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Gizem Kaftan  
*Boston University*

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## The Turkish Women's Movement in Abeyance

By Gizem Kaftan<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The Turkish women's movement started during the Ottoman era, and it is still in process in the newly established Turkish Republic. This paper examined the Turkish women's movement, which began after 1923 and found that the Turkish women's movement had two abeyance cycles. The first abeyance period in the Turkish women's movement took place between 1935 and the 1960s. In the first abeyance period, the reasons for the abeyance were economic problems, World War II, and the changing political arena in Turkey. In 1945, Turkey became a multi-party democracy, and this changed political opportunity structures. After 1960, the Turkish women's movement picked up, but it was not very active until the 1980s. During this time, leftist organizations were very active, and they mobilized women in their organizations. The second abeyance period started after the 2010s when the religious Justice and Development Party in Turkey started to consolidate its power. From 2010 onwards, the political opportunity structures are closed for women, and women have a hard time to find elite allies for their causes. In the current political climate, even though there are many active women's organizations, they are not effective.

*Keywords:* Feminism, Abeyance theory, Turkey, Social movements, Feminist movements, Turkish women, Turkish women's movement, Turkish feminism

### Introduction

The Turkish women's movement has a long history of activism, along with a record of legislative gains as well as progress in the social area. Both external and internal factors and forces shaped the Turkish women's movement, but the most effective force influencing the Turkish women's movement has been the state. At the start of the Turkish women's movement, there was only one active organization, focused on gaining suffrage for Turkish women (Libal, 2008). Here followed a long abeyance period, and in 1960, Turkey experienced a military coup. Prior to this coup d'état, there had been only one party in the parliament, the religious and conservative Democrat Party. Thereafter, we saw a radical women's movement in the leftist parties of Turkey, notably the Turkish Communist Party (Özçürümez and Cengiz, 2010). Another military coup in 1980, did not end up liberating people. This coup created a void in Turkish politics, especially on the Left, and gradually the women's movement filled that void.

This article focuses on the evolution of the modern women's movement during the Republican era after 1923. It addresses three main research questions: Did the Turkish women's movement enter an abeyance cycle during the period from 1935 and 1960; is the Turkish women's movement in an abeyance cycle now? If so, when will this abeyance cycle end? The article argues

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<sup>1</sup> Gizem Kaftan is a current Ph.D. student at Boston University's Political Science department. She received her Master of International Affairs from Northeastern University and her bachelor's degrees from Koc University, Turkey. Her research interests include European politics, Turkish politics, and women's studies.

that the answer to the first two questions is yes. However, we cannot predict when the present abeyance period will end. In this paper, I draw on the prodigious literature on the Turkish women's movement and examine it through the lens of social movement theory. In particular I draw on Verta Taylor's (1989) abeyance cycles theory and apply it, for the first time, to an analysis of the evolution of the Turkish women's movement. I also show why two abeyance periods are different from each other.

I begin with a review of the literature, followed by a descriptive account of critical events in the history of the Turkish women's movement, with a focus on the characteristics of the first abeyance period. I, then, explain the developments in the Turkish women's movement starting from the 1980s, with a focus on the second present period. I end with concluding remarks.

### **Social Movements and Abeyance Theories**

In their work, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) explained the importance of political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes. They explain that the "emergence of a particular social movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system" shows us the significance of the political opportunity structures (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 2). This idea is relevant to the present study because Turkey experienced two coup d'états, which led to significant changes in the political structure. Mobilizing structures are defined as "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 2). Mobilizing structures may change. For example, at one time, the Turkish Women's Union was a large organization with transnational connections (Libal, 2008). McAdam et al. (1996) also provide a list of dimensions showing the factors salient to the emergence and evolution of a social movement. These include "the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system", "the stability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity", "the presence of elite allies" and "the state's capacity and propensity for repression" (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 10). These factors, too, are relevant to our study. The Turkish women's movement enjoyed the support of elite political allies in the 1990s, but this began to change in 2002 when the Justice and Development Party came to power (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008; Eşlen-Ziya, 2012).

Taylor (1989) applied her abeyance theory to the American women's movement. She explained that abeyance structures had three functions: "promoting the survival of activist networks," "sustaining a repertoire of goals and tactics," and "promoting a collective identity that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose" (Taylor, 1989, p.762). Studying two organizations with several chapters: National Woman's Party and the National Organization for Women, she identified several reasons for the abeyance of the movement. One was that the "advocates of women's rights lacked access to and support from the established political system" (Taylor, 1989, p. 764). Another was that "the cultural ideal of "the feminine mystique" that emerged after World War II affirmed the restoration of "normal family life" (Taylor, 1989, p. 764). Moreover, she created five variables related to the abeyance process: "temporality, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralization, and culture" (Taylor, 1989, p. 765).

Some scholars have criticized aspects of Taylor's abeyance theory. Bagguley (2002), who researched the abeyance in the British women's movement after the 1990s, argued that Taylor had a "rather narrow focus on formal social movement organizations" (Bagguley, 2002, p. 171). He argued that it would be hard to apply Taylor's theory "to those movements that have not developed extensive formal organizations, and that depend upon more informal network-like forms of

association" (Bagguley, 2002, p. 171). He added that "social movements with this informal network-like form of association are at risk of going beyond abeyance, and ceasing to exist, even in this relatively torpid state" (Bagguley, 2002, p. 171). Network-like organizations are essential because of the changing mobilizing structures and technology, and horizontal organizations have been on the rise (Moghadam 2013; Tüfekçi, 2017). Even though "some formal types of social movement organization are more efficient as carriers of abeyance structures than informal network-like forms of association," with the changing world, we should pay attention to informal and horizontal organizations as well (Bagguley, 2002, p. 171).

Holland and Cable (2002) argued that Taylor's abeyance theory paid too much attention to factors external to the organizations. In their work, they analyzed "a grassroots SMO [Social Movement Organization] with a local constituency" (Holland and Cable, 2002, p. 299). They argued that this organization's "ability to mobilize is influenced by internal organizational factors rather than external political conditions" (Holland and Cable, 2002, p. 299). In their research, Holland and Cable (2002) examined Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvilleans, which was established in 1982 and "has undergone two cycles of abeyance and resurgence" (p. 299).

Sawyers and Meyer (1999) analyzed the relationship between public policy and abeyance periods. They argue that because the political systems "for mobilization or policy reform need not be either open or closed but may be partly opened, and opportunities may vary across political issues and constituencies over time" (Sawyers and Meyer, 1999, p. 189). They maintained that "the boundaries of a policy domain are fluid," and for a political change, "mobilizing political protest is one way to do this" (Sawyers and Meyer, 1999, p. 190). They asked several questions that were also relevant to the Turkish case. They asked: "Can the presence of a political movement, in this case, the women's movement, actually affect the policymaking process and the content of policy?" (Sawyers and Meyer, 1999, p. 191). To this question, my answer is yes because as we will see later, the Turkish women's movement gained rights and changed the policy agenda in the past (Gündüz, 2004; Özçürümez and Cengiz, 2010; Tekeli, 2010; Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008; Arat, 1994; Müftüler-Bac, 1999; Eşlen-Ziya, 2012). The second question was, "If the women's movement was indeed less visible and active, or in abeyance, in the 1980s, was this a cause or an effect of a conservative political climate?" (Sawyers and Meyer, 1999, p. 191). These questions were posed in connection to the U.S., but if we change the 1980s to the 2010s and the setting from the U.S. to Turkey, the answer to this question similarly is "yes."

In their article, Amenta et al. (2010) explain the political consequences of social movements and argue that the main aim of a social movement is to create a policy change in line with its ideology. They state that key decisions are made by the elites such as political executives but not by the social movement organizations, so the social movement organizations should affect the elites' ideas to achieve a policy change. This, too, is relevant to the Turkish case. Social movements can help change policy; can be used as an analysis tool as stated above, the Turkish women's movement experienced a number of legislative victories, at least until the start of the new century (Gündüz, 2004; Özçürümez and Cengiz, 2010; Tekeli, 2010; Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008; Arat, 1994; Müftüler-Bac, 1999; Eşlen-Ziya, 2012).

## **History of the Turkish Women's Movement**

### *First Steps of the Turkish Women: From 1923 to 1935*

After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was defeated, and its territories were divided among imperialist forces in the Sevres Agreement. The Turkish Liberation War ensued, and in

1923, the Republic of Turkey was established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The first years of the Republic saw the introduction of family law, election law, penal law, and civil law (Safarian 2007:149). Atatürk aimed to empower women with the new laws that passed, a view that was evident from the speeches he made. In 1926, “women received equal rights with men by law,” and this law “banned polygyny, *çarşaf*, and marriage before 18.” (Safarian, 2007, p. 151)<sup>2</sup>. Subsequently, “in 1927, women were allowed to work at state-run institutions” and “in 1928, female teachers’ college opened” (Safarian, 2007, p. 151). White (2003) defined this period as the state feminist period: “male-dominated state that made women’s equality in the public sphere a national policy” (p.145). According to White (2003), these reforms were only effective for Istanbul elites, or “a bourgeois, urban women” (White, 2003, p. 145). White criticized state feminism because it “was concerned primarily with women’s public emancipation but little concerned with their private lives as women” (p.147). In this state feminist era, there were several attempts to establish independent women’s organizations and even a political party. For example, Nezihe Muhittin tried to establish “a political party campaigning only to obtain women’s right to vote and be elected,” but the government of the 1920s did not give permission to establish the party (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, p. 44; Arat, 2000, p. 111).

By the 1930s, the Turkish Women’s Union was established, and it collaborated with the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (Libal, 2008, p. 32). Criticisms of the group focused on the purportedly divisive nature of the elite women’s organizations, as these organizations were “distracting from concerns of the majority of women in Turkish society” (Libal, 2008, p. 32 in Baltacıoğlu). Although there was some criticism, in 1935, the Turkish Women’s Union hosted an international “Congress of Feminism in Turkey” and “issued a declaration against the rising threat of Nazism” (White, 2003, p. 155). The Turkish Women’s Union was very effective, and through its efforts, Turkish women gained their suffrage rights in 1934, just before the International Congress.

After gaining suffrage rights for Turkish women, however, the Turkish Women’s Union dissolved itself because of external threats. White (2003) stated that “state elites were displeased, particularly since Turkey was attempting to stay neutral in international affairs, and closed the Federation, arguing that, since the Republic had given women all their rights, there was no longer any reason for women to organize” (p. 155, in Arat, 1997). However, Libal (2008) argued that “the TWU [Turkish Women’s Union] struggled to find a space between the IAW’s [International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship] deeply pacifist platform and its own government’s nationalizing projects” (p. 40, in Toprak, 1986). Moreover, Libal (2008) stated that the organization “voted to dissolve because their goal of achieving political rights for women had been realized” (p. 44, in New York Times, 1935). Women in that organization continued “their work as members of charitable organizations of the ruling Republican People’s Party” (Libal, 2008, p. 44).

The first wave in the Turkish women’s movement thus ended with the closure of the Turkish Women’s Union, and the Turkish women’s movement went into the first abeyance cycle. Verta Taylor (1989) stated that the American women’s movement “reached a stage of mass mobilization between 1900 and 1920 and declined after the passage of the suffrage amendment” (p.762). Here, we see that there is a fifteen-year lag between the American women’s movement and the Turkish women’s movement, but they both started their abeyance cycle because of the suffrage amendment.

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<sup>2</sup> *Çarşaf* means burqa in Turkish.

*First Abeyance Period of the Turkish Women's Movement: From 1935 to the 1960s*

I argue in this article that the Turkish women's movement was in an abeyance period from 1935 to about 1960. During these years, there were no effective women's organizations in Turkey. According to Arat (1994: 243) stated "when the political system opened up after World War II, women's political activism remained limited," and "women's associations were mostly philanthropic or professional associations." In their article, Özçürümez and Cengiz (2011) provide some examples of the organizations which were active during this period and the years they were formed: the Turkish Association of University Women (1949), the Society for the Protection of the Rights of Women (1967), and The Society of Mothers (1953) (Özçürümez and Cengiz, 2011, p. 23-24). A characteristic of the organizations was a focus on promoting on Kemalist values and good motherhood (Kılıç, 1998).

Political events and changes in the political opportunity structures are relevant to the evolution of the Turkish women's movement. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk died in November 1938 and was replaced by İsmet İnönü as president, which signaled a change in the leadership. Secondly, in 1939, the Second World War started, and although Turkey did not join the war, it affected Turkey negatively. According to Demirkırat (1991), an economic crisis emerged because, as a precaution, men were conscripted, and agricultural production suffered. Moreover, there were problems with Russia because Russia planned to invade Kars, a Turkish city that was bordering the USSR. Therefore, there were neither political opportunities nor mobilizing structures from 1935 to 1945.

After World War II, other problems started to dominate the Turkish political arena. Turkey was still a single-party republic, and that party was the Republican People's Party. In 1946, a new party was established, called the Democrat Party (DP) (Demirkırat, 1991), by Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, and two other former members of the Republican People's Party (Demirkırat, 1991). This party became the preferred party of religious fundamentalists and anti-Atatürk groups, ruling Turkey from the 1950s to 1960 when it was dissolved after the 1960 military coup (Demirkırat, 1991). Adnan Menderes was executed, and the military began ruling Turkey (Demirkırat, 1991).

*First Period of Resurgence in the Turkish Women's Movement: From the 1960s to the 1980s*

After the coup in 1960, the military replaced the old constitution with a new one. That codified the freedom of thought, speech, press, and communication (1961 Constitution). This period was also significant in modern Turkish history because the Turkish Left started to evolve, gaining much traction throughout Turkey. According to Arat (1994), "during the 1970s, when Turkish politics became increasingly fragmented and polarized, women were politicized along with men, but their political activism was restricted to some involvement in leftist groups" (p.243). Özçürümez and Cengiz (2011) analyzed a women's group, the Progressive Women's Association. According to their article, this association "was established in 1975 within the framework of the Turkish Communist Party" (Özçürümez and Cengiz, 2011, p. 20).

Even though the women's movement in Turkey started to pick up with other political fractions, it is hard to state that women's movement was the main feature of this period. Instead, this period is remembered and analyzed mostly in terms of student and labor protests, high inflation, coalition governments, and instability. The political opportunity structures changed very swiftly between left and right fractions. Women's organizations were mostly identified with left fractions and parties such as the Republican People's Party, the Turkish Communist Party, and the Revolutionary Left. This period came to a halt with the 1980 military coup, after which all organizations in Turkey were banned. The ban included women's organizations, leftist organizations, and Islamic organizations. In 1982, a new constitution was written under the close

supervision of the military elites, and it “aimed to curb demands from civil society” (Arat, 1994, p. 243). With the new constitution, “a new paradigm” and “a new discourse” emerged in politics in 1983 (Arat, 1994, p. 243).

It was during this period that the second wave feminism started to emerge, albeit very slowly. As Özçürümez and Cengiz (2011) stated, “second wave feminism is affiliated with the spirit of 1968, forming the theoretical base of the new women’s movement” (p.23). Moreover, with the effect of student and labor movements, “the pre-1980 era” was “dominated by secularist and Marxist women’s associations” as we observe in Turkey (Özçürümez and Cengiz, 2011, p. 23).

### **Modern Turkish Women’s Movement**

#### *The Second and Third Wave Feminism in Turkey: From 1980s to 2010s*

After the 1980 coup, Turkish civic life and civil society were abolished by the military government (12 Mart: İhtilalin Pençesinde Demokrasi, 1994). Although the military government closed down all of the associations in Turkey, this did not stop the Turkish women’s movement (Eşim and Cindoğlu, 1999). Diner and Toktaş (2010) argued that “the rise of the women’s movement in this period was partly due to the opportunities presented by the imprisonment of many male activists and leaders of the leftist organizations” (p.45). According to Arat (1994: 242), “women who were politicized in the 1980s did not seek opportunity and power through parties and regular elections, but rather organized in small groups and joined together through collective campaigns to create a more democratic society,” adding that “women helped resurrect civil society and thus contributed to a transition to a political democracy as well as a democratic society.” Feminists “encouraged women to claim their sexuality,” and they enhanced “women’s respectability as individuals, rather than as mothers or sisters” (Arat, 1994, p. 244). Elsewhere Arat (2000), explains that feminists realized that the main problem of the Turkish women was the “substantive equality beyond formal equality” (p. 113).

There were also problems among different women’s organizations because Islamist, feminist, and Kemalist women’s organizations emerged after the 1980s. According to Arat (2000), the “fundamental cleavage among the women of this period was between secular and Islamist women” (p. 113), and Özçetin (2009) explains that “the modernist conception regards the headscarf as a sign of ‘backwardness’ and ‘uncivilizedness’” (p. 106). According to Özçetin (2009), “the most salient challenge to secularism came in the 1980s with the reemergence of Islam as a political force, especially with the influence of the fundamentalist Iranian Revolution” (p. 109). At this time, the women who were wearing headscarves were becoming more urbanized and educated. In 1985, the ban on headscarves was lifted in the universities because the number of religious women increased in the universities as political Islam spread, only to be banned again in 1989 because it became a religious and a political symbol for the religious women (Özçetin, 2009, p. 110-11). The headscarf debate ended in 2008 when the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party lifted the ban in universities.

The Islamist women’s movement in Turkey began in the 1990s with the rise of Islamic parties such as the Welfare Party. According to Özçetin (2009: 112), the main aim of the Islamist women’s movement in Turkey was “to break the perception of the headscarf as a symbol of Islamist movements as well as to demand their differences as being religious.” The women in this movement did not identify as feminists because they thought it aligned with secularism or they perceived feminism in pejorative terms (Özçetin, 2009, p. 112).

The motherhood frame and Kurdish identity were also areas of discussion. Carreon and Moghadam (2015) define maternalist frame as the “elements of motherhood, mothering, and maternal identities deployed to evoke meanings within a given context and elicit participation and/or support of collective action” (p. 19). An example they provide is the emergence of Saturday Mothers, who “held weekly vigils in central Istanbul demanding that the authorities account for the disappearances and deaths of their loved ones” (Carreon and Moghadam, 2015, p. 22). The Saturday Mothers have experienced police harassment from time to time. For example, Diner and Toktaş (2010) stated that in 1998, “the police prevented the group from gathering at their usual meeting place and took some of them into custody” (p. 48). Nevertheless, they were still active in 2018.

The Kurdish women's movement began in the Southeast region of Turkey. Even though the Kurdish party had representatives in the parliament, with a balanced number of women and men, it was not sufficient to create a large momentum. Firstly, “the environment of violence and insecurity increased the vulnerability of Kurdish women in the region” (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, p. 48). Secondly, if these Kurdish women joined some kinds of demonstrations or organizations, those organizations were closed, and these women were imprisoned (Diner and Toktaş, 2010, p. 48).

In summary, although we can observe the rise of feminism after the 1980 coup, problems emerged among the women's groups: contention between the women's groups and the state, especially after the election of the Justice and Development Party, disagreements across different women's groups, and the vulnerability of the Kurdish women.

*Campaigns and Protests Organized by Turkish Women's Movement: From the 1980s to the 2010s*  
*Petition Campaigns in late 1980s and the 1990s*

In describing campaigns and activities that women's organizations launched in Turkey, Arat includes a 1986 petition campaign in Ankara and Istanbul when the government did not implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Arat, 1994, p. 244). Turkey had signed CEDAW the previous year, but the application (or lack thereof) of this convention was a cause of concern for the women's organizations (Arat, 1994, p. 245).

Both Arat (1994) and Tekeli (2010) discuss the campaign against wife battering and other forms of violence against women, launched in 1987. The women's groups organized “a march and a festival, publications and a temporary museum” (Arat, 1994, p. 245). This campaign had been launched because a state judge had refused to grant a divorce to a woman, “mother of three children and pregnant with a fourth, who was regularly beaten by her husband” (Arat, 1994, p. 245; Tekeli, 2010, p. 121). Although “only 3000 women marched on the streets of Istanbul on 17th May 1987,” public opinion was alerted to the problem (Tekeli, 2010, p. 121). Tekeli writes that the campaign led to more press coverage.

In 1989, a campaign against sexual harassment was launched by women's organizations in Turkey. Arat (2000) stated, “feminists drew attention to widespread sexual harassment that had not previously been expressed,” and this was an important step because “sexuality became a public issue” (p. 117). In this campaign, “feminists sold purple ribbons in public places to encourage women to defend themselves against sexual harassment” (Arat, 2000, p. 117).

Another campaign was launched in support of prisoners who had gone on a hunger strike to protest the conditions in the state called the “black protest.” The protest showed that feminists

could link their activism with human rights issues, with the result that “the women were duly placed under police supervision” (Arat, 1994, p. 245).

*a. Civil and Penal Law Amendments in 2002 and 2004*

The amendments to the civil and penal codes of 2002 and 2004 are regarded as significant for women’s human rights, and they resulted from feminist activism. In these amendment processes, feminist activists worked together with women in political parties, as they realized the benefits of securing elite allies. Thus, they worked to connect women MPs [Member of Parliament] with the women’s movement. The “new Civil Code instituted the full equality of women and men in the family by ending the supremacy of the husband over the wife” (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008, p. 468). The first amendment was to change ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ with ‘spouses.’ The new Civil Code also adopted a property regime providing for “equal division of property acquired during marriage” upon divorce, unless the couple chooses another regime, “namely division of property, division of shared property and joint property regime” (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008, p. 470). In another achievement, the husband lost his privileged status as ‘head of the household’ (Tekeli, 2010, p. 121). However, both this amendment and the property division amendment would be valid only for couples and families who got married after January 2002 with the result that 17 million women were excluded from this law because they were married before January 2002 (Tekeli, 2010, p. 122).

The penal code amendments were more difficult, but feminists pursued reform. Women’s group launched the ‘Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective’ to create awareness and mobilize women (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008, p. 471). In the old Turkish Penal Code, women and men had different punishments for adultery, and women groups argued that “any law penalizing adultery would only serve to punish and control the sexuality of women” (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008, p. 472). Feminists also took on honor killings and virginity controls. Honor killings were that defined very vaguely in the law, with the result that many perpetrators escaped punishment (Tekeli, 2010, p. 122; Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008, p. 472; Gündüz, 2004, p. 123). Virginity tests meant for “single female job seekers in the public sector” (Tekeli, 2010, p. 121). The Turkish women’s movement was firmly against both as they were the manifestation of Turkish patriarchy (Eşlen-Ziya, 2012, p. 130).

*b. The Second Abeyance Cycle in Turkish Women’s Movement: From the 2010s onwards*

According to Müftüler-Bac (1999), there are four main oppression agents of Turkish women (p. 305-8): the Mediterranean culture, Islam, Kemalism, and the Leftist ideology. The Mediterranean culture is defined as “the machismo tradition that one can come across to varying degrees in all Eastern Mediterranean societies” (p. 305). Moghadam (2003: 118-9) also described the “honor-shame complex” of the Mediterranean region. According to this culture, “family structure is based on male superiority and female inferiority, which is reproduced by women themselves as mothers and mothers-in-law” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999, p. 305; Kandiyoti, 1987, p. 327). The Mediterranean described by those scholars is persistent in Turkish society; for example, in 2014, President Erdogan stated, “Women and men cannot be equal, it is against their creation” (BBC, 2014). According to Müftüler-Bac (1999), “Islam divides the world into two, the public sphere that belongs to men, and the private sphere, the domain of domesticity that belongs to women. The two do not mix” (p. 306). With the rise of political Islam and the power of the Justice and Development Party, the valorization of masculinity increased in Turkey. I argue that it forced the Turkish women’s movement into abeyance.

According to the Pew Research Center's research in 2008, in Turkey, religion is vital (94%) (Pew Research Center, 2008). For example, the old minister of education, Hüseyin Çelik, stated, "yesterday, a game show presenter wore such a dress, it cannot be accepted. We have not involved anybody's life, but this is excess. It cannot be accepted in the world" (Hürriyet, 2013). This shows the mindset of the government in Turkey against women. Women should wear clothes which are socially acceptable such as clothes without cleavage or with a headscarf. Moreover, two other artists in Turkey who are known to be close to the government stated, "Being a slave [to men] is in the creation [nature] of women" and "You shouldn't shout if you wear a short skirt, if you get naked and get raped by people who are perverted by the secularist system" (Birgün, 2015). The first quote was from Uğur Işılak who composed a song for the election campaign of President Erdogan and after President Erdogan's election, served as a Member of Parliament from the Justice and Development Party.

Islam and the rise of Islam is the biggest obstacle for the Turkish women's movement in Turkey. The rise of Islamism and the single party pro-Islamic government created a partially closed opportunity structure for the women in Turkey. The women's movement had difficulty finding equality champions and strategic male partners to convey women's interests within parliamentary debates, because "a religious right party was in power," and because "women's groups were 'faced with a dramatic backlash' from government authorities, including the new Minister of Justice, who repeatedly rejected the appointment demands of actors in the women's movement" (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008, p. 467 in *New Ways*). I attribute the present abeyance period in Turkey to the institutionalization of the AKP and its Islamic ideology. In the new political environment, opportunity structures are foreclosed elite political allies for feminist goals are elusive.

Although the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002, this second cycle of abeyance started after 2010, when the Justice and Development Party changed its stance. With each election cycle in the new century, the Justice and Development Party won more significant percentages of votes. For example, in 2007, the Justice and Development Party won nearly half of the votes (Habertürk, 2007), even though the party was becoming illiberal and repressive. My argument is that when the Justice and Development Party realized that their votes were increasing regardless of their political and social positions, they could become more repressive toward social movements in Turkey. In this new context, the feminist movement went into abeyance.

In the Müftüler-Bac (1999), she argued that Kemalism could be seen as an oppression agent (p. 307). For the second abeyance period, this paper disagrees that Kemalism is an oppression agent because Kemalism had liberated women by abolishing the Islamic marriage rules, which favored male dominance, and emancipated women by helping them to gain electoral rights. However, for religious women, Kemalism created an obstacle, and it delayed the integration of religious women into society.

For the last component, Müftüler-Bac (1999) stated the Leftist ideology was an oppression agent (p. 307). She said that "Turkish Left took upon itself the liberation of all the Turkish people, and it did not handle women as a separate category" (Müftüler-Bac, 1999, p. 307). There are different approaches to the Leftist ideology in the literature. Tekeli (2010) argued that Progressive Women's Organization "questioned the 'official ideology' of the state regarding the 'full equality claim, these women were not acting as feminists; in fact, they were 'anti-feminists' in their outlook" (p. 120). Arat (1994) stated that "women were politicized along with men," and she criticized that the women's only involvement was in the leftist groups (p. 243). Özçürümez and Cengiz (2011) also analyzed Progressive Women's Association/Progressive Women's Organization, and they stated, "the founding members and the leadership mostly included female,

leftist-oriented laborers from both lower-middle and middle classes” (p. 24). However, they also criticized the Progressive Women’s Association because “the establishment of Progressive Women’s Association was not directly linked to ‘the woman question.’” As the literature shows, Leftist ideology has mixed effects on the abeyance of the Turkish women’s movement. Firstly, it had a mobilizing effect on women in the 1970s, but this mobilization was only for lower-middle-class and middle-class women because this organization focused on Marxism and communism rather than women. Secondly, the leftist ideology created false consciousness for the women in Turkey as they felt that they were active during the 1970s, but their actions did not create policy changes because the leftist organizations have never become the ruling parties.

This paper also argues that mobilizing structures have changed in Turkey. In her book, Tüfekçi (2017) argued the mobilizing structures are changing in the world. For example, in the past, formal organizations and vertical organizations were commonplace, and these organizations had an official leader, offices, and an executive body (Tüfekçi, 2017). According to Tüfekçi (2017), “the formal organizations constituting the movement were bolstered by the informal ties” in the civil rights movement in the US (p. 65). However, nowadays, “digital tools have made this work much easier to undertake and to organize in a more horizontal and egalitarian manner” (Tüfekçi, 2017, p. 50). These arguments of Tüfekçi (2017) can also be used for the Turkish women’s movements and the changing mobilizing structures. Not all, but some of the Turkish women organizations are only using social media for communication. They do not have a formal body, and they are only active in events. The lack of formal mobilizing structures can create abeyance in the movement because there is no leader and no ability to negotiate. If there is no negotiation, there is no policy change, and this directly affects the women’s movement in Turkey.

## Conclusions

This article examined the Turkish women’s movement and its abeyance cycles from 1923 to 2017. The first part of the paper gave information about the history of the Turkish women’s movement and then it explained the first abeyance period in the Turkish women’s movement which was from 1935 to the 1960s. In this period, the reasons of the abeyance were related with the world conjunction and the internal politics of Turkey. In those years, the Turkish Republic was still being constructed, and the republic was trying to be more democratic by changing its party system. So, some of the reasons for the first abeyance cycle might be irrelevant for the second abeyance cycle. This paper identified four cultural reasons for the second abeyance cycle which started in the 2010s. This article also identified other reasons such as the changes in mobilizing structures and the hardship of finding allies in the parliament.

To sum up, the Turkish women’s movement had been in abeyance before, and it is in abeyance now. Turkish women could break this cycle if there were a change in the mindset of government or if there were changes in the cultural norms.

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