

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Gramscian Reading:

The Attack on Women's Freedom and their Role in Establishing Peace and Security in Illiberal Democracies

Sevgi DOĞAN

Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa

Abstract

The current Turkish government has failed to realize a holistic framework for gender equality. Its reluctance to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS agenda proves its essentialist and victimhood-oriented approach. This article tries to show how this approach has determined its political project - the authoritarian, patriarchal, and conservative-confessional New Turkey - by concentrating on the policies issued by the Justice and Development Party (hereafter AKP) during the last twenty years. As a result of this project's implementation, women in Turkey and their organizations have been negatively affected, especially after the 2016 crisis and the AKP's adoption of increasingly sectarian/repressive/regressive policies. To shed light on the ongoing feminist-women/government tension, this article looks at the role of AKP's 'organic intellectuals' who operate within Turkish society to support the government's project, relying on Gramscian and Marcusean insights while analysing AKP's authoritarianism according to Gramsci's Caesarist-Bonapartist model. Its organic intellectuals consolidate this traditional and religious vision of women in society. By putting women at the centre of religious discourses and making them a bearer of moral or ethical principles, the government reproduces, approves and reasserts their second-class position in society.

Keywords: AKP; Gramsci; gender; Caesarism-Bonapartism; WPS

Introduction¹

"When they get together and go out into the streets, without arms, without protection, in order to ask for the most primitive civil rights, they know that they face dogs, stones, and bombs, jail, concentration camps, even death."
Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

Violence against women or sexual and gender-based violence is not, as it has been for so long, a private issue to be kept within family and home. It has become both a political and international issue which crosses borders. In this regard, there are different international conventions and resolutions (i.e., Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the Istanbul Convention, etc.) including National (NAP(s)) or Regional Action Plan(s) (RAP(s)) designed to protect and demand gender equality in the face of a traditional ideology of male supremacy.

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CONTACT Sevgi Doğan, sevgi.dogan@sns.it, at Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Italy.

Res. 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is shaped around four pillars and places normative stress on the importance of the National Action Plan² to implement the resolution (Alemdar & Yinanc 2021, p. 1). However, of more than 80 countries which have adopted NAP(s) about WPS, Turkey—the case study of this article—has failed to implement a NAP even though it formally adopted it within Res. 1325 (Peace & Freedom, 2021). In the context of UNSC Resolution 1325 on WPS, the idea is not only to protect women from violence, but to support and enable women to actively participate in politics and public issues, providing them with political and social empowerment. One of the criticisms of the four pillars—participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery— of Res. 1325 on the WPS Agenda is the need to place more emphasis on prevention of violence towards women and their protection than their subjectivity; and therefore, considers women as victims more than as agents (Shepherd 2008).

Despite its international obligations to make provisions for ensuring gender equality and to protect the human rights of women, the Turkish government remains reluctant to develop comprehensive policies for gender equality, to consider women as ‘active agents’ in politics, and to recognise their inevitable and substantial contributions to security and peace building. President R. T. Erdoğan demonstrated this reluctance in his speech during the First International Summit on Women and Justice held in Istanbul on 24 November 2014 in which he highlighted the inequality between men and women in line with the Islamic perception of creation that addresses this inequality:

‘We observe that women’s struggle for their rights got stuck in their fight for *equality* while missing the sense of *justice* (italics mine). [...] What is right is to establish equality among women. What is right is to have equality among men. You cannot put women into men’s work like the communist regimes did in the past. [...] That would go against women’s delicate bodies’ (Daloglu 2014).

Emphasis on the difference between the concepts of equality and justice is not an *occasional* usage but *intentional* and *calculated* preference, which brings with itself an essentialist approach.³ On the one hand, stressing on inequality aims to maintain the traditional and hierarchical structure, on the other hand, it once more highlights ‘the nature of women’ as being fragile. Under the current AKP (Justice and Development Party) government Turkish policies lean on an essentialist characterisation of women that portrays them as victims and ignore their role as agents. Emphasizing their role as mothers—active at home and passive in public and political life— this essentialist approach stresses their innately peaceful character. This essentialist approach makes reference to religious values and aims in order to consolidate the subordinated patriarchal position of women. This brings us to the discussion about the perception of women in social and political life, that is their role in external and internal affairs, and in decision-making processes such as decision about peace and security⁴. One of the errors of the government is to perceive

² CEDAW’s 2016 concluding observations on Turkey refers to the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and called Turkey for formally approving and implementing the plan on gender equality ‘in cooperation with representatives of women’s organizations’ (article 25c, 36c, and 38) (CEDAW 2016).

³ See E. Eldem 2018, ‘Osmanli Imparatorlugu’ndan Gunumuze Adalet, Esitlik, Hukuk ve Siyaset Uzerine,’ *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 288, pp. 24-37, for an elaboration of the usage of these concepts in the Turkish political context. Eldem refers to the idea that in Turkish political history the usage of the concept of justice became a political rhetoric of the political right, while equality is an element of the leftist political discourse (p. 24).

⁴ By security, I refer to the safety of women’s, children’s, minorities’ lives, and those who are more vulnerable and marginalized in society, that is their safety in the public and private sphere.

women only as a part of family and therefore to insist on a patriarchal-authoritarian-hierarchical perspective in order to re-create a religious-traditionalist-native conception of the role of women in society.

Despite its unwillingness to take women's demands, existences, and struggles into consideration, the paper acknowledges that the recent struggle that women have established by their own efforts against the government's violent actions and policies might *not-only* lead a counterhegemonic⁵ (alternative revolutionary (in Gramscian sense)) project or play a counterhegemonic role, but also might establish/build (alternatively lead) a hegemony based on gender-equality. It is now largely accepted that the current regime in Turkey is authoritarian⁶. This means a rejection of all kinds of plurality and attempts to centralize all power into a single-hand⁷, thanks to its populism, its exploitation of religion and national sentiments, its neoliberal policies, its anti-intellectual attitude, its relation with religious sects and its support of movements such as the Gülen movement⁸. Despite the esteemed contributions to the literature on the Turkish authoritarianism in relation to neoliberalism and hybrid types, this study tries to read the effects of Turkish authoritarianism over women's struggle in Turkey through a Gramscian analysis. In this regard, this paper seeks to evaluate the cultural and intellectual contributions and creations of women's struggle, feminist debates and the LGBTQI+ movement in Turkey as a possible construction of gender-equality based society. Since the consensual and coercive basis of governance became dominant over many societies from the north to the south and led different types of authoritarian government under the democratic promises, a Gramscian perspective and evaluation of the fascist period through his concepts and theories such as the theory of Caesarism, hegemony and intellectual, gives an analytical tool for analysing AKP's authoritarianism and its policies about gender issues and for interpreting women's movement as a counterhegemonic element.

Based on this claim, the article will be divided into two different parts: a theoretical part and the application of this theory to the case study. The theoretical part begins with an evaluation of Antonio Gramsci's theory of Caesarism and his theory of the intellectual in order to analyse AKP's authoritarianism in relation to its policies on gender equality and the agenda on women, peace and security. Gramsci claims that a Caesarist(-Bonapartist) model can be either progressive or regressive. While the progressive Caesarist model can lead to a transformation of society, the regressive Caesarist model maintains the status quo and avoids fundamental changes and transformations. Erdoğan's authoritarianism will be labelled as a regressive Caesarist authoritarianism, which plays a crucial role in re-establishing the essentialist approach of women's position in society, family and politics by a series of policies and decisions such as the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. In

⁵ Here the concept of counter-hegemony is used to refer to an opposition to the existing dominant power or status quo.

⁶ In the last few years, there are many valuable contributions, debates and discussion on the rise and emergence of new type of authoritarianism in Turkey; here are mentioned just some of them: Yilmaz and Turner 2019; Yilmaz, Caman, & Bashirov 2020; Esen & Gumuscu 2016; Özbudun 2015; Arat & Pamuk 2019; Çalışkan 2018; Yavuz & Öztürk 2019. Additionally, very recently, in 2022, Dimitar Bechev, in *Turkey Under Erdogan: How a Country Turned from Democracy and the West*, continues to elaborate one of these claims on the decline of democracy and the rise of competitive authoritarianism.

⁷ The State comes under the control of a man; the separation between state and party disappears. Even party becomes an instrument and strict control of a single-man. And in this sense, authoritarian means a domination of one voice over all of the State's sectors and ignoring all diversity found in civil society; against this diversity authoritarian regimes become intolerant.

⁸ The Gülen movement is accused of being responsible for the attempted coup d'état in 2016 and immediately after was labelled by the AKP as Fethullah Terrorist Organization. It was a former ally of AKP. Despite their differences, they fought against military tutelage and secularism when the AKP came to power. This alliance led the AKP to win the national electoral victories to form alone the government in 2002, 2007 and 2011.

the literature, this theoretical contribution is not studied yet in relation to the empirical studies on women's question in Turkey. While Doyle's study (2017) shows that many 'women's organizations, with the exception of Islamic organizations' prevents 'regressive change but rather advance progressive change (p. 251),' Erdoğan's regressive Caesarist authoritarianism targets to eliminate women's activism and their effectivity in promoting progressive change leading to advances not only in women's right but also in the whole of society.

Furthermore, to shed light on the ongoing feminist-women/government tension, this article looks at the role of AKP's 'organic intellectuals' who operate within the Turkish society in order to support the government's project, relying on Gramscian and Marcusean insights while analysing AKP's *regressive* authoritarianism according to Gramsci's *regressive* Caesarist(-Bonapartist) model. Its organic intellectuals consolidate this traditional and religious vision of women in society. By putting women at the centre of religious discourses and making them a bearer of moral or ethical principles, the government reproduces, approves and reasserts their second-class position within society. While under the current Turkish Caesarist authoritarianism its organic intellectuals try to undermine women's struggles in public and political life, women play an important role in creating a counter-intellectual stratum against them.

In the second part, the effects and consequences of this *regressive* Caesarist authoritarianism will be examined in relation to gender equality. This will include studies on AKP's policies and its WPS agenda, and both arguments and suggestions about a concept resulting from women's struggle: a possibility of (cultural-intellectual and political) hegemony based on gender equality (*gender-equality based-hegemony*). The questions asked under the first subtitle of this second part are: How does the AKP oppose women's struggle?; and, why is it so important for AKP to move women away from the public sphere? Regarding these questions, the article attempts to analyse why Turkey fails to realize a holistic framework for gender equality. It will do so by concentrating on the AKP's policies from 2002 onwards (the year in which it came to power), with a particular focus on the period after 2016, after the attempted *coup d'état* and the establishment of a presidential system in 2018. Therefore, the article admits that AKP's political structure and its ideological basis in authoritarianism, hierarchy and patriarchy⁹ explains its unwillingness to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)).

The questions asked under the second subtitle of the second part, are: How do women struggle for their rights?; and, how did they attempt security and peace building, despite AKP's repressive and *regressive* politics? Here I propose the concept of gender-equality based hegemony which is possible through women's struggle, that is from a counterhegemonic position towards an establishment of a *gender-equality based-hegemony*. The question is whether the cultural and intellectual activities created by women's struggle can be considered as a new type of intellectual stratum and intellectualism in terms of Gramsci's theory of the new intellectual, to construct a new gender-equality based-society or a new (cultural-intellectual and political) hegemony (Doyle 2017, p. 5). Gramsci, regarding this new intellectual, writes as follows:

⁹ Simten Cosar and Metin Yegenoglu in their article mark the AKP's period as 'the emergence of a new mode of patriarchy' by arguing it in terms of neoliberal, nationalist and religious discourses while comparing it with 'the already existing republican and liberal modes of patriarchy' which refers to the Kemalist understanding of society. Here, again there is a reference and a comparison/conflict between the secular and religious one. However, I believe that it is difficult to separate the nationalist and religious/conservative discourses from the already existing patriarchy which they define as republican and liberal modes (Coşar and Yeğenoğlu 2011). In Turkey, patriarchy, even in its more democratic, republican, or liberal period, has always been composed of nationalist and religious discourses.

'The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator (but superior at the same time to the abstract mathematical spirit); from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains "specialized" and does not become "directive" (specialized and political).' (Gramsci 1989, p. 116)

Women have demonstrated through their long history of struggles that they are strong enough to be a 'constructor, organizer, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator' (Gramsci 1989, p. 116).

The methodology that I have used is that firstly, the literature on the Turkish political structure and its theoretical base is reviewed through a Gramscian lens. Secondly, the literature on gender issues in Turkey in relation to the AKP's policies is reviewed and analysed according to Gramscian intellectual theory and Marcus's notion of a one-dimensional society. In this respect, the article focuses more on the representation of women in peace-building processes and decision-making mechanisms during and after the Turkish-Kurdish conflict within society for consolidating democracy.

Theoretical Basis

Under this title, the paper will concentrate on Gramsci's theory of Caesarist-Bonapartist model and theory of intellectual, which, will subsequently be discussed in a Turkish context.

Caesarist-Bonapartist Type of Authoritarianism

'Mussolini uses the state to dominate the party and he uses the party only to some extent, during difficult times, to dominate the state.' (Gramsci 1977, QC2 §75, p. 233; PN 1992, vol.1, p. 320).

Gramsci's theories have been used in different fields, including gender studies, to analyse contemporary social and political dynamics (Slaughter 2011; Ledwith 2009; Simon 2013; Paechter 2018). One can see Gramsci's sensibility towards women's discrimination and sexual harassment in his *Notebooks* where he emphasises that 'until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics and caution must be exercised in proposals for new legislation.'¹⁰ Based on the natural equality of human beings, along with being sensitive towards women's role within society, Gramsci referred to a necessary transformation of the subaltern position of women into a new feminine identity. Women ought to be liberated from their position as slaves and from patriarchal-based cultural and intellectual domination (Ghetti 2020, p. 4). According to Gramsci, without new women, without a meaningful *emancipation* of women, there will not be new men (Ghetti 2020, p. 4).

¹⁰ Antonio G 1992, *Selections from the prison notebooks*, Q Hoar, & G Nowell-Smith (eds.), Lawrence & Wishart, London, p. 296 hereafter *SPN*. Antonio G 1977, *Quaderni dal Carcere*, Valentino Gerratana (ed.), vol. 3, p. 2149-2150, henceforth cited as *QC*, paragraph as §, number of Notebook, for example, as *QC13*; *Prison Notebooks*, hereafter *PN*.

Gramscian concepts and theories such as hegemony and the intellectual along with the Caesarist-Bonapartist model help us to understand the current Turkish government's (AKP) approach to women and their position in society. Gramsci explained Mussolini's ascent in relation to the theory of Caesarism or Bonapartism within the modern framework; in other words, he explored fascism as a form of Caesarism. For Gramsci, the most important element of Caesarist-Bonapartist model is not leadership but the transformation of state apparatus and politics, i.e., 'an integral reformulation of the criteria of legality, capable of legitimizing and institutionalizing squad violence' (Gagliardi 2016).

Gramsci redefined the concepts of Bonapartism and Caesarism¹¹ - concepts introduced by Marx and Engels¹² to explain authoritarian governments in the framework of the class struggle - in the context of the social and political crisis of Italy when fascism emerged. Not only did he aim to grasp 'the victory of fascism' and the defeat of revolutionary transformation, but he wanted to understand politically and theoretically how liberalism and liberal institutions generally had also experienced this failure (Fontana 2004, p. 176-177). Gramsci explained this failure as a problem of hegemony: the failure of dominant groups to establish their cultural influence and nurture political consensus (Fontana 2004, p. 177).

In this respect, Gramsci assesses the Italian crisis as 'catastrophic' (Gramsci 1977, QC13, §27, p. 1617) which later will be applied to the political crisis of Turkey. In the battle between forces, in which there are neither losers nor victors, the new cannot be born, and the balance between them turns out to be catastrophic, dramatic and aggressive.

In this situation 'a great personality' (Gramsci 1992 SPN, p. 219) as defined by Gramsci, appears to arbitrate between the opposite forces. However, Gramsci did not concentrate on the conception of the leader; as a follower of Marx, for Gramsci, the charismatic leader lacks historicisation (*storicizzazione*) (Gramsci 1992 SPN, p. 436; QC11, §22) meaning that this conception misses concrete historical reality or historical process. Instead of the charismatic leader, Gramsci affirms the category of Caesarism (Antonini 2021, p. 109). In a modern sense, Caesarism can emerge from parliamentary compromises and coalition governments (Gramsci 1992 SPN, p. 220). Both fascism and Nazism initially arose in a constitutional and legal fashion to govern within parliamentary coalitions (Fontana 2004, p. 181).¹³ The problem of hegemony is directly related to the concept of Caesarism, which Gramsci defines in terms of the exercise of coercive force, described in military terms. In the *Notebooks*, Gramsci writes that 'indeed military theory was developing in the direction of war of movement' (Gramsci 1992 SPN, p. 110) but war of position is essential to gaining power. Gramsci stresses that 'military leadership must always be subordinate to political leadership' (Gramsci 1992 SPN, p. 88) and emphasizes the importance of a war of position, associating the modern authoritarian regimes with the 'balance of forces'.

Gramsci describes the Caesarist solution in two forms: progressive and regressive (Gramsci 1992, SPN, p. 219). Progressive Caesarism means that third force intervention helps the progressive forces rise to power, while in its regressive form it serves reactionary forces to triumph. In the first case, the Caesarist regime is the consequence of an organic crisis that results in a "quantitative-qualitative" transformation —a passage from one type of state to another, in which there are substantial improvements for the subaltern class. Regressive

¹¹ In this article, I will not explain in detail the concept of Caesarism but Gramsci like Marx and Engels regards this concept as a class phenomenon as Benedetto Fontana claims in his article (Fontana 2004, p. 177).

¹² As Francesca Antonini claims in *Caesarism and Bonapartism in Gramsci: Hegemony and the Crisis of Modernity*, Caesarism and Bonapartism are different historical and philosophical concepts. Marx, particularly, tried to avoid the confusion between these two and separated them from each other (Antonini 2021, p. 1).

¹³ Gramsci evaluates the rise of fascism and national socialism in relation to economic, social and institutional crisis.

Caesarism, on the other hand, is characterized as merely quantitative, meaning there is no passage from one type of state to another and no improvements for marginalized groups - only the continuation of the oppressive status quo.

For Gramsci, having military power and exercising coercion are necessary but not sufficient factors for maintaining a durable form of Caesarism in contemporary societies. Accelerating social and economic changes, developing mass communication, and promoting mass organization require governments to rely on new forms of power (Gramsci 1992 *SPN*, p. 220). This means that hegemony needs to accentuate the importance of cultural and ideological factors. 'That form of Caesarism combines elements of the coercive and administrative organs of the state (the military, police, and security bureaucracies) with its ideological and cultural apparatus (mass media, mass communication, and mass mobilization)' (Fontana 2004, p. 194).

Gramsci's theory of the intellectual

Gramsci highlights that 'the "normal" exercise of hegemony [...] is characterised by a combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, an attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority' (Gramsci 1992, *SPN*, p. 80). Gramsci contrasts the concept of hegemony with *mere* domination - the exercise of coercion over other (subaltern) groups. However domination or coercive force is not the only character of hegemony; an intellectual and moral leadership or moral and cultural mechanism of consensus or persuasion is necessary for establishment of hegemony (Fontana 2004, p. 184).

In this sort of hegemony, intellectuals play a great role as intermediaries between the ruling class and those who are ruled by them in order to disseminate and produce knowledge, culture, values and beliefs within society. Gramsci warns us that, due to the complexity of their social and political institutions, it will be difficult to bring about revolutionary or transformative change in contemporary democratic societies through a war of movement - that is, a direct assault similar to the seizure of the Winter Palace by Bolsheviks in 1917. Therefore, social transformation is achievable only through a war of position¹⁴, that is an ideological, intellectual, cultural struggle aimed at realizing hegemony (Gramsci 1992, *SPN*, p. 243).

In the *Notebooks*, Gramsci writes that all men, in a generic sense, are intellectuals, as they all have an intellect in which they use. However, not all are intellectuals in the sense of social function (Gramsci 1992, *SPN*, p. 9). In this regard, Gramsci separates them into two groups: 'traditional' professional intellectuals - literary, scientific etc.; and the 'organic' intellectuals, 'which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, which are for the most part "specialisations" of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence' (Gramsci 1992, *SPN*, p. 6). These intellectuals are 'the thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class' (Hoare and Smith 1971, p. 3). Intellectuals guarantee the functioning and reproduction of the superstructure that Gramsci divided into two elements: civil society (including organizations); and political society, i.e., the State (Gramsci 1992, *SPN*,

¹⁴ Cihan Tugal in his book makes use of Gramsci's theory of passive revolution to explain the rise of the AKP in the context of a neoliberal reconstruction of Turkey (Tugal 2009). He states that the AKP established its hegemony through passive revolution and on "the interface between civil society and political society" (ibid., p. 8). However, in my view, the AKP could not establish a hegemony in the Gramscian sense although the party mobilized civil society, as Tugal states in his book, in the sense that the party regulated "everyday life, social space, and people's relation to the economy" and linked civil society to political society (leadership) but it could not build a cultural hegemony—or leadership—, i.e., dominate over the intellectual world (ibid., p. 8), which could convince people of its policies.

p. 12). Gramsci underlines that hegemony is established at these two levels. Giuseppe Cospite (2010, p. 75) observes that in Gramsci, hegemony is understood as direction (*direzione*) even before dominion (*dominio*). Yet he adds that it oscillates between hegemony = direction and hegemony = direction + domination (QC1, 1977b, §44, p. 41). In the same QC, Gramsci highlights that before coming into power a class can be *dirigente* (leader or director); however, upon gaining power the class becomes dominant, though it can continue to be '*dirigente*' (1977b, p. 41). Domination in an economic area however, must be parallel with the development in the areas of the ideological, juridical, religious, intellectual, philosophical etc. (QC6, 1977a, § 200, pp. 839-40). Cospite (2010, p. 89) writes that '*hegemony [...] is synonymous with political leadership (direzione politica), sometimes united with, sometimes opposed to domination (dominio), coercion (QC1, §44) or in an even more meaningful sense, an element of connection between the moment of consent and that of force (civil or political hegemony connected and not opposed to that of cultural or intellectual) (QC13, §26).*'¹⁵ In addition, Gramsci writes that '*since hegemony is political but also and above all economic, it has its material base in the decisive function exercised by the hegemonic group in the decisive core of economic activity*' (PN 1996, §38, p. 183). Furthermore, it is worth noting that Gramsci finds a dialectical relationship between structure and superstructure when talking about hegemony.

As a result of this theoretical clarification, Gramsci's aforementioned theories and concepts will be applied to the Turkish case.

Caesarism-Bonapartism authoritarianism in the Turkish context

Turkey did not witness a full democracy based on the separation of powers which control the public institutions and government, allowing people to freely decide who rules them under a multiparty system. In 2016, Turkey was exposed to radical change. Accelerated by the attempted coup d'état of that year, its so-called democracy¹⁶ was overthrown and reversed by AKP's government, especially by removing the principle of separation of powers, which can be considered the cornerstone of democracy. Within this year, Turkey witnessed serious social and political conflicts, such as the military operation¹⁷ in the East and Southeast of Turkey, ISIS attacks in different cities, the increase of violence against women and child abuse (IHD 2017; KCDP 2017; Asuma & Imdat 2018), and the failed coup d'état attempt which paved the way for a new type of neoliberal-authoritarianism.¹⁸ This section seeks to explore the AKP's authoritarianism with reference to the Caesarist-Bonapartist model and the negative impacts of AKP's authoritarian policies on gender, violence against women, and women's rights, by taking into consideration its neoliberal political structure and policies.

In its party program, AKP assumes that the State, at least in principle, should be outside of all types of economic activity, defining the function of the State in the economy as

¹⁵ Translation is mine. '*Egemonia [...] è sinonimo di direzione politica, talvolta unita, talvolta contrapposta a dominio, coercizione (Q1, 44) or in senso ancor più pregnante, elemento di raccordo tra il momento del consenso e quello della forza (egemonia civile o politica connessa e non contrapposta a quella culturale o intellettuale) (Q13, 26)*' (2010, p. 89).

¹⁶ Turkey's democracy was subjected to severe military interventions and witnessed the closure of different parties in different period.

¹⁷ The conflict between PKK and the Turkish government was ceased for 2 and half years and peace process began (2013-2015). In 2015, the conflict between two parties began again and the military operation started to the cities such as Sur in Diyarbakir, Cizre ve Silopi in Şırnak, Nusaybin in Mardin ve Yüksekova in Hakkari.

¹⁸ Neoliberal authoritarianism is a sort of 'critique of state-oriented political and economic system' (Dogan 2021, p. 174), therefore, stressing on the existence of individual freedom especially for consumption, emphasizing on flexible working arrangement/condition, making laws to pave the way for privatization and privatization of public institutions (education and health sectors etc.), usurping of human rights guaranteed by law such as freedom of expression, right to assembly and demonstration etc., dominating over communication instruments such as press by means of using the public institutions.

regulatory and supervisory. The AKP considers privatization as an important tool for the formation of a more rational economic structure and wishes to improve the competitive capacity of the country's economy, believing that foreign capital would contribute to the development of the Turkish economy. In this context, the AKP claims that the relations with the European Union, the World Bank, the IMF and other international organizations should be maintained in accordance with the needs of the economy and national interests. Through its party program, the AKP demonstrates its support for neoliberal policies by ensuring private enterprise via political, bureaucratic change (article 3.1) (AKP 2001).

Though this paper will not focus on the political economy of gender issue in relation to the neoliberal perspective¹⁹, to explain briefly, neoliberal policies dominated Turkey's²⁰ society in the early 1980s and these processes, as Gamze Çavdar and Yavuz Yaşar pointed out, were implemented by AKP through 'the further institutional reforms' in 2000s (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019, p. 2). 'The privatization of public schools, the subcontracting of many government services, the elimination of public jobs and the comprehensive healthcare reforms implemented during the 2000s have all been part of this process of institutionalizing neoliberalism' (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019, p. 2). This neoliberal process and reforms, on the one hand, demand women to be a larger part of public life as employees, yet on the other hand they deepen the gender-dimension of society. For instance, some AKP's legislative initiatives regarding women seem progressive, like promoting "flexible working conditions" that would allow them to stay home while working' (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019, p. 10). However, with these changes, gender segregation or 'traditional gender division of labor' (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019, p. 10) are reinforced. The mutual relationship between authoritarianism and neo-liberalism is largely discussed by some scholars (Bruff & Tansel 2019), demonstrating that the application of neoliberal policies resulted in growing an authoritarian governance.

The authoritarianism of AKP can be described in the context of a Caesarist and Bonapartist model. This model describes: forces in conflict; charismatic leadership; combination of coercion/domination and consent; destruction of democratic and republican elements and instead, the reconstruction of an imperial or single-man regime; a bureaucratic military-police dictatorship; and lastly, neoliberal policies. The Turkish Caesarist-Bonapartist model should be considered in relation to the confessional issue, in the sense that this authoritarianism requires a more confessional conception of state and power to strengthen its patriarchal extension.²¹ 'The bureaucracy, the military associations, the police (broadly conceived), and so on are the instruments through which the fascist regime realizes its control over the masses and more, generally, over civil society' (Antonini 2021, p. 165-6). These are also instruments of contemporary, authoritarian regimes.

In the context of Gramscian Caesarism, it can be said that the AKP emerged from a conflict between the religious and secular—*laik*²²—groups, and the leftist and rightist groups. Even

¹⁹ The author of this paper finds the analysis of the material basis of gender equality necessary (i.e., economic conditions of daily life, reproduction (household) and production (the market)) (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019, p. 18) and unavoidable but since it needs a broad discussion, it would be difficult to argue it in this short article. Çavdar and Yaşar (2019) in their work underline the combination of conservatism, Islam and neoliberal policies in order to explain the material condition of gender equality in terms of its political economy. 'Yalçın Akdoğan, one of the ideologues of the AKP and Erdogan's close confidant,' as Çavdar and Yaşar state, 'openly declared in the early 2000s that a new conservatism had recently adopted *lassie faire* economics and therefore largely overlapped with liberalism in opposing the welfare state and supporting a market economy, private property, and a limited state' (2019, p. 17).

²⁰ Here, the adjective Turkish is not used when it is used to refer to the society in which one can find different identities such as Kurdish, Turkish, Armenian etc., because of its national connotation or its ethnic connotation.

²¹ I particularly thank Fabio Frosini for his comments on my interpretation of Turkish case in terms of Gramsci's conception of Caesarism and Bonapartism, who suggested the confessional conception of state and power.

²² *Laiklik* refers to Turkish secularism which is one of the principles of Republic of Turkey involved in 1982 Constitution (2 article). It is not the scope of this article to discuss differences between the Turkish laicism/*laiklik* and secularism but to

though this conflict has always existed, in the 1990s the conflict manifested between National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*)²³—an Islamic and anti-Western movement—and a secular-Western view which tried to circulate its values both in the political and social areas (Altuntaş & Demirkanoglu 2017, p. 66-67). As a result, some Islamic parties which supported the ideas of National Outlook were banned on the grounds that they conducted religiously-based politics. By promoting Islamic fundamentalism, they were considered a threat to the secular or *laik* structure of the State. For instance, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) was banned from politics in 1998 after being accused of violating the principle of separation between religion and State. The increased tension led also to a division within National Outlook - on one hand were 'reformists', who later established the AKP under Erdoğan leadership in 2001, and on the other, were 'traditionalists', who still promoted the original ideas of National Outlook (Altuntaş & Demirkanoglu 2017, p. 67).

As Gramsci says, 'the forces in conflict balance each other in a *catastrophic manner*', which results in 'a third force C interven[ing] from outside, subjugating what is left of both A and B' (Gramsci 1992 SPN, p. 219). AKP emerged as a third force not only because of the conflict between the secular and religious outlook, but also because of the conflict that existed among the religious groups or forces (like National Outlook). According to Gramsci, the rise of Caesarism is the result of different political crises. The AKP was seen as a political solution not only by forces inside National Outlook but also external forces which regarded the AKP as a reformist-European oriented party, and therefore an example of a moderate Islam that could be a good example for the Islamic world. Italian history demonstrates something similar. 'Fascism is seen [...] as a political solution (although a limited and problematic one) to the *organic crisis*, as an effort to restore the "broken" bourgeois hegemony' (Antonini 2021, p. 165-6; italics mine). As a civilian movement, despite its shortcomings, the AKP succeeded in comprehending the needs of society and using this as a political manoeuvre towards the beginning of its tenure (i.e., between 2002-2011, in which it was *apparently* 'democratic' in terms of its social and political promises).

In a Bonapartist manner, the AKP under the Erdoğan presidency attempts to transform the republic and the (semi-)democratic structure of the State into a more authoritarian one by way of a presidential system based on a one-single man-regime. After the attempted coup in 2016, Turkey moved towards a more authoritarian model with statutory decrees (OHAL). The AKP made use of 'the coercive and administrative organs of the State (the military, police, and security bureaucracies)' (Fontana, p. 194) to control and reorganize society through the declaration of decrees which moved Turkey towards a more authoritarian structure. Through the referendum on 16 April 2017, 18 articles of the Turkish constitution were changed. The set of amendments included: the abolition of the current parliamentary system and its replacement with a presidential system; the elimination of the office of the prime minister, increasing the number of deputies in the parliament from 550 to 600; and making changes to the structure of the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK). Following the inauguration of the presidential system, president Erdoğan decides practically everything. This new system can be described as a single-man regime and the command-order oriented system is 'one-dimensional'. The Turkish-type presidential system can be

explain briefly, Taha Parla and Andrew Davison's work (2008) clarifies it in a Turkish context. They write that 'secularism is not laicism's equivalent; it is something much more than laicism, since laicism does not negate the ideas of religion and God' (p. 59). In this regard, Nevzat Celik (2018) writes that 'to create a new form of the western secular model onto the framework of the new Republic of Turkey, *laiklik* has articulated as a political Kemalist doctrine to protect itself and, especially translates itself to the totalitarian context [...] Turkey's own secular model *laiklik* was not aimed at the separation of religion and state but first to control it and finally to try to minimize it from the public sphere (p. 189).'

²³ It is a religious-political movement founded by Necmettin Erbakan that emphasized the decline of the Muslim world as a result of the Western values such as secularism.

described in Gramscian terms as a government which operates as a ‘party’ which is over and beyond the interests of people and the multiparty system.

From a Gramscian perspective, I believe that AKP failed to succeed in a cultural hegemony and therefore relies only on domination and manipulation. While AKP tries to hold power, it is only concerned with the form, meaning AKP misses the consent of society and also domination of cultural and intellectual life, as Gramsci points out in his notebooks.²⁴ Although it had power through the consent of people by means of democratic election, including the referendum and general and local elections from 2002 to 2019, it fails to conquer or dominate the cultural and intellectual area. The AKP tried to achieve its ideological and cultural domination in collaboration with the Fettullah Gülen movement until the attempt coup of 2016.²⁵ However, the Gülenist attempt to establish political domination failed by the coup in 2016.

Therefore, its political movement lacks moral-intellectual leadership. However, this isn’t to say that the AKP do not have ‘organic intellectuals’. These intellectuals exist not for creating and contributing to cultural and intellectual development through ideological revolution, as Gramsci explains in the *Notebooks* (Gramsci 1992, SPN, p. 5-24) but rather for propaganda. They contribute to the government’s anti-gender equality and sexist discourses and play an important role in establishing a counterrevolutionary position.

The role of intellectuals in constructing gender and deconstructing gender

With regard to these issues, it is essential to take a long hard look at the struggle of women in order to establish a peaceful and secure society, which is against aggressive resistance towards gender equality. On the one hand, some women resist the denial of their active role in politics; on the other hand, the current government’s policies accept nothing but a domestic role for women. The latter’s policies are strengthened by government-sponsored intellectuals. At this point, Gramsci’s theory of the intellectual will serves to disclose how the current government’s political language maintains and reinforces misogyny within society by means of these intellectuals. By putting women at the centre of religious discourses and making them a bearer of moral or ethical principles, the government re-creates, approves and cements their second-class position. AKP is against women’s inclusion not only in civil society but also in politics. The dominant and authoritarian power succeeds in doing so through its organic intellectuals— judges, prosecutors, lawmakers, newspaper columnists, theologians, academics and the like – who endorse violence against women.

In this regard, Marcuse’s theory of the one-dimensional society and wo/man explains the goal of a political regime based on misogyny, patriarchy, bureaucracy, hierarchy conservatism, and Islamism. One-dimensional society means not to see these problems and forces of domination in critical and negative way. Marcuse, in *One-Dimensional Man*, underlines the importance of the critical or negative thinking because of its characteristic

²⁴ As Hasret Dikici Bilgin (2009, p. 110) in ‘Civil Society and State in Turkey: A Gramscian Perspective,’ and Ahmet Öncü (2003) ‘Dictatorship Plus Hegemony: A Gramscian Analysis of the Turkish State’ wrote that when the consent of society is weakening, the hegemony—relies on both consent and coercion—finds itself in crisis and only coercive and based on domination which is already mentioned by Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks* (1992, p. 210; QC 13, 1977, §23).

²⁵ Gulenist movement is a faith-based or Islamist-based movement gathering particularly around education which the movement considers a key to resolve social, cultural, religious and political conflicts and problems. The movement fought against secular values through culture. Therefore, they could overcome and challenge the Kemalist (secular movement) and leftist intellectual hegemony by concentrating on education and intellectual development. Education becomes only an instrument for manipulating people and attaining power. Thus, Gülen movement has many schools in different countries from Africa to Asia. The members of Gülen movement held important positions in the police, judiciary, military and bureaucracy. Many of them were arrested, prosecuted and dismissed from their jobs after the 2016 coup.

of being two dimensional which is capable of seeing contradictions. One dimensional way of thinking does not allow the persons to be aware of the forces of domination and therefore there would not be no demand for changes. AKP's organic intellectuals help the authoritarian regime to maintain the existence of the established society through one-dimensional thinking.

While Marcuse focuses on the way of thinking and criticizing, Gramsci highlights that intellectuals are important elements of any political system, because of the directive, organizational, and educative functions that they perform (Gramsci 1992, *SPN*, p. 16). The AKP's organic intellectuals direct and organize the AKP's policies, including manipulating and provoking people, but they seem to lack any real connection or link with ordinary people. These intellectuals behave, write, and disseminate knowledge about social, political and economic problems according to the party's policies. The main characteristic of these intellectuals is their lack of critical reasoning, while they seem to have a poor record in organizational and connective functions (Vacca 2020, p. 48). In this respect, one might note an episode in 2019 when a spokesman of the AKP, the senior state official at the Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet), marginalized LGBTQI+ individuals by calling them a 'heresy contrary to creation'. In a similar way, in May 2020, the Turkish Platform of Thought advocated Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and supported the government's anti-gender policies through a report in which they underlined difference between the sexes more than problems of gender equality and violence.

Emphasizing the traditional division of labor and espousing an essentialist view of women along with the Turkish-Muslim female identity, this authoritarianism tries to marginalize those who identify themselves as Kurdish, trans, or as members of the LGBTQI+ community, as well as those who fight for gender-equality and against violence perpetrated on women. While this authoritarianism increasingly restricts the space available for civil society, in recent years, one can observe that women are the only opposition group who continue to struggle on the streets for their rights despite overwhelming attacks against them by the government.²⁶ As Gramsci underlines, civil society is not mere a reflection of the private sphere but it is a sphere where civil society participates in political debates (Ketola 2013, p. 76) and produces new thinking, culture and new intellectual projects. Using Hegel's and

²⁶ Jessica Leigh Doyle (2017), on the one hand describes how CSOs and women's organizations play an active role in progressive social change in terms of women's rights in Turkey, on the other hand she emphasizes how these organizations are restricted by the government and therefore they are not totally independent from the state (p. 24). Daniella Kuzmanovic (2012) stresses on the existential anthropological approach which can explain 'how agency becomes a matter of existential mastery before it is a matter of social or political mastery' (p. 6). Kuzmanovic considers civil society and civic activism as a reflection of 'existential issues pertaining to subjectivity' (p. 178). According to this view, the power of subjectivity and agents who have potentiality to change and transform society is the key element of civil society and its organizations (p. 6, 177). I think that while emphasizing on the subjectivity and agency of civil society organizations is important, it is also crucial to underline a Gramscian integrality which highlights the totality of civil and political society. Therefore, it is crucial to question how much they are 'autonomous, agentic subjects' in order to see the whole picture. It is true that many civil society organizations or NGOs deal with the questions regarding the cultural, social and political issues which cannot focus on structural questions because of its lack of material capacity to help people permanently on the economic level and can therefore offer only temporarily solutions. Quintan Wiktorowicz (2000) claims that 'civil society is never autonomous from the state; it has only varying degrees of independence (p. 56-7).' This is the case when AKP supports those civil society organizations that sustain itself and established the women's civil society organization for defending its essentialist-patriarchal-conservative gender approach (Keysan 2019, pp. 8-9). Markus Ketola (2013) underscores the role of NGOs as civil society initiatives in 'policymaking arena' and facilitating the reform processes (p. 1). Like Kuzmanovic, Ketola also believes that civil society can have a greater role in society (p. 77). Asuman Ozgur Keysan (2019) defines civil society 'gendered and neoliberal in character' (p. 3). Through all these readings on civil society, one can easily draw a conclusion that the general idea about civil society in Turkey is based on the view that civil society can create and lead a democratization (process) (Dikici-Bilgin 2009).

Gramsci's conception of civil society, Ketola (2013, p. 77) defines civil society in terms of women's movements and their civil society organizations as a place or a space where there is competition in a Hegelian sense and where one can find the hegemonic versus counterhegemonic struggles in a Gramscian sense. Therefore, women might lead a new way of thinking, a new type of epistemology and a new type of intellectuals through their practices, struggles and methods in order to build an equality-based democracy, and therefore peace and security in society. As Sirin Tekeli (2022) says, 'the feminist struggle is about changing mindsets and cultural values and about forcing society to recognize the dignity of women as individual human beings.'

While the AKP's organic intellectuals try to destruct what the women's movement has obtained after a long struggle, women can construct a hegemony based on peace and equality. As Gramsci states, a new historical situation creates a new ideological superstructure. The representatives (intellectuals) of this ideology must be conceived of as new intellectuals who are born from new situation different from the previous intellectuality (Gramsci 1977a, QC8, §171, p. 1044). Here, in line with what Gramsci says, one can imagine that feminist intellectuals or intellectual women might be able to create a new ideological superstructure in which they fulfil the role of the new intellectuals, or organic intellectuals within a new historical situation.

Empirical Part

The gender issue and the AKP government's approach

'We fight just to gain our rights to be a worker,
 a doctor, a parliamentarian as we are mothers.'
*Women's World*²⁷

Women can take a leading part in the democratization and development processes. This section tries to draw attention to the importance of *democratization from below*, i.e., through women's organizations and movements. The consolidation of democracy demands pluralistic and inclusive politics. Yesim Arat and Sevket Pamuk speak of three different groups who approach the woman question in a different manner and who contribute to democratic development in Turkey: 'women who called themselves feminists and have sparked and expanded the women's movement in Turkey over the years; Islamist women who have fought mostly for their gender-based religious rights; and Kurdish women and feminists who have sought recognition of their ethnic and gender identity' (Arat & Pamuk, 2019, p. 229). In this respect, they mentioned three challenges in the democratization process in Turkey: Islamists contesting the secular nature of the Turkish state²⁸; Kurds challenging the ethnic nationalism of the Turkish state; and 'women who criticized the illiberal nature of civil rights in the country and demanded the expansion of their rights as women' (Arat & Pamuk 2019, p. 228). Women, even coming from different cultural, ethic, and religious background, collaborated/collaborate with each other to democratize society.

These women's movements argued for the insufficiency of a 'Republican project of modernity' and highlighted 'its limits in democratizing the country' (Arat & Pamuk, 2019, p. 229). They struggle against authoritarian, secularist and nationalist patriarchy respectively. Women's movements in Turkey go back to the late Ottoman Empire where women

²⁷ A magazine, published between 1913 and 1921 during the ottoman period (Kılıçkiran, 1997, p. 103)

²⁸ According to Hamit Bozarslan, 'the Kurdish question has constituted the most important challenge to Turkish Republic since its foundation in 1923' along with the *irtica* which means 'religious reaction' (Bozarslan 2008, p. 333).

demanded a part of public life (Çakır 1994). By the 1980s, the second wave of feminist movements emerged. 'Many achievements were made thanks to the women's movement in Turkey: reforms in the Civil Code, bringing the establishment of women's shelters against domestic violence to the agenda, discussing topics such as domestic violence, rape, virginity control, sexual harassment, honour killings, etc.' (Dogan 2020). However, with the decline of democracy in the 2010s, women encountered new challenges, fighting for their rights that they had already obtained after a long history of struggle (Kılıçkiran 1997; Tekeli 2022; Bakan and Tuncel 2019).

The decline in protecting women's right demonstrates how the AKP's policy about gender is contradictory. AKP's gender policy can be split into two phases: 1) from 2002 to 2011 the party was in favour of supporting women in social and political life; 2) since 2011, the AKP's policies have become more and more 'conservative' and 'traditionalist'.²⁹ The party in government 'ignored existing egalitarian laws, and began to promote Islamically inspired models of traditional roles that could restrict women's access to and benefit from the existing legal framework which feminists had worked so hard to improve' (Arat & Pamuk 2019, p. 253). The AKP's policies on gender issues do not go beyond the discourse of victimhood and are against the idea of political agency. As Erensü & Alemdaroglu write: 'No matter how it is explained, the accounts of Turkey's authoritarian trajectory often assume a breaking point after which the otherwise reformist AKP had to change gears and switched into a repressive mode, resurrecting the sectarian, patriarchal, and authoritarian character of the party' (Erensü & Alemdaroglu 2018, p. 19).

During its first years in power, the AKP carried out substantial amendments in the Constitutional and the Penal Code regarding gender equality "in line with the demands of EU conditionality" (Arat & Pamuk 2019, p. 253). However, despite these legal and institutional changes, it seems that no significant progress has been made in terms of the position of women in Turkey during the period of AKP government (Altuntaş & Demirkanoğlu 2017, p. 88). The Global Gender Gap Report indicates that women's position in society and the idea of gender have not been comprehended and therefore there are no considerable changes in this regard. In reports compiled from 2016 to 2020, Turkey always appears towards the bottom of the list: according to the 2020 report, for instance, out of 153 countries Turkey ranks 130th (World Economic Forum 2020). Between 2002 and 2011, the AKP took concrete steps with regard to gender issues and women's human rights protection. In this period, civil organizations took a crucial role in empowering Turkish democracy (Aksoy 2018, p. 103). On the one hand, it cooperated with several NGOs under its own patronage and engaged in dialogue with women's associations in order to make women visible in public life and to disseminate the view of *gender justice* instead of *gender equality*; on the other hand, it marginalized those it found more radical towards body, gender-equality, and sexuality and who could monitor the state's gender policies.³⁰ The women who were excluded from public

²⁹ For a further explanation about the periodic development of AKP's policies on gender see A. Telsereen' article (2020), 'Changing Gender Politics in Turkey throughout the 2000s: A Feminist Analysis of Gender Policies Pursued by Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) Governments'.

³⁰ For example, the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM, Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği) is one of the NGOs that the AKP sponsored to focus on women's issue in line with the party's program and which is called as one of the government-organized NGOs (GONGOs). These GONGOs play a counterrevolutionary role in representing Turkey in international arena and keeping control over civil society. Additionally, taking anti-feminist position, these organizations call for (gender) justice instead of (gender) equality which Erdoğan differentiated in one of his speech (abovementioned). What they mean by gender justice is the elimination of the homogenous image of women created by the idea of gender equality which, according to the president of KADEM, ignored the differences among them (Yılmaz 2015). This signifies that they address the differences among men and differences among women; there is no equality between man and woman but there is justice among them.

life, whose education right were taken away because of their headscarves and who wanted to eliminate this unfairness played an important role in the rise of the AKP and the continuation of electoral support for the AKP (Arat and Sevet 2019, pp. 269-270).

After the general election of 12 June 2011, the AKP returned to a traditionalist outlook, departing from its election manifesto which regarded women as individuals and subjects. After the election, the name of the Ministry of State for Women (*Kadınlardan Sorumlu Devlet Bakanlığı*) was changed to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies thanks to decree-law No. 633 on 29 October 2011. The implication is that women's roles are confined to family and that women's rights should be limited to this institution. Particularly after 2011, one can observe that the AKP left the 'so-called liberal' policies aside and returned to conservative values such as those which consider women as a part of family and community, as the bearer and reproducer of tradition (Altuntaş & Demirkanoglu 2017, p. 84). Erdoğan has consistently encouraged women to have at least three children in public speeches (Hurriyet 2008; NTV 2009; Bianet 2014; Euronews 2017; Evrensel 2021), serving to consolidate patriarchal notions and conservative family values.

After 2011, the AKP began to regard the family as a social policy and legitimated the idea of the 'sacred mother' and 'sacred family' through its policies which defined women through the family. The Turkish president, during various public meetings (Vatan 2010), has underlined the idea that man and woman cannot be equals. In 2014, he claimed that religion (Islam) gave a sacred position to women in society which is motherhood and which is, for him, repudiated by the feminists and feminism (Daloglu 2014). Other AKP bureaucrats besides Erdoğan have made discriminatory remarks about women, emphasizing maternity as the best possible career for women, claiming that virtuous women should not laugh in public, and that pregnant women must stay at home rather than going outside or being visible in public space. Instead of implementing egalitarian laws, they aim to impose traditional religious roles on all women (Arat & Pamuk 2019, p. 255).

In doing so, AKP proves that it never regarded gender issues as basic social, cultural and political problems; therefore, instead of designing emancipatory policies and contributing to the realization of the WPS Agenda, AKP politicizes the discourse about gender and turns it into an instrument for strengthening and consolidating its power and shoring up public support. Its liberal policies on gender aimed to cement the support of certain groups of women and to restore its one-dimensional project of 'New Turkey'. This New Turkey 'is organized around the supreme power of the President, erosion of checks and balances and separation of powers' (Yılmaz & Turner 2019, p. 691-698). It includes redesigning the legal and political system along with the *re- and de-*construction of academia and the reformulation of the gender issue. At the beginning of its foundation, Erdoğan defined the form of his party's politics as conservative³¹-democratic, thus differentiating itself from National Outlook and other Islamist-based parties and the political standpoint of anti-Westernism more generally. During its first period, AKP's policies could be described as a *hybrid* composed of 'conservative' and 'democrat' discourses together. In its second period, it abandoned hybrid politics and provides only a conservative, conventional and religious vision.

After the termination of the peace process in 2015, the failed coup attempt in July 2016, and the transformation of Turkey's parliamentary system into a presidential one by referendum in 2017, women's human rights have suffered serious setbacks and their status is in danger of going backwards. After the failed coup attempt in July 2016, many organizations that worked for the rights of women and children, including human rights and

³¹ Although it is not clear what exactly conservative means here, it can be said that the term 'conservative' refers to being the devout and resistant to change along with being in favor of traditional values.

11 women's organizations (Barisik 2018, p. 16; KESK 2018)³², were closed by KHK³³ (decrees-laws) which were officially finalized in 2018. These were ostensibly issued to clear away traces of 'parallel structuring' (i.e. the Gulenist movement) within the State but began to extend to other opposition elements in the country. These organizations were established in different cities in Turkey in order to provide a space for women who were violated and to provide advice and support. Women become even more vulnerable with the closure of these centres because some women organizations, like VAKAD (Van Women's Association), have done women's studies for many years and following cases based on violence/murder against women; moreover, these organizations and associations supported women with the economic, legal, psychological and social consultancy; they opened literacy courses for women and provided scholarships for girls (Karatat 2017).

Given the fact that AKP shifted its policies from democratic reform to conservatism as far as the gender issue is concerned, it is important to underline that AKP's Caesarist regime is regressive. The emergence of a Caesarist government implies the continuation of the previous system and the preservation of the existing power under a different form. This does not result in a qualitative but merely quantitative Caesarism. Considering its policies about the Kurdish question, the gender issue, and the growth of restrictive and oppressive procedures and measures taken over the last years, such as imprisonment of journalists, academics, entrepreneurs, politicians, the representatives of civil society organizations, women's organizations, women human rights defenders, and other activists, the closure of non-governmental organizations including women's organizations, associations and centres, the AKP's Caesarist regime represents a regressive one, in the sense that it was not able to promote an organic change in society: a continuation of previous authoritarian regime in a different form. Without an ideological dimension and unwilling to support knowledge production and intellectual-cultural development, including knowledge produced by feminist movement, it has failed to construct progressive Caesarist-Bonapartist authoritarianism.

Women's role in peacebuilding: the possibility of hegemony-based on gender equality (gender equality based-hegemony)³⁴

'The world is gigantic and awful and complicated. Every action launched on its complexity awakens unexpected echoes'.³⁵
 A. Gramsci

Making use of women's knowledge production on topics like gender, violence, war, peace, conflict, women's economic, cultural and political status, the way to participate in peace process, etc., is of great importance for a democratic society. Their participation in the educational processes is also crucial in order to eliminate all types of violence, not because they are more sensible than men or that they bring their heart and feelings to the table, but because they are part of this society, and their experiences, knowledge, and perspectives

³² Adıyaman Kadın Yaşam Derneği, Anka Kadın Araştırmaları Derneği, Bursa Panayır Kadın Dayanışma Derneği, Ceren Kadın Derneği, Gökkuşluğu Kadın Derneği, KJA, Muş Kadın Çatısı Derneği, Muş Kadın Derneği, Selis Kadın Derneği, Van Kadın Derneği (VAKAD) (Tahaoglu 2016).

³³ Most part of associations and centers were closed by decree no. 677 on 22 November 2016. With decree 375 associations were closed (Karatat 2017).

³⁴ I would like to thank to Elisa Piras for her suggestion about hegemony based on gender equality instead of my original concept women's hegemony.

³⁵ Translation is mine. 'Il mondo è grande e terribile e complicato. Ogni azione lanciata sulla sua complessità sveglia echi inaspettati' (Frosini & Liguori, 2010).

are different from the dominant male standpoint. They have been more exposed to the existing system's deficiencies and the damage it causes. Another important thing worth mentioning is their capacity to structure a *dialectical relation* between feeling and reason, i.e., heart or spirit and mind by avoiding any reductionism.

Ignoring the role of women and children in bringing about peace and security is emblematic of the AKP's policies of gender mainstreaming and shows their lack of commitment to the implementation and realization of the WPS agenda. Gizem Bilgin Aytac stresses how it is crucial to collaborate with NGOs for the implementation of the WPS agenda in Turkey. Thus, she writes that there are a few NGOs which concentrate on the relationship between peace and women and that there is no specific organization dealing with the WPS agenda (Aytac 2021, p. 10). Burcu Özdemir Sarıgil notes that the Turkish model of Humanitarian Aid and Assistance lacks a gender perspective and commitment to equality (2021).

Given that gender equality is a necessary condition for structuring a democratic and peaceful order, women's perspectives, knowledge and experiences can contribute to solutions for war and conflict. Within the framework of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, which began and intensified in the 1990s, women became vocal about the gender-related risks of the conflict and worked towards opening a space for reconstructing peace. Since 1990, Kurdish and Turkish women have collaborated in the creation of women's peace groups. In 2009, some of these activists founded the 'Women's Initiative for Peace' to further the ongoing struggle against male domination and war (Barış için Kadın Girişimi 2014). These women believed that the Kurdish question could be resolved and peace restored if women's voice could be heard and if they could participate in the peace process (Alemder 2019). Kurdish and Turkish feminist groups worked together to build a culture of peace: for instance, in the 2000s, the feminist magazine *Amargi* created a space in which these activists could write about the damages produced by militarism and war (Arat & Pamuk 2019, p. 250).

Notwithstanding women's attempts at contributing to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and their proposals for the strengthening of democratic norms and institutions, they were excluded from the negotiation processes during and after the conflict in the East and Southeast of Turkey regarding the Kurdish question; during the last years, their rights have been not only violated, but questioned. In the concluding observations on Turkey's seventh periodic report in 2016, CEDAW recommended that Turkey take necessary steps to begin peace negotiations and 'ensure that women and women's rights organizations are included in all peace negotiations and post-conflict efforts for rebuilding and reconstruction' (CEDAW 2016, article 37a). The implementation of international conventions such as CEDAW and Security Council resolution 1325, which protect, secure, preserve, and fulfil women's human rights, is necessary at a national and regional level in preventing the violation of human rights during and after conflict.

The headscarf ban was another challenge in the democratization process. Religious women struggled to obtain rights against secular restrictions on dress in public space. In 2013, the headscarf ban was repealed by the AKP and therefore the Islamist women's protest against the headscarf ban petered out. Their struggle, unlike the critique of the contradictory religious view on women, was supported by many feminist-secular groups considering their struggle as a human right issue. 'With the rise of the AKP to power in 2002 and the positive atmosphere generated by the EU accession process, Islamist women's CSOs began to cooperate with some feminist and Kurdish women's CSOs to improve women's rights' (Aksoy 2018, p.106). Critical Islamist CSOs and groups of Muslim feminists worked with other women's CSOs to fight against the proposed abortion ban in 2013 (Aksoy 2018, p.106). The basic criticism made by these critical Islamist CSOs was directed at the government's intervention on their body once the secular state did the same for their headscarf.

Therefore, they refuted all 'types of control over women's bodies whether in the name of modernity, secularism, the Republic, religion, tradition, custom, morality, honour or freedom' (Arat 2010, p. 880). Secular feminists and pious women collaborated together to struggle against the attempt of the AKP majority in parliament to change the Penal Code in 2016. This Code proposed a law that 'would allow men who had sex with underage children, including rape, to have their punishment deferred if they married them. The bill aimed to protect those men who contracted religious marriages with girls below the age of marriage as prescribed by the Civil Code' (Arat & Pamuk 2019, p. 260).

Since women and children are more vulnerable groups because of migration, poverty, violence, rape, discrimination resulting from male wars, it is necessary to hear women's words about the war and its results, about peace and its process, its conditions and the way to reconstruct it. The AKP has tried to destroy women's desires to establish a non-hierarchical, non-sexist, democratic country since 2011. It is necessary that Turkish, Kurdish, and religious women come together through their organizations and collaborate with each other to fight against an authoritarian regime to obtain their rights and to establish a peaceful and democratic society in which they are regarded as subjects or agents.

The establishment of *gender-equality based-hegemony* can be a solution to the damage produced by conflict and war which are the result of the existing capitalist system. By the concept of gender-equality hegemony, I am referring to the Gramscian sense of hegemony which demands a consensus and an intellectual-cultural leadership based on gender equality. More precisely, political and cultural hegemony. 'The charismatic *women of destiny*'³⁶ can bring a different perspective to the social, cultural and political problems of a world in crisis; it is the crisis of male supremacy and, as Gramsci says, this old system is bound to die, allowing a new one to be born through a gender-equality based-hegemony.

The particular demand of women is to be accepted as individuals who can control their lives and who can decide on their bodies. 'Instead, many feminist scholars argue that the increased focus on sexual violence has seen "women returned [...] to the singular destination of victimhood" [...], and the emphasis on women's agency and the role they could play in building peace recede into the background' (Thomson 2019, p. 601). This is a crucial and significant criticism which stresses on women as actors of their actions and decisions and on their power and ability to construct peace and *peaceful hegemony*.

(Feminist) Women are considered as enemies for two reasons: firstly, because they produce knowledge about the gender question by criticizing the patriarchal structure of society; secondly, because women are now more visible in public life; thirdly, they have a particular way of struggling which is different from the traditionalist style in the sense that they are more open to negotiation and they are more colourful in struggle. However, women may assume cultural-intellectual leadership and could bring about peace through an anti-militarist, anti-war stance.

Conclusion

This study focused primarily on women's role in the peacebuilding and peacekeeping process in Turkey by two ways: a) first it investigated how AKP's policies undermine the development of a gender perspective in civil and political society through the use of Gramsci's organic intellectuals and his Caesarist-Bonapartist model to explain Erdoğan's authoritarianism; b) it acknowledged that women and women's organizations might have a great potentiality of creating/leading a hegemonic alternative by taking a counterhegemonic position.

³⁶ Originally, Gramsci refers to 'charismatic "men of destiny"' (Gramsci 1992 *SPN*, p. 210).

The article tried to interpret the current regime as Caesarist-Bonapartist by using Gramscian theory and terminology which is in line with its approach to the gender issue. This study demonstrated that the AKP could not establish its own hegemony while it failed to build cultural-intellectual and ideological leadership.

This article demonstrated that the AKP tried to establish its hegemony by engaging in civil and political society. Instead of establishing this hegemony by the *spontaneous* development of civil society, i.e., by supporting *independent* civil organizations, and instead of implementing the WSP agenda which advocates female participation in the peace building process and underlines the importance of NAPs, it built up its civil organization to control civil society, to support its agenda, to circulate its ideology and views. This essentialist and victimhood-oriented approach block the AKP from implementing the WPS agenda. In a country like Turkey, where religious and ethnic conflicts always exist, the implementation of the WPS agenda becomes crucial to empower women and their organizations or associations to deal with intersecting religious, ethnic, economic, and sexist problems.

In a Gramscian sense, women's movements in civil society can create a counterhegemonic power not only against the hegemony of the state but also the hierarchical, patriarchal, nationalist, conservative, racist and colonialist structure of the state and society. Women's movements can create a new potential for a *gender equality based-hegemony*. As Gramsci analyses through his theory of intellectuals, he believes that the bourgeois intellectuals, during the fascist period, supported the state to gain the people's consent within civil society by producing and controlling the ideas. What Gramsci is suggesting is to criticize, question, and struggle against these ideas and create new counter-ideas or a new counter-ideology to gain people's consent. In this respect, women's movement and feminist ideology can respond to a Gramscian hegemonic demand.³⁷

Gramscian thinking helps us to understand how the women's movement can create 'a new organization of knowledge' (Dikici-Bilgin 2009, p. 112) by replacing and removing the old *regressive-aggressive* one.

ORCID

Sevgi Doğan 0000-0002-5220-5847

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³⁷ For a different perspective on Gramsci's theory of civil society and women's civil society organizations and movements see Markus Kotela (2013), *Europeanization and Civil Society Turkish NGOs as instruments of change?*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, New York (p 163). The author mostly focuses on the contradictions and conflicts between counterhegemonic voices in society while they challenge 'each other's legitimacy in a public debate' (p. 163).

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