

**TWO TRANSFORMATIVE ACTORS OF TURKISH POLITICS:
JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY AND KURDS**

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ABSTRACT

TWO TRANSFORMATIVE ACTORS OF TURKISH POLITICS: JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY AND KURDS

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In its most general form this study aims to understand and reveal the dynamics that shape AKP's Kurdish politics. In this way primarily, socio-political factors that constitute AKP and the political tradition out of which it has arose have been analyzed with in the theoretical framework of the center-periphery model. It seeks to determine the socio-political basis of AKPs emergence on a platform of change and EU centered vision. It understands this approach as an effort to legitimize itself against a Kemalist center.

This study understands AKP's desire to align itself with the West in the course of its quest for legitimization and its desire for the candidacy for the process of ascension to the European Union as the only paths to take after the events of February the 28th has confirmed the judgment that Turkey cannot consolidate its own democracy within its own dynamics. This study contends that the most fundamental influence that has shaped AKP's Kurdish politics and obliged AKP to attend to the Kurdish problem, in addition to the political tradition out of which AKP arose, is full accession to EU and the target of consolidating democracy.

The study also analyzes the evolutionary phases the Kurdish politics went through. The process of consolidation of democracy in Turkey in accordance with the requirements of ascension to the EU has been seen as the common fate of AKP and

the Kurdish politics as well as the source of legitimization both domestically and internationally.

This study understands AKP's Kurdish politics as one of a paradox for the ethnic and religious identities that has faced a systematic resistance since the conception of the republic: On the one hand is the union of these two identities against a socio-political system that excludes both, and on the other hand is their political competition on a platform that is perpetually overlapping.

The study concludes that AKP's determination and ability to solve the Kurdish problem will give hints on whether the party would succeed or not in its mission of creating a new political language and democratizing the country.

Keywords: AKP, Kurdish Politics, European Union, Consolidation of Democracy

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE’DE SİYASETİN İKİ DÖNÜŞTÜRÜCÜ AKTÖRÜ: AK PARTİ VE KÜRTLER

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Bu  alıřmada en genel ifadesiyle, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’nin (AKP) K rt politikasını řekillendiren dinamikleri anlamaya ve ortaya koyulmaya  alıřılmıřtır. Bu  er evede  ncelikle, AKP’yi oluřturan sosyo-politik unsurlar ve i inden geldiđi politik gelenek, merkez- evre modelinin teorik imkanlarından da yararlanılarak analiz edilmiřtir. AKP’nin deđiřim s ylemiyle ortaya  ıkıřı ve Avrupa Birliđi (AB) merkezli bir vizyon ortaya koymasının sosyo-politik temelleri tespit edilmeye  alıřılmıř; bu politikanın Kemalist merkez karřısında bir anlamda kendi meřruiyetini kabul ettirme  abası olarak ele alınmıřtır.

T rkiye’nin kendi i  dinamikleriyle demokratikleřemeyeceđi kanaatini pekiřtiren 28 řubat deneyimi, bu meřruiyet arayıřında Batı ile b t nleřmeyi ve bu kapsamda AB’ye uyum s recini bařlıca se enek olarak algılanmasına yol a mıřtır. AKP’nin K rt politikasını řekillendiren ve bu partiyi K rt sorununa eđilmek durumunda bırakan temel etmenin de, i inden geldiđi siyasi geleneđin gerekleri yanında, AB’ye tam üyelik ve demokratikleřme hedefi olduđu ifade edilmiřtir.

Aynı řekilde K rt politikası da ge irdiđi deđiřim evreleriyle  alıřmada ele alınmıřtır. T rkiye’nin AB’ye uyum  er evesinde demokratikleřtirilmesi, AKP ve K rt politikasının hem ortak kaderi, hem de i eride ve dıřarıda bir meřruluk kaynađı olarak ele alınmıřtır.

Bu alıřma AKP'nin Krt politikasını, Cumhuriyet tarihi boyunca devamlı direne karřılařmıř olan etnik ve dini kimliklerin, bir yandan onları dıřlayan bir sosyo-politik sisteme karřı zorunlu birliktelięi, bir yandan da sıklıkla keřiřen bir taban zerindeki siyasi rekabetleri temelinde ele almıřtır. AKP'nin Krt sorununun özm konusunda ortaya koyacaęı irade ve performansın, onun yeni bir siyaset dili oluřturmaya ve lkeyi demokratikleřtirmeye iliřkin misyonunu ifa edip edemeyeceęini tartıřmayı mmkn kıldıęı sonucuna ulařılmıřtır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AKP, Krt Siyaseti, AB, Demokratikleřme

To My Family: Faruk, Ezra, Yusuf K kce

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CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

As the title makes it clear the aim of this thesis is to discuss and analyze the Kurdish policy of AKP (Justice and Development Party). Thus this thesis will deal with both the formation of AKP and the evolution and history of the Kurdish problem and finally it will discuss the intersection of these two independent phenomena, in the Kurdish policy of AKP. Throughout the thesis, these phenomena will be analyzed from the center-periphery perspective and the underlying assumption of all the discussions in the thesis is the significance of modernization in the formation of these phenomena. Thus it also includes a discussion of Turkish modernization.

At the base of the political, social and cultural problems that Turkey face today lays the particular character of Turkish modernization. This particular characteristic arises from the fact that Turkish modernization in fact is a series of attempts of “imposed modernization”. Throughout these attempts to impose modernization, the gap between the center and periphery has been widened, and this widening created religiously, ethnically or culturally excluded and marginalized groups and identities. The Muslim majority can be also considered as one of these excluded groups. Though this might seem as an assertive expression, it had been more and more recognized and voiced by the intellectualls in the more critical aura of the post-80 period. In that sense even though we are trying to analyze a current

social phenomenon, it is necessary to understand this historical background and start our analysis within the lights of the findings we can get from history.

Two different phenomena and groups of actors constitute the scope of this thesis. First one and the starting point of this thesis is AKP. Yet AKP can not be evaluated and understood on its own. It can be understood as an extension of a political understanding and as the final outcome of the center periphery relations produced by the nationalization and modernization attempts of Turkish Republic.

The second phenomenon and actor is the Kurdish question and the Kurds. Kurdish question is also an outcome of Turkish modernization and attempts of nation state building. What is significant for our thesis is that, two actors that were marginalized by Turkish modernization- Islam and Kurdishness- intersected at a certain stage of modernization and found means of self-expression in a style of politics represented by AKP.

In order to talk about the Kurdish policy of AKP, we first need to understand the dynamics of these two phenomena. Although this thesis aims to understand “The Kurdish Policy of AKP”, throughout the research process the question underneath was also whether if such a policy has actually existed or not. Keeping this question in mind, throughout the reading and research process of this thesis, local elections were held at 29 March 2009. In this election, AKP received much less than it expected in the East and Southeast regions populated dominantly by Kurds, and fell below its previous election rates. Although the economical crises and the handicaps of a seven year rule might have contributed to this result, the significant loss of vote in the Kurdish regions needs further explanation. Thus a new picture emerged after the local elections making it necessary to ask new questions.

In fact, previous governments also had to deal with the Kurdish problem. In his memoirs Numan Esin, one of the members of 27 May 1960 coup, points that Kurdish problem became a part of politics soon after transition to multiparty politics, and even at an early stage like 1950's DP (Democrat Party) attempted to develop a strategy to deal with the Kurdish problem (Esin, 2005: 158). Later on especially ANAP (Motherland Party), but also SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) and even CHP (Republican People's Party) had prepared reports dealing with Kurdish problem. However, it was AKP which took a step further and rather than just pointing to the existence of the problem, showed its determination in order to deal with the problem in the context of a democratization reform.

At this point the existence of DTP (Democratic Society Party), as a rival for AKP in Kurdish politics, becomes an important factor. AKP shows political will for the solution of Kurdish problem. But it also has to struggle with a political actor powerful enough to politically benefit from the reforms taken by the government.

During the research of this thesis, AKP declared a political agenda titled "Kurdish opening" (the party officials preferred to refer it as a democratization opening) that includes some political and cultural rights. Prime Minister Erdoğan met with the DTP leader Ahmet Türk for the first time. The process which started with the declaration of Kurdish problem as "the first and most important problem of Turkey" by the President Abdullah Gül started to crystallize slowly. We witnessed that the highest ranking state officials accepted that Kurdish problem stays as the major impediment to democratization. The government officials emphasized that the reforms were to be achieved through a process rather than an all-encompassing package, and declared their political determination for the solution of the problem.

The statements of President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan and the Minister of Interior Beşir Atalay and the non opposition from military represented a picture of harmony and agreement among the highest state organs for the Kurdish opening.

Even though this new situation seems to have challenged the doubt whether AKP had any political strategies for the Kurdish issue, I believe, nonetheless, it is important since it illuminates and clarifies the political climate during the research and writing of this thesis. Although I started this project with certain questions and possible answers to them, throughout the eight months that I was engaged with the project, these questions kept on evolving and changing. This is a certain sign that politics is still functioning.

At the first part of the thesis, I tried to look at the historical and social background of AKP and tried to outline the basic parameters of the political vision of AKP. Thus, I tried to pinpoint the principles that distinguish or will likely to distinguish AKP from other political parties in its vision of Kurdish problem.

One of the main matters that this thesis aims to point out is the particular nature of the conjecture that enabled AKP to deal with the Kurdish problem. Following Law for the Ensurance of Tranquility (*Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu*) which was ratified while Sheikh Said rebel was ongoing (4 March 1925) and subsequent Law on Forceful Deportation (*Mecburi İskan Kanunu*), it was impossible even to mention the Kurdish problem. It is obvious that the current political environment that enables us to openly talk about the problem can not be understood only with referring to the determination of political actors.

The most important factor that determines the redefinition of a 'concept' as a 'problem' or as a 'no-longer problem' is the changing of social and political

formation. This change in formation, no doubt, does not happen independently from the push of the 'concept' which was deemed a 'problem.' Thus we can say that the ways of dealing with the Kurdish problem throughout the Ottoman and Republican era and lately the AKP's way of dealing with the problem are all linked with the changes in the social and political formations. In this respect, today it is essential to consider the impact of Turkey's EU membership process to the way AKP deals with the Kurdish problem and to the approach of intellectuals to this problem. This conjectured medium is the outcome of a global environment that proved to be quite productive for both AKP and the Kurdish problem. This conjuncture prevented AKP to remain insensitive to the Kurdish problem and it also provided a new medium of legitimation for AKP.

So AKP's approach to the Kurdish problem turned to an opportunity of maintaining legitimacy for AKP both inside and outside the country. In this context it is important to state that while AKP turned the EU membership vision as its *raison d'être*, on the other hand Kurdish political movement was aiming to publicize their political discourses and demands in Turkey through European Union. For both of these actors, EU is the main dynamic that enforces their political vision and discourse, since it is assumed that Turkish democratization can only be fulfilled by the help of EU.

Since its foundation a reform package has been the most important commitment of AKP. By such a package AKP aims to create an image favorable for itself both in Turkey but also in EU as well. And the European parliamentarians have defined the reforms as "courageous and revolutionary" (Cizre, 2008: 9). So

that, for both of these actors EU membership appears as the sole solution to their problems.

From its inception, Turkish state maintained an exclusionary and marginalizing discourse against the Kurds, Islam and minorities. Islam was marginalized by assertive secularist policies, and Kurds were marginalized by an ethnicist definition of Turkish identity and by the denial of Kurds and their language.

Secularism in Turkey was not perceived as a model based on a separation of state and religion and maintenance of equal distance towards every religion. Instead it was understood as a “social model which enables state to penetrate over the society” (Çiğdem, 2009: 91). Such an interpretation of secularism led to the disintegration of the society and marginalization of certain societal groups.¹ AKP has the mission of representing these groups who were excluded from the political life and aims to create a Turkey that reached European standards in terms of cultural and political rights. Such a Turkey would have to provide a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem as well. Thus the common goal of EU membership is the intersection point of the Kurdish problem and AKP.

There is also another point which makes the current conjuncture exceptional for AKP: there is a separate and a very strong political actor representing the Kurdish politics. The appearance of MNP (National Order Party), MSP (National

¹ In his book *D'nin Halleri* (Modes of D) which deals with the religion, democracy and coups in Turkey, Ahmet Çiğdem points to the problematic nature of the relation between religious and political. He claims that understanding this relation is an indispensable way of understanding Turkish society. “Just as politics has demands from religion, religion might also make demands from politics. Secularism doesn't force us to negate the political dimension of religiosity. If it is possible to conduct politics despite the market, it is equally possible that religious tendencies can coexist with secularism” (Çiğdem, 2009: 91-92)

Salvation Party) and RP (Welfare Party) line in politics appeared as a problem for the center right parties and the rise of the power of RP was linked (either as a consequence or as a result) to the decay of center right parties. In a similar fashion, existence of a strong political actor like DTP created a new situation for AKP different from the situations faced by previous center right parties.

In that regard, while AKP was trying to produce new policies within the wider framework of democratization, it also had to conduct a political struggle with a Kurdish nationalist political actor aside from PKK. This creates a unique political environment entirely different from the previous periods of Republican era.

Turkey became the stage for the contestation of two political parties that struggled for the Kurdish electoral zones, in addition to a state and its sometimes placating sometimes oppressing attitude. There is now a Kurdish nationalist political actor and a strong center party that aims to challenge and indeed succeeds in challenging the monopoly of this Kurdish nationalist actor. The struggle between the two had been most visible during the local elections of 29 March and more specifically at the municipal elections of Diyarbakır (which is considered as the capital by the secessionist Kurds). In that sense to win at Diyarbakır was very meaningful for AKP and not to lose at Diyarbakır for DTP.

In brief, this thesis first questions if AKP has a concrete Kurdish policy and it also aims to understand the relationship between the two actors in this special historical moment. In that regard, it aims to identify in what sense AKP's Kurdish policy has differed from the center right parties and from the RP tradition. Finally the thesis aims to make a rational reading of the process defined as either Kurdish opening or democratization reform. Internalization of the notions of civil society and

democracy are phenomena that lead to a new political environment. This new environment enables the representation of social demands.

Throughout the Turkish history, most important demands based on identity claims were voiced either by Islamists who believe that they were marginalized due to oversensitivity of Kemalists in equating secularism with modernity and equating Islam with backwardness or by Kurdish ethnic identity which was excluded due to the formation of nation state on the basis of Turkish ethnicity.

In this regard, it is essential to consider the relation between the social, political and emotional factors that created AKP and AKP's approach to the Kurdish problem. Sharing a common fate has shaped the sociological aspects of the relationship between these two actors. This study investigates the practical implications of this relationship in actual political life and the prospects of genuine representation within the context of such a relationship.

Obviously the contemporary circumstance in Turkey is much different from the founding period. But the current situation does not only differ from the founding moment but it also points to a rupture from the 80 years old historical evolution of the Republican era. We are experiencing a period when democratic consciousness has rooted in large masses and throughout this period, it became clear that democratization significantly differs from the ideal democracy that state espouses. The democratic perspective of state, as defined by Metin Heper "Democracy is a perfect system only in theory, since it is easy to abuse democracy. Thus what Turkey needs is a special democracy adjusted to the special circumstances of the country" has changed (Heper, 2006: 140).

AKP is the actor of this change, but it also benefits the most from this transformation. Thus the political equations that this thesis tries to identify shall be better understood from the framework of this change.

Readings of the last part of this thesis was made while AKP declared the “Kurdish opening”. In this last part I benefited from Erdoğan’s speeches at party meetings, from proceedings of the debates on Kurdish problem at the National Assembly and from the media representations of the Kurdish opening. This part, which is the most critical part of the thesis aims to understand the dynamics of the so called “Kurdish opening” process and the significance of this process in Turkish political life.

CHAPTER II

2. AKP AND TURKISH POLITICS

2. 1. Historical and Social Background of AKP

Starting from the end might have more explanatory power. 80 years has passed since the declaration of the Republic, and today, the current situation, which so bothers the republican elites, and which is reflected in the slogan of “secularism is under threat” tells us one thing: The center of Turkish modernization is not the society but it is the state (Kasaba-Bozdoğan, 1999: 3). However, throughout the Ottoman history, religion was a mediator between the state and the society and functioned as a cultural and political bridge between the two. “The dominant Sunni Muslims of the empire shared a frame of reference based on the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet, which were used to define notions of virtue and justice in society. The most critical period of Ottoman state transformation took place in the nineteenth century. The seeds of the modern Republic were sown in this period, when Islamism was mobilized as a form of nationalism, with the aim of constructing a “Muslim nation” out of diverse ethnic groups” (Yavuz, 2005: 59). With the realization of the fact that the Empire had lost its power vis-a-vis West, the political and state elites subscribed to Ottomanization, Islamism and Turkism respectively as the ways of saving the empire (Akçura 1998).

Although those recipes to save the empire had been tried one by one, they were formulated at the same era and coexisted all together, and were implemented respectively.² Influenced by Moiz Tekinalp, the first theoretician of Turkish nationalism, Yusuf Akçura discusses these three strategies in detail in his seminal article “Three Ways of Politics”. Akçura wrote this article in 1904 in a Turkish journal published in Cairo, and his formulation of Turkism affected the understanding of Turkish nationalism throughout 1930’s. Akçura’s formulation of Turkism is race based, as he says:

The tendency of our current history is to concentrate on races. Religions are losing their political power and significance. Rather than being a social phenomenon, they are becoming privatized. Instead of being social issues, religions are concentrating on guiding the conscience. They now occupy a limited space as a mediator between the Creator and the created. Thus religions can only maintain their political and social importance by allying themselves with the races, indeed in the service of the races (Akçura, 1998: 34-35).³

Although Akçura personally favors Turkism, he considers Islamism as a powerful alternative as well. As the policies of Ottomanisation proved to be insufficient to keep the empire integrated, the appeal of Turkism and Islamism increased. It was Abdulhamid II who tried to follow a policy of Islamism in order to save the empire. Although Abdulhamid is known as a conservative figure in the popular imagery, he is a typical 19th century modernist and one of the key figures of the Ottoman modernization. Though Abdulhamid instrumentalized religion as a

² One of the most authoritative scholars on late Ottoman period Eric Zürcher discusses these three politics in detail and claims how they co-existed at the same time at the ranks of CUP (Committee for Union and Progress). See Eric Jan Zürcher, (2000) “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics (1908-1938)” in Kemal Karpat ed. *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.

³ Akçura’s views on religion and race were implemented by the new republic. Islam was put under the service of Turkish nationalists just as Akçura had foreseen. And thus religion changed from being a social phenomenon, and turned into a state designed project, in which it was the state to decide on what levels and forms should the religion exist.

means of social cohesion and a modern ideology to legitimize his rule (Selim Deringil, 1991), he also established modern schools with Western curriculum. Young Turks emerged in the political scene as unexpected results of these modern schools. They received secular education in these Western modeled military schools, and developed their own political visions reflected in their deep rooted belief in positivism as a guide for the society and state and in their trust to elite rule and in their determination to create a modern society.

To quote from İlber Ortaylı, during this “longest century of the empire”, despite the fact that there were competing ideologies with their distinct projections of state and society, the state continued to act in a transcendental way, formulated as *hikmet-i hükümet* (raison d’etat) and throughout the 19th century, this understanding continued to deepen. In fact, the understanding of a transcendental state was the Ottoman Empire’s most important legacy to the Republican Turkey. However this legacy started to be eroded by the criticisms coming from two different groups; by groups who were marginalized by the Republican project due to the secularist and ethnic nationalist policies of the Republic and by intellectuals who put emphasis on individual liberties and democratization. “The Kemalist program of modernization including its economic policies, secularist tenets, and ethno-nationalist foundations came under close scrutiny and received increasingly vocal criticism” (Kasaba, 1999: 12).

The key concepts that shaped the Turkish modernization were the ones that defined the concepts valued by the majority of the population, such as religion and tradition, as reactionary ideas that had to be left behind and departed from. Essentially having negative contents, these definitions were particularly addressing

the Islamists and Kurds who were not included in the Kemalist modernization. Since Kurds were overwhelmingly religious people and were also residing in rural areas mostly, they were the most persistent group against the modernization efforts, and thus were perceived negatively by the modernizing actors. Thus, Kurdish ethnic identity is coded twice as the adversary of the regime. As being religious people and as being Kurds, Kurdish people had been ignored and disavowed by the regime. Inevitably the relationship between the Kurds and the new regime was based on this binary opposition. As Martin Van Bruinessen states “State’s attempts of replacing Islam with Turkish nationalism as the founding ideology exacerbated the coldness of religious rural Kurds against the regime” (Bruinessen, 1992: 123). Or more appropriately we can state that the relationship between Kurds and the Republic was based on the negative codes formed in this context. On the other hand, Islamists were still making claims in favor of the religious identity that Kemalist modernization was aiming to get rid of. Being the carriers of this identity, they were perceived as the biggest threat against the regime.

It is certain that the political climate feeding these binary oppositions didn’t appear suddenly in 80’s or even after the multi party system. It is also obvious that Turkish modernization did not suddenly start with the republic as well. “At the close of the nineteenth century, Ottoman bureaucratic elite were convinced that the survival of the state was contingent upon defining a homogeneous and unified community as the basis of their rule and legitimacy” (Kasaba, 1999: 23).⁴ Despite its shortcomings at certain issues, “center-periphery relations” continues to be the

⁴ This view had manifested itself during the 20th century with events like the Armenian departure of 1914-15, the population exchange with Greece between 1920-23, 1942 Wealth tax, events of 6-7 September etc. (See. Kasaba, 2008: 24).

most suitable theoretical instrument in understanding the current social situation in Turkey. The key point here is that while center was trying to dominate the periphery, the periphery has developed a political tradition with double strategies: refraining from directly challenging the center, yet persisting on manifesting its own political reasoning. In this strategy of “double discourse” peripheral parties articulated the popular resentment against the state into a basically state-oriented discourse (Cizre, 1996: 146).⁵

In the case of Turkey, this political reasoning manifested itself whenever it could through free elections and in each election gave support to the same direction. Appropriately or not, the support was led to the parties that succeeded in winning the heart of the periphery or at least to those who attempted -genuinely or not- to win the hearts.⁶ The consistency of the periphery at this point has been the most important determinant of Turkish politics. This consistency is an outcome of the authoritarian tendencies of the center and has shaped the nature of political life in Turkey. Ideal of westernization has been associated by the periphery with the statist and authoritarian tendencies of the actors of westernization. As Barrington Moore claims, an incomplete political modernization, meaning implementation of modernization project in a selective attitude concerning the socio-cultural life through top down mechanisms, leads to fascism.⁷ Keyder claims that such a

⁵ Cizre is also keen on the tensions this strategy created on behalf of state elites. “The history of military interventions bears witness to the *tense* acceptance of the Turkish state elite of the peripheral right to shape political outcomes through the electoral process” (emphasis added, Cizre p. 147).

⁶ This process started with DP and despite the interruptions of military interventions, supremacy of center right parties which are heirs to this political tradition continued in the electoral box. Periphery (had to) consider these parties as the instruments that would carry them towards the center.

⁷ Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Boston, Beacon, 1966., quoted from (Keyder, 1999: 31)

perception and practice leading to a confrontation between the elites and masses gives life to a variety of populist movements (Keyder, 1999: 38). It was the center right parties who had been the carriers of these populist projects, however they had never been brave enough to follow those projects up to the end.

In this context, politics was never conducted properly but instead it was janus faced, one looking at the periphery and the other towards the center. This forced the peripheral political actors to adopt “double discourses” - one speaking to the periphery and the other speaking to center (Cizre, 1996: 146). This point is particularly important as it reflects how Turkish modernization left politics out of picture. Politics (political demands) were put forward before elections in the form of discourses and promises, yet when the time came to fulfill those promises, politics was always confronted by the military guardianship. It is in this political environment that Kurdish and Islamic political movements came to life, gained strength and got oppressed.⁸

This problematic understanding of modernity which limits the sphere of politics is intermingled with the problems of the creation of the nation state. “Nationalism is the constitutive ideology of Turkish Republic. Such an organicist and societal perspective prevented the development of a citizenship constituted foundationally around universally applicable civil rights (Keyder, 1999: 34). This had been the most consistent characteristic of the modernization movement that started during late Ottoman period. Ottoman elites who pursued a modernizing path in the political realm (not in the military realm) were educated in the West and they

⁸ Silence of the masses enabled the elite to create an imaginary people. Redefinition of people through folklore and history is a common feature of every nationalist project. For a clear and precise account of how this happened in Turkish case see. Keyder, “Whither the Project of Modernity?: Turkey in the 1990s”, in *Turkish Modernisation and National Identity*, p. 37

deeply believed that survival of the state could only be possible by such a selective modernization.⁹

This had been the paradox of Turkish modernization. Modernization started as a project of Westernization, but Westernization was perceived as an instrumental strategy for resisting the West. It was believed that the only way to co-opt with West was possible by mimicking the West. Niyazi Berkes defines this side of westernization as “Kemalism is not Westernism but it is liberation from West”. Thus he talks about a more contingent westernization: “Westernization according to the principles that are forced upon as a result of backwardness” (Berkes, 2007: 143). Dunkwort Rustow (1964) defines this selective modernization as “defensive modernization” and points to the Ottoman roots of this defensive attitude. In this regard, declared in 1839, Tanzimat was “a document that aimed to legitimize a series of attempts for Westernization”. According to Jale Parla “underneath this desire of renewal lies an ominous feeling of a defeat and alienation” (Parla, 2008: 10).¹⁰ On the other hand “new elites” had a different vision of Westernization compared with the state’s and sultan’s Westernization projects. While they were emphasizing the need of centralization and homogenization of the state, on the other and they were also attempting to redefine the role of religion in the social life different from the traditional system.

⁹ Hans-Lukas Kieser’s book *Türklüğe İhtida* (Conversion to Turkishness) is a very important work that gives an account of how and under which conditions the political views of the Ottoman youth who went particularly to Switzerland for education between 1870 and 1939 were formed and what kind of political and intellectual movements either in Europe or at home came into being as a result of these political views.

¹⁰ With reference to Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay’s article “Tanzimat Neyi Tanzim Ediyor”, Jale Parla defines the Westernization attempts of Ottomans as “The real target of these half hearted Westernization programme was creating time, through limited reforms, in order to strengthen the political, cultural and philosophical foundations of the empire (Parla, 2008: 10).

Even in these early phases of westernization and modernization “the efforts put for the renewal during the Tanzimat had been multiplied by the efforts to contain these renewals” (Parla, 2008: 12). However, a pure desire of modernization requires an open ended discourse and a sphere of action. Prevalent in late Ottoman period, this desire of containment was inherited by the republic and resulted in an authoritarian mode of modernization.

Despite such continuities with regard to selective attitude of modernization and centrality of *raison d’etat*, republican reforms created a rupture in the relationship between the elites and masses. Commenting on the relationship between Ottoman elites and masses during the traditional period of Ottomans, Şerif Mardin argues that:

One should begin to look at the way in which structures of understanding that existed in the minds of the Ottoman elites were reflected in state practice, the world of *devlet*, and how that world was linked to a homologous, corresponding world of folk practices another level of the life-world operating in conjunction with Islam. The folk were buoyed by this layer of popular culture, and Ottoman bureaucrats, although they lived in a separate elite layer of culture, were nevertheless suffused with the ambient popular culture, manifestations of which they had names for, such as ‘janissary behavior’, ‘sufi extremism’, ‘sect formation’, and ‘Ottoman (i.e., strong) women’ (Mardin, 1999: 64-65).

Although Mardin accepts that these micro-sociological elements didn’t demolish the gap between the elites and masses, he points that they still created a common repertoire. One of the most crucial break points of Turkish modernization and probably the most devastating one was the destruction of such microsociological elements which included common living spheres and sensibilities between state elites and society. According to Mardin “the end of single-party rule and the greater participation of the common folk in politics made the analytical tool of *devlet*,

already stale in the 1950s, even feebler for understanding the many layered texture of social forces at work in Turkey after the 1950s” (Mardin, 1999: 64).¹¹

However in this newly created cultural framework the residue of some old concepts remained. Based on this residue, “life world” managed to create its own paths whenever possible. If we use Certeau’s conception; “everyday life” managed to create its “own path” within the restrictive and imperious policies. Consequently everyday life managed to create a living space and territory matching up with its own discourse.¹² Although Atatürk’s “civilizing” project utilized the educational system to transmit a new sense of identity and a new value system, this purpose was in conflict with the deeply internalized Islamic value system found within the family and the traditional neighborhoods. In other words, the Kemalist system could not be totally successful in breaking down traditional patterns of the production and transmission of knowledge. In the Turkish context, therefore, two different cultural patterns existed side by side in competition with one another (Yavuz, 2005: 52). Obviously, the role assigned to religion by Ataturk in creating a new nation from diverse ethnic communities was influential in this outcome. However, following the end of the Independence War and formation of the new republic with its own institutions and reforms, state’s policies vis-a-vis religion was based on a “double discourse” of both defining the religion and excluding the religion (Cizre, 1996a: 231-232). As a result the society responded by transforming the religious knowledge

¹¹ In order to describe the deepness of this rupture, Mardin points to the usefulness of the “life world” conceptualized by Anthony Giddens and Michel de Certeau. The language reform destroyed the organic bond (which closes up the life worlds) between the Ottoman elites and the common people, and this created a new folk culture. (Mardin, 1999: 65)

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley 1984 (quoted from Mardin, 1999: 63)

through secret and underground mediums and religious education from that point on secluded itself into its own confines. As a result, the society responded by transforming the religious knowledge in a secret way and via underground mediums and introverted the religious education.

Despite its weakening, the *madrasa* tradition which was particularly powerful among the Kurds managed to continue its existence. Just as state started to interpenetrate every instance of social life in a desire of creating a new nation, brotherhoods and *madrasas* functioned as a medium of resistance and sources for the creation of new meanings. *Madrasas* started to lose their power only after 60's with the spread of modernization and creation of new state schools that corresponded to *madrasas* (Yüksel, 1993: 92).

To put it briefly, exclusion of people from political decision mechanisms in the early decades of the republic (and considering that republic is the self governing of people) and imposition of a new identity on the people, led to the linking of identities belonging to the private sphere to regional and tribal identities. Thus dynamism of the society was transferred to spheres that were beyond state control. Rather than unifying the society, Kemalist reforms helped to the politicization of particular identities like ethnic Kurdishness and Alevi/Sunni Islam (Yavuz, 2005: 78-79).

Despite the fact that Turkish Republic has experienced four military coups, and despite the continuing guardianship of military over politics between these coup periods, in its relation with the center, periphery always managed to create means of self expression and managed to be the key political actor that shapes politics in one way or another. And at the same time, this also shows that Kemalist programme

couldn't completely succeed in its project of creating a "secular Turkish Republic".¹³ "Since these policies paved the way for social groups to return to Islam as a counter ideology to resist the authoritarian hegemony of bureaucratic and state elites" (Yavuz, 2005: 211). Taking into account the transformations it experienced (and it is obvious that again the enforcing practice and discourse of the state was crucial in this transformation), the Kurdish movement especially in the last 20-25 years managed to find channels of expressing itself both within Turkey and abroad by the help of PKK. Actually this was a direct consequence of nation state's policy of excluding other ethnic identities.

Considering that "no identity has a self referential point", Yavuz points that the example of Islamic political identity could also be understood within this framework. Despite the problems it creates in explaining the construction of national identities, the concept of "other" is useful in understanding Turkish nation building as we can observe that attempts of stretching the Turkish identity to the whole nation, has developed with regard to its "other". Similarly, we can observe the functioning of "internal other", in the politicization of both the Kurdish identity and the Islamic identity. This rather long analysis of social process is important in pointing out that vertical and horizontal differentiation of different segments of society had similar experiences in the process of getting involved in politics, and that they followed similar destinies as they turned some people to "other" or as they

¹³ By destroying traditional networks, the secularist Republic destroyed its own means of penetrating and reshaping the traditional periphery. The Association of Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları) which was found in 1912 was closed and replaced by the People's Houses (Halkevleri) in 1932. Hearths' understanding of nationalism recognized the constitutive role of Islam as an inseparable part of national culture and identity. The People's Houses sought to disseminate secularism and nationalism by creating connections between the rural and urban populations. However, the results in rural didn't match the expectations. As the state's hostility to religion became clear, societal groups that did not share in the political and economic benefits reaped by the new elite saw Islam as an ideology they could use to challenge the Kemalist state (Yavuz, 2005: 82).

were becoming themselves the “other”. It is even more significant when we consider the two most important topics of Turkish politics; the struggle for the representation of Islamic groups in politics and the struggle for acknowledgement of the cultural and political rights of Kurds, -both were, in most cases, represented by the same political actor. And it is in this context that we can notice how meaningless is the questioning of whether the Kurdish uprisings were religiously or ethnically motivated. Today there are figures who claim Kurdish rights with Islamic arguments and struggle for them just like Sheikh Said did in the past.

In the context of this thesis all the discussions on historical background first aims to answer “Which social formations that make up AKP, have led it to deal with the Kurdish problem?”, before questioning “ What is the Kurdish policy of the AKP?” Despite its claim of representing the center, the AKP follows the center-right traditional wisdom in which the only way of establishing itself on the center is transferring the periphery to the center. And the AKP historically knows that while relying on the periphery as a source of political power, it has to consider the reservations and sensitivities of the center in order to remain as a legitimate political actor. This has been the most significant weakness of the center right parties. In the Turkish case, the periphery which tries to move towards the center has been the sole source of political discourse that targets the political status quo. This has double functions for Turkish politics, while this has enabled the accommodation of marginal groups by the system on the other hand it enabled the state actors to accommodate the political demands, very reluctantly though, and enabled democratization, though malfunctioning.

Kurdishness and Islam, as the two actors that are excluded by Turkish modernization, has served as “constitutive other”, “internal other” and as elements that the system can function “neither with them nor without them” and they have been the most important determinants of politics throughout the Republican history.¹⁴ In order to determine the problems of Turkey, one needs to examine the two centuries old history of modernization, and the continuities and ruptures in the process. If we have a look at the key historical turning points such as the centralizing moves of Mahmut II, the declaration of Tanzimat, the Young Turk coups, declaration of the Republic, single party regime, establishing the multi party regime and military coups, we notice that all social developments stemmed from the state’s attempt of shaping the society and from the assumption that all means are legitimate for this purpose.

Introduction of concepts like modernization and westernization, starting of significant changes within the social and political formation of the Ottomans and introduction of centralization as a way of revival in the face of Western superiority all point to an era when the Ottomans started to lose their self confidence in the validity of their administrative system. Why should that be important? In Turkey, “military as the first modernizing institution got integrated to the political history of 19 century. After a while the military would claim the role of protecting modernity vis-a-vis tradition, and would get established permanently in the political realm” (Yeğen, 1999: 45).

¹⁴ For the discussion on how the “other” is invented see, Jacques Derrida, “Psyche Ötekinin İcadı”(Psyche Invention of the Other), *Toplum Bilim Jacques Derrida Özel Sayısı*, (Aug. 1999), pp. 103-127

Military's establishment of itself as the guardian of the ideal of modernization and subsequent centralization of the political structure had profound effects on parts of society who remained out of the center during this process and remained relatively aloof from modernization. It has effected these peripheral groups' perception of the political actors that share the sensitivities of the military (military to a large extent was free from this perceptions) and these political actors experienced a sort of legitimacy crises against the society.

During the second half of 19th century, centralization attempts of the empire led to the strengthening of the position of bureaucracy. This led to a resistance in the Ottoman rural areas towards centralization. Şerif Mardin doesn't subscribe to the view that reforms of 19th century aimed to close the cultural gap between the palace and people. Instead, he argues that the target of the reforms was to create a homogenous national unit (Mardin, 1994: 154).

The resistance to the political strategies of centralization was not, in reality, a resistance towards the effort to bridge the cultural gap between the center and the periphery, but against the affects of the perceived homogenization effort. This resistance had ethnic, cultural and religious components. "The country side was the social space of an ethnic, cultural and religious plurality and a non-centralized political resistance. As such it was perceived as the source of all evil by the RPP. Thus it was inevitable that the two basic component of the countryside Islam and Kurdish identity would be excluded by the center in this process" (Yeğen, 1999: 75). Both of the two political parties that were established in the early years of republic (1924 TCF-Progressive Republican Party- and 1930 Serbest Fırka-Free Party-) aroused widespread interest reflecting the strength of the resistance towards

centralization. Landslight victory of DP was also considered as the result of the pressures of center over the periphery. This resistance towards centralization had two bases, Islamic and Kurdish identities. “These were also the two opponent discourses in the post-80 Turkish politics; Political Islam of Muslims and the ethno-political resistance (called as nationalism) of Kurds (Yeğen, 1999: 75).¹⁵ To say it shortly, both Islam and Kurdish nationalism were the targets of the fury (rage) of a centralizing modernist and nationalist republic. As Tarık Zafer Tunaya had pointed, Turkish nationalism found a legitimate base after the defeat at the Balkan Wars and the rise of Arab nationalism. Tunaya defines this as “the barriers over Turkish nationalism were lifted”. “Young Turks for the first time officially acted just as if they were a minority and adopted a nationalist ideology; Turkism as it was named then. Thus Turkish nationalism appeared on the scene of history as one of the latest nationalisms of the empire” (Tunaya, 1989: 355). In that sense Kurdish nationalism developed in the shadow of Turkish nationalism.

In the process which finally gave birth to the republic, “declarations of the actors involved showed no sign of creating a nation state. Instead the aim was creating a new political unit in order to protect the sultanate and the caliphate. Islam still is the main point of reference in the discourse of ARMHC, and *millet* still connotes a religious community (Yeğen, 1999: 91).

Difficulties of transition from a Muslim nation to a Turkish nation and replacement of religion by nationality as the source of collective identity had first been signaled by the Kurds. Kurds showed reaction to the removal of Khilafat. These reactions parallel with the shift of Turkish nationalism to a more racist tone

¹⁵ Mesut Yeğen doesn't prefer to use the term nationalism and instead prefers to use “ethno-politic resistance” of the Kurds.

under the influence of the rise of Fascism in Europe. At this point Şerif Mardin draws our attention to the fact that, unlike the Western cases, the centralization process in Turkey wasn't the result of any compromise. Mardin points that centralization in the West was the result of a series of confrontations and compromises. He writes "as a result of these compromises nation-state was born as a well integrated institution. Whenever a compromise or a one sided victory is achieved, forces of periphery were integrated at the center" (Mardin, 2008: 37).

Ottomans adopted this new form of state as the role model of their reforms. In the construction of the modern Turkish state; modernization, Westernization, centralization, nationalism and authoritarianism are all interrelated and integrated with each other. Thus "The culture that gave birth to Republic and the symbolic vocabulary of this culture necessitated the existence of an elite class" (Çiğdem, 2009: 27).¹⁶ This elite group and discourses of Westernization, modernization etc... that are represented by these elites all together make up the state discourse of the Republican era. However these discourses had been challenged and subverted by the traditionalist Islamic discourses. On the other hand, as references to Islam and religiously defined nationality were replaced by references to Turkishness, the Kurds who fought together against the infidels during the War of Independence felt betrayed. Thus in Turkey, and particularly with respect to Kurds, it is impossible to analyze the fact of ethnic identity independently from religious identity.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ahmet Çiğdem argues that demands for a common culture were accompanied by nostalgia in the later years of the republic and states that the demand of a common culture would strip up the culture from its contents (Çiğdem, 2009: 27).

¹⁷ Müfit Yüksel tells that throughout the Ottoman rule sheikhs and mollahs had generally showed loyalty to the state, and only after the reign of Mahmod II, the leading Nakshi aristocracy had followed opposition. "Sheikh Ubeydullah had revolted at 1880 and was exiled. At 1914, grandsons of Seyyid Sıbgatullah Arwasi, Sheikh Şihabüddin and Seyyid Ali revolted against the Young Turk rule

We can notice this when we look at the official discourse as well. Mustafa Kemal was holding meetings with Kurdish elites when he gave start to National Resistance and during these meetings he was defining both the Turks and Kurds as elements of Islam and was arguing for the necessity of uniting in order to defend the independence.¹⁸

Throughout my readings for this thesis one point got my attention: In the literature on Kurdish problem, the bond between religion and Kurdish identity is emphasized only with regard to the *millet* system of the Ottomans, but it is almost always neglected that in the process of the formation of Republic, removal of Khilafat, and increased emphasis on Turkish identity which led to the transformation of Kurdish movement and to gain the characteristic of a nationalist movement were all paralleled by attempts of removing religion from the public sphere and erosion of religion as the common societal bond.¹⁹

At this point we should also notice that Kurdish nationalist discourses with regard to the Kurdish problems were also transformed throughout the republican era. In the same vein, we can notice that AKP also experienced a transformation from its

with Islamic anxieties. As a result the sheikhs are hanged. The Nakshibendi aristocracy had turned opposite soon after the declaration of Republic with the Sheikh Said uprising. Throughout the single party regime, the oppression of gendarmerie forces exacerbates the opposition of the sheikh and molla families. This oppositional attitude represents itself in the boycotting of state schools, attempts of keeping madrasas open, and even with refraining from obtaining the identity cards that were provided by the state” (Yüksel, 1993: 101-102).

¹⁸ “I have full confidence in the sacrifices that you are ready to face for the sake of the eternal liberty of our state, and preservation of the monarchy and khilafat from vanishing, and in your warm feelings towards me... Kurds and Turks are two inseparable brothers and our duty today is to get united as Turks Kurds and all elements of Islam, defend our independence prevent the fragmentation of our land” (Atatürk’ün Bütün Eserleri vol. II, no. 388-389, quoted from Akyol, 2007: 78).

¹⁹ For instance in the works of Bruinessen and Yeğen, whose area of specialization is Kurdish problem, there is no reference to the sources who study Kurdish problem from a religious perspective. In this study particular attention was given to avoid such selectivity, and this study also benefited from works of Kurdish intellectuals like Mufit Yüksel, who studies the problem from an Islamic perspective.

RP origins -aside from many other issues- with regard to its attitude on the Kurdish problem. These two transformations can also be read as part of the means of struggles developed to face the oppressive mechanisms of the state. And the agreement between the Kurdish movement and AKP for the democratization of Turkey within the framework of EU integration can also be understood as the combination of these struggles and conjectural elements, leading to the conclusion that; EU is the only way out for Turkey.

We already said that AKP is not a new phenomenon. Although it can be perceived as a new political actor with a distinct style of making politics, its newness can be better understood as inevitable results of changes that were experienced in the local and global levels. Aside than this, AKP is a distinct political initiative, and has a distinct style of politics. In the context of the modernization attempts of Ottoman and Republican elites and their desire of creating a new society by the single party rule and the military coups aiming to keep this new society on the right track, we can conclude that AKP is the appearance of a segment of the society who were not the subjects but objects of these desires. This is the reason of the attraction AKP received.

To use Derrida's conceptions, the reason behind the political fragmentation of Turkey is that each political position and identity creates an "other" in order to define its own position. Derrida defines this as the "constitutive other". The constitutive others of the republic are Islam and Kurdishness. Kurds represent both of these identities that were excluded as the constitutive other.

Especially in the aftermath of the defeat in WWI, Islam had been the unifying factor between Turks and Kurds against the "victorious infidels" and

against the local Christians. There is direct relation with the development of the Kurdish problem and removal of this link. According to Martin Van Bruinessen “When Mustafa Kemal removed religion from its previous position after the foundation of the republic, he also shook the bases of Turkish-Kurdish unity” (Bruinessen, 1992: 46). At the process of the formation of Republic and during the War of Independence, Islam and Kurdish identity are the main elements of an independent Turkey. Religion is central to the understanding of populism in these years. However religion is excluded from populism during the period of 1923-50. Thus religion had continuously been the most important element of the counter-populisms that started to represent itself since 1950. The issue of secularism gained a new sensitivity after the end of single party rule and since then secularism had been protected and looked after by the founding bureaucrats and intellectuals of the republic, and the fear of its loss has been a source of anxiety. Even Celal Bayar, when visited İsmet İnönü as the founder of DP, was questioned whether if they would stick to secularism or not?²⁰ Since then this question had been a way of interrogating and controlling the elected governments.

Thus we can see that the new Republic has a very peculiar relation with the religion. Due to this peculiarity, no party with an Islamic reference was founded until 1970's. Although religion had been excluded as a result of a unique understanding of secularism, this exclusion was far from being complete. Instead, the state preferred to define an appropriate Islam and keeping this Islam integrated to the system. In a sense it tried to position religion as a base for the new Republic.

According to Hasan Bülent Kahraman, secularism and the fear of shariah are the

²⁰ From Celal Bayar's book *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes* (My Prime Minister Adnan Menderes) prepared by İsmet Bozdağ. Quoted from (Kahraman, 2007: 26)

fundamentals of the Republican ideology. “Republic never wants to get rid of this fear, since when this fear is removed than the existential reason of republic would be removed” (Kahraman, 2007: 45).

On the other hand, republic is a project of transforming the people. In that sense it is still an unfinished project. When the republic accepts the norms of universal democracy and secularism, then it would also automatically get rid off its mission of transformation. Today some liberal and democratic intellectualls emphasize this aspect of the Republic and claim that in a sense a new and mature republic is formed which got rid of its mission of transformation. Yet as of today, it seems too difficult to claim that Republic got rid of its adolescence excitements and reached a level of maturity. In the Republican ideology, the people were cited as passive objects rather than active subjects. “The Republican elites considered the Islam of peoples as an extension of peasantry and projected that only a high, sublime, aristocratic and esthetic version of religion could be acceptable. In that respect the way people exercised their religion was unacceptable, since the modernization programme of new Turkey is an urban and esthetic one” (Kahraman, 2007: 49).

In the Republican version of secularism state oppressively controls the religion, thus Republic developed a sui-generis concept of secularism distinct from the conventional understanding of secularism where states do not interfere into the religious realm.

Thus it is clear that neither the countryside nor the religious and cultural values of the people were considered to be included in these attempts of modernizing and civilizing the society. Instead, they were tried to be civilized and

modernized through ideological apparatuses like “people’s houses”. People endured these attempts in silence until 1950, and in 1950 when people were given a say they made their choice clear and instead of supporting CHP, the guardian of state’s sensitivities, they opted for the DP without making a thorough examination. When we say that people acted without a thorough examination, we must understand that people acted with the feeling that “it can’t be worse than CHP”, thus opted for the possible alternatives.²¹ DP was successful in mobilizing the religious and cultural values as a mass party. Although DP didn’t have any religious and ethnic priorities and it had no intention of deliberately making these identities more visible, still the relative moderation that DP was offering had been crucial in determining the peoples’ preferences. From this point on even RPP felt the necessity to instrumentalize the common values of people in the political competition, since it became clear by the transition to multi party politics that, in every election people sided with the parties that are more sympathetic to these values.²² Looking from this perspective, we can find an abundance of evidence that the countryside, the religious groups and the poor, in their interaction with the center, had been the motor power of democratization and for the demands of renewal and change. However, this does not mean that the excluded groups which make up the periphery have an essentially democratic nature. In fact, democracy is instrumentalized by the periphery as a mean of moving towards the center. Republican history with coups, military interventions and

²¹ Musa Anter tells a story in his *Memoirs* “Before the 46 elections, Adnan Menders, Mukerrem Sarol and Cihan Baban came to Fırat Student Dormitory in order to invite me to join DP. I gave them this answer: Sir, just as every Easterner I hate CHP. My opposition to them is not political; it is more like a vendetta. In this respect, it is my duty and the duty of every honorable Easterner to defeat CHP. With this hope we will give every help and support to your party” (Anter, 1990: 121).

²² 1950, 1965, 1973, 1983, 1996, 2002 general elections all reflect the desire of periphery to move towards the center. These elections were interrupted by the interventions of center to the politics at 27 May 1960, 12 March 1971, 12 September 1980 and 28 February 1997. Attempts of intervention after 2002 electoral victory of AKP were unsuccessful.

guardianship of bureaucracy and military over politics had enforced these excluded political actors to demand change.²³

Considering the distance in the attitudes of AKP and its predecessors, we can also notice that this struggle led to the internalization of democratic demands by the periphery and periphery inclined to a more rational way of conducting politics. Due to the exceptional nature of politics in Turkey and the continuous guardianship role of military bureaucracy over the politics, the periphery was never considered as a legitimate actor by the center, however as long as multi-party elections are conducted, it remained impossible to keep away the periphery from the center.

In that sense, Kahraman's point is crucial in order to understand the nature of politics in Turkey: "Politics in Turkey was never produced as an intellectual inquiry, instead it was just conducted" (Kahraman, 2007: 174).

2. 2. Socio Economic Bases of AKP

The relation between center and periphery will remain tensioned as long as both as given categories are not recognized as legitimate. Non existence of such a tension throughout the Ottoman era owes more to the fact that both categories were considered as legitimate, rather than economic and cultural similarity between these two categories. This was feasible due to the existence of a common universe of meaning and life between these two social strata. The tensioned nature of the relationship between these two categories throughout the republican era was a result

²³ Although center and periphery are instrumental theoretical apparatuses in order to grasp the nature of this political and social formation, the conceptual framework that Kahraman proposes is also suitable. According to Kahraman it is the "periphery in the center" formed by DP and AP that brings AKP to power. This point has an explanatory value since the classical accounts of center periphery neglects the formation of a new center during the transformation of periphery to the center (Kahraman, 2007: 78).

of a continuous suspicion of the deeds of the periphery on behalf of center and the periphery's inclination to undermine the sensitivities of the center whenever it is feasible (Mardin, 1973:102).

As a legacy of the Ottoman Empire the state in the Republican era showed a transcendental character as it enjoyed autonomy from society in shaping its major policies (İnalçık, 1980: 7).²⁴ The bureaucratic elites continued to consider the “transcendental state” as necessary and inevitable in order to keep the society united. This legacy prevented Turkey from adopting an open political regime. And again due to the same reason, democratic transition was the result of legal changes rather than political processes. While the center was always overwhelmingly powerful vis-a-vis the periphery, the state elites always acted with the self assigned mission of “unifying” the society. And they had been over sensitive and over reactive to any possible problems in this context, thus they followed a harsh attitude against any inclination that questions the hegemony of state. Şerif Mardin claims that during the early years of the Republic, the fear that Anatolia will be divided upon ethnic differences was very powerful among the founders of the new state. According to him this fear continued to remain in the background of Kemalist attitudes until the end of single party rule in 1950 (Mardin, 1973: 177).

At the end of 27 years rule of CHP, DP came to power with the claim of representing the people against the bureaucracy. In a sense this was the march of periphery towards the center. However the bureaucratic cadres continued their elitist attitudes after 1950 as well. While explaining the existence of the strong state

²⁴ For an analysis of how the Ottoman state tradition was inherited by Young Turks and Kemalists, see Ali Kazancıgil, “The Otoman-Turkish State and Kemalism”, in *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State*, Ed. Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun, London: C. Hurst and Company, 1981: 48.

tradition in Turkey, an important reference is made to the non existence of an economically autonomous and thus politically strong bourgeoisie. Throughout the 19th century, the economic entrepreneurs didn't transform to a class with an autonomous economic power, and consequently political power. They remained as an opportunist community (Heper, 2006: 182). This continued throughout the republican era. Moreover the bourgeoisie developed under state patronage, thus turned dependent on the state. The fact that bourgeoisie is neither autonomous nor powerful led this class to remain passive vis-a-vis the bureaucracy and the state. The businessmen always sided with the state thinking that they will cease to exist unless they maintain good terms with the state. Keyder also believes that absence of an independent bourgeoisie and a landlord class contributed to the widening of the gap between state elites and masses without any serious opposition during the early years of the Republic (Keyder, 1999: 31).²⁵ When the bourgeoisie of the periphery felt itself powerful enough to challenge the bourgeoisie of the center supported by the state, parties of the periphery started to strengthen with the support of this peripheral bourgeoisie. This fact shaped the process of political representation of the conservative circles in Turkey.

During the economic model of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), state was directly involved with economic development. Haldun Gülalp argues that this protective and developmental role of the state feeds the nationalist ideology, while the determinant role of state on economic development with its apparent aim of maintaining the welfare of the low income groups feeds populism (Gülalp, 1999:

²⁵ At this point we can also make a contribution to the analysis of Keyder: One of the reasons of the existence of a strong resistance in the Kurdish regions to the ethnic and religious policies of the state is the fact that Kurdish notables were mostly landlords.

46-47). However Turkish political economy experienced significant changes from the ISI of 60's and 70's. Export oriented economy-politics of 80's resulted in liberalization, economic development and the birth of the discourse of Islamic community. Brotherhoods and Islamic communities contributed to the formation of a lifestyle based on organizational solidarity by the newly acquired financial resources maintained through capitalist market. Islamic doctrine and practices increasingly became rationalized as a result of the combination of religious discipline, ethical solidarity, and entrepreneurial dynamism that has occurred under the leadership of the successful small and medium enterprises known as "Anatolian tigers" (Yavuz. 2005: 117).

The rise of Islamism started in this process which enabled a visibility to the values of periphery. Güllalp claims that rise of Islamism is the continuation of the depression of the ISI. Güllalp says, "If the promise of development that ISI represented has failed and together with it, faith in modernization, then the crisis of development and the rise of Islamism must be connected" (Güllalp, 1999: 46). Urbanization, capitalization and revolutions in the technologies of mass communication and broadcasting have been influential in the socio-economic context of Islamic awakening and the assertion of its political identity. Migration from rural areas to urban centers created socio-economic problems and this resulted in the appropriation of Islam as the mean of social equality and justice (Yavuz, 2005: 116). If we go on with the remarks of Tanıl Bora "While Turkey was on the way of being a market society during 80's, by 90's it became a market society. The promising start of a new modernization stage of capitalism during 80's, was followed by poverty, inequality and disappointment" (Bora, 2001: 59). Nurdan

Gürbilek describes the 90's as "the period when the display cabinet lost its glimmer, when the opportunities were narrowed, and the promises came to the limits. These are the years when the distribution struggle in the cities is given in an even more ruthless environment and under even more tight and brutal conditions" (Gürbilek, 2004: 8). Birth of private radio and tv channels and appearance of press as a medium, while giving way to polyphony, on the other hand enabled the power to enlarge its penetration (Bora, 2001-02: 59). It is also worth thinking over the fact that it was Islam that rose as a result of economic inequality rather than leftist discourses. Obviously the devastating effects of 12 September were the most significant factor behind this. And in this political environment, economic injustice turned as the major dynamic of the rise of Islamic movement. For instance the distinctive feature of RP, beside its critical stance towards secularism, was its demand of a radical change in the system which it claimed was responsible for the social and economic problems. As a result it quickly gained strength in the urban outskirts, places where usually leftist and socialist parties gain mass support (Laçiner, 1996: 9). This process was accompanied by the rise of Anatolian capital. Turgut Özal, who was the key figure of post-80 years, supported small and middle scale entrepreneurs in order to overcome the opposition of large industrialist members of TUSİAD, representative of center bourgeoisie. Thus with the 1980 economic ruling, two separate bourgeoisie class emerged who often clash with each other. The rivalry between them was not confined to their portions of the market, but more importantly included different visions on the ideological and cultural routes of the country. "The new Anatolian bourgeoisie is less dependent on the state and more

embedded in Turko-Islamic culture and demands a smaller government, larger political space, and freedom for civil society” (Yavuz, 2005: 124).

The rise of an Islamic bourgeoisie annoyed the Kemalist circles as much as the Istanbul’s bourgeoisie. Huge amounts of capital accumulation occurred in the major cities of Anatolia, since 80’s. The rising tension between the bourgeoisie of Anatolia and Istanbul had been a significant factor during the political problems of the coalition government in which RP served as the major partner. Therefore the 28th February coup wasn’t limited with closure of RP, but also targeted the Anatolian bourgeoisie which was labeled as the “green capital”. Batı Çalışma Grubu (Western Study Group), para-legal body that took care off the military organized operations, published lists that targeting many firms having “Islamic capital”, while these lists also included such huge companies like Ülker. Ahmet Çiğdem’s observation is insightful. Çiğdem argues that neither 12 September nor 28 February was concerned with Kemalism. “The principle object was to strengthen the guardianship regime. It desired to make all necessary arrangements to ensure the continuity of this guardianship” (Çiğdem, 2009: 22). Yasin Aktay also points that the 28 February process targeted the Özal and the spirit associated with him rather than reactionarism (Aktay, 2001: 127). This means the impossibility of conducting politics by establishing a sphere autonomous from the absolute sovereignty of the state. This intervention which instrumentalizes Kemalism, demolished all the dynamism of the society and put away “the capability to produce solutions” (Çiğdem, 2009: 22).

Social movements’ create new opportunity spaces. Opportunity spaces are forms of social interaction that provide new possibilities for cooperation, common

identity and meaning. Politics and market are the most important of these opportunity spaces. These processes also define the framework that gave birth to AKP. After 1923 the state elites couldn't penetrate the society and couldn't transform it. This failure brought with itself new social problems like politically and economically suppressed identities, injustice and non-participation. In contrast, Islamic social and political groups had been able to establish social and moral paradigms to fill this vacuum. Hakan Yavuz defines this process as "Despite this state-led secularization policy, Islam has continued to offer a set of rules for regulating and constituting everyday life. (...)For many Turkish Muslims, Islam continues to serve as a repertoire and a site of counter-statist discourse and an organizational framework for social mobilization to deal with the stresses of development" (Yavuz, 2005: 51).

In this process the periphery considered its Islamic identity as a means of opposition in order to resist the demands of the center. In this medium of revival of religious politics and integration to the world capitalist system, the confidence in the nation state also started to erode (Gülalp, 1999: 44).

Desire to keep Islam away from the Turkish state widened the gap between the center and periphery. Periphery showed its disaffection to this gap, after multi-party politics started, by supporting the political parties that it considered as capable of narrowing the gap. Islamic groups, which started to integrate to the state centered politics through Democrat Party, gained a new opportunity of self representation with the establishment of MNP in 1970. From this point on, this party and its successors were the locus of attempts to transform the politics in line with the Islamic sensitivities. In the meantime, DP-AP line strengthened its position as the

center. Thus, while the Islamic opposition started its journey without mass support, the large masses of the periphery continued to be the power base of the center right parties.²⁶

Yet the widespread circulation of Islamic discourse had been possible after the legal changes brought by Özal like the widening of freedom of association and meeting, removal of state monopoly over TV and radio broadcasting, and facilitation of the spread of local and international languages. Especially with the new opportunities of broadcasting, the Islamic movements gained an activist consciousness that shaped Turkey's socio-political appearance. There occurred a new wave of consciousness that was organized through weekly and monthly journals. Economic liberalism that started with Özal had two important consequences; first it strengthened the Anatolian capital that aimed to remove the monopoly of large capital and second with the widening of freedoms, opposition to bureaucracy and the strengthening of Islamic movements started to be more visible. From this point on it is possible to talk about a sort of Anatolian bourgeoisie. Inevitably, this bourgeoisie started to pressure the political parties that it supported for its demands. This process enabled the periphery "to turn back to the stage of history with its own ethical and aesthetic values. This was followed by a struggle for the existence of Islamic symbols in the public sphere (Göle, 1999: 76).

However, while having revolutionary affects on one hand, commodification and spread of the Islamic knowledge also started a radical change in the traditional norms of Islamic teachings and relationships. Starting from 80's the debates that

²⁶ With the emergence of National View Parties, the peripheral votes started to turn ideological. Kotku was the brainchild of MSP, and he was talking about the need of a party where Muslims would feel at home. The same feeling resonates in this sentence "We are tired of being used by other center right parties" (Yavuz, 2005: 279).

went on in the media about identity and state-society relations had deep effects on society and these debates simultaneously started to transform the traditional Islamic teachings. Throughout 80's, the weakening of nation state in Turkey created new opportunities for the Islamic movements to create their own social political and cultural spheres. Thus the top down process of Westernization and bottom up process of Islamic liberation started to clash on their visions of modernity and on their projection of ideal society. According to Hakan Yavuz throughout this process "Islamic social movements have brought with them something entirely new: the vernacularization of modernity and the internal secularization of Islam in terms of rationalization, nationalization, and the accommodation of faith to the overriding exigencies of reason and evidence" (Yavuz, 2995: 14).

In order to better grasp the transformation of the Islamic movements, an analysis of the meanings attributed to democracy can be helpful. During 80's and 90's a relative moderation occurred between the Islamists and the existing political structure as a result of the widening of opportunities to conduct politics with Islamic references, In the debates on Islam and democracy which started during 70's, a branch of intellectuals that represents Islamism reflected distaste for democracy. This attitude was stemming from the belief that there is an irreconcilable difference between Islam and the existing state structures and these two excluded each other. That was so, since democracy was considered as people's sovereignty as opposed to God's sovereignty (Aktay, 2001-02: 131). However by 90's, the attitudes towards democracy turned more and more positive. At this point Yasin Aktay claims that throughout the democratization process started in 50's, the Islamic demands had more chance of expressing its demands as democratic development is achieved and

he even argues that it was the Islamic groups who benefited most clearly from democratization in Turkey. (Aktay, p. 134) In this process, the Islamic movements moved more towards the center and they started to care more on the sensitivities of the center. According to Ömer Laçiner, the formation of AKP and the forecasts on its immediate success had been the result of a vacuum in the center of political establishment (Laçiner, 2001: 149). While the center right parties lost their previous position as the carrier of the demands of periphery towards the center, parties belonging to the MNP tradition were all closed down by the secular regime. Finally with the heavy destruction of the 28 February process, the Islamic politics get convinced on the need of moving towards center and conducting politics on more rational bases. AKP appeared in the interaction of these two demands; it both carried the Islamic base towards the center and it appeared as a center of attraction for the center right politics.

2. 3. Dynamics That Prepared the Formation of AKP

AKP, first and foremost, is the result of the problems that were not been able to be solved by the political mechanisms in Turkey. Aside from the causes that gave way to its existence, AKP itself is the continuation of these political problems, dilemmas and deadlocks. Since 1980's, Turkey experienced a widespread and intense tension with regard to the two key problems of its political establishment; "secularism" and "Kurdish reality". Secularism is considered as a "way of life" with regard to the "unique conditions of Turkey" and functioned as a mean of limiting the political integration of certain segments of society and forced these segments to frame their politics on more ideological grounds. It is well known that the dominant

state elites, first and foremost the military and civilian bureaucracy, considered any demand related with identity as a “security threat”. Especially the Kurdish and Islamic identities were considered within this definition of security threat. This led to an increased politicization of Turkish society (not limited with the carriers and defenders of Islamic and Kurdish demands but also included the groups that oppose these demands). The assertive Kurdish and Islamic identity claims reinforced the “securitization” of domestic politics in Turkey and the institutionalization of a national security state, in which the military expanded its overseer role to include such civilian areas as the judiciary, economy, education, and foreign policy (Yavuz, 2005: 323).

The nature of politics in Turkey had always transformed the relation between the government and opposition to a problem of legitimacy which is codified on being either pro system or anti system. This was the case in years between 1950-1960 and between 73-80 and finally through the 28 February process. Finally during the AKP term, this perception continues to dominate the relation between CHP and AKP (Heper, 2006: 190). Such a perception of politics functions as one of the primary reasons of the institutionalization of the “national security state”.

The statement of Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, one of the architects of 28 February intervention, as “28 February will continue thousand years” is the precise expression of this institutionalization. This new “security concept” that aims to control the society into the most minimum details had two results; while it started to strictly contain politics on one hand – as always happened in Turkey- it also led AKP to appear as a hope not only for religious groups but also for large masses of the periphery, the rural areas and the poor. “Silent masses” came to election boxes in

order to support a new party with high assertions, a party which has many characteristics that would enable the large masses to affiliate with themselves. While AKP insisted that it changed and broke its ties with its past and with the political tradition that it came from, it couldn't succeed in convincing the secular Kemalist elites, the civilian and military bureaucracy. After the closure of FP, the conservative groups formed SP while AKP was formed at 2001 by the then so called "reformers".

References to the Islamic identity demands and to the struggles on Islam's existence in the political realm with regard to AKP are not only related to the fact that major actors of AKP has Islamic backgrounds, but also are related with the fact that the political demands of the periphery has reflected itself through the recognition of the Islamic identity as well. In principle one of the major elements of the struggle between periphery and center, aside from poverty, inequality etc., is the codification of Islamic identity as belonging to the rural areas and reservation of this identity by the rural (periphery). Because political Islam, with its negative use, "was created as a concept not only to oppose the politicization of religion but also aimed to present cultural Islam as an acceptable form of religiosity" (Çiğdem, 2009: 116).

Representation of headscarf as a political symbol and gradual embodiment of Islamic politics in headscarf took place in this process. Restriction of the struggle for the existence of Islam in the public sphere to the issue of headscarf had in one hand created a base for the spread of Islamic politics, on the other hand headscarf turned the major symbol of political tension since it is a visual element that can easily be pointed out by the secular establishment which codified Islam as a security threat. Finally the "putting of Merve Kavakçı, an elected representative in the parliament,

into her place” of led to double feelings among the large masses; “this issue can’t be solved this way” and “some way should be found to solve this issue”. Although contributed by the evident failures of post 28 February governments, in fact what happened in the upcoming elections was a replica of what has always happened in the struggle of center and periphery. In the “regulated and subordinated” political environment the periphery broke all its ties with the parties that deemed as representatives of the sensitivities of the center, and directed its support to a “periphery party” which took its lesson from 28 February process and that would presumably be more careful vis-a-vis the over sensitivities of the center. This reformist group that broke away from FP developed a new political discourse in accordance with the messages they received both from the center and the periphery. They adopted “change” as their slogan and as political actors, who were mistreated by the 28 February process; they followed a discourse that takes care of the social groups that were mistreated by 28 February. As the representative of the segments that needed democracy most, the stress on democracy became more evident and straightforward.²⁷

At this point we need to look at the significance and meaning of electoral process as a form of political practice. In principle the elections are attempts of restructuring of the political center according to the values and norms of society and redefining the boundaries of the state in order to create more space for social participation and social values. This is the case in Turkey as well. Yet in Turkey this

²⁷ Motto of change, aside from referring that Turkey will be governed more democratically and more open-mindedly, was basically claiming that they themselves has changed. This was also voiced by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself. At least he was assuring that he won’t repeat his previous acts such as starting his opening speech with reciting Fatiha from Quran, as he did several years ago when he first became mayor of Istanbul.

process took one step forward and two steps back. The political center had always had to take the limits of military bureaucracy into account, and had never showed enough courage to use the license given by the society in order to reshape the political center in accordance with the values of the society.

Both Islamic groups and Kurdish people considered elections as opportunities to create new political maps concordant with their own values and to redraw the boundaries between the state and society. This is the reason of the success of Democrat Party in the aftermath of the transition to multi-party system. Electoral behaviour in the aftermath of military interventions and the rise of AKP to power following the 2002 elections were also shaped by this fact. As a last case, the landslide victory of AKP in the 2007 elections can again be considered as the reaction of the periphery to the pressures coming from the center.

Perceptions of society toward the state started to gradually change since 80's, and instead of considering the state as the master, society started to consider state as its servant. A political polarization among the elites of center and periphery started in this process. This polarization accelerated with the 28 February process. One of the most interesting findings of the research "*Elites and Social Distance*" is the ossification of hatred amongst the certain segments of the well-educated high income level society towards the Kurds and DTP, towards the conservatives in general and towards AKP and AKP's supporters in particular.²⁸

The central strategy of AKP had been to achieve permanent democratic reforms and thus to gain legitimacy in the eyes of both the state and the West. The

²⁸ Üstel, F.-Caymaz, B. (2009) *Seçkinler ve Sosyal Mesafe Araştırması*, İstanbul: TESEV.

problems AKP faced in legitimizing itself turned out to be a significant element of its dynamism. Thus, although the emphasis on democracy can be evaluated essentially as a pragmatic attitude, this tension led the party to continue to increase its power base even while it is in power. The general election that led to AKP's second term was the most apparent indicator of this point. Throughout the first term of AKP, the opposition parties gave priority to guardianship rather than politics and tried to undermine the opportunities of politics. This attitude of the opposition brought AKP forward as the address of political process. Thus the attacks towards AKP with regard to secularism conducted by the Kemalist center and CHP, the spokesperson for the ossified demands of this center, were the major factors strengthening AKP. Prime Minister Erdoğan's sarcastic statement as "Fortunately, there is CHP" shows that he is aware of the fact that this binary tension has positive results for AKP. The definition of secularism by the republican elites in accordance with the state logic, and abolishment of all the foundational links between state, politics, culture and society with this formulation of secularism, forced the periphery to support the parties that were considered as representative of the values of periphery. Islamic identity had been recognized by the reference point of a political movement for the first time in modern Turkey by National View. As a result, National View played a crucial role in the integration of the large portions of society that were marginalized, by representing a more inclusive identity rooted in the Ottoman Islamic tradition. The changing names, from *Milli Nizam* (National Order) to *Milli Selamet* (National Salvation) to *Refah* (Welfare) to *Fazilet* (Virtue) to *Saadet* (Felicity) reflect both the pressures of the ongoing power struggle between the secular Kemalist center and the Turkish-Islamic periphery and also the main

political platform of the party during each period (Yavuz, 2005: 280). In this sense AKP represents both a rupture from this tradition and the continuation of this tradition. In a sense, it can be said that with its break away from the National View tradition, AKP in fact transformed this tradition and followed a transformed version of the tradition. Since politics in Turkey is not conducted solely by its civilian actors but rather functions as an opportunism that aims to maintain a balance between the state and social actors, survival in this context can only be achieved through transformation.

There are basic conceptual differences between AKP and RP (and RP's predecessors and successors). For instance, AKP abandoned the emphasis on concepts like "*batıl*" (falsehood) and "*hak*" (truth). In the political jargon of RP, "*batıl*" represents the West and USA and EU are the political platforms of this "*batıl*" system. AKP, with the politics it conducted for harmony with EU, followed a completely opposite path. While RP was modern, but anti-Western, a harmonious relation with West was a way of gaining legitimacy for AKP. AKP considered that solutions to most of the political conflicts of Turkey could be found through a democratic transformation of the country in accordance with EU norms, while RP was proposing that in order to solve these conflicts, different identities should be integrated under the Islamic identity (New Ottomanism). RP was presenting Islamic brotherhood and Islamic nation as a cure to the Kurdish problem as well.

As the secular Kemalist ideology began to be imposed by the center over much of traditional Anatolian social life, religion gradually was politicized and became the dominant counter-hegemonic identity of the broad periphery. When the later internal power struggle within the secular sector made support from the

periphery crucial, concessions such as allowing limited public manifestations of religion were made in order to harness this support. First the DP and then its successor, the AP, demonstrated a more sensitive attitude toward religious sentiments in a notable break from the militancy of the early Kemalist period (Yavuz, 2005: 280-281).

While this process politicized religion, the DP-AP line was caught between the demands of the center and periphery. This political and social environment gave birth to a political movement where Islamic political identity “would feel at home” and this movement eventually turned to AKP. It is also significant that the real successors of RP, FP and SP had already showed some shift in their rhetoric even before the establishment of AKP. If the reformers did not break away from SP, the SP wouldn’t be able to establish itself in the center as AKP did and wouldn’t be able to achieve the electoral success that AKP did, but such SP would be significantly different from today’s SP.

The relation between the state and Islamists had always been dynamic and progressive. Formation of an Islamic political identity and starting of relations with the state also brought about the integration of Islamic groups to the system. The most distinctive feature of AKP in Turkish political life was its success in achieving this integration on a mass scale. With the influence of the climate of post 28 February process, AKP transformed the Islamic groups that voted for itself. Hakan Yavuz argues that one of the major implications of modernity is the autonomization of politics and other social spheres from all-encompassing ideologies, for example, religion or secularism. The attempts by Islamic groups to cope with the fragmentary nature of modernity have created contradictory positions and languages. These

contradictions impel Islamic movements toward a more liberal and pluralistic self-understanding (Yavuz, 2005: 39).

2002 elections can also be considered as the restoration of power to the Islamic groups who had been forced out of office at 1997. The Islamic groups were amongst the large masses that gave AKP a significant power that enabled it to redefine the political center with regard to social values. In this process, Islamic groups themselves were also transformed. Democracy and human rights appeared as the principles that were mostly cited by these groups.

2. 3. 1. 28 February and a New Beginning

At 24 December 1995, RP gained 21.4 percent of votes and secured 158 seats in the parliament. The significant share of social support given to this Islamic oriented party proved the failure of Kemalist ideals of a homogenous society. In 28 June 1996, a leader whose political philosophy, personal choices and life perceptions relied on Islam, became the prime minister for the first time. The coalition formed by Islamic leaning Erbakan and European oriented Çiller was a good representation of the tension inherent to the formation of modern Turkish identity. This tensioned togetherness didn't have the chance to construct its own path.²⁹ The 28 February coup turned this option impossible. At the beginning actions of 28 February that targeted all segments of the society were only a show of force. Redefinition of the society by BÇG (Batı Çalışma Gurubu-Western Working Group)³⁰ at the breakpoint of secular and non-secular nexus aroused

²⁹ If it had the chance, how would things develop? We can ask this question at many other instances as well. How would Turkey be if there was no 12 September coup? Obviously, answers to such questions would be quite speculative, but it is certain that things couldn't go worse under any circumstances.

³⁰ A secret organization formed in military for the monitoring of the society during the 28th February Progress.

tensions that had permanent effect on the society. But results of “the indexing of the society from universities to small and large enterprises, that are considered to be sympathetic for RP reflected that these institutions has the power to regenerate themselves” (Çiğdem, 2009: 36).³¹

27 March 1994 local elections and 24 December 1995 general elections which lasted with the victory of RP were psychological turning points, where the need for a redefinition of state society relations became apparent. The political campaign that aimed reorganization of the political center and transformation of the bureaucratic system activated large segments of the society from Kurds to newly emerging Anatolian bourgeoisie in the name of identity and justice.³² Some newspapers reported election results with the titles of “Other Turkey won”, “Black Turks against White Turks”, “Fatih defeated Harbiye”. But this had been a painful and short term in power. In fact RP had been a party in power but it was powerless.³³ In the long run, erosion of state legitimacy was not the sole result of 28 February intervention. It also started a new understanding among traditional Sunni Turks and Kurds which considers EU membership and Copenhagen criteria as the sole mean of significantly transforming the authoritarianism of Turkish state and its ideology. At April 1997 military made a change in its National Concept of Military Strategy, and declared reactionary Islam as the foremost enemy of the founding

³¹ Çiğdem considers this as the power that brought AKP to government (Çiğdem, 2009: 36).

³² Hakan Yavuz claims that electoral victory of political Islam has four main causes. 1- Transformation of Turkish-Islamic synthesis into a state policy by the leaders of 1980 coup. 2- Political and economical liberalization and accompanying birth of Anatolian bourgeoisie represented by organizations like MÜSİAD. 3- Emergence of a new group of Islamic intellectuals who efficiently use printed and electronic media. 4-The ideological representation of “just system” by RP and its organizational flexibility (Yavuz, 2005: 192).

³³ Ömer Çelik, in his article published at 23 October 1996 at *Yeni Şafak* claims that the legitimacy crises that RP has vis-a-vis the establishment is not as harmful to RP as its own crises. Rather than relying on its own thesis, RP preferred to use DYP as a shield to itself (Çelik, 1996: 27).

ideology of the country and of national unity. Thus “reactionary Islam” was claimed to be even more dangerous than the threats of an interstate war and secessionist Kurdish movement. The Chief of Staff formed a new unit called BÇG (Western Working Group) in order to spy on suspected Muslim organizations and enterprises at every segment of society. The military intervention redefined secularism as a way of life and enlarged its definition in order to include many aspects of civil society. In the same vein, the Constitutional Court under the leadership of Ahmet Necdet Sezer also defined secularism as a way of life and closed RP in confirmation with the demands of military. The discovery of Europe as a guard for human rights and democracy by the National View did not prevent the closure of FP. Merve Kavakçı who were elected from FP at the 1999 election were not allowed to take her oath, and the President Süleyman Demirel accused her “for being an agent provocateur who secretly aims create a radical Islamic state” (04.05.1999, *Hürriyet*). The Chief Prosecutor defined FP as “a vampire sucking the blood of the country and infiltrating ignorance” (08.05.1999 *Hürriyet*). SP which was formed following the closure of FP was the platform where the break-up of National View took place. During the 28 February process a political tradition was crushed, a large segment of society was declared undesirable, and certain violations of rights, most significantly on education, has been systematized. On the other hand, given the negative image of 28 February process at the societal level, AKP who was the outcome of this process received an easy approval at society.

Just like previous coups the 28 February as well “destroyed the features that make up a society such as dynamism and the capability to overcome problems” (Çiğdem, 2009: 50). This point is important in understanding and explaining the

change among the Islamic and conservative circles vis-a-vis their attitude towards EU in the aftermath of 28 February process. The society lost its capability to solve problems and it also lost its self confidence to achieve that. Aside from AKP, all the political and identity based demands in Turkey, are all established around EU and this fact alone is important to reflect the military coups' devastating effects on features that make up a society.

2. 3. 2. Social Bases of AKP as a New Political Actor

It is necessary to make a point before starting to examine the social bases of AKP: throughout 80's and 90's Turkey experienced a huge transformation in which all modernizing institutions, values and ideals came under attack. Thus, this is a period when the Kemalist modernization project also started to come under criticism. "It was this conception of modernity, with its strict identification of modernization with Westernization that led to the pessimism I mentioned. There is, however, another conception of modernity; non-Western modernity. Proponents of non-Western modernization see in the apparent crumbling of social cohesion and the rise of credos actively challenging the aspirations of modernity a welcome sign that some negotiation might occur between the Westernizers and their erstwhile objects" (Keyder, 1999: 30). With the spreading of critical perspectives stemming again from the West a new process started among the Turkish intellectuals which enabled the Islamic opposition and liberal democrats to come closer to each other around the concepts of human rights, freedom and democracy. This process contributed to the legitimization of AKP.

This new approach which believes in the compatibility of Islam and modernity implies no normative commitment to the Enlightenment project. “They observe in this challenge a search for cultural identity, the assertion of a claim over life-worlds whose definition had been denied to their inhibitors” (Keyder, 1999: 30).

First point to be noticed for the social base of AKP would be that, the electoral base of AKP is not as rigid as the electoral bases of RP and SP or CHP political traditions. With the influence of 28 February, it attracted most of the electoral base of RP and this would be expected since AKP broke away from the same tradition. But more than that, AKP attracted significant support from the electoral bases of ANAP which emerged in politics with its claim of uniting four inclinations, and of other center parties. We can roughly define this power base as a conglomeration of the supporters of the Islamic movement, economically or culturally excluded groups and the new dynamic and self-confident Anatolian capital. The fact that these masses were the targets of 28 February is also significant, since from the very beginning AKP gave the signals that it has no intention of getting into a dispute with the established system and emerged as the right address for the Anatolian capital who seeks to get rid of its ideological luggage, and that seeks and finds ways to exist as a part of the world capitalist system.

The predecessors of AKP had to take many risks in order to appear in the political platform. This was so since the Kemalist worldview had certain political results and expectations. With its insistence on “ideal society” Kemalism first of all prevents an open and inclusive public deliberation which is necessary for creating a social contract. This ideal society is Westernized and secularized homogenous nation state. Second, Kemalism doesn’t tolerate the expression of different life styles

or existence of different identities at the public sphere, since this harms the Kemalist vision of an ideal society. Third, it defines politics as an administrative issue aiming to achieve the pre-defined Kemalist ideals. This could only be achieved with the limitation of politicization (Heper, 2006: 242). While taking its stage, AKP avoided an open confrontation with these points. But it had more and stronger instruments in order to transform this structure compared with its predecessors. These were primarily the EU integration process and the democratization attempts followed in this context. The most appropriate term to define the political philosophy of AKP would of course be pragmatism. This is the polar opposite of the mission assigned to political parties by Kemalism. As Metin Heper stated “Kemalist vision of multiparty politics is a rational struggle among two strong parties that are loyal to Kemalism rather than a political race between parties or even politics” (Heper, 2006: 243).³⁴ From the beginning of multi-party politics, center had always been suspicious of the parties that represent the periphery and always looked for means to suppress them. This led to an environment where the discourses of political actors are strictly controlled and where politics is almost impossible to conduct. This was so, since the republican regime considered political participation as legitimate only within the limits of Kemalist ideals and only to those who aim to exalt these ideals. “Finally, it limits political participation to those who subscribe to Kemalist goals and seek to promote them; those who are not fully committed to Kemalist ideals are depicted as backward, irrational, or divisive and are excluded from the public sphere” (Yavuz,

³⁴ This can also be understood as a race among two rational political parties in order to develop the principles of Kemalism. As a matter of fact, this was the aim of the establishment of the *Serbest Firka* (Free Party) at a very early stage while Ataturk was alive. However the results weren't like the expectations and the party was soon closed. Throughout the Ottoman Empire and the Republican ages, the main line of division in politics was between a dominant center and a divided, particularistic and segmented periphery (Heper, 2006: 248).

2005: 76).³⁵ In the final analysis, difference of opinion is considered as illegitimate and “it treats politics as a ‘management’ issue to realize predetermined Kemalist end” (Yavuz, 2005: 71).

Differing from its predecessors AKP come to the political scene having this knowledge in hand and developing the strategies to survive despite this political environment. The dual attitude of its founders; in one hand expressing the demands of the periphery in the public, on the other hand attempting to get closer to big capitalists are signs of this awareness. It can also be read as the undertaking of a politics that would be responsive to Kemalist sensitivities as well, since “Turkish capitalism from its inception had always been a planned capitalism. Its capital accumulation and its bourgeoisie were created by nationalization, taxation, confiscation and degrees” (Çiğdem, 2009: 19).

At the process of decomposition from Islam and centralization of political power, groups at the periphery expressed their oppositions with Islamic symbols. Even when Islam was not formulated as an ideology as it did during 80’s, the religious sensitivities of the periphery were decisive in their relation with politics. Thus it is important to keep in mind that when referring to periphery, we are talking about a group that had politicized to a certain extent due to the exclusion of Islam from life. As early as at 1924, the first attempt of transition to multiparty politics had

³⁵ In order to understand the perception of Kemalist regime towards religion, proposals prepared by a committee established to reform religious life in accordance with the precepts of reason and science in 1928 are instructive. The committee, under the leadership of Mehmet Fuad Köprülü and İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, declared that “religious life, like moral and economic life, must be reformed along scientific lines that it may be in harmony with other institutions.” It recommended that people not take their shoes off in the mosque, the language of worship be Turkish, and the prayer times be adjusted to the needs of the work day; it even called for the introduction of church-style pews and music instead of Qur’anic recitation. Its recommendations were not implemented because of the fear of hostile public reaction, but the first call to prayer (*ezan*) in Turkish was introduced on January 22, 1928, in Istanbul (Yavuz, 2005: 76).

lasted only seven months and the newly established party was closed down since the state considered this move as a reactionary threat to the existing system. Due to the same reason, the life of SCF that was established at August 1930 had only been three months, since the periphery considered the party as a mean of expressing their uneasiness with the radical secularist policies of Kemalism (Yavuz, 2005: 80). In the same vein, the political preferences of the periphery had been prevented to take office with the rigging of 1946 elections and the power term of Democrat Party has ended with the execution of Adnan Menderes and his friends. During all these processes Islamic identity had been in the forefront of the political preferences of the periphery.

2. 3. 3. Ideology of the “periphery” and democracy

AKP presented itself as conservative democrat. The book written by Yalçın Akdoğan and titled as *Conservative Democracy* was considered as theoretical background of the party. Although AKP claimed this identity during its formation, it never felt the neccessity to clarify the term. Questions like “What did conservative democracy meant” or “what was the meaning attributed to the term by AKP” were never answered publicly. Yet, we can still claim that it was the periphery that shaped the ideology of AKP. As we tried to explain above, since the beginning of multi-party politics, periphery had been the major actor of politics, and shaped politics, while it was still excluded from the system in the binary relation of center and periphery. This led to a circumstance unique to Turkey. What is this circumstance that is so unique to Turkey? In order to understand this, we need to analyze the dynamics of the electoral success of Democrat Party.

The years between 1925-1950 are a period when periphery retreated. During this period Islam, owing to its spiritual and communal structures, partly succeeded to be immune from the alienating effects of modernity and republican nation building project. This was particularly so for the Kurds who achieved to maintain the traditional madrasa system. It was this periphery constituting a significant majority that carried DP to power. New industrialists that object to economic statism, landlords objecting the land reform, intellectuals demanding more freedom of speech, religious leaders who had been prosecuted, Kurds etc, all supported DP which represented itself as the voice of the marginalized periphery.

Ergun Özbudun and William Hale define this “liberal center right” that constituted the major body of Turkish politics since DP as:

In this, the DP created the main building blocks of what can be called the liberal centre-right tradition in Turkish politics –that is, attachment to private enterprise (aided, on occasion, by the state), majoritarian democracy (with a tinge of cultural conservatism), clientelist populism and western oriented foreign policy (Özbudun-Hale, 2009: 18).

The significant point here is that, following the realization of the power of its votes, the periphery appeared as the carrier of democracy, and in almost every election constituted itself under the rightist and conservative parties. Thus a democratic consciousness started to emerge between the DP and the vote block that overthrew CHP from power. Thus a sense of citizenship began to evolve around the DP, with the concomitant feeling that the state could, for the first time, be made responsive to the needs of the people (Yavuz, 2005: 90). The inevitable consequence of multi party politics were the penetration of Islam to the public life, visibility of Islam and its transformation at the discursive level. In this vein, the political experiences also were the means of reconciling Islam with the system. Just as DP

did, AP also represented a cultural conservatism that stresses religious and moral values. But, again just as DP didn't, AP also didn't attempt to change the political and legal constraints imposed on Islam.

The party (AP) proclaimed that it was 'attached to moral values and beliefs'. 'Civilisation' did not mean lack of religion –in fact, the most civilized nations were the most moral and religious ones, it claimed. Like the DP, the AP promoted the spread of religious education through the İmam Hatip schools and courses on the Qur'an for school pupils, but it never attempted to withdraw laws restricting the role of religion in politics or the secular legal codes (Özbudun-Hale, 2009: 20).

After Adnan Menderes and Süleyman Demirel, Turgut Özal appeared as the leader of center right. Özal who was personally a religious man, ruled the country from 1983 until when he lost the majority at the parliament in 1991. Özal, just as his contemporaries Ronald Reagan and Margareth Thatcher did, adopted a market oriented economy and tried to minimize the state control over economy. These years were also the years when the Islamic movement and an Islamic politics developed under the banner of RP. This Islamic line that MSP evolved and distanced from the center right again became closer to center right with AKP. Despite the fact that he came from the RP line Erdoğan represented himself as heir to Menderes and Özal.³⁶

With regard to AKP's being the continuation of National View and representation of itself as the continuation of DP, AP and ANAP line, Ahmet Yıldız asserts that: "conservative democracy definitely pulls the party to the center-right of Turkish politics of the Democrat Party (1945–60), Justice Party (1961–80) and Motherland Party (1981–) genre (Yıldız, 2008: 42). However, the ideological

³⁶ According to Özbudun and Hale, Özal was believing that Islam and modernity could be reconciled in a liberalist framework. His example was USA. In USA, people from different believe and creeds enjoyed religious freedom. According Özbudun and Hale AKP, is strict follower of this thought. "In essence, he (Özal) believed that Islam as a religion could be combined with modernity, within a liberal perspective. In the United States, people of different faiths had sought and found religious and political freedom. Their faith endowed Americans with a live morality. The state could be secular, but not individuals, who were left free to practice their religions. Later, this attitude was closely mirrored by that of the AKP. In essence, Özal continued the centre-right tradition inherited from the DP and AP, albeit with a greater emphasis on internationalism and a fuller commitment to the open economy. Against this, however, radical Islamism was gaining ground during the late 1980s and 1990s" (Özbudun- Hale, 2009: 21).

discourse of the party still carries the vestiges of the National View, although it is updated and revised under the current perspective of Muslim democrats (Yıldız, 2008: 45). Aydın and Dalmış provide empirical evidence for the existence of two dynamics operating in opposite directions in the ongoing identity formation process of the party. Although the AKP follows the model of the modernist Motherland Party of the 1980s rather than its Islamist predecessors, the dominance of those groups who belonged to the National View Movement in the past seem to steer the party in a more conservative direction (Aydın and Dalmış, 2008: 221). Regarding this issue, Ahmet Yıldız's interesting conclusion about the nature of change in the party's identity is that "this dual habitus of the AKP is an indication of the fact that Turkey's center-right, with its religious, liberal and conservative components, has found itself a new watercourse. This has contributed significantly to the marginalization of traditional religious movements and groupings of National View Movement and other center-right parties" (Yıldız, 2008: 42).

The relation between democracy and the Islamic politics that had been carried by AKP to the center right is in itself an important topic that goes beyond this thesis. Yet for our purposes, it is significant that democracy had been appropriated by the AKP as the main discourse that would legitimize its rule and within this context, a discourse that defends the rights of the expression of cultural, political, religious and ethnic differences emerged as an indispensable feature that shapes the politics of AKP. Thus democracy is instrumentalized by AKP, but this doesn't mean that AKP would defend democracy for a while, and then give it up later on.

For the consolidation of democracy in Turkey and reaching the EU criteria necessitates the solution of Kurdish problem and therefore AKP had to deal with it. During early 90's Islam and democracy was one of the hottest discussion topics in Turkey. The Islamic groups and their intellectuals were questioned on their distanced attitude towards democracy or more appropriately they were questioned on whether if democracy was their priority or not, while some of these Islamic intellectuals were defending that democracy is inherent to Islam. The RP experience and 28 February coup had significantly affected Islamic groups' attitudes towards democracy.

Being victims, the Islamic groups came to an understanding that to conduct politics necessitates demanding democracy and thus prioritized democracy in their agenda. This process ended the debates on the compatibility of democracy and Islam. In this process political Islam showed a sign of change in its attitude towards the West and EU, and the traditional view of West as the enemy of Islam was dropped. The most significant factor behind this shift was the migration of veiled girls, who were denied university education at home, to West and their opportunities to get university education at West. Besides, the closure of RP, the systematic repression of the existence of Islam in the public sphere and formation process of FP are the dynamics of this transformation. Thus, the National View Line attempted to redefine itself on the discourses of human rights, democracy and rule of law and appeared as the chief protagonist of EU membership.

From the very beginning, political participation contributed to the expression and spread of Islamic political identity. Appearance of Kurdish national identity in the political realm represented by a distinct political actor started relatively late

compared to political Islam. During that time period, Islamic political identity also contributed to the politicization of Kurdish movement. In general we can conclude that in the Turkish case, democratization and liberalization contributed to the move of Islamic groups towards the political center. Though the same thesis doesn't fully apply to the Kurdish movement; we can still say that, aside from a wing that opted for armed struggle, Kurdish movement never distanced itself from politics. In the final analysis, just as it is in the case of DTP, an injured political consciousness was formed which was caught in between of being under the guidance of PKK or not. Whereas the history of political participation is at the same the history of creating new public spheres for political demands. The consolidation of democracy with the Islamic movement, and with the Kurdish movement, the relations between them, and their expressions in the political arena are not causal but constitutive relations in this aspect. As such they compose the two most important mile stones of the history of democratic consolidation in Turkey.

As Yavuz pointed, the process of securitization and criminalization of alternative lifestyles and identities has not strengthened but on the contrary has undermined the legitimacy of the Kemalist state in general, and the military in particular. Most of the Islamic and Kurdish actors allied themselves with the pro-European Union forces as the only option to contain the military and rid the state of its governing ideology (Yavuz, 2005: 335).

This led to a feeling that EU membership is the sole option in order to limit the military's power and to form a democratic state. "In this process, the anti-EU military bureaucratic Kemalism divorced itself from the pro-EU Kemalism that defined Kemalism as a process of joining the EU. In other words, nation-state-

oriented Kemalism has been in conflict with the globalization-oriented democratic version of Kemalism” (Yavuz, 2005: 344).

This divergence within Kemalism itself has been significant in the change of attitudes, where the Kemalists started to show hostility towards West, while the Islamic groups discovered Europe as a positive power. AKP took the full power from democratization initiatives, since the desire of EU membership and the responsibilities that EU demands from Turkey was weakening the power hold of the dominant groups in Turkey. As Ümit Cizre points out, politics of AKP especially until 2005 was aiming to narrow the power base of these dominant groups:

Broad support in Turkey for EU membership restricted the ability of the military officers to oppose a significant reduction of their power. However, it became clear that once the EU-driven democracy agenda had faltered, the military could pursue other options through its well-developed institutional channels to sustain its political influence and continue the imperatives of guarding the secular republic. AKP’s initial success in drawing the NSC away from an executive role in politics was closely connected with the existence of a sufficient margin of comfort that the civilian authority derived from its reform performance. The AKP’s military policy has also backslid from its earlier discourse, which combined a search for a consensus with the military while proactively extending civilian oversight over it (Cizre, 2008: 15).

CHAPTER III

3. KURDISH PROBLEM

3. 1. Historical Background

Emergence of Kurdish issue as a problem corresponds to the modernization and centralization efforts during the late Ottoman Period. One of the most important impacts of the politics of Modernization-Westernization is the widening of the gap and the rise of the tension between center and periphery. In other words, the fact that modernization was perceived as centralization caused adverse reaction to modernization, as well, in the rural areas (Yeğen, 1999: 57). Until the end of 18th century, Ottoman system was based on *millet* system. In this system there was no hierarchy among the elements of the empire. According to the *millet* system, the society was based upon religious communities rather than ethnic ones. Bernard Lewis defines this system as: “There was only the Muslim nation in the empire; there was no Turk, Arab or Kurd. Greek Armenian and Jewish nations existed but not as ethnic communities but as religious communities” (Lewis, 1991: 333).

Although there was a hierarchy between Muslim and non Muslim elements, there was no such inequality based on ethnic markers. According to Şerif Mardin “For Ottomans terms such as Turk, Circassian or Arab meant little rather than connotating the origins of Muslims” (Mardin, 2008: 217). Thus, *millet* system was based on religion rather than the ethnic community. Kurds had little problem in this system, since they were part of the Muslim *millet* and they enjoyed a high degree of

autonomy. The nature of Kurdish existence didn't change until the attempts of state centralization and the emergence of minority rights (Yüksel, 1993: 82). With the emergence of nation state, a shift occurred in the concept of *millet*. "While millet represented religious communities and lately the Muslims according to the Ottoman legal system, following the republic it started to mean a national community; Turks" (Yeğen, 1999: 121).³⁷ As Yeğen also points out "the classical Ottoman politics and bureaucracy enabled the ethnic religious and cultural communities of the periphery to loosely interact with the center." (Yeğen, 1999: 58) Particularly for the Muslim ethnic groups, religion was the mean of connection between the center and periphery. However in the first quarter of the 19th century, important social and political changes took place in the Kurdistan region. Tanzimat brought the principle of equality in front of law. This however meant the end of the privileges of tribal chiefs, and thus inspired unrest among the Kurds. In an article that explores the dynamics of the rise and fall of the power of these tribal chief and the social problems originating from this system, Nur Yalman points that the emergence of the Kurdish question is not only related with the rise of central power but also with the destruction of the feudal land system of East Anatolia:

These legal developments of the nineteenth century, which were intended to increase the power of central authority and to dismantle the feudal land structure of the East Anatolia, in fact, had unforeseen effects on the agrarian system (Yalman, 1971: 186).

The main rationale behind the centralization attempts which weakened the autonomy of the Kurdish region was to keep the Empire united. For Abdulhamid, Islamism was the strategy to achieve this. In this regard Abdulhamid formed the

³⁷ 1961 Constitution made it clear that the term millet has no religious connotations anymore and stressed that sovereignty belongs not to the "millet" (nation) but to "Türk milleti" (Turkish nation): "Sovereignty belongs to Turkish nation." (1961 Constitution, 4. article)

Hamidiye Legions in 1891. This was a paramilitary organization headed by local Kurdish tribal chiefs. 65 such legions were formed between 1891 and 1908. The Hamidiye Legions brought similar problems just like the current village guard (korucu) system. Kurdish tribes who joined the Hamidiye Legions gained too much power vis-a-vis other tribes and used this power in order to suppress their rivals, often in a very cruel way. This led to quarrels with the suppressed tribes and the state. According to what Altan Tan quotes from Siwaren Hemidi, Hamidiye Legions also led to a quarrel among the Kurds themselves:

Hamidiye Legions has arms, they are protected by the royal decree. Thus these legions attack and raid the villages and towns of the other Kurds. The victims appeal to the government; they ask the help of the sultan for the establishment of justice. But they don't get any result; since Sultan himself is the responsible in the first place...It is impossible to truly explain the harms done to our country and people by these legions. This is not only a Kurdish Armenian problem. Today Kurdistan is divided into three: Armenians, Kurds who are part of Hamidiye and Kurds who are not part of Hamidiye. Today these three groups turned against each other...for centuries there was solidarity among Kurds and Armenians. But today Abdulhamid created such a rift that it would remain as a shame for the history.³⁸

Abdulhamid also emphasized education in order to integrate the Muslim Kurds to the empire.³⁹ It was assumed that educating the children of Muslims from different ethnic background- and of the Kurds in the mean time- and enabling those children to come to government positions will help to protect the peace and stability

³⁸ Alayen Siwaren Hemidi, *Kürdistan journal*, 14 Eylül 1901 quoted from (Tan, 2009: 102).

³⁹ With regard to these reforms Şerif Mardin points that: "With these reforms the duration of military education was extended and it was pervaded throughout the country. Thus the military schools started to recruit students from entirely new social backgrounds with regard to previous years. With the extension of education years, a recruited student started to receive education from 8 to 12 years. Thus these students were set free from the influence of their local background" (Mardin, 2008: 252-53). This was a new form of *devshirme* system. Kurdish children were also recruited by these schools and were prepared for government service.

in their region.⁴⁰ For this purpose, School for the Tribes (Aşiret Mektebi) was established in Istanbul at 1892 (Heper, 2008: 82).

However expectations of Kurds were different. Instead of educating Kurds at Istanbul they were demanding Kurdish schools in their region. Said Nursi expressed this demand to Abdulhamid by a written petition. He was arguing that rather than educating Kurdish children in Istanbul, establishing modern schools in their own region with their mother tongue would be more useful. He was also considering this as a strategy of integrating the Kurds. However state followed a different path.⁴¹ Necmeddin Şahiner cites that after this initiative, Said Nursi is hospitalized with the claim of mental retardedness.⁴²

By 1909 policies for centralization started to appear as policies of oppression. First Law on Associations was enacted. Many of the Kurdish associations and clubs were among the closed ones. Soon after, again in 1909, Law to Protect Bandits and Uprisings were enacted.⁴³ As Şerif Mardin also points, during the decline period, the officials of the Ottoman Empire were “raiding their own society. The relationship between these officials and the periphery- and

⁴⁰ Abdülhamid defends his Kurdish policy in his memoirs and states that: “I know that I have been criticized for bringing the sons of some local Kurdish Beys to Istanbul and taking them into government service. For years Christian Armenians occupied the ministerial positions. What is wrong in bringing Kurds who share our faith to these positions? I believe that I made no mistake in my Kurdish policy” (Sultan Abdülhamid, (1987). *My Political Memoirs*, Dergâh Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 29)

⁴¹ He gave other advices to Abdulhamid such as to transform Yıldız Palace to a university, to ease the pressures on society and transition to constitutional monarchy (Akgündüz- Öztürk, 1999: 171).

⁴² Şahiner tells that Said Nursi came to İstanbul at November 1907. The time of his petition on establishing an Eastern University and his deportation to Medical Hospital corresponds to May 1908. The political climate was very tense during these dates (Şahiner, 1977: 347).

⁴³ With this law, all the arms belonging to non Turkish elements would be seized, and new military groups would be formed to enact the law. Moreover non-Muslims were considered for the first time to be recruited as soldiers and learning Turkish was made compulsory.

particularly the rural poor under heavy tax burden- were showing signs of ‘Eastern Despotism’” (Mardin, 2008: 47). This has worsened the relationship between the center and periphery. And thus attempts to integrate the Ottoman society proved fruitless. Non Muslims were followed by the Albanians and Arabs, and Ottoman Empire began to disintegrate. Turkism appeared as the last strategy to prevent Empire from being collapsed.⁴⁴ It became clear that Ottomanism based on an Ottoman citizenship aiming to integrate the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society was useless. Feroz Ahmad states that:

Nationalism was so powerful and pervasive among the people of the Empire that it was too late for the Ottoman dream which predicted a community of free and equal people composed of different ethnicities and religions but united in loyalty to the sovereign of the Empire (Feroz, 1986: 113).

Turkism started to gain more power following the defeats at the Balkans (1912-1913). However even then, it still wasn’t the hegemonic ideology. When the last Ottoman Assembly convened at February 1920 and declared the National Oath (Misak-ı Milli), there wasn’t any reference either to Turkey or to Turks. According to the programme of Anadolu Rumeli Müdafı-i Hukuk Cemiyeti’nin (ARMHC), which was the constitutive organization of the National Assembly, all Muslim citizens were natural members of the organization (Tunçay, 1989: 343). However when the ARMHC was transformed into the People’s Party at 1923, being a Turk was the necessary condition for membership. It was stated that “Every Turk and those coming from external lands but accepting Turkish nationality and Turkish culture can be a member” (Tunçay, 1989: 362). In practice the membership was

⁴⁴ Yusuf Akçura who is from Kazan in Russia is one of the main figures of Turkism. His article entitled “Three Ways of Politics” published in 1904 had deep influences. Akçura claimed Turkism as the savior of Ottomans. His ethnicist Turkism overrode Gökâlîp’s cultural Turkism in 1930’s, and this has an important effect in the development of Kurdish problem.

closed to those who don't speak Turkish. Considering that it was a single party regime, "in order to become a member of the party thus to participate in politics, one had to be born as a Turk or become a Turk" (Yeğen, 1999: 95). However, Amasya Protocol was defining Kurds as an indispensable part of the Ottoman society and was stating that social and ethnic customs of Kurds would be recognized. Mustafa Kemal used the term Türkiye for the first time in a speech delivered to the Assembly at April 1920. It was used as the official name of the country for the first time at 1921. In one of his speeches at 1925 Atatürk stated that "In the current nature of our state, the bond of solidarity among our people has changed after so many centuries. Instead of religious or sectarian ties, the members of our nation are united by Turkish nationalism" (Quoted from Heper, 2008: 135). As a matter of fact, being Turkish started to have racial connotations by the time and some of the intellectuals and bureaucrats of the time made such statements. Mahmud Esad Bozkurt who served as the Minister of Justice between 1924 and 1930 stated in one of his speeches that;

Revolutionaries should be careful. Their creation might collapse if unreliable people take the responsibility. Thus, each revolution should be achieved by the true sons of the nation and should be protected by them. Turkish revolution should be kept alive by Turks. (Quoted from Nişanyan, 1995: 136)⁴⁵

Afet İnan, one of the national historians, was also designated by Atatürk himself with the task of "scientific inquiry of Turkish history and race".⁴⁶ In that

⁴⁵ Despite the bluntness of these expressions, according to Heper they can be understood in the context of Ottoman disintegration. "Statesmen of the Republic have the memory of three century long disintegration of the Empire. According to them disloyalty of non-Turk elements were responsible for this disintegration and such statements were results of this belief" (Heper, 2008: 152).

⁴⁶ According to an anecdote that Behar quotes from the book entitled "Atatürk's History Thesis", İnan shows a book written in French claiming that Turks belong to the yellow race and thus belongs

respect, Committee for Etudes of Turkish History” was established at 1930 (Behar, 1996: 126). By 1931, language started to become the focus of attention. In a speech he delivered at Adana, Ataturk stated that “Language is one of the major characteristics of a nation. Anyone who wants to be an inseparable member of Turkish nation should first of all speak Turkish. Those who speak other languages can cooperate with others and act against us.” This gives a clear picture of the attitude against Kurdish people. All these speeches and attitudes reflect a radical rupture with the discourse of years between 1919 and 1922. Islam was considered as the main social bond at those years. In that respect at May 1920 in his address to National Assembly, Ataturk declared that: “The peoples who constitute this Glorious Assembly are not only Turks or Circassians, Kurds or Laz. It is composed from every Muslim community. (Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri (Atatürk’s Speeches and Statements) I, III, 1997: 73).

Uniting role of Islam was vital during the War of Independence. Kurds fought at that war under the flag of Khilafat. Mustafa Kemal and his comrades emphasized the Islamic brotherhood and the significance of Khilafat throughout the War of Independence. At the early stages of war, Atatürk toyed with the idea of granting autonomy to the Kurds after the victory is secured. Mango cites that Ataturk stated in a telegram he sent to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha and other high ranking commanders at the Kurdish regions that: “Provided that the Ottoman state would not disintegrate, I am in favor of giving every right and privilege to our Kurdish brothers, in order to increase their loyalty to the state and to enhance their welfare and development.” In 1920 he sent a note to General Nihat Anılmış, Commander of

to the inferior race. When İnan asked if that’s true or not, Ataturk refuses the claim and says “We should deal with this. You should work on this subject” (Afet İnan, 1939: 243-46).

South Forces, stating that “We believe in the necessity of establishing a local government gradually in the Kurdish regions. Kurds can finish their preparations until that time” (Mango, 1999: 7). In fact “there were 70 Kurdish deputies in the first Assembly, and Mustafa Kemal often described Turks and Kurds as two brothers constituting the Islamic nation (Bozarslan, 2002: 93).

In the same line with these statements, article 11 of the first constitution of Turkey (20 January 1921) states that cities have local autonomy. At February 1922, Assembly decided that autonomous administrations should be established at Kurdish majority regions. However, none of these were implemented. When the new state as a republic was established, and the reforms began to be implemented, Kurds in a way felt deceived. This was a term of Kurdish uprisings and many of Kurdish notables were executed.

Although Kurds were among the constitutive elements of the republic this was never officially declared. Although, based upon the Lauzanne agreement (24 July 1923), it is declared that “Religious bonds unite the Turks and Kurds under the same nation”, the actual policies following the republic made it clear that the new republic was based on Turkish ethnicity.

Kirişçi and Winrow state that there was no Turkish nation before 1908. Turks were only an ethnic category. There was no “consciousness” of Turkishness among Turks. But by the end of 19th century, many of the leading Ottoman intellectuals started to get interested with the Turkish language and culture (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 93).

Anthony Smith, one of the pioneers of nationalism literature defines nation as, “a community of people; sharing a historical land, common myths and historical

narratives, a collective public culture, a common economy and a common legal system binding on all of its members” (Smith, 1991: 14). Although Turkish and Kurdish ethnicities had the potential of forming a single nation from the perspective of this definition, the political history of Republic defeated this potential. Benedict Anderson describes nation “as an imagined political community born out of the spread of vernaculars through print capitalism.”⁴⁷ Citizens are the members of this imagined political community. However Turkish state had been unsuccessful in creating a national identity based on citizenship, since citizenship based nationalisms could only emerge in institutionalized democracies. Throughout the transformation from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic, the complexities of state building prevented the emergence of citizenship based nationalism (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 27). On the contrary, the founders of the Republic created a nation state, which is in line with Rousseau’s model of authoritarian state. In this understanding, every action of public authority is equally binding for every member of the political community. Nation is understood as a single body. No space of differentiation is recognized for the elements of the nation. According to Mardin, these features make up a rather untidy and non-systematic proposition of the single party ideology (Mardin, 1999: 60).

Official politics of Turkish state throughout the 20th century based on this conception of state which doesn’t recognize the differences among the elements of the nation, had contributed unwillingly (in fact despite willing an opposite outcome) to the politicization of Kurdish ethnic identity. The policies which led to this

⁴⁷ B. Anderson, 1991, aktaran (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 7)

conclusion are assimilation, discrimination, centralization and modernization processes.

During the 19th century, Western powers showed an ever increasing interest to the rights of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. At the Paris Conference held at 1919, Russia supported the idea that his share of Ottoman land should be given to Armenia and the forthcoming Kurdish state. Sevr Treaty (August 1920) also refers directly to the Kurds and mentions the possibility of the formation of an autonomous body for Kurdish majority regions and even of an independent Kurdish state. Sevr Treaty is the first facing of Turkish state with the Kurdish problem in an international context. Kurds were included into the Sevr Treaty despite the fact they were not a religious minority. "Although the Treaty of Sevres was never put into force, it shaped the perceptions of the founding fathers of the Turkish Republic regarding the largest non-Turkic ethnic population in its territory" (Özcan, Yavuz, 2006:102).

However Lauzanne Treaty signed at 1923 limits the definition of minorities with non Muslims. There were no reference and no guarantees for Muslim minorities. Throughout the republican regime all governments based their discourse on Lauzanne Treaty, and referred to Lauzanne when claiming that there are no ethnic and national minorities in Turkey. ⁴⁸

⁴⁸ One of the major disputes in the Lausanne Conference was on the status of Kurds. Turkish delegation headed by İsmet İnönü fiercely opposed assigning the minority status to Kurds on the grounds that Kurds are Muslims, thus belong to the same nation with Turks. In his book entitled "Kurdish Problem" points out that: It is very interesting that the founding cadres of the Republic, who later abolished the Islamic Law, had relied on the minority definition of the shariah principles during the debates in the Lausanne Conference with regard to minorities and Kurds... According to Islamic law, no Muslim society has any superiority to other Muslim communities and a Muslim can not be a dhimmi under the rule of another Muslim (Tan, 2009: 194).

The idea of “Kurdish Independence” emerged after the end of WWI, during the partition of Ottoman Empire among the Allied Countries. Some Kurdish notables also pronounced Kurdish Independence based on the “right of self determination”. They even made some negotiations with the French and British and reached some conclusions (Mumcu, 1991: 14-15). Thus Kurdish unrest which started with the centralization policies of Tanzimat and CUP’s Turkist policies, finally resulted in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism and gave way to the idea of Kurdish independence. However these attempts proved unfruitful as religion prevailed as the dominant identity among the Kurds and Kurds rejected the idea of breaking off the Ottomans and Khilafat.

At this point we can claim that despite the fact that tribal solidarity is strong among the Kurds, and maybe because of this strength, ethnic self-consciousness is not well developed. It was already mentioned that the politicization of Kurdish ethnic identity was an outcome of codification of Turkish ethnic identity as the base of the new Turkish state. However throughout the War of Independence and during the birth of republic, the whole reference is to “millet” rather than to Turkishness. Throughout the congresses of Erzurum and Sivas, at the National Oath and at the speeches of Mustafa Kemal during and before the War of Independence, the whole emphasis is given to religion and Ottoman patriotism. The term “millet” refers to Muslim community. There is no mention of the term “Turk” at the National Oath. Islamic rituals were observed during the opening ceremony of the First Assembly, and in his first speech as the president of the Assembly Mustafa Kemal made no mention of either Turks or Turkey. Instead he declared that the assembly doesn’t consist of Turks, Kurds, Lazs or Circassian, but instead it consists of the members of

an Islamic community bond to each other with a high degree of solidarity.⁴⁹ A year after the opening of the Assembly, first constitution (Teskilat-ı Esasiye) was ratified. The first article declares that “sovereignty belongs to the nation”. The nation referred here doesn’t refer to a national identity based on Turkishness, it still has religious meaning. The third article defines the Assembly “as the executive body of the new Turkish state”. This is the first time that, term Turkey is officially pronounced.

TGNA (Turkish Grand National Assembly) abolished the monarchy at 1922 and took an important step towards republic. The reference made to 700 years old Ottoman history is replaced by the “1500 years old history of Turks”.⁵⁰ Although the terms Turk, Turkish nation and nation of Turkey still refers to the Muslim community, for Mustafa Kemal and his friends these terms acquired a new meaning. In a speech he delivered at 1922 Mustafa Kemal states that “We were living as members of a religious community until 3,5 years ago. From that point on we are living as members of Turkish nation.”⁵¹

For Mustafa Kemal and his friends, Turkishness is the base of the new national identity necessary for the transformation of the traditional Ottoman society to a modern society. Emergence of Kurdish problem and politicization of Islamic identity has occurred simultaneously at this process. At 1923, TGNA declared the

⁴⁹ TBMM Zabıt Cedidesi 1:8, 24.4.13336 / 1920,C.2, sy. 162-165 (quoted from Kirişçi, Winrow, 2000: 96)

⁵⁰ Mesut Yeğen, points to the functionality of the emphasis made to pre-Islamic history in the Turkish History Thesis: “There was a need of proving that the common history shared for thousand years, reminded by the Turkish History Thesis, is a glorious history as well. In order to undermine the ongoing power of Islamic identity and establish national identity as the common identity, there was a need to construct a “racial” history and remind the people the glory of this racial history” (Yeğen, 1999: 195).

⁵¹ TBMM Zabıt Cedidesi, 1: 130, 1922, sy., 314-314 (quoted from Kirişçi, Winrow, 2000: 97)

republic. Thus nationalism based on Turkish nation was officially accepted. At March 1924 Khilafat was abolished and Law of Unity of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat) was ratified. These two developments led to unrest particularly among the Kurds, since for the Kurds loyalty to the Khilafat was the main reason of loyalty to Ottomans.

Despite the fact that in theory a civic nationalism is claimed, the practice was different. The article of 1924 constitution which states that “The name Turk, shall be understood to include all citizens of Turkish Republic without distinction of race and religion”⁵² remained largely rhetorical and never materialized. In practice ethnic nationalism prevailed over citizenship. Moreover, the definition of Turkishness in 1924 constitution was problematic as well. For Example Selahattin Demirtaş, the spokesperson for DTP claims that it is no more possible for them to accept Turkishness as a definition of citizenship and he makes reference to 1924 constitution. He says that citizenship definition of 1924 constitution excluded Kurdish ethnic identity.⁵³ Yeğen defines the 1924 constitution as:

Although physical existence of Kurds is not yet questioned in the 1924 constitution, it was clear that political and legal existence of Kurds and other ethnicities was unacceptable for the new regime. Kurds are no more Kurds as legal and political subjects. They became Turks just as the rest of other citizens of the country (Yeğen, 1999: 119).

Law on Settlement (*İskan Kanunu*) ratified at 1934 makes these points perfectly clear, by dividing the population into three groups. İsmail Beşikçi claims that this law was particularly ratified for the purpose of assimilating Kurds into the Turkish

⁵² Can be reached from (<http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~genckaya/1924constitution.pdf>)

⁵³ In an interview on Kurdish opening, Demirtaş stated that: “If the founders would have said in 1924 that “Turkish will be the common language to mold us into a nation, but other languages will also be preserved” then there would not be any problem. Then, today I could be able to say “I am a Turk” without self-denial and humiliation.” (Star newspaper, 13 October 2009)

identity (Beşikçi, 1991: 30). The law made a classification based only on Turkishness, without mentioning the word Kurd. The classification was such: “Those who speak Turkish and belong to the Turkish ethnicity, regions populated by people whose Turkishness needs to be buttressed in cultural and language terms through policies of settlement, and regions closed to any kind of civilian settlement due to security reasons” (Kirişçi, Winrow, 2000: 103). Although the existence of a Kurdish problem is not acknowledged, the Law on Settlement was designed as a remedy to this problem. Mesut Yeğen claims that this law “was a centralist formula of integration. It was authorizing the government to intervene and to “correct” the demographic composition of the country in accordance with the political needs of the government” (Yeğen, 1999: 137).

Another development that helped to further alienation of Kurds was the Alphabet Revolution that took place at November 1928. Kurds had a strong tradition of madrasa and starting to use the Latin script affected the Kurdish literates who were educated at madrasas in Kurdish and Arabic using the old script. Although Kurds managed to continue the madrasa tradition, this revolution led Kurds to further turn inwards and increased their feeling of alienation from the state.

Passing to Latin script has a political aspect aside of its social, pedagogical and cultural results. Lewis claims that “The alphabet reform aimed to cut the ties of the people with the previous era, to close the door completely on the past, as much as it expressed the imagination of a new future” (Lewis, 1962: 273).

Republic transformed the attempts of modernization and reformation to a whole scale transformation and revolution. Revolutions were considered as a necessity of modernization and were aiming to create a completely new and

civilized society. Popular education institutions such as People's Houses and Village Institutions were built in order to produce the modern citizen, the building bricks of the modernization project (Yeğen, 1999: 55). Turkish Hearths and People's Houses were charged with the embracement of the new regime and revolutions by the society. Party Inspectorates were formed in the Kurdish cities which were resisting the attempts of national integration. Prime Minister of the time and the leader of CHP, İsmet İnönü himself described the relationship between the People's Houses and the party as "People's Houses are the centers where the people will be able to grasp the ideals of the party" (İnönü 1933: 101).⁵⁴ The citizenship system of modern Turkey was codified in a way that is intolerant to ethnic and religious differences and projected the ideal of a homogenous nation. Despite the fact that Mustafa Kemal himself openly talked about the Kurdish identity, throughout 1930's a new political discourse denying the existence of Kurdish identity was developed. Mesut Yeğen points that state had denied the existence of Kurdish ethnicity from the beginning and this approach that neglected to acknowledge the Kurdish ethno political awareness, misconstrued the substance of the real problem by creating discourses with definitions such as backwardness, terrorism, and regional underdevelopment. Indeed, the term terrorism was ascribed for the risings in Ağrı in 1930, and in Dersim in 1937 (Yeğen, 1999: 145). Seyyid Rıza, leader of 1937 Dersim Rebel was also executed with the accusation of banditry.

Kurdish ethnic identity became even clearer in the post WWII period. To an extent this was the inevitable result of the modernization of Turkish society. This time it was the educated urban Kurdish youth who politicized the Kurdish ethnic

⁵⁴ Quoted from (Yeğen, 1999: 186)

identity. This secular political tradition was significantly different from the previous Kurdish leadership. Kurdishness got embedded in the Marxist-Leninist discourse.

The harshest measure of Kurdish assimilation was the ban on the usage of Kurdish. Considering that language is the carrier of cultural identity, ban of Kurdish was aiming the destruction of the most vital part of a culture. As more emphasis is given to Turkish and Turkishness, unrest raised among Kurds.

One of important factors that influenced the State's approach to the Kurds was the fact that the issue was designated as one of modernization: "These regions (refers to Kurdish regions) should also benefit from the virtues of the republic just like the rest of our country" (quoted from Yeğen, 1999: 142).

Considering that political culture is an aggravating factor in political problems, one can better understand why Kurdish problem has increased and turned multilayered (Heper, 2006: 20- 21). In an environment where political culture is shaped by a single party rule, Kurdish problem has inevitably deepened.

In his study on Kurdish problem, Metin Heper refers to the Weberian conception of "state" as the institution which has the legitimate monopoly of violence in a given territory. "in this context state has the ultimate authority. State isn't subjected to the authority of political governments; instead political governments are subjected to state rule" (Heper, 2006: 23).⁵⁵ Throughout its 80 years old history Turkish state has always subjugated the political governments, and always determined the legitimate limits of politics. If there had been any

⁵⁵ Such an understanding of state is defined as transcendental state by R. N. Berki's "State and Society: An Antithesis of Modern Political Thought" article. Based on this article, Metin Heper analyses transcendental state in the Turkish case: In the final analysis, transcendental state represents an understanding in which duty is sacralised, all differences are melted into a single ideal and all the individuals are expected to sacrifice their energies to fulfill their sacred duties (Heper, 2006: 27).

improvement in Kurdish problem, it was achieved despite this political and cultural environment.

3. 2. Role of Religion in the Politicization of Kurdish Identity

Whether the Kurdish political movement and Kurdish revolts are rooted in ethnicity or religion has been a long contested issue. The discussions of the Sheikh Said Rebellion are at the center of this contestation.⁵⁶ While some scholars consider Sheikh Said Rebellion as a religious rebellion, there is also an important branch of scholars who claim that this was a misperception derived from the religious persona of Sheikh Said. This group claims that the rebellion was based on an independent Kurdish ethnic identity, yet the new regime defined the rebellion as a religious one, since it denied the existence of a separate ethnic Kurdish identity.⁵⁷ However one shouldn't forget that the influence of Naqshbandiyya among the Kurds proves the political significance of Islamic values among the Kurds. There had been 18 rebels against the oppressive state policies between 1924-38 and all of them were led by Naqshi brotherhoods (Halli, 1972: 75).

⁵⁶ The process which ended with the execution of Sheikh Said has started with the ratification of Takrir-i Sükûn and formation of Eastern Independence Tribunals. These two developments led to debates in TGNA and Kazım Karabekir mentions his and claims that these will harm the sovereignty of the people. However, in 4 March 1925 Takrir-i Sükun is ratified. At 7 March members are elected for the Eastern Independence Tribunals. And Sheikh Said is captured in 15 April 1925 and then executed (Mumcu, 1991: 161).

⁵⁷ Uğur Mumcu, in his book "Kurdish Islamic Uprising, 1919-1925" (Kürt İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925) claims that Britain was trying to create an independent Armenian and Kurdish state. He claims that in the final analysis Sheikh Said was attempting to create an independent Muslim Kurdish state (Mumcu, 1991: 161). Although these statements are still open to debate, it is significant for our discussion in the sense that it shows the primary role of religion in the politicization of Kurdish identity.

Following the declaration of republic, the wave of Revolutions was accompanied by the wave of Kurdish revolts. “8 of the 18 revolts that took place between 1924-38 happened between May 1929 and 1930. Except the Menemen incident, all of them took place in the Kurdish region” (Kirişçi, 2000: 106).

Importance given to modernization, centralization and secularization has contributed to the spread of Kurdish ethnic consciousness which has turned to the bastion of resistance against the ruling elite.

Attempts to weaken the influence of religion has also incited Kurdish separatism, since religion based socio-political system was the most important bond that kept Turks and Kurds united during the Ottoman regime and the War of Independence.

Especially the debate on Sheikh Said Rebel, of “whether if it is religious or ethnic” itself also proves the significance of the Republican attempts, such as exclusion of religion and abolishment of Khilafat, acceptance of Latin Script in the formation of Kurdish ethnic identity. Altan Tan’s point with regard to Sheikh Said Rebel deserves attention:

Ruling elite of the republic has presented conflicting explanations on the problem of whether if Sheikh Said Rebel was a religious-Islamist uprising or was a nationalist Kurdish revolt. Ankara government of the time presented the rebel as a Kurdist and separatist rebel in the domestic public opinion, while presenting the rebel as a religious, reactionary uprising to the Western states (Tan, 2009: 211).

Unrest against the centralization policies of Ottomans and degradation of the statute of religion (abolishment of Khilafat and monarchy) had played a significant role during the Kurdish rebels that took place between 1880-1925. According to Mardin, the idea of ummah was instrumental in maintaining solidarity in society and had an

important function in the organization of social and religious life. He claims that the vacuum left by the removal of ummah idea was an important factor in the politicization of Kurdish identity (Mardin, 1993: 100-101).

Lack of support by the Alevi Kurds to Sheikh Said Rebel is an important data pointing to the religious content of the rebel (Bruinessen, 1992: 31).⁵⁸ Many Alevi Kurdish Tribal Chiefs sent telegrams to TGNA during the rebel declaring that they are ready to help in suppressing the rebel (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 110). Politicization of religion among the Kurds and functioning of religion as an important dimension of Kurdish consciousness had been more significant with the replacement of Kadiriyya by the Naqshibandiyya. In a way, Naqshibandiyya had functioned in the formation of Kurdish consciousness. Naqshi sheikh had joined the separate authorities of molla and bey in their hands and became the only regulator of religious, social and political life. Suppression of religion by the republic turned Naqshibandiyya to dissidents. Many Naqshi Sheikhs were executed at this process⁵⁹ (Yüksel, 1993: 56).

Based on this point, we can claim that Kurdish political movement was formed with a religious character. Religion served to keep political consciousness of Kurdish people alive. The functionality of the rhetoric “Islam is the cement of this

⁵⁸ According to Martin Van Bruinessen, lack of support by Alevi Kurds to Sheikh Said and even their resistance against him tells us that the uprising of Sheikh Said is a religious rebel. The Alevi Kurds feel closer to Alevi Turks rather than Sunni Kurds. (Bruinessen, 1992: 31)

⁵⁹ Bruinessen’s Agha, Shaikh, and State and Mufit Yüksel’s *Kürdistan’da Değişim Süreci* are two important sources in order to understand the spread of Naqshibandiyya among the Kurds and its influence in the social and political life. Yüksel, in his book, deals with the migration of Naqshibandiyya sheikh families to big cities and weakening of madrasa tradition and how these led to modernization of these families and weakening of Islamic identity.

society”, voiced by central right parties and AKP is based upon such a background.⁶⁰

The Kurdish elites who participated in political life through DP, AP, ANAP and RP have provided support for these parties through their influence over Naqshis. This has been a medium of the politicization of Kurdish identity. It has also contributed to modernization, and according to one view, to assimilation of Kurdish families.

Until mid 80’s, central right parties had been the medium of Kurdish participation in Turkish politics. Particular nature of Naqshibandiyya was also important in determining the involvement of Kurds in the political life. The political and activist nature of Naqshibandiyya which was widespread among Kurds, had been significant in the formation of the political consciousness among the Kurds in the face of centralization policies of Ottomans and the denial of Kurdish identity by the repressive policies of republic. This influence of Naqshibandiyya is often omitted. Aside from pointing the spread of Naqshibandiyya in the Kurdish region and the decision-making position of Naqshi sheikhs in the society, the influence of Naqshibandiyya in the formation of Kurdish political movement and Kurdish ethnic consciousness should also be taken into account. Actually this importance of

⁶⁰ In a speech he made at 2005 Erdoğan declared religion as our most important unifying element, and he was accused by considering religion as a supra identity. He made the following statement as a response to these critiques: “I know perfectly well what I said. Check when and why I said this. I made this statement as a response to Mr. Baykal’s analogy with Yugoslavia. There Serbians, Croats and Bosnians all belong to different religions. But in Turkey there are almost 30 different ethnic groups all belonging to Islam. In such a country religion is the cement. The supra identity is, as I said previously, ‘Citizenship of Turkish Republic’. Religion is a cement, our most important unifying element. Mustafa Kemal has similar statements. To see that one should read *Nutuk*. When Tayyip Erdoğan says these, everybody misinterprets them. This is the same with regard to the debates on supra and sub identities. Turkish Republic citizenry is our supra identity, that unites all of us. And I should also add that although I said one nation, one flag and one country, they are trying to subvert my statements as if I have said two nations” (Milliyet, 11 Aralık 2005).

Naqshibandiyya in the formation of Kurdish ethnic consciousness prevents us from determining whether Kurdish rebels are religious or ethnic.⁶¹

Kurdish political movement managed to develop an independent identity and a political language and started to secularize itself during this process. Politicization of religious identity parallels with this process as well. This also affected the perception of Kurdish politics by the Islamic movements and most of the Islamic movements avoided developing a political language emphasizing the problems of the repressed Kurdish people. At this point we should also add that It is necessary to add that, dealing with a problem that merges two kinds of repression -both towards the ethnic and religious identity- when considered in the context of that time period in Turkey, would function to squash a political movement before it could emerge.

Yet Kurdish ethnic identity never remained aloof of politics and used the legitimate channels of political participation.⁶² Kurdish existence and their support were evident in DP following the multi party elections, and continued in the parties that follow the tradition of DP (and continue to operate in the center and periphery tension) as well as in the parties of National View tradition. Particularly RP gained a high degree of votes in the Kurdish region. This reflects the potential of the RP to

⁶¹ In order to see the close relation between Naqshibandiyya and politics we can see the crucial role played by Naqshi sheikh Zahit Kotku in the formation of MNP and MSP. Kotku also supported the liberalisation policies of Özal. His disciples soon turned to be the crucial figures of Turkish social and political life; Özal, Erbakan and Erdoğan. According to Kotku, Turkish Muslims would shape the state and society through integrating to the middle class (Yavuz, 2005:191-192).

⁶² Musa Anter, in his book *My Memoirs*, aside from pointing to the important Kurdish sheikhs and their influences on tribes, also makes this statement on the approach of DP and Adnan Menderes to Kurdish issue: “He was well intentioned but he was surrounded by an old guard which will soon make him fickle” (Anter, 1990: 121). Anter rejects the proposal of joining DP, saying that he won’t be engaged with party politics, but he assured that he would give every support necessary. As the testimony of Anter shows, Kurds’ relation with politics remained on legitimate grounds until 80’s.

integrate large masses of Kurds in the system. In general despite the exclusion they experienced and the resulting irritation they felt, Kurds had always attempted to raise their voice within the system. And as such they made their preferences from the parties that are against the system but those that are moving towards the system; the parties that will carry the demands of Kurds to the system.

Until the formation of HEP (People's Labor Party), the political preference of the region favored center right parties. The cooperation of right parties with tribal chiefs and sheikh families had also been influential in this process. Religion had always been an important factor in this cooperation, but it was RP that attached central importance to religion in the solution of Kurdish problem. While the Sunni Kurds in the region supported RP, the Alevi Kurds supported HADEP. Hamit Bozarslan, a Kurd himself, claims that the regional victory of RP in the 1994 local election and in 1995 general election has different dynamics than the general rise of Islam in the countrywide. According to Bozarslan this difference is related with the "centrifugal formation of Kurdish political area" and with wider Kurdish protests (Bozarslan, 1996: 16-19). Rise of RP in the region is not a consequence of Islamicization of the region. Instead, it was the rise of RP in a region, where religion was already dominant, and appearance of RP as the hope of Kurds.

Marxist left political line in Kurdish political life which was materialized at HADEP, based their politics on criticizing the power of tribes and sheikhs. It was inevitable that, conducting politics with a Marxist left political discourse is difficult in a region where religion is more dominant than other regions of the country.⁶³

⁶³ At this point I would like to quote a justified statement of Ahmet Çiğdem: "Despite the fact that in the theoretical legacy of Marx, there is no statement that implies a degradation of religion, I never understood the religious perception of Turkish socialists. Aside from the political and ideological

Leftist Kurdish political movements preserved their distance with religion, but by time they evolved to a more nationalist line. During 2002 elections-when AKP also entered politics-, RP tradition has put a distance with itself and Kurdish nationalism and political successes of HADEP turned visible. This is the first time when Kurdish politics achieved a high degree of political representation. HADEP became the first party in 12 Kurdish populated cities. According to Yavuz, this success shows the degree of autonomy Kurdish nationalism gained vis-a-vis Islamism (Yavuz, 2005: 252).

However, if we look at the preceding elections we can reach a different conclusion. Electoral victories of RP in the region at 1994 and 1995, and the persistence of the power of religion in the region forced PKK to change its tactics and to abandon its anti religious discourse.⁶⁴ Abdullah Öcalan has referred to this point as early as 1989, and in an interview he gave to Doğu Perinçek at the time, he defined the relationship of left with religion as alienation:

We need to resist secularism as long as it serves the interest of West. We should support it as long as it resists reactionary influence of religion. Here Left made a critical mistake. They considered socialism as enmity towards religion and as atheism. This led leftists to get alienated from their own society (Perinçek, 1990: 101).⁶⁵

distortions of this attitude, it leads to a sociological blindness that prevents them analyzing Turkish society.” We can say that this widespread attitude of left is replicated in the Kurdish leftist movement.

⁶⁴ PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) which was also known as Apocular (Apoists) was formed at late 1970’s and established training camps in Syria and Lebanon at 1979. Like other leftist organizations, PKK was also crushed by the 1980 coup. However, since PKK was also organized outside Turkey, it managed to reorganize itself. Following its first armed attack in Eruh in 1984, PKK is waging an armed struggle -with short termed cease fires- since almost 30 years. Armed attacks continued even in August 2009 while Kurdish opening was on the agenda.

⁶⁵ Doğu Perinçek’s book “Interview with Abdullah Öcalan” (Abdullah Öcalan ile Görüşme) is based on the interviews he made with Öcalan during 23-25 September 1989 at Damascus.

This shift in the discourse of PKK and attempts of rapprochement with the religious values of the people has affected Kurdist political actors and damaged the political power of center parties in the region.

Abdullah Öcalan declared armistice at November 1995 and declared that federation doesn't necessarily mean separation. Short before than this, he said "I love Turkey. I am not a Kurdish nationalist" (quoted from Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 155). Some considered these shifts as PKK's desire to find a political solution. 1977 programme of PKK was emphasizing Kurdish nationalism and Marxism-Leninism and had a very critical stance against religion.⁶⁶ However conservative and traditional nature of many Kurds forced PKK to soften its stance against religion. Moreover PKK started to use Islam as part of its propaganda. In the final stage DTP even used an imam in a meeting.⁶⁷ The spectacular performance of RP in 1994 local elections can be considered to have influenced PKK. Few months after the election Öcalan claimed that "The struggle of PKK is in accordance with Islam." And he went on saying that "Kurdish identity and Islam is under pressure in Turkey" (*Özgür Ülke*, 13 Temmuz 1994). While on the one hand the persistence of religion among the Kurdish people forced PKK and other Kurdish nationalists to soften their attitude towards the religion, on the other hand modernization and the strengthening of PKK in the region eroded the power of Naqshibandiyya.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ PKK, Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu, Program, p. 201

⁶⁷ During a demonstration organized at 25 February 2008, to protest the military operations conducted in Northern Iraq, Muhittin Eryılmaz, a retired imam made a speech while holding Quran in his hand, and he was detained after the demonstration because of this speech. DTP Diyarbakır MPs Selahattin Demirtaş, Aysel Tuğluk and Gültan Kışanak and Diyarbakır Mayor Osman Baydemir were also present at the demonstration (*Hürriyet*, 29 Şubat 2008).

⁶⁸ Müfit Yüksel gives a case as an example: "Hüseyin Mutlu, brother of Sheikh Nureddin ran as a candidate of DYP in 1991 elections but he lost. This was the first time that Norşin Sheikhs lost an

3. 3. Attitudes of Political Parties to the Kurdish Problem

Though there were no reference to the Kurdish issue in their political programs, the Progressive Republican Party established in 1925 and the Free Party established in 1930 were supported by the Kurds who showed reaction to the regime and by people who felt uneasy with the anti-religion policies of the new regime. As a result, both parties were closed short after their establishment on the allegations of “igniting reactionary movements” and “giving way to separatism” (Tan, 1993: 67). Following the establishment of DP with the transition to multi-party system after the World War II, Erdal İnönü, the ‘National Chief’, demanded guarantees from Celal Bayar on the topics of secularism and Kurdish issue, and Bayar promised to abide by the basic principles of the regime on these issues (Tan, 1993: 67). Though important Kurdish figures like Abdülmelik Fırat and Mustafa Ekinci were members of the party, no serious steps were taken on the Kurdish issue apart from providing partial mitigation. In later years, leftist parties such as Workers Party of Turkey, Labor Party and Socialist Workers’ Party of Turkey have also nominated Kurdish representatives. However as Altan Tan points, “Disputes arouse between the Turkish leftists who expressed the Turkish national demands and the Kurdish leftists. And soon after, sacrificed to the maintenance of internationalism, the Kurds were eliminated from those parties” (Tan, 1993: 68). The common approach of the mass parties to the Kurdish issue was the discourse of “regional underdevelopment”. Taha

election. Previously, other brother of Sheikh Nureddin, Muhyeddin Mutlu was elected as representative of Bitlis in 73, 77, 87 general elections. With the victory of HEP candidates supported by PKK over sheikh families was a turning point and with this result the influence of sheikh families was significantly reduced in the political life of the region” (Yüksel, 1993: 183).

Akyol's following statement is important as a prototype of center right parties' approach to the Kurdish issue:

The mass protest activities are organized by poor villagers, people living in the slums and the young people who don't take part in the production process yet.(...) The poor villagers become proletarians as they move to cities. Leading to social protests all over the world, this is actually a process of economic character that is put forward sometimes as the tribal identity, sometimes as the clash of classes, sometimes as mysticism and sometimes as the ethnic or sectarian identity (Akyol, 1992: 16).⁶⁹

This discourse and approach is not only inadequate but also misleading as it doesn't grant the political and cultural rights of the Kurds. However, it is true that, since the emerging of the Kurdish issue, the central authority has been unsuccessful in changing the traditional structure and semi-feudal regime and creating a new structure. "To begin, the underlying reasons behind the Kurdish problem, for me, are the central powers' inability to replace traditional, semi-feudal structures with modern institutions (even, contrarily, reinforcing such local powers for its own immediate needs); the 'gap' between this region and Western parts of the country in every aspect of life; and especially the country's inability to develop capitalism in this region on a level commensurate with other region" (Akçay, 1997: 278).

On the other hand; though the state uses this argument since the beginning of the Kurdish issue, it wasn't able to provide a solution to economic backwardness. The state has been trapped in the vicious circle of terrorism and economic backwardness. The relationship between the state and the PKK became, increasingly, mutually constitutive, dialectic as well as symbiotic. Again Adnan Akçay points:

⁶⁹ Quoted from an interview included in Metin Sever's book, What do the Intellectuals think about Kurdish problem p. 16

The establishment only sees PKK terror, while the other side sees only terror perpetrated by the State. It is a perfectly vicious circle, but it represents reality! Not only on the discursive level but also in practice these two terrors sustain each other. In other words, they need each other in order to maintain their standpoints. Worse than this, both sides deliberately suppress any approach other than their own, by continuously asserting that there is no other way of dealing with the matter than the ones adopted by themselves (Akçay, 1997: 178).

The Kurdish issue was expressed through the center right parties, in which the leading figures of the region were making politics, before the political party tradition (the DTP and its ancestors) that generated politics about the injustices the Kurdish people were subject to and before the PKK which carried out armed activities as of 1980. Though this fact can't be regarded as the representation of the Kurdish issue in the political arena, it can be seen that the Kurds didn't end their relations with the politics and tried to express themselves in it with the transition to multi-party system.

Following the policies of the single-party system which denied the Kurdish ethnic identity and the repressive regime that was implemented intensely in the Kurdish regions, the Democrat Party achieved an important success in the east and southeastern Turkey with the slogan 'Now it is the Nation's term to Speak!' and by including the Kurdish tribe leaders to itself. Mesut Yeğen points out that the apprehension regarding the Kurdish issue has changed with the multi-party system:

The state's discourse on the Kurdish issue starts to change significantly with the 1950s. The Kurdish issue has started to be perceived and presented as a social issue rather than a problem to be eliminated. This new understanding and presentation took place on the thematic surface of 'backwardness' discourse (Yeğen, 1999: 159).

While this process appears as the inclusion of the Kurds to the politics by the state, it appears as the efforts to be represented in politics to the Kurds. Numan Esin, who is

among the officers carrying out the 27 may 1960 coup d'état, tells the anecdote about DP's approach to the Kurdish issue:

We went to Yassiada. We made our request (talking with Menderes) to Tarık Bey, the commander of the island. He said 'do you have to disturb the man? He is too timid. I said "No, we will talk to him" (...) We asked him various questions. (...) For example I asked him the following: 'The Kurdish issue is the basic problem for Turkey. What were you planning to do as the government? He gave this interesting response: Our solution was democracy. We believed that the freedom we would grant to our people would bring a solution to the problem. We have acted in that direction. So we have chosen to integrate the community with the government and with the country (Esin, 2005: 158).

We can't know whether Menderes would have been able to realize his plans if the DP ruling had maintained. However, we know that, while Menderes and his friends were executed, 485 Kurdish landlords, sheikhs and intellectuals from the Eastern and Southeastern cities who were members of the DP or had close contacts with the party were detained and gathered in a camp in Sivas by the officers of the 27 may 1960 military coup. 55 people, among whom were the members of important Kurdish families such as Bucak, Fırat and Ensarioğlu, were subjected to forced residence in various cities of Turkey until 1963 (Tan, 2009: 339).

Like the DP, AP also relied on the support of the periphery and of unofficial networks and was similarly supported by the Kurds. Again the discourse of regional backwardness of DP was reiterated by the AP. This approach was clear in AP's government program dating 1965:

To realize a balanced development in a social justice framework, we have to narrow the development gap among the regions. There are great gaps in terms of life and living standards in most parts of the country, especially in East and Southeast regions (TBMM, 1988b: 104, quoted from Yeğen, 1999: 163).

Handling the issue as a problem of ‘development’ and ‘integration’ rather than a problem in its own right, Demirel defined GAP as ‘an integration process’, upon the criticisms of TUSIAD and some journalists mentioning that GAP wasn’t a profitable investment. About GAP, Özal had also said ‘GAP is the symbol of Turkey’s unification.’ Yet, it was the AKP leader and Prime Minister Erdoğan who was fortunate enough to inaugurate GAP.

The AP was effective in Turkish political life between 1963-1970. Following the 12 March memorandum, National Unity Government was established and during the first general elections afterwards, the CHP moved towards the left and developed a policy that advocated the ethnic (the Kurds) and religious (the Alevis) minorities, achieving a partial success in the Kurdish provinces. It was the last time CHP showed existence in the region (Yavuz, 2005: 95-96). CHP wasn’t able to show any existence in the Kurdish provinces afterwards.

One of the first actions of State Planning organization (DPT), which was founded by the allegedly-liberal 1961 Constitution, was to prepare a report that didn’t recognize the Kurdish issue and the Kurds (Akçura, 2008: 82-83). This report envisaged the deprivation of Kurds from their roots, and the denial of Kurdish identity and language through forced migration of the Kurds.

In the first general elections held after the 27 May military coup, most of the Kurds who were parliament members during the Democratic Party rule, moved to the Justice Party, which they considered as the inheritor of the DP. This time, new generations belonging to the families of banned or imprisoned leading Kurdish figures got a foothold in politics. Altan Tan points out that the integration of feudal Kurdish families to the system was speeded up in the process. ‘Showing reaction to

the system since the Sheikh Said incident, the leading Kurdish figures were exiled or imprisoned for years and a majority of their children were in a struggle to get a foothold in the system, leaving their claims, problems and demands behind” (Tan, 2009: 343).

One of the important consequences of 27 May coup was the crystallization of the left-right distinction, emerging after the “event of 49s”, among the Kurds as well.⁷⁰ Established on 12 February 1961, the Turkish Workers Party (TİP) attracted sympathy among the leftist Kurds. Kemal Kirişçi notes the following on how the leftist tendency became evident among the Kurds:

In the period when the traditional local notables were returning, there was also emerging a new intellectual group of political elites, who played an outstanding role in the long run in the social and political life of the region. It is with a survey of this group, including of its ideology, background, various factions, and utilization of the press through publications and perspectives on nationalism and the socio-political structure of the region, that we will close this chapter. These elites, many of whom were of middle and upper class origins, differed from the traditional elites in many aspects, perhaps the most significant being their secular and modern educational background. Their political agenda was to a great extent shaped by left-wing ideologies. Their political discourse was very different from the one that prevailed among the Kurds of Turkey before the Second World War. The emphasis was clearly on a revolutionary and radical rhetoric. The denial of the Kurdish identity and the lack of economic development in eastern Anatolia were attributed to capitalism and imperialism. This argument provided a basis of solidarity for Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 240).

These new elites could also be classified as the Kurdish-left. As Entessar argues:

“The Kurdish-left which was first organized under the roof of the TIP and later under different organizational structures, started splitting into factions

⁷⁰ Event of 49s provides an important clue to understand the approach of DP to the Kurdish problem: According to what Musa Anter argues in his memoirs the Event of 49s was planned by a meeting at the Presidential Palace between President Celal Bayar, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Vice-President of the Chief of Staff, Cevdet Sunay. Since the Kurdish movement in Iraq might affect the Kurds in Turkey and since Kurdism is gaining grounds in Turkey, they agreed on an arrest warrant which targets Kurdish intellectuals and aims to suppress the Kurdish movement. Anter claims that Menderes said in that meeting “We will arrest 50 of them and then hang them. By this way 50 by 50, we will hang thousand of them with court decisions” (Anter, 1990: 151-152).

from the second half of the 1970s on. Differing objectives and tactics strained relations between the Kurdish and Turkish left. For the Kurds, the goals of socialist revolution and Kurdish nationalism were not incompatible; they had to be pursued simultaneously. The Turkish left, on the other hand, considered Kurdish insistence on the ethnic recognition as counterproductive, divisive, and ultimately detrimental to the survival of the political left. They contended that ethnic recognition would be achieved under the proletarian leadership of a socialist Turkey” (Entessar, 1992: 92).

Triggered by the “event of the 49s”, the left-right distinction provided a basis for the establishment of Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKDP) in 1965 by the rightist Kurds. In this way, the socialist Kurds were gathered under TİP, the rightist and nationalist Kurds were gathered under TKDP and the feudal Kurdish landlords were gathered under the AP and the New Turkey Party (Tan, 2009: 350).

Bülent Ecevit overthrew İsmet İnönü and took control of the CHP after the 12 March 1971 Military Coup. With a discourse claiming to be on the side of the oppressed and he managed to gain votes from the Kurds.

A majority of the pious Kurds voted the MSP in 1973 elections. In the process that continued until the 12 September 1980 coup d'état, the ideological distinction among the Kurds became more evident. Established in a meeting in Lice, Diyarbakır, in 27 November 1978, the PKK (Partiya Karkaren Kürdistan) had a Marxist-Leninist ideology.⁷¹ The 1980 coup was traumatic among the Kurds. The PKK gained strength due to the tortures in Diyarbakır prison particularly. In his book titled “Kurds”, Hasan Cemal points that the Kurds who were able to get out of the prison went to the mountains before even visiting their homes. Defining itself as the Kurdish proletarian revolutionary movement and as the struggle for national

⁷¹ Mustafa Akyol points that aside from Marxism-Leninism, Maoism is also an important dimension of the ideology of PKK. Rural guerrilla warfare which is a distinguishing feature of Maoism is also adopted by the PKK (Akyol, 2009: 135).

liberty, the PKK expanded and engaged in armed activities. Authored by Graham Fuller and Henry Barkey, “Turkey Kurdish Question” defines the PKK as follows:

Owing to its leftist roots particularly, PKK movement is a very unfamiliar one among the nationalist Kurdish movements. Most of the other Kurdish parties and especially the ones in Iraq were established in relatively traditional Kurdish environments which depended on a certain region or tribe. They had represented the least assimilated of the Kurds. On the contrary the PKK was born from the radical leftist Turkish organizations which were mostly violence-prone and which emerged during the period of anarchy and terrorism of 1970s, and it found supporters among the assimilated Kurdish students in Ankara (quoted from Akyol, 2009: 135-13).

Though Özal was relatively braver with regard to the Kurdish issue, he also believed that the solution to regional backwardness would be a cure for the issue. Just like Süleyman Demirel’s presentation of the GAP as an integration project, Özal also regarded it as the symbol of Turkey’s unity (Yeğen, 1999: 196).

However, Özal initiated a series of policies that provided more cultural freedom to the Kurds who were not recognized as a separate ethnic group till then. According to Hakan Yavuz, Özal believed that full membership to the EU could be a way to undermine the authoritarian position of the powerful Kemalist state-centric institutions, public sector industries, and those who profited from their patronage (Yavuz, 2005: 114). Law no 2932 which banned the use of Kurdish in public and private domains was abolished during Özal’s presidency, in 1991.⁷²

One of the propositions of political parties in order to solve the Kurdish problem was the forced migration of the Kurds to the west regions. Migration, which was provided by forced settlement during the first years of the Republic, later on took place spontaneously as well as through state incentives. For instance, Özal believed that many Kurds would attain better living standards in the west and

⁷² Leaders of the military coup ratified this law in 1983 as a reaction to the increasing visibility of Kurdish nationalism.

separatist demands would consequently weaken. However, the economic results of the migration weren't as expected in the short term. Instead of solving the problem, it made the issue more complex. Suffering from unemployment, the suburbs of cities served as a base for the PKK (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 140).

While PKK increased its activities and Law on Struggle Against Terrorism was being enacted, Özal made courageous statements to openly discuss the Kurdish issue. In April 1992, Özal suggested that permission to broadcasting in Kurdish and teaching in Kurdish at schools as a second language would help the government to more effectively deal with the Kurdish issue. The coalition government established by the DYP and the SHP in November 1991 gave hope that Özal's plans could be implemented. Without directly referring to the Kurdish issue the existence of different ethnic groups who had to express and develop their cultural identities in Turkey were mentioned in the government's protocol.⁷³

When Demirel became the president, Çiller took the lead of the DYP and she, like Özal, considered the permission to broadcasting and teaching in Kurdish for a while. However, Demirel at that time declared that "the cultural issues can't be discussed unless terror is solved" and put an end to discussions. Though some political parties mentioned about the demands for recognition of different identities and expressed this fact under the framework of Kurdish issue, they refrained from referring to the Kurdish issue in their party programs.

Including the AKP, almost all the political parties that had a constructive approach to the problem, believed that along with Turkey's democratization, the Kurdish issue would be automatically solved. They refrained from pointing the fact

⁷³ Common Government Protocol and its Appendixes signed by DYP and SHP, 19 November 1991, p.15 and p.55, quoted from Kemal Kirişçi p. 142

that Turkey's democratization can't be achieved unless the Kurdish issue is solved. DYP and SHP continued this approach. The Kurdish parliament members in the SHP could only attempt to take the oath in Kurdish, and this attempt didn't bring any change to these parties. Moreover, OHAL (state of emergency) and village guard system, though promised to be abolished, have continued in their term (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 142).

Çiller, espoused the policy of "kicking PKK out of the Assembly" in the preparation process of 1994 local elections, and thus played a role in the abolishment of immunity for DEP deputies. In 1994 elections, the DYP lost ground while the RP increased its votes in the Kurdish regions due to the emphasis on "Islamic brotherhood" and "just order" (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 144).⁷⁴ The discussion that emerged when Kurdish members of the Social Democratic Populist Party attended the Kurdish Congress held in Paris in 1989 ended in the discharge of those deputies from the party and the establishment of pro-Kurdish HEP (People's Labor Party) in June 1990.

HEP made an alliance with the SHP in 1991 elections and won 22 seats in the parliament. Following the Kurdish deputies' attempt to take their oath in Kurdish, the Constitutional Court closed the HEP in 1992 with the accusation of provocation of ethnic separatism. The members of HEP established the ÖZDEP (Freedom and Democracy Party) in 1993. ÖZDEP was also closed on the grounds of seeking for a federal solution.

⁷⁴ When PKK threatened all the political parties in the region in 1993, RP was the single major party that continued its activity in the region. At July 1994 RP formed a commission and the report prepared by this commission criticized the activities of Şevket Kazan in the region. And RP managed to get many of the seats in the region in 1995 elections. Of course, this success owes much to the fact that HADEP couldn't pass the nationwide ten percent threshold.

DEP was established soon after. Diyarbakır Deputy Hatip Dicle defended the PKK activities ending in the death of 5 reserve officer trainees at the Tuzla train station in 1994 and consequently, right before the local elections in March 1994, Çiller enabled the abolishment of immunity for the DEP deputies and Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Doğan and Selim Sadak were sentenced to 15 years each. 6 DEP deputies escaped abroad. The Constitutional Court closed the DEP in June 1994. Established afterwards, the HADEP participated in 1995 and 1996 elections. The Kurdish political parties continued their existences with DEHAP and with the DTP eventually. Started with the HEP and developed with the DTP, policy based on Kurdish ethnic identity strengthened its place in politics in the meantime as the names of the parties were changed and new ones were established. And in this process it steadily moved into PKK's horizon.

In Turkish political life, like the antecedent parties of the DTP, the antecedent parties of the AKP were also closed and, they entered the politics again by changing their names. After the closure of the MNP (National Order Party), which was established in 1969 as the first party of the National View Movement, the MSP was established by the same people and it won 48 deputies in 1973 elections. 17 of the deputies were of the East and Southeast provinces. Though the party lost votes throughout the country in 1977 elections, it's votes increased in the East and Southeast. Taking the name RP (the Welfare Party) in 1984 local elections, it won the municipalities of Van, Batman and Urfa. The same increase was observed in 1987 elections as well. It won about 25% votes in the region and particularly in Diyarbakır (Tan, 2009: 463). Arguing that the Kurdish reaction against the secular Kemalist system had a religious character rather than an ethnic one, Altan Tan

points that National View Movement's popularity was interrupted in 1991 elections, when the RP disappointed the Kurdish electors. "In the elections, The RP made an alliance with Türkeş's anti-Kurdish MÇP (Nationalist Working Party) and with Aykut Edibali's Reformist Democracy Party"⁷⁵.

It has to be pointed out here that, the Kurdish support to the DP and Ecevit's CHP was not due to pro-Kurdish policies of those parties. The Kurdish support was nourished with 'hope'. Although those parties didn't own the Kurdish issue ideologically, they were still observed as the party of the periphery rather than the center. Thus, they were supported by the Kurds owing to their discourses regarding 'justice'. The same fact lies behind the warmly welcoming of the AKP in East and Southeastern provinces. Promising for 'change' and 'democracy', the AKP was honored in the region and received 54% of the votes. Although AKP followed an inconsistent approach towards the Kurdish problem, declaration of "Kurdish opening" raised hopes for the solution of the problem in a democratic manner.

3. 4. Kurdish Problem and Political Representation

Kurds living in Turkey are represented in a wide political scale from the ones trying to develop Turkish nationalism to the ones demanding the establishment of a separate Kurdish state. However, on the political representation of the Kurds and their views regarding political representation, we can ascertain that the participation

⁷⁵ Altan Tan claims that he was on the top of the list prepared by the local party organizations for the upcoming 1991 electoral candidate list. He tells an anecdote that took place before the 1991 elections, which finally led with his resignation from the party. In a meeting with the heads of city branches of the party Erbakan denied the existence of such a coalition with MHP and said "I can't betray to my Kurdish brothers who have supported me and this cause for so many years, I can't help people who have blood in their hands. I will not let them pollute our pure movement." (Tan, 2009: 464) However soon after the coalition is established and Tan and some other Kurds resigned from the party.

rate in both local and general elections has never fell below the country in general since the transition to multi-party system. Thus, Kirişçi and Winrow say that the Kurds have, in one way or another, integrated with Turkish political life (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 158). We have said that with the transition to multi-party system, there have always been Kurdish representatives among the existing political parties. This fact is indeed a very important data indicating that the Kurds have never give up their hopes of politics. However we can't claim that all the Kurdish deputies in center parties and even those who had executive power have been effective in finding a solution to the Kurdish problem. Holding such posts could be possible mostly by putting aside the demands for political and cultural rights relating to the Kurdish ethnic identity. In order to see the consequences caused by the Turkification policy over the Kurdish identity, Kirişçi and Winrow gives the following significant example:

The fact that, Alparslan Türkeş, though fiercely opposing to education and broadcasting in Kurdish, supported the village guard system, led some Kurdish tribes to support the MHP. For this reason, 7 Kurdish tribes joined the MHP in 1994 and in one of his speeches in Kurdish, Homo Meral, the chief of the Alan tribe, have proudly said 'We are pure Oghuz Turks' (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 147).

As it could be understood from this example, the isolation of the Kurdish identity on one hand lead to the establishment of Kurdish political awareness, and on the other hand, it divided the Kurdish people by tribal interests and lead to the attempts/efforts to adhere to Turkishness in a speech paradoxically made in Kurdish.

In 1950s most of the traditional Kurdish elites were eliminated or as it can be seen in such extreme examples like the one above, were integrated with a new regime that was relatively more democratic. That modernization policies in Turkey

inclined to Turkification resulted in the assimilation of the Kurdish identity. Another consequence of modernization was the emergence of a new group of Kurdish elites demanding the recognition of the Kurdish identity. They comprised of middle and high class Kurds who had broken away from the feudal relations. The Marxist and Leninist discourse popular among these Kurdish groups in the 1970s led to a partial weakening of religious ties. As stressed by the Kurdish intellectuals like Müfit Yüksel and Altan Tan, also the Turkish-Islam synthesis which was instrumentalized after the 80s to mitigate the effects of Marxist Leninist separatist thinking led to a split among the religious Kurds. Meanwhile, the Marxist and secular groups gained strength among the Kurds. The foundations of PKK, which led the Kurdish issue to become more complex and become a problem of ‘terrorism’ after 1980, was laid down in a meeting held in Diyarbakır in 1977 by its leader Abdullah Öcalan. In the meeting a document titled “The Way to Kurdistan Revolution” was approved. The document stated that ‘the Kurdish regions were being exploited and to exploit the Kurdish villagers and workers, the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords were in close contacts with the Turkish ruling class’ (Kirişçi, Winrow, 2000: 117).

An article in the 1982 Constitution maintains that: “No language that is banned with the law can be used to express and communicate ideas”, and from this point of view, the use of Kurdish language has been banned by law no 2932. When 1, 5 million Kurdish refugees from Iraq rushed into Turkey in 1991, the ban on the Kurdish language was abolished. The facts that Village guard system was adopted in 1985, OHAL (emergency state) was declared in 1987, Law on Struggle Against Terrorism was enacted in 1991, the PKK attacks were increased after 1992 and the intense migration from rural areas to the center of the region as of the beginning of

the 90s, have led to differentiations both in the dynamics of the Kurdish issue and the comprehension of it.⁷⁶ The migration has also weakened the region's economy and caused the capital to depart the region. Since the regional development was introduced as a solution to the Kurdish issue, migration removed that opportunity. What is more, an earlier wave of migration to big cities throughout the whole country starting in 60s, caused a social change throughout Turkey and this inevitably affected the Kurdish issue. Being an Islamist sociologist, Ali Bulaç makes the following conclusion on the affects of migration to the Kurdish issue: "With the transition to multi-party system in 1950s and the migration from the villages to big cities in 1960s, new societal powers emerged. Those were the Muslims, Kurds, the poor of the cities and new tradesman classes coming from the countryside. The active participation and support of these new social powers was decisive in comprehensive civilianization demands and in religious awakening movements observed in political life after the 1980s" (Bulaç, 1993: 32).

The PKK activities had started and were increased after 90s, making it difficult to decouple the Kurdish issue from the problem of terrorism and creating a situation in which both affected each other. National Security Council (MGK) regarding the problem in Southeast as an outcome of separatist terrorism and aiming to solve it by means of military forces rather than politics, has gradually become more effective in the Kurdish issue.

To explain how the Kurdish issue has gradually transformed into a problem of violence and terrorism, we have to consider the functioning of psychological

⁷⁶ Sencer Ayata et. al, "Research on Population Moves in the GAP Region" (Gap Bölgesi Nüfus Hareketleri Araştırması), Ankara, TC Başbakanlık GAP Bölge Kalkınma İdaresi Başkanlığı, 1994

processes as well as the political practices. Ideology, just like religion, functions as a model to understand the world and to locate the self in that world. Motivated by Erik H. Erikson's book titled 'The Problem of Ego Identity', Şerif Mardin puts ideology forward as a means to establish a psychological balance and this approach can be helpful in understanding why 'violence' is regarded as an instrument (Mardin, 1993: 30). In this understanding, the youngsters search the political and social ideologies in the out world in order to find the answers to the questions that would shape their characters. In Kurdish regions, where the youth population is high and the working and educational opportunities are few, violence appears as both a reflection of reaction and as an element of balance while the youth shape their character. In the process, violence has both taken the place of politics and has become an element of pressure on politics. Compelling the Kurdish people to become a part, the PKK violence has both led to query the legitimacy of both DTP and the antecedent parties in political life (in the eye of state and majority of the society) and has itself gained their legitimacy to make politics (in the eye of the PKK and some Kurds). This inverse proportional relation lies behind the fact that DTP-PKK relation creates trouble in the eye of both state and society and even in the eye of some DTP members today. On the other hand, making politics towards the rights of Kurdish ethnic identity, DTP has gained non-negligible power among the discourses based on Kurdish nationalism. Moreover, while enforcing for the granting of political and cultural rights of the Kurdish people, the world conjuncture seems to come to a consensus on the elimination of violence originated from the PKK. An initiative for the solution of Kurdish problem is taken in such an environment.

Moreover, the developments taking place after the 1980s, the attention of NGO's, chambers, businessmen and international circles regarding the Kurdish issue, especially as of the second part of 1990s caused the political solution to the issue be further brought to the agenda.

In the final resolution of the 'International Conference on Northwest Kurdistan' held in Brussels in March 1994, the Kurds were defined as the 4th greatest community having its own history, language and culture in the Middle East and Turkey was called to amend the Constitution in a way to recognize the Kurds as a separate community.⁷⁷

Held on the 10-11 December 1995, the Helsinki EU Summit declared Turkey as the candidate state destined to join the Union. The Union required Turkey to carry out reforms in its legal system and to solve the Kurdish problem in peaceful manner under the framework of 1993 Copenhagen Criteria. In this scope, 34 articles of the Constitution were amended by the parliament and the ban on the expression of opinion in 'banned' languages was abolished in October 2001. In the process, for the Kurds, as for the Islamic groups, full support of Turkey's entry into the EU is seen as a way to guarantee basic human rights (Yavuz, 2005: 344).

Before the 2000s, prepared by Doğu Ergil in 1995, The TOBB report titled, "Eastern Question; The Diagnoses and Facts", though still not expressing the problem as the 'Kurdish issue', included significant and progressive suggestions for the time. Instructed by Sabancı, another report was pointing the need for collaboration of the public and private sectors to develop the region's economy. The

⁷⁷ Final Declaration of International Conference on North West Kurdistan (South East Turkey), 12-13 March 1994, Brussel, organized by Medico International (Frankfurt/Berlin) and Kurdistan Human Rights Project. Quoted from (Kirişçi, Winrow, 2000: 66-67)

report also mentioned that establishing factories in the region wouldn't be helpful 'unless the cultural rights of the Kurds were recognized'. At that time, NGO's like Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), Human Rights Association (İHD), Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HYD) followed the issue closely. Symposiums on democratic solutions to the Kurdish issue were being held, researches were being carried out and reports were being prepared in cooperation with international non-governmental organizations.

This transformation should be borne in mind while trying to understand the transformation of Kurdish problem in the 2000s. The framework of feudal relations is no more descriptive, the representation of Kurds has switched from the landlords and sheikhs to modern political organizations which have no religious and aristocratic references.

The PKK has also gained strength in this environment and the codes of political representation of the Kurds have started to alter. The parties carrying the periphery to center were able to create a base for themselves in the region through including the sheikh and tribe families to the party; however at the time when the AKP appeared on the political stage, this was no more possible. The emptied villages and the concept of forced migration have seriously altered the societal structure. In addition to struggles of the economic life, the immigrants to the cities were also faced with the difficulties of finding a place for themselves in the new societal formation; and thus became effective in the change of political language.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ For the relation between the social structure and culture, see the analysis Mardin made in his book *Ideology and Religion*. (Mardin, 1993: 58-59) In his analysis Mardin relies on Clifford Geertz's study on Indonesia entitled "Ritual and Social Change: A. Javanese Example."

CHAPTER IV

4. KURDISH PROBLEM OF JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY

4. 1. Common Fate of Two “Other”s and Common Ground of EU Integration Process

Şerif Mardin, in his analysis on Turkish modernization, points that school and neighborhood are in contradiction with each other since the foundation of the Republic. Mardin defines this contradiction as between the center and the periphery, namely between the new doctrines and traditional values. Kemalizm, far from eliminating this contradiction, increased it. In the meantime, political and daily lives were under suppression. However, the distance between the center and the periphery enabled the countryside to be alive even in the years it wasn't visible. Neighborhoods, mosques, monasteries, stackyards and villagerooms served an environment for this dynamism. The Republic and its ideology of school weren't able to fully abolish these institutions. Ahmet Çiğdem points:

The Jacobinism of the school, its illuminated despotism and above all, the bureaucratic rationality it represents, has prevented the deepening of the acquisitions of the Republic and didn't let the individuals to become citizens and the regime to become democratic and flexible in the political system. Nevertheless, the contributions from the neighborhood-from the rightists and leftists- to the democratization of the cultural and political plots in Turkey are more than those from the school. Though it has fell into oblivion nowadays, the leftist practice in Fatsa, the solidarity and resistance in the Islamist culture are wholly regarded as consequences of the neighborhood. Only by imposition and compulsion could the formalism, officialism and the uniform of the school compete with the free and daring character and the informality of the neighborhood.(Çiğdem, “Mahalleye Baskı”, *Açık Görüş*, 30 Eylül 2007)

In other words, the Islamic culture and Islamic solidarity conflicted with the state and its pedagogic approach. The ‘life style’ of the Muslims which arose from the Islamic culture and which doesn’t depend purely on commands and prohibitions was restricted and the Muslims were not represented in daily life or there were distortions in their representation. In addition to these facts, the Muslim’s position in the cinema, novel and all main art works, headscarf ban, media, politics and bureaucracy made the Muslims feel themselves as ‘a stranger and pariah in his own homeland’⁷⁹ as Necip Fazıl characterizes it in his populist phrase.

Because, “The Kemalist revolutions believed that to completely Westernize the society, the state’s authority and power could be used and all the old traditions of the society could be changed with a new language, a new history, a new system of symbols and references and a new life style accordingly” (Kurdođlu, 2004: 210)

Until the 12 September coup, popular Islamism was based on the policy and thought of locality/nationality. While it was previously stuck among the rightist policies in Turkey, following the Iran Revolution and 12 September, Islamism started to compete (and continued to overlap with in some occasions) with the rightist policies in the struggle for the rights and freedom. As a consequence the moderate Islamist thought got closer with other excluded sects in the country. It got closer to the Kurdish problem as it drifted away from the rightist policies. In addition to state’s total exclusion, this separation was also effective in creating some contacts between the Kurds and the Islamists.

⁷⁹ These verses are from “Sakarya” (1949) poem written by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. This poem can be considered as the manifesto of popular Islamist movements in Turkey. Poet makes an analogy between the Turkish youth and the river Sakarya, and through this analogy delivered his message to the generations who were excluded and declared as “other” by the Republic.

The Kurds' trial with the republic regime was much more severe. Of course a hierarchy among the victims is not humane or ethic. However, the Kurds being the greatest victims of the Republic depend on historical facts, rather than a subjective ranking. As Mesut Yeğen points, the Kurds have been the subject of the problem that compels Turkey the most:

The Kurdish problem is a distinct one owing to following reasons: Though it is about the deepening of democracy in Turkey, the Kurdish problem is also related to the Republic. The republic bears no risk, even if a few thousand non-Muslims were given whichever rights to reinforce their differences. Yet, the existing organization of our Republic depends on the realization of these rights, at least theoretically. We admit, since the Lausanne, the collective rights of certain citizens, in other words, we admit that they belong to a sub-national cultural community under the national community and that they have the right to continue their situation. Alevis' situation is clearer. Apart from posing a risk, it is obvious that total effect of Alevis in Turkey's modern history strengthens the Republican thought and the existing organization of the Republic. And this is so despite that fact that Alevis were also suppressed from time to time by the Republic (Yeğen, "Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler", 5 Aralık 2004, *Radikal* 2).

These two unwanted children of the Republic (the people regarding Islam as a way of life and wanting to live accordingly and the Kurds) intersected much more frequently with each other during the AKP ruling. The representative power of the AKP in Turkish politics and its being the only party supported by the Kurds after the DTP is the reason of this intersection. The approach of the political parties to the Kurdish problem is important in terms of analyzing their relations with democracy and the state. Thus, the Kurds base their relations with the political parties on the framework of these concerns.

From its establishment in 2001 and coming to power in 2002 and until 2007, when it strengthened its ruling with a high rate of votes, the AKP has a distinctive Kurdish policy, which aimed at reconciliation with the Kurds. The Kurdish deputies

in the AKP, the need for stability in the country, global conjuncture and the EU process had common contributions in this aim. Erdoğan, in his famous speech in Diyarbakır, 2005, emphasized democracy concerning the Kurdish problem and brought the issue to an irrevocable point. In his speech Erdoğan said:

Great states face their mistakes. There have been administrative and political mistakes in the past. Those can't be ignored. The Kurdish problem isn't only the problem of the region, but the problem of everyone and whole Turkey. It is my problem also... What will happen, how will the Kurdish problem be solved? It will be solved with more democracy, wealth, rights and under the Constitutional order and societal unity. (akparti.org.tr)

Erdoğan's speech echoed everywhere in Turkey, especially in the Kurdish regions. In 22 July 2007 elections, AKP gained 54% of the votes in the East and Southeast. 80% of the Kurds living in cities such as İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, Mersin and Bursa voted the AKP. (Tan, 2009: 512). Since DTP's hegemony in the region was threatened, some state institutions that were standing aloof from the AKP welcomed this result. Moreover, the military interference in Turkish politics, and the basic issues such as minority rights, freedom of religion and conscience, the Kurdish problem and anti-democratic activities such as torture and ill-treatment accordingly were highly criticized by Europe. This criticism became chronic, leading to the legitimization of European Union's function. (Çiğdem, 2009: 51)

AKP's power in the region and the Western pressure regarding the Kurdish issue solely created a new and a convenient situation. One of the reasons of transition to multi-party system was to determine a position according to the West. Bearing this in mind, the effect of the European Union to Turkey's democratization would be better understood. It is also an indicator to the fact that the democratization

process in Turkey isn't realized directly with the will of the politicians, but indirectly from the outside.

The fact that European Union, as well as being an economic union, started to emphasize the political connections and principles brought new obligations to Turkey's relations with the West. Moreover, the global economic organization required a more stable political atmosphere in countries that are part of it. These circumstances were developed when the AKP came to power. Besides, the founders of the AKP were victims of malfunctioning of political dynamics in the country and victims of "a secularism model for Turkey" that strictly determined the relation between religion and political area.

Excluding the Kurdish nationalist parties, we can make a generalization: Central or sub-central parties; DP, AP, ANAP, Ecevit's CHP in the 70s and the SHP had determined a political discourse concerning the Kurdish issue. The Kurdish issue started to be regarded as a problem also by the military and the political will as a result of both the imposition from outside (the EU) and the unpreferred way of coping with terrorism. That İlker Başbuğ had to announce the problem in the speech he delivered at the Turkish War Colleges is an obvious example.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ İlker Başbuğ in the speech he delivered at the Military Academia in 14 April 2009 repeated the official discourse of the republic: "Since there had been no attempts for assimilation, then how can we explain the uprisings took place until 1938 in the East and Southeast regions? This is an important and valid question. Some of the reasons that experts and academicians agree on are:

- Local reactions to a centralist administration which is a necessity of modernization and centralization project of the Republic,
- Transition to secularism and undermining of the authority of local religious leaders and sheiks,
- External powers and their agitations,
- Regional backwardness,
- Misbehaviour of some of state officials in the region.

In the final analysis, we can see that the uprisings that took place in the early years of the republic are not ethnic based." Despite the repetition of state rhetoric, Başbuğ made some important points. He declared that different ethnic identities are sources of richness, and he used the term "people of Turkey". Thus this speech created a positive environment in the public and some even considered it as a historical speech.

It has become a must to solve the problem that always bothers Turkey and prevents its diplomatic and economic relations that are now managed in global level. In other words, Turkey cannot claim not to have such a problem, since there are too many actors both inside and outside pointing out to the problem.

The previous governments in the past have carried out limited activities to solve the problem now and then. While Erdal İnönü's SHP and Özal's ANAP was in power, education and broadcasting in Kurdish was in the agenda. Moreover, though rapidly changing her mind, Çiller who came to power after Demirel in the DYP, had pointed to the Bask model and argued about the vast autonomous circumstances of the model and their suitability to Turkey (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 51).⁸¹

However, this and similar initiatives were sacrificed to concerns of jeopardizing Turkish state's unity. Unlike the central parties, RP which had an Islamist discourse had 35 Kurdish and Southeastern deputies in the parliament after the 1995 general elections. The RP argued that separation from Islam lay behind the ethnic conflict in general. Figures like Fettullah Erbaş stated that the problem couldn't be solved unless the system is clearly interrogated while some deputies were arguing that the problem aroused from the economic gap between the west and the east of the country. Mazlum-Der (The Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People) was an important factor which shaped the RP's attitude towards the Kurdish problem. Established by some Islamist intellectuals in 18 January 1991, Mazlum-Der held a Kurdish Problem Forum in 1992. İhsan Arslan who is the AKP Diyarbakır Deputy now, was the chair of Mazlum-Der at the time

⁸¹ Çiller seems to have influenced by the report prepared by TOBB. TOBB president Yalım Erez assigned Prof. Doğu Ergil to prepare a report on the Kurdish problem and the report attracted widespread attention at the time. Most of the statements that Çiller made were also present at the report. For a detailed analysis of the report see Ümit Cizre (1996).

being. Many Islamist Kurdish intellectuals attended the Forum, in which Turkish Republic's Kurdish policy was criticized. On the other hand, the fact that Muslims weren't sensitive enough to the Kurdish problem was stated and a self-criticism was made. In his speech at the Forum, İhsan Arslan mentioned the fact that an Islamic stance wasn't displayed with regard to Kurdish problem and said the following: "Why did the Muslims stay silent and why were they mere spectator while the Kurdish identity was denied and the mother tongue of millions of people was banned?" (Arslan, 1992: 12-13). Kurdish Problem Forum of Mazlum-Der raised the sensitivity towards the Kurdish problem among the Islamic community and enabled the RP to strengthen in the Kurdish regions in the short term.

4. 2. The Program and Activities of AKP Regarding the Kurdish Problem

Let's start with the following statement: The way AKP makes politics separates from the Islamist tradition basically in its attitude towards Westernization and as I try to explain in this thesis, AKP's attitude towards modernization and Westernization differentiates from the post-80s Islamist discourse in its reformist identity. The reformist Islamism tends to associate the Islamic principles with Westernization.⁸² However, late 20th century Islamism generates from the qualitative conflicts between Islam and Western civilization. Thus, Islamism that revived in late 20th century emerged when the promises regarding Westernizing modernization failed (Gülalp, 1999: 45).

⁸² Gülalp points that Islam as a faith always protected its power. However he also adds that religion increased its political force after 80's, and he points to the differences of an Islamic politics nourished in such an environment from the politics of Young Turks. Reformist Islamism aims to make a synthesis between Islamic principles and Westernization, while Islamism that emerged towards the end of twentieth century is based upon a wholesale rejection of West. This new form of Islamism claims a substantial difference between Islam and Western civilization.

However, another consequence of modernization is the gaining independence of politics and other social areas from the surrounding ideologies such as religion and secularism. Yavuz makes the following ascertainment:

Situations and discourses have emerged, which are in conflict with the Islamist group's attempts to cope with the fragmental nature of modernization. Those conflicts have caused the Islamist movements pursue a more liberal and pluralist identity. And again these conflicts and separations served a fruitful base for the birth of a modern and civil society (Yavuz, 2005: 39).

This very base enabled the Islamist discourse to get more eclectic and to get closer with other identities. Concepts such as human rights, freedoms, democracy and so on entered the discourse of Islamist movements, and on this base, the Islamist movements got closer with different identities that were otherized by the regime.

AKP's activities towards change, development and democratization is much close to the Islamist standing that exists since the late periods of the Ottomans and in that sense it is much familiar; it tries to gain power against the West by acquiring their values regarding democratization, development and change.

AKP has achieved to transform this attitude into a rational policy not only to make Turkey stronger against the West, but also to get out of being a 'usual suspect' in the country. From this point of view, rather than questioning the sincerity of AKP's discourse of democracy we can discuss the rational extensions of this attitude.

Let's reiterate this fact: The Kurdish problem which is the topic of this thesis and the Islamist tradition from which AKP has emerged have changed dramatically since the 1920s. Though both issues have simultaneously reappeared in the political and cultural agenda of Turkey in the late 80s and the 90s, they have gone through changes. And both of the issues, and both the Kurdish resistance and the Islamist

resistance have a very crucial position in Turkey's experience with democracy and even serves as a mean in extending its experience.⁸³ That the military coups have become a tradition in Turkish Republic and the military custody continuously oppresses over politics have led to the civil society and the democratic intellectuals to lose their hopes of inner dynamics regarding Turkey's democratization and come to an agreement that to access the European Union is the shortest and best way for democratization. Moreover, the European Union is very appropriate for the Republican ideology which has turned its face to the West since its establishment.

Besides many political rationales for implementing the European Union as a national program, AKP has arguments to convince its conservative base as well. After all, the Ottomans tried to conquest the West.⁸⁴

AKP was also aware of the fact that a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem would improve Turkey's image in the outside world and would strengthen the possibility of Turkey's full membership to the EU. While AKP implements the democratization demands of the EU for its own legacy, it is aware of the very fact: The EU wouldn't admit Turkey unless the Kurdish problem is solved peacefully. Already unwilling to admit Turkey to its club, the EU would then have a very strong reason to reject the demand for membership and wouldn't support a government which is reluctant about the situation.

⁸³ Mesut Yeğen claims that Kurdish resistance (at least the ones that do not insist on a nation state) has contributed to democratization where as there is no such contribution in the Islamic resistance. (Yeğen, 1999, p. 76) Rhetoric of reactionarism has been an excuse for military interventions. In that sense we can claim that since this rhetoric led to the abandonment of democracy, in a negative sense Islamic resistance has contributed to democratization, since it enlarged the groups who demand democracy. Moreover Yeğen's point contradicts with one of the main points that this thesis aims to provide. Religion is one of the constructive elements of Kurdish resistance, and the relation between Caliphate and Kurds has been one of the most important determinants of the formation of Kurdish movement.

⁸⁴ Ahmet Davutoğlu, (Interview with *Kriter* journal, June 2009)

While the AKP was facing the Kurdish problem; state-centered world view was weakening, international organizations and NGOs were becoming sensitive to minority and identity issues, international interest concerning the oppressed minority groups was raising and possibility of external intervention –with humanitarian reasons- in order to prevent violations of human rights were recognized and nation states were obliged to abide by the international agreements which are also binding in internal affairs on issues like human rights. Besides the imposing conditions to access the EU, the global capital also requires unproblematic regions.

To say it briefly, minority rights and human rights issues in general were in the international agenda (Kirişçi-Winrow, 2000: 33).

Two questions are to be asked regarding AKP's Kurdish policy: What is the difference between the AKP and other political parties and the formal discourse regarding the Kurdish problem? And secondly, what differences occurred in the demands and expectations of the Kurdish people and the Kurdish people struggling for Kurdish rights? Of course we have to bear in mind that today we can't handle the Kurdish defenders as a whole block of people as we did in the past. That is to say, rather than one-sided variable, there are attitudes which alter each other also and in the mean time continuously interact with its own elements and thus split up and change. For this reason, while we observe AKP's attitude towards the Kurdish problem, we have to consider the changes that have occurred in the demands of the Kurdish people and Kurdish political leaders.

It has to be stated that Turkey's attitude towards the Kurdish problem has never been of a domestic political nature only. This is because of the existence of the PKK and its relations with neighboring countries and with the USA. This fact has

unavoidably effected relations with Turkey also. Thus, the fact that the bill to send troops to the North Iraq didn't pass the Assembly weakened AKP against the PKK during its early ruling. The USA was annoyed and used the Kurdish trump card against Turkey (Özcan-Yavuz, 2006: 109).

That is to say, while the AKP was in power, the USA was active in the Middle East and Iraq in terms of politics and military. This intersection also affected the solution process of the Kurdish problem. The government was in close cooperation with the USA especially in solving the problems of Northern Iraq Kurdish Administration and the PKK. Lastly, the policies developed with the President Barack Obama gave peaceful messages to the Islam world and tried to minimize the problems in the Middle East. As Henri Barkey states, the USA was called to be the mediator on the solution to the Kurdish problem since the relations with the USA and the EU got difficult from time to time because of the Kurdish problem. (Henri Barkey, "A Chance for Turkish-Kurdish Peace, *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 June 2009)

This point is the opposition's (the CHP and the MHP) main criticism to the AKP government regarding the Kurdish opening: The Kurdish opening is an American project. This idea actually bears in itself the reality that Turkey is examined/monitored by the West due to some internal problems. Thus, as Turkey attempts to access the EU, it is being monitored concerning democratization and human rights. Nilüfer Göle makes the following ascertainment on the issue:

Turkey is expected to admit the Armenian genocide in order to pass the test of Europeanization. Europeanness necessitates to get rid of the Turkish nationalism based on the denial of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic past (Göle, 2009: 37).

AKP now tries to realize these examination subjects. While the consecutive initiatives are being discussed in the political arena, they strengthen Turkey with regard to the West and enable the AKP and the accompanying periphery get closer to the center and become the “pleasant citizen”.

Examining the opening process from the spring of 2009 until now, we can answer our first question. How is the Kurdish policy of the AKP? And how does it differentiate from other parties? In its party program, the AKP had already stated its policies concerning Turkey’s main problems. This statement was tried to be realized under the framework of the laws enacted in the EU harmonization process. The Kurdish problem was discussed when the PKK activities and the Turkish General Staff’s operations were continuing.

Excluding the DTP which owes its existence to the Kurdish problem, AKP’s program has the best program with regard to the solution of the Kurdish problem among other central parties.

The Kurdish problem takes place under the title ‘East and Southeast’ in the party program. The CHP defines the same problem as the ‘Ethnic differences’, the DTP as the ‘Kurdish issue’ and the MHP as the ‘Problem of terrorism’. The AKP has combined all these attitudes. The part regarding the issue is as follows:

The event, which some of us call the Southeastern, others call the Kurdish or the Terror problem, is unfortunately a reality in Turkey. In cognizance of the negative issues caused by this problem in our social life, our Party shall follow a policy guarding the happiness, welfare, rights and freedoms of the regional population, in a manner not to create a weakness in the prevention of the terror threatening the region, the integrity of Turkey, as well as the unitary State structure; a sustainable policy which goes beyond the identification of the reality respectful to the sensitivities of the entire society, efficient and aimed at solving problems at the root. The cultural diversity in this region is considered richness by our Party. On condition that Turkish

remains the official and instruction language, our Party regards the cultural activities in languages other than Turkish, including broadcasting, as an asset which reinforces and supports the unity and integrity of our country, rather than weaken it. The elimination of certain troubles originating from the under -development of the region, are intended to be solved within the scope of the general democratization project, rather than special arrangements aimed at the region. Despite the terror which has lasted for long years and was maintained with an intense outside support, the fact that the region's population is attached to the unitary State structure, and the fact that the problem did not turn into an ethnic conflict with the common sense of our people, is proof that the issue can be solved as an internal affair. Our Party aims at putting an end to certain practices which are resorted to as a reaction to terror but, which go beyond their original purpose, and which disturb the region's population. It also aims at abolishing entirely the State of Emergency practices, which have been maintained for many years. We believe that our State must display a deterrent posture towards criminals and a protective posture towards innocents and must treat innocent people with affection... (akparti.org.tr)

During the 80s and the 90s when daily politics was still a part of the state's formal discourse in Turkey, terrorism was regarded as the reason for regional backwardness in the Southeast. However, the AKP party program defines terrorism (without mentioning its name) as the consequence of the Kurdish problem. The following phrase included in the party program summarizes how the policies that regard terrorism as the reason has affected the state's Kurdish policies: "Any approach, which ignores that terror is a consequence, turns to producing solutions with only oppression." The attitudes that regard the issue as only a 'security problem' is also criticised: " Since solutions based on a perception of a bureaucratic and authoritarian State rely solely on the concept of security, in the long term they exacerbate the problems even further" (akparti.org.tr).

According to the program, the AKP considers the cultural diversity as richness. AKP's solutions rely on cultural and economic priorities. From its establishment until 2009, there had been times the question is reduced to pure

economic reasons. However, that the problem couldn't be solved only by economic development has been included in the party's program: "...cultural differences don't necessitate ignoring the common features with the people of the region. On the contrary, the consciousness of being a citizen of the Turkish republic is the constructor of our unity and solidarity." It is being accepted that the realization of the differences wouldn't pose a problem to the unitary structure. An evaluation about the nationalist concerns raised to the solutions is also included in the party program. The democratic opening (Kurdish opening) that has been made public since April 2009 has been partially framed with a pre-meeting and a general meeting made in the Assembly on the 10th and 12th of November 2009 and the medium and long term activities to be carried out were listed in detail. This issue will be examined particularly in the below. The government's general attitude towards the opening was that it isn't a package but a process and is '...though such activities carried out within the framework of democratic state are met with concerns at first, they would result in unity and solidarity of our people in the long run.' Yet, the democratic opening process started by the AKP continues with societal and official concerns. The process that has been started as the 'Kurdish opening' at the beginning was named as the 'Democratic opening' and then as the 'Project of National Unity and Solidarity' by the AKP.

Before this initiative, the AKP has recognized the legitimacy of the Kurdish language with the establishment of TRT Şeş and created a psychological base for the initiative. The political action removing the obstacles in front of Kurdish is explained in the AKP program as the following:

On condition that Turkish remains the official and instruction language, our Party regards the cultural activities in languages other than Turkish, including broadcasting, as an asset which reinforces and supports the unity and integrity of our country, rather than weaken it (akparti.org.tr).

However, though the AKP has determined the program as such, it has postponed its loyalty to its own program owing to the balances it seeks in its relation with the status quo, its competition with the DTP, its balanced steps not to receive the reactions of the electors in the West and Middle Anatolia. It can be said that mainly these balances lay in the gap between its political program and its daily political statements. AKP achieved to make politics in parallel to its program as a result of the international conjuncture and the agreement reached in the state. This policy was compatible with the foreign political vision formulated as ‘zero problem policy’ and the USA’s security expectations in the region.

Moreover, Erdoğan’s attitude towards the Kurdish issue was not consistent through his political life. While he was a member of the RP, he had a positive view towards the alignment between Necmettin Erbakan and Alparslan Türkeş, which Altan Tan regards as a break in the Kurds’ relations with the RP. However, in 1991, he submitted a Kurdish report to Erbakan which was prepared by Mehmet Metiner, his adviser. Though the administrators of the RP ignored the report, Erdoğan supported it. During a journey he paid to Russia after AKP’s coming to power on the 3rd of November, 2002, he visited a Turkish construction center. Upon the question of a Kurdish worker about the solution to the problem, Erdoğan responded as ‘If you believe there is a problem, then it exists. If you say there is no problem then it disappears. I don’t believe there is such a problem. I say that such a problem doesn’t exist.’ (Akçura, 2008: 262-263) However in the speech he made at the Assembly

upon the resolution for General Meeting, Erdogan said ‘the problem doesn’t disappear by ignoring it’ and added: “Our recent history clearly showed us that denying the existence of the problems doesn’t make them disappear, instead the problems turn more complicated.” (akparti.org.tr)

The naming of the Kurdish issue is a good starting point to follow the different shapes it took through the republic. The distance covered is as the following: From ignoring the Kurdish ethnic identity, refusing the existence of a race called Kurds and not citing the name ‘Kurdish’ to recognizing the existence of the Kurds. It has also become prominent in the Kurdish policies of Menderes and Özal: ‘The Kurds do exist.’ Thus the problem was named as the ‘Kurdish reality’ by Demirel who even said ‘We accept the Kurdish reality’. However what Demirel referred to by saying the ‘Kurdish reality’ wasn’t the ‘Kurdish problem’. Thus, upon Prime Minister Erdoğan’s saying “Özal and Demirel also declared 15 years ago what I am telling now’, Demirel corrected him and said “We meant that the Kurdish people do exist as we said we identify the Kurdish reality. I said we approve this fact. That means, the Kurds do exist, however, he is a Turkish citizen. Being of the Turkish race is not a must to be a Turk” (Fikret Bila, *Milliyet*, 17.08.2005).

Demirel was right in correcting Erdoğan, as in 1992 he said the following: “Certain people living in this country call themselves as Kurds. They come from Kurdish roots. They are citizens, the owners of this country. They are not minorities, they are Turkish citizens. The country will be better governed and everyone will be equal as the PKK terrorism which is known as the 29th Kurdish revolt is ended. I don’t accept an issue as the Kurdish problem. The country would be separated as we admit it as a problem.”

This approach was, in brief, deeply rooted in the established attitudes towards Kurdish issue. Thus, with the death of Özal, Demirel became the president and Tansu Çiller's nationalist policies came to the agenda. The 90s served a period in which great military operations were realized and tough measures against the Kurdish language and Kurdish symbols were taken. The search for solution which was interrupted with Abdullah Öcalan's arrest in 1999 again came into the agenda as of 2003. The policies based on ethnic differences that were followed in the Middle East with the Iraq occupation of the USA in 2005, The Kurds living in Iraq and the concept of state/identity/ and existence created by Kurdistan in Northern Iraq, which is also admitted by Turkey today all forced Turkey to put forward a new paradigm beyond revising the existing policies. The intentions of the USA to withdrawal from the region also contributed to the process.

Some believe that, wanting stability in the Middle East as it withdraws from Iraq, the USA contributed to the solution of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Cüneyt Ülsever, one of the liberal figures of the media, summarizes this attitude as:

The Kurdish issue is not being discussed due to internal dynamics. The 'Kurdish opening' is actually the 'Northern Iraq opening'! Of course our Kurdish issue continues with pain. Of course we must solve this problem. However, the dynamics have changed: It is the USA now! (...) As it withdraws from the Northern Iraq, the USA wants us to become the protector of it in Iraq, which is on the edge of inner war. Turkish General Staff has a positive view after a long period of time, but wants the PKK to be removed from the Northern Iraq in return. The USA signals Turkey 'to help about the issue. But you should also take some positive steps about your own Kurdish issue (Cüneyt Ülsever, 29.07.2009, *Hürriyet*).

Apart from all these discussions, interpretations and attitudes, (aside from the perceptions the National View developed during the 90's) the process for the solution to the problem was started by Erdoğan's Diyarbakır speech in 2005.

However, until 2009, in four years time, the AKP wasn't consistent; it delivered nationalist speeches, and departed from the Kurdish problem and the EU perspective. It developed new policies at home and abroad. However, in his famous Diyarbakır speech, Erdogan said:

Diyarbakır is a province of Turkey as much as Ankara, İstanbul, Konya, Samsun and Erzurum. Everybody should understand this. Every country has mistakes in its past. Every country has tough days in its past. Like other great and powerful states, we reached today through all those tough events. For this reason, turning a blind eye to the past mistakes doesn't suit a great state. The great state and great nation is the one which has the courage to face with itself and to discuss the mistakes in detail. With this understanding does our ruling aim to serve the country. I am the Prime Minister of the government who believes to the self-confidence, historical awareness and geographic consciousness of my nation and my state. I believe that, as facing the past and turning to the future, it is possible to guarantee our future with our past. Because the future is bright. While I was imprisoned for reading a poem, I had delivered this message to my people: 'I am never and ever angry with my state. This state, this flag and this homeland is ours. One day, the mistakes will be corrected.'... Yes, this was the message I had delivered from the prison. For this reason me and my friends' dream is to make everyone equal in every part of this country, to make freedoms fully available, to make the rule of law dominant in the country and to make our children hopeful of their future. We don't have to label each problem we have. Because they are our problems. But if you insist on naming it, the 'Kurdish problem' doesn't only belong to a sect of this nation, it belongs to us all. It is my problem also. The problems don't have separated origins. All the problems are the common problems of every citizen of Turkish Republic no matter they are Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian, Abkhazian or Laz. Because the sun warms everyone and the rain is mercy for everyone. Because we are the people of the same land, we are a nation. For this reason, to those who wonder what will happen in the Kurdish issue, I reply as it concerns me more than anybody, as the Prime Minister of this country. If they would come with another problem of this country, I would again say, it concerns me more than anybody. We are a great state and as the nation, we solve and would continue to solve each problem with more democracy, citizen's rights and more wealth under the Constitutional order and under the main principles and the principle of the Republic which we have inherited from the founders of this country...⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Since the text of the speech is unavailable at the party website, this text is retrieved from the website of a journal.
http://www.sabah.com.tr/Siyaset/Dosyalar/2005/08/12/dosya_basbakanin_diyarbakir_konusmasi

Upon the meetings he held with non-governmental organizations to make some inquiries, Beşir Atalay, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the 60th government and the executor of Democratic opening, delivered a speech on the 29th of July 2009 and said: “We tend to take determined and courageous steps to develop the democratic opening that was started with the Diyarbakır speech our Prime Minister delivered in 2005.” Besir Atalay, in a way, pointed that the opening was started with Erdoğan’s Diyarbakır speech. Atalay also said “We believe that the issue that is named as the Kurdish problem could be solved as the democratic rights of our citizens expands and as every citizen-no matter where they live- feel themselves as equal and free individuals of the state”, shaping the method of the solution and its limits in a way. This step was taken to create a state policy, and by excluding the PKK and the DTP from the process, it aimed to legalize the solution in the eye of the public. Because, some sects of the society and especially the ones who are negatively sensitive to the Kurdish problem (including some AKP’s electors also) would object to the solution and say “The PKK and/or Abdullah Öcalan is pointed as interlocutor.” Thus, Yalçın Akdoğan, the advisor of Prime Minister Erdogan, instead of criticizing the CHP and the MHP who rather than giving support to the opening harshly attacked it, criticized DTP in his articles published in the Star newspaper.

Under the framework of returning from the mountains, people arrived from Mahmur and Kandil via Habur border and their welcoming turned into a show, which was mostly criticized. Upon this show, the criticisms of the opposition indicating that Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK were pointed as the interlocutors became much more severe. The government decided to cease the coming of the

PKK members from Europe. Erdogan said “We can start all over again if necessary” which was interpreted as the ending of the opening. However after holding meetings in the Assembly, Akdoğan wrote an article titled ‘Three Possibilities Regarding the Opening’ and stated that whether or not supported by the opposition, the opening process would continue without turning back and added:

The government put forward the fact that the process won’t be suspended or delayed. Then there are two alternatives. The opening would progress with a large political support, or the government, despite all the obstacles would continue on its own political path (Akdoğan, *Açık Görüş*, 15.11.2209).

The speeches of Prime Minister Erdoğan each having a manifest style shaped the democratic opening. In the Diyarbakır speech in 2005, while Erdoğan was pointing that the opening would be determinedly realized, he delivered messages of brotherhood to the society in general. In the Group Meeting dated 13th of October 2009, Erdogan said the following:

Neither the terrorist organization nor its derivatives are the representatives of my Kurdish brothers and sisters. They have never been and will never be so. Neither the provocations of the terrorist organization nor the irresponsible statements of some politicians would refrain us from our democratic march. They will never cause a drift between us and our Kurdish citizens. Democracy, laws and politics will continue to function. Turkey has reached the democratic maturity to discuss, debate and solve any problem and it will enhance this maturity even further. Our people expect solutions from democracy and politics. The reactions of those who are unable to tolerate democracy cannot damage these initiatives (akparti.org.tr).

With this speech, Erdogan actually gave the signals (to the Kurds actually) that both the PKK and the DTP would be excluded from the process. His speech at the Congress was greatly discussed in the media, in which Erdoğan said:

...We are all together Turkey. We are Turkey; we have a common past and a common future. Closing its ears to Sabahat Akkiraz, Turkey lacks folk songs. Turkey longed for Cem Karaca as much as he longed for Turkey. As one cannot imagine a Turkey without Mehmet Akif, a country without Nazım Hikmet would be deficient. Without Said Nursi of Bitlis, Turkey's spirit is deflated. We love everyone because they are human. We learned this approach from Yunus who says 'Love the created for the sake of the creator'. There is no exclusion in the roots of this country. Let's start a new milestone. This land is maternal. This land welcomes everyone with love and patience like a mother. Intolerance is the only thing that can't be tolerated in this land. Our book doesn't instruct conflicts regarding tribe and sect. We don't and will not make ethnic or religious discrimination. I am addressing the opposition parties: come and openly say what you want to. Aren't there problematic areas in this country? If you are waiting for your time to come, this nation won't bring you to power. Come and let's together get rid of these problematic issues. Let's all together enjoy the conclusion. But if what you want to make things more difficult, my nation won't let you do so... (akparti.org.tr)

A due emphasis is given to Erdoğan's speeches and statements in this work.

Underlying reason for this emphasis is that in the opening process, discourse is as much important as concrete steps (and that government is criticised for not taking concrete steps. Beşir Atalay's speech when he declared democratic opening to the public in 29 Temmuz 2009, was criticized by Ahmet Türk on the same grounds.) These speeches in a sense aim to prepare the public psychologically to opening and to create a desire for a common past and future. Akdoğan's assessment of Erdoğan's speeches during the opening process is:

Erdoğan's statements as the leader of the opening process reflect the general soul of the opening process. If determination, will and honesty constitute an important part of the process, another important dimension of the process is the influential power of the discourse which gives spirit and meaning to the process. Transformative power of the speech gives its color to the process. If a statement is made from the heart, and is powerfull enough to stir the hearts, then it has a transformative power. If speech is based on justice, equity and honesty, then it doesn't only transforms the hearts and individuals but it transforms the whole society (Akdoğan, *Açık Görüş*, 29.11.2009).

With such statements, he was aiming to smooth the criticism of being influenced by Kurdish nationalism and was aiming to stress that the opening process is not only related with the Kurds but it is a “national unification project”. Paradoxes of AKP as being a democrat when it comes to rights and freedom, but turning to a culturalist nature in order to prevent the opposition from rising to power, was due to the fragmented nature of the party itself, and slowed down the opening process from time to time.

Although AKP was based on the cadres of National View when it was formed in 2001, it also included different figures as well, since the party was aiming to be the new actor of center right politics. In order to rely on the largest possible popular base and to conduct healthy relations with the establishment, “statist” individuals were also included in the party. Rather than reflecting a desire of a pluralist politics, this was a result of an acute calculation of political balances and realities in Turkey. Ahmet Yıldız defines this as:

...the nature of change in the party’s identity is that “this dual habitus of the JDP is an indication of the fact that Turkey’s center-right, with its religious, liberal and conservatave components, has found itself a new watercourse. This has contributed significantly to the marginalization of traditional religious movements and groupings of National Movement and other center-right parties (Yıldız, 2008: 42).

Although it has its own dynamics and developed independently from the Kurdish opening, we should also stress the importance of Ergenekon trial since it brought military guardianship over the political realm and the human right violations and unidentified assassinations in the region to the public attention. A detailed analysis of the Ergenekon Trial would exceed the scopes of this study, yet suffice it to say that if the deep state operations weren’t identified by this trial, Kurdish

opening wouldn't be on the agenda. As later stressed by government officials, Kurdish opening can be considered as a part of a larger framework aiming to democratize (Democratic Opening) the political and social life of Turkey. Ergenekon Trial is also an important dimension of democratization.

4. 3. At the threshold of “love or leave”

Ruşen Çakır and Fehmi Çalmuk claim “Contrary to Erbakan, Erdoğan has a more nationalist political approach instead of ‘ummah’ism” in their book *Recep Tayip Erdoğan, The Story of a Transformation*. However, it was Erdoğan himself, as RP's İstanbul Provincial Chairman who has started an aid campaign for the Kurds that migrated from Northern Iraq to Turkey. The motto of this campaign was ‘We must provide from our own food and clothes for our Kurdish brothers and sisters’. An advisory board has been established in order to regain the Kurdish base that was offended by RP because of its alliance with MÇP and IDP. The advisory board was chaired by Mehmet Metiner and included Ali Bulaç, Abdurrahman Dilipak, Altan Tan and other intellectuals. This board drew up a ‘Kurdish Report’ (which was criticising the Kurdish policy of the formal ideology and was saying that the Kurdish reality was again being denied with the 1980 coup) on behalf of RP İstanbul Provincial Organization (Çakır-Çalmuk, 2001: 196).

Different from RP, AKP is a party in which the “three phases of Turkish right” as Tanıl Bora says, is represented because of its foundational philosophy and roots. It ideologically nourishes from these synthesis and transitions. In his *Three Phases of Turkish Right* book Tanıl Bora sees the source ‘material’ of Turkish right:

nationalism, conservatism and Islamism as one clew but not three separate positions. The ideologies which are being traced over this “phase” metaphor, have connections, intersections and sometimes they interlock. These three ideologies represent the three phases of Turkish right. Nationalism is the solid phase, namely it forms the grammar of right. Conservatism is the gas state and it adds a style and ‘ambiance’ to right. Islamism represents the liquid phase. Namely, kind of blood. An indispensable source of imagery and value (Bora, 1998: 7-8).

Numerous parties in the Turkish right had their shares from these ideological transitions. AKP is one of them and it contacts with all the three of these phases of right. Both ideologically and on behalf of its voters.

Therefore, AKP’s test with nationalism is not surprising and it should not be seen as a disease coming from nowhere. Indeed this is the nationalist wing’s effect on AKP which the Party has been trying to discipline and can be explained by the political balances, electoral concerns and the pressure of the psychological based national consciousness discourse coming from the past and most basically the mentality regarding the sustainability of the state.

This wing may be evaluated as the projection of the Unionist (İttihatçı) wing over CHP, AKP and the similar political actors. This wing emerges while taking a position or showing behaviour during critical times and resembles the parties each other. When the Kurdish problem emerges this wing easily shows itself. Mithat Sancar’s statement on this is: “... Kurdish problem is the key problem in this country. Without exception, all the parties that become stiff and diverge from democratic solution become nationalist and authoritarian at the end. Demirel’s DYP, Karayalçın’s SHP, Yılmaz’s ANAP, Çiller’s DYP and Erbakan’s Refah all had this

problem. To stiffen up in Kurdish problem is good for no one” (Mithat Sancar, *Taraf*, 17.11.2008).

AKP had this problem from time to time. Initially, AKP approached to the Kurdish problem with a solution based attitude. However, following the 2007 election it had an excluding discourse that stood out with security concerns.

Moreover, in his November 2008 dated speech in Hakkari Erdoğan said:

We have a supra identity. This identity is Republic of Turkey citizenship. And we said something when we hit the road: One nation, one flag, one country, one state, we said. Does anyone oppose this? Can somebody say ‘no, not one nation’ or ‘I don’t accept one flag’? Well, if one does not like it, one is free to go anywhere he likes.

Erdoğan almost went through “love or leave” discourse. While revising his words upon the negative reactions, he said MHP had the patent of “love or leave” discourse and they would not have such an approach. However MHP itself criticized AKP for these words.

The power struggle against DTP in Kurdish cities was the source of this nationalist and essentialist approach. So, that was a political choice more than an ideological change and it resulted with the questioning of the liberal support to AKP. One of the negative reactions was from Ali Bayramoğlu who is obviously supporting the Kurdish Opening today:

... Especially following the elections, AKP policies began to be more pro-order... Even though the prime minister is essentially right in his criticism against DTP which organizes and manages street movements and challenges AKP not to come to Southeast, he started to seem stiffened and authoritarian with his language, similes and way of criticism. Dengir Mir Fırat's leave and Abdülkadir Aksu's assignment strengthened this scene. The government received criticism from democratic and liberal circles because of this route... And the prime minister sees every criticism as an attrition initiative against his party while he should have asked ‘why do we receive these critics, what are the criticsers point of view?’. He tends to give harsh responses and ‘that scene’ becomes consistent. Why do all these happen?

According to us, everything is clear. At least currently there is a ‘political assessment error’ more than a political-ideological deviation... It is well known that Tayyip Erdoğan gives value to local elections especially in south-east... However, if the cause of events keeps this way, AKP will inevitably lose votes in south-east region because of the government’s new approach and attitude... (Ali Bayramoğlu, 11.10.2008, *Yeni Şafak*).

At 2007 general elections, AKP found the power to interfere in the Kurdish problem via the high voting rates from the region. However the party initiated a nationalist discourse with the concern for redemption of losses in the west region. Seeking the salvation in nationalism -which is taking the easy way out during critical times-, with the “contribution” of the conjuncture, emerged in AKP this time.

However, Cengiz Aktar pointed out this situation one year before 2007 general elections and warned “AKP is the leaser of nationalism ideology not the owner. It is of vital importance for AKP itself and the country that AKP takes its political steps, bearing in mind this reality” (Cengiz Aktar, 26.09.2006, *Vatan*).

But it did not happen that way. Nationalist risings showed up in the feast day messages in January 2007. The motto used by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s posters for the feast surprised the public opinion.

"I'd sacrifice myself for the crescent and star" took different reactions from the streets and media. While the communication expert Ali Saydam evaluated the Prime Minister’s feast posters as “a getaway to nationalism” MHP members argued that AKP “stole their role”. The opposition parties frequently repeated their criticism over the poster. AKP got harsh reactions from Kurds and the left wing. Therefore while the nationalists accused AKP with role stealing, leftists, Kurds and liberals criticized it for giving credit to nationalism. Moreover, the opposing parties claimed

that AKP played a double game because the posters were not hanged in the eastern region but the western region.

This situation partly went on following the election. However it was the time for local elections in March 2009 and this was an opportunity for AKP to present a new promise package and to show a new attitude. Within this phase TRT 6 TV aired in Kurdish. A Kurdish TV was almost a social taboo which had been quarreled over for 25 years and was regarded as a dream. The project started with a few hours of Kurdish broadcast and then continued with the initiation of TRT 6. However this development did not completely wipe out AKP's recent nationalist perception. Based on the following election results, we can say that Kurds did not find AKP's TRT6 move satisfying. DTP which devoted itself to the Kurdish problem, imposed to Kurds that DTP is the only address via an efficient effort within this phase. This move showed its effect in the local elections. DTP's votes increased in comparison with 2007⁸⁶. Moreover AKP's proactive attitude to win over Diyarbakır –DTP's fortress- brought together an obstinacy and tension. The nationalist temper that emerges in critical times, progressed in favour of DTP this time and resulted with DTP's victory in Diyarbakır and the whole region. A large number of economic investments and social aid web in the region did not end up as AKP wished.

AKP even lost votes in its own provinces. In Bingöl AKP's votes were 71% in 2007 elections. This rate went down to 43% in 2009. Major regress was faced in Bitlis, Van, Mardin, Siirt and Ağrı.

Here is a point that the time when AKP mostly alienated from the nationalist sentiments was the phase until 2004 –during the consecutively legislation of EU

⁸⁶ DTP which had to enter 2007 elections with independent candidates due to 10 percent threshold gained roughly 4 percent of the votes. This rate increased to 6 percent in 2009 local elections.

packages. The second alienation phase was the process of Kurdish opening. AKP managed to keep its distance from nationalism despite the harsh criticism from the opposition parties, public reaction and the continuing martyr funerals during the Kurdish opening.

4. 4. The Kurdish Opening as a State Policy

The defeat psychology that AKP was in following the local elections- because of the losses of main cities and losses of votes despite its first place in the elections- was the messenger and justification of an upcoming language and policy. Thus, the Kurdish problem was on the Party's agenda once again.

In May 2009 Hasan Cemal went to Kandil Mountain as a journalist and shared the opinions of PKK chiefs with the Turkish public opinion. PKK's message from Murat Karayılan was:

We are at an important threshold! We also gained an important opportunity for peace in 1993 but this was all wasted because of the 'political will gap' and the problem was completely assigned to the military forces back then. Let's don't miss this peace opportunity now. We don't want bloodshed anymore. Thereby we would be coming to the same point after years. Turkey would loose blood. PKK can not be finished by military methods. They tried for 25 years but no point. I can not say anything about another unilateral extension of cease-fire. The priority is to silence the arms. Capitulation is the next step... First the arms must be silenced. Nobody should attack anybody. First, we must start talking to each other... We must start with dialogue not with arms. Let's talk sincerely... (Hasan Cemal, Milliyet, 05.05.2009).

Thus, in the same month (May 2009) President Abdullah Gül made the following statement for the Kurdish issue "Call it terror problem, call it South-eastern problem or Kurdish problem. This is the top problem of Turkey. It must absolutely be solved. This matter is being more openly talked within the State. There

must be positive developments. People are much more aware on what is happening. Good things happen in such a condition. We are at the threshold of a historical opportunity. We must not let it go."

The debates and the statements from the State and the Government brought the Kurdish problem to the point of no return. Messages kept coming from both sides without considering the danger "being an addressee". The media and the public opinion no more considered the matter as a security problem and the PKK as a couple of bandits.

The process –especially as of its part under control of the Government- was welcomed by Kurdish public opinion and political actors, with a little reservation of "let's see what happens". However, obstacles were posed just as in 1993. At that period, while Demirel government was considering issuing a general amnesty, 33 unarmed soldiers were killed in Bingöl in 25 May 1993. The search for an amnesty and a solution was cut because of this massacre which also considered as defiance for the 33 Bullets Incident⁸⁷ that had an important place in Kurdish social memory.

However just before the discussion was initiated with the "Democratic Opening" headline in December 2009 [upon the signals of the initiative], some incidents happened that would strengthen the circles opposing the Kurdish Opening. News started to come about "soldiers died because of landmines or ambushes".

⁸⁷ In 1943, 33 smugglers were captured at Van Özalp. However instead of being sent to trial, these 33 people were shot to dead with the order of General Mustafa Muğlalı. This incident was kept as a secret for a long time until when DP uncovered the issue in order to attack İnönü and CHP. In the end Muğlalı went under trial and was sentenced to twenty years. Sociolog Neşe Özgen deals with this issue in her book *Remembrance and Forgetting in Social Memory* (Toplumsal Hafızanın Hatırlama ve Unutma Biçimleri) and discusses the implications of this event in the identity construction of Kurds. In 40's this massacre was considered as the killing of smugglers, in 50's as a representation of CHP's attitude towards the people of the region, and in the following years as a massacre targeting the Kurdish movement. Studies on oral history and the related documents support this argument. [Özgen, H.Neşe, *Toplumsal Hafızanın Hatırlama ve Unutma Biçimleri*; Van-Özalp ve 33 Kurşun Olayı TÜSTAV Yay., İstanbul, 2003]

These however were controlled through political and mediatic manoeuvres and the public opinion prevented from getting psychologically distanced from the opening. Öcalan actually participated in the phase and –as always- called out to the political actors via his lawyers. He declared that he had been preparing a road map for the solution (Road Map for the Kurdish Problem) and prepared the Kurdish public opinion for a solution by attracting the attention to the upcoming solutions from the society. Prior to 1999, there were no efforts from the State. The solution proposals were limited with Öcalan's cease-fire efforts [which were not clear to be tactical or not]. This was the case, since the balance of power in the state was in favour of the army. It was a phase when no new solutions could be submitted other than the limits drawn by the MGK and the General Staff. Gangs organized within the state such as JITEM, Ergenekon, Counter-guerrilla was feeding from the Kurdish problem and just because of that they undermined the solution focused efforts in a way that threatened social peace.

The state generated a victory based discourse after Öcalan was caught. But following the Organization's reply through armed actions and operations it was understood that the situation was different. In parallel, the political fight that was represented by DTP continuously grew up over legitimate grounds. The success gained in 22 July 2007 general elections and in 29 March 2009 local elections made it possible for the Kurds to be regarded as the common subject of solution focused efforts. In addition to these, the Kurdistan oriented federative structure in northern Iraq and the legitimate reality of this structure provided Turkey a historical choice regarding the Kurdish matter.

PKK was taught to loose power upon Öcalan's capture in 1999. However PKK grew stronger, politically socialized and began to show its power in Kurdish dominated regions. Kurdish movement compelled Turkey's political paradigms; it rendered the army and security oriented perceptions functionless. There upon Erdoğan gave voice to the solution as a state project and the project started under the responsibility of the ministry of Internal Affairs. Erdoğan declared:

We as the General Staff, MİT (National Intelligence Service) and the Government have initiated a study with my MGK member friends and the responsibility of this internal security matter is certainly upon the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We charged the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry is running the meetings with all the related Ministries. It will conduct the necessary preparations with the agencies. It will conduct the meetings with the General Staff, MİT as well as the members of the parliament from this region. The Ministry will bring us a developed, improved study and we will make our final evaluation. Then we will make a statement to the public about this within a united discourse (*Radikal*, 23 July 2009).

Upon this statement, it was clear that the solution for the Kurdish problem was created by the reconciliation within the State. The opposing parties CHP and MHP went on denying the Kurdish problem and considering the Kurdish identity as a folkloric element over AKP's Kurdish policy. MHP continued its conventional policy since early 1990s and opposed the process with the essentialist memorizations of the State although the State has already left these arguments.

CHP, on the other hand, had a different approach to the Kurdish problem, however its opposition to AKP, lead it to show effort to interrupt the Kurdish Opening. Finally, during the pre-hearing of the Democratic Opening in the National Assembly CHP's vice chairman Onur Öymen criticised the Kurdish Opening comparing it with the Dersim event (with the help of the non sensical talk due to the coincidence that the hearing was held on 10 November, Atatürk's death anniversary)

and CHP's chairman Deniz Baykal defended Öymen. This put an almost permanent distance between CHP and the Kurdish Opening.

DTP's attitude changed throughout the Opening process. The opposing parties criticized AKP of having a common cause with DTP since they had the DTP=PKK formula. Moreover DTP made public releases stating that Öcalan should be addressed for the opening. Such events caused AKP to put distance to DTP. Within this phase the name "Kurdish Opening" has been changed into the "National Unity and Brotherhood Project".

4. 5. From Kurdish Opening to National Unity and Brotherhood Project

Although yet we never heard the definition of "Kurdish Opening" from the Prime Minister, Minister of Internal Affairs or other government officials, this expression used in media had not been corrected in the beginning. However, after a while, the Government described the period as "Democratic Opening". Since the process was not limited to the Kurdish problem, it was a period of total democratization of the country including many things from minority rights to freedom of religion and faith. But as looking out for the reaction of the western parts of the country a final description has been made by the Prime Minister and the process was named as "National Unity Project". The government insistently repeated that the opening process was not a short term project, and certainly not a package. It was a long way with enormous difficulties. Consequently, in order to balance the reactions that might rise in the process, and to minimize the discomforts that might develop in public particular importance was given for emphasizing the unity and solidarity. Although the need to distinguish Kurdish problem and terror from each

other was mentioned, what to do at the final analysis was achieving an actual separation of Kurdish problem with the violence and armament. It was essential that PKK should give up their weapon and come down from the mountain. This was the hardest task of AKP, since silencing of the weapons was not possible without Öcalan's cooperation. According to Hasan Cemal, who had gone to Kandil and had an interview with Murat Karayılan just before the opening process has started "It was highly unlikely to silence the weapons by ignoring Öcalan and without his signs given form İmralı." In this same article, Hasan Cemal, also stated that a mistake made in the opening process was 'to separate Kurdish problem and PKK':

If PKK stands on feet for many years, this is because it puts down roots among Kurds and because it had the support of social base and civil society. For this reason, while killing PKK at the mountains as counter terrorism, supposing to take Kurds along in plains and assuming to be able to put the Kurdish Problem on the right track points out another mistake. Because after all these years, separating Kurdish problem and PKK from each other is far away from a rational expectation...

Hasan Cemal is making a completely dissimilar assessment to AKP's discourse. He is pointing out the dilemma of AKP's Kurdish opening in one sense. Since from the beginning, AKP has established its discourse on distinguishing Kurdish problem from terrorism. This was so partially because of trusting its power in the region, and partially because the state has always reduced the problem to a security and terrorism problem. But the point where Kurdish opening comes to a dead end was PKK and Abdullah Öcalan. To distinguish the Kurdish problem from the terror problem and to go beyond the official concept and 80 years of recitations would mean a lot in the past. However, since the problem itself has transformed in this process, this policy of AKP has not received positive reaction from PKK and DTP side. At the beginning of the thesis, we have said that developing a policy for the

solution of Kurdish problem would also enable AKP to legitimize its own existence. We should also express that: Kurdish problem is the most special base of conducting politics for the political parties in Turkey. Since politics is, in the definition of Hannah Arendt, the area of action and freedom. (Arendt, 1994) It is an action of human being to leave a mark in this world and thus repeating what has occurred is not politics. Defending the status quo is to go out of the politics. Also from the perspective of the confirmation of its political existence, AKP could not have turned a blind eye to such an important subject. Because it was not able to satisfy the expectations of its own party grassroots with regard to head scarf and it was unable to overcome the resistance of the center at this issue. Solving Kurdish problem was an action that also would support the claim of its own authenticity.

The will of solving Kurdish problem also refreshes the commitment to change and transformation. This commitment has the potential of self-destruction. AKP achieved dynamism in its first ruling period, especially in the first three years, during the legislative changes with regard to EU harmonization packages. AKP got this dynamism once again in the Kurdish opening process.

AKP, who is seeking self-legitimation through European Union and trying to throw off the perception of being a usual suspect, took the initiative of solving an 80 years old problem at a time it overcame (or supposed itself to overcame) its legitimacy concerns. And with this step, its legitimacy was once again questioned and was blamed as traitor by the opposition. (Bahçeli is describing the Democratic Opening as “betrayal opening”) Since Kurdish problem, just like political Islamic past of AKP which threatens its legitimacy, in the eyes of official Kemalist elitist view is a dangerous “other”.

5. CONCLUSION

As the writing of this thesis ended, Kurdish opening was entering a new phase. DTP was closed by the Constitutional Court on the accusations of its links with terrorism. As happened in the previous closure cases, BDP soon replaced DTP and BDP MPs declared that upon the advice they received from Öcalan, they stepped back from their previous decision of resigning from the parliament. In the meanwhile, street demonstrations were turning more violent and more widespread. Rising tension led to speculations that Kurdish Opening ended with failure, yet the government and the AKP declared it clearly that they have no intention of retreating from the opening process. As of today, it is impossible to know how the opening will develop and whether if it will be successful in solving the at least 80 years old Kurdish problem. However, I believe this do not constitute an essential weakness for the purposes of this thesis. As I have tried to show throughout the thesis, historical and structural changes both within Turkey and in the international environment make it impossible to ignore the Kurdish problem any more. This thesis aimed to analyze the AKP as both a product of these changes and an agent of change as well. In short the thesis aimed to analyze the dynamics and processes that shaped AKP and Kurdish problem, and finally the dynamics that led to the intersection of these two independent phenomena in a certain time of history. As both of these phenomena are creations of the modernization process, it was necessary to deal with Turkish modernization.

Reluctant modernization attempts started with the decline of Ottomans. Yet Ottoman modernization as defined by Rustow was a “defensive modernization” and

was unsuccessful in preventing the decline of the empire (Rustow, 1985: 131). With the foundation of Republic modernization attempts gained a much more radical nature. The main aim of the Kemalist modernization can be summarized as the building of a secular nation state from an imperial and religiously oriented society. As Bernard Lewis argues in his classical “Emergence of Modern Turkey” during the transition from Ottomans to the Kemalist Republic, “God had to be replaced twice: as the source of sovereignty, by the people, and as the object of worship by the nation” (Lewis, 1993: 479).

Thus republican modernization created two major excluded groups; Islamic groups and Kurds. From that point on Turkish political life was shaped by a continuous struggle by the center that aims to shape the society with regard to the Kemalist principles and aims, while the society resisted to these top down modernization attempts. Moreover, a very radical interpretation of secularism has exacerbated the tension between the state and society,- and as of today, it still serves as the main power base for AKP- since the aim of Kemalist secularism far exceeded to create a separation between state and religion. Instead secularism in the Turkish context was considered as a “way of life” (Kuru, 2007: 571-572).⁸⁸

This added an ideological and cultural dimension to the center-periphery relations in Turkey. As the title of Şerif Mardin’s famous article suggests, since then

⁸⁸ Ahmet Kuru identifies two different versions of secularism in his article entitled “Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party”: “I argue that state policies toward religion are the result of ideological struggles. In the three cases it is the struggle between ‘passive secularists’ and ‘assertive secularists’ that has shaped public policies. Passive secularism, which requires that the secular state play a ‘passive’ role in avoiding the establishment of any religions, allows for the public visibility of religion. Assertive secularism, by contrast, means that the state excludes religion from the public sphere and plays an ‘assertive’ role as the agent of a social engineering project that confines religion to the private domain. Thus, passive secularism is a pragmatic political principle that tries to maintain state neutrality toward various religions. Whereas assertive secularism is a ‘comprehensive doctrine’ that aims to eliminate religion from the public sphere (Kuru, 2007: 521).

center-periphery relations can be taken as a key to understand Turkish politics. This thesis aimed to achieve this, and tried to analyze the development of both AKP and the Kurdish problem from the lenses of center-periphery relations.

In that sense the most crucial aspect of AKP is that AKP is the product of center-periphery relations and it is a continuation of the peripheral parties which takes its political power from its potential to carry the large masses of the periphery to the political center. Since these parties base their power to the groups that are excluded and “other”ised by the political center, throughout the multi-party history (and indeed even in the early and unsuccessful attempts to transition to multi-party politics) parties representing the periphery, DP, AP, to a certain extent CHP in 70’s, and ANAP had always been sensitive to both religious demands of the society and to the Kurdish problem. Being an heir to this political tradition, it is not surprising that AKP also is based upon the support of these excluded groups, and is sensitive to the religious and Kurdish identity demands. Yet as this thesis has claimed, AKP has far exceeded the preceding peripheral political parties in its dealing with the Kurdish problem. Rather than identifying the major steps of the AKP’s approach to the Kurdish problem, one of the major aims of this thesis was to identify the reasons that created this unique situation. Thus this thesis is more related with the reasons that made AKP to declare and start a Kurdish opening rather than the content and possible successes and failures of the opening process.

The unique conjuncture that this thesis has identified has its roots in the particular nature and development of AKP and the historical legacy created AKP, in the changing nature of the international political environment and in the exceptional stage of the development of Kurdish political movement.

Although AKP aims to establish itself in the center right politics, its leader and most of its high profile members rose from the ranks of RP. Thus although being basically a center right party, religious orientation of AKP is much more evident than the center right political tradition. This religious dose combined with the religious origins of the Kurdish problem, is particularly important for the aim of this thesis and given the common negligence of the religious roots in the formation of Kurdish political identity in the academic literature, constitutes one of the original contributions of the thesis. Kurds had been excluded by the Republican regime, and coded as the “other” twice; as overwhelmingly being religious people and as constituting a separate ethnic identity other than Turkishness. Two excluded groups of the Republican regime, Islamic groups and Kurds thus shared a common faith, and this common faith led them to intersect in the AKP. This common fate also led to the creation of a common discourse based on victimization and unjust treatment and to a common approach to overcome the injustices and the process of exclusion they experienced. Moreover, due to the religious dimension of the problem, the cadres of AKP had started to turn more sensitive to the Kurdish problem while they were still in RP.

Moreover, since most of AKP’s cadres rose from the RP tradition, they were excluded from the politics in the most recent military intervention. However this turned a major power base for AKP as the political power of AKP was fed by the struggle between the Kemalist center and the social groups in search of justice and equality for their identities. This is the case for both the religious identity and the ethnic identity. Throughout the thesis I tried to follow the intersection of these two excluded identities under the AKP, and AKP’s political mission of carrying these

excluded groups into the political arena. Thus AKP's basic notion was to enlarge the realm of politics, to include excluded groups into the political realm and to prevent the limitations put on politics by the guardianship system. This could only be achieved through a radical democratization attempt, and although being the agent of democratization was designated to the AKP by the historical circumstances rather than its own determination, this mission of democratizing Turkey was the crucial factor that shaped the Kurdish policy of the AKP.

AKP which can also be considered to be a result of 28 February progress has continued to feel itself insecure as the governing party. This was not only due to the trajectory of 28 February process, since the party, while in power, also faced a closure case in the constitutional court as well. Though achieved not to be closed only barely, AKP was declared as the focus of reactionary movements by the Court and the Court decided to punish AKP by cutting the financial help given by the Treasury. Moreover, as the recent Ergenekon case undiscovered, the party has also survived various abortive coup attempts. All these show the sincerity of the security and legitimacy problem AKP experienced. However main success of AKP was its ability to transform these threats into its own benefit. With this, AKP not only shows that it achieved to change itself but it also is the main transformative power in Turkey, and it transforms the nature of politics in Turkey towards a more inclusionary and democratic arena. As democratization appeared necessary to survive against the regime, it became impossible to neglect the Kurdish problem.

Related with this development another important point this thesis had tried to indicate was the importance of the international conjuncture. Intersection of Islamic political movement and Kurdish politics under the AKP had been possible in a

unique international environment that shaped the nature of Turkish political life. The most important international dynamic was obviously the EU integration process.

Throughout this study, both the AKP's promise to change Turkey and the change it experienced within itself was considered as a result of the "need for democracy". A great importance is given to EU integration process since it was considered that resisting the oppressive politics of the regime could only be achieved through EU harmonization laws.

Although AKP evolved from an anti-EU political line, it quickly adopted itself to the political necessities and turned to the champion of EU integration. EU integration process enabled the AKP to make legal changes in favor of enlarging the realm of politics and to protect political realm from military guardianship. As the political sphere enlarged, its capacity to take initiatives and to develop solutions to the problems had also developed.

Moreover EU became another common point in the evolution of Islamic and Kurdish political trajectories. Throughout their political histories both the Islamic groups and the Kurdish political actor were convinced that a democratic solution to their identity demands were not feasible given the power balances within Turkey and an external push for democratization was necessary. EU integration process appeared as the address to this need. From that point on EU membership was instrumentalized in order to overcome the limits set by the Kemalist regime for the inclusion of excluded identities into the legitimate political grounds and further democratization. At this point, it is important to mention that EU integration proved to be an influential and efficient way to overcome Kemalist restrictions, since

ultimate Westernization was one of the main goals and promises of Kemalist modernization.

One of the main arguments this thesis tried to provide was that through EU membership and further democratization AKP aimed to solve the legitimacy crises that it experienced, and solving the Kurdish problem emerged as the pre-requisite of further democratization and EU integration process.

This might lead to conclude that AKP attaches only instrumental value to democratization. But as this thesis tried to show, since it declared its agenda as change, AKP did not only achieve to change the political life of Turkey, the party itself experienced a change.⁸⁹ Moreover, the periphery that AKP was representing, the Kurdish political movements and the state also experienced a change in their perception on the Kurdish problem. I tried to underline and follow the lines of these changes throughout the thesis.

Moreover, EU is part of a larger shift in the international political environment. This shift is reflected in the decline of nation state's capacity and monopoly to deal with the problems in its borders. The decline of nation states in the world affected both the Kurdish movement itself and the state's approach towards

⁸⁹ Yalçın Akdoğan who is the advisor of Prime Minister Erdoğan and author of the book *Conservative Democracy* presented as the manifesto of AKP defines the capability of AKP to change itself and to transform outside in the following statement: "AKP on the one hand shows the understanding of change appropriate for a conservative party, on the other hand it tries to transform the conservatism itself. Conservatism prefers evolutionary changes rather than radical changes and revolutions, and attempts to modify and improve rather than removing or annihilating. In that sense, the concept of transforming" suits better to AKP rather than "changing". Rather replacing the existing thing with a completely new one, AKP prefers to improve and modify it. It aims to create a difference without removing anything. In that sense AKP is not anti-system party, but aims to "transform" the system in the lines of the expectations and needs of the society. Rather than trying to replace the center with periphery, AKP transforms the center to a new direction that would not neglect the periphery. The transformative style of politics that AKP has embraced aims nothing other than democratization of the system, administration and the center of Turkey and achieving universal standards in this regard. Including its own tradition AKP aims to transform each and every political understandings and claims (Akdoğan, *Açık Görüş*, 11.10.2009).

the Kurdish problem. The right to self determination, which was once so hegemonic that both Woodrow Wilson and Lenin could agree on, has lost its appeal in the international environment. Moreover the new international regime creates legal and institutional bodies that supersede the power of nation state and forces nation states to act within the limits of universal human rights within their own territory. Combined with the emergence of EU as the most important institutional body that oversees the human right violations in Turkey, this global shift and the increasing importance of human rights and freedom in the international political system affected the political life in Turkey. The grassroots of the AKP also experienced a transformation in the process as they also faced problems of human rights violations with regard to religious freedom. This created an opportunity of empathy with the Kurds. On the other hand, with the decline of the notion of self determination, the idea of separation lost importance in the Kurdish political movement. In this conjuncture, Kurdish political movement gave emphasis to the cultural and political rights emerged and following the capture of Öcalan, PKK renounced its claim on a separate Kurdish state. This not only points to a change experienced within the Kurdish political movement, but such a change created a more suitable environment to discuss the Kurdish problem.

As of today, Kurdish problem has four major topics as defined by the previous administrators of DTP; right to instruction in Kurdish, changing the definition of citizenship which is based on Turkish ethnicity, strengthening of local administrations (to the extent that will enable them be independent in their domestic affairs, and constitutional guarantees for these changes. My emphasis is not on whether AKP would be able to match these demands or not. Important point is that

AKP feels itself compelled to maintain a balance between the statist groups and civil politics. In the face of the responses of statist wings to the opening process, AKP shows timid, nervous and conflicting attitudes.

This is related with the fact that AKP from the beginning was not aiming to transform the establishment. The discourse of increasing the freedoms appeared more as a necessity rather than a value in itself. AKP's profile is more inclined to concentrate on material issues like economical growth and infrastructural development. After pointing to this nature of AKP, Ümit Cizre points to the transformation of AKP after its formation and argues that the party was compelled to pass from a security oriented politics towards a civil politics:

After coming to power, AKP would prefer not to get involved with troublesome issues and would prefer to concentrate on daily problems. In short, party felt itself compelled to make a transition from a security oriented political climate towards a civil climate, in the face of political pressures since 28 February process. It was not eager to replace the state structure that can't accommodate multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-ideological, free and brave society with a structure that doesn't deal with these issues and it wasn't that willing to achieve all those EU pulled reforms.

But, now AKP has to be sure of one thing: The crucial role that AKP plays in the Turkish political history comes from the fact that AKP had to change itself simultaneously in order to transform the system. This creates a completely new opportunity, that none of the previous parties ever had. Improvements in the normalization of civil military relations, and management of the Kurdish issue in a satisfying way constitutes the substance of actions to transform the political history of the party and the country irrevocably.... It creates the ability to have a completely different perception on politics, country and world and to transform them. This is the source of AKP's difference and uniqueness. Moreover, foreign pressures, domestic awakenings related with the Ergenekon trial and a relatively strong economy provides supports that multiplies the opportunities of the party (Cizre, *Açık Görüş*, 20.12.2009).

What could AKP achieve in the face of the problems mentioned in the beginning of this conclusion? To an extent it is understandable that AKP wants to continue the opening with the discourse of "unity and integrity". However

considering that present authority and power relations that could enable “unity and integrity” still implies the guardianship over politics, it seems unlikely that such a discourse will be convincing for the Kurds.

We already stated that AKP’s attempt to transform the system stems from a security concern in the face of a state block united against AKP. However, at this point solutions to macro problems like Kurdish problem can only be achieved with the self-confidence and consciousness of a governmental power rather than motivations aroused from needs.

As I tried to point out throughout the thesis, with all the developments with regard to the Kurdish problem, this is no more an issue of AKP alone. Instead, AKP appeared as the (only) suitable actor for these developments. Although this thesis had to end while the opening process was still continuing, it doesn’t prevent us from understanding the dynamics of AKP’s approach to Kurdish problem and this assures that although AKP took the initiative for the Kurdish opening, (without claiming that AKP has no significance in the process) at the current stage it is no more possible for anyone to ignore the Kurdish problem.

Before ending, it is useful to quote Ergun Özbudun’s following statement:

As of today, Turkey needs a new social contract. One of the ways to achieve this is re-writing the constitution. A social contract that declares that being together is based upon having common rules and respect for differences. AKP can be the agent of this process with the support it received in the elections and with its promises to accomplish the demands of the periphery (Özbudun, *Açık Görüş*, 18.05.09).

As a matter of fact, while AKP brought Democratic Opening to the parliamentary debate, prime minister himself declared the necessity of a new constitution, but he stated that conditions are not ripe for a new constitution.

Because AKP's previous attempts to establish a commission to prepare a draft of a civilian constitution attracted harsh responses and discouraged AKP. The suspicion of the shaking of the Kemalist regime is the reason of the resistance showed towards the new constitution. Despite the continuous shifts in the relation of center and periphery, the suspicions towards ethnic and religious identities remained constant throughout the modern Turkey.

Let's hope that the recent initiative taken to solve the Kurdish problem will also change this old and unfortunate tradition, and as Derrida said "democracy-to-come" finally comes. Though Derrida uses this expression to point that democracy is still not a verified system and it never will be. Yet this expression still points to a desire and has a positive side. So let's finish with it and say democracy-to-come or even democracy-to-come "sooner or later".

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