

# QUEERING CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRACY

*The Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its official political identity of conservative democracy dominated the first decade of the new millennium in Turkey. Conservative democracy rests on a fusion of a particularistic conservative national identity with the universal principles of liberal democracy. The conservative narratives on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgenders (LGBTs) reveal the limits of this synthesis' ability to create a deliberative democracy in Turkey, and underscore the challenges faced in recognition of LGBT demands within the conservative democratic project.*

Mehmet Sinan Birdal\*



\* Mehmet Sinan Birdal is an Assistant Professor at the Department of International Relations at Işık University in Istanbul.



he Justice and Development Party's (AKP) emergence in 2001 and its electoral victory on 3 November 2002 ushered a new era in Turkish politics. Emphasizing its break from the Islamism of the Virtue Party (FP), and its predecessor the Welfare Party (RP), the AKP articulated a political discourse combining conservatism with liberalism.

The 2000s also attested the consolidation of the LGBT movement in Turkey. LGBT issues significantly challenge the AKP's conservative-liberal synthesis, revealing the fault-line between a liberal narrative based on universal human rights and democracy, and a conservative narrative based on particular values and identities. Drawing on the post-AKP conservative-liberal discourses this article delineates the grounds on which the LGBTs are excluded from civil rights and explains how this logic contradicts the liberal democratic narrative invoked by conservative democracy.

### *Antinomies of Conservative Democracy*

Since their party's foundation, AKP's leaders were eager to dispel any affiliation with Islamism and instead promoted themselves as "conservative democrats". The AKP's political identity was subject to heated discussions among academics and pundits. Yalçın Akdoğan, advisor to the party's leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, provided a semi-official definition, drawing on modern conservative political theory. Akdoğan argued that modern conservatism is almost inseparable from liberalism in its opposition to socialism and defense of the free market. Both traditions share common founding figures such as David Hume, Edmund Burke, and Friedrich A. Hayek. In distinction to liberalism however, conservatism not only defends freedom in the market but also the restoration of authority in the social field.<sup>1</sup>

When it comes to democracy, the relationship between conservatism and liberalism becomes more tenuous. Akdoğan adopts a prominent liberal academic Atilla Yayla's definition of democracy denoting it not as a lifestyle, but a method for the peaceful coexistence of adverse lifestyles.<sup>2</sup> Conservative democracy invokes the principles of participatory democracy as respect for, and recognition of difference as well as consensus based on mutual tolerance.<sup>3</sup> Pursuing a policy of tolerance is not only an ethical question, but also a political imperative in the age of identity politics. Akdoğan asserts that the twin processes of globalization and localization unleashed certain social groups' demands for recognition of their identity. While politicians must respond to these demands of identity politics, they must do so without alienating and othering certain identity groups. Thus, in order to maintain social peace, conservative democracy needs to create a pluralistic political environment in which

1 Yalçın Akdoğan, *AK Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, [AK Party and Conservative Democracy] (Istanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2004), pp. 38-45, 58.

2 Akdoğan (2004), p. 63.

3 Akdoğan (2004), p. 65-66.

all identity groups feel mutual respect. This environment is reinforced by “national values” (*milli değerler*), a central pillar of Turkish conservatism.<sup>4</sup> This reliance on a set of substantive values is the crux of conservative democracy’s incompatibility with liberal democracy.

While liberalism rests on the democratic procedure, operating among ahistorical and asocial individuals with natural rights prior to society, conservatism predicates on a substantive definition of the “public good.”<sup>5</sup> However, rather than attempting to formulate a solution to this paradox, Akdoğan chooses to gloss over the differences between the organicism of conservatism, and the professed individualism of liberalism emphasized by Yayla himself.<sup>6</sup> This negligence becomes apparent in Akdoğan’s narrative, in which the liberal dichotomy between

civil society and the state is replaced by a yearning for the fusion of the state and the nation: “The reconsolidation of the democratic regime is the fundamental precondition for the peaceful coexistence of social differences, for the fusion of the state and the nation to occur and for the restoration of the corroding system.”<sup>7</sup>

Socialization through family, school, and community is the most important mechanism procuring the fusion of the public good with national values, and merging the state with the nation. Akdoğan states: “For conservatism, the most important social institution is the family. The most negative aspect of the modern era is the dissolution of the family, which is the carrier of tradition and social values.”<sup>8</sup> He emphasizes that even the conservatives most sympathetic to modernization assert that Westernization needs to be a selective process in order to prevent social degeneration.<sup>9</sup>

With its distinction between economic and political modernization and the preservation of family and culture, conservative democracy follows the same logic identified by Partha Chatterjee, the famous scholar of subaltern studies, with regard

*“LGBT issues significantly challenge the AKP’s conservative-liberal synthesis, revealing the fault-line between the liberal and conservative narratives.”*

4 Akdoğan (2004), p. 70-71.

5 For a review of the debate between liberals, neoconservatives and communitarians see Chantal Mouffe, “American Liberalism and its Communitarian Critics,” *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 23-40; for a defense of rational procedure as the legitimating principle of democracy see Jürgen Habermas, “Recht und Moral (Tanner Lectures 1986),” *Faktizität und Geltung: Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaats* [Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy] (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 541-599.

6 Atilla Yayla, *Liberalizm*, [Liberalism] (Ankara: Liberte, 2008), pp. 146-156.

7 Akdoğan (2004), p. 67.

8 Akdoğan (2004), p. 50.

9 Akdoğan (2004), p. 53.

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to postcolonial nationalism. Chatterjee distinguishes between the problematic and the thematic features of an ideology. The problematic involves the identification of historical possibilities or the practical program of an ideology, which is justified by the latter’s claims of validity, while the thematic is an epistemological and ethical system warranting practical inferences. Chatterjee argues that postcolonial nationalism changes the problematic, but retains the thematic aspect of nationalism. In other words, postcolonial nationalism reasons within the same epistemological and

ethical universe of colonial nationalism, despite the former’s political opposition to the latter.<sup>10</sup> Prior to challenging colonialism, postcolonial nationalism first constitutes its own sovereign sphere by dividing the social world into a material and a spiritual domain. In the material domain of economy, statecraft, science, and technology, anticolonialism acknowledges Western superiority and warrants the imitation of Western institutions. However, in the spiritual domain of culture, religion and family, anti-colonialism asserts its superiority over Western culture.<sup>11</sup>

The first wave of Islamism in the 19th and 20th century, and to some extent Kemalism, resorted to this bifurcated discourse.<sup>12</sup> Starting with the *Tanzimat* period throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the excessively Westernized degenerate, often portrayed as an effeminate, emerged as the *Leitmotiv* of the Ottoman and Turkish social imaginary.<sup>13</sup> In this vein, Akdoğan cites İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, a pedagogue of the early 20th century, who distinguishes between civilization, an ensemble of technical procedures, and culture, urging Turks to “imitate other civilizations but refuse other cultures.”<sup>14</sup>

For Akdoğan, tradition is essential to nation-building and maintaining social peace in a pluralistic political environment.<sup>15</sup> In his view, “political legitimacy is (...) based

10 Partha Chatterjee, *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus: Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 38.

11 Chatterjee, (1999), p. 52.

12 For a characterization of the early Islamic movement, see Charles Kurzman, “Introduction: The Modernist Islamic Movement,” *Modernist Islam 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 3-27.

13 Şerif Mardin, “Super-Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century,” in P. Benedict, E. Tümertekin and F. Mansur (eds.), *Turkey: Geographic and Social Perspectives* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974); Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, [A Critical Look into Turkish Novel] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009).

14 Akdoğan (2004), p. 50.

15 Akdoğan (2004), p. 54.

on the common acceptance of a national identity that expresses itself in commonly held norms regarding action, rules, and collective worth.”<sup>16</sup> By constructing the AKP as the agent representing the people and defending the national values against the elites and degenerates, conservative democracy becomes a hegemonic, rather than deliberative project.<sup>17</sup>

In this hegemonic discourse, the AKP’s electoral victories are interpreted as its license to represent and define national values and distinguish the others.<sup>18</sup> In this context, conservative democracy resorts to an “invention of tradition” as an indispensable part of its political project. An invented tradition is “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”<sup>19</sup> Invention of tradition is characterized by a constant tension between the need to respond to novel situations and attempting to construe certain parts of social life as unchanging.<sup>20</sup>

Political instrumentalization primarily differentiates invented tradition from custom and convention. In contrast to the latter two, the invented tradition’s main function is symbolic, ritualistic, and ideological rather than being technical and practical. Topics such as family, school, and community are symbolic aspects of the conservative democratic invention of tradition. In this regard, sexual deviance, signifying ultimate degeneration of the nation, constitutes the main dilemma for the rearticulation of Turkish conservatism within the conceptual universe of liberal democracy and multiculturalism.

### *Homosexuality as a Constitutive “Other” of Conservative Democracy*

The LGBT movement is thought of as a paradigmatic example of the politics of recognition. Politics of recognition can be defined as the pursuit of a group for the affirmative public acceptance of its identity. A movement seeking recognition is based on specific identity-based harm incurred due to economic and political discrimination or cultural patterns depriving those certain groups of a moral or civic status.<sup>21</sup> The first decade of the new millennium also witnessed the rise of the LGBT politics of recognition in Turkey. The LGBT demands for recognition have been met

16 Yalçın Akdoğan, “The Meaning of Conservative Democratic Political Identity,” in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), p. 50.

17 The following discussion is based on Sinan Birdal, “Neden LGBT Tarihi? Türkiye’de Siyaset ve LGBTfobi,” [Why LGBT History? Politics and LGBTphobia in Turkey], in Bülent Bilmez, (ed.), *Cumhuriyetin Tartışmalı Konuları*, [Controversial Issues of the Republic] (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Forthcoming).

18 This account of hegemony is based on Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2007).

19 Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.

20 Hobsbawm (1997), p. 2.

21 Elizabeth Kiss, “Democracy and the Politics of Recognition,” in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón (eds.), *Democracy’s Edges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 193-196.

with ambiguity by the AKP. On 9 October 2002, several weeks prior to the 2002 elections, Erdoğan joined a TV program called “Young Viewpoint” (*Genç Bakış*) as a guest speaker. On the show Ahmet Altın Işık, a young student, asked Erdoğan whether he would personally condone the recognition of certain rights (such as the right to marriage) for LGBT individuals, as in some cases in Europe. Following the program host’s initial shock and a wave of laughter and applause from the audience, Erdoğan replied: “First, homosexuals also need to be put under legal protection in the framework of their own rights and liberties. We find inhumane the ill-treatments that they are exposed to and that we sometime come across on some TV screens.”<sup>22</sup>

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As a decade of AKP incumbency demonstrates, opposing the ill-treatment of LGBT individuals is far from meeting the demands for recognition. Feminist political theorist Nancy Fraser asserts that harms of misrecognition are cultural and symbolic injustices deriving from the social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. She argues that though these patterns are linked with unequal distribution of political and economic rights, they must be analytically distinguished. She identifies three types of misrecognition: i) cultural domination, i.e. subjugating a culture to another; ii) non-recognition, i.e. rendering a culture invisible; and iii) disrespect, i.e. constant vilification by public and cultural representations.<sup>23</sup> The prevailing public discourses on the LGBTs exhibit all three kinds of misrecognition, even to the extent that the conservative democratic identity is actually constructed on the basis of a homophobic culture. Hence the LGBT individuals’ demands for recognition and protection against harms of misrecognition significantly challenge the AKP’s aspiration of a conservative liberal synthesis.

Akdoğan, for instance, mentions the right of choosing one’s spouse as a fundamental human right.<sup>24</sup> This right, however, is nowhere explicitly affirmed for gay and lesbian couples. Furthermore, Akdoğan warns against separatist, destabilizing, and marginal demands:

<sup>22</sup> The video can be reached at “Başbakan Erdoğan: Eşcinsellerin de yasal güvence altına alınması şart!,” [Prime Minister Erdoğan: homosexuals also need to be put under legal protection!], *T24*, 28 May 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/basbakan-erdogan-escinsellerin-haklari-yasal-guvence-altina-alinmali/204994>

<sup>23</sup> Kiss (1999), p. 196-197.

<sup>24</sup> Akdoğan (2004), p. 72.

Raising consciousness about protecting rights and respecting other's rights is as important as knowing one's own rights. The most important point in human rights is for everyone to possess human rights consciousness and human responsibility. Human rights should not be regarded as "separatist" and destabilizing "marginalizing" demands, but to the contrary as a meta-value (*üst değer*) aggregating the will of individuals and groups to live together and thereby, creating a general consensus and domestic peace.<sup>25</sup>

Akdoğan's conception raises the question of who gets to decide which demand is separatist, destabilizing, and marginal. Since underprivileged groups are subject to misrecognition, their demands for recognition of equal moral and social status is usually construed as separatist, destabilizing, and marginal. Thus, assessing whether a certain demand for recognition warrants the protection of law and human rights based on their compatibility to a vaguely defined

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"general consensus and domestic peace," can with a strong likelihood, reproduce misrecognition. As such, LGBTs' demands of equality and justice can easily be subjugated to their conformity with a politically constructed national identity. The conservative discourses on the LGBT present significant evidence of how such a majoritarian conception of human rights and democracy provide a basis for discrimination, misrecognition, and humiliation.

Based on the writings of several conservative opinion leaders, conservative recognition of LGBT rights is fairly restricted to the right to live, while public visibility can be a legitimate cause of discrimination. A respected figure among conservative and Islamist circles, Hayrettin Karaman asserts that Muslims do not tolerate, but merely bear the existence of homosexuals, gamblers, and those engaging in extramarital sex. According to Karaman, in a democratic society, one should not expect people of different faiths and moral values to like each other. These people have to bear each other; however, that does not mean tolerating each other. Bearing one's existence means not resorting to violence against different people. Nevertheless, in Karaman's view, tolerance attributes normalcy to homosexuality, which he is unwilling to do. "What am I going to say to my child when talking about this?" he asks, "Tolerate homosexuality too, that it's not different from normal people, that humans can be this

<sup>25</sup> Akdoğan (2004), p. 75.

way or that way!”<sup>26</sup> Thus, Karaman distinguishes between bearing (*tahammül*) a homosexual’s being and tolerating (*hoşgörü*) homosexuality. *Tahammül* implies guaranteeing the life of homosexuals, whereas *hoşgörü* refers to affirming their equality.

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Karaman tackles the question of how Muslims can live in the same society with homosexuals under a democratic and pluralistic regime. His main recommendation to Muslims is minimal engagement with homosexuals, leading almost to a social segregation of conservative and LGBT communities. Regarding human rights, Karaman emphasizes that offenses to public morality necessitate legitimate limits on human rights and liberties. Admitting that there are arguments asserting that homosexuality is not an offense to public morality, he responds that “the obliteration of

religious, national and local cultures by globalization should not be allowed.” Thus, Karaman continues, “What is considered immoral by our religion and culture and the behaviors that are commonly held by our people as such should be considered as immoral. And the use of this principle in limiting freedom should be supported.”<sup>27</sup>

Other conservative opinion leaders also resort to explicit demonization and call for the criminalization of homosexuality. *Zaman* columnist Ali Bulaç argues that there is a positive correlation between the spread of homosexuality and mass killings of civilians during wartime. According to Bulaç, the majority of the soldiers murdering civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq are reportedly homosexuals. Due to their “deep spiritual traumas,” homosexuals “enjoy killing.”<sup>28</sup> Supporting Bulaç, another *Zaman* columnist Ali Ünal argues that homosexuals are more aggressive than heterosexuals due to the former’s introverted nature; that 25 percent of homosexuals are sadomasochists and torturers; that the majority of mass killers torturing their victims are homosexuals; that in the U.S. six serial killers who chopped up and ate their victims are homosexuals; that there is a special relationship between fascism and homosexuality; that the majority of the administrators in Nazi concentration

26 “Hayrettin Karaman: Cemaatler Arasında Sözleşmeye İhtiyaç Var,” [Hayrettin Karaman: There is a Need of an Agreement among the Communities], *T24*, 3 January 2012, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/hayreddin-karaman-cemaatler-arasinda-sozlesmeye-ihtiyac-var/189690>

27 Hayrettin Karaman, “Eşcinsel vb. ile Aynı Toplulukta Yaşamak,” [Living in the Same Society with Homosexuals etc.], *Yeni Şafak*, 31 May 2009.

28 “Karanlık bir Kafa”, [A Dark Mind], *Milliyet*, 14 May 2009.

camps were homosexuals; that 10 percent of Hitler's close circle consisted of homosexuals; and that the majority of French legionnaires were homosexuals who raped boys in Tunisia.<sup>29</sup>

These allegations are backed by professor of psychiatry, Nevzat Tarhan, who states that the most common form of homosexuality is pedophilia. In his view, even though Bulaç's data regarding Iraq and Afghanistan may not be accurate, there is evidence suggesting that homosexuals have a tendency to violence. Tarhan refers to Vlad the Impaler, who "watched impaled Ottoman soldiers with orgasmic pleasure."<sup>30</sup> In Tarhan's view, such a portrayal of homosexuality does not count as homophobia, since combating pedophilia is not homophobia. Nobody can be charged with homophobia for defending public morality; however, those who urge religious people to tolerate homosexuals are accused of being Islamophobes.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Homosexuality: Sickness or Sin?***

Defining homosexuality became the centerpiece of a heated debate among Islamist writers when Selma Aliye Kavaf, then the Minister of State responsible for Women and Family Affairs, depicted homosexuality as a sickness in 2010.<sup>32</sup>

Several Islamist NGOs formed the Call for Life Platform (*Hayata Çağrı Platformu*) to support Kavaf and declared homosexuality as a threat to humanity. In her statement representing the platform, Asiye Dilipak, an activist in the Islamist women's movement and the wife of the renowned Islamist writer Abdurrahman Dilipak, argues that:

Not considering homosexuality an anomaly, threatening the future and the security of humanity will decrease the demands for therapy by people who are living with this problem and will cause the spread of homosexuality... The increasing voice of the homosexual lobby should not have an impact on the correct attitude towards the truth and regarding this matter, which poses a threat to human life, and the continuation of the human race.<sup>33</sup>

Not all conservatives agreed with the platform. The Minister of Health Recep Akdağ admitted that being a homosexual in Turkey was hard and could be a cause

29 Ali Ünsal, "Biz de 'İlkel Çağ Kafası' mı Diyelim?" [Then Should We Say: 'Primitive Age Mind?'], *Zaman*, 18 May 2009.

30 Nevzat Tarhan, "Eşcinsellik, Kazıklı Voyvoda ve Şiddet" [Homosexuality, Vlad the Impaler, and Violence], *Haber 7*, 15 May 2009, <http://www.haber7.com/haber/20090515/Escinsellik-kazikli-Voyvoda-ve-siddet.php>

31 Tarhan, (2009).

32 Faruk Bildirici, "Eşcinsellik Hastalık, Tedavi Edilmeli", [Homosexuality is a Sickness, It Must be Cured], *Hürriyet*, 7 March 2010.

33 "Kavaf'a Sonunda bir Destek," [A Support to Kavaf at Last], *Radikal*, 23 March 2010.

of discrimination. Thus, Akdağ called the society to be “conscientious” (*insaflı*).<sup>34</sup> Özlem Albayrak, in a column for the conservative newspaper *Yeni Şafak*, argued that there is no point in disseminating hatred. But she reserved her right to condemn homosexuality as a sin. However, in Albayrak’s view, Akdağ’s correction of Kavaf revealed that heterophobia was as dominant as homophobia.<sup>35</sup>

Hilal Kaplan, another Islamist columnist writing for the liberal newspaper *Taraf*, criticized the Call for Life Platform for invoking Western epistemology to classify homosexuality as a sickness. A Muslim, Kaplan asserted, should regard homosexuality not as a sickness but as a sin, which can be committed by any human being like fornication or adultery. Kaplan emphasized that she opposed any attempts against the lives, property, and honor of homosexuals but she also objected to any effort to legitimate homosexuality.<sup>36</sup> The ensuing debate between Kaplan and political scientist Zeynep Gambetti demonstrates how LGBT-related issues reveal the paradoxes of Islamist democratic political theory.

Gambetti opposes Kaplan by emphasizing three major points: i) homosexuality is not a choice like drinking alcohol; ii) in contrast to drinking alcohol, homosexuality defines one’s individuality and all one’s relations; iii) defining homosexuality as a sin merely excludes homosexuals from the public sphere while avoiding being accused as undemocratic.<sup>37</sup> In response, Kaplan argues that the problem lies in the incompatibility of the ontology of a democratic system dominated by secularism and non-secular Muslims.<sup>38</sup> She resorts to Islam in order to define homosexuality as a question of religious faith and conscience. Thus, homosexuality can be construed as a sin, like drinking alcohol or extramarital sex, which can nevertheless be left to the will of private individuals.

Kaplan then refers to liberal democracy and its protection of religious freedoms in order to legitimize the attempts against public visibility of LGBTs. Kaplan regards the charge of homophobia as oppression against conservative Muslims. Conservative opinion leaders complain that homosexuality is used to test how democratic conservatives truly are. Albayrak argues that homosexuality is imposed as a litmus test for Muslims.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Kaplan asserts that seculars either charge conservative Muslims with homophobia or expect them to remain silent, and that both attitudes are expressions of latent-Kemalism.<sup>40</sup>

34 “İki Bakanın Arasına Eşcinseller Girdi,” [Homosexuals Came between Two Ministers], *Milliyet*, 9 March 2010.

35 Özlem Albayrak, “Eşcinsellik Meselesi,” [The Issue of Homosexuality], *Yeni Şafak*, 16 March 2010.

36 Hilal Kaplan, “İslam ve Eşcinsellik Meselesi,” [Islam and the Issue of Homosexuality], *Taraf*, 3 April 2010.

37 Zeynep Gambetti, “Eşcinsellik, İçki ve Diğer Benzeri Günahlar Üzerine,” [On Homosexuality, Drinking and Other Relevant Sins], *Taraf*, 25 May 2010.

38 Hilal Kaplan, “İslam ve Sekülerizm,” [Islam and Secularism], *Taraf*, 22 July 2010.

39 Albayrak (2010).

40 Hilal Kaplan, “İslam ve Eşcinsellik Meselesi,” [Islam and the Issue of Homosexuality], *Taraf*, 3 April 2010.

Mustafa Akyol, a self-styled conservative columnist for the pro-government newspaper *Star*, states that democracy protects the rights of conservatives to condemn homosexuality. He adds that free societies in liberal democracy do not have to be copies of European societies; for example, in the Netherlands same-sex marriages are legal, but polygamy is not. Thus, Akyol concludes, since different societies have different moral values, liberal democracy in Turkey does not require the legalization of same-sex marriages.<sup>41</sup>

### *Concluding remarks*

In the conservative democratic discourse, sexuality in general, and LGBT issues in particular, serve as indicators of Turkey's distinct identity. As such, LGBT demands for recognition are depicted as threats to national values. The disrespect for LGBTs and the social harms they endure are legitimized by a narrative that construes conservatives as the true victims of an imposing Western and Kemalist discourse. A closer look at the conservative democratic arguments, however, reveals an undeniable fault-line between a particularizing narrative, which constructs the national identity based on an invented tradition, and a universal narrative, which legitimizes conservative democracy in terms of liberal democracy. Therefore, conservative democratic discourse resorts to the syntax emphasized by Chatterjee with regard to anti-colonial nationalism.

Homophobia in Turkey is not limited to conservative circles. However, the AKP and its conservative democratic identity dominate contemporary Turkish politics. The depiction of LGBTs as the "other" of an imagined Muslim Turkish identity significantly challenges the LGBT movement in its pursuit for recognition. Imagining and articulating a political community that includes LGBTs as equal citizens should be the starting point of the movement's political strategy. In becoming a proactive agent in drafting the new constitution, the LGBT movement has already taken important steps in this direction.

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41 Mustafa Akyol, "Eşcinsellik, Müslümanlık ve Sıradışı Evlilik," [Homosexuality, Islam, and Unusual Marriage], *Star*, 15 March 2010.