic resonance, has also been weak. Although westernization – or, put differently, integration with the European political system – has kept its place as the main goal of the Turkish political elite, this has not necessarily been reflective of public opinion and, in several cases, elites have had to push the public on certain issues (Şenyuva, 2006, p. 22).¹⁰² In a similar vein, while trust in the EU increased to 50 percent in 1997 (Esmer, 1999), a figure which may indicate a high societal request for change towards European values, Turkish society's indifference towards issues involving Christians and their lack of religious freedom was also observable in the polls, a fact that confirms the negative view of Christians held at the time. Indeed, according to the Turkey Values Survey conducted between 1996 and 1997, 61% of respondents stated that they could not be neighbors with Christians (Esmer, 1999).

¹⁰⁰ Original excerpt: 'Türkiye'nin gayrimüslim azınlıklara tanınan hakların işlenmesine her zaman riayet ettiğini'

¹⁰¹ See the literature review section in the introductory chapter.

¹⁰² Çiğrem Kentmen reminds readers that the public opinion literature suggests that one should not rely on elite opinions for future predictions in the case of candidate countries (Kentmen, 2008, p. 488).

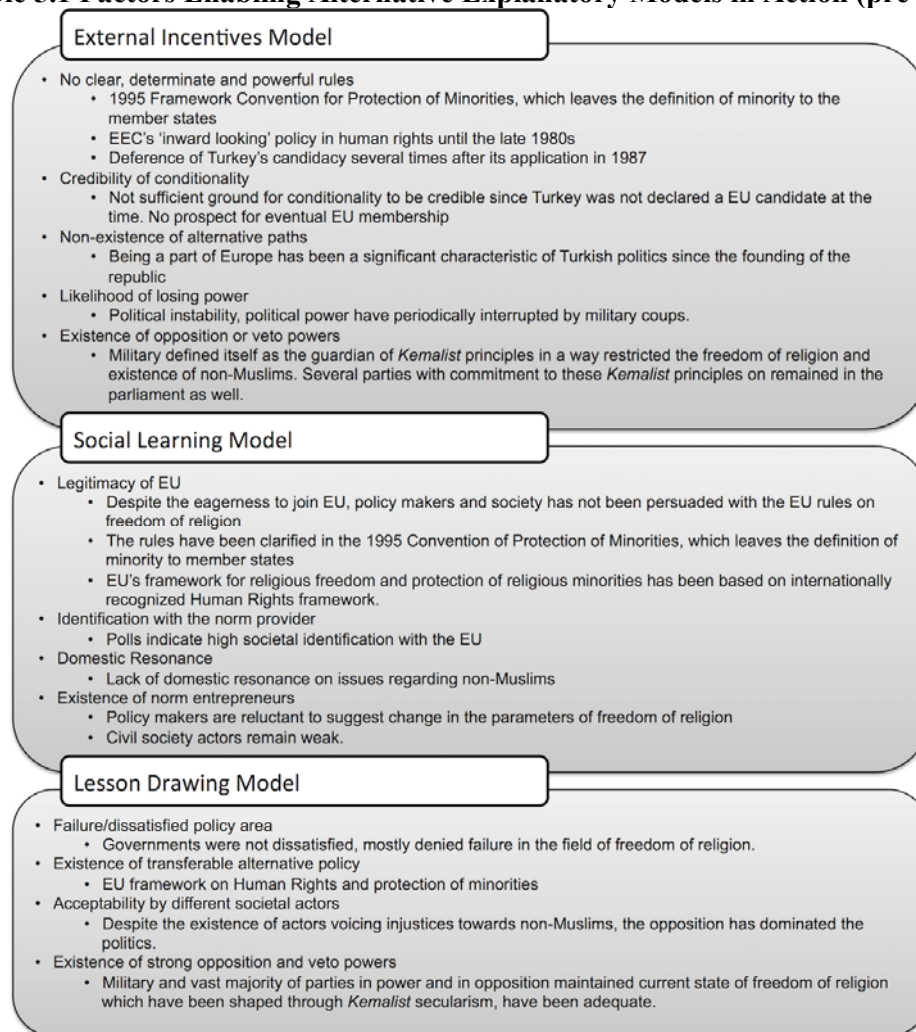
That being the case, Christians of Turkey, who would have been expected to act as norm entrepreneurs, were not able to voice concerns over their worsening status in this period. Their silence should not be taken to indicate a lack of problems in need of solutions, but rather the fear of the state's reaction. Moreover, civil-society organizations among Christians remained limited. Patriarchates and the boards of community foundations acted as the primary representatives of their communities in dealing with problems encountered by Christian minorities. In addition to the existing community foundations, some new community foundations – though certainly not many – were founded in this period. The very first steps of the Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation were taken in 1995 (Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation, undated). However, these few positive developments did not fortify Christians against their fears. From the perspective of the former representative of Community Foundations, the civil-society participation from the Christian community was so weak that it was carried on with personal efforts (Laki Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015). Vingas also confirmed the concerned mindset gripping Christians with the following words:

I am very happy to be the founder of *Feriköy Sanat ve Kültür Severler* Association at a time when we could not find anyone to deliver the founding declaration to the police headquarters.¹⁰³

Taking into account the lack of a political will to create a change in their status, the concerns of Christian minorities were not irrelevant. Considering that the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM) suggests that a certain policy change will occur if it is in the interest of the policy maker (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005), Christians could only expect change from a policy maker dissatisfied with a certain policy area given that policy makers were generally satisfied with the *status quo*. Despite the fact that non-Muslims had experienced short-term positive developments germane to their religious freedom under the term of the Democrat Party in the 1950s and Turgut Özal's Presidency in the late 1980s, a transformation process did not occur during either of these periods, as neither government could find the right context to reveal their dissatisfaction.

¹⁰³ Original excerpt: 'Feriköy Sanat ve Kültür Severler Derneği'nin kurucusu olmamdan dolayı mutluyum çünkü o dönem kuruluş bildirgesini bile emniyete kimse götürmek istemiyordu.'

Table 5.1 Factors Enabling Alternative Explanatory Models in Action (pre-1999)



The above discussion suggests that the political and social setting in the pre-1999 period did not provide suitable grounds for external Europeanization theories to function in a way that would stimulate change in regard to the protection of Christians and their religious freedoms. As summarized in table 5.2, Turkey has been eager to take the path leading to EU inclusion; however, the absence of clear and determinate rules combined with the risk of power loss in a destabilized political context with strong veto powers demonstrates the incapability of EIM in explaining the absence of domestic change in parameters of freedom of religion. Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge the capacity of other explanatory models prior to 1999. Despite the identification with the EEC/EU as a norm-provider sustaining internationally legitimate, clear and consistent norms enabling domestic change, the Social Learning Model (SLM) proves powerful in explaining the lack of reforms in the absence of both domestic resonance concerning protection of religious

minorities and policy makers and/or strong civil-society actors willing to create change, not to mention the non-presence of a political power convinced of the legitimacy of the European framework for protection of religious minorities. Moreover, the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM) is as coherent as the above-mentioned alternatives in predicting that, even if transferable policies exist, the transformation of the parameters of freedom of religion is not likely to occur in a context where there is not only strong opposition against the broadening of religious freedoms, but policy makers themselves do not espouse dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs.

Using the preceding period as a backdrop, the following sections of the chapter will analyze a time period in which, following from the framework presented in relevant literature, one would expect the external Europeanization theories to be at work. Thus, the remainder of this chapter demonstrate the motivations and actors behind the recasting of freedom of religion, testing the validity of theories of external Europeanization as applied to the protection of Christians. This will be done through employing an eclectically analytical approach analyzing three different time periods conventionally considered to be turning points in Turkey's democratization process: 1999-2005, generally seen as the period of successful European conditionality; 2005-2010, during which a slowdown in Europeanization and democratization was observed, and; finally, 2011-onwards, during which a sharp decline in democratization has been observed.

5.1. 1999-2005: Exploring the Potential of Europeanization

The 1999 Helsinki Summit at which Turkey was declared an EU candidate signified change in respect to the protection of religious minorities and broadening of their religious freedoms. Between 1999 and 2005 eight harmonization packages were enacted as a part of a legal adaptation process which can be described as the preparation phase before the European Council decided to commence accession negotiations with Turkey. The same time-frame also bore witness to changes concerning religious freedoms in Turkey, such as paving the way for the organization of the Law on Associations, which in turn led to easing of the conditions for registering community foundations, restitution of properties, and construction of places of worship.

As soon as the Helsinki Summit had concluded, EU conditionality came to be considered the main driving force behind Turkey's democratization process in general, and

developments regarding non-Muslims in particular. The rules were clearly defined in the Accession Partnership document signed with Turkey in 2001. The document's core was based on objective conditions for the start of the accession negotiations in terms of compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria (European Council, 2001). Although the document also included comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem as a subjective condition, progress reports prepared by the European Council also underlined the fact that:

Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States (European Commission, 2000, 2001).

Progress reports prepared by the European Commission have also set the expectations of Turkey that include protection of non-Muslims and freedom of religion under the sections of 'Human Rights' and 'Protection of Minorities', as part of the Copenhagen political criteria. Although the definition of 'minority' is ambiguous in the commonly referred to Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities signed in Strasbourg in 1995, with an agreement that left the definition of national minorities up to the signatory states (Council of Europe, 1995), progress reports have identified some of the problems faced by non-Muslim including differential treatment given to non-Muslims despite their recognition in the Lausanne Treaty, their lack of legal personality, issues related to property ownership and minority schools, places of worship, religious instruction, and liturgy and other religious practices (See Table 5.2 below).

Table 5.2. Issues Related to Turkey's Christians Mentioned in the Progress Reports – Actions Taken by the Turkish State in Response (1999-2002)

Freedom of Religion		Years				
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Recognition (General)	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	In June, a circular addressed to local authorities underlining the rights of Syrians of Turkish origin who had emigrated and inviting them to return their homeland was issued by the prime minister.	-	-
Legal Personality	Demand from the EU	✓	-	-	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	In August, the Law on Foundations was amended.
Property	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	With a circular issued in 2001, relatives of Non-Muslims who were forced to leave their homeland prior to 1924 were prevented from obtaining land registry records.	With the amendment of the Law on Foundations, community foundations have regained their right to acquire and dispose of property, and to register their property as long as they can prove their ownership.
Board Elections	Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
Minority Schools	Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-

Recognition of Christians and Issues Related to Their Continued Existence

Freedom of Worship	Places of Worship	Demand from the EU							
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Religious Instruction	Freedom of Worship	<p>In December a circular was issued to ensure that religious communities would not seek permission for restoring places of worship and buildings belonging to their charitable institutions.</p> <p>The government gave permission to the Syriac Orthodoxy to open a church in Istanbul.</p>							
		Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Discriminatory Policies	Religious Instruction	Demand from the EU	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other Discriminatory Policies	Places of Worship	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	x	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Discriminatory Policies	Hate speech	Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

In the light of guidelines underlined in the progress reports, Turkey introduced three harmonization packages between February 19, 2002 and August 9, 2002. These included the amendments to the Law on Associations and the Law on Foundations as well as changes made to several articles of the Constitution. Accompanying these legal adaptations aimed at broadening the rights of non-Muslims, state authorities took several symbolic steps, including official calls to non-Muslim minorities. For example, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit issued a circular in June 2001 extending an invitation to expatriate Syrian Orthodox citizens of Turkey to return to their homeland (Milliyet, 2001). Likewise, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's message to Christians on the occasion of Christmas in December 2000 and 2001 could be interpreted as a conciliatory gesture (Hürriyet, 2000).

It is possible to observe the impact of EU conditionality behind construction of this affirmative atmosphere towards Christians. Despite the fact that criteria included in the Accession Partnership document were of a subjective nature, the reform agenda was shaped around clear and consistent rules in the light of objective criteria and a determinate membership vision. European public support for Turkey's EU accession worked as another determinant strengthening EU conditionality. According to the Eurobarometer survey, Europeans' support for Turkey's membership rose during this period; while 29% of Europeans were in favor of Turkey's EU membership in 1999, this increased to 46% by 2001. Within the same two-year period, the percentage of those against Turkey's EU membership decreased from 47% to 34% (Euro-Barometer, 1999, 2001). Therefore, it could be expected that a Europeanization effect on domestic change 'motivated by the conditionality linked to the prospect of eventual membership' (Özçürümez & Şenses, 2011) also had an impact on the field of freedom of religion and issues related to Turkey's Christian communities. Indeed, most Christian representatives would agree that it could be assumed that the EU acted as the main facilitator with reference to the enhancement of religious freedoms of the Turkey's Christians during this first stage of EU candidacy (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2014).

Despite the existence of strong EU conditionality, however, a slow start in the transformation process of the rights of non-Muslims can be observed. As demonstrated by interviews conducted with representatives of the Christian community, most Christians did not experience any legal or behavioral changes in regards to their religious freedoms. Compounding the fact that the amendments to the Law on Associations and the Law on

Foundations created an insufficient basis for developing a comprehensive solution and left much to be resolved, regulations introduced in this term brought additional restrictions. Following a circular issued by the coalition government (1999-2002), relatives of non-Muslims who had been forced to leave their homeland prior to 1924 were subsequently prevented from obtaining land registry records (Milliyet, 2012c). The enhancements introduced also lacked an efficient system of implementation, which meant that the impact of the EU was largely limited to legislative changes (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). The general opinion of the Christian representatives interviewed for this study is that Christians did not experience any notable difference in the state of their religious freedoms during the early years of this term when compared to previous decades. As one representative of a minority community stressed, in this period the minorities continued to ‘experience difficulties in expressing their Christianity in public’ (anonymous, personal communication, November 11, 2013).¹⁰⁴

The main reason behind the slow pace of tangible change appears to be the reluctance of the coalition government of the Democratic Left Party (*DSP*), Nationalist Movement Party (*MHP*), and the Motherland Party (*ANAP*), as they generally were content with the *status quo*. Although institutional preparations, such as the establishment of the Secretariat General for European Union Affairs (ABGS) and preparation of the National Program for the adaptation of the *acquis*, were expected to take a long time (G. Yılmaz, 2014), the unwillingness of the government at that time to touch upon topics related to minorities (Ulusoy, 2011, p. 412) is difficult to overlook. Although the coalition government came to power with a pro-reform agenda, none of the parties was eager to enable the reforms following commencement of the EU accession process (Öniş, 2003). Many scholarly works also described the attitude of the coalition partners as ‘cautious’ (Narbone & Tocci, 2009) and ‘resistant’ (Keyman & Öniş, 2007). *MHP* and *DSP* nationalist reactions against the reforms were reflected in both newspapers and the parliamentary debate on reforms related to non-Muslim minorities. The coalition government’s resistance to the political reform process began right after the Helsinki Summit. At a cabinet meeting shortly after, the ‘Reference and Working Paper’, a document prepared by the subcommittee of the Supreme Board of Human Rights which included aims such as ‘taking the complaints of non-Muslims into account in the light of

¹⁰⁴ Original excerpt: ‘Kendimizi hristiyan olarak ifade etmek, mesela ismimi söylediğim vakit, sorunlarla karşılaşılırdık.’

the articles of Treaty of Lausanne'¹⁰⁵ and 'enabling non-Muslims living in Turkey to have free exercise of religion regardless of their minority status in the Treaty of Lausanne'¹⁰⁶ as one part of adoptions for the EU harmonization process in the field of human rights, democracy, and rule of law, was discussed. *DSP* and *MHP* politicians criticized these reform targets as misleading, stating that they created an image of Turkey where 'non-Muslims are having difficulties in free exercise of their religion'¹⁰⁷ and demanding the removal of the statements pertaining to non-Muslims from the report (Hürriyet, 2000b). Following on the heels of the enactment of the third reform package, the *MHP* requested the cancellation of the amendments to the Law on Foundations enabling non-Muslim foundations to possess properties (Radikal, 2002b), and consequently the regulation prepared according to the new amendment was suspended (Radikal, 2002d). The National Security Council, an institution through which the military exerted its control over politics in that period, also opposed the draft regulation after the amendment to the Law on Foundations was added, on grounds that a possible threat may emerge following an increase of non-Muslim foundations (Radikal, 2002e). In the meantime, the draft was sent to the Higher Council of Minorities (*Azınlık Tali Komisyonu*) and the constitutional court rejected the opposition of the *MHP* to annul the recent amendments (Radikal, 2002f).

Though there was potential for change in this period, the political power's unwillingness to act remained a serious obstacle to progress. Coalition parties cast religious minorities as an enemy of the nation. The resistance within the coalition government and their perception towards the amendments in the harmonization packages concerning the state's non-Muslim citizens as 'undermining our national culture with our own hands'¹⁰⁸ is documented in the debates reported in daily newspapers as well as in parliamentary records. To begin with, *MHP* parliamentarian Ahmet Çakar's reaction to the broadcasting of a movie¹⁰⁹ about the Capital Tax discriminatively imposed on non-Muslims on the national public television channel (*TRT*), and his assessment of this broadcast as inadmissible due to its potential to 'strengthen the enemy's hand' (Hürriyet, 2001a), reveals the negative perception of religious minorities and continuation of the

¹⁰⁵ Original excerpt: 'Gayrimüslim vatandaşlarımızın uygulamadan doğan yakınmalarının Lozan Antlaşması hükümleri ışığında incelenerek gerekli tedbirlerin alınması.'

¹⁰⁶ For the original quotation see Q13 in Appendix A.

¹⁰⁷ Original excerpt: 'azınlıkların dini vecibelerini yerine getirmeleri konusunda bir problemi varmış gibi'

¹⁰⁸ See the parliamentary speech of Mesut Türker, an MP of the *MHP*, on March 5, 2002 (21. Term 69. Session).

¹⁰⁹ Salkım Hanımın Taneleri (Mrs. Salkım's Diamonds) (1999).

status quo mindset. Intended continuation of the *status quo* and the perception of non-Muslims as a factor undermining national culture is also evident in the speeches of *MHP* parliamentarians in speeches subjecting the amendments to the Law on Foundations and the Law on Associations to debate:

A little later today we will discuss some of the amendments to the Law on Associations within the scope of EU harmonization packages. With the changes that will be made here it will be possible to establish a foundation which claims that there are minorities in Turkey that have differences on the basis of race, religion, sect, culture, or language... Great Atatürk and his comrades established the Republic of Turkey on the basis of national unity. The basis of this unity was religion, language, history, and culture. The religion of our nation is Islam.¹¹⁰

The Law on Foundations contains a threat to revive the *Fener Rum* Patriarchate, which has never given up the desire of being a state within the state and reinforcing its ecumenicity.¹¹¹

... with (this) proposal, opportunities that are provided for our foundations will be provided for minority foundations. Obviously, with the permission of the cabinet, our homeland is being sold through the registration of properties; namely, our homeland will be sold to Armenians, *Rum*, and Jews. Those who want to sell our homeland to Armenians, *Rums*, and Jews will not be forgiven by the history and Turkish nation.¹¹²

MHP parliamentarians were not alone in holding prejudices against the non-Muslims of Turkey. In her speech on the occasion of 78th anniversary of the Law on Unity of Education *DSP* parliamentarian Ayşe Gürocak expressed the prevailing view of the state against non-Muslims with the following:

With this law, all the science and education institutions have been secularized... Once again, thanks to this law, the minority schools, which had begun to go beyond their religious and cultural aims; [the students attending these schools] have been made eligible for living together and being the citizen of the same country.¹¹³

This antagonistic approach of the coalition government to non-Muslim minorities was also reflected in the EU progress reports. In 2002, the European Commission released the most comprehensive report relating to freedom of religious written over the past several years.

¹¹⁰ See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Ali Güngör, on March 21, 2002 (21. Term 77. Session). For the original quotation see Q14 in Appendix A.

¹¹¹ See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Mesut Türker on March 5, 2002 (21. Term 69. Session). For the original quotation see Q15 in Appendix A.

¹¹² From the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP İrfan Keleş on August 2, 2002 (21. Term 125. Session). For the original quotation see Q16 in Appendix A.

¹¹³ See the parliamentary speech of *DSP* MP Ayşe Gürocak on March 7, 2002 (21. Term 71. Session). For the original quotation see Q17 in Appendix A.

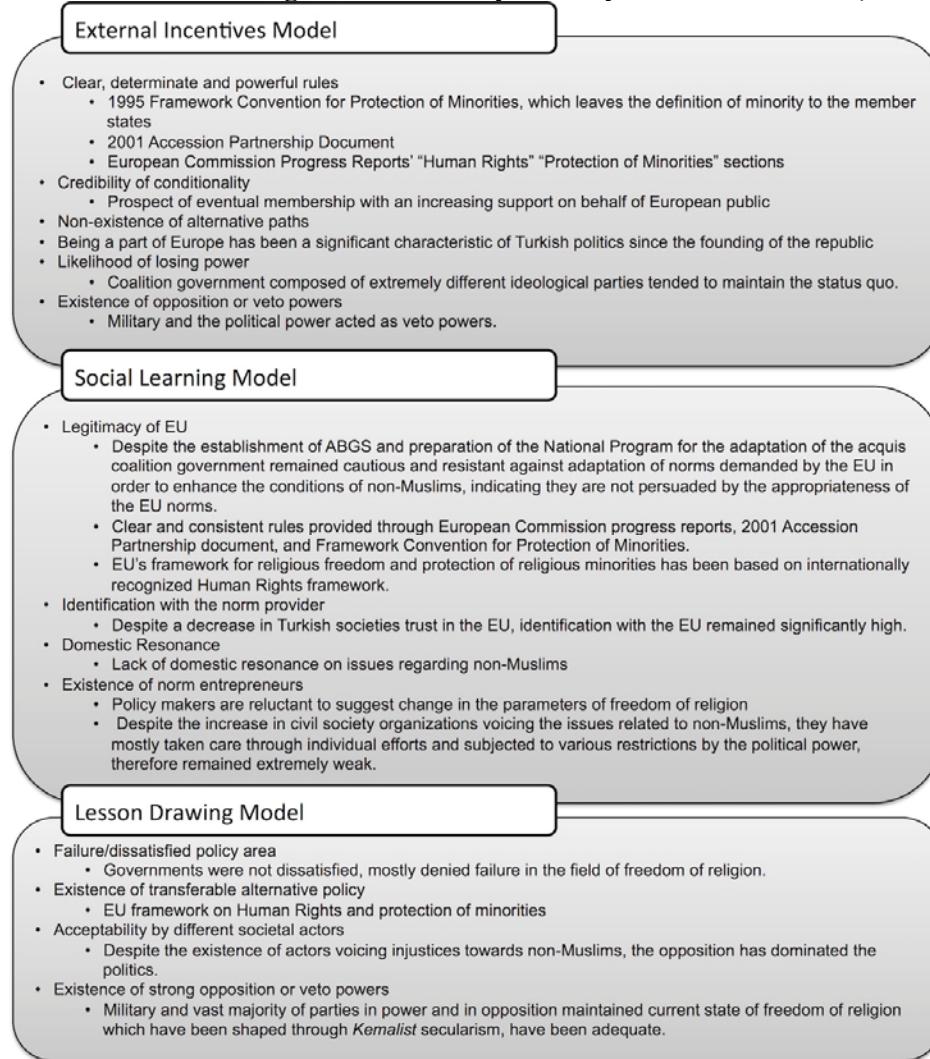
Although the report included positive comments concerning the permission given to the Protestant community to build a church in Diyarbakir and the initiation of a dialogue process, it also contended that there was ‘no adequate follow up’ to the dialogue process between non-Muslims and the government as well as noting that ‘two cases of confiscation of Armenian property in recent months’ had taken place (European Commission, 2002). Apart from this, while the positive response of the authorities to the Armenian Patriarch’s request for an opening of a Christianity department at the university level as a solution to the issue of clergy training was echoed positively, the insistence of the authorities to place this department under the *İlahiyat* faculties, the traditional domain of Muslim theologians, was criticized (European Commission, 2002).

Christians of Turkey have also confirmed the insufficiency and inefficiency of formal rule adaptation in the beginning stages of the EU accession process. The amendment to the Law on Foundations enabling religious minorities to obtain and restore their properties was not welcomed by Christians underscoring the insufficiency of the existing law to provide a true solution for Christian foundations (Radikal, 2002a). Christians also complained of the government’s inability to commit to more than a few symbolic gestures. Despite the existence of EU conditionality, Christians continued to experience difficulties to the extent that some communities have referred to the period between 1999 and 2001 as ‘the most difficult years’ (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). This was not surprising for many Christians who described the relationships between their communities and the authorities who disregarded the rights of non-Muslims as based on ‘suspicion and resistance’ (Laki Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013; anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013).

While most of the factors enabling the External Incentives Model to yield results remained limited in scope due to the reluctance of a coalition government acting as a veto power checking reforms that would have benefited religious minorities, the components of the Social Learning Model were weak in terms of leading to domestic policy change in this period. Although EU norms were appropriate, clear and consistent – in other words, legitimate – following the above analysis of the approach taken by the coalition government to issues related to non-Muslims during parliamentary debate, it is obvious that the policy makers remained unpersuaded by the EU’s freedom of religion package. It

is also possible to observe a decrease in the greater society's identification with the EU as surveys from this period demonstrate a 10% drop in trust in the EU after 1997 (Esmer, 2002). Although the 40 percent rate of trust in the EU is considered significant for some scholars, and these scholars therefore assumed that a strong societal demand would decrease the adaptational costs for democratization reforms (Çarkoğlu, 2004, p. 23), the Europe and Turkey Values Survey conducted between 2000 and 2001 revealed a continuing negative perception towards Christian minorities held among the population at large (Esmer, 2002). According to the survey, 52% of respondents did not want Christian neighbors. In addition, the political environment continued to be restrictive for norm entrepreneurs such as civil-society organizations. Mobilization among Christians was also weak, with the exception of the *Agos* newspaper. Publication of this newspaper began in 1996 with the aim of voicing the problems of Armenians within the Turkish state and raising awareness of their condition among the Turkish community at large as well as among Turkey's Armenians (Hrant Dink Foundation, undated). These years also saw the Protestant community becoming more organized. The Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation was registered in June 2001 (Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation, undated), at a time when other Protestant churches were being closed (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Similar initiatives continued within the *Rum* Orthodox community, although these initiatives were mostly undertaken with personal efforts (Laki Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015) and subjected to various restrictions by the state (anonymous, personal communication, July 27, 2015).

Table 5.3 Factors Enabling Alternative Explanatory Models in Action (1999-2002)



This picture presented above in which the legal adaptations for the protection or religious minorities and freedom of religion proceeded with the push of EU conditionality in the absence of either a willing government or societal support began to change following the Justice and Development Party (*AKP*)'s ascendancy to power in November 2002. At first, the *AKP*'s Islamic roots raised the fear of a possible emergence of an Islamic state among secularists and other groups within Turkish society including nationalists, civil-society organizations, the army, and religious minorities – particularly non-Muslim minorities. In the first couple of years, however, the *AKP*'s declared commitment to EU laws (Hürriyet, 2002b) signaled a process of broad democratization encompassing expanded rights of religious minorities. These expectations were substantiated in the *AKP*'s party program where it states the aim stated is to 'fulfill its promises in its relations with the EU and the

conditions, which the union demands of other candidate nations' (*AKP Party Program*, 2002).

The continuation of commitment to EU reforms by the new government stepped up the pace of the reform process and accelerated modifications in the legal infrastructure enhancing the conditions for Turkey's Christians in this period, as evident in progress reports (See Table 5.4 below). In this vein, amendments easing the conditions for Turkey's Christians were enacted for the Law on Foundations in the 4th and 6th reform packages. The Law on Associations was amended with the 4th reform package and, later in November, 2004, replaced by a new Law on Associations removing the statement discriminating against establishments aiming at promoting religion. Steps have also been taken concerning places of worship. The introduction of the new zoning law in 2003 with the 6th reform package, for example, made it possible to build Christian sanctuaries. These changes, passed as part of the five reform packages, also included new regulations on free electricity distribution for Christian places of worship, abolition of the Higher Council of Minorities (a secret commission tasked with monitoring religious minorities), redrafting of the description of Christianity in religion textbooks, and an amendment to Article 90 of the Constitution emphasizing the superiority of international agreements over national laws. Taken together, these changes intended to improve the conditions of religious minorities and meet the Copenhagen criteria.

Table 5.4. Issues Related to Christians Mentioned in the Progress Reports – Actions Taken by the Turkish State in Response (2003-2005)

Freedom of Religion		Years		
		2003	2004	2005
Recognition (General)	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	In November, the new Law on Associations was introduced, thus removing the restrictive Article 5.	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Legal Personality	Turkey's Response	With the amendments to the Law on Foundations and its implementation in January, the authority from which the community foundations are required to obtain permission in order to acquire, dispose of and register properties was changed. Foundations were now required to obtain permission from the DGF instead of the Council of Ministers.		
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Property	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Board Elections	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Minority Schools	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Places of Worship	Turkey's Response	In September, the term 'mosque' in Article 2 of the zoning law and its regulation was replaced with 'places of worship', thus allowing the construction and restoration of sanctuaries for non-Muslim religious communities.	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Liturgy and other religious activities	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Religious Education	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Religious Instruction	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓
Training Clergy	Turkey's Response	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓

Other Discriminatory Policies	State discrimination (<i>D/B</i> , recruitment to state offices)	Demand from the EU	✓	-	✓
Security Issues	Turkey's Response		-	The Higher Council of Minorities was replaced with the Committee for Evaluation of Minority Communities' Problems.	-
	Demand from the EU		✓	-	-
	Turkey's Response		-	-	-
	Demand from the EU		-	-	-
	Turkey's Response		-	-	-
	Demand from the EU		-	-	-
Hate speech	Turkey's Response		-	-	-
	Demand from the EU		-	-	-
Textbooks	Turkey's Response		-	In March, the government issued a regulation urging the removal of discriminatory statements on the basis of race, religion, gender, language, ethnicity, philosophical belief, or religion.	-
	Demand from the EU		-	-	-

Despite the rapid process of legal adaptation, there have also been considerable shortcomings in implementation, a fact mirrored in the progress reports. For one, the reports regularly revealed the inefficiency of the amendments to the Law on foundations in solving issues related to legal personality and property ownership. The 2005 progress report noted that, regarding property rights of religious minorities and previously confiscated properties, only 341 of 2285 applications had been accepted by the end of 2005 (European Commission, 2005a, p. 30). Moreover, the report criticized the rejection of the registration application of the Diyarbakir Protestant church, as this was contrary to the changes made to the Law on Associations in 2003 (European Commission, 2004, p. 44). The difficulties communities continued to face in restoration or construction of places of worship even with amendments to the zoning law replacing the term ‘mosque’ with ‘places of worship’ are also noted in the reports (European Commission, 2004, p. 44). In addition, the unenforceability of board elections and restrictions against the training of Christian clergy were also remarked upon in these reports (European Commission, 2003, 2004). The shortcomings of the legal framework and its implementation was summarized in the latest report of the European Commission before the start of the negotiation phase as follows:

With respect to freedom of religion only very limited progress has been made since October 2004 in terms of both legislation and practice... In practice non-Muslim religious communities continue to encounter significant problems: they lack legal personality, face restricted property rights and interference in the management of their foundations, and are not allowed to train clergy (European Commission, 2005a, p. 29).

Despite all of these negative factors, it was hard for Christians to neglect the real shift in state attitude. The government’s frequent meetings with representatives of non-Muslims on various occasions, such as of the joint appeal of non-Muslim communities in September 2003 (European Commission, 2004, p. 43); the prime minister’s visit to the *Nave Şalom* Synagogue after the bomb attack in November 2003; the opening of the *Surp Pirgiç* Hospital Museum of the Armenian Foundation in December 2004; and the Meeting of Civilizations in September 2005 were all welcomed by Turkey’s Christians. Christians felt valued within this dialog process (anonymous, personal communication, March 20a, 2014).

The affirmative atmosphere created despite the limited progress made in reference to the religious freedoms of non-Muslim’s of Turkey has been perceived as a direct result of

EU conditionality in a context where a clear and consistent set of expectations for full membership was provided by the EU to a government eager to take the necessary steps to fulfill the demands of the EU. The process continued along guidelines based on the Accession Partnership document and Commission reports, preserving the prospect of eventual membership. Against increasing support from the European public – by 2005 the proportion of those in favor Turkey’s accession to the EU increased by 20 percent as compared to 2002 (Euro-Barometer, 2006) – the *AKP*’s willingness to materialize the reform process when compared to the previous coalition government enabled EU conditionality to function and lead to domestic change in different policy areas. Despite the fact that the *AKP* signaled alternative inspirations – other than EU membership – in several statements, an issue which will be discussed later in this section, its commitment to the EU process made the EU the main anchor of the reform process (Öniş, 2012, p. 139). However, the *AKP*’s role in the continuation of the EU reform process was particularly prominent in the policy area regarding freedom of religion and Turkey’s non-Muslim minorities. Indeed, although the previous coalition government had amended the Law on Foundations, Turkey’s Christians had not felt its effects; the amendment only began to be implemented after the *AKP* came to power and sped up the implementation process. In the words of Laki Vingas, former representative of non-Muslim foundations, ‘Although the foundations of these laws had been laid by the Ecevit government, the *AKP*, at least, first, did not cease this system; and second, developed it’ (Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015).¹¹⁴

Although it was difficult to halt the momentum gained by the credibility of EU accession created after the 1999 Helsinki summit (anonymous, personal communication, July 16, 2015), the argument positioning the EU as the engine powering the transformation of religious freedom in Turkey does not reflect the whole picture. For one, the veto powers that slowed down the transformation process prior to November 2002 remained, and actually became more active following the change in the government, making their presence felt through demonstrating the existence of old state reflexes in various situations which overshadowed the transformation of freedom of religion at this stage. As one example, the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi - MGK*), which at that time was dominated by army officers, issued a circular on 7 April 2003 suggesting that the

¹¹⁴ Original excerpt: ‘Yapılanların temelleri Ecevit Hükümeti tarafından atılmış olabilir... ama AKP en azından bu sistemi bozmadı bir, daha da geliştirdi iki.’

state prevent the restitution of the non-Muslim's properties by suspending their applications on the excuse of detailed inquiry (Radikal, 2003b). Deep-seated bureaucracy could also be perceived as a veto factor as it constantly threw obstacles in the path of the implementation of the democratic reform process. Despite the existence of laws issued in respect to the restitution of the properties and opening of Christian places of worship, their implementation required top-down instructions from the ministries (Radikal, 2003c).

As described by Baskın Oran, this period witnessed intense resistance to change from both above by the 'deep state' and below by the nationalists (Radikal, 2004e). Despite identifying as a social-democrat party and supporting the EU reform process in general, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP*) held a *Kemalist* secularist mindset and functioned as a veto power against changes concerning freedom of religion and non-Muslim minorities (Alcan, personal communication, July 9, 2015). The parliamentary speech made by CHP parliamentarian Onur Öymen during the session discussing an omnibus legislation including the amendments to the Law on Foundations is a prime example in that regard. In his speech the *CHP* member criticized the changes enabling restitution of non-Muslim properties by suggesting 'reciprocity' between the Muslims of Greece and Christians of Turkey should be preserved and argued that the 'ecumenicity' title used by the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate should remain inadmissible. In Mr. Öymen's words:

Although the steps taken by the government in this regard are positive, there is also the other side of the coin that is the reciprocity principle... first you need to assert the rights of our kin in Greece... likewise we won't let the Patriarch use the [ecumenical] title, which was not bestowed upon him in Lausanne.¹¹⁵

In a similar vein, the *CHP* opposed the draft of the new Law on Associations which paved the way for religious groups to establish associations by propounding that 'associations that are based on ethnicity and religion... can create their subculture by rejecting the democratic national culture'.¹¹⁶ That is to say, after November 2002 the veto powers

¹¹⁵ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Onur Öymen on June 19, 2003 (22. Term 96. Session). For the original quotation see Q18 in Appendix A.

¹¹⁶ See the speech of *CHP* MP Mehmet Kesimoğlu on July 16, 2004 (22. Term 117. Session). Original excerpt: 'Etnik ve dinî temelli dernekler, vatandaşların, ulusun, ortak değerlerine olan bağlılığını kendi etnik ve dinî değerlerine doğru yönlendirebilirler. Bu tür dernekler, demokratik ulusal kültürü reddederek kendi alt kültürlerini oluşturabilirler.'

retained as strong a stance as they held during the term of the coalition government in their resistance to the broadening of religious freedoms of non-Muslims.

The fact that the reform process gained momentum in a context where the vast majority of factors enabling EIM (bar a shift to a pro-reform government) remained constant suggests that there may be alternative explanations for enabling EU conditionality to function. One of these alternatives, the Social Learning Model, has considerable explanatory capacity, but is weak when it comes to accounting for legislative adaptations enhancing the conditions for non-Muslims and broadening their religious freedoms at this stage. Continuation of the clarity, consistency, and legitimacy of EU norms as well as the fact that the identification of societal actors with the EU are higher when compared to previous decades (51-59%) in terms of 'trust in the EU' in 2004 and 2005 (Euro-Barometer, 2004, 2005), as well as the self-identification of the *AKP* with the commitment to the EU project during its first term in government leads researchers to acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of factors presented as indicators of domestic change were active. However, it is difficult to observe domestic resonance on the issue of rights and liberties of non-Muslim Turkish citizens. Although there is not enough evidence regarding the general perception among Turkish society towards non-Muslim minorities, looking at previous and later data from the Turkey Values Surveys (2001, 2007, 2011) it is possible to assume a continuation of the negative view held in respect to non-Muslims in Turkish society (Esmer, 2002, 2007, 2011). Nonetheless, it would be fair to argue that in this period there was an increase in the number of norm entrepreneurs. The government was relatively eager to introduce changes broadening religious freedoms. Christian communities also began to emerge as norm entrepreneurs by becoming more visible through their civil-society organizations. In addition to the Protestant and Armenian organizations that started up in the preceding years, the Syriacs in Istanbul established Mezo-Der to reinforce friendship and cooperation across ethnic and religious divisions (Süryaniler, not dated). Likewise, the *Rum* Orthodox community entered into the process of building a dynamic structure discussing contemporary issues facing their community (Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015). It is, however, also important to acknowledge that the mobilization of Christians was still in an incipient stage in this period and far from having an impact on policy changes or preventing the negative perception of non-Muslims within society at large.

Another alternative explanation requires consideration of a shift in the willingness of governmental actors with regards to the broadening of religious freedoms, which, this thesis contends, should be considered as significant a factor as both the EU conditionality and social learning mechanisms. The indicators of such a transformation took place in November 2002 and had visible effects on the process of transformation of freedom of religion in Turkey. Dissatisfied with *Kemalist* policies towards religion – given that, according to several scholarly writing, these policies had relegated the Islamist movement to the peripheries for decades (Radikal, 2004e) – the *AKP* introduced itself as a conservative democratic party and challenged the *status quo* by recasting the boundaries between religion and politics (Dinç Belcher, 2012). The *AKP*'s party program reflected a shift in the approach to religion, in taking a clear stance against the interpretation of religion as an enemy (*AKP Party Program*, 2002). The founder of the *AKP* and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had been *both* convicted for 'inciting religious hatred' for reading a poem in public *and* listed as a victim of the lack of freedom of religion by a US Department of State report in 2002 (DOS, 2002), defined what he called 'conservative democracy' during his 2004 speech at the American Enterprise Institute as a concept that meets modernity without neglecting religion:

A significant part of Turkish society desires to adopt a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition... an understanding of rationalism that does not disregard the spiritual meaning of life, and a choice for change that is not fundamentalist. The concept of conservative democracy...answers this desire of the Turkish people (Erdoğan, 2004).

In his speech Erdoğan also represented the *AKP*'s interpretation of religion as a sacred and collective value in a democratic society:

Religion is a sacred and collective value. This is how we should interpret it, how we should understand it. It should not be made the subject of political partisanship causing divisiveness. Therefore, it is important that conservatism – as a political approach which accords importance to history, social culture, and, in this context, religion as well – reestablishes itself in a democratic format (Erdoğan, 2004).

The above statements demonstrate the *AKP*'s divergence from the mainstream perception of secularism and signals their desire to challenge the perception of secularism embodied in *Kemalism* (Fisher-Onar, 2009). Early statements made by leading the *AKP* parliamentarians indicated that international standards for human rights, including the European Human Rights regime, were taken as a guide; an alternative model for

overcoming their dissatisfaction with secularist policies neglecting ‘the spiritualist meaning of life’. The 2002 party program clearly underscores the importance of the human rights standard and EU norms:

All the human rights standards in the international agreements that Turkey has interplead will be put into practice, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Paris Charter, and the Helsinki Final Act (*AKP Party Program*, 2002).¹¹⁷

In addition to the party program, Abdullah Gül, then vice-president of the *AKP*, stated the party’s aim is ‘to provide Turkey with high standards of democracy and freedoms’ after the 2004 EU Reform Monitoring meeting (Radikal, 2004a)¹¹⁸ and Prime Minister Erdoğan stressed the importance of the EU reform process in achieving this aim on several platforms during the party’s first term.¹¹⁹

Pairing the references to EU norms with the statements criticizing *Kemalist* policies towards religion, it would be fair to argue that the *AKP*’s ‘conservative democratic’ approach towards religion and their dissatisfaction with past treatment seems to have made the EU’s standards for human rights and religious freedom appear attractive. As some scholars have stressed, the ‘*AKP* seems to find the values required by the EU closer to the values that they themselves are trying to impose on the political agenda in Turkey’ (Doğan, 2005, p. 430). In one speech addressing to the nation, Prime Minister Erdoğan clarified the party’s reasons for choosing to continue the EU reform process. From Erdoğan’s perspective, ‘the factor that encouraged [the party] on the EU track is the possibility of people from different cultures and religions having the chance of coexistence, knowing each other, and co-enrichment within the scope of universal values’.¹²⁰ In parallel to Erdoğan’s explanation, there was a noteworthy emphasis on the ‘richness’ derived from ‘different faiths and cultures’ in the *AKP*’s election manifesto (*AKP Election Manifesto*, 2002).

¹¹⁷ Original excerpt: ‘Başta İnsan Hakları Evrensel Beyannamesi, Avrupa İnsan Hakları Sözleşmesi, Paris Şartı ve Helsinki Nihai Senedi olmak üzere Türkiye’nin taraf olduğu uluslararası sözleşmelerin insan hakları alanında getirdiği standartlar uygulamaya geçirilecektir.’

¹¹⁸ Original excerpt: ‘[Bizim bütün amacımız,] Türkiye’de en yüksek standartlarda demokrasiyi, özgürlükleri gerçekleştirmektir.’

¹¹⁹ See Erdoğan’s ‘Monthly Address to the Nation’ speech, November and December, 2003; Erdoğan’s speech in ‘İnsan Haklarında Yeni Taktikler Sempozyumu’ October 02, 2004, Ankara.

¹²⁰ See Erdoğan’s ‘Monthly Address to the Nation’ speech, December 2004; Original excerpt: ‘Ancak bizi AB yolunda asıl gayretlendiren faktör, farklı kültür ve inançtan gelen insanların evrensel değerler çerçevesinde bir arada yaşama, birbirini tanıma ve birbiriyle zenginleşme yolunda bir şans yakalaması ihtimali olmuştur.’

This emphasis on richness and coexistence of different cultures and religions heralded an inclusive approach towards Christians. The *AKP* began to underscore the need for dialogue, tolerance, and respect for minority rights (Özbudun, 2006), which in turn broke ground for steps to be taken to enhance Christians' right to freedom of religion. Indeed, instead of the negative attitude espoused by previous governments in facing non-Muslims, the *AKP* demonstrated a supportive attitude towards the democratic transformation process, including recasting religious freedom in Turkey in a way that would include different religious traditions. Prime Minister Erdoğan's recommendation 'not to be afraid of religious freedom' to the wife of former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, who had criticized the EU reform process saying that it 'causes our religion to be lost', was emblematic of this change (Radikal, 2007d).

Christian representatives who participated in the dialogue process also observed the lift of the threat perception once held against Christians and acknowledged the role of the *AKP*'s previous encounters with *Kemalist* secular policies as being as significant as the EU accession process. Although the EU has been largely perceived as the engine driving the democratization process (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014), the previous encounters between the Islamic tradition – upon which the *AKP* is based – and *Kemalist* secularism, which restricted their religious freedom by limiting religious activities in the private sphere on many occasions, made EU norms for freedom of religion attractive to the *AKP*. This was perceived as a significant motive explaining the changes that occurred after the *AKP* came to power (anonymous, personal communication, October 30, 2013; Alcan, personal communication, July 9, 2015; anonymous, personal communication, March 26, 2013). Therefore, the *AKP*'s conservative identity and its dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* secular setting appear to be two themes observed by the Christian representatives in their dialogue with government authorities (anonymous, personal communication, March 24 & November 25, 2013; April 22, 2014). According to a former representative of a Christian community, they came to believe that 'a real religious people would not harm' other religious people (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013). In the words of one priest, 'the AK Party gave a breathing space to oppressed people because the party itself was oppressed' (anonymous, personal communication, March 26, 2013)¹²¹ and 'did not ignore minority rights as other

¹²¹ Original excerpt: 'AKP ezilen olduğu için ezilen halka nefes aldırdı.'

governments did'¹²² (Anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013). Some Christian representatives even ruled out the EU as an anchor in the whole process as they had not witnessed any progress until the *AKP* came to power despite the EU being in the picture since the 1960s (anonymous, personal communication, March 23, 2013).

However, it would be naïve to evaluate this shift in the understanding of religious freedom as guided through intentions fully compatible with freedom of religion as understood in European terms. Despite the fact that the religious identity of the *AKP* led to positive developments in the attitude towards non-Muslim minorities, interactions with Christians contained traces of divergence from freedom of religion as understood within the Human Rights-centric European concept, indicating that recasting of the parameters of freedom was taking a different shape. It is possible to observe this divergence through the discourses of *AKP* politicians and publications and statements by the other state bodies, aiming to demonize certain religious groups which were not condemned by the government authorities. The Presidency of Religious Affairs' (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı – DİB*) publications against missionary activities are extremely noteworthy in this regard. *DİB*, as a state institution, continued to exhibit an attitude that prioritized Islam over other religions as well as presented Christian missionaries as threats to Turkish society. Proselytism and missionary activities have never been legally prohibited but as Ali Bardakoğlu (then head of the *DİB*) noted, he did include the prevention of missionary activities among its main objectives in office (Radikal, 2003a). The *DİB* also defined conversion to Christianity as an adverse event (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2003b) and listed precautions taken against the Christian missionaries in its 2003 Press Release:

The responsibility of the *DİB* in the face of missionary activities is to enlighten people and raise awareness to that issue. The Presidency not only enlightens people through preaching (*hutbe* and *vaaz*)... but also keeps in touch with the ministries and institutions concerning missionary activities (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2003a).¹²³

Government representatives not only avoided any public condemnation against the *DİB*'s anti-Christianity statements, they also maintained some restrictive reflexes adopted by the previous governments they had criticized of being overly restrictive towards religious freedoms. A mandate issued to public officials not to attend to a lecture by the *Rum*

¹²² Original excerpt: 'Bu hükümet azınlık haklarını diğer hükümetler gibi hiçe saymadı.'

¹²³ For the original quotation see Q8 in Appendix A.

Orthodox Patriarch in which his ecumenical title was emphasized can be used is one example (European Commission, 2003, p. 35). Moreover, the ‘minority report’ prepared by the Prime Ministry Human Rights Advisory Board containing a roadmap of Minority and Cultural Rights was declined by the government, as they did not want to provoke the opposition (Oran, 2004a). Although it is possible to ascribe the reluctance of the government in embracing the report to strong opposition from the army and traditional secular parties, both of which had supported closure of parties challenging state policies, statements by the Minister of Justice criticizing the report as ‘intellectual rubbish’ are instructive. Also relevant is the later organization of a conference on Ottoman Armenians during which state figures stated that Armenians ‘have stabbed Turks in the back’ (Radikal, 2008g), which sparked off questions concerning the commitment of the *AKP* to EU norms with regard to freedom of religion and protection of religious minorities. This ongoing uncertainty of process paved the way for some Christians to withdraw their support of the *AKP*, claiming that the *AKP* was a party composed of the same ‘yeast’ and was a continuation of ‘old political understandings’ (Radikal, 2004b).

Despite the continuation of certain old-state reflexes, however, the *AKP*’s inclusionary attitude towards non-Muslims of Turkey and the fact that it did not limit their references to EU norms and values in expressing this attitude formed a basis for a different sense of the state of affairs. From the very beginning, while underscoring that the coexistence of different cultures and religions as outlined in the EU model encouraged them to overcome their dissatisfaction with past treatment, they have also advocated other alternatives by revisiting the past. Prime Minister Erdoğan’s speech following the November 2003 bombings of the *Neve Şalom* Synagogue gave clues of such an approach in defining the *AKP*’s ideal civilization:

Our pure and clear Islam religion which says ‘the one who kills one person, kills the entire humanity’ cannot be used to describe any terrorist activity. Let me add this immediately: we should be as sensitive to the other people’s sacred values as we are to our faith, Islam. This is the civilization envisioned by our ancestors who themselves coexisted with every religion, every language, and every mindset. This is exactly what we understand as civilization.¹²⁴

The *AKP*’s sensitivity to coexistence under the umbrella of religious diversity is revealed in this quotation, but it also includes a remarkable reference to an ancestor. Examining

¹²⁴ See Erdoğan’s ‘Monthly Address to The Nation’ Speech, November 2003; For the original quotation see Q19 in Appendix A.

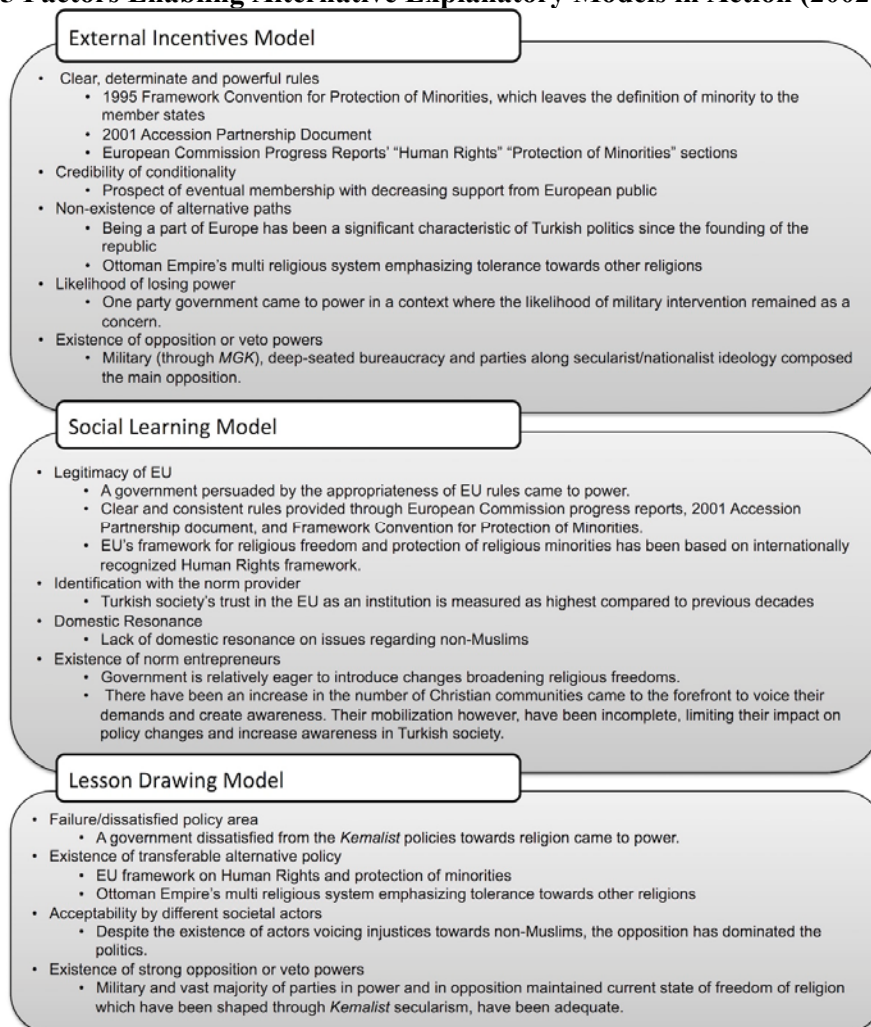
other statements made by *AKP* politicians one can easily identify the mentioned ancestor to be the Ottoman Empire, which provided non-Muslims a limited space for freedom under the authority of Islam. For instance, during the opening of a worship place including three sanctuaries – a mosque, a church, and a synagogue - the Prime Minister quoted from the edict the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II granted the Bosnian Franciscans in 1463:

No one shall disturb or give harm to these people and their churches! They shall live in peace in my state. These people who have become emigrants, shall have security and liberty. They may return to their monasteries which are located in the borders of my state. No one from my empire, whether notable, viziers, clerks, or my maids will break their honour or give any harm to them! No one shall insult, put in danger, or attack the lives, properties, and churches of these people! Also, what these people have brought from their own countries have the same rights... By declaring this firman, I swear on my sword by the holy name of Allah who has created the ground and sky, Allah's prophet Mohammed, and 124,000 former prophets that no-one of my citizens will react or behave in contradiction to this firman!¹²⁵

As suggested by the discussion above, the first stage of the transformation of religious freedoms between 1999 and 2005 was a period in which most of the fundamental laws were amended. Among those, the Law on Foundations, the Law on Associations, and the Regulation of Elections were changed in order to ease the conditions of non-Muslim minorities. There was considerable progress in lifting restrictions concerning places of worship and liturgy services; however, laws ruling over sensitive issues that should remain in the religious domain, such as the ecumenicity of the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate and the ban on the employment of clergy from abroad, were maintained. There were also improvements in respect to removal of misinformation concerning Christianity in textbooks for religious education, though problems experienced by minority schools continued to a large extent. Despite this limited progress, Christian representatives were generally satisfied with the developments in this period and content that they finally saw the beginning of a process that would solve problems that had been accumulating over the decades (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013). At the very least, the opening of communication channels between non-Muslims and the government was remarkable.

¹²⁵ See Erdoğan's speech in the opening ceremony of 'Garden of Faiths' on December 8, 2004, Antalya; For the original quotation see Q37.

Table 5.5 Factors Enabling Alternative Explanatory Models in Action (2002-2005)



In analyzing the dynamics that paved the way for these developments overall, the impact of the EU accession process is undeniably remarkable. The period between 1999 and 2005 represents an epoch marked by intensive formal rule adaptation through the guidance of progress reports. However, analysis suggests that the credibility of the EU and European institutions was crucial, yet limited, in terms of fully understanding the developments of this term. EU influence undeniably marked the process between the 1999 Helsinki Summit and November 2002, a period during which a coalition government was in power and the trust in the EU was high, but the dynamics of both Turkish society in general, and Christians in particular, were weak. Considering that this is a period in which Christians were viewed as undesirable neighbors, and Christian organizations surviving through personal efforts were very few in number, it could therefore be argued that there were not substantial conditions to actively push through a legal adaptation process. The social

environment was not only insufficiently fertile for the SLM to function, it was also not suitable for EIM effectiveness. As is clear in the analysis above, the high adaptational costs and presence of veto players blocked the process. It is important to underline the fact that the army was not alone in revealing itself as a veto player during this term. The coalition government and the bureaucracy's reluctance were also significant obstacles impeding efforts to broaden the rights of non-Muslims.

However, the lack of efficiency of the EIM between 1999-2002 helps us to understand which factors did enable the reform process in the period from 1999-2005. Comparing the factors enabling EIM before and after 2002 (see Tables 5.3 and 5.5), it is possible to observe that there was not much change except for the relative stability achieved after the single party government came to power. It is also possible to observe the emergence of the Ottoman model as an alternative path. This leads us to conclude that EIM remains insufficient to fully explain the activation of the reform process on its own. Although societal demand for the broadening of freedoms for non-Muslims remained low, we bore witness to the incipient signs of non-Muslim civil-society organizations. In addition to this – and perhaps more vital for this term – the change in political power had a positive impact on the transformation of freedom of religion. A party with an ideological past rooted in political Islam which had previously been excluded from politics by *Kemalist* secularism demonstrated an inclusive approach towards non-Muslims in general and Christians in particular. In its struggle with *Kemalist* principles, it adopted a positive attitude towards European values, bringing human rights to the forefront particularly in terms of freedom of religion. The attractiveness of EU values concerning human rights and freedom of religion for the *AKP* both enabled creation of a context where EU conditionality could function effectively and created suitable conditions for the LDM to function. *AKP* references given to the EU in the reform process of religious freedom in this period signified that the role of the EU was not solely that of a push factor enabling EU conditionality, but it was also an attractive model for the *AKP* to draw upon in the area of religious freedom. Given that Turkish society's trust in the EU and the perception of Christians among the general public as well as the impact of the veto powers remained unchanged, the *AKP*'s dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* approach to religion favorably cast the EU and the norms it embodied. Nevertheless, it would be fair to argue that, at this point, the *AKP* did not take the European idea of freedom of religion for granted. Indeed,

as interviews and the analysis of discourse above suggest, the Ottoman idea of ‘toleration’ of diversity was picked up by leading politicians in speeches in which they reflected their interpretation of the European idea of freedom of religion. Although such examples referring to the Ottoman system of tolerance of religious minorities are not frequent in this period, use of references to both the European Human Rights and the Ottoman Empire’s multi-religious system tolerant of other religious traditions signals a divergence from the EU values, which leads us to conclude that an emulation of the European perception of freedom of religion as interpreted in the light of the Ottoman past became a the central motive behind reforms respecting non-Muslim minorities.

5.2. 2005-2011: Achievements and Setbacks in The Pace of the Reform Process

Starting with the accession negotiations in October 2005 there was a general slowdown in formal rule adaptation. Most scholars assessing the pace of the democratization process have remarked upon this clearly observable deceleration and credited both the *AKP* and the EU for this result. While the *AKP* experienced ‘reform fatigue’ due to their continuous struggle with veto powers (Patton, 2007), the decrease in the credibility of conditionality during this term derived mainly from the addition of new conditions not related to the Copenhagen criteria. Cyprus’ entry to the EU and debate over Turkey’s possible ‘privileged partner’ status (as an alternative to full membership of the EU) came to the table, and therefore substantially diminishing the ‘push effect’ (G. Yılmaz, 2014).

These new developments, however, do not seem to have fully halted the steps taken to broaden the space of religious freedom for Christian minorities. Despite the slowdown, an increase in the government’s focus on issues related to religious minorities was still observable. From the perspective of the vast majority of the Christian representatives, non-Muslims did not experience a slowdown in improvements with regard to their status vis-a-vis the state and society (Alcan, personal communication, July 9, 2015; Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015). Some communities, on the other hand, did not observe any difference in the pace of the reform process – neither acceleration nor slowdown - until late 2007 (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Nonetheless, significant regulations were passed by the parliament in this term. In November of 2006 the Law on Demographic Services was issued, allowing the religion section on identity cards to be

changed upon written request (European Commission, 2007, p. 16). In February of 2007, the new Law on Private Education was issued (Official Gazette, 2007) ‘reconfirm(ing) the right of non-Muslim minorities... to hold [i.e. convene] minority schools’ (European Commission, 2007, p. 21). Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior issued a circular in June of 2007 underlining the equality principle in the Constitution as well as freedom of religion (Radikal, 2007b). Likewise, Prime Minister Erdoğan’s 2010 circular urged bureaucratic units and local authorities to implement the new regulations passed as a part of the democratization process (Radikal, 2010c; Official Gazette, 2010). Last but not least, the new Law on Foundations was passed in February 2008 and its regulation was prepared over the following months (Radikal, 2008b).

Apart from the legal adaptation process, the actual implementation of laws and regulations began to bear results in this term. Jehovah Witnesses and the Protestant Church in Diyarbakir, for example, were finally approved as associations (European Commission, 2006, p. 15). In addition, the restitution of properties gained speed following the introduction of the new Law on Foundations in 2008. Quoting from the 2010 Progress Report, ‘a total of 1,410 applications for restitution were submitted by 107 foundations. To date, 131 positive decisions have been given, while another 150 requests were met without taking the cases to the Foundations Council’ (European Commission, 2010, p. 30).

The dialogue process between the government and Christian minorities was intensified in this term. Representatives of Christian minorities met with government authorities on occasion (European Commission, 2006, 2007, 2009; Taraf, 2009b) and these gatherings yielded concrete results. For example, the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s applications for work permits for foreign clergy began to gain approval from the Turkish state after 2008 (European Commission, 2008, 2009). Prime Minister Erdoğan’s declaration that the ‘Ecumenicity of the *Rum* Patriarchate is an internal issue of Orthodox Christianity’ implying that it ‘should not be a matter on which the state should rule’ (Radikal, 2008a) was also perceived as a positive step at the time (European Commission, 2008, p. 19). Furthermore, there were efforts to employ non-Muslims in the bureaucracy. For the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, a Turkish citizen of Armenian origin was given the chance to be employed as a civil servant in the office of the Secretary-General for EU Affairs (EUSG) (Taraf, 2011b). The European Commission also observed

this progress in progress reports, mentioning an ongoing debate on minority related issues initiated ‘under the auspices of the government’ (European Commission, 2009, 2010).

Nonetheless, several events have overshadowed these positive developments. For one, news reporting attacks on Christians and their places of worships increased. The European Commission regularly reported attacks on Church buildings (European Commission, 2007, p. 16). In addition, several non-Muslim citizens were found dead in their houses (Radikal, 2008c). Even worse than this, several serial assaults and assassinations were undertaken against prominent Christian figures. First, a Catholic priest was killed in February 2006; following this, the ethnic Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink was assassinated in January 2007, the same year as the brutal execution of missionaries in Malatya in April. Last but not least, a Protestant pastor was attacked in 2008. The state was blamed for not taking due precautions as well as actually promoting hostility towards Christians. The *DİB*’s hostile attitude towards missionary activities was also reflected in Progress Reports (European Commission, 2006, p. 15). *Sarı Gelin* (Blonde Bride), a documentary distributed to public schools, also created controversy among the Armenian community. Although the Ministry of National Education suspended the documentary, which included a discriminatory approach towards Armenians, the decision of whether or not to use it for educational purposes was left to local school authorities (European Commission, 2009, p. 28). A case was also filed against two missionaries accused of ‘inciting hatred and hostility’ and ‘insulting Turkishness’ on account of their missionary activities undertaken to spread Protestantism in 2008 (Bianet, 2010).

In addition to these adverse events expressing hostility towards the non-Muslim population, the insufficiency of amendments as well as uncertainties experienced during the implementation of legislative changes formed a source of concern among Christian representatives who managed the reform process on behalf of their communities. Although some religious minorities interpreted the insufficiency of the amendments as a ‘burst of the suppressed problems of the non-Muslims, which have accumulated over decades’ (Vingas, personal communication, November 20, 2013),¹²⁶ uncertainties faced in practice were significant in that they demonstrated the limited state of the reform process. Despite the Law on Associations having paved the way for religious communities to be legally organized as associations, Protestant churches began to struggle with court cases to register

¹²⁶ Original excerpt: ‘Azınlıkların sorunları birikmiş. Patlıyor şimdi.’

their communities (European Commission, 2009, p. 22). The law that enabled voluntary changes to be made to the religion section on ID cards was also found insufficient, since the inclusion of the religion section itself on ID cards was perceived as a potential source of discrimination (European Commission, 2009, 21). Moreover, the removal of restrictive statements towards minority schools in new Regulation on Private Schools caused dissatisfaction, since the statement was kept in the Law on Private Schools (Official Gazette, 2007). The new Law on Foundations was also a disappointment as it did not address previously seized properties, those properties sold to third parties, and the properties of merged foundations (Bianet, 2008). Therefore, the restitution of the *Rum* Orphanage for Boys and *Mor Gabriel* Monastery was a very extended process (European Commission, 2009).

A quick look through the European Progress Reports would be sufficient to observe the continuation of the role EU conditionality played in the reform process in this term. Progress Reports underline the reform-seeking aspects in regard to non-Muslim minorities item by item. Most of the improvements took place in step with the suggestions in the reports (See Table 5.7). The deputy chairman of the *AKP* at the time also highlighted the motivating factor behind the reforms regarding non-Muslim minorities as the EU accession process (Radikal, 2006a). In addition to this, the renewed accession partnership document also laid down a foundation for the rights of non-Muslim minorities as an area in which further reforms were expected (Radikal, 2005c).

Table 5.6. Issues Related to Christians Mentioned in the Progress Reports – Actions Taken by the Turkish State in Response (2006-2010)

Freedom of Religion		Years				
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Recognition (General)	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	The Ministry of Interior issued a circular in June ensuring freedom of religion for non-Muslim Turkish citizens.	-	-	-
Legal Personality	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	In February, the new Law on Foundations was adopted.	-	-
Property	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	In February, the new Law on Foundations was adopted	-	In May, a circular was issued by the Prime Minister urging authorities to pay attention to issues faced by non-Muslims of Turkey, including the protection and maintenance of their cemeteries by municipalities, implementation of court decisions in favor of non-Muslims foundations at title-deed registry offices, as well as taking legal action against hate speech directed at non-Muslim communities. In November, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was given the land deeds of the <i>Büyükkada</i> orphanage.
Board Elections	Demand from the EU	✓	-	-	-	-
Minority Schools	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Places of Worship	Turkey's Response	-	In February the new Law on Private Education was introduced.	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	-	✓	-	✓	✓
Free	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-

Liturgy and other religious activities		Demand from the EU				
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	In August the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was given permission to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of the Dormition of Theotokos at the Soumela Monastery in Trabzon. In September the Armenian Patriarchate was given permission to perform religious service at the Armenian Holy Cross church on Akhtamar Island in Lake Van. 14 members of the <i>Rum</i> Orthodox clergy were granted Turkish citizenship by Turkish authorities.
Religious Instruct	Demand from the EU	-	-	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	x	-	x	-	-
State discrimination (DİB, recruitment to state offices)	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	In April, voluntary declaration of religious affiliation ID cards became possible with changes in the Law on Demographic Services.	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Security Problems		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hate speech	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Textbooks	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-

However, it would be fair to argue that ECtHR decisions played a real part in pushing the process in this term. As Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin declared during a debate over the draft of the new Law on Foundations in 2006, the reason behind the amendments of these laws was the decisions of the ECtHR, as these put Turkey under the obligation of paying compensations (Radikal, 2006b). Indeed, the properties of *Fener* Boys High School Foundation could only be returned after the cases were brought to the ECtHR (*Fener Rum Erkek Lisesi Vakfı v. Turkey*, 2007). The *Fener* decision by the ECtHR set a model for the restitution of *Yedikule Surp Pirgiç* Armenian Hospital (*Yedikule Surp Pirgiç Ermeni Hastanesi Vakfı v. Turkey*, 2008). Similarly, restitution of the *Rum* Orphanage in *Buyukada* took place after the ECtHR ruling in 2010 (*Ecumenical Patriarchy v. Turkey*, 2010). Moreover, the ECtHR decision in 2009 paved the way for the establishment of the *Kurtuluş* Protestant Church foundation (*Özbek and Others v. Turkey*, 2009). Although several ECtHR decisions have yet to be implemented - such as the 2007 ECtHR decision against the compulsory religion course (*Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey*, 2007) and the 2010 ECtHR decision demanding the removal of the religion section from identity cards (*Sinan Isik v. Turkey*, 2010). ECtHR decisions proved to be highly effective for both rule adaptation and its practice. In the words of one respected figure in the Christian community, ‘nothing happens when you do not take your case to the ECtHR’ or ‘they simply do justice in order to avoid the compensations’ (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013).¹²⁷

The fact that the enhancements took place with the guidance of progress reports and ECtHR decisions would seem to favor the External Incentives Model. However, taking into account the context in which these improvements took place directs us towards a different conclusion. First of all, although progress reports and ECtHR decisions proves that rules referring to freedom of religion and non-Muslims were clear and determinate in this term, as earlier scholarship has demonstrated, the reform process continued in a context where EU credibility within the general democratization process was assumed to be low since the reward for implementing reforms had become ambiguous (G. Yılmaz, 2014). This ambiguity was derived from the increase in the EU’s emphasis on subjective criteria, which was mainly due to the Turkey’s stance against the extension of the customs

¹²⁷ Original excerpt: ‘son anda muhtemelen AİHM’den ağır bir ceza geleceği durumlarda kendilerinden bazı hakları iade ediyorlar.’

union to new EU member states, specifically the Republic of Cyprus; and the question of EU's absorption capacity coupled with the necessity of European public support for enlargement. EU authorities began to emphasize these factors in order to underline the fact that the negotiation process was open-ended, thus implying the absence of a guaranteed outcome (European Commission, 2005b). Indeed, European public support remained low from 2005 onward. According to the Eurobarometer survey, European support for Turkey's EU membership measured extremely low, hovering around 28%-31% between 2006 and 2010 (Euro-Barometer, 2006, 2008, 2010). Therefore, it would be appropriate to argue that the prospect of eventual membership promised since 1999 was shattered in this term. Against the implementation of subjective criteria, the *AKP* began to underline the fact that the EU was not *the* singular path for the democratization process. As will be discussed later in this section, references to their Ottoman ancestors' tolerance was emphasized just as much as references to EU norms, especially referring to the rights of non-Muslims in Turkey.

It is also important to take into account the strong opposition and intensification of veto powers, as both increased the likelihood of the *AKP*'s loss of power in this term. The main opposition party, the bureaucracy, and the army continued to act as the main veto powers in this term. The military, for example, took a clear position in releasing its report on missionary activities in Turkey in 2006 and demanding legal regulations against such undertakings (Radikal, 2007c). In 2007 the Turkish Armed Forces reinforced their opposition to the *AKP* and their policies 'undermining the fundamental values of Turkish Republic notably secularism' through a declaration published on their official website, in a move that was perceived as an electronic coup over the following days (Hürriyet, 2007c; Radikal, 2007d). The 'e-coup' caused unrest among prominent *AKP* leaders, who retained their concern of a possible military intervention (Sever, 2015). In addition to the army, the Presidency formed opposition against the government's policies concerning the rights of non-Muslims. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer rejected the supplication for an official request for a visit from Pope Benedict XVI, who had demanded an official request from the Ecumenical Patriarchate before he sent a request to the Turkish Presidency. This was interpreted as the recognition of the Ecumenicity of the Patriarchate, and therefore recognition of his international status. The Turkish president's reaction was perceived as a non-approval of improvements with regard to freedom of religion when taken together

with his veto on the draft of the new Law on Foundations in 2006, which he gave on the grounds that ‘new law will pave the way for these foundations to attain economic and political power which does not exist in the Treaty of Lausanne and the prologue of the 1982 Constitution indicates that no act can be protected in the expense of the Turkish national interest... [and the] historical and spiritual values of Turkism’ (Radikal, 2008d).¹²⁸

The debate over the draft of the new Law on Foundations received severe criticism from the opposition parties as well. One line of argument taken by the main opposition party, the *CHP*, was the non-existence of discrimination against Turkish citizens based on their background. *CHP* parliamentarians underlined that ‘according to our Civil Law, there is no difference between me [him] and Vasilaki in Istanbul who is a Turkish citizen regardless of his origins of whether he is minority or majority’,¹²⁹ and purported that any opinion to the contrary may reveal the desires for the ‘division of society into compartments.’¹³⁰ The parliamentary debate revealed that the restrictive approach towards non-Muslims had been preserved among the opposition. Although many parliamentarians stressed the fact that non-Muslims are their ‘brothers who produce together and share the same worries and pride’,¹³¹ as them, some of them felt the need to remind opponents that separatist movements are the ‘product of the *Halki* Theology School’,¹³² and others accused the government of ‘setting the problems of artisans and peasants in order to restitute the properties of Agop.’¹³³ Concerns of ‘an establishment of an Ecumenical Orthodox state along with the Golden Horn, similar to the Vatican’ (Radikal, 2008e)¹³⁴ were also expressed in the parliament as politicians compared the draft law with the certain articles of the Treaty of Sevres, which Turkish government ‘ripped off signing the Treaty

¹²⁸ For the original quotation see Q20 in Appendix A.

¹²⁹ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Orhan Erasan, on November 1, 2006 (22. Term 13. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Medeni Yasa’mız açısından hiçbir fark yoktur, tam bir eşitlik söz konusudur, tam bir eşitlik söz konusudur.’

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Haluk Koç on November 1, 2006 (22. Term 13. Session). For the original quotation see Q21 in Appendix A.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Ali Meral on October 31, 2006 (22. Term 12. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Ne olacak? Agop’un mallarını vereceksiniz. Gözünüz aydın, tebrik ederim sizi. Esnafı bir tarafa bıraktınız, Köylüyü bir tarafa bıraktınız, işçiyi bir tarafa bıraktınız, çiftçiyi bir tarafa bıraktınız Agop’un işiyle uğraşıyorsunuz.’ Preference for the name Agop needs an explanation at this point in order to clarify the significance of the quotation, as Agop is a *Rum* Orthodox name.

¹³⁴ Original excerpt: ‘Tıpkı Vatikan gibi... Haliç’in kıyısında, bir ekumenik, Ortodoks küçük bir din devletçisi oluşturacaklar.’

of Lausanne.’¹³⁵ Warning the government about the fact that these ‘articles of the Treaty of Sevres are being put into practice’ with the introduction of the new Law on Foundations¹³⁶, opposition politicians often portrayed non-Muslims as posing a threat to national unity. The following statements by *CHP* and *MHP* parliamentarians over the *Rum* Patriarchate are demonstrative:

The *Fener Rum* Patriarchate will transfer the properties on them by using different names; Like the Vatican, they will try to declare their reign over land.¹³⁷

Dear parliamentarians, the right to possess limitless land entitled to foundations may lead to very adverse events. For example, a foundation which would be established by the *Fener Rum* Patriarchate on the local status could purchase land in Istanbul Balat, in the center of Istanbul, with a huge amount of aid coming from abroad. Did you consider that? Likewise, do you understand why some funds from the European Union are already being used in restoration of the buildings in Balat – and not somewhere else?¹³⁸

Some parliamentarians, on the other hand, were concerned that the government had supported the improvement of the conditions of non-Muslims in a way they perceived would ‘make their ancestors to turn in their graves.’¹³⁹ While *MHP* parliamentarian Osman Durmuş derided the government representatives, shouting at them that ‘You are defending the church foundations, beware of the God!’¹⁴⁰, another *MHP* parliamentarian reminded them of the will of Mehmet II, who had declared that *Hagia Sophia* would remain a mosque until eternity, asking the government ‘if (they) meant to open *Hagia Sophia* as a church for all those years they were promising to open it as a place of worship’.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the broadening of religious freedom with the introduction of these laws was in and of itself presented as a dangerous development by the opposition parties. What was

¹³⁵ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Onur Öymen on November 1, 2006 (22. Term 13. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Sevr Antlaşması’nın 151’inci maddesine göre, ...’Türkiye de buna aynen uyacaktır.’ diyor. Değerli arkadaşlar, biz, Lozan’da bu maddeyi yırttık.’

¹³⁶ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Halil Ünlütepe on January 29, 2008 (23. Term 55. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Lozan Antlaşması’yla işlevsiz hâle getirdiğimiz Sevr Antlaşması hükümleri sanki yeniden uygulamaya sokuluyor gibi geliyor.’

¹³⁷ See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Erkan Akçay on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Fener Rum Patrikhanesi, çeşitli isimler altında Patrikhane etrafında aldıkları taşınmazları kendi üzerine geçirecekler, Vatikan misali toprak boyutunda ekümeniklik hükümlerini ilan etmeye kalkışacaklardır.’

¹³⁸ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Birgen Keleş on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session). For the original quotation see Q22 in Appendix A.

¹³⁹ See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Mehmet Şandır on January 29, 2008 (23. Term 55. Session) and *CHP* MP Oktay Vural on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session).

¹⁴⁰ See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Osman Durmuş on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session).

¹⁴¹ See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Mustafa Kalaycı on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Yıllardır “Ayasofya ibadete açılsın.” dediniz. Yoksa Ayasofya’nın kilise olarak mı açılmasını istiyordunuz?’

truly happening, according to some parliamentarians, was that ‘the foreign organizations shaped around the churches and schools are being carried to present under the name of foundations.’¹⁴² *CHP* parliamentarian Rahmi Güner’s speech was representative of this fear:

My dear friends, this ecumenicity system is not something simple. It is the organization of the Orthodox peoples in the world and [this is] the restitution of properties of *Rum* foundations to these community foundations. In my city, there are 8-10 foundations similar to this. Are we going to restitute these foundations? Are we going to concede them my dear friends? If this law passes, all of these will be in danger. Look, if the ecumenicity system is established, missionary activities will launch in several places in Anatolia. We need to consider this carefully: None of the missionaries – they are political personalities under the guise of men of God – are men of God. While we should be very careful with them we are [instead] making concessions to them. My dear friends, I want to say this: I was born and grew up in my city to the sound of the call to prayer, not with the church, or the sound of church bells. I don’t want these to swap places.¹⁴³

Likewise, during the parliamentary debate on the draft Private School Law, *CHP* parliamentarians criticize the government for the approval of ‘the right of all non-Muslims to open schools with a resolution for no apparent reason.’¹⁴⁴ Calling upon the *AKP* parliamentarians to veto the draft law in order to demonstrate their religiosity (Radikal, 2006d) *CHP* representative Engin Altay suggested that:

With Article 5 of this draft, the missionary school’s door is being opened in Turkey as it was in the Ottoman Empire and the early Republican years. I am putting this out as a historical warning. When this draft is legalized, the doors of an education system based on Christianity will be opened.¹⁴⁵

Another line of argument opposing improvements to the rights of non-Muslims rested on highlighting the importance of the Article 45 of the Lausanne Treaty, which mentions the reciprocity principle between Turkey and Greece. A vast majority of *CHP* parliamentarians suggested the necessity of taking the reciprocity principle for guidance in the legislative adaptation process. As the parliament speech of Onur Öymen suggested, the

¹⁴² See the parliamentary speech of *MHP* MP Mehmet Şandır on January 29, 2008 (23. Term 55. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Vakıflar adı altında yabancıların Türkiye’de bir örgütlenme yapmasını, 1453’ten bu yana kiliseler, birtakım mektepler etrafında oluşturulan örgütlenmenin günümüze taşınması.’

¹⁴³ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Rahmi Güner on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session). For the original quotation see Q23 in Appendix A.

¹⁴⁴ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Mustafa Gazalcı on September 20, 2006 (22. Term 126. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Hiç gereği yokken burada bütün gayrimüslim azınlıklara mensup kişilerin okul açabileceği ve dinî köken itibarıyla mensup yabancı uyruklu çocukların devam ettiği okulların açılabilmesi önergeyle kabul edildi.’

¹⁴⁵ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Engin Altay on September 20, 2006 (22. Term 126. Session). For the original quotation see Q24 in Appendix A.

broadening of the rights of non-Muslim minorities should only be possible under the condition that similar rights are recognized for the Muslim-Turks in Greece:

Now, I am asking you: Do these rights exist among the regulations regarding the Turks in Western Thrace? They do not exist. Then, why are you introducing this? First, go to Greece and tell them: 'leave the administration of the Turkish foundations to Turks.' Guarantee their rights there, then come to us and tell us 'Look, Greece as a European country has guaranteed these rights in line with Lausanne; do the same.' Then, come and we can sign it together.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the opposition in the parliament, resistance towards the reform process at the bureaucratic level was another factor functioning as a veto power in this period. The General Director of Laws and Decision's statement targeting missionaries as terrorist organizations is emblematic of how bureaucratic cadres had not internalized the reform process yet (Hürriyet, 2007b):

The missionary activities in Turkey are spreading without controls, as in the last period of the Ottoman Empire... the act of missionaries are more dangerous than a terrorist organization and unfortunately it is not considered as a crime in Turkey (Hürriyet, 2007b).¹⁴⁷

The attitude taken by bureaucratic institutions is also echoed in interviews with representatives of non-Muslim minorities. The resistance of the bureaucracy has functioned as an obstacle, often showing itself to be obstinate. The attitude some interviewees have encountered is 'Ankara said it, but I won't do it.' (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013; March 23, 2013).¹⁴⁸ Likewise, the local authorities may have held a key position in enabling the implementation of the reform process. While the existence of a non-Muslim population in a certain city or neighborhood may speed up the process of implementation, as some non-Muslims took part in the decision-making procedures (anonymous, personal communication, April 17, 2014; April 26, 2014; November 28, 2013), the absence of non-Muslim population decreases the possibilities of addressing any problems (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013).

Considering the intensification of the veto powers as demonstrated above, as well as other developments impeding the functioning of EU conditionality such as weakened

¹⁴⁶ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Onur Öymen on November 1, 2006 (22. Term 13. Session). For the original quotation see Q25 in Appendix A.

¹⁴⁷ Original excerpt: 'Türkiye'de misyonerlik faaliyetleri Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son dönemindeki gibi denetimsiz bir şekilde yaygınlaşıyor... misyonerlik, bir terör örgütünden daha tehlikelidir ve maalesef bu Türkiye'de suç sayılmamaktadır.'

¹⁴⁸ Original excerpt: 'Ankara demiş ama ben yapmam' gibi bir tavır var'

clarity and determinacy of the rules due to the introduction of subjective conditions and the shift to talking about privileged partnership instead of full EU membership; and the decrease in the credibility of conditionality, it would be appropriate to argue that EIM remains insufficient to fully explain the continuation of reforms broadening the religious freedoms of non-Muslims – even in their imperfect state. This observation then leaves us with the following question: how can we account for the ongoing effort to recast the parameters of religious reforms and the rights of non-Muslims as occurred contrary to general democratization process? The Social Learning Model, as an alternative, appears to have partial explanatory capacity. Although the EU progress reports and ECtHR signaled a clear and determinate set of norms setting the EU as a legitimate external anchor with respect to the rights and liberties of non-Muslim minorities, the introduction of subjective criteria, as discussed previously, considerably decreased the legitimacy of EU norms and led to the government's questioning of the appropriateness of EU norms. In addition, the extent of identification of the policy-makers and society with the EU underwent significant changes in this term. While the *AKP* began to search for alternative paths with regard to freedom of religion, as will be discussed in the remainder of this section, Turkish public support for EU membership decreased remarkably. As the Eurobarometer survey shows, trust in the EU by the Turkish public dropped from 51% in autumn of 2004 to 27% in 2008 (Euro-Barometer, 2004, 2008). Moreover, while the legislative adaptation process continued, a period of intense public debate concerning religious freedoms and non-Muslims took place and sparked off reactions as well as support from a vast majority of society. However, it would be too optimistic to assume strong public support for finding solutions for the issues faced by non-Muslims since we do not observe significant changes in the negative perceptions held by Turkish society towards non-Muslims. In parallel to this, although the Turkey Values Survey released in 2007 (Esmer, 2007) showed that the percentage of people who did not want a non-Muslim neighbor decreased to 44% (compared with 52% in the 2001 survey), the ratio is still very high. Therefore, it would be fair to argue that societal demand for a change in respect to religious freedoms for non-Muslims remained low. Indeed, another survey released on Radicalism and Extremism revealed that the ratio had risen to 52% by 2009 (Radicalism and Extremism, 2009).

A notable change, however, occurred in the construction of societal reaction towards the lack of freedom of religion, especially after the assassination of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in June of 2007. From Laki Vingas's perspective,

Hrant Dink's assassination – I have to say unfortunately – had a positive impact... He and his family paid a price, but on the other hand some topics are no longer taboo. Hrant Dink found room in society's consciousness. People started to empathize and to question (Laki Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015).¹⁴⁹

If not in general Turkish society, then the societal dynamic created after the assassination of Hrant Dink had an obvious impact on Christians. From Toros Alcan's perspective Hrant Dink was an important figure not only for Armenians, but also for the entirety of Turkish society because he impacted society as a non-racist individual; he was able to communicate with people and his speeches revealed the wrongful claims of the Turkish state on the Armenian issue (Alcan, personal communication, July 9, 2015). After his death there was a notable quantitative increase in Christian civil-society organizations. For example, the Association of Protestant Churches was established in 2009 with the proclaimed aim 'to struggle for reinforcing freedom of religion in Turkey in parallel to the International Human Rights Law' (Association of Protestant Churches, not dated). Additionally, the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, which had been established in Athens in 2006, took a visible stance in the Turkish public domain and began to organize conferences (Agos, 2009). Moreover, *Nor Zartonk*, a civil youth initiative, was established after 2008. The same year saw the opening of the newspaper *Agos*, which had already begun to gather together the Armenian community as well as attract the attention of a section of society sensitive to the lack of freedom of religion. The vast majority of these initiatives were welcomed and supported by the Turkish government, which continued to support the reform process with regard to the rights of non-Muslims. Despite the increase in the number of norm entrepreneurs, however, decreased legitimacy of and identification with the EU as a norm provider and the low levels of domestic resonance on issues concerning non-Muslims together considerably lowered the explanatory capacity of SLM.

As LDM suggests, continuation of the limited changes in parameters of freedom of religion for non-Muslim's of Turkey may have its roots in the government's dissatisfaction with the approach to freedom of religion and its search for an alternative transferable

¹⁴⁹ For the original quotation see Q26 in Appendix A.

replacement. Despite weak societal pressure for, and the limited existence of, powerful opposition against enhancing the religious freedoms for non-Muslims, as suggested by discourse analysis of the period from 2005 to 2011, the *AKP*'s dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* approach to religion and its struggle to carve out a space for religion, particularly Islam, continued to motivate the government's efforts to create 'a religious-friendly public sphere' and enabled it to take a relatively flexible stance towards the non-Muslim citizens of the republic as compared to previous administrations. At the same time, the emphasis on non-Muslim minorities as 'first-class citizens' intensified remarkably after the 2007 murder of Hrant Dink and the *Zirve* Massacre in which Christian missionaries were brutally slain. However, the prospect of EU membership, which offered an alternative transferable policy with regard to freedom of religion and had frequently brought up the rights of non-Muslims and their freedom of religion in the previous period, was opened up for debate in this period. In this context – wherein the European model of freedom of religion began to be questioned - a comprehensive understanding of the *AKP*'s approach to religious freedom and non-Muslims is necessary in order to reveal alternative inspiration sources which may contribute to the explanatory potential of LDM.

In examining the discourses of *AKP* politicians the continuation of emphasis on the EU in casting statements related to the democratization process, including the emphasis on freedom of religion, is observable. Series speeches of *AKP* politicians which took place on both international and national platforms that demonstrated the commitment of the *AKP* to the EU project with a particular interest in freedom of religion. Remarkably, Mehmet Ali Şahin, then minister of the state defined their perception of freedom of religion as an EU norm:

Freedom of religion includes one's belief in religion, meeting the requirements of that religion, moreover, spreading it to the others. European Convention of Human Rights has defined it (Radikal, 2005b).¹⁵⁰

Prime Minister Erdoğan has also framed the values reinforcing the coexistence of different cultures and freedom of religion as parallel with EU norms on several occasions. In a speech explaining the aim of the Alliance of Civilization Initiative, he argued that 'every

¹⁵⁰ Original excerpt: 'Din özgürlüğü herhangi bir insanın bir dine inanması, o dinin gereklerini yerine getirmesi, hatta inandığını başkalarına anlatmasını kapsar. Avrupa İnsan Hakları Sözleşmesi, bunu düzenlemiştir.'

culture and religion at its heart has similar ideals and aims.’¹⁵¹ In an *AKP* group discussion, he later assured those present that the freedom of conscience of those whose beliefs and ideas differ from its own are guaranteed as a part of a broader guarantee of freedom.¹⁵² Moreover, in a speech arguing that freedom of expression should be limited in cases where it violates freedom of religion, he based his argument on various ECtHR case laws. In his words:

We come across two questions. One of these questions relates to the possibilities of imposing legal and proportional restrictions on freedom of speech in order to protect individuals and groups in democratic societies. The second one is whether insulting religious beliefs should be included within the restrictions on the freedom of speech. My answer to both of the questions is yes. Viewed from a legal aspect, the European Court of Human Rights’ case law, as several of its decisions reflect, confirms my answer to these questions. With the decisions like *Otto Preminger Institute v. Austria* and *Wingrove v. England*, the Court openly displayed that insulting religious beliefs is not included in the European Human Rights protection system.¹⁵³

Parliamentary debate also provides us with the main motivation driving the government to incorporate the EU reform agenda in the arena of rights for non-Muslim minorities. The debate that took place around the draft Law on Foundations in 2006 particularly demonstrates the reflection upon the *AKP*’s dissatisfaction with *Kemalist* policies, which had a negative impact on both Muslim and non-Muslim minorities. Against an opposition believing that the Treaty of Lausanne would be violated with the introduction of the mentioned regulations, *AKP* parliamentarians reminded them of Article 42 of the treaty, which urges Turkey to provide convenience for religious institutions, and stressed that they were in fact repairing a treaty which had been violated for decades. Underscoring the citizenship status of non-Muslims of Turkey¹⁵⁴, which had been contradicted by previous experiences in which they were treated as foreigners, *AKP* politicians maintained that the reforms enhancing the rights of non-Muslims should take place not only because they were demanded during the EU accession process, but also because it was the right thing to do. The following speech by Mehmet Ali Şahin reflected the *AKP*’s approach to freedom of religion and non-Muslims in relation to EU norms:

¹⁵¹ Erdoğan’s speech on ‘Alliances of Civilizations’ at Melbourne University, Melbourne, Australia, December 7, 2005.

¹⁵² Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on February 7, 2006.

¹⁵³ Erdoğan’s speech on the ‘Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Beliefs’ in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, June 28, 2006.

¹⁵⁴ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Recep Özel on November 1, 2006 (22. Term 13. Session). For the original quotation see Q28 in Appendix A.

The European Union demands solutions for problems experienced relating to this matter. In fact, we should take care of it before the European Union asks this of us. We are in fact coming from such a tradition, such a culture. We have an idea of civilization that acts with the consciousness of the fundamental duty of conforming to the rights of others. We should have done it. We, however, had already suggested these to the Directorate General of Foundations, before the European Union brought it forward, in order to solve the problems that we encountered during the symposium we organized in 2003. Therefore, we put these regulations in the draft law on our own, just because we believe that it is the right thing to do. Therefore, this draft has been prepared in order to satisfy the needs of Turkey, in order to satisfy the needs of our new foundations, in order to solve the problems of the community foundations that non-Muslim Turkish citizens belong to.¹⁵⁵

Despite the emphasis on equality and non-discrimination as being in line with EU norms for protection of religious minorities, however, the *AKP*'s political discourse fell short of embracing Christian minorities in society until 2007. For one, the *DİB*'s publication negatively targeting Christianity and Christian missionaries continued to provoke Turkish society against Christians. The Director of Religious Affairs expressed that the sermon he himself preached targeted missionaries who had been threatening the people (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2006a). Although he explained that the presidency is not against freedom of religion, the warning of people against the treachery of missionary activities – which are not forbidden by law – has continued to violate the supposed impartiality of the state in issues concerning non-Muslims. In addition to the *DİB*'s explicit hostility against Christians, the government's roadmap to restore religious freedoms for non-Muslims contradicted its definition of freedom of religion as underlying the coexistence and equality of religions, and was clearly against freedom of religion as understood within EU norms. The *AKP* government also expressed its support for the implementation of the reciprocity principle at times and subjected the improvements of non-Muslim rights in Turkey to steps taken for Muslim minorities in Greece. In an *AKP* party group discussion Prime Minister Erdoğan clearly stated that:

Concerning the Law on Foundations, we take steps on the basis of reciprocity. And whatever rights Muslim Turks have in Greece, we would give the same rights to them [non-Muslims] here.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, the debate on the re-opening of the *Halki* Seminary and the restitution of the properties of Christian minorities has also revealed the divergence from the discourse of

¹⁵⁵ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Mehmet Ali Şahin on November 1, 2006 (22. Term 13. Session). For the original quotation see Q29 in Appendix A.

¹⁵⁶ Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on September 26, 2006. For the original quotation see Q30 in Appendix A.

fraternity and cultural espoused on many occasions by *AKP* politicians. Mehmet Aydın, the minister of state, has criticized the *Rum* Orthodox Minority for demanding a privilege, as Muslims are not able to open private theology schools (Radikal, 2005a). Despite approving the re-opening of the Orthodox Seminary, Mehmet Ali Şahin, another minister of the state, reacted to the criticisms from the EU, which found the draft Law on Foundations insufficient for restitution of the properties of the Turkey's Christians, by directing the criticism back to the EU for only being concerned of property issues and adding that 'Equating freedom of religion only with the restitution of the properties makes me uncomfortable' (Radikal, 2005b).¹⁵⁷

Besides indicating that freedom of religion has not been fully embraced, *AKP* parliamentarians'' contradictory statements on freedom of religion and the rights of non-Muslims also demonstrate that EU values of freedom of religion have not been fully accepted. In fact, there have been substantial grounds for the *AKP* to question the EU's demands. Although the prospect of EU membership appealed to the *AKP* mainly as a means to overcome its dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* stance against religiosity and its restrictive consequences for Islamists in the public sphere, the ECtHR's *Leyla Şahin* decision – which found Turkey's ban on headscarves consistent with the principle of freedom of religion (*Leyla Şahin v. Turkey*, 2005) – was another disappointment for the *AKP*, as it had believed that the EU path would pave the way for freedom inclusive of public Islamic identity (Patton, 2007, p. 348). While prominent *AKP* figures stated that they found the decision wrong and against freedom of religion and conscience (TBMM, 2005), many scholars marked this event as a turning point in its unconditional pro-EU stance (Kılınç, 2008; Patton, 2007).

The *AKP*'s approach to freedom of religion, however, took a real turn in 2007. Interviews with Christian minorities also highlight the importance of 2007, as after this year the government increased communication with Christian representatives and regularly consulted their opinions on issues related to their communities (anonymous, personal communication, October, 23, 2013). It is possible to observe this shift in the *AKP*'s attitude towards Christian minorities after successive homicides targeting Turkey's Christians in 2007, especially after the *AKP* acknowledged that the murderers had connections with the deep state and that they were in fact the real target of these crimes (Radikal, 2009b; Taraf,

¹⁵⁷ Original excerpt: 'Din özgürlüğü denince akıllara sadece gayrimenkullerin gelmesi beni rahatsız ediyor.'

2009a). An interviewee remarking how the *AKP* took a more decisive stance in passing the Law on Foundations claimed that:

After 2007 they realized that the MGK conspiracy was targeting them. With all the assassinations and blame thrown at the pious, it came to a breaking point with the AK Party. This is how they passed the Foundations Law (anonymous, personal communication, November 13, 2013).¹⁵⁸

Alongside the emphasis on religious freedoms and the rights of religious minorities from 2002 on, an increase of the *AKP*'s embrace of Christians is revealed in their discourse at this time. The first notable sign of this shift is the *DİB*'s condemnation of homicides targeting Christians, as the *DİB* is an institution reflecting the state's position:

According to all divine religions and our common faith, killing one person is as major a sin as killing all humanity and attacks targeting innocent people, despite the values, sacred beliefs and the cause it is done for, are an explicit betrayal of religion and of the common values that humanity has tried to develop together. These murders of innocent people cannot have a religious, national, philosophical, or humanistic justification (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2007).¹⁵⁹

AKP politicians' frequent gatherings with the representatives of non-Muslim minorities also signaled that they were more interested in meeting their demands (Taraf, 2009b). It is also possible to argue that, compared with the pre-2007 period, they had started to develop a sense of empathy with non-Muslims. Hüseyin Çelik, the Minister of National Education stressed this shift in the discourse with as follows: 'We have 'otherized' non-Muslims, Kurds, Alevis, and religious people after the founding of the republic... In 1936, when the vote of the peasants became valuable they were not the 'other' anymore, but the problem of the 'others' continue' (Radikal, 2010a).¹⁶⁰ In another speech he also criticized discrimination against non-Muslims:

Non-Muslims in Turkey have suffered a lot. The Capital Tax was a disgrace. The closure of the theology school (*Halki*) was shameful. The events of September 6-7 were an inhuman plot which humiliated Turkey in front of the world (Radikal, 2010b).¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Original excerpt: '2007'den sonra MGK kumpasının kendilerine olduğunu gördüler... Cinayetler işlenince, suç dindarlara atılınca AK partide bir kırılma oldu. 2007'den sonra anladılar. Vakıflar yasasını böyle geçirdiler.'

¹⁵⁹ For the original quotation see Q31 in Appendix A.

¹⁶⁰ Original excerpt: 'Cumhuriyetle birlikte gayrimüslimleri, kürtleri, Alevileri ve dindar insanları ötekileştirdik... 1936'da köylünün oyu makbul olunca 'öteki' olmaktan çıktı, ama diğerlerinin problemi devam ediyor.'

¹⁶¹ Original excerpt: 'Gayrimüslimler Türkiye'de çok acı çekti. Varlık vergisi bir yüz karasıydı. Ruhban Okulu'nun kapatılması büyük bir utançtı. 6-7 Eylül olayları Türkiye'yi dünyanın gözünde küçük düşüren insanlık dışı bir komploydu.'

Evaluation of the problems of non-Muslims and Muslims on the same axis is evident in several statements that also demonstrated the motivation behind improvement of non-Muslim's rights as derived from the ruling party's dissatisfaction with the overall lack of freedom of religion. According to Ali Babacan, Foreign Minister at the time:

In Turkey, not only non-Muslim minorities, but also the Muslim majority is experiencing problems with religious freedoms. Lately Turkey has been involved in a debate on laïcité. Our definition of laïcité is very clear: A clear separation of religious and state affairs. And non-interference of the state in individuals' practice of their religion (Taraf, 2008).¹⁶²

A speech by the Director of Religious Affairs stressing the importance of religious freedoms, including freedom of worship and freedom to train clergy reflected a similar approach: that, with regard to restriction of religious freedoms, Islamists and non-Muslims have shared similar sensitivities. The director's expression of his support for the reopening of the *Halki* Seminary and reclamation of Church museums as functioning churches, is therefore noteworthy:

Let's let the churches remain as churches, the mosques as mosques. People express their religiosity and irreligiosity freely. We should be asking for similar freedoms for Muslims (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2010).¹⁶³

In speeches given on several different occasions by Prime Minister Erdoğan, the importance of the respect for different religious values and freedom of religion¹⁶⁴, as well as the possibility of coexistence despite religious and sectarian differences, was given prominence.¹⁶⁵ For instance, in a speech he made on the occasion of a concert performing songs from three religions, he emphasized:

There is always a platform for people regardless of their religion, faith, culture, and worldview to get together, talk and compromise.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, he stressed that Turkey is a country in which different cultures and religions share the same space and denying this fact is 'being disconnected to the people, nation,

¹⁶² For the original quotation see Q32 in Appendix A

¹⁶³ Original excerpt: 'Bırakalım kiliseler kilise olarak, camiler cami olarak kalsın. İnsanlar özgürce dinlerini veya kendi dinsizliklerini ifade edebilsinler... Müslümanlar için de aynı özgürlükleri talep etmemiz gerekir.'

¹⁶⁴ From Erdoğan's speeches at the 8th Jeddah Economic Forum on February 24, 2007 and *AKP* Group Meeting on June 16, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ See Erdoğan's speeches in the 'Monthly Address to the Nation' speech on January 2008, March 2008, August 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Erdoğan's speech in 'Melodies of Three Religions concert and Ramadan dinner with ambassadors in Ankara' on September 16, 2008, Ankara. Original excerpt: 'Hangi dinden olursa olsun, hangi inanca, hangi kültüre, hangi dünya görüşüne sahip olursa olsun tüm insanların bir araya gelebilecekleri, konuşabilecekleri, anlaşabilecekleri ve uzlaşabilecekleri bir zemin mutlaka vardır.'

society, and the realities of the country.’ Within this context, it is possible to observe that *AKP* politicians have acknowledged the discriminatory attitude previously held towards people belonging to different ethnic groups, religions, and sects.¹⁶⁷ Challenging the traditional state approach of denial of problems faced by non-Muslims, he reminded the audience that it is futile to disregard problems facing different sectors of society:

Disregard the terrorism issue; disregard the Kurdish issue; disregard the issues of the Gypsies, Alevites, and minorities [if you like]. But whenever you disregard them, these issues do not in fact disappear.¹⁶⁸

In addition to the sense of empathy developed towards non-Muslims, an emphasis on ‘first class citizenship’ and ‘equality’ in Turkish society can also be observed. The following statement made by the prime minister during the party group meeting was significant in demonstrating his sensitivity to the idea of equal citizenship at the time:

We have to develop an atmosphere where everybody feels like a first class citizen regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, or sect; where we consider our cultural differences as our wealth; and where we strengthen our fraternity.¹⁶⁹

This point of view is clearly observable on issues regarding the rights of religious minorities. During discussion on the draft of the Law on Foundations, in taking a stance against an opposition implying that non-Muslims were ‘foreigners,’ *AKP* parliamentarians repeatedly stated that non-Muslims are citizens of the Turkish Republic¹⁷⁰ and argued that ‘discriminating against those foundations only because they are (belong to) non-Muslims’¹⁷¹ is contrary to the equality principle stated in the Article 10 of the Constitution.¹⁷² Moreover, the speeches made and actions taken by leading *AKP* figures together presented a coherent trend in regard to the *AKP*’s relation to non-Muslims. The

¹⁶⁷ See Erdoğan’s ‘Monthly Address to the Nation’ Speech in November 2009.

¹⁶⁸ Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on January 26, 2010. Original excerpt: ‘Halktan, millettten, toplumdan, ülkenin gerçeklerinden kopuk olmak işte budur. Terör meselesini görme, Kürt meselesini görme, Romanların, Alevilerin, azınlıkların meselelerini görme. Sen görmezden gelince bu meseleler ortadan kaybolmuyor.’

¹⁶⁹ Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on May 6, 2008; Original excerpt: ‘Etnik köken, din, mezhep ayrımı olmadan herkesin kendisini birinci sınıf vatandaş hissettiği, kültürel farklılıklarımızı zenginlik saydığımız, kardeşlik duygularımızı güçlendirdiğimiz bir ortamı hızla geliştirmek mecburiyetindeyiz.’

¹⁷⁰ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Mehmet Ali Şahin on January 29, 2008 (23. Term 55. Session); and *AKP* MP Bekir Bozdağ on January 31, 2008 (22. Term 57. Session).

¹⁷¹ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Veysi Kaynak on January 31, 2008 (23. Term 57. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Kendi vatandaşlarımıza ait olan, kendi tabiyetimize ait olan vakıfların bir kısmının, sırf gayrimüslim oldukları için ayrı tutulması ne bizim devlet geleneğimizle bağdaşır ve ne de adalete, hakkaniyete, eşitliğe uygun olur.’

¹⁷² See the parliamentary speeches of *AKP* MPs İsmail Bilen and Mehmet Müezzioğlu on January 30, 2008 (22. Term 56. Session).

prime minister's insistence that non-Muslims be seen as equal citizens in Turkish society¹⁷³ and issuing of circular in which he urged authorities to 'make minorities feel that they are the part of Turkish society' (Radikal, 2010c), as well as President Abdullah Gül's statement that he was the president of all citizens regardless of their religious identity (Radikal, 2010d) were noteworthy in this regard. In a meeting with non-Muslim representatives, the prime minister put this clearly:

Everybody is equal in this country. Equality of our citizens without saying they are Turk, Kurd, Muslim, Christian is our fundamental idea. Our main criteria in solving our problems and serving our people are democracy, constitutional rights, and a humanistic approach (Taraf, 2009b).¹⁷⁴

The emphasis on non-Muslims' equal citizenship has also been reflected in the reciprocity debate. While opposition parliamentarians have referred to Article 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne to contend that non-Muslim's rights should be restricted to the rights given to Muslims in Thrace, *AKP* parliamentarians argued the reciprocity principle cannot be applied to citizens of Turkey¹⁷⁵ as what was intended by the Treaty of Lausanne was not reciprocity but parallelism.¹⁷⁶ Hayati Yazıcı explained the difference between reciprocity and parallel practice as:

Article 45 foresees a parallel practice with the Muslim Turks in Greece. Well, if they violate this practice, they would have been oppressing, but we won't be in the position of an oppressor. Therefore, reciprocity is out of question here. Besides, reciprocity is a matter between foreign citizens and the state. The subject of our regulation here... is citizens who own a community foundation. They are Turkish citizens and not foreigners. Therefore, reciprocity is out of question.¹⁷⁷

Likewise, a few years later, the Director of the Religious Affairs presented a similar interpretation of the reciprocity principle in a way that does not 'otherize' non-Muslims:

Today we need to support the religious freedoms of Muslims in Western Thrace, the Balkans, and Europe. But we cannot restrict the freedoms of others

¹⁷³ See Erdoğan's 'Monthly Address to the Nation' speeches in October 2009 and March 2010; Erdoğan's speeches at the *AKP* group meetings on February 3 and November 3, 2009; and Erdoğan's speech at the meeting with the representatives of civil-society organizations on August 15, 2009, Prinkipo.

¹⁷⁴ For the original quotation see Q33 in Appendix A.

¹⁷⁵ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP İsmail Bilen on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session).

¹⁷⁶ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Hayati Yazıcı on January 30, 2008 (23. Term 56. Session).

¹⁷⁷ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Hayati Yazıcı on January 31, 2008 (23. Term 57. Session). For the original quotation see Q34 in Appendix A.

in our geography just because the other [states abroad] do not give freedom to Muslims. (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2010)¹⁷⁸

As the above discussions suggest, the *AKP* government demonstrated a decisive attitude towards the broadening of religious freedoms for non-Muslims, and in this vein took important steps challenging the traditional state approach to issues concerning non-Muslims. The *AKP*'s dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* approach to religion and the party's ensuing aim to recast the definition of *laïcité* clearly motivated their stance. Remarkably, in calling out religious-based discrimination and disregarding people's cultural, linguistic and religious differences as a crime against humanity¹⁷⁹, the prime minister reminded his party that they have a very important responsibility in redefining *laïcité* as an inclusionary concept:

From now on, I believe we have a very important responsibility as a nation. That is to keep *laïcité* not as a discriminative, but as a uniting principle, and pass it to the future generations.¹⁸⁰

Within this context, despite their disappointment with the 2005 ECtHR decision, the freedom of religion framework offered by the EU continued to offer an attractive alternative for the *AKP* as a way to overcome their dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* definition of secularism. Prime Minister Erdoğan indicated in a party group discussion that their interest in EU membership is in its use as an instrument to consolidate basic rights and liberties.¹⁸¹

If the EU is having negative thoughts about Turkey, they should decide so that we can move on. Didn't we say that, with respect to the political criteria, we would take the Copenhagen political criteria as the Political Criteria of Ankara; and the Maastricht Economic Criteria as Economic Criteria of Istanbul and then move on?¹⁸²

President Erdoğan's statements made during a meeting with civil-society organizations held in the *Adalar* neighborhood, which is mainly populated by non-Muslim citizens, was also remarkable in demonstrating not only the party's development of an empathetic

¹⁷⁸ Original excerpt: 'Bugün Batı Trakya'da, Balkanlar'da, Batı dünyasında, Avrupa'da Müslümanların din özgürlüklerini savunmamız, korumamız gerekir. Ama bir diğeri Müslümanlara özgürlük vermiyor diyerek kendi coğrafyamızda başkasının özgürlüğünü kısımayız.'

¹⁷⁹ Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on January 26, 2010.

¹⁸⁰ Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on February 2, 2009. Original excerpt: 'Bundan sonra da, bizi millet olarak bekleyen çok önemli bir sorumluluğumuz olduğuna inanıyorum. O da, laikliği, ayrımcı değil birleştirici bir ilke olarak yaşatıp gelecek nesillere taşımaktır.'

¹⁸¹ Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on September 26, 2006.

¹⁸² Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on March 27, 2007; For the original quotation see Q27 in Appendix A.

attitude towards non-Muslims, but also its perception that the EU reform process was a tool for enhancing their right to freedom of religion:

I would like to say this with all my sincerity: we do not solve the problems of our citizens just because the EU asks it. There may be shortcomings in the implementation; there may be expectations from the legislations. But whatever we do, we do it because we love our people and because we want them to have a more prosperous, free, and humanistic life.¹⁸³

Though this proliferation of affirmative statements stressed themes of equality and empathy in reference to Christians and referenced EU as a source of inspiration, arguing that the *AKP* actually aimed to recast freedom of religion in a manner fully compatible with European norms would not reflect the truth. The following statement from a representative of a Christian community demonstrating the fact that the *AKP*'s comprehension of freedom of religion is not compatible with EU norms provides us with ground for questioning of alternatives:

Every political party has its own sensitivities. For them [the *AKP*] it is religion, but they interpret freedom of religion from their own point of view. Freedom of religion has been reduced to freedom of worship. They say 'I repaired the church, what else can they want?' But they don't grant me the tenure of my own property. The structure provided by the EU is not appealing to them. The government only applies things that will benefit themselves (anonymous, personal communication, November 20, 2013).¹⁸⁴

As the interviewee points out, the *AKP* politician's discourse also suggested that the model of freedom of religion they desired not only diverged from the European model, but has also been limited due to various reasons. For one, despite the positive change in the government's attitude and its support for religious minorities, many academics in this term (İnsel, 2008a) argued that some *AKP* politicians preferred to continue the hate speech against non-Muslim minorities (İnsel, 2008b). The Minister of National Defence's remarks below demonstrate that *AKP* politicians had not even internalized EU's norms in the first place:

Had the *Rums* continued in the Aegean region today and the Armenian [community] lived on in various spots around Turkey, could the same nation state exist today? (Radikal, 2008f)¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ From Erdoğan's speech at the meeting with the representatives of the civil-society organizations on August 15, 2009, Prinkipo. For the original quotation see Q35 in Appendix A.

¹⁸⁴ For the original quotation see Q9 in Appendix A.

¹⁸⁵ Original excerpt: 'Bugün eğer Ege'de Rumlar devam etseydi ve Türkiye'nin pek çok yerinde Ermeniler devam etseydi, bugün acaba aynı milli devlet olabilir miydi?'

An argument initiated by Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2009 also discredited the government's supposed sincerity in striving for freedom of religion for all. Here, Erdoğan declared the possibility of deporting illegal Armenian workers, despite the fact that such an attitude would harm the 'opening process' (Taraf, 2009c).

Second, emphasis on 'kin' in referring to the Muslim-Turks in Europe¹⁸⁶ is another indicator of the departure from the European understanding of freedom of religion. A speech Erdoğan made in Romania called upon the kin of Turkey to support their causes, including the 'Armenian issue' is worth noting:

My request from you, our kin and citizens from all around the world, is to do the necessary catch-up work on issues related to Turkey. I don't have a shadow of doubt on voicing our rightful struggle on the Cyprus issue, 1915 events, and especially the terrorism issue.¹⁸⁷

More importantly, the conservative religious identity shaping *AKP* politicians' approach to freedom of religion, including an attitude of empathy towards non-Muslims and adaptation of policies in parallel to the EU reform agenda in broadening of religious freedoms, has also represented divergence from the EU model. In this period, this conservative attitude is revealed in several different ways. Firstly, politicians have used references based on religious reasoning in explaining respect for other religions. Erdoğan's quip, 'We love the created one due to the Creator himself'¹⁸⁸, which has been repeated in several speeches, revealed his conservative perspective on the freedom of religion. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe the example of the Ottoman *millet* system, which enabled the coexistence of people belonging to different religious communities under the superiority of Islam, as an alternative to the EU's framework of freedom of religion based on human rights. The Director of Religious Affairs' definition of freedom of religion following the visit of the Pope in 2006 reflected this view:

Since the Ottoman Empire, freedom of religion and religious tolerance have been provided by saying 'we want to see Muslims in the mosque, Christians in the church, and Jews in the synagogue'... What is important is that everybody

¹⁸⁶ See Erdoğan's speeches at 'Ramadan Dinner with Muftis in Western Trace' on October 9, 2007, Ankara and 'Address to Our Citizens and Kins' on October 25, 2007, Costanza, Romania.

¹⁸⁷ See Erdoğan's speech 'Address to Our Citizens and Kin' on October 25, 2007 in Bucharest, Romania. For the original quotation see Q70 in Appendix A

¹⁸⁸ See Erdoğan's speech 'Meeting with the Gypsy Citizens' on March 14, 2010 and speeches at the *AKP* group meeting on February 7, 2006 and January 13, 2009. Original excerpt: 'Yaradılanı yaradandan ötürü seviyoruz.'

performs his service and respects others (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2006c).¹⁸⁹

References to the Ottoman Empire have also been used in supporting the draft laws to improve non-Muslim's rights. Arguing in the favor of the introduction of the new Law on Foundations, Avni Erdemir reminded his audience of the system of religious 'tolerance' in the Ottoman Empire:

We should not forget that we are the children of a great civilization. Everybody in our land is under the protection of this country. Those who bear bad intentions toward this state have learned a lesson in the past. Those who will do wrong to this state will for sure learn a lesson. Let us remember the Byzantines and the tolerance of our ancestor who said 'I would rather see an Ottoman turban in the midst of the city than the Latin mitre.'¹⁹⁰

Likewise, throughout various speeches Prime Minister Erdoğan has reminded his audiences that the civilization they succeeded never differentiated between Muslims or Christians or Jews¹⁹¹ and, on the contrary, was a civilization where 'mosques and synagogues existed on the same street in harmony for centuries.'¹⁹² Erdoğan also remarked:

We as Turkey are the inheritors of a tradition in which many tribes of different religions and cultures have coexisted over an expansive geography.¹⁹³

Although the emphasis on the Ottoman heritage carried the potential of 'othering' Christian minorities (Gambetti, 2010), as the Ottoman *millet* system foresaw a superior status for Islam in relation to other religions, it is not possible to observe dominant usage of this analogy in order to discriminate. However, it would not be fair to argue that prioritization of Islam was non-existent. Prime Minister Erdoğan's following statement may well be understandable as coming from the leader of a conservative party. By publicly expressing the importance of Islam in his eyes he shed light on his true understanding of freedom of religion.

¹⁸⁹ Original excerpt: 'Osmanlı'dan beri din özgürlüğü ve dinler arası müsamahanın 'Müslümanı camide, Hristiyan'ı kilisede, Yahudi'yi havrada görmek isteriz' denilerek sağlanmıştır... Herkes kendi ibadetini kendince yapsın ve herkes buna saygılı olsun, anlamlı olan budur.'

¹⁹⁰ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Avni Erdemir on January 31, 2008 (23. Term 57. Session). For the original quotation see Q36 in Appendix A.

¹⁹¹ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on September 26, 2006.

¹⁹² See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on December 1, 2009.

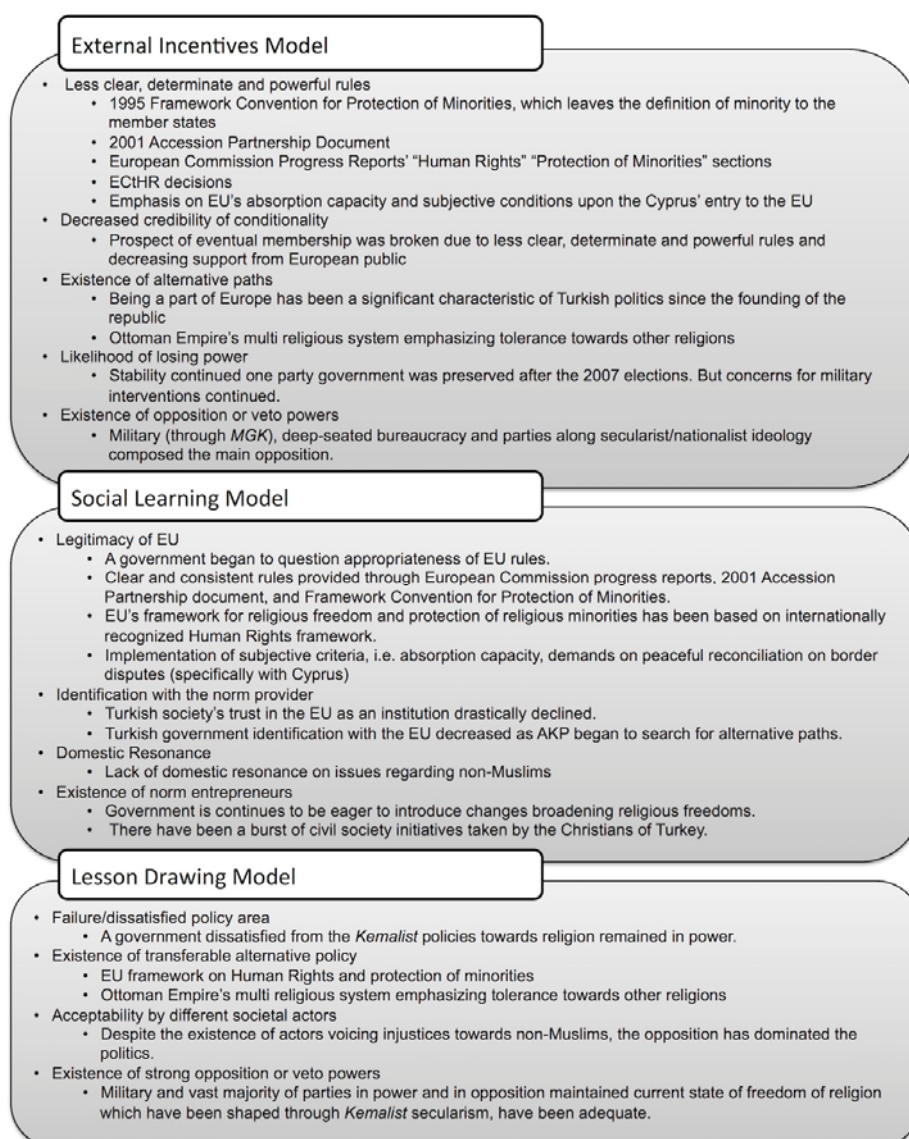
¹⁹³ See Erdoğan's speech at the UN General Assembly on December 18, 2006 New York. Original excerpt: 'Türkiye olarak biz, büyük bir coğrafyada farklı din ve kültürden birçok kavmi, yüzyıllar boyunca kardeşçe bir arada yaşatmış bir geleneğin mirasçısıyız.'

Thanks to our supreme religion Islam, humanistic values had taken their perfect form in Mevlana's doctrine of love much earlier than their emergence and development in the West.¹⁹⁴

In sum, what can be observed in the period between 2005 and 2010 is that, first of all, positive steps continued to be taken despite the fact that they were overshadowed by restrictive implementations which occasionally came to the fore, and that implementation of issued laws were insufficient to overcome the problems and uncertainties in practice. While legal regulations in the Laws on Private Education and Foundations, and Demographic Services were enacted, and circulars were issued urging authorities to amend the lack of equal treatment experienced by non-Muslim minorities, inadequacy of the new regulations for private schools and Law on Foundations caused disappointments. Moreover, the hostile attitude held by state authorities and numerous attacks on Christians and their places of worships limited the transformation process.

¹⁹⁴ See Erdoğan's speech at 'Mevlana's Night of Reunion' on December 17, 2006, Konya. Original excerpt: 'Hümanist değerlerin, Batı'da ortaya çıkıp olgunlaşmasından çok daha önce Anadolu'da, Mevlana'nın sevgi öğretisinde mükemmel şeklini almış olmasını, yüce dinimiz İslam'a borçluyuz.'

Table 5.7 Factors Enabling Alternative Explanatory Models in Action (2005-2011)



Nevertheless, steps continued to be taken under the guidance of the EU progress reports as well as the decisions of the ECtHR. It is remarkable that the reform process in respect to freedom of religion was maintained in a context where steps towards democratization in general slowed down due to the new conditions that are not related to Copenhagen criteria and the decrease in Europeans' support for Turkey's EU membership, which began to overshadow the clear and consistent rules that had been used as reference points in the previous periods. Decrease in the EU's credibility led to a debate on alternative paths, at least at the discursive level. Additionally, there was an intensification of veto powers such as bureaucratic institutions, the army, and opposition parties, all of which retained their

discontent with reforms enhancing the conditions of non-Muslims of Turkey. Considering all of the above factors, it would be appropriate to rule out EIM as sufficient in itself for understanding the broadening of religious freedoms for non-Muslims within the period of analysis.

As argued throughout this section and demonstrated in Table 5.7, conditions prescribed by the SLM for domestic change to occur in a particular field in this period largely did not function. In a context where legitimacy of the EU had decreased - if not disappeared altogether - and Turkish society and policymakers' identification with the EU as a norm provider began to be questioned, not to mention that there was not a remarkable change in the domestic resonance in the issues concerning non-Muslims, the explanatory capability of the SLM remains very low. However, it would not be appropriate to disregard the burst in the number of norm entrepreneurs displaying sensitivity towards the lack of religious freedom and pushing for the enhancement of rights enjoyed by Turkey's non-Muslim population, especially in the wake of the assassination of Hrant Dink and the murder of missionaries in Malatya. These civil-society initiatives clearly contributed to the reform process, not only by creating awareness of non-Muslim issues, but also by creating space for Christian community representatives to take part in the negotiation process with the government and address unresolved issues.

Though the reform agenda as it concerned non-Muslims was challenged by opposition from both the vast majority of society and parties represented in the parliament, the government acted as a norm entrepreneur by staying in touch with these civil-society initiatives. This creates fertile ground to analyze the role of the government as an anchor of domestic change that has occurred in the field of freedom of religion. As the above discussion suggests, the emphasis on religious freedom, equality, and human rights appearing in the discourse analysis starting with commencement of the EU accession negotiations in 2005 demonstrates an ongoing dissatisfaction of the *AKP* with *Kemalist* policies. Remarkably, after 2007, the year the Christian community was targeted with a string of homicides, in perceiving these crimes as a threat to themselves, the *AKP* began to embrace non-Muslims and emphasize religious freedom and equal citizenship regardless of one's religion, placing importance on the existence of Christians and Jews in Turkey. While a sense of empathy with Christians was developed and the party began emphasizing equal citizenship, thus indicating a tendency towards a freedom of religion model built

upon EU progress reports, the maintenance of state-authorised hate speech occasionally adopted towards Christians; the emphasis on kinship among Turks made during speeches addressing Muslims living abroad; and the references to their Ottoman Empire ancestors, at times with an emphasis on Islam's superiority in relation to non-Muslims and freedom of religion taken together indicate that the European idea of freedom of religion was not the sole source of inspiration for the *AKP*. What stimulated the recasting of freedom of religion in Turkey in this period appears to be a combination of the EU's idea of freedom of religion combined with the practices of the Ottoman Empire, something that would become predominant after 2011.

5.3. 2011-2015: Freedom of Religion Under the Shadow of Islamic Values?

Slowdown of the formal rule adaptation in the context of the EU harmonization process became evident following the Turkish parliamentary elections held on June 12, 2011. It has been argued that the reforms advancing democratization came to a halt after this date (Kubicek, 2014). While the increasing skepticism towards Turkey's potential EU accession among EU member states has been acknowledged as the main reason of this slowdown, Turkey's rapid economic development and its increasing importance in international politics also encouraged Turkey to diversify its alternatives, if not free itself from the EU prospect altogether (Baudner, 2014; Oğuzlu, 2012). Although for some scholars this state of affairs does not necessarily signify a termination in Europeanization, as Europeanization without a membership prospect is still possible (Oğuzlu, 2012), later works contended that the *AKP* began to backslide in the democratization process (Kubicek, 2013).

This general picture, however, did not hold true for Christian minorities. Although overall decline in the pace of the reform process has been observed, Christian representatives have underlined the fact that 'there has not been a campaign against them' (anonymous, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Toros Alcan, a representative of non-Muslim foundations, remarked that the state 'could have dissolved the representation of minorities in the Foundation's Council' but they did not, as just one example indicating the continuation of the developments in relation to their rights (Alcan, personal communication, July 9, 2015). Former representative of non-Muslim foundations Laki Vingas also stressed the fact that, although it sometimes required extensive effort, 'they

still witnessed positive developments in 2011' (Vingas, personal communication, July 3, 2015).¹⁹⁵

Indeed, the amendments to the Law on Foundations in 2011 and 2013, the introduction of the new Private School Regulation in 2012, and the broadening of the scope of the Criminal Code to include the punishment of the hate crimes were all seen as positive steps. Beside the legal adaptation process, as examined in detail in Chapter 4, developments have also been observed in practice with regard to recognition of Christian minorities, their freedom of worship, religious teaching, and condemnation of discriminatory policies targeting their communities. First of all, the registration of foundations and restitution of properties regained momentum after 2011. In 2013 the head of the Foundations Council remarked that they were hopeful concerning restitution of the remaining properties (Vingas, personal communication, November 11, 2013). Indeed, the *Galata Rum* Primary School (Radikal, 2012d), the properties of the *Mor Gabriel* Monastery (Radikal, 2014a) and *Deyrulzafaran* Monastery (Radikal, 2015a) were restituted in the following years. Christians were also allowed to open or reopen minority schools. The *Rum* Orthodox community opened a school on *Gökçeada Island* in September 2013, and Syriacs also began the process of opening a minority school (Radikal, 2013a). Moreover, minority schools were provided with financial aid, though this was not dispersed along the regular lines (Agos, 2015a). Secondly, as a sign of elimination of the administrative obstacles hampering freedom of worship, the building of several new churches was approved (Radikal, 2012e) and cemeteries and church buildings were renovated by municipalities (Agos, 2015b). Examples of free and safe exercise of liturgy and other religious activities also continued to be observed (Radikal, 2011a; 2011b; Hürriyet, 2011). In the realm of religious instruction, the government began to seek a solution for the opening of the *Halki* Seminary (Agos, 2013d). Last but not least, some discriminatory practices, such as the implementation of the ethnicity-code (*Soy kodu*, a secret code issued by the state to indicate citizen's ethnic origins without their knowledge) on non-Muslims came to an end (Agos, 2015c) and discriminatory statements in history textbooks were removed in response to complaints by the Syriac community (European Commission, 2013, p.61).

¹⁹⁵ Original excerpt: 'Yani biz hala 2011'de çok pozitif gelişmelere şahit oluyorduk.'

Parallel to these improvements, from an interviewee's perspective, Christians were able to carry on the dialogue process with the government. In his words, they continued to 'reach every level of bureaucracy, they are listening our [the Christians'] problems' (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013).¹⁹⁶ It is in fact possible to argue that there was an observable increase in the number of meetings between non-Muslims and state authorities after the 2011 election. Taking a quick look at the Table 4.1, which provides a list of meetings between the government and Christian representatives, demonstrates that the vast majority of these gatherings, 17 out of 22 to be precise, took place after 2011.

Beyond the positive picture described above, the role of the prospect of EU membership is undeniable. Despite the fact that the references given to the EU accession process drastically decreased, the EU accession perspective was preserved. After the 2011 election, in explaining the government program Prime Minister Erdoğan included the EU perspective in his speech:

We have carried EU accession process decisively in our terms of government. Although the partial political approaches of some EU member states had a negative impact, we maintained our work to adopt EU standards (Taraf, 2011a).¹⁹⁷

In the same speech Erdoğan also emphasized the importance of the ECHR and UDHR in the preparation of a new constitution, which would be:

A text that is based on individuals and their rights, protects our national unity and common values; accepts societal diversity as richness; promotes pluralism instead of monologism and includes all of the elements of democratic constitutional state (Taraf, 2011a).¹⁹⁸

Alongside this declaration of persisting EU perspective, the EU's continuing legitimacy is also observable through improvements with regard to freedom of religion for Christian minorities which materialized in step with criticisms included in the EU progress reports (see Table 5.8) as well as decisions of the ECtHR urging the Turkish government to return properties belonging to Christian minorities. The properties of the *Kimisis Theodoku Rum*

¹⁹⁶ Original excerpt: 'her kademeye ulaşabiliyoruz, derdimizi dinliyorlar.'

¹⁹⁷ Original excerpt: 'Hükümetlerimiz döneminde AB'ye katılım sürecini kararlılıkla yürüttük, bazı AB üyesi ülkelerin objektif kriterlerden uzak siyasi yaklaşımları süreci olumsuz etkilese de AB standartlarına uyum konusundaki çalışmalarımıza samimi olarak devam ettik.'

¹⁹⁸ Original excerpt: 'bireyi ve onun haklarını esas alan; milli birliğimizi ve ortak değerlerimizi koruyan; toplumsal çeşitliliği bir zenginlik olarak kabul eden; tek sesliliği değil çoğulculuğu öne çıkaran ve demokratik hukuk devletin tüm unsurlarını içeren bir metin.'

Orthodox Church, for example, were restituted to its owners in 2011 following the ECtHR's 2009 decision (*Bozcaada Kimisis Theodoku Rum Kilisesi Vakfi v. Turkey* (1), 2009; *Bozcaada Kimisis Theodoku Rum Kilisesi Vakfi v. Turkey* (2), 2009). Moreover, the Büyükada Orphanage was registered on behalf of the Patriarchate in 2011 following the ECtHR's decision in 2010 (*Ecumenical Patriarchy v. Turkey*, 2010). The ECtHR's decisions were also effective in the realm of freedom of worship. For example, the *Kurtuluş* Protestant Church Foundation was established in 2011 after ECtHR decided in 2009 that non-approval of the request was violation of the Article 11 of the Convention (*Özbek and Others v. Turkey*, 2009). Finally, the deeds of the *Mor Gabriel* Monastery were delivered after the Syriac community declared that they would otherwise take the case to the ECtHR (*Agos*, 2012l).

Table 5.8. Issues Related to Christians Mentioned in the Progress Reports – Actions Taken by the Turkish State in Response (2011-2015)

Freedom of Religion		Years				
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Recognition (General)	Demand from the EU Turkey's Response	✓ A number of meetings took place between the Turkish authorities and religious leaders of non-Muslim communities, including the Ecumenical Patriarch.	✓ Representatives of all non-Muslim minorities were invited to parliament to share their views on a new Constitution. There were meetings between Christian representatives and authorities, including the Minister of EU Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Director of Religious Affairs, the President, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of National Education. The President, Prime Minister and Minister of EU Affairs issued a message on Easter. The Ministry of Culture provided support to a festival held by the Syrians of Turkish origin in Sweden. The Prime Minister visited <i>Rums</i> with traditional ties to Istanbul, now based in Athens.	✓ There were meetings between Christian representatives and authorities, including the Deputy Prime Minister, President, and Prime Minister. In February President Abdullah Gül remarked that 'the state should stand at an equal distance from adherents to all beliefs and those who do not hold a belief' The Prime Minister and The Turkish Parliamentary speaker issued a message for Easter.	✓ The Prime Minister issued a message to offer condolence for those killed or deported in 1915. The Prime Minister met with the Armenian Deputy Patriarch.	✓ -
Legal Personality	Demand from the EU Turkey's Response	✓ The 2010 ECHR judgment was implemented, allowing the establishment of the <i>Kurtuluş</i> Protestant Church Foundation.	✓ The Greek primary girls' school in Istanbul and the Armenian <i>Tibrevank</i> Lycée in Istanbul were granted foundation status.	✓ -	✓ -	✓ -
Property	Demand from the EU Turkey's Response	✓ Titles of the properties on the island of <i>Bozcaada</i> were transferred to the Bishop of <i>Imbros</i> and <i>Tenedos</i> , thus implementing the 2009 ECtHR judgment. The Law on foundations was amended, widening the scope of the 2008 Law.	✓ The <i>Rum</i> Primary School in Gökçeada was restituted. The <i>Rum</i> Orphanage in Büyükkada was restituted.	✓ The Lands of <i>Mor Gabriel</i> Syriac Orthodox Monastery were returned. The Latin Catholic Church in Mersin was given the title deeds of two properties.	✓ The restitution of the Properties of <i>Mor Gabriel</i> was completed. In October 12 parcel of land belonging to the <i>Mor Gabriel</i> Monastery was returned.	✓ -
Board Elections	Demand from the EU	-	-	-	-	✓

Freedom of Worship	Minority Schools	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-
		Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		A partial solution was formulated for Armenian and <i>Rum</i> children who do not possess Turkish citizenship to attend schools as guest students. The Ministry of National Education extended support to minority schools by distributing mathematics and science textbooks free of charge in the 2010-2011 academic year.	-	-	In March, the reopening of a <i>Rum</i> minority school on <i>Gökçeada</i> was approved by the Minister for National Education.	-	-
Freedom of Worship	Places of Worship	Turkey's Response	-	✓	-	✓	✓
		The Protestant church in Van was officially opened.	-	-	The Istanbul Syriac Orthodox Church's request for land for the construction of a new church was approved.	-	-
					The Malatya Municipality re-constructed damaged buildings in the Armenian cemetery.	✓	-
Religious Education	Liturgy and other religious activities	Turkey's Response	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		A number of special religious ceremonies continued to be permitted such as Divine Liturgy of Theotokos at the Dormition of Theotokos at the Soumela Monastery in Trabzon, in the Armenian Holy Cross church on Akhtamar Island in lake Van.	✓	✓	There was a religious service held in Soumela Monastery in Trabzon.	-	-
		A number of special religious ceremonies continued to be permitted, such as Divine Liturgy of the Dormition of Theotokos at the Soumela Monastery in Trabzon, in the Armenian Holy Cross church on Akhtamar Island in lake Van.	✓	✓	The Syriac Orthodox community held a religious service in Adyaman.	-	-
Religious Education	Religious Education	Turkey's Response	-	-	✓	✓	✓
			-	-	The Ministry of National Education declared that non-Muslims were to be provided with alternative questions in place of questions on Islam in the university entrance and secondary	-	-

Other Discriminatory Practices	Training Clergy	school final examinations; he also urged all Turkish school administrations to respond positively to requests from non-Muslims to be exempted from compulsory religion classes.									
		Authorities began work on a textbook on Christianity together with representatives of the Christian community.									
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A committee was established and given the task of reviewing options for the Halki Seminary.
	Demand from the EU	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Etyen Mahcupyan (an ethnic Armenian) became a key advisor to the Prime Minister.
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	The Criminal Code was amended to refer to 'hatred and discrimination', thus increasing the penalty for hate offences.
Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Textbooks	Demand from the EU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Turkey's Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Nonetheless, ‘Turkey has moved quite forward, but the problems are not over’, stated Nikos Uzunoglu, head of the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, in a recently article in the Turkish newspaper *Zaman* (Zaman, 2013). Indeed, despite the positive steps taken in parallel to the EU progress reports and ECtHR decisions, the criticisms of the European Commission and Council of Europe did not see any results in respect to the legal personality of religious congregations and the Ecumenicity of the *Rum* Orthodox Patriarchate. The lack of legal personality for religious communities and the denial of the Ecumenicity of the patriarchate have been subject to criticism in regular progress reports from the European Commission within the context of political criteria (European Commission, 2003: 35). Moreover, the 2010 Council of Europe Venice Commission recommendations that Turkey recognize the legal personality of religious communities and the ecumenicity of the patriarchate have yet to see implementation (Council of Europe, 2010). Similarly, implementation of the ECtHR decisions on compulsory religious education and religion section on ID cards is pending (European Commission, 2013:55; Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey, 2007).

While these issues are still in want of a solution, some back steps in the democratization process were also observed. Among these, significant problems were encountered with regard to the restitution of properties. The *Agos* newspaper’s quip that ‘The restitution process is not all lavender and roses’ made in response to Prime Minister Erdoğan’s claim that the government had restituted 2.5 million dollars’ worth of property (*Agos*, 2013m) was an honest reflection of problems encountered, such as the failure to reconstitute of the Syriac Catholic Church (T24, 2013), demanding of documents from the 1936 declaration from foundations in Hatay - a region that joined Turkey in 1939 (*Agos*, 2014b) - as well as church properties in the process of restitution being offered for sale (Radikal, 2013f) and being put on tender (Radikal, 2013g). In addition, the state intervention in election of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch (HyeTert, 2011d) and cancellation of election regulations for electing the board of non-Muslim foundations (HyeTert, 2011c) were not taken as positive signs by Christian minorities. Apart from this, exclusion of the Patriarchate from the commission formed to find a solution for the reopening of the *Halki* Seminary (Milliyet, 2013) as well as omitting reopening of the seminary from the Democratization Package (*Agos*, 2013c) were as disappointing for Christians as the request of a fee for worshipping in churches that had been turned into

museums (Taraf, 2013a). Furthermore, other discriminatory activities were revealed with the decision of the constitutional court to reject the application of a Christian citizen wishing to change their names according to religious traditions (Radikal, 2011c).

Accounting for the limited transformation process achieved as described above, the role of EU conditionality sustained through progress reports and ECtHR is difficult to ignore. However, evaluation of the sufficiency of EIM in explaining the reform process requires examining the complete context. Despite the clarity of the rules passed, a continued decrease in the credibility of conditionality can be observed. This decrease, which can be traced back to 2005. The statements by the Prime Minister and Minister of EU Affairs pointing out reluctance on the EU side in granting EU membership to Turkey (Demokrat Haber, 2012) signified that the EU conditionality was no longer perceived as a credible motivator behind the reform process. Indeed, scholars observed ‘Turkey-skepticism’ to be on the rise in Europe, leading to ‘discouraging signals’ towards Turkey which resulted in the ‘privileged membership’ proposal being offered to Turkey on behalf of the EU (Oğuzlu, 2012). From the perspective of Prime Minister Erdoğan:

There are different approaches in Europe; France gave a different attitude; Germany gave another one... When it [the EU] consisted of 15 members, the *acquis* was different and the implementations were different; but suddenly it increased to 25 members, and the implementations have changed. Now you see, the members are accepted not on the grounds of suitability, but with political decisions. We observed these facts and the same approach continues.¹⁹⁹

The ‘grand coalition in favor of Turkey’s exclusion’ (Öniş, 2009b) observed in the previous years was maintained and reflected in European public opinion polls. In the absence of relevant questions in the Eurobarometer data after Autumn 2010, analyzing other surveys conducted is useful in tracking the downward trend in positive opinions concerning Turkey’s membership in the EU. According to the Transatlantic Trends Survey data, European public opinion *against* Turkey’s EU membership increased from 20% in 2004 to 35% in 2013 (Transatlantic-Trends, 2013). Given that the EU is not eager for Turkey’s membership, the *AKP* shifted its foreign policy in another direction; developing a distinctive attitude during the Arab Spring, the 2013 coup in Egypt, and the war in Syria which fostered ‘extreme self-confidence’ and led to an eventual loosening of its interest in the EU (Demokrat Haber, 2012).

¹⁹⁹ See Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on May 27, 2014. For the original quotation see Q38 in Appendix A

Yet, the opposition and veto powers, as a determinant impacting EU conditionality, were not as strong as they had been in the pre-2011 period. Legislative, constitutional, policy-based, and symbolic changes that took place up until late 2012 reduced the opposition from the army and the bureaucracy, which had acted as guardians of the *Kemalist* principles for decades (Düzgit & Keyman, 2013). Furthermore, the debate regarding minority-related issues indicates that the opposition in the parliament was also weaker than before. For one, the *CHP*, instead of directly opposing proposed laws related to the rights and liberties of non-Muslims, framed their objections by deficiencies in the proposed laws. This is revealed in the parliamentary debate on the amendment to the Criminal Code that would broaden it to include punishment of hate crime. During the parliamentary debate *CHP* parliamentarian Ali Özgündüz criticized the fact that the proposed amendment did not cover hate speech.²⁰⁰ Moreover, the *CHP* began to reach out to non-Muslim minorities as its counterpart in opposition, the People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP*), had done for years. They backed non-Muslim candidates in the parliamentary elections and began to gather with representatives of religious minorities in order to hear their demands (Agos, 2015d).

However, examples such as the following remarks by *CHP* MP Muharrem İnce are imprinted on the memories of Christians of Turkey:

If Atatürk did not exist and become the savior of this country, your name would not be Ahmet, Hasan, Hüseyin. Your name would be Dimitri or Yorgo (Agos, 2013f).²⁰¹

While incidents similar to this have prevented the vast majority of Christians from developing trust in the *CHP*, the *MHP* maintained their strong opposition to changes concerning the rights of non-Muslim minorities. The desultory reaction of the *MHP* leader against people protesting in the memory of Hrant Dink in calling them as 'nothing but a mob' (Radikal, 2012f) and the *MHP*'s written parliamentary question interrogating the position of Laki Vingas as a member of the Foundations Council both signified the disinclination of the *MHP* for the broadening of liberties for non-Muslim minorities (Agos, 2013n). The following statement targeting Catholic Church representatives who were

²⁰⁰ See the parliamentary speech of *CHP* MP Ali Özgündüz on March 1, 2014 (24. Term 71. Session).

²⁰¹ Yorgo and Dimitri are names which are commonly used by *Rum* Orthodox citizens. Original excerpt: 'Atatürk olmasaydı, bu ülkenin kurtarıcısı olmasaydı, adınız Ahmet, Hasan, Hüseyin olmazdı. Adınız Dimitri olurdu, Yorgo olurdu.'

invited to parliament to share their views on the drafting of a new constitution from *MHP* MP Oktay Öztürk, who was also a member of the Constitutional Committee, also demonstrated the continued threat perception of non-Muslims:

We should not let those who will take us to our old bad past once again; those who want to divide us taking advantage of our weakness (Agos, 2012m).²⁰²

During the parliamentary debate on the budget of the Directorate General of Foundations, Mustafa Erdem, another *MHP* MP, also expressed his concerns on the restoration and the re-opening of the churches:

The government's interest in the restoration of the *Sümela* [Soumela hereafter] and *Akdamar* [Akhtamar hereafter] Churches in our territory is quite disturbing. Even though Akhtamar was closed to worship, in order to please Armenians and gain their consent, today worship practice began and rendering it ordinary, attendance of the members of this religion living abroad was made possible. As if what Armenians did during the Independence War is unknown, there was special interest taken in the Armenian Surp Giragos Church in Diyarbakir and the bell tower that was destroyed with cannon balls by our ancestors in 1914 as it was higher than the minaret has been repaired today... The minds of the Turkish nation are made to listen to the ring of the bell.²⁰³

It is quite clear that, although weakened, the opposition still seems far from supporting improvements in the liberties granted to non-Muslim minorities at this point. Coupling this fact with weakened EU-credibility, EIM remains insufficient to explain continuation of the reform process with regard to Turkish Christians. Having said that, the continuance of reforms affecting religious minorities still needs a suitable explanation.

In search for alternative explanatory mechanisms for domestic change pertaining to non-Muslims, the following statement by a representative of a Christian community arguing against the impact of EU conditionality is more than merely notable:

The issue of *Mor Gabriel* was, yes, problematic; we were engaged in it since 2008. But what is important here is your point of view. Cadastral work has recently begun in this field. The peasants had seized the properties. They claimed the [abandoned] land, and the Treasury and Regional Directorate of Forestry tried to seize it [from them on behalf of the state]. We cannot blame the government in this. We cannot say that it is the impact of ECtHR. The Syrians were making press releases and raising these issues. Obviously the EU has an impact, but it is not only that (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013).²⁰⁴

²⁰² Original excerpt: 'Bir daha bizi eski kötü günlere gütürecek, zayıflığımızdan istifade ederek bizi parçalamak isteyenlere de fırsat vermememiz gerekir.'

²⁰³ See the parliamentary speech of Mustafa Erdem, an MP of *CHP* on December 11, 2012 (24. Term 37. Session). For the original quotation see Q39 in Appendix A

²⁰⁴ For the original quotation see Q40 in Appendix A

This experience underscoring the fact that Christian civil-society initiatives had played a prominent role in overcoming a particular obstacle encountered direct us to consider the potential of SLM in explaining the reform process. At first glance, the factors enabling SLM appear to be inefficient. Although the EU continued to present a clear and consistent set of norms regarding freedom of religion and protection of religious minorities through its progress reports and ECtHR decisions in this period, due to the decreased credibility of conditionality, questioning of the appropriateness of EU rules increased after 2011. Policymakers' and society's identification with EU norms also remained low. As will be demonstrated over the following paragraphs the policy makers' identification with the EU drastically declined. Moreover, societal identification with the EU on the whole did not rise. The degree of societal identification with the EU is revealed through surveys conducted at that time. According to the Turkey Values Survey and the Eurobarometer survey, while perception of the EU's image fluctuated between 2011 and 2014, it mostly remained low (Esmer, 2011; Euro-Barometer, 2012, 2013, 2014) thus indicating low societal identification with the EU²⁰⁵. Despite general support for the democratization process (Radikal, 2013d), it can also be assumed that domestic resonance in reference to the EU's norms in terms of the rights and liberties of non-Muslims remained low by looking at the 2011 Turkey Values Survey measuring the perception of Christian minorities in the society. According to the survey, the proportion of those who did not want Christians around them was 49% (Esmer, 2011).

Despite the lack of both identification with the EU and domestic resonance on minority related issues, however, there is an observable increase in both the amount and efficiency of norm entrepreneurs advocating freedom of religion. New formations increasing the visibility of Christians in the public space continued to emerge. These include *RUMVADER*, which was established in 2011 to support minority foundations morally and financially and help them to put out their name in Turkish society (*RUMVADER*, undated); *Paros Magazine*, which mainly focuses on the cultural and social life of non-Muslims and began publication in October 2011; and *Sabro*, a monthly Syriac newspaper which began distribution in March of 2012 with the aim of voicing their

²⁰⁵ The percentage of those who gave a positive response to the question in the surveys about the EU's image was 39% in 2011-2012 Turkey Values Survey; 36% in Spring 2011 Eurobarometer; 30% in Autumn 2012 Eurobarometer; 32% in Spring 2012 Eurobarometer; 20% in Autumn 2013 Eurobarometer; 35% in Spring 2013 Eurobarometer; 39% in Autumn 2014 Eurobarometer; and 43% in Spring 2014 Eurobarometer. The positive responses to the question about the trust to the EU is even lower.

‘struggle for common, equal and free life’ (Sabro, undated). Apart from these, initiatives that expressed and questioned issues related to non-Muslims and their freedoms also increased. These included *Irkcılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe Dur De* (Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism) (Radikal, 2012g) and *Adalet Talebimiz Var* (Demand for Justice) (Agos, 2012n). The post-2011 period also bore witness to changes in the parliament. With the *CHP* trying to redirect its approach towards non-Muslims (Agos, 2015d) and the *HDP* starting shifting from focusing solely on issues related to Kurds towards being a party producing solutions for the greater democratization process, these two parties placed an emphasis on justice for and the equality of non-Muslims of Turkey. The election of Christian citizens as MP’s representing the *AKP*, *CHP*, and *HDP* also paved the way for the demands of Turkey’s Christians to land on the parliamentary agenda (Radikal, 2015b). The numerical increase in norm-entrepreneurs has been followed by the public visibility of Christians voicing their demands. As some communities carried out EU-supported projects to increase awareness both among their communities and greater Turkish society (Agos, 2013j; Sat7TurkHaber, 2013), spiritual and civil non-Muslim leaders continued to demand equality and freedom from policy makers; what’s more, they began to comment more about their problems in public. Voicing their disagreement with the proposal to turn the *Hagia Sophia* Museum in Istanbul into a mosque, as was suggested by the Deputy Prime Minister, the *Rum* Patriarch issued a strong response by saying that they would gather the entire Christian population irrespective of sect to protest against it (Agos, 2014c). Moreover, during the drafting of the new constitution, representatives of the Syriac Orthodox community demanded the resolution of property issues as well as a more representative *DİB* (Agos, 2012o) while *Rum* Patriarch Bartholomeos expressed himself following the meeting in parliament to which he had received the first official invitation in the history of the Republic with the following words:

We don’t want to be second-class citizens. Unfortunately, until today... we have suffered wrongs. All of these are being changed, getting better gradually; a new Turkey is being born. We never lost our hope. We are pleased now. We are sure that our thoughts will be considered because we do not want anything more than our rights as Turkish citizens. We don’t want discrimination; we want equality. Because we are citizens, we were born and raised here; we do our military service, we pay our taxes, we vote. Therefore, we asked for non-repetition of all these wrongdoings. We asked for our rights to be guaranteed in the new constitution (Milliyet, 2012b).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ For the original quotation see Q41 in Appendix A

In addition to the increase in the number of norm-entrepreneurs reinforcing freedom and equality, another factor which shaped the developments with regard to non-Muslims was the distinctive shift in the government's perception of religious freedom after 2011. Approaching the issue of religious freedoms as a field where the government has often expressed dissatisfaction, LDM, in focusing on the possible existence of domestic intentions leading to policy change, may help us to explain the limited progress achieved in broadening Christian's freedom of religion in this period.

It is possible to argue that LDM's explanatory capability increased in this period. This is mainly due to the fact that the power of the army and the bureaucracy as veto powers and in ability to present *Kemalist*-based opposition to policy changes regarding freedom of religion was greatly lessened as they were taken under the control of the *AKP* through constitutional and legislative changes. Moreover, despite the lack of support from the general public, the increase in the number of societal actors demanding the broadening of religious freedoms and enhancement of the rights of non-Muslims had a positive impact on the process.

Although the shift in the domestic balance of power decreased the government's struggle against *Kemalist* ideology, they preserved their sensitivity towards the *Kemalist* understanding of religion. From the perspective of Christian minorities, the *AKP*'s adaptation of EU norms in relation to freedom of religion and non-Muslim minorities represents a change in the mentality (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2013), and this change in the mentality has a direct legacy from the Islamic movement which was suppressed under the *Kemalist* regime from the founding of the republic (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2013). The continuous sensitivity of the government towards unjust sufferings experienced during the reign of the *Kemalist* approach can be traced through the speeches of Prime Minister Erdoğan. Following criticisms of societal opposition against his party involving its part in raising a religious generation, in a group meeting Erdoğan argued that this was the same 'fuss' made before February 28²⁰⁷, and in other statements he orally listed the difficulties that Islamists faced:

28 February... regulations incompatible with the feelings of the nation from primary schools to universities and Quran Courses to mosques. Children of this nation were offended in front of university entrances. Many female students disinclined furthering

²⁰⁷ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on February 02, 2012.

their education due to their religion, due to their attire. The dignity of our female students - who were refused entrance to the universities, exposed to torture in persuasion rooms and whose education rights were taken away are being returned even if late.²⁰⁸

They have forbidden reading, teaching, and learning the Quran in this country. They have forbidden reciting the azan [call to prayer] in its original [language] in this country. They have forbidden practicing one's faith. They have forbidden dressing and living according to one's faith.²⁰⁹

Some Christian representatives contend that continuation of dissatisfaction with the traditional state approach to religious freedoms enabled the *AKP* to empathize with Christian minorities and prevented them from disregarding the issues as they affected Christians (anonymous, personal communication, December 16, 2013; March 20a, 2014). In a way, the guarantee of religious freedoms to religious minorities was perceived as a guarantee of these freedoms for Muslims as well (anonymous, personal communication, November 13, 2013). Prime Minister Erdoğan confirmed this argument by recognizing that the lack of freedom of religion also affected non-Muslims in a speech in which he chose to use a quotation from a Christian citizen contributing to a newspaper letter campaign in 1966. In Erdoğan's words:

Not a Muslim, a Christian citizen, an Armenian citizen writes this letter: 'Dear *Yeni İstiklal* Newspaper, I find myself responsible to Turkey, as its citizen, to write from Diyarbakir in response to your newspaper's call for proof against the lies of İnönü. I am Christian, but I present the activities of this person who is the enemy of all religions and has declared and proved that he is left of center. The worship place known to Muslims as *Kurşunlu* Mosque or *Fatih Paşa* Mosque had been used as a warehouse and was closed in 1941-1942. A few wrecked cartridge boxes, wedges, draggers, saddles, and other rubbish were put inside. In its yard there were wrecked carriage wedged and guards were placed in front of it. Meanwhile, in our Latin Church, a group of soldiers were placed to protect these so-called munitions in the mosque. "They were using our religious place of worship as a toilet," he says.²¹⁰

We observe similar references used by the *AKP* in describing the deconstruction of the nation against the old repressive regime to demonstrate the *AKP*'s pragmatic partnership with the Christian minorities (anonymous, personal communication, March 20a, 2014), which increased after 2011. In 2013 Ömer Çelik, the Minister of Culture and Tourism,

²⁰⁸ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on February 28, 2012. For the original quotation see Q45 in Appendix A

²⁰⁹ See Erdoğan's 'Monthly Address to the Nation' Speech in April 2013. Original excerpt: 'Kur'an-ı Kerim'in okunmasını, öğretilmesini, öğrenilmesini yasakladılar bu ülkede. Minarelerden ezanın aslına uygun olarak okunmasını yasakladılar bu ülkede... İncancı yaşamayı yasakladılar. İncancına göre giyinmeyi, yaşamayı yasakladılar.'

²¹⁰ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on April 24, 2012. For the original quotation see Q46 in Appendix A.

clearly expressed the *AKP*'s approach towards non-Muslims in answering a question concerning the sincerity of the call to expatriated Christians of Turkey:

Please note that Turkey is now being governed by a cadre who has suffered from similar issues to yours in the recent past. If some coup attempts had succeeded, most of us would not be alive today. The fact that the call for them to return to their homeland is made by these cadres is itself a guarantee (Agos, 2013h).²¹¹

In a similar vein, during his visit to a minority school Ömer Dinçer, the Minister of National Education, touched on the common victimization encountered by different segments of society.

In this country everyone was affected by the general approach of authoritarian rule... Syriacs, Alevis, Armenians, Kurds, *Rums*, everyone was affected. One has to see and express the fact that spreading human rights and freedoms as much as possible and extending and deepening democracy as much as possible in this country will reinforce our brotherhood (Radikal, 2012h).²¹²

According to the vice-prime minister, they continued to bear witness to victimization through issues related to non-Muslim minorities until very recently:

We learned the lessons from the issues that concern us. One of them is the following: The foundations and associations were oppressed and prevented from undertaking their activities in Turkey where coups, interventions, direct and indirect inducements, threats, and blackmailing has been valid (Agos, 2013g).²¹³

A nationalist (*ulusalcı*) mindset, an extreme nationalist idea has been trying to keep the tragedies of the past alive. What difficulties we faced during the legislation of the new Law on Foundations. I was not a minister at the time. But I turned red from shame while listening to the discussions. Now they are all recorded. In the end we managed to pass this law (Agos, 2012f).²¹⁴

As the above debate suggests, in an increased show of empathy after 2011, the *AKP* framed issues of concern to non-Muslims through the mutual shared past lack of freedom of religion, as they themselves had similarly suffered in previous decades. It would not be fair to argue that the EU prospect continued to offer an alternative model to the *AKP* as to regulation of religious diversity. As the discourse analysis of the post-2011 period has demonstrated, the *AKP* referred to the EU in reference to steps taken including enhancement of the rights of non-Muslim minorities, though these references were rare.

²¹¹ Original excerpt: 'Unutmayın ki, sizin yaşadığınız acıların yakın zamanda benzerini yaşamış bir kadro yönetiyor Türkiye'yi. Birtakım darbe teşebbüsleri eğer başarıya ulaşıyды pek çoğumuz belki hayatta olmayacaktık. Bu kadronun söylüyor olması basil başına bir güvencedir zaten.'

²¹² For the original quotation see Q47 in Appendix A.

²¹³ For the original quotation see Q11 in Appendix A.

²¹⁴ For the original quotation see Q10 in Appendix A.

For example, in explaining why the reference texts in the Democratization Package included the restitution of the properties belonging to the Syriac Orthodox church in *Mardin*, Beşir Atalay referred to the following points:

The European Court of Human Rights jurisdiction and case law that our country accepts as binding; some issues mentioned in progress reports of the European Union with whom our country carries a negotiation process; criticisms of our legislation and the implementations of our judiciary and administrative bodies voiced in national and international arena.²¹⁵

Likewise, statements made by Prime Minister Erdoğan at his party's group meeting included EU values as a target. While he contended that the opening of a new chapter in the *acquis* within the context of EU negotiation process was a positive development in one party-group meeting²¹⁶, in another meeting he conveyed his party's aim in the following words:

Adopting the democratic values of Europe and establishing the fundamental principles of human rights and freedoms in ideal form have been among our main objectives for the past 12 years; we advance towards these objectives decisively and we will attain them.²¹⁷

The continuation of the emphasis on equality and freedom of religion in reference to non-Muslim minorities, therefore, could be evaluated as belonging to a context where fundamental principles, such as human rights and religious freedom in Europe, retains their attractiveness for the *AKP*. The Prime Minister's preference of *Türkiyeli* (from Turkey) instead of *Türklük* (Turkishness) in defining the nation was remarkable in this sense in that it represented an inclusionary approach towards non-Muslims in general, and Christians in particular:

Tribes, races, languages, faiths, and parents may be different; we have gathered under the *Türkiyeli* identity and became a nation in which history, culture, our common civilization, and faiths have made us brothers.²¹⁸

Through declaring the restitution of the Christian properties as a matter of 'rights' (Agos,

²¹⁵ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Beşir Atalay on March 1, 2014 (24. Term 71. Session). For the original quotation see Q42 in Appendix A.

²¹⁶ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on November 12, 2013.

²¹⁷ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on May 27, 2014. Original excerpt: 'Avrupa'nın demokratik değerlerini benimsemek, temel insan hak ve özgürlüklerini en ideal manada ülkemizde tesis etmek 12 yıldır temel hedeflerimiz arasında, biz bu hedeflere doğru kararlılıkla ilerleriz ve ilerleyeceğiz.'

²¹⁸ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on January 30, 2013. Original excerpt: 'Kavimler, ırklar, diller, inançlar, anne-babalar, şehirler farklı olabilir, biz hepimiz daha üst bir kimliğin, Türkiyeli kimliğinin altında bir araya gelmiş, tarihin, kültürün, ortak medeniyetimizin, inançlarımızın bizi birbirimize kardeş yaptığı tek bir millet olmuşuz.'

2012d), and stressing the importance of citizenship instead of Turkishness in the draft constitution (Agos, 2012e), the *AKP* emphasized a right-based approach to freedom of religion in this period. In parallel to this, Christian minorities were described as ‘first class citizens’ regardless of their religion and sect on many occasions (Agos, 2012c; Paros, 2015; Taraf, 2011a).²¹⁹ To set an example, non-Muslim minorities were called to apply for jobs in public institutions such as the police department (Hürriyet, 2013c) and other bureaucratic institutions (Radikal, 2012c). Moreover, *AKP* parliamentarian Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu replied to criticism over selection of a non-Muslim minority representing Turkey in the Eurovision Song Contest by underscoring the fundamental equality between Muslim and Christian citizens (Radikal, 2012b). In response to a comment in the parliamentary debate on the restitution of the *Rum* Orphanage in *Büyükkada*, Bülent Arınç stressed the importance of the ECtHR decision in the restitution, he contending that:

This is not something to condemn. Right is the most sacred property of the righteous. We believe in that, and we do it by force of law.²²⁰

Prime Minister Erdoğan also underlined this rights-based approach in clarifying the importance of ‘common values’ in his speech explaining the ‘Democratic Republic’ project he introduced to the parliament:

We stand up for the new constitution being a text including all the elements of a democratic constitutional state, based on individuals and their rights, protecting our national unity and common values and accepting our diversity as richness, prioritizing pluralism over monologism (Taraf, 2011a).²²¹

Apart from their emphasis on equality and citizenship, it is important to note that the government also showed a broadening comprehension of *laïcité* by including freedom of religion, and demonstrated that this shift in their approach to religion enabled a direct approach to Christian minorities. While the former Minister of Foreign stated that freedom of religion was one of their fundamental principles, in his speech at the group meeting the Prime Minister reminded the audience of the *AKP*’s definition of *laïcité* in the following terms:

First of all, we should not forget this: we are a democratic, secular, and social

²¹⁹ See also Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on January 22, 2013.

²²⁰ See the parliamentary speech of *AKP* MP Bülent Arınç on December 11, 2012 (24. Term 37. Session). Original excerpt: ‘Bu da ayıplanacak bir şey değil. Hak, haklının en mukaddes malıdır. Biz buna inanıyoruz ve bunun, hukukun gereği olarak yapıyoruz.’

²²¹ For the original quotation see Q12 in Appendix A.

state governed by rule of law. This is clear our definition of laïcité in our party program. The AKP maintains an equal distance from all faith groups; the guarantor of freedom of religion for all faith groups is the *AKP* government, this is our understanding.²²²

The Presidency of Religious Affairs also adopted a positive approach towards religious minorities as compared to the previous periods. In performing the first visit of the Presidency of Religious Affairs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the history of Republic of Turkey, Mehmet Gómez declared his support for the re-opening of the *Halki* Seminary and stated ‘Every faith should train its own clergy’ (Agos, 2012g). During a 2013 symposium on organ transplantation Mehmet Görmez also stressed the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims (IHA, 2013).

As the above discussion suggests, the EU continued to be perceived as an example for the *AKP* in its search for a framework for the recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion in Turkey. Yet *AKP* politicians’ decreasing references to European norms in regard to Christians, and their intense criticism of the EU and EU progress reports demonstrated a divergence from an EU-centered perception of religious freedom. *AKP* politicians, for instance, began to emphasize the EU’s prejudice against Turkey and stressed the fact that the EU objective was not unconditional. The following statements from Prime Minister Erdoğan are notable in that sense:

Of course this report is not a ‘report card’ for us. The only authority that can assess Turkey is obviously the nation itself. We do not have an expectation of an assessment from elsewhere. But we would have liked to see the EU mention its own reluctance to engage and embrace Turkey in this report. We would have liked to witness criticism of the European Union and certain member states for their manners towards Turkey as well as their criticism of Turkey in certain issues... We sincerely expect the European Union, which is very generous in its criticism of candidate states, to write its own report.²²³

Since we have embraced international law and international values, we have the intention of European Union membership, and we pursue this decisively. But this should not be misunderstood; and arrogant parties outside as well as inside should not interpret our good intentions as being unconditional.²²⁴

²²² See Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on July 2, 2013. For the original quotation see Q48 in Appendix A.

²²³ See Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on October 22, 2013. For the original quotation see Q43 in Appendix A.

²²⁴ See Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on May 13, 2014. For the original quotation see Q44 in Appendix A.

Weakened EU credibility both due to ‘enlargement fatigue’ within the EU and ‘reform fatigue’ from the *AKP*, as well as the foreign policy preferences of the *AKP* that occasionally led to confrontation with Europe, taken together could account for this divergence from the EU prospect. This state of affairs also led to use of other inspirational references, which brought to the surface the broadening of rights for non-Muslim minorities. The references, in fact, had existed earlier; the pre-2011 period also bore traces of a conservative outlook centering on Islam and an idealization of the Ottoman past. A model which can be loosely defined as the ‘Ottoman policy of tolerance’ intensified over time and began to shape the recasting of the status of non-Muslims.

The emphasis on cultural richness, Ottoman ancestors, religious conservatism, and the superiority of Islam were all elements included in the discourses of *AKP* politicians evoking the Ottoman model of tolerance. Despite the emphasis on citizenship, rights and freedom of religion in reference to the Christians of Turkey in an attempt to consolidate an approach to religious freedoms in line with the EU model, the ‘richness’ discourse adopted concordantly signified that the *AKP* was using a different perspective on freedom of religion. In official greeting statements made on the occasion of Christian festive days, authorities stressed that Christians are among the country’s ‘exceptional diversities’ (*müstesna çeşitlilik*) and part of the nation’s cultural richness, as well as being first class citizens (*Agos*, 2012c; 2012p; 2013o; 2013p).²²⁵ In the message he issued to celebrate the Easter of Christian citizens President Abdullah Gül also emphasized this theme of cultural richness:

The exceptional diversity of our nation is the richness that forms our cultural heritage. This richness that we carry proudly is the fundamental virtue of the Republic of Turkey (*Agos*, 2012h).²²⁶

Underscoring their contribution to the nation’s ‘richness’ suggested that *AKP* politicians did not intend to disregard Christians as previous governments had. The Minister of the EU Affairs’ explanation of the president’s call for families to have at least three children emphasizing that the call was also meant for non-Muslims because ‘the prime minister... wants Turkey to remain big and alive with all its richness’ (*Radikal*, 2012b) could be taken as an indicator of this perception.

²²⁵ Original excerpt: ‘Hükümet AB sürecini devam ettiriyor ama tam tamına da ayak uydurmak istemiyor.’

²²⁶ Original excerpt: ‘Milletimizin içinde barındırdığı müstesna çeşitlilikler, kültür mirasımızı oluşturan en büyük zenginliğimizdir. Geçmişten geleceğe büyük bir iftiharla taşıdığımız bu zenginlik çağdaş Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin harcındaki asli faziletlerden biridir.’

Although the emphasis on richness does not necessarily signify a divergence from the EU model, the frequent references made by *AKP* politicians in this term to ‘glorious ancestors’ and the Ottoman past in debating the rights of Christian minorities did signal that they were using the Ottoman approach towards non-Muslims as a guide. In her analysis Jenny White touches on this point, stressing that one of the important aspects of the transformation of religious freedoms in Turkey was the replacement of derivation of rights from the *Kemalist* model to the Ottoman approach to religious minorities (Agos, 2013l). Confirming Jenny White’s argument, *AKP* politicians defined themselves as members of the ‘deep-rooted past’ (Agos, 2013i) and declared that they would always make an effort to protect the existence of ‘ancient civilizations’ (Radikal, 2013b).

Arguably, non-Muslims were considered as ‘ancient civilizations’ needing protection. During his visit to the *Rum* Patriarchate the Minister of Foreign Affairs asserted that it is a ‘historical responsibility’ to sustain the coexistence of religious communities (Agos, 2012j). A similar point was made during another visit paid to the *Rum* Patriarchate, this time by the Director of Religious Affairs. Declaring his support to the reopening of *Halki* Seminary, the director contended that:

At the same time, we consider non-Muslim citizens living in our country as a grace of our history, culture, and civilization... I always say stressing the fact that being in need of other countries in order to train religious personnel does not befit this country’s history, culture, civilization, and greatness (Agos, 2012g).²²⁷

The *AKP*’s preference for the Ottoman metaphor is also significant as the Ottoman ideal complements the *AKP*’s conservative identity (Oktay, 2012). As interviews conducted with religious minority representatives and discourse analysis of the *AKP* politicians suggest, there was an increasingly conservative approach to freedom of religion in this period. Although some religious minorities considered the EU as the main facilitator behind the enhancement of their rights in the beginning of the democratization process (anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2014), others emphasized the *AKP*’s religiosity and conservative identity, as this facilitated the relationship between the Christian minorities and the government (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013). Some Christian clergy supported this argument as well by evaluating the role of *AKP*’s religiosity in broadening of their freedom with the following words: ‘a person who devotes himself to

²²⁷ For the original quotation see Q49 in Appendix A.

religion would not harm other religious people' (anonymous, personal communication, March 24b, 2013).²²⁸

Indeed, *AKP* politicians preserved a religious outlook in their approach to non-Muslims. For example, Bülent Arınç admitted in a meeting with non-Muslim representatives that his political ideology prevented him from acknowledging the sincerity, friendship, and religiosity of non-Muslim communities until he started to work with them on issues restricting their freedoms (*Agos*, 2012r). In another meeting he expressed the impact of religiosity in changing the state's negative perceptions of non-Muslims:

Jews and Christians also have fasting. This means that God, the creator of all of us, assigned a form worship called fasting as a duty for us due to its various wisdoms. Your respecting this makes us very happy (*Agos*, 2012f).²²⁹

Similarly, during a debate on the right to martyrdom for non-Muslims, Bekir Bozdağ, benefitted from the guidance of Islam in his argument:

We are not creating a definition of martyrdom. I consulted the hodjas [religious teachers] on this issue. According to Islam, in fact, giving or taking someone's martyrdom status does not rest with us. It is the will of God... Consider a country that has two soldiers, one non-Muslim, one Muslim. While fighting against terror, neither Islam, nor justice, nor consciousness would approve telling the Muslim soldier's acquaintances that they are given particular rights and the other that they are not because they have a different religion (*Agos*, 2012s).²³⁰

In supporting the reopening of the *Halki* Seminary, vice-chairman and spokesman of the *AKP* Hüseyin Çelik also used Islam-based argumentation in contending that it is wrong to oppose to the reopening of the theology school in the name of Islam, and invited others to empathize with non-Muslims:

Now there is Rotterdam Islam University; 500 students are receiving an Islamic education. There are extensions of sects and communities in Europe. There are 5000 mosques in Europe; one third of them are converted churches. One needs to be honest and emphasize that Muslims will open, Europe will say yes; Turkey will train 100 priests and will there be a fuss? Can something like this happen? The one who is sure of his religion, do not hesitate from another's practicing of his faith. Opposing this would be neither humanistic nor Islamic (*Agos*, 2012g).²³¹

However, references to religion in general and Islam in particular did not necessarily

²²⁸ Original excerpt: 'Gerçek dindardan zarar gelmez.'

²²⁹ Original excerpt: 'Musevilerin de, Hristiyanların da orucu var. Demek ki hepimizi yaratan Allah bütün dinlerde oruç adıyla bir ibadeti çeşitli hikmetleri sebebiyle farz kılmış. Sizin buna saygı göstermeniz bizi çok sevindiriyor.'

²³⁰ For the original quotation see Q51 in Appendix A

²³¹ For the original quotation see Q52 in Appendix A

represent an affirmative attitude towards non-Muslims. Christians continued to be described as traitors in history textbooks (Radikal, 2015c) and Christian missionaries presented as ‘exploiters’ (Radikal, 2015d); the Foreign Ministry also continued to generally address Christians as if they were foreigners (Agos, 2012j). Moreover, traces of hate speech against Christians were also observed. Muhyettin Aksak, for example, referred to the members of the PKK movement as the ‘Armenian Convert’ (Agos, 2012t). Christians in Turkey also perceived the following statements by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s as hate speech:

What they have said about me for instance; one said (I have the same mentality as a) Georgian, another said, excuse me, worse things like (I am like an) Armenian (Agos, 2014d).²³²

In light of the above examples, some Christian representatives held that the religious sensitivity of the government alone was not enough to gain their confidence (anonymous, personal communication, December 9, 2013). Despite the governments’ reactionary attitude exemplified in their glorification of the Ottoman past, which was commonly borrowed from in establishing a grounds for relationship with religious minorities and enhancement of their religious freedoms, many Christians observed the emergence of a discourse emphasizing inequality and superiority of Islam over other religions (anonymous, personal communication, October 23, 2013) as a part of the idealization of the Ottoman religious tolerance policy.

Government emphasis on Islam as the one religion of the nation appeared as indicative of the reinforcement of Islamic identity over society. Though the Prime Minister stated that they were not reinforcing the one-religion policy and contended that governing people belonging different faiths is the party’s ‘most successful aspect in sense of ruling,’²³³ his concurrent emphasis on Muslim youth ‘as the real descendants of the Turkish nation’ (İnsel, 2012) as well as his ‘one religion’ emphasis in a statement referring the features of the Turkish nation – although this was later excused as a slip of the tongue – drew reaction from the Christians of Turkey (Agos, 2012i). The Prime Minister also made it clear that the party’s primary concern was, in his own words ‘Islam, Islam, Islam’ (Bianet, 2015).

²³² Original excerpt: ‘benim için mesela neler söylediler; çıktı bir tanesi (aynı zihniyet) Gürcü diyen oldu, çıktı bir tanesi afedersin çok daha çirkin şeylerle Ermeni diyen oldu...’

²³³ See Erdoğan’s speech at the *AKP* group meeting on January 15, 2013.

The discursive emphasis on the superiority of Islam has also seen practical implementation. Non-Muslim pupils were docked points for not answering questions concerning Islam – from which they are legally exempted – in university and secondary school entrance exams (Taraf, 2013b; Radikal, 2014e; T24, 2015a). Furthermore, two ‘Muslim’ experts were required by the state in cadastral works done as a part of the restitution of Christians’ properties (Radikal, 2012i). Moreover, the insistence of turning the identically-named *Hagia Sophia* museums in *İznik*, *Trabzon* and Istanbul, which have been known as Christian sanctuaries for centuries, into mosques increased the perception that the *AKP*, as an ‘Imaginary Ottoman Authority’, is prioritizing Islam over Christianity (Kechriotis, 2013). In the meantime, the *Hagia Sophia* museums in *İznik* and *Trabzon* have been turned into mosques, despite the court decisions ruling against this (Radikal, 2013h) and Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç implied that *Hagia Sophia* in Istanbul will also be open as a mosque (Agos, 2014c).

The conservative identity of the government did not prevent the *AKP* from occasional nationalist reflections as well. Reflections of a combination nationalist-conservative attitude are seen on issues related to Christian minorities. For instance, despite the non-restrictive interpretation of the reciprocity principle in the Treaty of Lausanne underlining the Turkish citizenship of Christians, and therefore rejecting the implementation of reforms concerning their freedoms on condition of reforms implemented for Muslims in Greece, the government reinforced the reciprocity principle in its restrictive form in the post-2011 period. In explaining why the Theology School had not yet been reopened, Erdoğan demonstrated that they would continue to employ conventional ‘nationalist’ arguments in approaching the Christians of Turkey:

They said ‘Why is the Theology School not yet opened?’ I tell them ‘Opening the Theology School is not an issue for us.’ I ask them ‘I have 150,000 citizens in Western Trace. Why do you appoint their Mufti and not give them the right to choose?’ (Agos, 2013k).²³⁴

Although Bülent Arınç claimed that the opening of the Theology School is ‘not an issue of reciprocity’, and therefore one should not understand it as an issue of ‘we won’t do it if Greece doesn’t’ (Agos, 2013r), the Prime Minister once again clearly stated:

For us, (the opening of the) Theology School is an instant issue. But when we

²³⁴ For the original quotation see Q53 in Appendix A

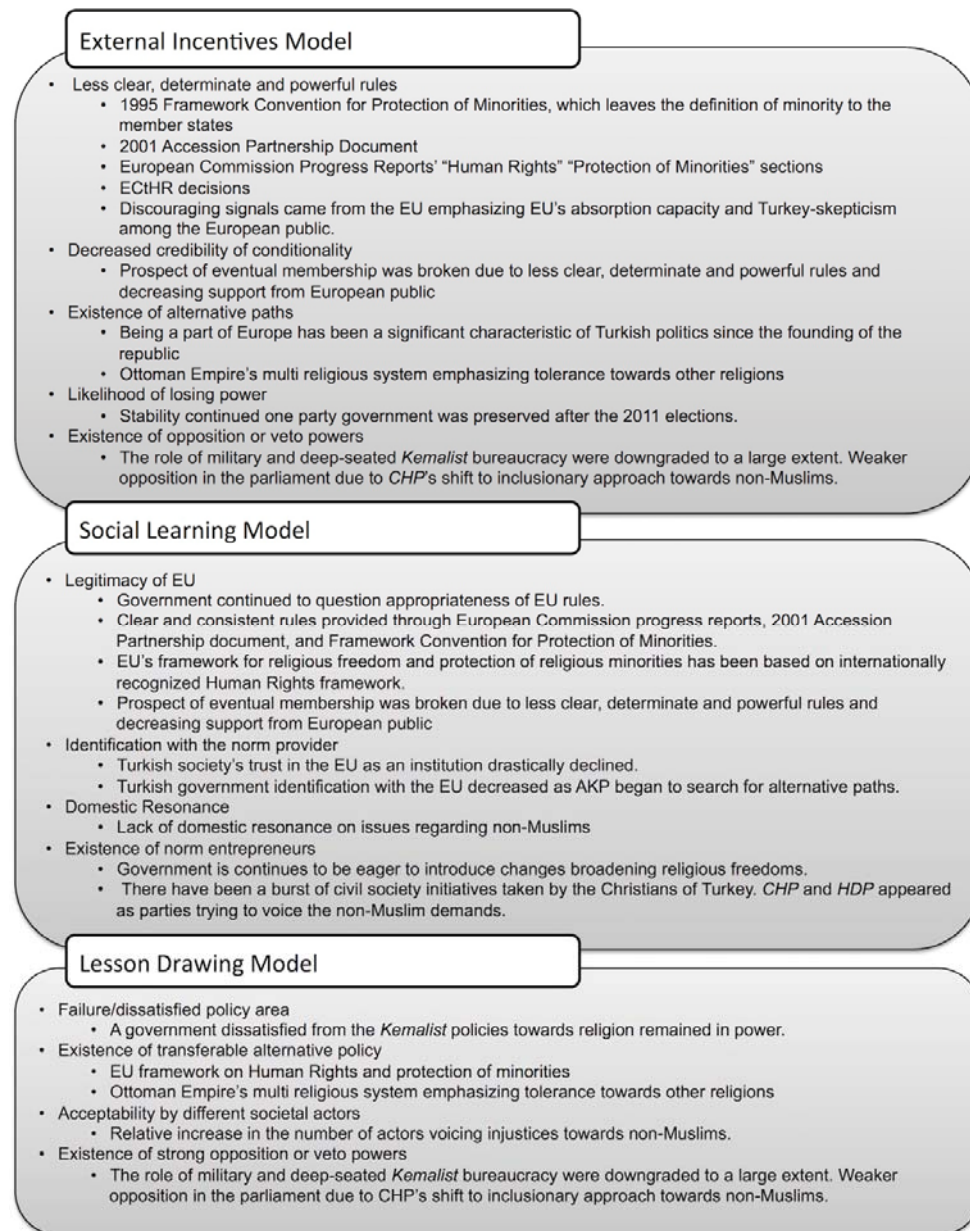
return one thing, we have the right to expect something in return.²³⁵

To sum up, in the post-2011 period reforms enhancing the rights of non-Muslims continued to take place alongside legislative rulings and manners of implementation that at times overshadowed and nullified these improvements. As exemplified throughout the chapter, while the amendments made to the Law on foundations in 2011 and 2013, the introduction of the Private School regulations in 2012, and the changes undertaken in practice paved the way for restitution of extrajudicial practices of the previous decades, the cancellation of the community boards' election regulations and persistence in not reopening the *Halki* seminary resulted in disappointment.

It would be absolutely appropriate to attribute the achievements gained in the ongoing process to the monitoring of the progress reports and ECtHR decisions, and to the increase in the number of norm-entrepreneurs promoting the broadening of non-Muslim's freedom of religion. Indeed, the above analysis suggested that the vast majority of the implementation took place under the watch of progress reports and ECtHR decisions, and with the push from civil-society initiatives. It is therefore reasonable to credit the shortcomings and back steps in progress to the decreased credibility of the EU in this period.

²³⁵ See Erdoğan's speech at the *AKP* group meeting on October 8, 2013. Original excerpt: 'Bizim için Ruhban Okulu anlık meseledir. Ama biz bir şeyin iadesini yaparken, bir şeylerin de iadesini bekleme hakkına sahibiz.'

Table 5.9 Factors Enabling Alternative Explanatory Models in Action (2011-2015)



However, taking a closer look at the EIM and SLM, as models benefitting from the above-mentioned factors, in analyzing the policy change one would realize that they are insufficient for explaining the changes that occurred in respect to non-Muslims' right to freedom of religion. As is summarized in Table 5.9, EU credibility began to be questioned and alternative paths taken as recasting the freedom of religion was added to the government's agenda, although EU norms were not completely ruled out. Progress reports

and ECtHR decisions continue to provide a roadmap for protection of religious minorities; however, the existence of subjective criteria greatly hampered the capacity of EU conditionality. In addition, though the likelihood of the government's losing power decreased as a consequence of weakened opposition, it would be too optimistic to expect opposition to policy changes to issues related to non-Muslims to have completely faded away. While EIM remains incapable of establishing a clear account for the continuation of domestic change in the field of freedom of religion, the increase in the number of norm entrepreneurs promoting equality and freedom of religion for non-Muslims appears to have relatively increased the explanatory capacity of the SLM. Even so, in a context where the EU's legitimacy is subject to questioning, marked decline in the identification of the norm provider occurs, and domestic resonance to policies concerning non-Muslims remained unchanged, the explanatory capability of SLM is limited.

On the other hand, LDM presents a different account explaining the enhancement of conditions for non-Muslims. First of all, the *AKP* government continued to express its dissatisfaction with the *Kemalist* approach to freedom of religion, describing themselves and non-Muslims as groups victimized by these policies and casting the conventional attitude of the Turkish state towards non-Muslims as a failed policy area. Second, post-2011 became a period in which the government eliminated barriers in making corrections to the failed policy area, and the number of societal actors demanding enhancement of the rights of non-Muslims increased relatively. These developments facilitated creation of an environment where the government and other societal actors could express issues related to non-Muslims on a common ground in order to voice their opposition to the lack of freedom of religion. At this juncture, LDM suggests that an alternative transferable policy or policies are required in order for domestic policy change to occur. Through analyzing policies and implementations, policy makers' statements, and the experiences of Christian representatives, it appears that a combination of two alternative sources of inspiration shaped the transformation process. While EU norms promoting the idea freedom of religion continued to be attractive to the *AKP*, instead of taking this idea as a human right, the government filtered it through the notion of Ottoman tolerance of religious diversity under the superiority of Islam. In an attempt to recast the parameters of freedom of religion in the light of a combination of EU and Ottoman models, the *AKP* government strove to create a model providing limited freedom of religion for non-Muslims.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation explored the actors and motives behind the recasting process of the parameters of freedom of religion in Turkey by analyzing the reform process for the rights of Christian minorities in Turkey over the past decade. As demonstrated through the historical background of this study, Christian minorities have been subjected, directly and indirectly, to extrajudicial activities restricting their religious freedoms since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Against this background, the past decade has witnessed the introduction of a number of legislative and practical changes providing relative relief for the Christian population with regard to issues pertaining to their continued existence and their freedom of religion. The transformation process commenced when EU candidacy status was granted to Turkey in 1999 and gained momentum after November 2002 when the *AKP*, a party with Islamic roots, won the general elections and entered office as a single-party government with a parliamentary majority. The nature of the changes related to the status of Christian minorities, however, has been subject to intense debate on the question of whether or not they represent an authentic transformation towards a human-rights based understanding of the freedom of religion. While the process of the initiated dialogue and legal adaptation has led to significant and historically unprecedented gains on behalf of the Christian citizens of Turkey, the conservative identity of the *AKP* government, which has explicitly placed Islam over other religions, has raised concerns.

Scholarly literature on the subject has predominantly emphasized EU conditionality as the dynamic driving the transformation of the parameters of freedom of religion. Most of the existing scholarship suggests that the broadening of the freedom of religion in Turkey occurred as one part of the democratization process driven by the prospect of EU membership, moving through the dynamics predicted by the External Incentives Model (EIM). At the same time, however, a significant number of studies acknowledge the limitations of the EIM and point out alternative explanatory paths. In parallel with the Social Learning Model (SLM), some of those explanations are centered on the capacity of the Europeanization process to frame domestic actors' beliefs and expectations, while others have integrated the Lesson Drawing Model (LDM) into their analysis, proposing

that the interest of policymakers in certain policy areas is just as important as EU conditionality.

Acknowledging the partial explanatory potential of arguments centering on the general democratization process in Turkey, and taking freedom of religion as its specific subject of study within the democratization process, this dissertation has argued that a number of questions remain unanswered: What is the nature of the transformation process? Can we conclude that a shift has taken place from the *Kemalist* approach to religious diversity towards the European understanding of freedom of religion? If so, how can enhancements of the rights of religious minorities unfold in a context where Islam is elevated over other religions? Most importantly, how is it possible that a party with roots entrenched in Islamic identity has been considerably more open to non-Muslims' religious practices when compared with parties embracing the *Kemalist* secularist framework?

To shed light on these issues, this study inquired into the actors and mechanisms that might conceivably explain the recasting of the parameters of religious freedom for Turkey's non-Muslims since 1999, and posed the additional question of the extent to which the external Europeanization theories are adequate in explaining the domestic shift in Turkey with regard to freedom of religion.

In order to answer these questions, this study first explored the scope of the transformation of religious freedoms as a dependent variable and analyzed the changes made with regard to freedom of worship, teaching, and other discriminatory state policies and issues related to the continued existence of Christian minorities as components within the concept of freedom of religion. It then provided an account of how domestic policy change can be discussed from an interactive and eclectic perspective by providing specific explanations for the recasting process of freedom of religion in Turkey.

In order to hypothesize about the phenomenon observed – that is, the change in parameters of religious freedom – this dissertation has tested alternative models of domestic policy change by eclectically examining their explanatory potentials extending over three periods of time. This study acknowledges the difficulties and limitations of incorporating an eclectic analysis of models that interact differently within three time spans. However, models are generally used in political science in order to explain a phenomenon, and the models explaining domestic policy change serve a similar purpose.

Considering these models as mutually exclusive and ignoring factors playing minor roles at the time, it is possible to draw up a clear account of facts. External Europeanization theories, for example, provide various explanations for domestic policy change occurring during the EU accession period of states. In some cases, one of the models introduced demonstrate far greater explanatory capability; in other cases, although factors observed point toward more than one model, one of them is preferred for the sake of establishing a clear knowledge base. An interactive analysis of different models, on the other hand, may generate a more complicated picture of the course of events and potentially lead to misinterpretation. In certain fields of inquiry, however, working with one model may lead to tunnel vision and the ensuing inevitable neglect of important mechanisms taking place behind a developing event. Considering the field of religion-state relations and freedom of religion in Turkey as an area where different models bear explanatory potential, but an individual model used alone remains insufficient to provide a fuller account of developments taking place in this field of research, this dissertation analyzed how alternative models have operated simultaneously in separate time periods.

Summarizing the findings of this research, Chapter Two demonstrated a method for evaluating the freedom of religion by providing a definition of the concept as a component within the greater body of human rights, and listing tools used for measuring the situation by the European understanding of the concept. Using this conceptual framework, Chapter Four provided a detailed analysis of domestic policy change by tracing the changes that have occurred within the parameters of freedom of religion over the decades prior to the declaration of the Turkey's EU candidacy status in 1999. Throughout this chapter, through analysis of both legislative amendments and behavioural changes reflected in the implementation process, it was argued that, although the steps taken are far from complete, Christian minorities have enjoyed a limited expansion of their religious freedoms and enhancements to their rights as compared to the situation in preceding decades. While it is vital to acknowledge that the state still lacks a comprehensive legal framework guaranteeing freedom of religion on par with European norms, changes have nevertheless been observed in almost all aspects of freedom of religion, indicating an ongoing recasting process.

In fact, the main findings of this research come from exploring the motives and mechanism accounting for this observation of the limited progress made towards a

European-style framework for freedom of religion. In this vein, Chapter Five offered an empirical analysis of developments between 1999 and 2015 with regard to freedom of religion experienced by Christians and issues related to their continued existence by making use of factors underlined in three models (i.e. EIM, SLM, LDM). The chapter finds that none of the models referred to in the literature review can alone provide a full account of the enhancements made to the rights of Christians throughout the entire reform process.

First of all, EIM, the model conventionally preferred for explaining democratization through Europeanization, proved insufficient for explaining the domestic policy change with regard to the freedom of religion in each time period analysed. Focusing on the factors included in EIM between 1999 and 2005, the study found that the factors functioning in favor of domestic change weakened after the surfacing of alternative paths for change when the *AKP* government came to office in November 2002 and began making references to ‘Ottoman tolerance’ and emphasizing the party’s commitment to EU as a tool for democratization. This slight shift did not move the process back or stall it; on the contrary, efforts at enhancing the rights of non-Muslims have since gained momentum. With subjective criteria for arguments dominating the scene following the commencement of accession negotiations, however, both the determinacy and authority of the rules and EU credibility were damaged. This rules out the EIM as a model sufficient for explaining the changes leading to the broadening of rights for non-Muslims post-2005.

SLM, on the other hand, has proven useful for understanding the early periods of the reform process, especially for the period between 1999 and 2005. After coming to power in 2002, the *AKP* perceived the EU reform process as a way to overcome its dissatisfaction with *Kemalist* secularist policies, while at the same time Christian communities made greater efforts to step forward and voice their demands, albeit to limited effect. These changes provided explanation for the acceleration of the reform process after November 2002. The explanatory potential of this model did not last, however, for the other two periods analysed. Although there has been a visible increase in the existence of norm entrepreneurs since 2005, the factors enabling SLM have remained ineffective, as the legitimacy of EU norms came to be questioned and identification with the norm provider (i.e. the EU) declined drastically in the ensuing periods.

Acknowledging the limitations of EIM and SLM, this study identified LDM as the most satisfactory explanatory factor for all three periods, despite its relative weakness during the earlier periods of the reform process. While most of the conditions leading to domestic change in LDM were absent, with the exception of the existence of EU norms as a transferable policy between 1999 and 2002, the speeding up of the reform process after the shift from a coalition government reluctant to introduce changes with regard to Turkey's Christians to a single-party majority government explicitly expressing their dissatisfaction with the conventional policies pertaining to freedom of religion hinted that LDM had the potential to explain the intense legal adaptation aimed at enhancing the conditions of Christians at play up until 2005. The power of LDM, however, was greatly reduced due to the low levels of acceptability of the reform process aimed at Christians and the existence of a strong opposition among veto powers, two factors which would normally hamper the changes introduced. The gradual increase in the number and influence of societal actors demanding better conditions for Christians and the abolishment of the veto powers arguing against this increased the explanatory potential of LDM post-2011.

The realization that none of these models borrowed from the literature are capable of explaining the reform process in its entirety, and that the explanatory capacity of each model varies throughout different time spans, does not necessarily mean that these models ought to be abandoned. On the contrary, it can be safely argued that they all provide analytical tools that aid understanding of the nature of the transformation process as well as the actors and mechanisms behind it. By removing the focus from individual models and adopting an eclectic approach this dissertation has in fact found that the reform process occurred due to the different combinations of several factors underlined in the EIM, SLM and LDM in each period investigated. Implementation of such a framework in the field of freedom of religion in Turkey reveals that the recasting of the parameters of religion in the country has been driven by the interaction of various factors.

During the period from 1999 to 2005, the existence of clear, determinate, and powerful rules, along with the prospect of eventual EU membership and subsequent pro-EU governments together ignited the start of the democratization process. This process was furthermore supported by high identification with the norm provider. The reforms enacted, however, remained extremely restrictive and did not have a concrete positive impact on the conditions of Christians in the early years of this period due to high perceived risks of loss

of power, the existence of strong opposition and veto powers, a lack of domestic resonance and norm-entrepreneurs with respect to issues concerning non-Muslims, and low acceptability of the reforms by different societal actors. A number of factors came into play in order to change this picture. The reform process accelerated and began to yield results when single-party government holding a sufficient parliamentary majority came to power in November 2002 and immediately began to explicitly voice its dissatisfaction with *Kemalist* secularist policies. Persuaded by the appropriateness of EU rules, the *AKP*'s framing of the lack of freedom of religion as a problem to be solved through the Europeanization process increased the legitimacy of the EU in this respect. It is also important to note that the references made to the Ottoman Empire's approach towards religious diversity were put forward not as an alternative, but rather as *complementary* to EU norms. Moreover, the government's willingness to introduce changes expanding religious freedoms coupled with the initial steps taken by the state to mobilize Christian communities boosted the number of norm entrepreneurs. Thus, while EU conditionality appears as the main mechanism behind the initiation of the reform process, the interest the *AKP* government took in the recasting freedom of religion, and the emergence of civil society initiatives voicing issues of concern to Christian minorities played crucial parallel roles, as both significantly contributed to the acceleration of legislative changes aimed at enhancing the rights of non-Muslims.

Analysis of the period from 2005 to 2010 demonstrated that the vast majority of factors present prior to the beginning of the accession negotiations weakened, if not disappeared *in toto*. Although EU norms remained clear and determinate, their power was considerably undermined due to the EU's emphasis on subjective conditionality, its absorption capacity, and decreased European support for Turkey's EU membership, a position which damaged the EU's credibility. As the prospect of eventual membership became increasingly uncertain, identification with the EU as the norm provider by policy makers and society also saw a decline. The fact that, with regards to the rights of non-Muslims, the reform process continued in this period despite the slowdown in the general democratization process suggests that other factors entered into the equation. The rise in civil society initiatives voicing non-Muslims' demands for freedom of religion was noteworthy. Especially in the period after the assassination of the Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in 2007, Christians began to break out of their shells by gathering

around various civil society initiatives. This led to increased awareness of their issues within greater Turkish society.

Two significant developments shaping the parameters of freedom of religion during this period were observed. First, there was increased questioning of the appropriateness of the EU norms in this context. Secondly, there emerged the ‘Ottoman tolerance’ discourse towards religious diversity. Analysis suggests that, although in regard to freedom of religion, EU norms continued to be a reference point for policy makers, directly applying them to the situation in Turkey was now off the agenda. This thesis’ discursive analysis coupled with interviews with representatives who took part in the decision making process suggest that the policy makers’ approach demonstrated signs of an attempt to form a synthesis between EU norms and the Ottoman tolerance policy.

The decreased likelihood of the *AKP* losing power, which was mainly due to the elimination of veto powers in 2011, had significant consequences for the recasting process of religious freedoms. This was particularly evident in the policies, practices, and discourses concerning non-Muslims. In the absence of a powerful EU conditionality mechanism, the parameters of freedom of religion continued to be replaced with an alternative transferable policy. As this study discovered, two different factors had an impact on the formation of this policy. Compared with previous periods, the booming of civil society initiatives and demands from other political actors for freedom of religion in parallel with EU norms was a remarkable phenomenon. The shift the Kurdish movement made towards forming a political party promoting democracy and human rights for a wider spectrum of disadvantaged groups coupled with the *CHP*’s attempts to embrace non-Muslim minorities in this period forced the government not to disregard EU norms. Even so, EU norms promoting freedom and equality of religious minorities remained an inspiration for a party that once considered them as a solution for overcoming its constituency’s own formerly disadvantaged position of discrimination resulting from policies of the *Kemalist* secularism that restricted freedom of religion for Muslims and non-Muslims both. As this thesis argues, non-Muslim minorities continued to experience enhancements of their rights and a relative expansion of their freedom of religion after 2011, as the recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion took shape through policies and practices inspired by the idea of freedom of religion, albeit conducted under the shadow of Islamic values.

In sum, this dissertation asserts that freedom of religion as a subfield of the democratization process demonstrates divergence from the analysis of the democratization process as explained through the EIM. Analysis of the process of recasting the parameters of freedom of religion indicates that it is not possible to trace the process through the guidance of a singular explanatory model. Rather, it is interactive and variable factors which have underpinned the enhancement of the rights of non-Muslims.

This study has made an effort to contribute to the scholarly literature on domestic policy change in general, and to the literature on External Europeanization in particular, both being fields of research drawing a wide audience. Revealing that there are, in fact, several interactive motives behind the recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion in Turkey, the study has demonstrated the usefulness of adopting an eclectic approach in building a comprehensive understanding of domestic policy change in certain policy areas as opposed to expecting the subject to fit into a single prototype.

More specifically, the study strove to contribute to the closing of a gap in a body of literature that often underestimates the role of domestic actors in effecting change. First of all, the analysis revealed the potential of civil-society initiatives in supporting change. It is due to the interest exhibited by civil society and other norm entrepreneurs which kept the European form of freedom of religion on the agenda in the absence of a clear EU membership prospect. This study also demonstrated the importance of policy makers' interest in implementing domestic policy change in certain fields.

This study hopes to furthermore contribute to Turkish studies by drawing attention to the importance of non-Muslims, a numerically insignificant group generally ignored in analysis of the country's democratization process. Despite their negligible voting power - and thus lower ballot importance for the political elite, the experience of non-Muslims is well worth analyzing, as their religious identity has become a tool for understanding the motives behind the recasting of freedom of religion in Turkey.

This study explored an important – yet understudied – aspect of the democratization process in Turkey in order to contribute to the understanding of domestic policy change, and in particular of the ongoing recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion in Turkey. While the study has provided answers to certain questions raised in this arena, difficulties and limitations encountered during the research process inhibited full analysis

of every aspect. These areas need to be explored as they may provide fertile ground for further research by leading to other questions still needing answers. Further research will make possible a fuller grasp of the actors and mechanisms behind domestic policy change.

Building a bridge between the conceptual framework and the case subject of the analysis was one obstacle faced while undertaking this research. In order to investigate the motives behind the recasting of the parameters of freedom of religion, this dissertation built on a conceptual framework for freedom of religion, dedicating an entire chapter to the presentation of an analytical framework for freedom of religion. In line with the greater body of scholarly literature, issues related to the existence of freedom of religion – which may be related indirectly if not directly to freedom of religion – were included in the study and were employed in order to trace enhancements of the rights of non-Muslims in general, and Christians in particular. It is acknowledged that most Christian communities (except for Protestants) are in fact ethno-religious groups differing from Turkey's general population along both religious and ethnic-identity lines. This situation makes it difficult to distinguish between ethnic and religious discrimination; however, considering that these groups have been recognized as religious minorities in the relevant literature, this study included ethno-religious discrimination such as the difficulties faced in *Rum* and Armenian schools. Further research clarifying distinctions *vis-à-vis* ethnic and religious activities of such communities is necessary to improve scholarly understanding in this field.

Future studies also need to consider the role of local actors in shaping domestic policy change. During the conduction of fieldwork for this study, municipalities holding local authority in implementing legislative changes were described as both facilitators of and obstacles impeding the implementation of changes regarding the rights of Christian minorities. Several interviewees identified the political affiliation of the municipality leaders acting contrary to national-level legislative changes broadening the religious freedoms as the reason behind difficulties they were facing. As a preliminary observation, the interviews suggested that, unlike the bureaucratic institutions that acted as veto powers for most of the time period analyzed, *HDP* (and some *AKP* and few *CHP*)-led municipalities have used their autonomy to implement changes as quickly as possible, while *MHP* and *CHP* (and some *AKP*)-led municipalities have refused to carry them out. Further research widening the investigation of municipalities as veto powers will aid creation of a more complete picture of the state of freedom of religion in Turkey.

This dissertation has provided a base for further research in order to advance the understanding of domestic change in general, and external Europeanization in particular. Academic literature to date has said little about the interaction between domestic and external actors of change. The author of this study believes that an eclectic analysis of the EIM, SLM and LDM needs to be extended to other areas of democratization process and hopes this dissertation will be regarded as a modest but meaningful contribution in this direction.

APPENDIX A. Quotations in Original Language

Quotations, which are originally in Turkish, have their English translations used in the main text. Originals of shorter excerpts presented in the footnotes.

Q1: Türkleştirme politikalarından kasıt, sokakta konuşulan dilden okullarda öğretilecek tarihe; eğitimden sanayi hayatına; ticaretten devlet personel rejimine; özel hukuktan vatandaşların belli yörelerde iskan edilmelerine kadar toplumsal hayatın her boyutunda, Türk etnik kimliğinin her düzeyde ve tavizsiz bir biçimde egemenliğini ve ağırlığını koymasındır.

Q2: Görülüyor ki, Türk olmayanların meydana getirdikleri Tüzel Kişiliklerin taşınmaz mal edinmeleri yasaklanmıştır. Çünkü, tüzel kişiler, gerçek kişilere oranla daha güçlü oldukları için, bunların taşınmaz mal edinmelerinin kısıtlanmamış olması halinde, devletin çeşitli tehlikelerle karşılaşacağı ve türlü sakıncalar doğabileceği açıktır. Bu nedenle... yabancı gerçek kişilerin Türkiye’de satın alma veya miras yolu ile taşınmaz mal edinmeleri mümkün kılınmış olduğu halde, Tüzel Kişiler bundan yoksun bırakılmışlardır.

Q3: Cemaat vakıfları tarafından satın alınmış veya cemaat vakıflarına vasiyet edildiği veya bağışlandığı halde, mal edinememe gerekçesiyle Hazine veya Genel Müdürlüğü adına tapuda kayıt edilen taşınmazlardan üçüncü şahıslar adına kayıtlı olanların Maliye Bakanlığınca tespit edilen rayic değeri Hazine veya Genel Müdürlüğü tarafından ödenir.

Q4: Partiğimiz hasta. Ya vekil patrik seçilecek ya da yeni patrik. Valiliğe eş patriklik önerisi ile başvurduk. Ama valilik bunu bizim Bizim hatamız valiye iki oneri ile gitmek oldu. Eş patriklik ya da yeni patriklik seçimi. Hukumet ise haklı olmayarak vekil seçin

dedi. Hukümetin aslında buna karışmaması lazımdı. Aslında 1861 kuruluş nizamnamesinde seçimlerimizin nasıl yapılacağı yazılıyor.

Q5: Müdür baş yardımcısı ve kültür öğretmenleri konusu geçen sene biraz sıkıntılıydı (2012-2013) akademik yılı. Türkçe öğretmenleri müdür baş yardımcısını kale alıyordu, bizi almıyordu. Bir gruplaşma olmuştu. Okul ikiye bölündü. Müdür baş yardımcısını süresi bitince yenisi için şöyle bir süreç oldu: MEB'a isim bildiriyorum. MEB onşar arasından seçip onaylıyor. 'Bu bizim için reform sayılabilecek birşey'. Haziran ayında önceki Türkçe öğretmenimizin ismini Müdür baş yardımcısı olarak önerdim. Tarih öğretmenini istemedim ama o da dilekçe yollamış. Durumu garantiye almak için görüşmeler yaptım. Sonuçta bakanlık bizim istediğimizi onayladı. %80-90 onaylanıyor.

Q6: 1990 yılındaki Talim terbiye kurulunun tebliğine göre hristiyanlar ve museviler inançlarını belgelendirmek kaydıyla din dersinden muaf tutulur. Burada belgelendirmek deniyor. Okul, kimliği baz alınca dar yorumlamış oluyor. Çünkü bu kimliklerin çoğunda musluman yazıyor. Muafiyet hakkı durumu da sorunlu çünkü dinimizi açıklamak zorunda bırakılıyor. Bir okulun geniş yorumladığı olmuştu. Kiliseden kağıt istemişti, ama bu istisna.

Q7: Ders kitapları konusunda dönemin MEB'ı Ömer Çelik'i ziyaret eden okul öğrencileri, Çelik'in talebi üzerine ders kitaplarındaki ayrımcı ifadeler ile ilgili bir çalışma yapıp yollamışlar. Sonuçta bir değişiklik olmuş, yazılan şeyler daha yumuşak bir üslupla yazılmış. Ama aynı şeyler var. Tamamen değişmemesinin bir nedeni, karşılıklılık ilkesi. 'Ermenistanda, diasporada ermeniler Türklere karşı rencide edici davranıyorlar. Bunun için kaldı' deniyor.

Q8: Misyonerlerin faaliyetleri karşısında Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'na düşen görev, toplumu bu konuda aydınlatmak ve bilinçlendirmektedir. Başkanlığımız hutbe ve vaaz yoluyla camilerde vatandaşları aydınlattığı gibi... ülkemizin Misyonerlik faaliyetleri ile ilgili...Bakanlıklarımız ve kuruluşlarımızla temasını sürdürmektedir.

Q9: Her iradenin önemli hassasiyetleri var. Bunların da din, ama din özgürlüğünü kendi açısından yorumluyor. Din özgürlüğünü Association of Protestant Churches özgürlüğüne indiriyor... Kiliseyi tamir ettim, daha ne istiyorlar diyor. Ama benim malımın kullanımını bana vermiyor. AB'nin sunduğu yapı onlar için cazip değil. Hükümet sadece kendi lehine olanları uyguluyor.

Q10: Türkiye'de ulusalcı bir zihniyet veya aşırı milliyetçi bir düşünce geçmişte yaşanan hadiselerin acılarını hala canlı tutmaya çalışıyordu. Yeni Vakıflar Kanunu'nu çıkartırken ne zorluklar çektik. Ben o zaman bakan değildim. Ama parlamentodaki konuşmaları duydukça yüzüm kızarıyordu. Şimdi bunlar tutanaklarda var. Sonuç bu kanunu çıkarmaya muvaffak olduk.

Q11: Biz kendimizi ilgilendiren konulardan dersimizi aldık. Onlardan birisi şudur: Darbeler, müdahaleler, açık ve kapalı yönlendirmeler, tehdit ve şantajların geçerli olduğu eski Türkiye'de vakıflar ve derneklere büyük baskılar uygulanmış... baskılarla faaliyetleri engellenmiştir.

Q12: Yeni anayasanın bireyi ve onun haklarını esas alan; milli birliğimizi ve ortak değerlerimizi koruyan; toplumsal çeşitliliği zenginlik olarak kabul eden; tek sesliliği değil çoğulculuğu öne çıkaran demokratik hukuk devletinin tüm unsurlarını içeren bir metin olmasını savunuyoruz.

Q13: Ükemizde yaşayan gayrimüslim kişilerin, Lozan Antlaşması'na göre azınlık statüsünde olup olmadıklarına bakılmaksızın mensup oldukları dinin vecibelerini yerine getirmelerinde gerekli pratik kolaylıklara, mevcut kamu düzeninin korunmasına ilişkin mevzuatımız hükümleri çerçevesinde olmak kaydıyla kavuşturulmasını sağlayacak tedbirlerin alınması...

Q14: Bugün, biraz sonra, Avrupa Birliğine uyum yasaları çerçevesinde, Dernekler Kanununda yapılacak bazı değişiklikleri görüşeceğiz. Burada yapılacak değişikliklerle, artık, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ülkesi üzerinde ırk, din, mezhep, kültür veya dil farklılığına dayanan azınlıklar bulunduğunu ileri süren dernekler kurulabilecek..... Büyük Atatürk ve arkadaşları, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devletini, milletin birliği esası üzerine kurmuştur. Bu birlikteliğin temelinde, dinde, dilde, tarihte ve kültürde ortaklık olarak işaret edilmiştir. Milletimizin dini İslamdır...

Q15: Devlet içinde devlet görüntüsünü ve ekümenikliğini pekiştirme sevdasından asla vazgeçmeyen Fener Rum Patrikhanesini ihya edecek olan vakıflar yasa tasarısı ve ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel haklara ilişkin uluslararası sözleşme, böylesi tehlikeler içermektedir.

Q16: Teklifle, kendi vakıflarımıza çok gördüğümüz imkânlar azınlık vakıflarına tanınmaya çalışılmaktadır... Açıkçası, Bakanlar Kurulu izniyle, vatan topraklarının gayrimenkul tescili yoluyla satışına izin verilmektedir; yani, vatan toprağı, Ermeni, Rum ve Yahudi azınlıklara satılabilecektir. Bu gerçeğı, Yüce Türk Milletinin çok iyi bilmesi gerekmektedir. Vatan toprağını, Ermenilere, Rumlara ve Yahudilere satmak isteyenleri tarih ve Türk Milleti affetmeyecektir.

Q17: Bu kanunla, Türkiye Cumhuriyetindeki bütün bilim, eğitim ve öğretim kurumları laikleştirilmiştir... Yine bu kanun sayesinde, Osmanlı'nın son dönemlerinde ve Kurtuluş Savaşı yıllarında dinî ve kültürel amaçlarının dışına çıkmaya başlayan azınlık okulları, birlikte yaşama ve aynı ülkenin vatandaşları olma gereğinin gerektirdiği şartlara sahip hale getirilmiştir.

Q18: Hükümetin attığı adım, bu konuda önerdiği adım, olumlu bir adımdır; bunu, biz de destekliyoruz; ama, madalyonun bir de başka tarafı var. Uluslararası ilişkilerde en önemli ilkelerden biri, karşılıklılık ilkesidir... önce, Yunanistan'daki soydaşlarınızın hakkına sahip çıkacaksınız... Aynı şekilde, Lozan'da İstanbul Patriğine verilmemiş sıfatların kullanılmasına izin vermeyeceğiz.

Q19: Bir insanı öldüren bütün insanlığı öldürmüş gibidir' diyen saf ve temiz islam dini, hiçbir terör ve tedhiş eylemine sıfat yapılamaz. Şunu da hemen ilave edeyim: Bu hassasiyeti kendi inancımız olan islam için ne kadar büyük bir dikkatle taşıyorsak, başka insanların kutsal değerleri karşısında da aynı dikkatle ve özenle taşımak zorundayız. Ecdadımızın yüzlere yıl boyunca her dinden, her dilden, her anlayıştan insanı bir arada uyum içinde ve bir bütün olarak tutan medeniyet tasavvuru budur. Bizim medeniyet fikrinden anladığımız da tam olarak budur.

Q20: 1982 Anayasası'nın Başlangıç bölümünde 'hiçbir etkinliğin... Türk ulusal çıkarlarının... Türklüğün tarihi ve manevi değerlerinin... karşısında koruma göremeyeceği' belirtilmektedir. Yeni yasa bu vakıfların Lozan'da olmayan 'ekonomik ve siyasi gücü' elde etmesine yol açacaktır.

Q21: Mavri Mira Cemiyeti Ruhban Okulunun içinden çıkmıştır... Türkiye Cumhuriyeti yurttaşı olan hiçbir gayrimüslim yurttaşımı töhmet altında bırakacak bir açıklama

yapmamaya özen gösteriyorum. Onlar bizim kardeşimizdir. Benimle beraber üreten, benimle beraber aynı tasayı, kıvancı paylaşan insanlarla yurttaş olmaktan, bir arada bulunmaktan mutluluk duyduğumu ifade ediyorum.

Q22: Sayın milletvekilleri, vakıflara tanınan sınırsız toprak edinme Türkiye’de çok olumsuz gelişmelere yol açabilir. Örneğin, Fener Rum Patrikhanesi tarafından tamamen yerli statüde kurulacak olan bir vakıf, yurt dışından gelecek büyük bağışlarla İstanbul Balat’ta, İstanbul’un göbeğinde ne kadar arazi satın alabilir, hiç düşünüyor musunuz? Gene Avrupa Birliği’nin bazı fonlarının daha şimdiden neden Balat’taki binaların -başka bir yer değil- restorasyonunda kullanıldığını hiç düşündünüz mü?

Q23: Değerli arkadaşlarım, bu ekümenlik sistemi basit bir olay değil. Dünya Ortodokslarının Türkiye’de örgütlenmesidir ve Türkiye’de bulunan Rum vakıf mallarının bu vakıflara, cemaat vakıflarına iadesidir. Benim ilimde sekiz-on tane bu şekilde vakıf var. Bu vakıfları biz iade mi edeceğiz? Bunlara teslim mi edeceğiz değerli arkadaşlarım? Bu kanun çıkarsa bunların hepsi tehlikeye giriyor değerli arkadaşlarım. Bakın, ekümenlik sistemi kurulursa Anadolu’nun birçok yerlerinde misyonerlik faaliyetleri başlayacaktır. Şunu çok iyi düşünmek lazım: Misyonerlerin hiçbirisi -din adamı kisvesinde siyasi niteliği olan kişilerdir- hiçbir zaman din adamı konumunda da değildirler. Bu konuda çok dikkatli olmamız gerekirken biz onlara taviz vermekteyiz Değerli arkadaşlarım, şunu söylemek istiyorum: Ben, ilimde ezan sesiyle doğdum, büyüdüm, kilise, çan sesiyle değil. Onun tekrar örgütlenmesini istemiyorum.

Q24: Bu tasarının 5inci maddesiyle, Türkiye’de, Osmanlı’da ve cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarında olduğu gibi misyoner okulların kapısı aralanmaktadır. Bunu size tarihî bir uyarı olarak sunuyorum. Türkiye’de bu tasarı kanunlaştığında, Hıristiyanlık anlayışına dayalı eğitim organizasyonlarının kapısı aralanıyor.

Q25: Şimdi, size soruyorum: Batı Trakya'daki Türklerle ilgili olarak, geçerli mevzuatta bu haklar var mı? Yok. O zaman, niçin siz bunu getiriyorsunuz? Önce, gidin Yunanistan'a, deyin ki: 'Türk vakfı yöneticilerini, bırakın Türkler seçsin.' Orada haklarını sağlayın, Türklerin haklarını sağlayın, sonra bize gelin, 'Bakın' deyin 'bir Avrupa ülkesi olarak Yunanistan Lozan'a uyarak şu şu hakları tanıdı, siz de aynısını yapın.' Gelin beraber imzalayalım burada.

Q26: Hrant Dink cinayeti, maalesef diyeceğim, bu konuları iteklemiş oldu pozitif anlamda. O bir bedel ödedi, kendisi ve ailesi, ama öteki taraftan ilk defa bazı konular tabu olmaktan çıktı. Hrant denilen bir isim toplumun vicdanında yer buldu. Empati kurulmaya başlandı, insanlar sorguladı.

Q27: Eğer Avrupa Birliği Türkiye ile ilgili böyle bir olumsuzluk düşünüyorsa, verir kararını biz de yolumuza devam ederiz. Dedik ya, siyasi ilkelerle ilgili Kopenhag Siyasi Kriterleri'ni Ankara Siyasi Kriterleri yaparız, Maastrich Ekonomi Kriterleri'ni de İstanbul Ekonomi Kriterleri yapar yola devam ederiz.

Q28: Her şeyden önce, bu vakıfların mensupları Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı olan gayrimüslimlerdir, yani Türk vatandaşdırlar. Yapılan bu düzenlemeyle zaten mal edinmeleri imkânı daha önceden sağlanmış olan bu vakıfların geçmişle o veya bu sebepten tescil edilememiş taşınmazların adlarına tescili imkânı sağlanmaktadır.

Q29: Avrupa Birliği, bu konuda yaşanan sorunların çözümünü istiyor. Aslında, Avrupa Birliği bunu bizden istemeden biz yapmalıyız. Biz, aslında, böyle bir gelenekten geliyoruz, böyle bir kültürden geliyoruz. Başkalarının hak ve hukukuna riayet etmenin bizim asli görevimiz olduğu bilinciyle hareket eden bir medeniyet anlayışına sahibiz. Bunu bizim yapmamız gerekirdi. Ama, biz, hemen ifade ettiğim gibi, 2003 yılında yapmış olduğumuz

sempozyumlarda, ortaya çıkan bu sorunu çözmek için, daha Avrupa Birliği önümüze bu konuyu getirmeden, biz, o zaman Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü olarak karar vermiştik bunları çözelim diye. Dolayısıyla, biz, bu düzenlemeleri de kendiliğimizden, bunun doğru olduğuna inandığımız için bu Yasa metnine koyduk. O bakımdan, bu Tasarı Türkiye'nin ihtiyaçları için hazırlanmıştır. Yeni vakıflarımızın ihtiyaçları için hazırlanmıştır, gayrimüslim Türk vatandaşlarının mensubu bulunduğu cemaat vakıflarının demin ifade ettiğim sorunlarını çözmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Q30: Bizler Vakıf Kanunu'yla alakalı olarak, Lozan'a dayalı olarak, biz mütekabiliyet esasına dayanarak adım atarız. Ve burada da Yunanistan'da Müslüman Türklerin vakıflar noktasındaki hakları neyse, burada aynı hakları biz de bu çıkaracağımız kanunda onlara veririz.

Q31: Bütün ilahi dinlere ve bizim de ortak inancımıza göre bir insanı öldürmek bütün insanlığı öldürmek gibi ağır bir günah ve vebal olup masum insanları hedef alan saldırılar hangi değer ve kutsal adına, hangi amaçla işlenirse işlensin dine ve insanlığın birlikte geliştirmeye çalıştığı ortak değerlere en açık ihanettir. Masum insanlara yönelik bu cinayetlerin dini, milli, felsefi ve insani hiç bir gerekçesi olamaz.

Q32: Türkiye'de sadece gayrimüslim azınlıklar değil, Müslüman çoğunluk da dini özgürlüklerle ilgili sorunlar yaşıyor. Türkiye'de son dönemde laiklik eksenli bir tartışma yaşanıyor. Bizim laiklik tanımımız çok açık: Din ve devlet işlerinin açık şekilde birbirinden ayrılması; Devletin de bireylerin dininin gereğini yerine getirmesine müdahale etmemesi

Q33: Bu ülkede herkes eşittir. Türk, Kürt, Müslüman, Hristiyan demeden tüm vatandaşlarımızın eşit olduğu fikri temel düşüncemizdir. Sorunlarımızı çözmede ve

halkımıza hizmet gütürmekte en büyük kriterimiz, demokrasi ve Anayasal hakların yanında insani yaklaşımdır

Q34: Paralel uygulamayla mütekabiliyet farklı. 45'inci madde, Yunanistan'da yaşayan Müslüman Türklere paralel uygulamayı öngörmektedir. Ha, o uygulama haklarını ihlal ederse, o zulmetmiş olur, biz zulmeden durumda olmayacağız. Dolayısıyla, burada bir mütekabiliyet söz konusu değil. Kaldı ki, mütekabiliyet, yabancı ülke vatandaşları arasında, yabancı ülkeyle, ülke arasında söz konusu olur. Bizim burada düzenleme konusu yaptığımız...cemaat vakıflarının sahibi vatandaşlar, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşdır, yabancı değil bunlar, dolayısıyla mütekabiliyet söz konusu olmaz.

Q35: Şunu bütün samimiyetimle ifade etmek istiyorum: Biz, hiçbir vatandaşımızın meselesini AB istiyor diye, müzakerelerin bir gereği diye yapmıyoruz. Uygulamada eksiklikler olabilir, mevzuata yönelik beklentiler olabilir. Ancak ne yapıyorsak, insanımızı sevdiğimiz için, insanımızın daha müreffeh, daha özgür, daha insanca bir yaşama sahip olması için yapıyoruz.

Q36: Unutmayalım ki bizler büyük bir medeniyetin çocuklarıyız. Bizim topraklarımızdaki herkes, ama herkes bu ülkenin güvencesi altındadır. Bu ülke için yanlış emeller besleyenler gereken dersi tarihte almıştır, gelecekte de bu millete yanlış yapanlar dersini elbette alacaktır...Gelin, Bizanslılara 'İstanbul'da kardinal külahı görmektense Osmanlı sarığı görmeyi yeğlerim.' diyen ecdadımızın hoşgörüsünü hatırlayalım.

Q37: Hiç kimse ne bu adı geçen insanları ne de onların kiliselerini rahatsız etmesin ve zarar vermesin. İmparatorluğumda vakur içinde yaşasınlar. Bu göçmen durumuna düşen insanlar özgür ve güven içerisinde yaşasınlar. İmparatorluğumdaki tüm memleketlerde korkusuzca kendi manastırlarına yerleşsinler. Ne padişahlık eşrafından ne vezirlerden ne

memurlardan ne hizmetkarlardan ne de imparatorluk vatandaşlarından hiç kimse bu insanların onurunu kırmayacak ve onlara zarar vermeyecektir. Hiç kimse bu insanların hayatlarına, mallarına ve kiliselerine saldırmaz, hor görmesin ve tehlikeye atmasın ve hatta bu insanlar başka ülkelerden devlete birisini getirirse onlar da aynı haklara sahiptir. Bu padişah fermanını ilan ederek burada yerlerin ve göklerin yaratıcısı, beyefendisi Allah, Allah'ın elçisi aziz peygamberimiz Muhammed ve 124 bin peygamberle kuşandığım kılıç adına yemin ediyorum ki emrime uyarak bana sadık kaldıkları sürece tebamdan hiç kimse bu fermana yazılanların aksini yapmasınlar.

Q38: Avrupa'da öyle yaklaşımlar var ki, Fransa farklı bir tavır ortaya koydu, Almanya farklı bir tavır ortaya koydu... Ve 15 üyeliyken ortada olan müktesebat ve yapılan uygulamalar farklıydı, ama bir anda 25 üyeye çıkarıldı, uygulamalar değişti ve bakıyorsunuz Avrupa Birliği'ne alınan üyeler uygun oldukları gerekçesiyle değil, birçoğu siyasi kararla alındı, bu gerçekleri de gördük, şu anda da yaklaşım hala aynı.

Q39: Ülke sınırlarımız içerisinde Sümela, Akdamar kiliselerinin restorasyon çalışmalarına Hükûmetin ilgisi oldukça düşündürücüdür. Ermenilerin gönlünü kazanmak, rızasını almak için, Akdamar ibadete kapalı olmasına rağmen günümüzde bu ibadet uygulamasına başlanmış ve olağan bir hâle getirilerek ülke dışından da bu dinin mensupları bu ibadete iştirak ettirilir hâle getirilmiştir... Kurtuluş Savaşı esnasında Ermenilerin neler yaptığı bilinmezmiş gibi, Diyarbakır'da Ermeni Surp Giragos Kilisesi'ne özel bir ilgi gösterilmiş ve 1914 yılında, minareden yüksek olduğu için ecdat tarafından top mermileriyle yıkılan çan kulesi bugün yeniden tamir edilmiş, restore edilmiş ve ... Türk milletinin beyninde bir nâkus, bir çan sesi dinlettirilmeye başlanmıştır.

Q40: Mor Gabriel konusunda evet sorunluydu, 2008'den beri uğraşıyorduk. Ama bu konuda hangi açıdan baktığımız önemli. Bu alanda kadastral çalışmalar yeni başladı.

Köylüler topraklara el koymuştu. Onlar hak iddia etti hazine ve orman müdürlüğü el koymaya kalktı. Bu konuda hükümeti suçlayamayız. AİHM etkisi de diyemeyiz. Süryaniler basın açıklaması yapıyordu, bu sorunları gündeme getiriyordu. AB etkisi var elbet ama sadece bu değil.

Q41: Biz ikinci sınıf vatandaş olmak istemiyoruz. Maalesef bugüne kadar...haksızlıklara maruz kaldık. Bütün bunlar yavaş yavaş düzeltiliyor, değiştiriliyor, yeni bir Türkiye doğuyor. Umutlarımızı hiçbir zaman yitirmedik. şu an çok memnunuz. Görüşlerimiz eminiz ki göz önüne alınacak çünkü biz Türk vatandaşı olarak haklarımızdan daha fazla bir şey istemiyoruz. Ayrımcılık istemiyoruz, eşitlik istiyoruz. Çünkü biz vatandaşız, doğma büyüme buralıyız, askerliğimizi yapıyoruz, vergilerimizi ödüyoruz, oy hakkımızı kullanıyoruz. Onun için bugüne kadar olan haksızlıkların tekrar olmaması için ricada bulunduk. Bütün bunların yeni anayasa ile garanti altına alınmasını rica ettik.

Q42: ülkemiz yargı yetkisinin ve kararlarının bağlayıcılığını kabul ettiği Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesi içtihatları; ülkemizin katılım yolunda müzakere sürecini yürüttüğü Avrupa Birliği ilerleme raporlarında dile getirilen bazı hususlar; mevzuatımız ile adli ve idari makamlarımızın uygulamalarına ulusal ve uluslararası kamuoyunda insan haklarının korunması ve geliştirilmesi bağlamında dile getirilen eleştiriler.

Q43: Bu rapor elbette ki bizim için bir karne değildir. Türkiye'ye karne verecek yegane merci hiç kuşkusuz milletimizin ta kendisidir. Bizim başka bir yerden karne beklentimiz yoktur. Ancak, Avrupa Birliği'nin müzakere sürecindeki isteksiz ve oyalayıcı tavrını biz bu raporda görmek isterdik. Kimi hususlarda Türkiye'nin eleştirildiği kadar Avrupa Birliği'nin ve bazı üye ülkelerin de Türkiye'ye yönelik tavırlarının eleştirildiğine bu raporda şahit olmak isterdik... Aday ülkeleri eleştirmekte son derece cömert olan Avrupa

Birliđi'nin kendi öz eleřtirisini yapması, kendi ilerleme raporunu yazmasını samimiyetle bekliyoruz.

Q44: Uluslararası hukuku, evrensel deđerleri benimsediđimiz iin, Avrupa Birliđi'ne üye olma gayemiz var ve bunu kararlılıkla sürdürüyoruz. Ama bu yanlış anlaşılmasın, ieride olduđu kadar dışarıdaki mütekebbirler de yumuşak bařlı olmamızı uysal koyun olduđumuz řeklinde yorumlamasın.

Q45: 28 řubat... ilkokullardan üniversitelere, Kur'an kurslarından camilere kadar her alanda milletin hissiyatıyla uyuřmayan düzenlemeler yapılmıřtır. Üniversite kapılarında milletin evlatları rencide edilmiřtir. Nice kız öđrenci inanlarından dolayı, kılık-kıyafetinden dolayı eđitimden sođutulmuř... Üniversite kapısından döndürülen, ikna odalarında işkenceye maruz bırakılan, eđitim hakları ellerinden alınan kız kardeşlerimize bugün ge de olsa artık itibarları iade ediliyor.

Q46: Bir Müslüman deđil bir Hristiyan vatandař, bir Ermeni vatandař aynen řu mektubu yazıyor: 'Muhterem Yeni İřtiklal Gazetesi, İnönü'nün yalanlarına karřı yaptıđınız ispat çağrısına Diyarbakır'dan haykırarak cevap yazmayı, uyuđu bulunduđum Türkiye'ye karřı vazife bilerek sesleniyorum. Ben geri bir Hristiyanım, ama bütün dinlerin düşmanı olan ve nihayet ortanın solunda olduđunu ađzıyla da ispatlayan bu zatın faaliyetini arz edeyim. Müslümanların Kurřunlu Camii veya Fatih Pařa Camii dedikleri ibadethane 1941-1942 yılında depo yapılıp kapatılmıřtı. İerisinde pek az miktarda ve hurda bir vaziyette kütüklük, kama, haner, at eđerı vesaire gibi döküntü konmuřtu. Avlusunda 8-10 adet hurda at arabası takoza alınmıř ve önüne de nöbeti dikilmıřtı. Bu meyanda bizim Latin Kilisesi'ne de güya bu camideki mühimmatı koruması bahanesiyle bir manga asker yerleřtirilmıř. Dini ibadethanemiz iin -affederseniz- ibadethane, tuvalet olarak kullanıyorlardı' diyor.

Q47: Bu ülkede otoriter yönetimin genel yaklaşım tarzından yaşayan herkes etkilendi... Sünnisi de, Alevisi de, Ermenisi de, Kürdü de, Rumu da herkes etkilendi. İnsan hak ve özgürlüklerini mümkün olduğu kadar yaygınlaştırmanın ve bu ülkede demokrasiyi mümkün olduğu kadar genişletmenin, derinleştirmenin ancak kardeşliğimizi pekiştireceğini ifade etmek, görmek lazım.

Q48: Her şeyden önce şunu unutmayalım: Biz demokratik, laik, sosyal bir hukuk devletiyiz. Laiklikle ilgili tanımımızda partimizin, programı içerisinde çok net açık olarak bu vardır. AK Parti tüm inanç gruplarına eşit mesafededir ve tüm inanç gruplarının inancını yaşama güvencesi AK Parti iktidarındır bizim anlayışımız budur.

Q49: Biz ülkemizde yaşayan gayri Müslim vatandaşlarımızı aynı zamanda tarihimizin, kültürümüzün, medeniyetimizin, bir emaneti olarak görüyoruz... Her zaman altını çizerek diyorum ki; bu kadar zengin bir tarihe sahip olan bir ülkenin din adamlarını yetiştirmek için başka ülkelere muhtaç olmaları bu ülkenin tarihine, kültürüne, medeniyetine, büyüklüğüne hiç yakışmıyor.

Q50: Biz millet olarak, 75 milyon Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşı olarak hem ecdadımızla, hem ahfadımızla istiklale ve hürriyete yeryüzündeki her millettten çok daha fazla aşığız, çok daha fazla tutkunuz... Millet diyorsam, asla ve asla bir ırkı, bir etnik kökeni, bir inanç grubunu kastetmiyorum. Millet, bizim için ortak tarihi olan, istikbale aynı nazarla bakan, ortak idealleri olan bir topluluktur.

Q51: Bizim yaptığımız bir şehitlik tanımı değil. Ben hoca efendilere de bu konuyu sordum... İslam açısından baktığınızda esasında bir kişinin şehitlik makamını vermek veya almak bizim elimizde değil. Takdir Allah'a aittir... Bir ülke düşünün iki askeri var birisi gayrimüslim birisi Müslüman. Terörle mücadele ederken Müslüman olan askerin

yakınlarına řu hakları veriyorum, öbürüne senin dinin başka ben sana bu hakları vermiyorum demeyi İslam da, adalet de, vicdan da onaylamaz.

Q52: řu anda Rotterdam İslam Üniversitesi var, 500 öğrenci ilahiyat eğitimi görüyor. Tarikat ve cemaatlerin Avrupa’da uzantıları, kurumları var. Avrupa’da 5 bin cami var, üçte biri kiliseden çevrilmiş. Dürüst olmak, empati yapmak gerekiyor. Müslümanlar açacak, Avrupa tamam diyecek, Türkiye ’de 100 papaz yetiştirilince kıyamet mi kopacak? Böyle bir şey var mı? Kendi dininden emin olan, başkasının inancını yaşamasından çekinmez. Buna karşı çıkmak insani de, İslami de olmaz.

Q53: Ruhban Okulu niye açılmıyor?’ dediler. Ben de onlara ‘Ruhban Okulunu açmak bizim için mesele değil’ diyorum. Soruyorum: ‘Batı Trakya’da benim 150 bin vatandaşım var. Onların başmüftüsünü sen neden tayin ediyorsun da oradaki soydaşlarıma onu seçme hakkını vermiyorsun?

APPENDIX B. Guiding Questions in Interviews

Interviews made with minority representatives and local authorities have formed a crucial part of this study. Spiritual and civil leaders of Christian communities who closely follow developments regarding the members of their communities constituted an important part of the source of information that could not be obtained elsewhere. Interviews were semi-structured; questions were based on specific themes dragged from the common problems of Christians of Turkey which were reviewed throughout the chapter that constituted the historical background of this research; differing slightly in accordance with the identity of the interviewee. In each question I checked the factors suggested in the literature that might be effective in understanding the recasting of the parameters of religious freedom in Turkey; roughly the role of the EU, societal dynamics and the political authority. Some of the guiding questions are listed below:

1. Do you think the recent Law on Foundations and/or Law on Associations satisfies the needs of your community? Does it suffice to provide legal personality for religious communities and the restitution of their confiscated properties? Did you have any attempt to change the current law?
2. Can you perform board elections of your community freely? What are the challenges you are currently encountering?
3. Do you think current state of Minority schools fulfill the needs of your community? What are the current challenges and improvements compared to your communities past experiences? In your experience, what are the motives for current challenges and improvements? What do you think about the possible reopening of Syriac and *Rum* Orthodox primary schools?

4. Have you observed improvements with regard to the establishment of places of worship or construction and renovation of buildings? Have you observed any changes or obstacles in terms of electricity and water facilities?
5. Can you perform your liturgy services freely compared to the past? Do you experience any obstacles in public religious activities? Do you encounter difficulties in using the ‘ecumenicity’ title of the Patriarchate in the organization of religious affairs?
6. Compared to the past, what are the difficulties that missionaries face considering the threat perception among the society against them? Do you take any steps to deal with this issue?
7. How do your community provide religious education for children? Would you expect the state to provide religious education for Christian children? Do your community members have experienced problems in state schools due to their religion? Ex. Religion course.
8. How have you dealt with training of the clergy? What would you expect from the authorities? Do you think there have been attempts made to ease the restrictions in regard to this issue?
9. How is your relationship with Diyanet? To establish freedom of religion in Turkey do you think Diyanet should represent the Christians as well as the Muslims? Or would you prefer Diyanet to be abolished?
10. Do you think existence of religion category in ID cards prevents the freedom of religion of the members of your community? What are the recent obstacles your community observed? How have you dealt with them?
11. Do you observe discrimination in school textbooks against Christians? Have you taken any steps in order to overcome this issue?

12. How do you appraise the role of the political authority in dealing with the issues related to your community? Are you involved in the process of government's dealings in regard to the issues related to your community?

13. How is your community organized in dealing with the issues regarding the community? Is it the individual efforts or an organized structure that carries out the process?

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