

**EXECUTION STRATEGIES OF ISLAMIC
GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF TÜRKIYE
(2010-2020)**

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Received on: 19-11-22

Accepted on: 12-02-23

<https://doi.org/10.57144/hi.v46i1.656>

Abstract

Academics conducted in-depth analyses and critical research on the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, (AK PARTI) government's Islamisation projects. However, little research has been conducted to understand the execution processes of Islamic governance in Türkiye from a genuine administrative perspective. This research tries to fill this gap. For this purpose, it discusses the conceptual framework of Islamic governance for theoretical guidelines. Then, it discusses the execution strategies adopted by the AK PARTI government. The study identified that the AK PARTI government followed mainly six strategies in Islamising Turkish governance: (1) developing public institutions; (2) developing Islamic educational institutions; (3) curriculum reforms; (4) major financing; (5) empowering Islamic bureaucracy, and (6) managing Islamic Da'wa. These six strategies are largely implemented through two channels: the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Imam Hatip Schools. The Imam Hatip High School, a vocational high school with a modern and Islamic curriculum established to prepare preachers and Imams, is operated by the Ministry of National Education. The AK PARTI administration gave importance to these schools to produce a religion-oriented generation. This

has gained international attention as an alternative model for Madrasas in Muslim nations. However, this study concludes that Türkiye has a long way to go before achieving genuine Islamisation in society. The AK PARTI government should decentralize da'wa by focusing local enterprises on disseminating authentic Islamic messages and expanding the participation of numerous state institutions in the Islamisation process. This is a qualitative study depending on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include government reports and documents, websites of the pertinent government institutions and ministries, and national and international dailies. The secondary sources include referred books, journal articles, and scholarly research. The analysis focuses on the period 2010-2020 because it was from 2010 that the AK PARTI government mainly initiated Islamisation projects to generate an Islamic society based on Islamic values.

Keywords: *Islamic Governance, Strategies, Execution, Türkiye*

1. Introduction

Modern Türkiye has become a significant player in global politics by promoting Turkish nationalism with its Islamic brand.¹ However, Islam in Türkiye has always been a contentious topic regarding power politics. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal Ataturk founded modern Türkiye based on secularism and liberal culture where Islam was kept away from politics. The constitutional framework of Türkiye, thus, protected secularism as its state principle. Similarly, other state institutions were vigilant in preserving secular ideology. Therefore, Islamists in Turkish politics were always confronted with severe challenges in achieving state leadership. Islamic political parties faced resistance from several state institutions, including the military, judiciary, and secular elites in Türkiye. Whenever any Islamic party came into state power, the Turkish military intervened to protect secularism and banned religious politics.

However, the trajectory changed gradually when the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, (AK PARTI) formed the government in 2002. Under Erdogan's bold leadership, AK PARTI government managed the obstacles and attempted strategically to instill Islamic values in government mechanisms to support the revival of the Islamic spirit in public life. Although AK PARTI denied establishing an Islamic state, it envisioned applying Islamic norms and values in Turkish Muslim life. Erdogan did not dream of making a dramatic change in society. Rather, he measured the existing obstacles and designed pragmatic strategies to avoid the systemic threat of secular Türkiye. Erdogan spoke little about Islam between 2002 and 2010, preferring to concentrate on conservative politics based on Turkish nationalism. Still, after consolidating

enough power, the AK PARTI boldly initiated the process of Islamisation. Ihsan Yilmaz claims that the 2010–2011 period marked a turning point in the history of the AK PARTI administration since, at this time, the leadership shifted its focus to building the Islamisation program after 2011.² Conservatism and Islamism drove Türkiye in a new direction, assumed as the model for other Muslim countries.

Erdogan started to emphasize the policy of preserving family values, which aims to prevent socioeconomic disorders. According to the AK PARTI, the Turkish family is in a crisis, and its standards are breaking down, leading to socioeconomic problems, including crime, addiction, poverty, and homelessness. To prevent this, the country needs to have strong families.³ AK PARTI also adopted the policy of the pious generation that aims to re-configure the intellects and attitudes of youth based on the Quranic teaching and modern education. Erdogan credited an image of a perfect young man clutching a Quran in one hand and a computer in the other.⁴ The AK PARTI administration attempted to Islamise governance to produce an Islamic generation and make it suitable for providing efficient Islamic services.

Therefore, the question arises of how the AK PARTI government applied the policies of Islamisation into the government mechanism that supports the production of a generation based on Islamic principles and fruitful education. This study aims to deal with this question. It will analyze the execution strategies of Islamic governance as mechanized by the AK PARTI government.

This study is significant due to several reasons. Since it describes the governance strategies of Islamisation in Türkiye, it will benefit the policymakers, political leaders, and strategists of other Muslim countries who tend to follow the Islamisation process of the Turkish government as a model of Islamic governance. Because Secularism is prevalent in many Muslim nations, people will be able to comprehend how Islamisation might occur in a secular Muslim country like Türkiye. It will also contribute to the academic field that Islamic governance is not merely a theoretical manifestation but has pragmatic applicability even in secular Muslim countries. The justification for the study asserts that it is necessary to document how Türkiye, a country with a majority of Muslims, articulates Islamic identity by redesigning Islamic institutions and reshuffling governance structures considering existing social, political, and economic reality.

2. Literature Review

Existing literature addresses this question differently; most of the discussion concentrates on Erdogan's Islamisation policies and their critical analysis. There is insufficient focus on analyzing how Islamic policies are executed in the administrative system to materialize Islamic vision. Ihsan Yilmaz, in his latest book "*Creating the Desired Citizen: Ideology, State, and Islam in Turkey*," analyses the ideological contentions between the secular and Islamist approaches in creating a pious generation from the historical perspectives, where secularists and Islamists defined the concept of the desired citizen according to their own ideological goals.⁵ Other studies include Stark,⁶ Bruinessen,⁷ and Pupcenoks,⁸ and Yesilada et al.,⁹ Briefly explaining Turkish governance's Islamisation. However, their explanations are dissatisfactory, as the details and updates provided are neither sufficient nor are they according to the theoretical perspectives of this study. Their investigations are based on youth policy, family policy, or education. In this aspect, Moten¹⁰ Applied the framework of Islamic governance, but it is very short and not updated. No significant study has been found that comprehensively discusses the AK PARTI government's strategies in Islamisation from a genuinely administrative perspective that can be a model of Islamic governance. This study aims to fulfill this literature gap and contribute to the existing literature.

3. Methodology

Relying on the qualitative method, data are collected from primary and secondary sources for this research. Primary sources include government reports and documents, websites of pertinent government institutions and ministries, and national and international dailies. The secondary sources include referred books, journal articles, and scholarly research.

The following section will discuss the framework of Islamic governance in detail. This paradigm is chosen because Islam offers a unique perspective on governance that differs from other worldviews. Since the AK PARTI government aims to empower Islam in politics and government, it is essential to investigate Islamisation in Türkiye through the lens of Islamic governance, which is more pertinent to this investigation. The framework is then applied in the following section by examining various policy implementations by the AK PARTI government, including religious institutions such as Diyanet and education sectors, particularly Imam Hatip Schools. The Imam Hatip High School is a specific type of vocational high school with an Islamic and modern curriculum run by the Ministry of National Education to educate and prepare preachers and Imams. These Schools strive to harmonize religion and modern education to produce a generation founded on conservative and moral ideals.¹¹ The AK PARTI government provided special priority to qualify these schools. Similarly, these institutions have emerged as a matter of

discussion regarding their structures, numbers, and student and alums profiles, gaining worldwide attention as an alternative model for madrasas in Muslim nations following the September 11 events.¹² After analyzing Imam Hatip Schools, this study then analyses the impacts and challenges of Islamisation in Turkish society with possible recommendations, and finally, the study ends with conclusions.

4. Governance and Islamic Governance

Governance as a concept provides a firmly established framework to investigate the inherent intricacies of prevailing policymaking. It determines how society and its political processes are structured and guided. So, governance should be viewed as a broader notion within the political analysis that serves as a crucial tool for describing some of the complexities of political processes.¹³ However, depending on cultural and ideological perspectives, the philosophical ground of governance and its theoretical architecture vary. Therefore, governance in the Islamic framework is required to elucidate the basic guidance aligned with the Islamic worldview.

Regarding Islamic governance (IG), Taqiy al-Din Ibn Taimiyyah (661 h/ad 1263–728 h/ad 1328) provided a concise exposition of the fundamentals of Islamic government important for both the rulers and the ruled. We know that Islamic governance is ruled by *Shari'ah* (Islamic rulings). However, *Shari'ah* does not fully explain every situation. Ibn Taimiyyah claims that if *Shari'ah* does not give clear guidelines, the ruling authorities must seek advice from scholars or *'ulama* (Islamic scholars). The phrase "those who wield power" (*wulat al-umur*) includes these specialists. The obligation between the *'ulama* and *umara* (the rulers) should be mutual. The *'ulama* are responsible for efficiently guiding (providing advice or *nasīḥah*) the rulers so that their functions do not contradict *Shari'ah*'s goals, and the rulers must obey the *'ulama*'s direction.¹⁴ The ruler should be nominated by the people or the desire of the majority through the system of *wilayah*, a mutual convention between rulers and the ruled. He advocated political pluralism, participation, ensuring justice, and checks and balance in exercising power.¹⁵

Imam Khomeini's terminology of "velāyat-e faqīh," or the jurist's guardianship, provides the authority of guardianship in guiding public institutions and people. He analyzes "Propagation and instruction" as two essential functions of IG where *Fuqaha* will disseminate the light of religion and educate the masses on the beliefs, customs, and institutions of Islam to lead society for the execution of Islamic principles and the development of Islamic institutions.¹⁶ Islam. R. believes that Islamic governance incorporates the procedures and duties that provide governments of Muslim nations and formal institutions the authority to decide or enforce conformity

with Islamic laws, values, norms, or principles as stated in the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah. It provides guiding principles to fulfill the objectives of *Sharī'ah*, *Maqāṣṣd al Sharī'ah*.¹⁷

Islamic governance, according to Moten A. R., is concerned with three things: (1) the process of governing or ruling in terms of how governmental institutions operate public matters and manage public funds to promote the attainment of the common welfare; (2) the collection of laws and policies passed by leaders for execution by numerous government entities; and (3) the adjustments introduced to guarantee the stability of the political system by adhering to the rules of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.¹⁸ He describes the five essential characteristics of Islamic governance: (1) knowledge and accountability of the leaders. (2) The supremacy of the consultation in the decision-making process. (3) Spiritual and material education for all. (4) Priority to the welfare of the people and (5) ensuring justice for all.¹⁹

Therefore, from the above discussion, it can be inferred that Islamic governance encompasses mainly six strategies: (1) institutional development, (2) bureaucratic empowerment, (3) financing to Islamic development, (4) da'wah service (propagation) to serve the purposes of Islam and welfare of the entire community (5) educational reforms (6) curriculum update. This study will follow this framework to examine Islamic governance in Türkiye, arguing that all six strategies are present during the AK PARTI regime to institutionalize Islam in Türkiye. From 1-4 strategies are executed by Diyanet, the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Türkiye, and 5-6 strategies are executed by the Imam Hatip Schools. The following section discusses these strategies elaborately.

5. Discussion on The Execution Strategies of Islamic Governance in Türkiye

5.1. Developing Religious Institutions (Diyanet)

The Presidency of Religious Affairs, often known as Diyanet, is Türkiye's main authority for religious administration. The Secular Turkish Republic is a government department established to manage religious administrations and authority.²⁰ It upholds organized bureaucratic processes while offering Islamic services.²¹ The Diyanet, the central religious organization, performs directly under the presidential office and coordinates most religious functions for the Sunni Muslims community.²² Diyanet was created by Atatürk under Article 136 of the Turkish constitution in 1924 and became a recognized governmental organization.²³ Although its capabilities were constrained in the early years before the 1980s, it is administrative capacity and working spaces considerably increased. With a sizable budget, the workforce peaked in 2020 at 128,000 people.²⁴ Diyanet operates within institutional frameworks. It has

many units, each given a set of responsibilities. The main unit of Diyanet is The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA). Its functions are analyzed in the following.

5.1.1. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA)

The functions of the DRA are defined in Article 7, clause (a) of law No. 633 on the Establishment and Duties of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. It was established to conduct activities related to Islamic beliefs, worship principles, moral thinking and conduct, and the management of places of worship.²⁵ It supervises all mosques, employs all clergy (Imams, Preachers, and Muftis), runs Qur'ān classes, and centrally decides what will be said during Friday sermons.²⁶ Accordingly, this unit serves under four main departments: Mosque Service, Guidance, Family and Religious Counselling, and Social and Cultural Religious services.

Regarding Mosque Service, Diyanet is responsible for carrying out the government's mosque projects inside and outside Türkiye. Additionally, it is working to open mosques for prayer, manage their operations, ensure that they are clean both inside and outside, organize events for major Islamic days and nights, and plan the annual Mosques and Religious Officials Week. Türkiye had 80,836 mosques in 2009,²⁷ However, by 2020 that number had risen to 90,000.²⁸ Diyanet employs all of the Imams, considered civil servants trained by the state. Additionally, it develops the Friday sermon for every *Jumu'ah* mosque domestically and internationally.²⁹

Similarly, the department of Guidance Services guides Mosques in various ways, such as by setting up Islamic programs and meetings outside of mosques and engaging in other activities as directed by the Mufti Office through radio, television, and other broadcasting media to educate society.³⁰ Diyanet launched a radio station and television network in 2013 that broadcast programs on religious subjects. It also answers any inquiries about Islamic customs and beliefs.³¹ Transforming mosques from places of prayer into multipurpose social facilities containing libraries, cafés, and other amenities, implies that Diyanet has expanded mosque services beyond just religious activities.³² As the previous president of Diyanet expected, the organization's activists should guide the society by the Prophet's sunnah and make mosques into active hubs for people of all gender where Muftis, Imams, *mua'dhins*, and women officials work dynamically for this objective.³³

On the contrary, the Family and Religious Counseling Services develops initiatives and programs based on religious guidance for families, women, adolescents, and other segments of society. For this purpose, it employs female preachers, provides access to participate in religious and cultural events, and offers

counseling to help with family-related problems.³⁴ Diyanet created more space by increasing the proportion of female preachers to ensure more effectiveness in da'wah management and programs. According to research, there were 224 female preachers in 2009 instead of 78 in 2002. Diyanet has two major methods to reach its targeted demography, notably women and young people; (1) adopting specialized channels inside the Family Guidance Bureaus, a division under the Mufti office; and (2) signing protocols with relevant municipalities and ministries.³⁵

The Family Bureau, in this case, conducts home visits, particularly during important occasions like weddings and funerals, organizes a home gathering for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, or participates in outdoor gatherings to meet women and foster community ties so that the female staff members of the Bureau can have private discussions with women about marriage and sex life and properly guide them following national values and religious principles.³⁶ The Bureau promotes marriage and strives to lower divorce rates. Moreover, the Bureau organizes "marriage schools" or pre-marriage family courses jointly organized by local municipalities or directorates of the Ministry of Family. However, these programs are based on the Family Education Program, which the Ministry of Family already uses but has been reorganized to assure religious direction.³⁷

Regarding protocol signing, Diyanet signed agreements with two ministries in 2011: the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. These agreements laid the groundwork for collaborations aimed at preserving the fundamental principles of the Turkish family and averting harms that threaten family harmony. This collaboration was further updated and detailed in 2018.³⁸ Furthermore, Diyanet is actively contributing to implementing Ministry of Family policies by establishing channels within the system, such as hiring female preachers and establishing the Family and Religious Guidance Bureaus, which are equipped with necessary resources and development programs for human resources to restructure gender relations."³⁹ Female preachers deliver sermons outside mosques in hospitals, women's prisons, detention centers, reformatories, women's shelters, student dormitories, and factories. Thus, they play an important role in Diyanet's expansion and propagation of its message beyond places of worship."⁴⁰

In October 2017, the government revised several sections of the Law on Civil Registration Services, giving Muftis the authority to officiate at civil weddings and register them; this responsibility had previously been reserved for civil officers of municipalities. This amendment orientated a partnership protocol between Mufti offices and municipalities, and Diyanet was advanced to connect engaged

couples and even additional relevant audiences.⁴¹ Such a communication network allowed the Diyanet Family Bureaus to participate in training educational institutions run by municipalities, such as art classes or vocational courses. The inter-agency partnership hopes to educate and enlighten participants: “Family law and life in Islam include maintaining the family structure, increasing peace and sustainability in the family, maintaining traditions and customs, education of values and providing basic religious knowledge.”⁴²

5.1.2. Diyanet Qur’ān Courses

Diyanet administers Quranic courses. The courses have been revived since the AK PARTI took power in 2002. The number of students increased from 90,353 in 2001 to 297,247 in 2010. The Quranic courses have undergone considerable changes due to the 2012 education reforms. The number of Quranic courses increased to 20,000 in 2020.⁴³ The courses are no longer co-managed by the Ministry of Education. Students' minimum age requirement of twelve years was eliminated. Regulations of required course facilities were lifted, and the teacher's quality requirements were relaxed so that temporary teachers could teach.⁴⁴

In the academic year 2014–2015, the Diyanet began offering the Holy Qur’ān memorizing classes at the Medina Imam Hatip secondary school in Ankara. Nonetheless, Diyanet and the Ministry of Education signed a protocol in May 2019 titled "Quran Courses at School Cooperative Education." The agreement procedure states that after completing their Qur’ān memorizing classes in the fifth and sixth grades, students move on to additional consolidation classes in the seventh and eighth grades. Individuals who receive a Qur’ān memorizing certificate are subsequently referred to the Hatip secondary schools chosen by the Ministry of Education. In the academic year of 2019-2020, 14,900 pupils participated in Qur’ān memorizing classes.

In 2020-2021, 16,639 students enrolled in such courses.⁴⁵ Children who had not completed primary education were also forbidden from enrolling in summer Qur’ān classes until 2012. As the prohibition had been abolished, Qur’n Courses for children ages 4-6 were inaugurated in 2013, giving them a chance to learn about religion. Families that desire to raise their children following their religion pay close attention to these courses.⁴⁶ According to a report, 8,695 Turkish boys and girls memorized the complete Qur’ān during the 2021-22 school year and were handed certificates by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). During the 2020-2021 academic year, 73,000 students were registered in Quranic courses nationwide, with over 7,000 teachers instructing in over 1,700 subjects.⁴⁷

5.1.3. Diyanet Da‘wah Management in the Friday Sermon

Regarding the Friday sermon, the AK PARTI administration did not overlook da‘wah management. The ideological shift from Kemalism to Islamic conservatism necessitates a never-ending effort to persuade people using religious references and glorious historical legacies. As a result, the government empowered Diyanet to monitor and control Friday speeches in all mosques in Turkey. *Khaṭībs*, or preachers, do not normally prepare their own speeches. Instead, it has been the official authorities' responsibility since the Republic's early days to provide ready-made texts.⁴⁸

Before 2006, the authority did not actively pursue high-level centralization of the *Khuṭbah* practice. After 2010, however, *Khuṭbah* committees were set up in every city under the direction of the provincial Mufti offices. The members of this committee collaborate to choose discussion content for the weekly sermons. The Mufti's office receives the *Khuṭbah* topics they choose for the upcoming year. After receiving clearance from the Mufti office, the subjects are given to the appointed Imams and preachers, who are qualified to compose scriptures; every week, they respond to the committee with three or four different types of *Khuṭbahs* on each subject. The committee then agrees on *Khuṭbah*'s final draft and carefully edits it.⁴⁹ Governmental and religious organizations coordinate Friday sermons to deliver a consistent and coherent message to the country that fosters government policies.⁵⁰ According to Muhammet Sacmali's research, the Turkish Friday sermon is uniquely tailored for the Muslims inside Türkiye. According to him, one of the key messages of the Diyanet is that Turkish Islam is the finest way to practice Islam, and the Turkish are the most powerful and biggest Muslim community throughout history. The prevailing mindset "effectively provides localization and instrumentalization of Islam."⁵¹

Diyanet now posts *Khuṭbah* online once a week. The identical lecture is printed and delivered by Imams to their individual Friday Mosques in Istanbul and Ankara and distant communities in eastern and central Anatolia. Diyanet used to publish them in monthly publications before the facility of the internet.⁵² According to the Friday *Khuṭbah* authority, Muslims who come to worship and listen to the sermons are "exposed to reminders of their (re-)identified nationality."⁵³ In this way, the AK PARTI government endeavors to inculcate Islamic visions into the mindset of Turkish Muslims.

5.1.4. Empowering Islamic Bureaucracy

Although Erdogan opted to create and Islamise institutions, the Turkish bureaucracy is full of connections tied to secular or nationalist groups. As a result, it is not easy to change this trajectory

and it will take longer to accomplish. In this regard, Erdogan plans to empower religious institutions while considering the existing problems.⁵⁴ He emphasized Diyanet as his elementary project of transformation. The Diyanet emerged as a key player in the AK PARTI administration's social policy construction, improving its ability to realize Islamic goals outside Mosques.⁵⁵ The Diyanet has maintained a separate identity and a new bureaucratic structure since 2010. Academicians from theological faculties primarily surround human resources in senior management.

The Government formulated the law and enacted it in 2011 that elevated the status of the president of the Diyanet from the fifty-first to the tenth row of the state protocol. Furthermore, this law increased the status of the Managers of Departments in the Diyanet to the General Management Departments. For the Mufties (Islamic jurists) who worked in the cities and counties, their economic situation improved. The number of senior staff members working in Diyanet's central office has increased. In September 2014, the office of the Diyanet was directly attached to the Prime Minister's Office.⁵⁶ "rather than that of the deputy prime minister."⁵⁷ In several Turkish cities, Diyanet provided numerous facilities through its different centers, including KAGEM (Women, Family, and Youth Center of the Diyanet Foundation), which had its headquarters in Ankara and opened branches in many cities. It arranges a variety of religious and cultural events. The Diyanet employed thousands of female teachers for Quranic courses as women preachers.⁵⁸

The government adopted a new organization law (No.6002) in 2010 that constituted institutional expansion, widened its jurisdiction, and elevated its "status within the administrative hierarchy of the state (to the undersecretary, second only to a minister)." Therefore, the functions of the Diyanet included researching several religious communities and "religious-social formations that are members of the Islamic religion' (Article 5, Clause c)." Second, tasking the Strategy Development Department with examining "from a legal perspective" and providing opinions on laws, regulations, statutes, and drafting laws forwarded by the Prime Minister's Office, other ministries, and the presidency (Article 7, clause ğ, 5).⁵⁹ The review of legislation, which was usually assigned to the Council of State, has been delegated to the Islamic authority of Diyanet, who will interpret the laws from an Islamic perspective. As a result of this new law, Diyanet has become a significant player in the public policymaking process.

In a report on strengthening family unity submitted to the parliamentary commission in 2016, Diyanet advocated strengthening its institutional ability to effectively guide newlywed couples and families and shield them from anti-Islamic activities, superstitions,

and addiction. In 2017, the government passed laws giving Diyanet Muftis and Imams the authority to officiate civil marriages, which municipal authorities had previously handled.⁶⁰ This opportunity gave Diyanet a huge scope for focusing on the core of its operations.

In July 2017, the AK PARTI government established a new Department of Migration and Moral Support Services to assist religious services during crises and disasters, including terrorist attacks or earthquakes. Additionally, it assigned new responsibilities, including caring for Syrian refugees, drug addicts, prisoners, seasonal workers, and childcare facilities.⁶¹ The AK PARTI administration significantly aided Diyanet in its mission to convert the educational system to Islam. The Diyanet collaborated with the Ministry of Education Bureau (MEB) to ensure better coordination for educational responsibilities. The partnership focused on constructing educational services, creating a curriculum for Islamic education, and transferring Diyanet's human resources to the MEB.⁶²

After steering the presidential system in Turkey in 2018, the number of public service holders in Turkish institutions peaked at nearly five million in 2020. During this period, referencing practices from the AK PARTI's central administration intensified regarding hiring people in provincial and district organizations. The data from the Turkish Presidency's Department of Strategy and Budget (CSBB) implies that employment in public service will soon touch up to 23-25 percent of the total employment in Turkey, which means that one out of four people will be a government civil servant.⁶³ According to the most recent official data, the number of employees at Diyanet has climbed by 50,000 in only the previous 10 years, totaling 130'000. It will likely expand by another 5,000 or more over several days.⁶⁴

Moreover, the staff of Diyanet has been channeled to work with other public institutions through interviews or appointment processes. They work in universities, finance, the state-run TRT network, and the transportation sector. So, Diyanet is "forming an increasingly larger demography in Turkey's bureaucracy." In summing up, "the Turkish state is being transformed into that of a single-party, while the country's bureaucracy is quickly becoming Islamicised."⁶⁵ AK PARTI government has adopted different laws and policies so practicing Muslims can work in the wider public institutes and education field. The headscarf ban is a hot debate in secular Turkey, where a female cannot use a headscarf in public functions, and this practice is resisted by state force. Because wearing headscarves in public places was prohibited in the 1980s, only ten years ago, military officials hinted they might interfere if a presidential candidate whose wife wore a veil became president.⁶⁶

The AK PARTI administration formally lifted the restriction on Muslim women wearing headscarves in Turkish universities in

2010. Veiled women were permitted to work in the civil service in 2013, except for the judiciary, military, and police. Four female members of parliament wore headscarves that year.⁶⁷ In 2015, the first veiled judge entered the courtroom.⁶⁸ In 2016, the headscarf ban was lifted for the police department.⁶⁹ In February 2017, Türkiye relaxes the restriction on Islamic head coverings in the armed forces.⁷⁰ These initiatives allowed Islamic bureaucrats to function in areas of Turkish society that were unimaginable before the AK PARTI came into government.

5.1.5. State Financing to Religious Sectors

The AK PARTI administration is perceived as more serious about funding Islamic organizations and religious functions. The biggest Turkish religious institution, the Diyanet, received substantial government money from the beginning of the AK PARTI rule in 2002 until 2020. It received 3 billion Turkish Lira (\$339 million, €290 million) from the government in 2011. However, the budget has grown significantly, reaching 12.9 billion Turkish Lira in 2021, representing a four-fold increase in financial support in just 10 years.⁷¹ This budget exceeded the funding for important Turkish ministries like Foreign Affairs, Industry, and Tourism. The government continued to gradually increase the budget for Diyanet despite widespread criticism of the enormous budget, particularly from secularists. In 2018, the budget was 10.4 billion Turkish Lira; in 2019, it rose by 34%, and in 2020, the budget surged to 11.5 billion Turkish Lira.⁷² In addition to receiving governmental funding, the Diyanet Foundation has been authorized to receive tax-free donations since 2005. Diyanet also can raise zakat funds, which are used to help poor Muslims and advance Islam. In addition to this, it can boost revenue by organizing Hajj trips (Makka pilgrimages). Diyanet accessed in running businesses and investing in real estate throughout a range of sectors in the construction field.⁷³

6. Education Reforms

6.1. Developing Islamic Educational Institutions

The AK PARTI administration further developed Imam Hatip Schools to boost religious education in Türkiye. Kemal Ataturk founded Imam Hatip Schools (IHS) as a religious vocational school to teach individuals who would lead prayers (Imam), offer *Khutbah* (Friday sermon), and act as religious authorities. Article 32 of the Basic Law of National Education defines IHSs as teaching schools that the Ministry of National Education established to train its students for higher education and religious work, such as imams, preachers, and teachers of Quranic courses.⁷⁴ However, these institutions, directly or indirectly, experienced ups and downs with time.⁷⁵ However, it has been modernized by integrating traditional and modern education with two major components: religious and

academic courses. The Islamic courses include the Holy Qur'ān, Hadith, *'ilm al-Kalām* (Islamic theology), Tafsir, *'Aqīdah* (Islamic Creed), *Sīrah* (the life of Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u- 'alaihe wa sallam*)) Fiqh, Islamic jurisprudence, Religious History, Arabic language, preaching, and vocational training. Academic courses include Turkish Language and Literature, Mathematics, English Language, Sociology, History of Islamic Arts, History, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Psychology, Physical Education, National Defense, etc.⁷⁶

Although just 10% of its graduates currently work in the Diyanet, The Imam Hatip School was founded with the intention of training future Imams and preachers. Except for military schools, these IHS graduates could get admission into various educational institutions. However, the IH schools experienced challenges when the Turkish government changed at different times and took controversial policies towards Diyanet. For instance, the enactment of obligatory education for eight years on February 28th, 1997, resulted in the closure of the IHS middle school. Graduates of the IHS were forbidden from entering any department except theology.⁷⁷ However, since the AK PARTI took power in 2002, the situation has changed and IHS has been revitalized. IHSs were converted from vocational schools to Religious Education Intensive Regular High Schools in 2009. As a result, the limitation has been lifted, and students can now enroll in non-religious departments such as law, education, medicine, and engineering.⁷⁸ The purpose of the AK PARTI government in transforming IHS's status is to develop civil servants and public officials committed to Islamic doctrine. As a result, these institutes are seen as a mechanism for teaching social behavior necessary for developing a personality suited for becoming a desirable citizen. When Erdogan declared in February 2012 that his government was dreaming of "raising a pious generation," the Turkish education system began to experience a comprehensive reform to actualize this aim.⁷⁹ According to Yilmaz, the pious generation of AK PARTI is a venture to transform Turkish society into a community with an Islamic vision. The AK PARTI administration repealed Kemalist restrictions on Imam Hatip Schools, which limited their scope and advantages. The new law in 2012, the 4+4+4 educational formula, helped revitalize IHS middle schools. The twelve years of compulsory education refer to the first four years of elementary school, the second four years of middle school, and the last four years of high school.⁸⁰ Children were given access to a variety of optional courses through this transformation, and graduates were given the opportunity to qualify for admission to any department of their choice at universities.⁸¹ By improving religious schools, the AK PARTI accelerated the Islamisation of youngsters. Between 2010 and 2014, Imam Hatip Schools increased by 73 percent.⁸²

According to Bilal Erdogan, the president's son who works for the TURGEV Foundation (a charity organization that donates to education), when the AK PARTI came to power in 2002, the number of students at IHS was 65,000. It increased to 658,000 in 2013 and to one million in May 2015. In 2016, it increased to 1,136,000.⁸³ In 2018, the government allocated 23 percent of its budget—twice as much per student as in mainstream schools—to the Imam Hatip's students, who make up 11 percent of the entire students of schools.⁸⁴ Thousands of students were moved to IHSs as part of an "arbitrary replacement" scheme that converted some secular institutions into Imam Hatip Schools. In 2018, there were 4500 schools, up from 450 in 2002. In 2018, the government allocated 1.5 billion, or 68 percent more, for religious education⁸⁵ The AK PARTI government converted 1,477 public schools to Imam Hatip from 2002 to 2018 because of the insufficiency of secular schools in the neighborhood. Therefore, parents sent them to IHSs. Due to the scarcity of secular schools in the area, the AK PARTI administration turned 1,477 public schools into Imam Hatip between 2002 and 2018.⁸⁶

Some Islamic organizations in Turkey assist these Islamic Schools, such as the Foundation for Service to Youth and Education in Turkey (TURGEV), the Association of IHS Establishment and Maintenance, ENSAR Foundation, the Foundation of Turkey's Imam Hatip Members, the Alumni Association of IHS.⁸⁷ The government's support of IHSs and its graduate employment guarantees accelerated the advancement of such schools in Türkiye. For instance, a new brochure created to persuade students to IHSs offered numerous claims regarding the benefits of IHS graduates' entry into police and military academies. The IHSs also provide scholarships to this Islamic school's students.⁸⁸ Thus, IHSs became ideal institutions for developing and training Erdogan's supporters, who are pious and educated with modern thoughts. However, although significant progress has been made in quantity, these institutions have come under scrutiny for the competence of their student's performance. The Turkish Ministry of Education issued a report in July 2019 that found Imam Hatip School students performed academically low. The poll found that 66 percent of students from the 4th and 8th grades lacked sufficient reading comprehension skills, while 16 percent of children in grades four through eight only had rudimentary math skills.⁸⁹

6.2. Curriculum Reforms

It attempted to achieve the aim of the pious generation through curriculum reform by the AK PARTI administration. As a result, the educational system included compulsory and elective courses for graduation. The "Religious Culture and Moral

Knowledge" course has taken on a specific consideration in curricular changes. It has been made a mandatory subject according to the 1982 constitution, which seeks to safeguard national unity during foreign threats like communism. The course emphasizes teaching religious concepts while maintaining the secular aspect of the Kemalist administration, but under Islamist leadership, it is being changed and Islamised.⁹⁰ The Ministry of Education suggested introducing a course called "Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge" into primary education, which would be introduced at the initiation of a student's education and will last until graduation.⁹¹

The AK PARTI government's objective to raise a pious generation was implemented in secular schools by allowing children to choose between religious courses. The government also supports theology departments.⁹² Islamic courses have taken the role of other courses. Instead of offering like "Agriculture" and "Civic Education," the government offered courses related to "The Qur'ān," "Prophet Mohammed's Life," "Islamic History," "Basic Religious Teachings," and "Fundamentals of Religion."⁹³ Similarly, the course "The Social life" was replaced by new Islamic courses in the 2017 curriculum, which distributed 18 hours to "Islam and social life," 20 hours to "Islam and economic life," and 18 hours to "Islam and law." These courses addressed issues including marriage, divorce, and social interactions from an Islamic perspective.⁹⁴

7. Impacts and Challenges of Islamisation in Turkish Society

According to the research findings, Islamic governance in Turkey took place through three mechanisms: bureaucratic and structural transformation and education reforms. Diyanet had a significant role in the bureaucratic approach, while Imam Hatip Schools contributed to the Islamisation of education. The bureaucratic process of Islamisation has certain advantageous features: it promotes the goals and policies of the government and carries them out. The government can keep an eye on things and advise on what to do or not do per official agendas. Additionally, it acts in line with the perspectives and interests of the government. However, there are significant flaws in state-led bureaucratic Islamisation. First of all, it is not a sustainable strategy. Because the functional dimensions of institutions may be changed due to government transitions if their functions are not in line with the new government's policy objectives. More specifically, if a secular party gains control of the state, it will change the institution following its philosophy. This is also applicable to the Diyanet in Turkey. Because of the constitutional and systemic framework, Diyanet cannot resist these opposing structural changes. Second, these public institutions will be criticized for politicizing and serving as a tool for the government's political moves. As a result, despite their efforts to promote the genuine form of Islam, their da'wah will be futile. People

will become skeptical about them monopolizing their attitudes toward the government's interests, and as a result, they will reject the da'wah.

This skepticism is mirrored in some recent academic studies; the result shows that society is far from genuinely Islamisation. Because Islamisation does not merely imply an increase in the number of Imams and Mosques or an increase in the wages of Islamic bureaucrats but rather in individuals adhering to Islamic rules and guidance in all aspects of their lives, in this regard, several studies published recently showed the opposite effect. In Türkiye, for example, the proportion of deism is growing. Mustafa Akyol contends that despite the Erdogan government's significant efforts to develop a new "pious generation," a sizable proportion of Türkiye's youth rejects Islam in favor of faith in an unspecified God.⁹⁵

Furthermore, according to a Konda agency study in 2018, the number of atheists and other non-believers climbed from 2% to 5% of the population in ten years. The percentage of people with only a rudimentary belief in God increased from 31% to 34%. The proportion of devout Muslims has decreased from 13% to 10%. During Ramadan, between 77 to 65 percent of Muslims fast.⁹⁶ According to the Konda poll, the percentage of women who do not wear a headscarf has climbed from 34 to 37 percent in ten years. Women wearing tighter headscarves decreased from 13% to 9%. For some time, the headscarf trend has been waning. The past ten years had already seen a decline.⁹⁷ Regarding this result, Mucahit Bilici clarifies, "Turkish religiosity has been put to the test, and while it has succeeded politically, it has failed spiritually."⁹⁸

So, what are the viable solutions? The first necessity is to assess the current state of da'wah in Türkiye. Türkiye differs from many other Muslim countries regarding geographical location and political structure. It aspires to be a member of the European Union, whose culture is liberal, and many of its citizen's cultures contradict Islamic philosophy. Given the prevailing status quo, Türkiye should reconsider its Islamisation initiatives in reaction to the hostile environment. From 2010 to 2020, Türkiye's Islamisation process appears as a top-down hierarchy with lower productivity at the societal and individual levels. Because authoritative imposition cannot truly affect an individual's attitudes and behaviors if it does not come from inside. As a result, developing a comprehensive policy plan is critical for achieving better results.

Secondly, Turkey is also a secular country under the constitutional framework. In this environment, the government should prioritize the decentralization of da'wah and support privatization and localization. The private enterprise of da'wah, which will be free of government control, will aid in avoiding the blames of politicization. Furthermore, da'wah localization will aid in

instilling intrinsically Islamic doctrine among individuals by providing a persuasive analysis of authentic Islamic teaching. Religious institutions should be able to speak out against injustice and persecution involving anyone, regardless of the government's position or the opposition, which will boast institutional credibility. Thirdly, the government should promote greater coordination and cooperation among several ministries and departments in terms of religious services and social welfare so that the responsibilities of Islamisation do not confine to Diyanet alone. Finally, The AK PARTI should focus more on creating a climate that will promote love, compassion, and care for the people rather than relying merely on structural or bureaucratic techniques or legal enforcement since Islamisation is more about behavioral transformation.

8. Conclusion

The goal of producing a generation of religiously upright individuals and a conservative society propelled the AK PARTI leadership to undertake Islamisation. Nevertheless, several Turkish agencies and institutions fiercely opposed Erdogan's governance. Erdogan's leadership enabled the AK PARTI to overcome challenges and make steady progress toward Islamisation. Accordingly, the AK PARTI government adopted several effective strategies to activate Islamic governance for earning meaningful transformation in Turkish society. The government seriously cooperated with Diyanet institutions, empowering them to guide government agencies and disseminate Islamic teachings among the Turkish population. Diyanet also attempts to reach different communities by formulating programs relevant to the targeted societies. It offers family-related programs to strengthen family bondages, such as counseling services, pre-marriage courses, and religious teachings by female preachers. Diyanet offers Mosque services and organizes various social programs for other communities. For educational reforms, Erdogan's government concentrated on institutional development and curriculum reforms. In this case, the government restructured Imam Hatip Schools and offered plentiful conveniences to its students. The curriculum was redesigned, and Islamic courses were included to inculcate Islamic teachings.

Financial support is an inevitable requirement for any advancement. AK PARTI government, in this case, has shown significant performance. Diyanet receives more funding from the government every year than many significant ministries. Erdogan's government also effectively empowered Islamic bureaucracy. In this aspect, the government passed a series of laws to eliminate the challenges of female workers who cover their heads with hijab. The status of the Diyanet officers improved, and the job field of the theological students has widened for inter-ministerial coordination and offering more courses on Islamic subjects. The government also

manages Friday sermons through institutional coordination to guide preachers so that they can direct people in understanding the Islamic visions of the government. However, despite the major institutional transformation, the AK PARTI government still has a long way to go in achieving genuine Islamisation in society. The government can follow the decentralization process of *da'wah* and has less reliance on bureaucratic processes in Islamisation because the current approach is unsustainable and fails to provide an actual impact on Muslims' lives in Türkiye. The future implication of the research can be determined by designing an Islamic governance model by underpinning *maqasid sharīah* and existing political, economic, and cultural realities that will have genuine impacts on Turkish society.

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