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# Binary Deliberation: The Role of Social Learning in Divided Societies

## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to outline a new framework based on an extension and of the current theories of deliberative democracy. The framework, which I call “Binary Deliberation” emanates from an analysis of the social learning phase of deliberative activity. Deliberation, in the theories of deliberative democracy, is usually treated as a decision-making procedure. However, this approach falls short to appreciate the full benefits of the deliberative process. Binary deliberation argues for an analytical separation between social learning and decision-making phases of deliberation in order to allocate a distinct sphere to those specific moments of deliberation oriented to interpretation of differences rather than making decisions. The paper will also discuss the findings of two case studies from Turkey analysing the interaction between Islamic and secular discourses in the Turkish public sphere. The findings reveal a significant convergence between Liberal Left and Islamic groups in their attitude towards democratic values. This convergence indicates a new tendency in Turkish politics, yet its benefits cannot be fully realised until these groups deal with each other within the spheres of social learning.

## **Keywords**

Social Learning, Divided Societies, Turkey, Islam

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Within the last decade the normative idea of deliberative democracy has established itself as a viable option for designing democratic practice. Yet, the debate continues and there is still ample room to explore the ways in which deliberation can be practically implemented. One of the shortcomings of deliberative theory, in this sense, seems to be the difficulty in its handling of situations in which deep divisions prevail. It remains a matter of dispute as to whether or how deliberative democracy can accommodate deep cultural difference and conflicting identities (Deveux, 2003; Dryzek, 2005). While some difficulties stem from the usual predicaments any democratic project faces, such as existing power relations and inequalities in various forms, some are generated by ambiguities in deliberative theory itself. One of these predicaments is related to the insufficient level of attention paid to the internal differences of deliberative practises and the tension this insufficiency creates in the formulation of a deliberative framework. The internal difference question can be associated with the different phases of deliberation as decision-making and social learning. A general trend among most deliberative theorists is to treat deliberation as a decision-making procedure. Yet, this tendency overlooks the fact that there is another important phase of deliberation, which is oriented to social learning and understanding rather than decision-making.

For the development of democratic governance in multicultural settings the social learning phase of deliberation is especially crucial in terms of both its intrinsic qualities and as a necessary prerequisite to effective decision-making. It is relatively difficult for different groups in a divided society to successfully converge on common ground within decision-making procedures without prior attention to the social learning phase where groups can focus on understanding of each other rather than reaching agreement. When the ethical and cultural differences that constitute the background for any potential disagreement are considered during the social learning phase of deliberation, insulated from the immediate pressures of decision-making, then the unique resources of deliberation can flourish freely and enhance the outcome of any decision-making procedures. Therefore, it is essential that the importance of social learning phase of deliberation in divided societies be specifically acknowledged.

To this end, I will first outline the differences between social learning and the decision-making aspects of deliberation. This section will be followed by a brief outline of Binary Deliberation, which argues for

dividing deliberative activity in two separate phases, Social Learning and Decision-Making. I will develop the framework for Binary Deliberation on the basis of a cross-disciplinary approach communicating between deliberative theory and the findings of some research in social psychology. I will then move to the findings of two case studies in Turkey to show why social learning could play an important role in enhancing the level of understanding, hence interaction, between divided groups.

## **SOCIAL LEARNING vs DECISION-MAKING**

Individuals in deliberative settings search for a sense of consistency in their dealings with the issues at hand. I understand consistency as the logical link between positions individuals develop during deliberation and the cognitive skills they choose to evaluate these positions. In this sense participants apply different logic, hence cognitive skills, to the different stages of deliberation, which in terms of their aim and their orientation can be conceptualised in two distinct categories: social learning and decision-making.

Social learning is the first stage that individuals engage within a genuinely deliberative environment. Here, the aim of interaction between participants is to develop an understanding of each other's claims. In other words, the purpose of deliberation becomes one of assessment and evaluation of other perspectives. At this stage participants try to put themselves into others' shoes in an objective manner in order to look at the various claims on the agenda from a neutral perspective. Hence, interpretation of differences becomes the focus of the deliberative practice, and reaching agreement does not assume a priority during deliberation. The lack of pressure to make a decision also bestows upon social learning a different set of spatial and temporal properties. Most importantly, deliberation does not operate under formal time and space constraints as in most decision-making-oriented procedures. This freedom paves the way for a more inclusive and more informal deliberative framework in which differences can be expressed in a variety of more satisfactory ways. The social learning stage of deliberation, therefore, is primarily a hermeneutic practice, which fits well into Gadamer's notion of "the fusion of horizons", in which the traditional and the new converge to form a new perspective on the issue at hand (1975). In the fusion of horizons, nobody is fully detached from their subjective views, yet they arrive at a new juncture through learning without specifically striving for a rational agreement.

In contrast to the social learning stage of deliberation, deliberation as decision-making aims at specific decision. This is usually a formal process oriented to making decisions under some limited time and space

conditions. At the end of the process participants are forced to make a decision through voting, consensus, or some other kind of agreement. An important consequence of the decision-making procedures is that the urgency of reaching a decision overwhelms the attitude towards opinion-formation, thus preventing a broadening of the scope of learning. A highly precious element of deliberation, the time, limits the available scope of decision-making procedures, thus also delimiting the amount of information to share. The logic and the internal dynamics of deliberation also change; the hermeneutic function of social learning ceases its operation and retreats to the background since the deliberation moves into a different stage, in which reaching decisions assumes priority.

The main difference between social learning and decision-making, then, is their orientation to understanding and agreement, respectively. Yet, if participants do not converge on a solution, what is the merit of discussion? Deliberative theorists give various answers to this question. Warnke maintains that “in the first place, we come to understand perspectives other than our own; in the second place, we often learn from them” (2001, p. 301). Fearon echoes Warnke’s succinct summary of the benefits of discussion. He highlights several reasons why deliberation, even only for the sake of exchanging ideas, has a value. Fearon’s argument does not deal directly with the social learning aspect of deliberation, yet reinforces the idea that when deliberation works with an orientation to learning it could “improve the likely implementation of the decision” (1998, p. 45). Fearon also argues that the quality of discussion helps to gain the legitimacy of final decision in the eyes of the group, hence contributes to group solidarity. In a similar vein, Bohman (1998) maintains that unrestricted public discussion increases the democratic quality of the decisions because it takes into account all existing positions. Fennema and Maussen (2000) also underline the importance of public discussion as more dispersed and less institutionalised forms of public debate distinct from the regulated arena of public deliberation that is linked to decision-making. They conceive public discussion as a learning process and contend that public discussion should be as unrestricted as possible so that different positions become visible in the public eye. This broad inclusiveness, Fennema and Maussen suggest, could not only contribute to the overall quality of decisions in the long run, but could also counter some arguments against deliberation that it favours those who can articulate themselves well (Sanders, 1997; Fraser, 1992; Mansbridge, 1980). Deveaux also contributes to the debate by reflecting on the benefits of locating the source of democratic legitimacy outside formal political deliberation. The informal dimension of deliberation for Deveaux reflected

in “acts of cultural dissent, subversion, and reinvention in a range of social settings” (2003, p. 782) is an important part of democratic activity since democratic legitimacy cannot be exhausted by formal political processes alone.

On the other hand, the shift from social learning to reaching agreement (or from understanding to decision-making) comes with a price. One of the important consequences occurs at the level of personal engagement between participants. Orientation towards decision-making undermines the role of cooperative interaction by triggering an inclination towards protecting the existing configuration of interests, thus leading to a strategic power struggle among participants. Dryzek, for instance, argues that decision-making processes might exacerbate the possibility that deliberation could turn into an identity contest, if decision-making is linked to sovereignty challenge (2005). Clashes between identities rather than constructive engagement would surely have a detrimental impact on the quality of the whole process. Decision-oriented procedures would tend to encourage strategic calculations rather than learning. Fung, on the other hand, argues for “hot” deliberation in which participants might take deliberation more seriously if they have much at stake and believe they can influence decision (2003).

The strategic use of deliberation within decision-making processes is also highlighted by Sunstein, who argues that under the pressures of decision-making, members of a deliberating group would actually polarise their pre-deliberation tendencies towards a more extreme point, instead of moving towards agreement (2002). He points to research that the more participants attend to deliberation as a like-minded group emphasising their group identity, the less chance there will be that their original position will be moderated by deliberation. When this occurs there is clearly less chance that deliberation could display the kind of interaction favoured by an attitude towards understanding. This point is also indicative of the fact that the more members of a group are subject to peer pressure and group expectations, the less they interact with an attitude towards understanding others. As Mackie observes, people acting as part of an interest group rarely admit to changing their minds during a deliberative practice, yet admitting such becomes relatively easy in a subsequent forum with different participants (2002).

Sunstein, on the other hand, observes that his findings are at odds with Fishkin’s Deliberative Opinion Polling (DOP) conducted in several countries. DOP, in which small groups of participants from different backgrounds are asked to deliberate about various issues, has found no systematic tendency toward polarisation, even though it was identifiable in

some cases. On the contrary, Fishkin asserts that in DOPs all participants tend to change their attitude with deliberation (2009; 1995). After analysing the differences between his cases and the DOPs, Sunstein concludes that the difference stems from the institutional design of the deliberative procedures. In DOP cases, a large pool of information, including participants from various backgrounds, was available. The most importantly, though, is that there was no pressure for decision-making at the end of deliberation. Those factors, according to Sunstein, have considerably reduced the possibility of group polarisation in DOP cases (2002).

### **BINARY DELIBERATION:**

The implications of the difference between the social-learning and decision-making aspects of deliberation are of fundamental importance from the point of view of deliberative theory. The literature on deliberative politics has often conceptualised deliberation as a decision-making process and confined it into the formal structures of the various governing bodies oriented to reaching decisions. For instance, according to Cohen, “Deliberation, generically understood, is about weighing the reasons relevant to a decision with a view to making a decision on the basis of that weighing” (2007, p. 219) (my emphasis). Similarly Thompson specifies “deliberation” to mean only “decision-oriented discussion” that “leads directly to binding decisions” (2008, pp. 503, 504, -(my emphasis). Nevertheless, the important role played by informal ways of deliberation was emphasized earlier by Habermas and other democratic theorists such as Dryzek (2000; 2005), Benhabib (1992; 2002), Young (2000), Mansbridge (1999) and McCarthy (1991) and more recently by Parkinson (2006), Walsh (2007) and Steiner (in press).

Jürgen Habermas, particularly in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1987), offers useful insights into the fundamental role that learning reciprocity plays in communication. In his later works he also continues to emphasize the importance of informal, open and less-rigidly structured spheres of communication within the civil society. However, he does not analyse how and why the formal and informal deliberative bodies differ from each other. Instead, he increasingly uses the formal bodies of deliberation such as parliament, administrative bodies and legal system as the institutional basis for his theory. Within his framework, even though the legitimacy of the system is still tied into the idea of an active citizenry co-authoring the foundations of the political system, the core of the decision-making power remains in the hands of formal institutions. His dual-track system identifies a division of work between opinion formations within the

public sphere and will formation within formal bodies of decision-making. Within his model, the role of ordinary citizens, who are supposed to be “the authors of the law”, is limited to acting as a sensory device only. The result, in Habermas’ words, is that “civil society can directly transform only itself, and it can have at most an indirect effect on the self-transformation of the political system” (1996, p. 372). It is hoped that the influence of “the authors of the law” find their way into the decision-making processes through some indirect means such as elections and the media.

What is problematic with Habermas’ dualism, from the point of my argument, is that not only it subordinates the impact of social learning to the formal realms of decision-making, but also that it leaves one of the most important questions open; that is, how to sustain citizen’s deliberative capacity and their level of engagement within a setting in which the link between their effort and the outcome is ultimately tied to the decisions of a third party? The fragmentation of modern societies undeniably and inescapably creates different layers between the legitimate owners of the decision-making power and the moment of actual decision-making. Yet, the discontinuity between the people as the authors of the law and the legislatures who ultimately author the law needs to be addressed carefully when the gap in question manifests itself in the form of a simple but important question: “Why participate if the influence can only be achieved indirectly?” A satisfactory answer to this question should entail measures to enhance the democratic capacity of citizens in different participatory practices within the public sphere. Yet, unless the capacity gained within these practices is visibly and comprehensibly linked to actual decision-making processes, the question of “why participate” would remain as an ongoing dilemma for democratic societies. Giving a proper answer, therefore, to this question requires the development of a framework that aims to achieve two goals: first, creating a formal sphere for social learning so that it can function in its own terms; second, linking social learning back to the decision-making moments of deliberation in order to create a more sustained and more legitimate deliberative practice.

The framework I propose, which distinguishes between social learning and decision-making, aims at resolving this dilemma. Binary Deliberation envisages deliberative activity, where possible, always structured in a two-phase form in which social learning is separated from the actual decision-making process. The first phase is strictly oriented toward understanding, and I refer to it as social learning. It is designed to specifically facilitate the broad, inclusive, informal means of deliberation. In the second phase deliberative activity specifically moves towards making decisions. However, it differs from the standard decision-making

processes because it builds upon, hence benefits from, the outcomes of the social learning phase. Therefore, the scope of participants' engagement within Binary Deliberation is woven through both phases. The separation, in this sense, is only a temporary step to achieve better decision-making outcomes. In other words, the social learning and decision-making phases work in tandem in a mutually inclusive fashion. Yet, perhaps most importantly, while the decision-making phase benefits from the social learning phase, repeated applications of this model could in turn influence the outcomes of future social learning phases. That is, each repeated application of the model could potentially facilitate the development of new and higher levels of social understanding, so far as Binary Deliberation is conceived in continuum.

### **The Social Learning Phase**

Claus Offe concludes one of his essays with an important question "Is it conceivable that the 'social capital' of trusting and cooperative civic relations can be encouraged, acquired and generated and not just inherited?"(1999, p. 87). Offe's question is a critical one simply because if democratic theory assumes that the longevity of political systems is largely dependent on the level of attachment among its citizens, then trust certainly plays a central role in the process of building a democratic polity. If decision-making-oriented deliberation is prone to switching to the strategic forms of communication, then how to get participants out of this cocoon of power gaming and establish trust between them becomes an immediate priority for deliberative theory. The social learning phase of Binary Deliberation aims at providing a solution to this undertaking.

The social learning phase builds understanding between group members by enhancing communication between them. There are potentially many advantages offered by this process. It is designed in such a way that the process never loses sight of its main purpose, which is to identify values, interests and preferences of individuals and to learn from them. As mentioned earlier, an important aspect of deliberative process, cognitive objectivity, can be learned during this process. Talking to other people and being involved in their point of view plays a significant role in establishing cognitive objectivity (Heller, 1958). During the social learning phase individuals freely express their values and concerns in a cooperative manner. A key issue here is to allow individuals to freely express their identity so that they feel respected, hence more involved in the process. Research in social psychology indicates that reaching an understanding between conflicting parties is most likely to be successful when the process serves as a forum in which the parties are fully satisfied

with the level that they are allowed to express themselves (Eggins et al., 2002). Free expression of identities, feelings and thoughts allows participants to establish a link between themselves and the goals of the deliberative process. This link is crucial because it creates a self-defining reference point, which works as a yardstick for participants to compare themselves with the broader social context in which they are located. During the process of forming a yardstick, the issues discussed from the ethical and moral points of view of participants enable them to establish the points of commonality within the group. These commonalities are crucial because the attitude change becomes more likely when participants establish a common reference point with others (Haslam et al., 1996).

The social learning phase could also offset the impact of group polarisation. Eggins et al. (2002, p. 889) argue that the length and frequency of deliberative gatherings sustained over time is an important factor in offsetting the effect of group polarisation. They indicate that group polarisation occurs under conditions where a representation of group identities is insufficient. They examine the impact of group identities over time and conclude that structural factors that ultimately enhance identity have a positive impact upon participants' experience of the process and their capacity to work productively (p. 897). Corollary to the study is the finding that if participants feel that their inputs are valued, then their relationship with others has a more productive positive spin. This in turn contributes to the process by creating an overarching shared identity. The importance of time is also underlined by Gaertner et al. (1993, 1994) who show that after an extended period of contact people can develop a new and more inclusive category underlining similarities, hence reducing intergroup bias. In a case study of environmental management Kelly (2001) highlights the impact of social learning on participants' attitudes and preferences. He reports that the process and facilitation methods organised between landholders, researchers and government staff and based on a participatory learning cycle encouraged participants to be open about their preferences, goals and values. This process, coupled with the impact of having an open and transparent style, was able to produce a high degree of trust between everyone.

Therefore, the first phase of Binary Deliberation, social learning, could hypothetically offer the following potential outcomes:

*Better understanding, hence trust:* Communication across different groups would break the mental cycle that stereotyping creates. In most cases this process would also generate trust among group members.

*A sense of belonging, hence shared identity:* Being able to express personal points of view would generate a sense of belonging to the wider community and help to potentially develop a shared identity.

*Satisfaction:* Inclusiveness and equality principles of the process would generate a sense of satisfaction among participants, which could lead to enhanced legitimacy when tied to the decision-making phase.

### **The Decision-Making Phase**

A properly designed and executed social learning phase could be a springboard for developing trust and satisfaction amongst participants who, upon entering the decision-making phase, are expected to make more informed decisions. The importance of this process lies in the fact that participants, at the end, not only get to know each other better, but also by reaching a decision together they step into the realm of cooperation in which they one way or another step out of the realm of mistrust. Eggins et al. (2002) show that the positive outcomes produced in an earlier phase are carried over to a subsequent phase in which members of different groups come together to negotiate a collective strategy.

The two-phase structure of Binary Deliberation, therefore, would encourage cooperative behaviour. If the positive sense of cooperation developed during the social learning phase of deliberation is followed by reaching a decision, then participants would be able to link their efforts to a concrete outcome. This link in return would not only make deliberative process more sustainable over time, but would also increase the chance of achieving a better outcome. This is a powerful process in the sense that it could create the conditions of communication across the marginal sections of the community. That is, the possibility of reaching an agreement increases when social learning occurs. In other words, the greater the amount of learning achieved, the better the outcome of decision-making.

In the decision-making phase, the sense of satisfaction developed in the first phase could also lead to another important outcome: the fairness of the process. Research indicates that if participants feel satisfied with the fairness of the process they worry less about the nature of the final decision; that is, if the decision is not in their favour they do not necessarily feel alienated from the process (Tyler, 2006; Pruitt et al., 1993). It can be expected then that the satisfaction with the process should lead to an enhanced level of legitimacy.

The fairness of the process is also crucial to develop “a new sense of self” among participants as being part of a social group. The group value model suggests that people are more likely to develop a different sense of themselves related to a certain group when they receive fair treatment within this group (Tyler, 1989). Furthermore, fair treatment also increases people’s commitment to their group (Simon & Sturmer, 2003). The effect of developing a sense of social connection with others has been tested in a deliberative setting. In their study of a deliberative poll conducted in the Australian Capital Territory in 2002 on the issue of whether or not the ACT should introduce a bill of rights, Eggins, Reynolds, Oakes & Mavor (2007) found out that exposure to information, fair treatment and social identification can all play a role in making participants more engaged in the process. Yet the most important factor is “when they are treated with respect and given opportunities to discuss issues, ask questions and to air their views in collaboration with other members of a relevant community” (p. 99).

Yet, the most important outcome of the decision-making phase would be a likely change in the attitudes of participants. Intergroup contact theory in social psychology maintains that when individuals engage in positive social interaction with the members of a disliked group, as when making a decision together about a common concern, what they learn from this interaction becomes inconsistent with their general attitude (Pettigrew, 1998; Gilbert, Fiske, Lindzey, 1998). This inconsistency ultimately leads to a change in attitudes to justify the new behaviour. Therefore, at the end of the second phase, combined with the positive effects of the first phase of Binary Deliberation, it would not be unrealistic to expect a positive shift in negative attitudes towards the members of other groups.

The hypothetical benefits of the second phase of the Binary Deliberation model, the Decision-Making Phase, could then be summarised as follows:

*Better outcomes:* Since participants would be better informed and more satisfied in relation to the issues they dealt with during the first phase, the quality of decisions in the second phase would be higher, in the sense that they would reflect an overall satisfaction among participants.

*Enhanced legitimacy:* Being consulted in a process in equal terms with others would enhance the trust not only in others but also in the political system, hence resulting in enhanced legitimacy.

*Possibility of a change in negative attitudes:* Meaningful cooperation could further enhance the possibility of a positive change in

the attitudes of those who display negative attitude towards the members of a different group.

As stated earlier, Binary Deliberation perceives the social learning and decision-making phases working in tandem, that is, they are two distinct spheres of operation, yet they are also mutually inclusive in the sense that the process of Binary Deliberation cannot be assumed fully completed without a full realization of both phases. In addition to all positive outcomes listed above, what should be valuable in this process is that it is capable of having an influence beyond its boundaries, and that there is a potential for an enhanced level of understanding and trust to be aroused throughout these phases which could then become the foundation for a more sustainable participation within the community. As Mutz indicates, studies in social contexts and social networks concurs that participatory social environment renders more participation; that is, “the more people interact with one another in a social context, the more norms of participation will be transmitted, and the more people will be recruited into political activity” (2006, p. 96). Similarly, Pettigrew echoes Mutz by asserting that “intergroup contact and its effects are cumulative –we live what we learn” (1998, p. 78).

The positive attitudes developed within Binary Deliberation could, therefore, progress beyond the deliberative process and create a more generalized basis for future forms of cooperation. The successful and repeated applications of Binary Deliberation within a singular social sphere could create a continuous, upwardly moving spiral of bonding and trust as the future platforms for ever increasing cooperation within future Binary Deliberation engagements as well as general interaction within the broader social sphere.

### **The Significance of Binary Deliberation for Divided Societies: The Case of Turkey**

The importance of Binary Deliberation becomes immediately visible when societies are considered, such as in Turkey, where social, religious and cultural divisions cut deep across society and the ethical self-understanding of a community clashes with others on matters related to living together. If societal divisions are linked to ethical disagreements in general, then the solution to the problems of divided societies has to be conceptualised first at the level of social learning phase of deliberation oriented to understanding. It is more important at this stage that an understanding of the arguments and the needs of others primarily drive deliberation rather than that an agreement is reached at the end. The

issues related to ethical and cultural differences that constitute the background for any potential disagreement at the decision-making level are not expected to be resolved within a certain time frame. What is needed is to allocate a formally recognized sphere to the social learning phase of deliberation in order to maximise the potential towards mutual understanding inherent in all deliberative activities. Binary Deliberation is, therefore, a viable option for divided societies due to its emphasis on the social learning aspect of deliberation. To support this assertion, in the next section I will present two case studies from Turkey. The first study will present the findings of a Q study administered in Turkey in 2002, analysing the points of convergence and divergence between liberal left and Islamic groups. The Q study will be followed by another case study (Women's Platform for Peace) to trace the role of social learning in a real life situation based on individual interviews.

### **Q Methodology**

Q methodology tests individuals in terms of their position concerning a specific topic. The ability of Q methodology to work through the subjective values, judgements and preferences of individuals and create a typological map of subjective frameworks makes it an ideal methodology for comparing different patterns in attitudes. From the perspective of social learning, to be able to see the points of convergence and divergence between different positions is significant since these points indicate either a possible point of interaction or a reason that blocks interaction, which all are crucial to identify clearly where and how social learning can occur in a given setting.

The topic for the Q study administered in Turkey during the 2002 general elections was Islam, Secularism and Democracy. The aim of the study was to define the meaning that people attribute to the topic in question by revealing how people perceive the relationship between Islam, democracy and secularism in their daily engagement with those issues. The second aim was to observe whether, and to what extent, deliberative concepts, such as understanding each other through dialog or mutual respect, are embedded within the attitudes of participants. The Q study findings provide important clues as why, in a divided society such as Turkey, deliberation oriented to social learning and understanding could play a vital role. The findings show that divisions between secular and Islamic discourses in Turkey are not necessarily insurmountable, against a common perception. Yet, achieving an understanding of commonalities between discourses requires an emphasis on the implementation of the

right deliberative framework; deliberation oriented to social learning and understanding.

The Q study was administered through a set of statements presented to individuals, which participants were asked to rank from “most agree” to “most disagree”<sup>1</sup>. For the purpose of this research, the set of statements, called the Q set, was drawn from three discussion groups. The first group consisted of 10 secular-minded people, the second of 10 religious people and the third one of 20 people with either a secular or a Muslim background. Each group deliberated freely for approximately two hours. From these deliberations, 64 statements were selected according to a matrix system designed to ensure the representation of conceptual diversity. The statements then were rank-ordered by 34 individuals who did not attend the previous deliberations and were from a variety of social and political backgrounds, thus reflecting the diversity of Turkey’s social and political fabric. Interviewing large numbers is not important for a Q study since the idea is to capture the content of everyday life discourses in conversations and commentaries, focusing on the quality of discourses rather than on the quantity of each in society. Usually a sample of 30–40 people is considered large enough. In the next step, the Q-sorts were correlated and subjected to centroid factor analysis and Varimax rotation by using the statistical package PQ Method (2.06). Two factors, Liberal Left (LL) and Islamic (IS), showed significant similarities in their attitudes towards democratic and secular principles. Before displaying their factor scores, let me briefly describe each factor in a narrative based on how a hypothetical individual loading 100% on the factor would sort the original 64 statements.

### **The Liberal Left (LL)**

Based on the findings of factor analysis the LL can be described as a highly democratic and secular position. Despite its commitment to secularism it does not subscribe to the Kemalist vision in that it does not conceive democracy as subservient to secularism. The LL is committed to the rule of law based on individual rights. It sincerely attends to the problems of Muslim women even though it does not subscribe to any religious assertions made by Muslims. The LL opposes the state’s heavy-handed policy on the scarf issue.

Also, unlike Kemalists, the role of the army in politics is strongly opposed and the unity of the state is expected to be dependent upon basic individual rights. The diverse nature of Turkish society is not seen as a threat; instead the importance of common points is weighed heavily. In this sense, the LL has similarities with the IS, particularly in its lack of

sympathy towards the army and the state. A major difference between the LL and the IS is that the LL is less optimistic in the role that it attributes to dialog in resolving differences.

### Islamic (IS)

According to the Q study findings, the IS fully subscribe to the Islamic values and expect them to play a role in public life. This is the major point of contention between the IS and the LL.

Naturally, it opposes many of the Kemalist ideas, particularly those related to secularism. Yet the IS grounds its opposition to secularism in a democratic point of view by emphasising the importance of freedom of religious practice. Hence, it defends the freedom to use the scarf as part of a democratic practice. As in the case of the LL, the IS also prioritises democratic principles over secularism. Similarly, on the role of the army and the state in dealing with religious matters the IS also shares the same sentiment with the LL. In fact, in those issues the Q findings indicate a remarkable level of similarity between the IS and the LL.

The IS puts heavy emphasis on the role of dialog and mutual understanding. The Q findings show that all statements related to dialog and mutual understanding are ranked very highly by the IS. Indeed, the emphasis on these points is so distinctive that in terms of prospects for democracy in Turkey it could be described as the most important single finding of the Q study in Turkey. The IS, as the factor analysis will show, consistently argues for reconciling differences through a process of rational dialog and rebuffs suggestions that Islam and democracy are irreconcilable.

Table 1 shows how the LL and the IS participants compare, between -6=Most Disagree and +6=Most Agree, in their responses to the statements gathered from group discussions:

Table 1

STATEMENTS	LL	IS
7. The army is the guarantor of democracy and secularism.	-6	-6
60. In a secular society everybody should abide by the law. If the law bans wearing the scarf in public institutions the rule should be respected.	-5	-6
61. We should trust our people whether they are Kurds, Turks, Laz, Alevi, whether they wear a scarf or not. The more divisions are created in the name of state protection, the more divided we become. This is the real danger.	5	6
51. If the freedom of belief is overemphasised, Muslim people might be affected by the ideas that are dangerous for the secular regime.	-4	-5
25. Whether I cover myself with a scarf or not should be no one's business. This is what I understand from secularism. Everybody should pay respect to different beliefs.	4	4
59. We have to find out what is common among us rather than focusing on differences. For instance, we	6	3

have to emphasise the importance of education at the universities instead of arguing about the scarf controversy.		
48. The conflict between secular and Islamic people has been created superficially. The groups who are in control of the state have always created enemies in order to maintain their power. Yesterday it was communism, today fundamentalist Islam.	6	3
47. My wife has been refused to be issued a health card only because she wears a scarf. This is against basic human rights and secularism.	5	3
10. The differences between us are too deep. We cannot reconcile them by talking. This system will remain as it is in the future.	-3	-5
41. Quite a few female students, who had to take off their scarf to be admitted to universities, later became quite happy with their new look. May be this rule allowed them to do what they really want.	-3	-4
64. The Islamists are only softening their lines because of the strong resistance shown against them by the Army and Kemalists.	-3	-4
2. Kemalism and secularism cannot be separated from each other. Separating them will mean the end of secularism. If you are secular you are also Kemalist, or vice versa.	-2	-4

As the table 1 shows, the similarities between the IS and the LL are quite substantial. The fact that both the LL and the IS define individual rights as the main paradigm for their democratic framework becomes immediately evident in their response to the scarf issue. They both consider the scarf problem as a human rights issue irrespective of its impact on the state (25-41-47). Interestingly, though, the LL feels even stronger than the IS when the issue is clearly tied to another aspect of individual rights, such as health, as in the case of (1).

Consequently, the LL and the IS agree that if the law does not comply with human rights it does not deserve respect from citizens (60). This is quite a remarkable result from an Islamic point of view since it simply puts Muslims into the same anti-establishment category as the LL. Even though an anti-establishment sentiment can be associated with the left more easily in general, it is surely a new phenomenon for the Islamic population particularly when it is brought into the fore with a clear emphasis on human rights.

An important result of the LL's and the IS's anti-establishment tendency was also to have an antagonistic relationship with the state. This is one of the main reasons that both the LL and the IS have similar views about the role of the state and the army in democratic practice in Turkey. They strongly disagree with the suggestion that the army is the guarantor of democracy and secularism (7). They also agree that the state's anti-democratic measures, manipulated by existing power holders, are the main source of conflict between seculars and Muslims (48). Both discourses are clearly anti-Kemalist (1-2), though interestingly the LL's reaction to Kemalism surpasses the IS's (1).

Another important similarity between the LL and the I comes to the fore when they agree that the current system is bound to change and dialog can be an important tool to play a role in stipulating the change(10).

Even though the LL in general is sceptical about the concept of dialog, it still throws its support behind this statement. When this finding is considered along with the LL's very strong endorsement of the idea that the conflict between secular and Islamic people is superficially created and provoked by some groups within the state rather than by ordinary people (48), then establishing a ground for a possible cooperation between leftists and Islamists appears to be within reach. A positive approach to people's empowerment also underlines their suspicion about the kind of politics that promotes a state-centred framework (61).

Overall, it is not difficult to conclude that the LL and the IS display some similar characteristics in relation to their understanding of a democratic polity. Both of them consistently defend the primacy of individual rights as the normative base for a democratic framework. Such an agreement on the main principles of a political framework opens up new opportunities for new forms of cooperation between two traditionally hostile sides of Turkish politics.

Traditionally, the left and the Islamic groups are considered as being on opposite sides of the political spectrum. While the left claimed to be representing development and progress, Islamic groups confined themselves to the boundaries of right-wing politics. The flirtation of Islamic groups with not only right-wing conservatives but also with ultra-nationalistic groups such as the MHP (The Nationalist Action Party) was commonplace. Hence historically the left and Islamic groups have been in a rather antagonistic relationship. The findings of the Q study also provide clear evidence of this antagonism between the left and Islamists.

Table2 (+6=Most Agree, -6=Most Disagree)

<b>STATEMENTS</b>	<b>LL</b>	<b>IS</b>
49. In a Muslim society, the framework for freedom has to be determined according to Islamic values.	-6	4
15. Islam can accommodate different groups including atheists.	-4	4
17. The purpose of religion will be defeated when it is carried over to the public arena. Beliefs are personal matters, thus they should be kept within the individual sphere.	3	5
52. Respect for individual rights, the fundamental principle of democracy and secularism, exists in Islam	-4	2
20. If everybody tries to live according to Islamic rule, a just system can come into existence.	-5	0
6. The problem with Islamic law in relation to democracy is that Islamic communities exert social pressure on individuals. This conflicts with the democratic notion of individual freedom and rights.	3	2
11. In some religious cities, during the Ramadan people were beaten if they ate or drank during fasting. How can I be sure that Islamists will not do the same if they come to power? How can I trust them?	2	3

As Table 2 shows, the LL displays a strong reaction to the possibility that religious norms can be imposed upon the public sphere (49-20-17). The LL appears quiet unconvinced that respect for individual

rights exist in Islam (52-15-6). The LL is also quite sceptical about the level of trust that they can build up towards Muslims (11). These differences between the LL and the IS are quite substantial in the sense that they can easily create a cycle of mistrust, hence can undermine any future form of cooperation between the parties.

However, if the opportunity is given, the similarities outlined above could in fact trigger the development of a better understanding leading to breaking the cycle of mistrust between them. This is exactly where social learning can play a crucial role. That is, once an institutional setting is provided to expand the scope of understanding between opposing groups, a well-functioning cooperation between them can become a real possibility. The case study on Women's Platform for Peace in the following section will show how this can be achieved in real life.

### **Women's Platform For Peace (WFPF)**

Established as an anti-war alliance between different women's organisations, WFPF has attracted various groups from an unusually wide range of backgrounds. Zeliha Çalıcı, a member of the executive committee of WFPF, explained that when they formed the platform at the beginning of 2001 they were not so sure what kind of support they would get from other organisations. Hence, they were quite surprised when they realised that a large number of women's organisations from various backgrounds, including feminists, Kemalists, Kurds, gays and transsexuals, and Muslims, were interested in joining the platform. As Çalıcı (2003) says,

This was a new experience for us. Even though in the past we supported each other in different activities this was the first time we got together under the umbrella of the same organisation. I think for all of us it has been a great learning experience even though it has not always run smoothly and we encountered some serious problems between several groups. (Çalıcı, 2003)

While the emergence of some problems, such as the tension between Kemalist and Muslim women, within the platform was not unexpected, other problems, such as the tension between feminists and leftists, surprised the members of the platform. The problem existing between Kemalist and Muslim women was a familiar problem. The Kemalists pursued a tough line in their relation with Muslim women, sometimes completely ignoring their presence in meetings. In Çalıcı's words, "They (Kemalists) were very self-righteous and simply refused to communicate with Muslim women" (Çalıcı, 2003). Another problem surfaced between feminists and leftists. According to the feminists the

culture of the left-wing groups was very masculine. Feminists were not very comfortable with Muslim women either, even though the Muslim women were part of an organisation known as Islamic feminists.

These divisions within the platform reflected the divisions existing within the Turkish public sphere at large. What is crucial though is that the WFPF has provided a platform to find a way to reconcile those differences. The outcome has not been completely successful, since the reluctance of Kemalists and feminists to develop a dialog with others eventually led to their withdrawal from the platform. Yet the remaining groups have managed to develop successful cooperation around the aims of the platform. □alçı regrets that they were unable to resolve their differences with the Kemalists and feminists.

This was in a way the unsuccessful side of our story. Yet, the ones who remained showed a remarkable persistence for establishing a dialog with each other. These were leftists, Muslims, Kurds, gays and transsexuals. However, I must single out Muslim women for their effort to create a common platform with the rest. They tried so hard that they finally convinced everybody of their sincerity. I sometimes question myself about whether we have made a mistake by allowing other groups to treat Muslim women so negatively. But, I suppose in a way this is how things developed. Everybody needed some time to get know the other and establish confidence. Those who could not believe in that left early. Yet, now we act together a lot more comfortably than we did initially. For instance, just today we submitted a petition to the French Embassy to protest against the recent decision of the French government disallowing female students to wear a scarf in schools. (□alçı, 2003)

□alçı's observation is crucial on the point that the members' experience within the WFPF has been a process of learning and understanding of each other's position. According to □alçı, once the initial concerns and prejudices were eased, the groups within the platform were able to function better, thus to make decisions successfully. The WFPF experience highlights the importance of organising deliberative activity in binary form. First, it is essential that groups who are traditionally considered as being in opposite camps should be given the opportunity to get together in order to clearly understand their differences or similarities. This, first of all, would provide new breathing space for different groups to reflect their problems in the public sphere. Then through their interaction, groups would be able to find out how to reconcile their differences, as long as they were able to abide by the principle that governs their interaction.

In order for WFPF to set a good example of social learning, the opinions of Muslim women in the WFPF also need to be taken into account. I interviewed Hidayet Tuksal of Ba□kent Kadın Platformu (Capital Women's Platform- CWP) to understand Muslim women's response to the

WFPF. Apart from her active role in the management of the CWP, Hidayet Tuksal is a renowned Islamic scholar, who is particularly known for her work on the role of women in Islam. Tuksal indicates that the recent discussions on democracy within Islamic groups have helped them to understand democratic principles better. As a result of these discussions, Tuksal states,

There has been a sharp increase in the number of women participating in the meetings we have organised. This is important because almost in every meeting we discuss issues related to democratic rights of women. Formulating our problems around some democratic rights not only increased our self-understanding but also our perception about other groups that are not Islamic. I consider this interaction very important because it helps us to define things from women's perspective. The perception of women in the Islamic community is strongly tied to some religious references, which are very difficult to challenge and change. (Tuksal, 2003)

Tuksal indicates that apart from internal discussions, the platform's cooperation with other women's organisations has certainly played a crucial role in learning how to get out of a traditional way of looking at things and better understand the nature of the problems that are specific to their gender. Tuksal (2003) asserts that the Muslim women's experience in the Women's Platform for Peace constitutes a good example of this learning experience. In parallel to what Çalıcı said before, Tuksal also explains that it has not been an easy process for Muslim women, since they encountered some stiff resistance, particularly from Kemalist women:

As you know the platform was organised by members of IHD, but later supported by various women's organisations including Kemalists, feminists, transsexuals and gays. At the beginning there was a sense of not knowing what to do with us. Kemalist women, for instance, simply did not want to listen to what we said. It was very discouraging I must say. We were of course more willing to communicate because we voluntarily joined the group. So we insisted, stayed and in time our interaction with the others affected their perception about us. I think that when they heard about our problems directly from us they understood our position better. I must say that being a woman has always played an important role in this process. We were able to establish an empathy with the groups who were willing to listen to us. (Tuksal, 2003)

Yet, making themselves accepted was only one side of the coin for Muslim women. Equally difficult was the fact that it took them a while to feel empathy towards some groups in the WFPF. According to Tuksal Muslim women's relation with gay and transsexual groups was a real challenge.

From our point of view, gay and lesbian rights are the most intricate issue since Quran explicitly prohibits homosexual relations. So some of us were scared even to shake hands with them, thinking that it would be a sinful act. I personally feel no problem with cooperating with these groups. For me, it is important that we do not limit ourselves by some scriptural reading of religious texts. Yet, it is not easy to convince Muslims of this. So, it took some time to persuade our friends to communicate with these groups. However, when the dialog started things developed a lot easier. We realised for instance that some of these women (gays and transsexuals) had strong religious convictions. They in fact identified themselves as Muslims. For us this was a big step in understanding and establishing empathy with them. Today, I believe, we are a lot more relaxed in working with these groups. Just recently, our group donated some money to support one of their members to attend a conference in Europe. And in general I can say that our relation with friends from the IHD, who were mainly lefties, as well as with gays and transsexuals, has now reached a certain level of maturity. I think we can comfortably say that we now understand each other better (2003).

The Muslim women's story in the WFPF testifies to the vital role that social learning plays in deliberative processes. The positive outcomes of social learning as outlined in Binary Deliberation section, such as better understanding and trust, and developing a shared identity, can all be seen at work. Two things are crucial here. Firstly, the future of the process is dependent on the practice of social learning within those civic organisations like the WFPF. Platforms or alliances like the WFPF are the real domains for this kind of interaction between groups, since they provide the opportunity for practising the social learning and decision-making aspects of deliberation together. They are oriented to a practical task, yet not limited by the restrictions of decision-making practices. They have the capacity to be more inclusive and less time bounded; that is, they do have the flexibility to sort the things out. More importantly, though, the process of social learning should be purposefully organised, that is, it has to be acknowledged as a formal part of the process instead of letting it casually drift during participants' interactions. Surely, social learning is present at any stage of deliberation; yet to be able to maximise its benefit and to function in its own right it needs to be allocated its own space and time. This is precisely where Binary Deliberation can play a significant role. As I have argued, turning the grounds of commonality into practical, workable arrangements between parties has limited scope within the confines of standard decision-making practices. It is essential that conflicting groups should be given the opportunity to deliberate without the pressure of having to make a decision. Yet, it is equally vital that a clear link between social-learning and decision-making moments of deliberation is established, that is, social learning is rescued from a position where it

drifts within the public sphere with no particular aim in mind. This requires a new structural arrangement in which social learning is purposefully organised to become a formalised partner of the decision-making processes. Binary Deliberation with its two-phase structure therefore offers a model to fill this gap in current deliberative practice.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of Q methodology, including how to construct a matrix, see Brown, 1980