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**The Evolving “Art of Possible” : Turkey’s
Policies in the Twenty First Century**

**الفن الممكن الناشئ : السياسات التركية في القرن الحادي
والعشرين**

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful family who deserves my wholehearted thanks for their endless love and encouragement throughout my life. Particularly, my beloved husband, dear parents and sure the joy of my life little Nada whose love and support provided me the strength and perseverance I needed to achieve this work.

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Abstract:

The first decade of the 21th century witnessed dramatic changes all over the world amounting to a global political, economic and social transformation. In effect, new actors in world politics adapted to the new conditions and learnt lessons from previous experiences and the overthrow of decades of suppression. Turkey's rise is one of the most impressive cases in this century with developments at various levels, particularly economic and political, coinciding with critical global economic and political processes. Development was achieved under the rule of a newly formed political party with an Islamist background that was able to gain the Turkish voters' trust in three successive elections.

The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) is the main focus of this research, placing it in the context of history and of contemporary developments that facilitated this unique case. An analysis of the shift in the mentality and self-definition of the new party whose members are labeled Islamists is important as this was due to a long learning and adaptation process that led to a more mature understanding of the rules of the political game. The question of the collective identity of Turkey and the Turks conditioned the dramatic turn of events, notably in the field of foreign policy.

The thesis thus highlights the main milestones which Turkey went through under the AKP and tests prevailing stereotyped thinking concerning Islamists parties in the case of Turkey specifically.

ملخص عن الدراسة:

شهد العقد الأول من القرن الحادي والعشرين تغييرات جذرية طالت جميع أنحاء العالم على كافة النواحي بما فيها السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية. وعلى أثره، شهد العالم دخول فاعلين جدد إلى الساحة السياسية العالمية حيث تمكنوا من التأقلم مع الوضع العالمي الجديد و أخذ العبر من التجارب السابقة منهين بذلك عقود من الاضطهاد و الكبت. التجربة التركية هي من أبرز التجارب المثيرة للاهتمام في القرن الجديد حيث شهدت صعوداً مميزاً على كافة المستويات و تحديداً في المجال السياسي والاقتصادي بالرغم من الأزمات الاقتصادية والسياسية التي عصفت بالعالم كله. ولعل أهم ما يجعل البروز التركي في العقد الأخير محط للاهتمام هو تزامن هذا البروز مع صعود حزب سياسي جديد ذو جذور إسلامية تمكن من حصد أكبر نسبة من أصوات و ثقة الناخبين الأتراك على مدار ثلاث دورات انتخابية متتالية.

إن صعود حزب العدالة والتنمية هو المحور الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة آخذين بعين الاعتبار السياق التاريخي والتطورات المعاصرة التي لعبت دوراً في تشكل هذه الحالة الفريدة من نوعها حيث سيتم تحليل التحول في العقلية و الهوية الذاتية للحزب الجديد الذي لطالما وصف أعضائه " بالإسلاميين" والذي معاده إلى عملية طويلة من التعلم والتأقلم والذي بدوره أسهم في النضوج السياسي للحزب ليصبح أكثر درايةً بقواعد اللعبة السياسية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، لعبت مسألة الهوية الجمعية لتركيا و الأتراك دوراً رئيسياً في التحول الذي شهدته تركيا خاصة في مجال السياسة الخارجية.

إن الدراسة تسلط الضوء على الأحداث الفارقة في تركيا في ظل حكم حزب العدالة والتنمية مختبرين بذلك الأفكار النمطية السائدة حول الأحزاب الإسلامية متمثلة في الحالة التركية على وجه التحديد.

Introduction:

The great diversity of Turkey opens the appetite of researchers from different backgrounds to analyze and understand its rising strategic position in the 21th century, having in mind its long history and critical geographical and cultural position at the crossroads of two widely different continents. The historical shift from the Ottoman religious state to a civil, secular one under Kemal Ataturk obliged Turkey for decades to face the question of its collective identity, a matter that has shaped attitudes domestically and internationally. Any identity other than the secular one has been suppressed since the creation of modern Turkey, something seen as essential in order to protect Turkey's security from any threat either internal or external.

The domestic situation in Turkey went through many milestones since the beginning of the 21th century including the increasing role of new actors such as the Islamic elite and civil society, most crucially the economic crisis that affected the entire world. Turkish policies as well as voting, in particular, were decisively affected.

One of the main milestones in Turkish policies in the last decade was the success of a newly established political party with an Islamic background and its impressive capability to challenge the military institution that claims to be the protector of secularism in Turkey. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), which entered the Turkish political arena in 2002, impressed the world just as it was able to impress Turkish citizens with its achievements in term of putting Turkey on a pioneering position at different levels especially in the field of economy and foreign policy.

This study thus aims to analyze the rapid process of change that Turkey witnessed during the last decade as well as associated factors and implications. It

reconsiders and investigates prior concepts concerning the lack of openness of political Islam based on the Turkish model. It highlights relations between constitutional secularism and political Islam and how these contradictions were managed through the rule of the AKP as well as examining the strategic role in the region played by Turkey since the turn of the century.

The study will try to provide an answer to a main question: How were a fundamental openness and change in the Turkish domestic and foreign policy achieved, in spite of the rise of an Islamic political party? Our hypothesis that prevailing ideas are mistaken in categorizing Islamist parties as necessarily more rigid and less open on the economic and political levels than the secular parties that are supposed to be closer to the Western ideas of openness. Turkish reality, which will be the subject of the thesis, seems to show that the change in domestic and foreign policies coincided with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and could not in fact have been achieved in the era of secular parties. We will attempt to answer the question why this may have been so. It is thus a test of dominant academic assessments regarding the role of political Islam, limited to a particular case.

This analytical and comparative study is to be based principally on secondary sources interpreting the evolution of Turkish politics and policies, most notably articles, books, and other academic research, but not excluding official documents, reports, statements, speeches, and political programs.

The first chapter is based on the failure of social scientists to predict, and now to explain, the dramatic transformation that has taken place in a single decade in Turkey's domestic and international position. It will provide a *theoretical background* to the thesis which will focus mainly on constructivism as the approach best able to

explain the change process in Turkish domestic and foreign policy under the AKP. This section will provide background on the development of constructivism in the field of international relations and its main assumption as well as its variables in foreign policy analysis. As adaptation and learning are among the main concepts adopted by constructivists, this section will also highlight the changing factors within a party which include environmental factors (political opportunities, electoral incentives, and structure of competition) and internal factors within the party itself (the historical legacy and the dynamics of transition).

The second chapter *Political Islam in Turkey* will provide a historical background of modern Turkey after Ataturk's reforms and the entrance of political Islam into political life moving to the Welfare Party and the evolution of the AKP. The third chapter *The AKP's New Discourse* will highlight that party's published program and analyze the differences between its program and that of its predecessors, complemented by an analysis of the election results of 2002, 2007 and 2011. The fourth chapter *The AKP in Office* introduces economic developments under the governance of the AKP as well as the Turkish foreign policy pursued during the last decade. The research will be concluded with a section that summarizes the researcher's arguments and findings.

I. CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As constructivist theory will be the research base for this case study, it would be useful to get into the theory's details and concepts aiming to have a clearer image about a distinctive approach in international relations analysis. This chapter presents the social constructivist theory of international relations as well as its development, main assumptions, unit of analysis, constructivist scholars, and their view of foreign policy analysis. The chapter will also present the changing factors within a party in terms of environmental factors and internal ones.

I.1.The Development of Constructivism:

By the late 1980s the constructivist approach had entered international relations theory especially in North America. The historical context represented by the end of the Cold War, followed by the theoretical discussions between international relations scholars especially among neorealist's and liberals helped to set the stage for the constructivist approach. This approach was less widespread in Europe as the concept of an international society prevalent there had to a limited extent included the role of ideas and the importance of social interaction between states in their analysis. Therefore, there was less space for the constructivist approach there.¹

Constructivism was inspired by other theorists in social science such as Anthony Giddens who proposed the concept of structuration:

¹ - Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 161.

“According to Giddens, structures (the rules and conditions that guide social action) do not determine what actors do in any mechanical way which might be the view of neorealist’s regarding the structure of anarchy which constrains state actors. Structures do constrain actors, but actors can also transform structures by thinking about them and acting on them in new ways. The notion of structuration therefore leads to a less rigid and more dynamic view of the relationship between structure and actors. IR constructivists use this as a starting-point for suggesting a less rigid view of anarchy.”²

Nicholas Onuf is credited with coining the term "constructivism" in order to describe approaches to the study of world politics that emphasize the socially constructed character of international relations. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, constructivism has thus become one of the major schools of thought within international relations.³

I.2 Constructivist Theory:

This section will introduce constructivism as a mix of both social theories and international relations theories:

I.2.1.The Social Theory:

In social theory, human relations including international relations are made of ideas and thoughts and not simply material conditions or forces. According to constructivism the social world is not fixed or given: it is not something ‘out there’ that exists independently of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it. It is not an external reality whose regulations can be discovered through scientific research and explained by

² -Ibid.

³ -Ibid, 166.

scientific theory as positivists and behavioralists argue. The social world is a world of human consciousness: of thoughts and beliefs, of ideas and concepts, of languages and discourses, of signs, signals and understandings among human beings, especially groups of human beings such as states and nations. The social world is an intersubjective domain: it is valuable to people who made it and live in it, and who understand it very well because they made it and they are at home in it.⁴

The main emphasis of social constructivism is on intersubjective beliefs (and ideas, conceptions and assumptions) that are widely shared among people. Ideas must be widely shared in order to matter; nonetheless they can be held by different groups, such as organizations, policymakers, social groups or society. The social constructivist view of ideas can be shown by the following quotations:

“The claim is not that ideas are more important than power and interest, or that they are autonomous from power and interest. The claim is rather that power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up. Power and interest explanations presuppose ideas, and to that extent are not rivals to ideational explanations at all.”⁵

“The starting premise is that the ideational view held by social constructivists’ ideas always matter; the material world is indeterminate and is interpreted within a larger context of meaning. Ideas thus define the meaning of material power.”⁶

⁴ - Ibid, 162.

⁵ - Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 135-136.

⁶ - Nina Tannenwald, “Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo,” *International Security* 29. 4 (Spring 2005):19.

“Ideas are mental constructs held by individuals, sets of distinctive beliefs, principles and attitudes that provide broad orientations for behavior and policy.”⁷

I.2.2 Constructivism and International Relations

Political realism has dominated international relations theory for a long time especially in the post-World War II era due mostly to the emergence of the Cold War. However, realism has been criticized frequently during the last few decades, and liberals have been the major participants in the critiques against realism. As Alexander Wendt puts it:

“...the debate is more concerned today with the extent to which state action is influenced by 'structure' (anarchy and the distribution of power) versus 'process' (interaction and learning) and institutions.”⁸

⁷ -Ibid, 15.

⁸ -Quoted in Yokel Bozdaglioglu. *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3

⁹ – Ibid

¹⁰ - Nilüfer Karacasulu and Elif Uzgören," Explaining Social Constructivist Contributions to Security Studies." *Perceptions* XII (summer – autumn 2007): 29. <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/KaracasuluUzgoren.pdf> Accessed 2- 10- 2010.

¹¹ - - Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, 160.

In addition, constructivists had something new to say as they joined the debate believing that the cause of state egoism does not always justify treating it as given. They argue that the fundamental structures of international politics are social rather than material; and these structures form actors' identities and interests. They suggest that collective identity could emerge normally at the systemic level, a process that would generate cooperation.⁹

Constructivism is not itself a theory of IR, but a theoretically informed approach to the study of international relations, which depends on the perception that international relations are 'socially constructed'.¹⁰ Social constructivism emphasizes human ideas, beliefs and consciousness. They argue that the most important aspect in international relations is social rather than material as the international system is constituted by ideas, not by material forces. In particular, the international system is a set of ideas, a body of thought, a system of norms, which has been arranged by certain people at a particular time and place. However, the international relations system itself will change if the thoughts and ideas that enter into international relations change because the system consists of thoughts and ideas.¹¹

Constructivism seeks to demonstrate how many basic aspects of international relations are, contrary to the assumptions of neorealism and neoliberalism, socially constructed, that is, they are given their form by ongoing processes of social practice and

interaction. Thus, Alexander Wendt says of two increasingly accepted basic beliefs of constructivism:

(1) That the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.¹²

For neorealists, identities and interests are given; states know who they are and what they need before they start interaction with other states. For constructivists, it is the interaction with others that form one structure of identities and interests instead of another. States need to survive and be secure; neorealists and constructivists agree about that. Constructivists argue that we can only find out the security policy that follows through studying identities and interests as they are shaped in interactions between states.¹³

Simply put, constructivists believe that while thoughts and ideas that enter into the existence of international relations change, then the system itself can be changed as well, because the system consists of thoughts and ideas. Thus, change becomes possible in a big way because people and states can start thinking about each other in new ways and thus form new norms that may be very different from old ones.¹⁴

¹² - Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

¹³ - Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, 167.

¹⁴ -Ibid, 160.

I.2.3.The main assumptions of constructivism:¹⁵

First of all, according to constructivists, the international system is a system of ideas and norms which has been arranged by certain people at a particular time and place. Human agents construct social reality and reproduce it in their daily practices. Thus, constructivism sees the international system as ‘socially constructed’ and not given.

Secondly, constructivists argue that agents do not exist independently of their social environment. Thus, state interests emerge from an environment in which states operate and are endogenous to states’ interaction with their environment. The social world involves thoughts, beliefs, ideas, concepts, languages, discourses, signs and signals. People make the social world, which is meaningful in the minds of people. In other words, constructivists believe that the social environment defines who we are, our identities as social beings. In addition, normative or ideational structures do not exist independently from the social environment. Constructivists focus both on differences among people and how those relations are formed by means of collective social institutions.

Thirdly, constructivists emphasize the importance of normative or ideational structures as well as material structures in defining the meaning and identity of an individual. According to constructivists, human beings interpret the material environment. For example, the international system of security and defense consists of

¹⁵ - Nilüfer Karacasulu-Elif Uzgören, *Explaining Social*, 32-33.

territories, populations, weapons and other physical assets. But the important thing is how these material resources are conceived, organized and used in international security. In addition, constructivists stress inter-subjective beliefs such as ideas, and assumptions.

Finally, according to constructivism, norms and shared beliefs constitute an actor's identities and interests, e.g. the way people conceive themselves in their relation with others. Constructivists concentrate on the social identities and interests of actors. Social identities and interests are not fixed but relative and relational. Interests are based on the social identities of actors. Constructivist analysis redefines the concepts of roles, rules, identity and ideas, considerably departing from rational choice conceptualizations.

I.2.4. Challenging Neorealism:

Because neorealism was dominant during constructivism's formative period, much of constructivism's first theoretical work concentrates on challenging certain basic neorealist assumptions. Neorealists are fundamentally structuralists, and international politics is explained by the structure of the international system, a position first advanced in Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War* and fully clarified in his core text of neorealism, *Theory of International Politics*. In particular, international politics is primarily determined by the fact that the international system is anarchic - it lacks any comprehensive authority, instead it is composed of units (states) which are formally equal - they are all sovereign over their own territory. This anarchy, neorealists argues, forces States to act in certain ways, they have to "Self-help" which means they can rely on no-one but themselves for security. The way in which anarchy forces them to act in such ways, to defend their own self-interest in terms of power, explains most of international

politics in the neorealist view. Consequently, neorealists tend to disregard explanations of international politics at the 'unit' or 'state' level.¹⁶

Constructivists argue against the neorealist claim that self-help is given by anarchic structure exogenously to process. Wendt argues that self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and that if now we find ourselves in a self-help world this is due to process, not structure.¹⁷

Wendt argues: “it does not predict whether two states will be friends or foes, will recognize each other's sovereignty, will have dynastic ties, and will be revisionist or status quo powers, and so on.”¹⁸

I.2.5 Unit of Analysis:

The unit of analysis is individuals, especially elites, as constructivism focuses on the quality of interpretive activities. The individual, multi-rational human mind is individualistic and social, relational and collectivist. The processes of greatest interest to

¹⁶ - Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Publishing, 2005), 40 -43.

¹⁷ - Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46.2(1992):394.

¹⁸ - *Ibid*, 396.

constructivists are measured through a thorough understanding of how people operate at the individual level.¹⁹

I.2.6 Constructivism and Foreign Policy Analysis:

Constructivists thus see the surrounding world as socially constructed. “Constructed” in this context means that the world came into being through a process of interaction between agents (individuals, states, non-state actors) and the structures of their broader environment. For instance, in analyzing a certain foreign policy the constructivists don’t assume that a specific actor has certain interest but in rather they explore how these interests are constructed through a process of interaction with broader environments.²⁰

Some of the constructivists’ variables in foreign policy analysis are indicated here:

- **Identity:**

Constructivists believe that identity plays a main role in determining both domestic and international politics. According to Hopfs, identities have three main functions: “they

¹⁹-Emily Shaw, “Constructivist Microfoundations: Theories and Practices of the Individual in International Politics”(Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, Hawaii, 3-05-2005)

²⁰ - Jeffrey T. Checkel. “Constructivism and foreign policy,” in *Foreign Policy: Theories. Actors. Cases*, Ed. By Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Time Dunne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72.

tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are”.²¹ However, there is a link between identities and interests as constructivism assumes that interests imply choices. Moreover, the interests of states which are linked to their identities differ according to the historical, cultural, political and social context. In other words, the constructivists view interests as the result of ideas and the social construction of such ideas.²²

Identity offers an adequate explanation for how power is translated into threat as a constructivist view of identity in relation with the construction of threats: identity thus represents a potential source of alliance formation.²³

- **The security of identity:**

There is no stability in a state’s identity as identities are always open to contestation and some identities of some states might be less secure at a certain time than others, something more prevalent in pluralistic societies where the elites try to redefine their collective identity. Here, Constructivists link between identities and preferences as the implementation of a specific foreign policy may require consent and consensus among diverse groups that are involved in the decision making process who have various role identities.²⁴

²¹ - T. Hopfs, “The promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23.1 (1998):175.

²² -Enver Gulseven. “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period: Relations with the EU, Greece and the Middle East.” (PHD dissertation, Brunel University, 2010), 35-36.
<http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/5083/1/FulltextThesis.pdf>

²³ - Ibid ,40

²⁴ - Ibid, 44-45.

I.3 The Change:

Constructivism emphasizes the process of learning and interaction in politics, something called political learning. This process is defined as a “change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one's beliefs) or development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of observation and interpretation of experience.”²⁵ Others broadened the definition by arguing that an evaluation of structure and cognitive change is essential to the concept of political learning. As Jack Levy put it:

"Learning is not a passive activity in which historical events generate their own lessons that actors then absorb.... Learning is an analytical construction. People interpret historical experience through the lens of their own analytical assumptions and worldviews."²⁶

In general, there are set of factors that play a role in political parties seeking for change and in a way or other affect the balance within a political party. These factors can be divided into environmental and transitional ones.

I.3.1 Environmental Factors:

²⁵ - Gamze, Cavdar, “Islamist New Thinking in Turkey: A model for political learning?” *Political Science Quarterly* 121/ 3) Fall 2006): 480.

²⁶ - Ibid.

Environmental factors are those associated with the context in which the party finds itself after the onset of competitive elections. This set of factors may include electoral incentives, political opportunities, and competition structure.²⁷

Electoral incentives : the constitutional features of a political system and the electoral rules has an influence on political parties and party systems as winning the elections becomes the main common goal of all competing parties . The attitude of political parties varies within proportional representation systems versus plurality/majority formulas or within presidential systems versus parliamentary systems. Scholars note that proportional representation systems provide the opportunity to the political party to win seats in the legislature without compromising to win as this system reinforces the “inflexibility” element of the party and more insistence on its own ideology. However, plurality/majority systems do not necessarily require that a party broaden its appeal to increase its probability of electoral success.²⁸

Political opportunities: This includes the issues which the party can exploit such as economic crisis and the need for economic reform, minority issues or human rights of the oppressed groups. Within the same political party there may be an internal clash between those who seek to abandon the past in light of worsening economic conditions and those

²⁷ -John T. Ishiyama, " Communist Parties in Transition: Structures, Leaders, and Processes of Democratization in Eastern Europe," *Comparative Politics* 27.2 (1995):150.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/422162?origin=JSTOR-pdf>. Accessed on 27/3/2012

²⁸ - Ibid, 151.

who view the past favorably and are far less willing than “democratic reformers” to compromise the party's ideological purity and to break completely with the past.²⁹

The structure of competition: the existence of different parties may exert a "squeezing out" effect on political parties having a common ideological space. This "squeezing out" effect is seen mostly in plurality electoral rule (though under other electoral rules it also seems to apply) when a "crowding" of competitors leads to parties that aim to differentiate themselves sharply in terms of policy platforms.³⁰

I.3.2 Internal factors:

In addition to the environmental factors, the evolution of a political party is largely a product of a historical legacy coupled with the dynamics of particular kinds of transition. Thus, any kind of democratic transition affects the composition of the main actors especially the political parties' leaders, which affects the parties' response to any environmental factors they face. However, the environment doesn't cause the party to adapt; whether the party is able to adapt or not depends mainly on the readiness of the leadership to adapt.³¹

However, the development of the leadership is a result of two integrated historical factors: the long-term historical experiences of each party, particularly the extent to which the party was compelled to reform and developed a tradition of intraparty

²⁹ - Ibid, 152.

³⁰ -Ibid, 154.

³¹ -Ibid, 158.

pluralism, and the particular features of each transition, especially the degree to which the transitional intraparty struggle was resolved in favor of the democratic reformists.

The historical legacy: The particular history of each political party affects whether a tradition of internal pluralism existed or not, which in turn affects the power of the democratic reformist evolution within the party during the transition period.³²

The Dynamics of Transition: Beyond the general historical context, the extent to which the intraparty conflict was resolved (or not resolved) in favor of the democratic reformists through the transition period, around the time of the first elections, has a major impact on the ability of the party to adapt successfully later.³³

In general, many models in modern history are available in which political parties changed their attitudes according to the new situations their countries or the international system face. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist front, a series of parties in east-central Europe moved from enjoying a monopoly of power in single-party states to standing on the threshold of recognition as social-democratic parties in a context of competitive party politics. Some communist parties failed in adapting to the new global environment, whereas others managed to adapt and their parties witnessed changes in their programs and in their membership. The former ruling communist parties of both East Germany and Hungary can be taken as models of the adaptation process after 1989

³² -ibid.

³³ -ibid, 159.

as they witnessed the implosion of their once stable environments to find themselves as players in a new, uncertain and hostile political reality.³⁴

The Turkish Islamic parties present another case in which political learning and change took place through decades of experience and clashes with the existing political system, an excellent illustration of the workings of the constructivist paradigm and the subject of this research.

II. CHAPTER TWO: POLITICAL ISLAM IN TURKEY

³⁴ - Daniel F. Ziblatt, " The Adaptation of Ex-Communist Parties to Post-Communist East Central Europe: A Comparative Study of the East German and Hungarian Ex-Communist Parties", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31.2(1998):122.

II.1 Historical Background:

Although the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk were going on towards the modernization of the new republic founded in 1923, mainly through the adaptation of a secular and western lifestyle, the influence of these reforms was more tangible in the cities and towns than the countryside. As the Turkish population consists of a majority rural population, the rural and remote areas were less affected by the reforms and remained attached to the traditional lifestyle. Through the era of single party rule (1923-1950) political life in Turkey was dominated by the People Republic Party (CHP) which represents the Kemalist ideology and there was no room for other ideologies especially political Islam to emerge during this period.

Until the 1950s, the majority of the Turkish population remained isolated and traditional, while the urban centers were modern and secular, leading to the existence of two Turkeys which coexisted in uneasy harmony: an urban, modern, secular “center” and a rural, traditional, religious “periphery,” with little contact between them. The dominant elite were urban, modern, and secular, while the greater part of the population was rural, traditional, and pious.³⁵

After the end of World WAR II, a new era of multi-party politics started in Turkey and specifically after the parliamentary elections of 1950 which led to the rise of the Democratic Party, led by Adnan Menderes, which governed for a decade. The DP

³⁵ - Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee. *The rise of Political Islam in Turkey*. (Santa Monica: Rand, 2008), 33. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG726.pdf(Accessed on 22/5/2010)

adopted a more flexible policy towards Islamic practices but finally faced a military intervention in 1960.

II.2 The entrance of political Islam into political life:

The Islamist movements had remained underground through the period of one-party rule (1923-46) during which they tried to revolt against the secular state in the 1920s and 1930s. However, after the 1940s and the death of Ataturk the religious opposition embraced a nationalist discourse unlike the previous era during which the religious opposition considered nationalism as contradictory to the Islamic universal brotherhood (Umma). Moreover, the Sufi organizations and modern reformist groups supported this embracing of Islamic nationalist discourse at the social level which played a role in the creation of the social base for modern Islamist formations including the AKP.³⁶ Not only was the opening of the political system permitting suppressed identities to re – emerge but a shift in collective identity was underway. This is very much in keeping with predictions within the constructivist paradigm. In this context, constructivism also stresses the interaction of individuals, elites and conditions in a given social formation, as fueling change in the international arena.

One of the most significant figures in this context is Said Nursi (1876-1960) who has a similar influence to that of Muhammad Abduh in Egypt in term of emphasizing the harmony of religion and modernity. Later, the followers of Said Nursi formed the “Nurcu movement” that fragmented after his death into several groups. Afterwards, a figure called Fethullah Gülen controlled the most powerful of these groups, which saw that

³⁶ - Anwar Alam. “Islam and Post – Modernism: Locating the rise of Islamism in Turkey,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20:3 (2009):360-362.

Islam and the secularity of the state can go in parallel and stressed the connection between Islam, reason, science, and modernity. Gülen also stated that “Islam does not propose a certain unchangeable form of government or attempt to shape it. Instead, Islam establishes fundamental principles that orient a government’s general character, leaving it to the people to choose the type and form of government according to time and circumstances.” These movements weren’t engaged in direct political action but their social actions had political implications that influenced the formation of some Islamist parties including the AKP later on, and the role of the pious political elites in this shift is apparent.³⁷

It was not until 1970 that political Islam entered the Turkish political arena openly with the establishment of the NVM (National View Movement) - a movement not a party- , known as Milli Gorus, led by Necmetin Erbakan. The movement, from which many Turkish Islamic leaders descend, focused on criticizing the West and westernization in the formation of the movement’s identity, public discourse and policies. It believed that the westernization of Turkish society and state, which had traditionally been influenced by Islam, was more serious and dangerous than the West itself.

The West was seen as the “other” in contrast to the “national self” in addition to being conceived as “the mother of all evils.”³⁸

³⁷ -Ibid.

³⁸ - Dagi Ihsan, Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization. *Turkish Studies*. 6.1(2005): 4-5
<http://www.policy.hu/dagi/leftmenu/files/Transformation%20of%20Islamic%20Political%20Identity.pdf>
 accessed on 20/10/2010)

The NVM blamed the westernizers and their perception of the West as a strategically for what they considered the abandonment of “Islamic depth.” This was based on their belief that Turkey belongs culturally, historically and geographically to the Islamic world. Meanwhile, the NVM leadership adopted a discourse which distinguished between western culture, and modernization in the field of technology and development. “The emphasis on “modernization and development,” a “liberating” pre- condition from western hegemony remained an important feature of the NVM.”³⁹

In other words, the NVM’s discourse had two principal dimensions. The first was 'spiritual development' through which the movement aimed at expanding the influence of Islamic values and historical roots in the society through state – controlled Islamic institutions and long term social policies. This was also represented in the movement's declared hostility towards Israel and the preference for building strategic and economic alliances with Islamic states. The second dimension was technological development, considered the main pillar of the movement as it designed a developmental plan, relying mainly on state and/or subsidized private enterprises, which aimed at creating a macro-economic autarchy.⁴⁰ Here too, we are reminded of the strong political economy dimension intrinsic to constructionism, because of individuals and collective changes that it conditions.

The leadership of the NVM considered the Kemalist transformation of the Islamic – Ottoman state and culture into a Western model as a historic mistake. Instead, they

³⁹ - Ibid, 5.

⁴⁰ - Efecan Inceoglu."A Turning Point in AKP's Political Discourse: A Return to its Origins?" *EURASIA CRITIC* (2008). <http://www.eurasiacritic.com/articles/turning-point-akp%E2%80%99s-political-discourse-return-its-origins>(accessed 29/10/2011)

aimed to establish a 'national Islamic order'.⁴¹ Thus, the first Islamic party was established under the name of the National Order Party (MNP) in 1970, an extension of the NVM ideology. The party's program and public discourse stressed democratic views and supported freedom of conscience. However, it rejected those forms of secularism which could be interpreted as hostile to Islam.⁴²

This was the first in a series of Islamic – oriented parties led by Necmettin Erbakan. The MNP blamed the westernization process for the fragmentation of the society, a matter to be treated through a policy of industrialization based on native heavy industry created by “Anatolian capital”. This policy was believed capable of creating a strong nation that would lead the Muslim World and face Western hegemony. The party did not last for long as it faced military intervention in 1971 for having allegedly infringed upon the secular nature of the state.⁴³

After the military coup, the MNP was replaced with a new Islamic party known as the National Salvation Party (NSP) by a group of former members of the MNP. It introduced itself as the party of the urban poor and the provincial middle class, becoming a permanent part of the parliament during the 1970s, although far from dominant. Thus it succeeded in bringing Islam into the center of Turkish political life for eleven years. In 1973, the party competed in the parliamentary elections, in which they won 11.8 % of the

⁴¹ - Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee. *The rise of Political*, 40.

⁴² - Jacob M. Landau. "Turkey between Secularism and Islamism," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (1997): 352. <http://www.jcpa.org/il/vp352.htm>(accessed 11/2/2011)

⁴³ - Rabasa and Larrabee, *the Rise of*, 41.

votes and 48 seats out of 450 in the National Assembly, thus becoming the third parliamentary group after the Republican People's Party and the Justice Party (successor of the Democratic Party).⁴⁴

The NSP got its electoral support mainly from two groups: religious people and the needy population in Central and Eastern Anatolia. This was due to its ideology and propaganda that focused on moral progress relating to material and socio-economic progress. (See above for constructivism's positing of an interaction between conditions and volition)

The leadership of the NSP consisted mainly of lawyers and technological experts such as Necmettin Erbakan, who played a central role in this party as well as later succeeding Islamic – oriented ones. Erbakan was born in 1926, studied at Istanbul's Technical University and became a professor in motor technology. He was appointed later deputy prime minister in a coalition government formed with the CHP (The Republican People's Party) after the 1973 elections, under Bulent Ecevit. After the coalition collapsed, the NSP joined the National Front governments headed by Suleiman Demirel in 1975 and 1977.⁴⁵

During this period of the 1960s and 1970s, Turkey witnessed significant demographic changes characterized by the migration of villagers to the urban centers where the state wasn't able to provide needed services such as housing, drinking water,

⁴⁴ - Landau, *Turkey between secularism*,40

⁴⁵ - Ibid.

medical facilities, and electricity. Low income migrants built squatter housing or *gecekondu* ('built overnight') illegally on state land without construction permits.⁴⁶

It was in this context that the Islamic movements as well as other political parties started to seek support for and from these poor urban areas. The Islamic political movements were succeeding in these squatter towns as they provided them with cheap or free social, educational and medical services. "Within the shanty towns, Islamic rites and teachings are reinterpreted in these new conditions to provide the cognitive means to understand the social and political world of an unfamiliar and unsettling urban life."⁴⁷

In the following years, several important domestic shifts took place such as population growth, urbanization, economic change, and political reforms connected to the convergence with the EU. The underdeveloped regions in Anatolia were facing a severe development disparity between industrialized and rural regions leading to migration and population growth in urban regions in which the labor market wasn't able to handle the flow of migrants. This meant high levels of hidden unemployment, given the incapacity of the authorities to provide basic public services. These social and economic developments help explain the lack of confidence of many citizens towards the state and its institutions.⁴⁸ This back and forth between adaptation, change and retreat, is

⁴⁶ - Anwar Alam, "Islam and Post – Modernism", 364.

⁴⁷ - Ibid, 365.

⁴⁸ - Asiye Öztürk, " The domestic context of Turkey's changing foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Caspian Region ". Bonn (Discussion Paper / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik ; 10/2009)

characteristic of constructivism's view of the process of identity, ideational, and socio-economic transformation, and its impact on the international system.

Although a series of economic reforms were implemented after 1982, these were unable at the beginning to limit inflation and the rising public debt. However, economic liberalization caused the growth of the private sector in contrast to the unproductive public sector as well as facilitating the rise of a new business class. The religious movements put more effort in filling the gap caused by the inefficiency of public authorities, creating their own educational, social, and economic institutions and consequently challenging the traditional elite. In addition, foreign policy also went from focusing on security as a priority to placing the emphasis on economic dimensions.

Regarding foreign policy, according to Erbakan, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank were not serving the interests of Turkey but rather those of other countries, while damaging Turkey's sovereignty. Concerning the notion of international justice, the movement believed that it should defend the rights of oppressed nations in line with provisions of national and international protocols on human rights and freedoms.⁴⁹

The view of the NVM regarding Turkey's membership in the EU was negative. It believed that the EU was a Christian club and a contemporary version of Western imperialism. In effect, EU membership would weaken the domestic economy and make Turkey politically and economically dependent on the West. Any customs union would kill Turkey's infant industry before it was able to compete with its European rivals. In

⁴⁹ - Hakan Koni. "Foreign Policy Vision of the Turkish Religious Right: From National View to Justice and Development Party". *International Journal of West Asian Studies*. 3.1(2011): 73.

addition, Turkey's membership in the EU would necessarily subject it to the decisions of the Christian European countries, Turkey being in the minority. The movement believed that the EU aimed at integrating all involved countries into European civilization, thus contradicting Turkey's historical, cultural and social structures.⁵⁰

Consequently, it was argued, Turkey should be involved in a custom union with Muslim States with which it shared a common historical and cultural legacy. As many Muslim nations in the Middle East were rich oil producing countries lacking in industrial development and in the production of manufacturing goods, earnings gained through the sale of oil would be spent on Turkish exports and thus contribute to Turkey's economic sustainability, with its export – oriented domestic industry.⁵¹

However, the movement's view on joining the EU and active membership in NATO changed somewhat with the establishment of the Welfare Party. As Turkey was looking for wider security against the Soviet threat and communism, it was also possible to become a member of the EU as long as it would remain as an economic entity ensuring equal rights and benefits to member states. Moreover, the Welfare Party (WP) constantly adopted an anti – Israeli foreign policy as Israel was considered the tool of the West in the Islamic world including Turkey.⁵²

In September 1980, the military intervened again, closing down all the political parties and ruling the country for three years. It prosecuted and imprisoned many of those

⁵⁰ -Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid,75

⁵² -Ibid.

who had been involved in any socialist or Democratic Party or organization (left – wing politicians, intellectuals, students and artists). This gap helped the Islamists and ethnic Kurdish nationalists to fill the space vacated by the left (again, one notes the back and forth of social construction).⁵³

At the same time “the generals who came to power on September 12, 1980 instead of showing secular disregard for Islam , took several steps to strengthen it by opening new Qur’anic Schools (*Kuran Kurslari*), making religious courses compulsory , and employing new preachers (*imams*).”⁵⁴

Through these activities the leaders aimed at gaining legitimacy by controlling religion and adopting Islamic institutions and symbols which they thought would limit the role of political Islam in Turkish social and political life. Moreover, they believed that the Islamic threat would be more tolerable than the communist one.

The leaders of the coup made use of an ideology known as the “Turkish – Islamic Synthesis”, formed by a group of conservative scholars in order to enhance state power. This ideology was represented in the Association of Intellectuals’ Heart (Aydinlar Ocaci), which developed an ideology combining Ottoman, Islamic and Turkish popular culture to legitimize the control of the new ruling elite (in this, they hearkened back to the type of hybrid nationalism which characterized the late Ottoman period throughout Anatolia and, substituting Arab for Turkish, the Arab East). They tried to promote a new interpretation of the nation and state as a family and community while identifying

⁵³ - Ibid, 366.

⁵⁴ -M. Hakan Yavus. “Political Islam and Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey,” *Comparative Politics* 30.1 (1997):67.

dangers to the family, state and nation posed by ideological fragmentation. Educational systems as well as media were used for the promotion of this ideology.⁵⁵

In 1982, a new constitution was promulgated and more restrictions were imposed on everyday life with controls on labor unions and voluntary associations as well as state control over media. In 1983, parliamentary elections took place and the government was returned to the civilians but without the participation of the old parties. It was in this year that that a new Islamic – oriented party was formed though not formally identifying itself as such.⁵⁶

II.3 The Welfare Party

In 1983, then, a new party was formed by the leadership of NVM, calling itself the Welfare Party (WP). It was able to take part in local elections in 1984, obtaining 4.8% of the votes. This percentage rose to 7% in the 1987 general elections and in the following years it continued to grow. In the local elections of 1989 the party received 9.8% of the votes. In early 1990s, the party's fear of being closed down by the military as well as international changes led to the adaptation of a new approach in which the party's leadership focused on social problems with less stress on religious themes. Poor people who had suffered from the liberalization policies implemented during the 1980s were the main target for the WP. It gained 19% of the votes in the local elections of 1994 and the mayorships of 28 provinces including the largest cities Ankara and Istanbul. It was in the

⁵⁵ - Ibid, 67-68.

⁵⁶ -Ibid.

1995 general elections that the Welfare Party surprised Turkish society by receiving 21% of the votes and an Islamic – oriented party then came to power.⁵⁷ A decisive shift in identity had finally occurred.

As for the reasons of the WP success, they included both domestic and international developments. At the domestic level, the party managed to benefit from its grassroots organization that used modern methods in addition to the traditional ones. Moreover, it was able to attract the conservative Muslims who benefited from the economic liberalization process witnessed during 1980s, but were excluded from political life and repelled by the fragmentation and corruption of the mainstream parties as well as the Kurdish conflict in the southwest.⁵⁸

At the international level, the rejection of Turkey's full membership application in 1989 by the European Commission left the Turks with a feeling of exclusion from the West. In addition, they were increasingly disappointed by the post – Cold War substitution of “Islam” for the now vanished communist “enemy.” And there was a widespread feeling that the West was practicing a double standard when it moved against the killing of Muslims in Bosnia and Azerbaijan in the early 1990s while following diplomacy of protecting the Kurds in Turkey.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ - Ihsan Dagi, Transformation of Islamic Political, 5-6

⁵⁸ - Murat Somer, Muslim Democrats in the Making? Explaining Turkey's AKP (Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, March 17-20, 2004 , 9) http://home.ku.edu.tr/~musomer/research_files/ISA%20paper5.pdf.

⁵⁹ -Ihsan Dagi, Transformation of Islamic Political, 6.

It can thus be seen that the WP's success was a result of various pragmatic factors, among these: better services provided by the WP mayors and reduced corruption in the municipalities, as well as real and perceived international developments. Together, these elements provoked a further shift in the identity and the discourse of politics.

However, after coming to power the WP party faced difficulties in balancing its promoted program with the interests of the secular establishments. The party was accused of pushing Turkish society towards more secular – Islamic polarity. For the secular establishment, the party's provocative activities such as threatening to build a mosque in Taksim Square, a major public transportation suburb in Istanbul, and the promotion of an Islamic economic grouping as an alternative to the EU which reflected an Islamic oriented foreign policy, led to intervention, though not directly as in 1960, 1971 and 1980. On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council handed Erbakan a list of recommendations to put an end to anti – secular activities. As Erbakan refused to implement the recommendations, he was forced to resign on June 1997. In January 1998, the WP was closed down and Erbakan as well as his key assistants were banned from politics for five years.⁶⁰

“Unlike the previous cases before the Court, the judgment in *Refah* was based not on the party's statutes or program, but on various statements and symbolic public acts by party members of various standing (mayors, MPs, the chairman) over a six-year period. The Court found that these controversial statements and acts, taken as a whole, pointed to

⁶⁰ - Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee. *The rise of Political*, 43-44.

a theocratic vision incompatible with democracy, which Refah would be able to realize through its political influence, as fundamentalists had done elsewhere.”⁶¹

The shifting social construction was taking place, in other words, with some difficulty and a certain disorder, which was to be expected.

II.4 The evolution of the AKP:

After the closure of the WP by the Constitutional Court, the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi)-VP was established and banned after a short time. Thereafter, a split in the NVM occurred, leading to the formation of two parties. The first one was the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi – SP) representing traditional Islamist ideas in Turkish politics. The second was the Justice and Development Party (AKP), founded by a group of reformists within the NVM led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul.

The split within the NVM surfaced when Abdullah Gul nominated himself for the leadership of the Virtue Party in May 2000 against the wishes of Necmettin Erbakan. Gul was supported by Erdogan and Arinc and he succeeded in receiving nearly half of the votes of delegates, representing a turning away from the traditional leadership and ideology. In 2001, The AKP was established where Erdogan worked to attracting moderate and non-Islamic personalities in order to build a wider social and political

⁶¹ - Christian Moe, “Refah Partisi (The Welfare Party) and Others v. Turkey,” *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 6.1 (2003) http://www.icnl.org/research/journal/vol6iss1/special_5.htm#_ftn4

base.⁶² The success of this historical development reflects the kind of transformations at the social, economic and cultural levels which correspond to the predictions of the constructivist paradigm, by way of gradual but decisive transformations with important effects in the international sphere.

Erdogan and his friends describe themselves as conservative democrats, although they came from an Islamist political background. In an interview with the *Financial Times* published on 3 December 2004, Erdogan said the following concerning the Party's identity:

“We are conservative democrats... our notion of conservative democracy is to attach ourselves to the customs, traditions, and values of our society, which is based on the family... This is a democratic issue, not a religious issue.”⁶³

This represented a great transformation in the relationship between religion and politics. Erdogan expressed this relationship in an interview published by the *New York Times* on 11 May 2003 as follows:

“A political party cannot have a religion, only an individual can... religion is so supreme that it cannot be politically exploited or taken advantage of.”⁶⁴

⁶² - H. Yavus (ed.), *The Emergence of a new Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party*, (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2006), 88-106.

⁶³ - Quoted in Bilal Sambur, “The Great Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey: The Case of Justice and Development Party and Erdogan” *ejepts* 2(2009):121.

⁶⁴ - *Ibid*, 122.

The AKP, whose members label themselves as conservative democrats, focuses on human rights, civil liberties, democracy, respecting secularism, free economy, and abandoned the "anti- Western" discourse adopted by the WP. This followed a learning phase initiated among the political Islamists after the “post-modern coup” in 1997 and led to the appearance of the Islamist reformists who disassociated themselves from the WP's ideology and leaders. However, the party's figures frequently proclaim that the new party is a center – right party.

The AKP consists of individuals who joined the National Outlook Movement in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s led by Necmettin Erbakan, such as Prime Minister Erdogan, President of the National Assembly Bülent Arınç and the Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul. The second largest faction within the party includes those who joined the AKP from the ranks of conventional centre-right parties – mainly the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party. The other smaller three factions that occupy little space within the party involve Islamists from different sects who had joined the Welfare Party in the 1980s and 1990s, and joined the AKP after a gradual liberalization of their views. These include Mr. Erdoğan's close associates from the Istanbul municipality, some of whom were technocrats not affiliated with the NOM, and some former bureaucrats, such as former Foreign Minister Yaşar Yakış, who had previously served under centre-right governments.⁶⁵

The reformists realized that the West, especially the EU was a natural ally in decreasing the power of the military and in their quest for a system of democratic governance within

⁶⁵ - Aydın, Senem and Ruşen Çakır. 2007. "Political Islam in Turkey". *Center for European Policy Studies*. <http://www.ceps.eu>(Accessed on February, 17 2011)

which Islamic social and political forces would be regarded as legitimate players. The stage was thus set for a new domestic and international adjustment of political aims and methods.

III. CHAPTER THREE: THE AKP IN OFFICE

III.1 The AKP published Program:⁶⁶

The program of the AKP as published on the AKP official website covers several objectives and policies of the party. One of the main principles of the AKP is the proverb, *"Unless everyone is free, no one is free"*. The assurance of democratization by placing the individual at the center of all its policies, and providing and protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms are among the main tasks. The unity and the integrity of the Republic of Turkey, the secular, democratic, social state of law, and the processes of civilianization, democratization, freedom of belief and equality of opportunity are considered essential for the AKP.

The Party presents a political program that aims mainly to spread an understanding based on universal rights and freedoms to all areas, to eliminate the gap in the distribution of income, thus raise the welfare level of the people, involve citizens and non-governmental organizations in the public administration and create synergy within

⁶⁶ - <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/partyprogramme.htm>

society, and provide contemporary, rational, and realistic and easy to implement solutions in areas such as the economy, foreign policy, culture, arts, education, health, agriculture and animal husbandry.

The party's programmatic emphasis is mainly in the following areas: fundamental rights and political principles, the economy, public administration, social policies and foreign policy.

First: Fundamental Rights and Political Principles:

This part addresses several topics including fundamental rights and freedoms, political principles, political structuring, law and justice, democratization and civil society and the East and the Southeast issue.

Concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, the party believes that freedoms constitute the foundation of democracy, social peace and stability. Ataturk's principles and reforms are essential for raising the Turkish public above the level of contemporary civilization and the party sees this as an element of social peace.

Second: The Economy

The AKP defines the function of the state in economy as a regulator and controller and the formation of a more rational economic structure depends a lot on privatization. Concerning relations with the European Union, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other international institutions it must be maintained along the lines of the requirements of Turkey's economy and national interests. The party is committed

to policies that control public finance (the budget, taxation, and public debts), privatization, production and investment, industrial property, foreign trade, financial services, tradesmen, artisans and small and medium scale enterprises, agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry, energy, mining, transportation and communication, tourism, and consumer protection.

In general, the party aims at implementing a "*Continuous and Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy*" that contributes to the reduction of unemployment and poverty rates.

Third: Public Administration

The party defines the public administration as "*the highest form of organization provided by the Constitution and the legislation, possessing the right and authority to use the government for the benefit of the society*". The goal is to place the understanding of public administration in line with democratization, localization and civilianization. The party emphasizes on the concept of the "*Constitutional State*", where universal rights and freedoms of the citizens are maintained.

“The State must withdraw from all service areas and remain exclusively in the areas of foreign security, justice, basic education, health and infrastructure services, which are its basic functions as an executing body, whereas its regulating and inspecting functions must continue.”

In this area, the party's program puts policies and goals that cover the following issues: central government, local administration, public personnel management, security and combat against corruption.

Fifth: Social Policies

According to the AKP, the government shall implement social policies that assure the welfare of the citizens in addition to special programs that meet the needs of the poor, unemployed, ill and handicapped and children. This shall be implemented in cooperation with the local administration, NGOs and private sector.

The party's program under this topic includes policies to improve education, culture and arts, public health, social security, labor, women, family and social services, youth and sports, urbanization and housing, environment, science and technology, written and visual media, and traffic.

Sixth: Foreign Policy

The party takes into consideration the history and geopolitical situation of Turkey when forming the country's foreign policy. The AKP shall follow several policies in this areas including:

- Turkey shall take more initiative with regard to areas of crisis in neighboring regions and try to contribute more efficiently to the solution of these crises. Turkey shall make more efforts at providing security and stability in its near surroundings, shall increase its

attempts to keep good relations with its neighbors based on dialogue and regional cooperation.

- Relations with European nations shall continue to be a priority in Turkey's foreign policy agenda. Turkey shall rapidly fulfill its promises in its relations with the European Union and the conditions, which the union demands of other candidate nations as well.
- The cooperation with the United States of America which had been defense oriented shall be maintained and further it shall be extended to areas of the economy, investments, science and technology.
- Friendly relations with the Russian Federation shall be maintained based on cooperation rather than competition in Central-Asia and the Caucuses. This also applies for the relation with china.
- The bloodshed in the Middle East worries and concerns the Turkish public as it shares historical and cultural ties with this region. AKP believes that the only way to urgently stop the flow of blood and grievance, no matter to whom they belong is a lasting peace. Therefore, Turkey shall continue to support the efforts towards the achievement of the peace.
- The Party pays a special attention to Turkey's relation with Islamic countries. Thus, it shall make efforts to increase bilateral cooperation with these nations on the one hand, while continuing attempts on the other for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to have a more respectable place in the international arena and to have a dynamic structure able to take initiatives.

The AKP's program is thus based mainly on adopting democratic values, rule of law, human rights and freedoms, pluralism, peace and conciliation to be applied on all the citizens regardless of the differences in sex, religion, language, culture and origin. The program puts the state in a position that regulates, controls, creates opportunities rather than imposing obstacles.

It also seeks a form of economic development based on reducing the costs brought on by globalization, watching public spending, supporting enterprises, installing an earning system based on production rather than collecting interests, reducing taxation rates while widening the tax base, insuring fair income distribution as well as contributing to the reduction of poverty and corruption.

Importantly, the party does not put emphasis on ideology and refuses the separations that controlled the cold war era based on political ideologies. Rather, it sets a program aimed at satisfying the needs of the Turkish citizens in the first place and Turkish interests in the changing international environment.

III.2 How does the AKP program differ from its predecessors?

The following table compares the program of three political parties: AKP, SP, and RP

Table 1. *Comparative Evaluation of the Party Programs of the AKP, SP, and RP.*⁶⁷

	AKP (2001)	SP (2001)	RP (1995)

⁶⁷ - Murat Somer, Muslim Democrat, 12-13.

Democracy	<p>-Strong emphasis on individual rights, minority rights, and civil society.</p> <p>-Explicit rejection of the misuse of religion for politics, and of the oppression of the different interpretations and practices of religion.</p> <p>-Conspicuous absence or shortage of references to religious rights or to the question of secularism.</p>	<p>-Lip service to democratization and individual rights and almost no mentioning of civil society.</p> <p>-Emphasis on the question of secularism, what it is and what it is not.</p> <p>-Reference to individual rights and freedoms, with strong emphasis on religious freedoms.</p>	<p>-No reference to individual or human rights.</p> <p>-Major emphasis on social rights and freedom to practice religion.</p>
Economic role of the state	<p>-State's role in the economy defined as regulator and Supervisor.</p> <p>-Emphasis on (fast and transparent) privatization and structural reforms</p>	<p>-Emphasis on welfare state.</p> <p>-Need for a shift from rent seeking economy to "just" economy.</p> <p>-Establishment of a</p>	<p>-Extremely significant.</p> <p>-Strong redistributive role for the state.</p> <p>- An active role for the state in</p>

	-A diminished role for the state in agriculture	“guidance and guarantee fund” for agricultural sector.	subsidizing industrial development. -Privatization de-emphasized
Nationalism	-Weak nationalistic flavor. -Almost every policy and reform is justified by reference to international treaties, especially the Copenhagen Criteria, and Globalization. -Emphasis on Turkey’s need to keep pace with regional and global trends	-Moderate nationalistic flavor. -National interest frequently used as justification of policy positions. - Lip service to international obligations. - Embrace of integration with the EU.	-Very strong nationalistic flavor. -Conceives Turkey as the leader of the Muslim world
Religion and moral values	-Defines itself as conservative democratic and emphasizes values, traditions, and social norms as crucial in the good working of the	-Moral-ethical values and spiritualism offered as the ultimate solution to most problems (e.g.	-Very strong. -Outlines specific recommendations with special reference to Islamic

	system. -No special reference to religious values	poverty). -Advocates mandatory religion and ethics classes in schools. -Critical of materialism.	values and practices. - A major distinguishing characteristic of the party program.
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The table above gives a brief summary of the published program of the AKP, SP and RP. Concerning the promotion of democracy, the AKP de-emphasized the issue of religion with more emphasis on civil liberties and human rights. Also it stressed the importance of enhancing the role of civil society, raising its capacities, taking its opinion into consideration, giving it the opportunity to reach the level of contemporary democratic countries.

In comparison, the SP though putting less emphasis on the issue of democratization, human rights and civil liberties than the AKP but it gave greater consideration to these issues than the banned WP which promoted religious freedoms at the first level with no clear reference to the human rights and liberties in general.

The matter of secularism is also a point of difference between the three parties, as the AKP preferred to skip the issue of questioning secularism but rather indicated the importance of separating religion from politics in addition to praising the role of Ataturk's reforms and principles in coping with the contemporary civilization. However, both the

SP and RP raised the question of secularism as a major matter in their programs. The AKP program assures the party's commitment to the values and constitution of the Turkish Republic. In contrast, to the prevailing Islamic political identity based on the western opposition, a very skilful new discourse regarding the adoption of western values as an ally against the restrictions of the Kemalist state was adopted by the AKP.

In addition, the economic role of the state is a matter of great difference among the three parties. The AKP has a unique view towards this issue as it considers the state's role as a controller and supervisor with a big emphasis on privatization which differs significantly from the role drawn by the WP which gives the state a much more interfering role in the economy. However, the welfare state is a common goal emphasized by both the SP and AKP. In addition, the anti – globalization discourse adopted earlier by the AKP predecessors was abandoned as the economic crisis of 2001 made the commitment to the IMF program and the attraction of foreign investments an anchor for overcoming the Turkish financial crisis and integrating Turkey into the global economy.

In other words, the difference between the WP and AKP lies in the different conception the both have for the state and the economy as the WP, considered traditionalist tend more “to be state- oriented and to favor dirigisme” while the AKP ,considered reformers tend more “to seek support in society and to favor a (liberal) market economy.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ - Asiye Öztürk." The domestic context of Turkey's changing foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Caspian Region ". Bonn (Discussion Paper / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik; 10/2009), 14.

In short, the AKP's program approve of neo- liberal order in which there is a clear withdrawal of the state from the economy in order to achieve a productive and free market economy as a prerequisite for a democratic regime.⁶⁹

The issue of nationalism and membership of EU went through several stages starting from the WP that was promoting Turkish leadership to the Muslim world and the importance of building strong relations with the Muslim countries rather than the Christian ones (the West) including the EU which was described by them as a “Christian Club.”

The SP adopted a more moderate nationalistic language, embraced the integration with the EU, and showed more commitment to international obligations. On the other hand, the AKP differs greatly from both parties as it emphasizes the importance of relations with the Middle East and neighboring countries as well as the European, western, and Asian ones. In addition, the role of Turkey in keeping the peace regionally and globally is deeply emphasized. The AKP bases its reforms and policies on international treaties mainly the Copenhagen Criteria, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Convention on Human Rights, Paris Charter and Helsinki Final Act.

One can notice several points while reading the three programs represented mainly in the lack of a clear cut difference in the programs of both the RP and SP although the latter tries to use a more modern discourse and vocabulary especially

⁶⁹ - Omer Caha. "Turkish Election of November 2002 and the Rise of "Moderate" Political Islam". *Alternatives* 2.1 (2003): 108. <http://www.alternativesjournal.net/volume2/number1/caha.pdf>

regarding EU membership, but it can in one way or another be considered an extension of the values of the WP and the earlier NVM. The AKP's discourse , language, self-definition and policies on the other hand show a deep shift from the earlier ideology as it adopts a more democratic and liberal discourse with more emphasis on general morals and values as a main guide for all religions and secular ones as well.

It is worth mentioning that women's rights and more generally, gender issues were embedded in the program of the SP and AKP but with no clear or detailed indications regarding this important question, which is now of the main topics in the contemporary democratic countries. However, the WP raised the issue of Muslim women's right to wear a headscarf in governmental facilities as an important one. For the AKP, the party's view of the headscarf issue was best indicated through Erdogan speeches on TV programs in which he explained that they would not take on sensitive topics like the headscarf problem and the prohibition of female students to attend universities with headscarves. Although during the election campaign, he admitted that this was a serious problem, he has time and again emphasized that this should not be a matter for his own party alone. In other words, all of the political parties had a share of responsibility for finding solution for the problem.⁷⁰

The following table compares the terminologies used by the AKP and SP in their published programs:

Table 2. *Comparative Frequency of Key Terms in the Party Programs of the AKP and*

⁷⁰ - Ibid, 107.

*SP*⁷¹

Word	AKP-Program (per 10 pages)	SP-Program (per 10 pages)
Welfare(<i>Refah</i>)	2.0	6.4
Religion	1.6	3.8
Muslim	0.0	0.5
Human rights	2.0	1.3
Justice (<i>Adalet</i>)	2.9	9.7
Civil Society	4.7	2.0
Minority	0.6	0
Morality (<i>Ahlak</i>)	0.8	3.3
Spirituality (<i>Maneviyat</i>)	0.0	3.1
Nation (<i>millet</i>)	1.6	9.2

As the individual is the constructivist's unit of analysis, it is worth having a look at some main differences among the key leaders of the WP and AKP namely, Erbakan and Erdogan, stressing the role of the different attitudes and beliefs of both characters in the change occurred in the mentality, practice and discourse of both political parties as well as stressing the role of the lessons learnt by the AKP leader from Erbakan's mistakes.

⁷¹ - Murat Somer, Muslim Democrats, 14

Erbakan and Erdogan are the most significant figures that have been influential in the modern Turkish Islamist political parties as the change in their concepts and ideas contributed to the change that Turkey is witnessing today. For Erbakan, though he continuously insisted on using freedom of thought and freedom of conscience in his speeches, what he had in mind was markedly different and entailed an inflexible party structure in which the party supplies an identity to the members: he thus managed to create a party with a closed ideology. This matter was modified by Erdogan, who believed in pluralism as the way to reach all social sectors (rightist, nationalist, leftist and Islamist) and managed thus to obtain their support as a result as well as modifying the AKP's identity, steering it away from what might be termed "pure Islamism." This repositioning affected the party's popularity positively.⁷²

The gender issue, and in particular, identifying the political role of women, especially in the decision making process, was a matter at first neglected by Erbakan who once defended the concept of keeping women out of the decision making process. On the other hand, it was Erdogan who set up the first women's commission within the WP in the late 1980s and worked to modify the party's view concerning the inclusion of women in the decision making process later on.⁷³

In foreign policy approaches, the two leaders visited and opened relations with different countries, revealing differences in priorities and even in goals. While Erbakan focused on countries like Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Libya and Egypt aiming to work on

⁷² - Zeyneb İmisiker, *The Changing Nature of Islamism in Turkey: A Comparison of Erbakan and Erdogan*, (MA Thesis, Bilkent University, 2009: 29)

⁷³ - *Ibid*, 30.

an anti- western coalition. In contrast Erdogan, who aimed to have open relations with all international actors, visited almost all EU capitals in order to reveal his party's pro – EU policy.⁷⁴

Erdogan continuously kept in mind the political end faced by his mentor, and so he traced a more moderate line for himself. Early on, Erdogan had insisted on the fact that “my reference is Islam” and on the fact that “you cannot be secular and Muslim at the same time...” With the passage of time he shifted to a more conciliatory discourse, admitting that change is everywhere and cannot be avoided.⁷⁵ In addition, Erdogan who was elected mayor of Istanbul in 1994 got his prominence on the domestic level as a result of his pragmatic performance during his position as a mayor of Istanbul. This is stated explicitly on the official AKP website, which stressed the key role played by his role in good governance in Istanbul and an excellent performance as mayor in his rise to power, thanks to widespread popular support. The structural interaction of people, conditions, policies, and socio-economic factors are seen in the present case study to have heavily determined domestic, regional and world politics.

Some point to the fact that it could actually have been even better, since Erdoğan's personality has had a partly negative impact on Turkish politics. "Mr. Erdogan is said to speak no foreign languages and to know little about the outside world. Many

⁷⁴ - Ozgur Eksi, “Erbakan’s mistakes give path to Erdogan government,” *Turkish Daily News*, December 8, 2002.http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-26869663_ITM(accessed on October 8 , 2012)

⁷⁵ - Zeyneb İmisiker, *the Changing Nature of Islamism in Turkey*, 47-48.

feared ahead of the election that he might change his views again if his party came to power."⁷⁶

The sometimes emotional performance of the prime minister is also seen in the incident of Erdogan storming off the stage after an emotional debate with Shimon Peres, Israel's president, in a session about Israel's treatment of Gaza, during The World Economic Forum held in Davos on 29 December 2009.

III.3 the successive electoral victories:

The following section will provide an analysis of the electoral results of three successive elections in which the AKP made its breakthrough and improved its score, reaching power and maintaining it for more than a decade.

III.3.1 the 2002 elections:

After nearly one year of its establishment, the AKP entered the general elections with its published program that succeeded in achieving a notable victory. It gained 34% of the votes while the Republican People's Party - CHP was able to gain 19% of the votes, both were thus able to cross the 10% threshold needed for the parliamentary representation. The AKP gained almost two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly which enabled it to form a government on its own.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ - "Turkey's Charismatic Pro-Islamic Leader", *BBC*, November 4, 2002
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2270642.stm>

⁷⁷ - Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee. *The rise of Political*, 47-48.

Several factors led to this indisputable victory including: the adoption of a more moderate and pragmatic political message, the disastrous performance of the Turkish economy (the Turkish currency was devalued several times, the banking sector was devastated, and the economy shrank by a historic 9.5% in 2001), the spread of corruption among the mainstream secular parties, and the demise of the left in the early 1990s which led to targeting the working class neighborhoods. “The AKP made its biggest gains among the recent immigrants in the *varoş*, a group which today forms a plurality in Turkish urban areas. These people are pious and socially conservative and are not attracted to secular parties on either the left or the right. The *varoş* is one of the most important sources of AKP power. The AKP has skillfully drawn on its well-developed local infrastructure and social networks, much of which were established by the Welfare Party, to expand its political support among the working-class poor in Turkey’s large urban areas. These factors, rather than an appeal to Islam, explain the AKP’s success.”⁷⁸

The theoretical model we propose explains how the retreat from “Islamic” statism and the adoption of fundamentally liberal economic policies, first domestically, then internationally, could have been possible and as momentum was built, became likely, under the AKP. Constructivism takes, as it were, an anthropological approach to the social and political world (both domestic and international), positing a strong interaction between political elites and material conditions, rather than an inflexible and ideologically driven process, in which documents and abstract beliefs, rather than evolving human realities, drive change.

⁷⁸ - Ibid, 48-49.

According to Meltem Muftuler-Bac's *The New Face of Turkey: the Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications of November 2002 Elections*, paradoxically, the November 2002 elections in Turkey have highlighted the religious and cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union, meanwhile strengthening democratic institutions in Turkey. Moreover, the victory of 2002 was due to many reasons but one of the most important is that the Turkish public looked for a new leader to solve the economic, social and political problems that previous parties in power had been unable to handle. The author finds that the economic crisis and the resulting social outburst have been to the AKP's advantage as they were able to present an alternative to the existing administration of the country. In other words, hungry and unemployed masses voted for AKP which focused on socio-economic issues.⁷⁹

The AKP's moderate, non-confrontational rhetoric has made it attractive to a diverse array of voters ranging from Islamists to rural nationalists and moderate urban voters. The AKP responded to middle and working class voters, who were displeased with the economic plans of the outgoing government. As a result, it was able to attract many moderate urban voters, who were angry at the inefficient and corruption-ridden governments of the 1990s in addition to the political instability and economic downturns that characterized this decade. Many voters turned to the AKP, which labeled itself as new and not affected by the legacy of the 1990s. On the other hand, the November elections clarified the efficiency and importance of the personality of the AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan. A lot of people voted for him, regardless of his controversial

⁷⁹ - Muftuler-BAC Meltem. "The New Face of Turkey: The Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications of November 2002 Elections", *East European Quarterly* 37(2003): 437.

pedigree or the legal obstacles he faced. Thus, the interaction of individuals and societies, (the pillar of the constructivist theory) is seen to have played a key role in the 2002 victory and in the move towards collective change, based on the transformation of the ideas of individuals.⁸⁰

“However, having been in power during the deep economic crisis of 2001, the DSP-MHP-ANAP coalition which, in the aftermath of 1999 elections, had an electoral support of about 54% obtained only about 15% of the votes in November 2002. This is the largest drop in Turkish electoral history for an incumbent or coalition in two consecutive elections.”⁸¹

According to Tahran Erdem, a public opinion analyst, the AKP had received votes in the 2002 elections from electorates that voted earlier for other parties. In comparison with the 1999 general elections, 69% of the Virtue Party, 38% of the National Action Party, 28% of the Motherland Party, 21% of the True Path Party, and 14% of the Democratic Left Party voters voted for the AKP in November 2002. This indicates that the AKP attracted almost all sectors of society and even won the support of the conservative right. The AKP voters vary from the poor of the urban periphery to conservative peasants in the depth of Anatolia and to the demanding provincial entrepreneurs. In other words, the AKP enjoyed the trust of different people from various

⁸⁰ - Soner Cagaptay. "The November 2002 Elections and Turkey's New Political Era", *Meria Journal* 6.4(2002). <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2002/issue4/jv6n4a6.html> The November 2002 Elections and Turkey's New Political Era

⁸¹ - Ali Carkoğlu, " Turkey's November 2002 Elections: A New Beginning?" *Meria Journal* 6.4(2002) <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2002/issue4/jv6n4a4.html>

ideological, social and geographical backgrounds.⁸² This is clearly indicative of a landmark shift in collective identity.

The following table indicates the results of November 2002 elections in comparison to those of 1999:

Table 3. Election results and aggregate party system characteristics 1999-2002⁸³

	Vote Share (%)		% wins and losses	Seats in the Parliament	
	1999	2002		1999	2002
<i>Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti-DSP)</i>	22.19	1.22	-20.97	136	0
<i>Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP)</i>	17.98	8.34	-9.64	129	0
<i>Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi-FP)*</i>	15.41	2.48	-12.93	111	0
<i>Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi-ANAP)</i>	13.22	5.13	-8.09	86	0
<i>True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi-DYP)</i>	12.01	9.55	-2.46	85	0
<i>Republican People's Party (Cuhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP)</i>	8.71	19.40	10.69	0	178
<i>People's Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi-HADEP)**</i>	4.75	6.23	1.48	0	0
<i>Grand Unity Party (Büyük Birlik Partisi-BBP)</i>	1.46	1.02	-0.44	0	0
<i>Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP)</i>	0.00	34.28	34.28	0	363
<i>Young Party (Genç Parti-GP)</i>	0.00	7.25	7.25	0	0

⁸² Party: Identity, Politics and Discourse of Human Rights in the Search for Security and Legitimacy- Ihsan D. Dagi, Justice and Development

⁸³ -Ali Carkoğlu, "Turkey's November 2002 Elections."

<i>Independents***</i>	0.87	0.99	0.12	3	9
Total	96.60	95.89		550	550
<i>Other Parties</i>	3.40	4.11	0.71		
Volatility	20.15	50.91	****		
Fractionalisation	85.15	81.44	*****		
**** Highest (ideological) volatility ever in the Turkish party system.					
*****Lowest fractionalisation since 1991 elections.					

The graph above shows among other things that in 2002, ideological volatility (voter shifts in party allegiances) was the highest in history, underscoring the depth and breadth of shifts in Turkish collective identity. At the same time, it shows that the level of fractionalization was minimal, permitting a comprehensive takeover of governmental initiatives.

III.3.2 the 2007 elections:

On 27 April 2007, the army General staff posted a memorandum on its website accusing the government of having a secret Islamic agenda. This was after the government nominated Abdullah Gul for the post of president, a man controversial due his Islamic roots and his headscarfed wife.

Following the memorandum hundreds of thousands gathered in Turkey's major cities protesting against the government. The memorandum implicitly indicated that the army would intervene directly to protect secularism. On the other hand, the government issued a counter – statement in which it reminded the soldiers that they were government

employees, and that it was not acceptable in a democracy that the military intervene in politics. Meanwhile, the Constitutional Court upheld a case brought by the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition group, arguing that the first round of parliamentary voting to elect the president was invalid due to the lack of a 2/3 quorum, a claim that was accepted by the Court which decided that 367 deputies were needed for a quorum and the first ballot was invalid.⁸⁴

As a result, Gul was obliged to withdraw his nomination and Erdogan called for early elections for 22 July rather than the 4th of November. Fourteen political parties participated in the elections of 2007. The party's campaigns were dominated by several issues: the elections of the next president, a possible military incursion into Northern Iraq (the Kurdish issue), and economic issues.⁸⁵ The AKP took advantage of what happened and depicted itself as the defender of democracy and the victim of military intervention as well as promising to seek constitutional changes that would allow people to elect their president directly. However, the CHP campaign was based on blaming the AKP for the crisis, with less emphasis on democracy, in addition to forming a block with the Democratic Left Party (DSP) to increase its share in the vote. It did not, however, propose any distinctive socio – economic programs. As for the other opposition parties, they failed to convince the voters that social cohesion and economic prosperity was on the way.⁸⁶ The opposition thus failed to convince voters, on the contrary. Note the reality-

⁸⁴ - Rabia Karakaya Polat, "The 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey: Between Securitisation and Desecuritisation", *Parliamentary Affairs* 62.1 (2009):137 <http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/>

⁸⁵ - Ibid, 135

⁸⁶ - Ibid, 139.

rather than ideologically based approach to politics on the part of the AKP in this (and other) critical instance: this is clearly an example of a one step back, two step forwards approach it adopted, in line, incidentally, with constructivism's view of social and political adaptation, domestically and then internationally.

In July 2007, the ruling AKP achieved a landslide victory with 47% of the vote, the largest share for a single party since 1957. The results were surprising for all those who predicted the contrary, due to the division within Turkish society and the continuity of the polarity between secularism and anti – secularism, which showed it to be less than expected. In addition, the results indicated the dissatisfaction of the Turkish public with military intervention in political life. The electorate chose the party that focused more on the issues that had a direct impact on their own lives. Turkey's political transformation was thus showed to be based on a solid popular base.

The AKP also managed to convince the Kurds to vote for it by promising to solve their problem and giving them more rights and freedoms. Moreover, the representation of women and independents rose as the number of women in parliament increased from 24 to 50 (30 of them AKP members). The 2007 elections were the first in 16 years where Kurdish nationalists had the opportunity to be represented in the parliament. They later helped the AKP to achieve a 2/3 quorum leading to the successful elections of Gul as a president on 29 August.

Prime Minister Erdogan described the election result as, 'the reflex of the national will in response to what was done to Abdullah'. The Speaker of Parliament and one of the founders of the AKP, Bulent Arinc, characterized the outcome as a 'civilian

memorandum'. Both remarks followed up on the AKP's electoral strategy of presenting the party as a victim. After the elections, the AKP decided to retain Gul as its presidential candidate, claiming that 47% of the vote was proof of popular support for his nomination.⁸⁷

The following table shows the results of 2007 general elections:⁸⁸

Table 4. July 22, 2007 General Election Results

Registered Electors	42,799,303		
Voters	36,056,293	84.2%	
Valid Votes	35,049,691		
Party	Votes	%	Seats
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	16,327,291	46.6	341
Republican People's Party (CHP)	7,317,808	20.9	112
Nationalist Action Party (MHP)	5,001,869	14.3	70
Independents	1,835,486	5.2	26
Democrat Party (DP)	1,898,873	5.4	0
Young Party (GP)	1,064,871	3.0	0
Felicity Party (SP)	820,289	2.3	0
Others	783,204	2.2	0

⁸⁷ - Ibid, 142.

⁸⁸ - <http://electionresources.org/tr/assembly.php?election=2007>

III.3.3 the 2011 elections:

On June 12 2011, the Turkish voters went to the polls yet another time to elect the country's 550-seat Grand National Assembly. The Turkish election went as everyone expected it would, a landslide victory for the AK Party, chosen to lead Turkey for a third term. The AKP won 49.8 % of the votes, giving them 326 seats in a 550 seat parliament though Erdogan was looking forward to 330 seats that would have given him a super-majority in parliament and would have allowed him to make changes to the constitution without seeking the support of other parties.

Higher than during the previous election, 78 of the 550 newly elected MPs were women, thus making up 14.2% of the total number of representatives (2007:9.2%). 45 of those female MPs belong to the AKP, 19 are members of the CHP, 11 are members of the BDP, and three are members of the MHP.⁸⁹

This victory can be attributed to Turkey's good economic performance: about 60% of AKP voters stated that the economic situation was the main reason for their choice. Poor immigrants in cities, the rural population, but also the emerging bourgeoisie chose economic and political stability characteristic of the AKP era. The AKP government's professional performance as well as the Prime Minister's populist skills played a major role in the success. Erdogan continuously came up with new major projects for all the different cities and regions, among those plans, which endeared

⁸⁹ -Michael Meier, "The Turkish Election Results and next steps," *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, June 2011. <http://www.fesdc.org/pdf/The%20Turkish%20Election%20June%202011.pdf>

Erdogan to many voters, were projects to create new commuter towns for Istanbul, construct new airports, develop Turkey's own defense industry, and even construct a second Bosphorus. The AKP also managed to win more conservative voters; almost all of the nationalist parties' strongholds were won by the AKP.⁹⁰ These results came in light of major changes in the region especially in the Arab World and mainly the situation of Syria that terrifies the Turks regarding the prospect of another Iraq on their southern border as well as the tension with Israel after the incident of the Marmara flotilla.

Speaking at a victory rally in the capital, Ankara, Erdogan adopted a conciliatory tone: "Today workers, pensioners, farmers have won. People in the villages have won. Today 74 million people have won. Today the western world, Tripoli, Gaza have won. The Middle East, the Balkans, Europe have won. Peace, justice and stability have won." Of the planned new constitution, he said: "We will go to the opposition. We will consult with the media and academics to find a consensus. We will not close our doors regarding the constitution, only because we haven't reached 330 seats."⁹¹

⁹⁰ - Ibid.

⁹¹ - Constanze Letsch, "Recep Erdogan wins by landslide in Turkey's general election," *The Guardian*, June 13, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/13/recep-erdogan-turkey-general-election>

The following table shows the results of 2011 general elections:⁹²

Table 5. June 12, 2011 General Election Results

Registered Electors	52,806,322		
Voters	43,914,948	83.2%	
Valid Votes	42,941,763		
Party	Votes	%	Seats
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	21,399,082	49.8	326
Republican People's Party (CHP)	11,155,972	26.0	135
Nationalist Action Party (MHP)	5,585,513	13.0	53
Independents	2,819,917	6.6	35
Felicity Party (SP)	543,454	1.3	0
Others	1,437,825	3.3	0

⁹² - <http://electionresources.org/tr/assembly.php?election=2007>

IV.CHAPTER FOUR: THE RULE OF THE AKP

IV.1 the Turkish Economy under the AKP:

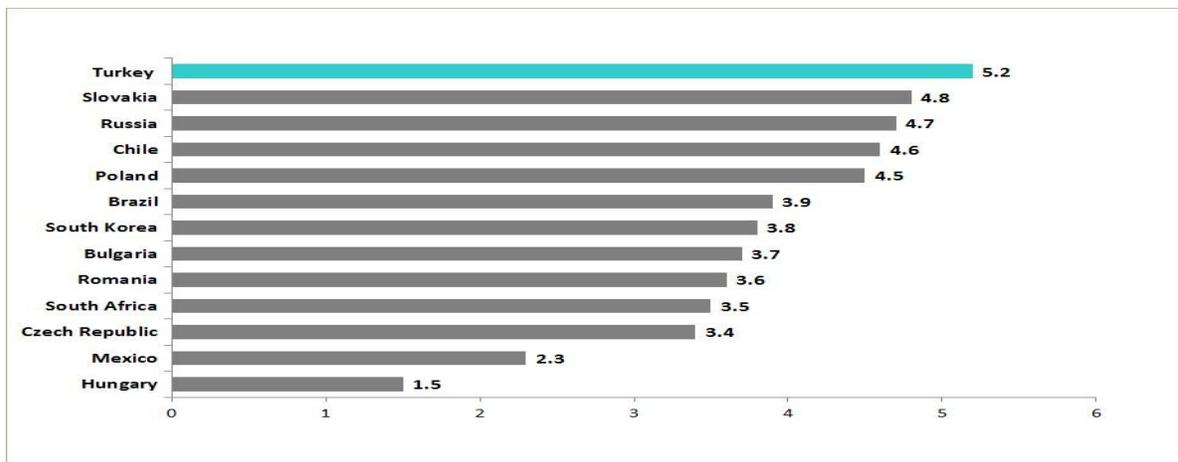
In spite of the global economic crisis over the last few years, the Turkish economy was able to achieve steady growth due to a combination of a macroeconomic strategy, cautious financial policies and structural reforms. The structural reforms which were widely hastened by the Turkey's EU accession bid opened the space for various changes in a number of areas that include increasing the role played by the private sector in the Turkish economy, enhancing the efficiency and resiliency of the financial sector, and placing the social security system on a more solid foundation.⁹³

These reforms have empowered Turkey's macroeconomic basics and decreased inflation to 6.4 % by the end of 2010 in comparison to 30% in 2002. In addition, the GDP levels more than tripled to USD 736 billion in 2010, up from USD 231 billion in 2002, GDP per capita soared to USD 10,079, up from USD 3,500 in the given period. As for foreign trade, exports reached USD 114 billion by the end of 2010, up from USD 36 billion in 2002. Similarly, tourism revenues, which were around USD 8.5 billion in 2002, exceeded USD 20 billion in 2010. In 2011 , GDP level was USD 772 billion and GDP growth was 8.5%.Whereas total exports reached USD 135 billion and total FDI inflow was USD 15.9 billion .In addition, the number of foreign companies as of the end of 2011 was 29,283.⁹⁴

Average Annual Real GDP Growth (%) 2002-2011

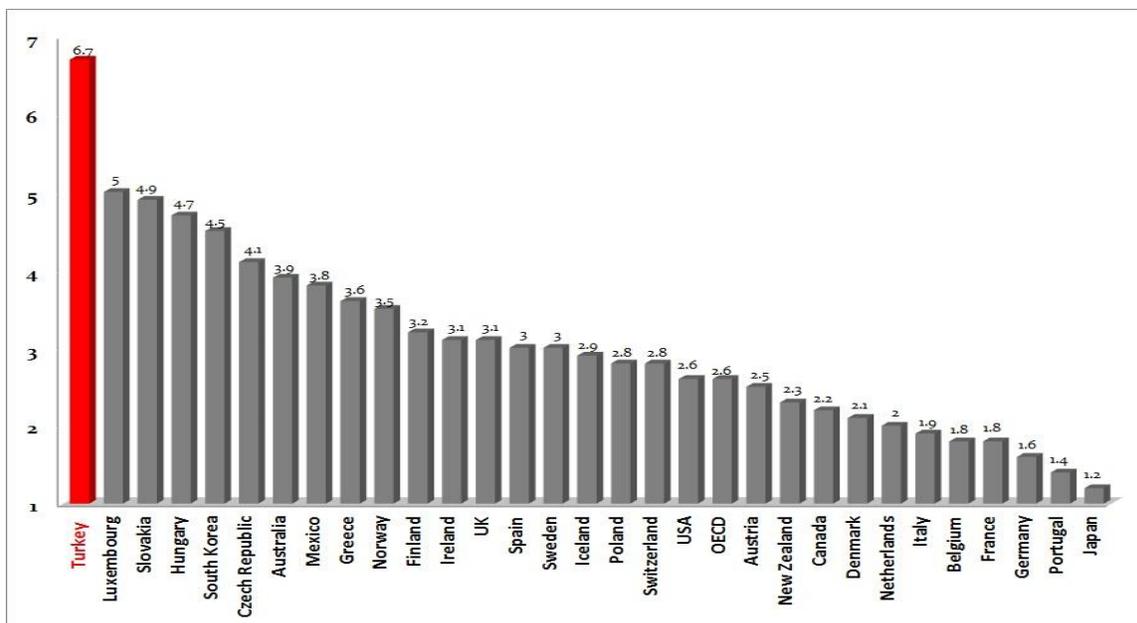
⁹³ -<http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/turkey/factsandfigures/Pages/Economy.aspx>

⁹⁴ - Ibid



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook April 2012, Turkish Statistical Institute (Turk Stat)

Annual Average Real GDP Growth (%) Forecast in OECD Countries 2011-2017



Source: OECD Economic Outlook No: 86

The following sections will highlight the main economic developments that Turkey witnessed since 2002:

IV.1.1 Unemployment

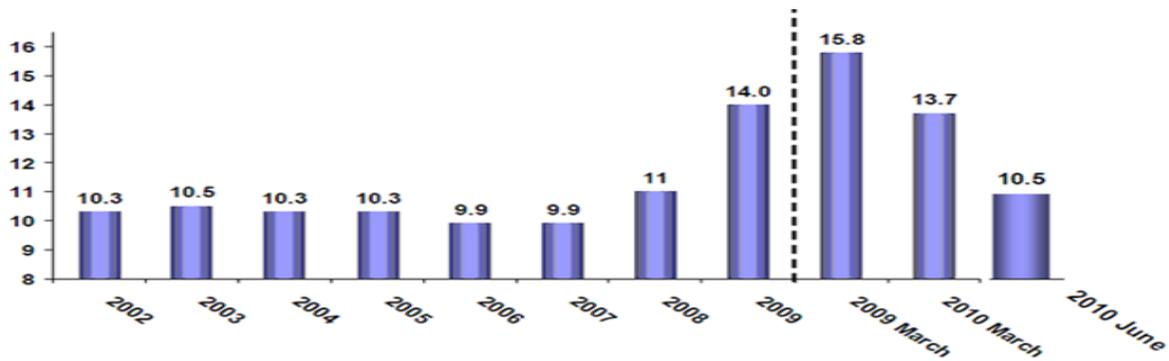
Unemployment is an issue that concerns both developed and developing countries as it are not only an economic problem but also a social one that may affect the stability of any society. Many reasons play a role in increasing unemployment such as inflation, demographic changes, economic crises, macroeconomic factors...etc.⁹⁵

In economic theory, a linear positive relationship between economic growth and employment had long been supposed. However, Turkish economic growth since 2002 , taking into consideration the global economic crisis in 2008, wasn't able to achieve sufficient job creation which is called a “jobless growth” as it does not generate sufficient employment to reduce the unemployment rate.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ -Halil Tunah, the Analysis of Unemployment in Turkey: Some Empirical Evidence Using Co-integration Test. *European Journal of Social Sciences* 18. 1 (2010):18-20

⁹⁶ -Ibid, 21.

Unemployment Rate in Turkey (%)⁹⁷



Source: Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Undersecretariat of Treasury

From 2002 to 2009, the employment rate in the agricultural sector declined from 34.9 % (7.46million) to 24.7 % (5.28 million), in the services sector it increased from 42.1 % to 50 %, in the industrial sector it increased from 18.5 % to 19.4 % and in the construction sector it increased from 4.5 % to 5.9 %. These indicators show that it's clear that there is an employment transition from agriculture to industry and especially to services. Between 2002 and 2008, while 3 million new jobs were created in urban areas, 3.3 million jobs disappeared in rural areas and in this specific period, several types of jobs mainly in the services sector, emerged as new areas of employment. These are retail industry (from 18 % to 22 %), financial services sector (from 3 % to 6 %) and social and personal services (from 14 % to 17 %).⁹⁸

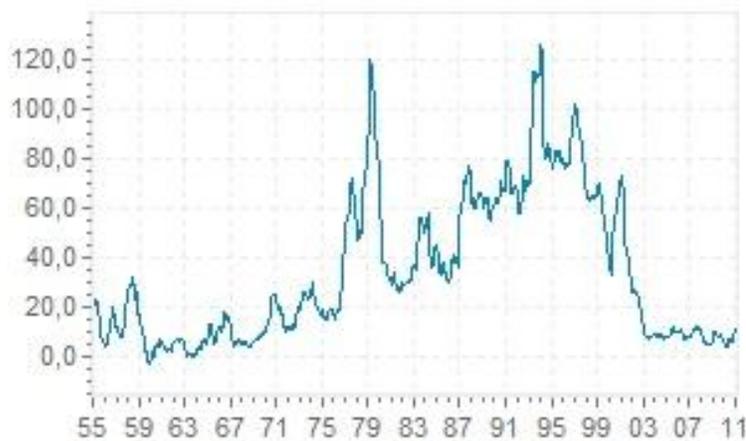
⁹⁷http://www.treasury.gov.tr/irj/go/km/docs/documents/Treasury%20Web/Statistics/Economic%20Indicators/egosterge/Sunumlar/Ekonomi_Sunumu_ENG.pdf

⁹⁸ - Ibid ,23

IV.1.2 Inflation:

For more than two decades, high inflation was a major problem facing the Turkish economy. However, a drop in inflation rates occurred after 2002 as it declined more than 60% as a result of tight monetary and fiscal policies under the anti-inflationary program.⁹⁹

Graph CPI (Consumer price index) Turkey long-term¹⁰⁰



IV.1.3 Housing:

The Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) has constructed more than 500,000 buildings across Turkey since 2002 as Turkey is currently undergoing a renewal process in which TOKİ would like to contribute to the modern urbanization of Turkey.¹⁰¹ These projects include the urban renewal areas: Zağnos and Tabakhane Urban Renewal Projects, Çömlekçi Urban Renewal Project Ayasofya Urban Renewal Project,

⁹⁹ -Ibid, 26.

¹⁰⁰ - <http://www.global-rates.com/economic-indicators/inflation/consumer-prices/cpi/turkey.aspx>

¹⁰¹ -Gülten Kara, "The Examination of the Urban Renewal Projects - A Case Study of Trabzon, Turkey," FIG (International Foundation for Surveyors), 18-22 May 2011: 2.
http://www.fig.net/pub/fig2011/papers/ts08d/ts08d_kara_5286.pdf

Pelitli Urban Renewal Project, Çağlayan Urban Renewal Project, Ortahisar Urban Renewal Project, Yomra Urban Renewal Project.

The housing projects enabled more than 1 million people to buy more modern and resilient houses from these projects, undertaken by TOKİ in cooperation with private construction companies which gave a boost to Turkish construction companies and also curtailed the rise of slums at least to some extent around the country.¹⁰²

IV.1.4 Tax reforms:

A medium-term tax reform strategy was implemented according to a review carried out jointly with the World Bank in 2002. The main purpose of the strategy was to develop the stability, transparency and equity of the tax system through measures and procedures that minimize tax distortions, broaden the tax base and improve the efficiency of the tax administration.¹⁰³

A legislative package of tax reforms was implemented which included direct measures related to the personal and the corporate income tax (investment tax allowance, free trade zones and regional tax incentives). In addition there were the indirect tax reforms, simplifying the system so as to align them with EU rules where a unified Special Consumption Tax (SCT) was introduced in August 2002. This tax replaced a range of selective taxes on oil products, vehicles, alcohol and tobacco products and a range of luxury consumer goods into a one single tax. Moreover, the tax strategy included reforms

¹⁰² - Faruk Şen, "Turkish economy to continue growing in 2011," *TODAY'S ZAMAN*, December 26, 2010

¹⁰³ - "Tax policy reforms in Turkey," Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/49/24/37154710.pdf>

of tax administration that include institutional improvements, automation, transparency, compliance, taxpayer services and tax audit.¹⁰⁴

In conclusion, the Turkish economy witnessed significant prosperity and refreshment under AKP but there are several aspects that still need to be tackled such as the improvement of livestock production in which Turkey needs to introduce measures concerning dairy and meat products. This is an area largely neglected by Turkey in comparison with EU countries, and as a result of this, the sector is under risk of total collapse.¹⁰⁵

The AKP in general has put effort into improving the economic situation aiming to raise the standard of living for the Turkish citizens and their trust in the AKP's credibility as a result, a matter that was successfully reflected in the ballot boxes. And most importantly, in line with the predictions of constructivism in the area of political economy, the reforms instituted are all of a powerfully liberal (or "neo – liberal") nature, contrasting with the traditional centralism and protectionism of Islamist parties.

IV.2 Turkish foreign policy under AKP:

After the 1990s, Turkish foreign policy entered a new phase of adaptation to the global changes as well as domestic ones after the rise of the unipolar global system and the disappearance of the Cold War international paradigm. In effect, Turkey was obliged to find alternatives for its foreign and security interests and priorities with more emphasis on cultural, historical and geographical dimensions in the region through a more

¹⁰⁴ -Ibid

¹⁰⁵ - Faruk Sen, Turkish economy to continue

integrative approach.¹⁰⁶

The AKP and before it the WP, argued powerfully in favor of an opening to all of Turkey's neighbors. Domestic factors played a central role in the change witnessed in the Turkish regional foreign policy. The argument here is that such a change is a part of a fundamental domestic one that could be seen as a reorientation or rearrangement of the overall domestic and social context in Turkey that led to the emergence of a transformation in the Turkish priorities as well as changes in the country's institutional power relations.¹⁰⁷

After the undermining of the political order dominated by Kemalism from 1923, Turkey faced the rise of new power centers especially the new circles that rose to power in the form of the Islamic-conservative elite that has held power since 2002 and powerfully influenced foreign policy.

As discussed above, some of the most important domestic reasons for the shift were population growth, urbanization, economic change, and political reforms connected with the convergence with the EU. The underdeveloped regions in Anatolia were facing a severe development disparity between industrialized and rural regions leading to migration and population growth in urban regions in which the labor market was not able

¹⁰⁶ - GulBahar Yelken, "Turkish Foreign Policy: New Concepts and Reflection" (MA thesis, Middle East Techninhal University, 2010: 21) <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12612869/index.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ - Asiye Öztürk, The domestic context of Turkey's changing foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Caspian Region / Asiye Öztürk. – Bonn: DIE, 2009. – (Discussion Paper / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik ; 10/2009,2) [http://www.die-gdi.de/CMS-Homepage/openwebcms3.nsf/\(ynDK_contentByKey\)/ANES-7SVFBA/\\$FILE/DP%2010.2009.pdf](http://www.die-gdi.de/CMS-Homepage/openwebcms3.nsf/(ynDK_contentByKey)/ANES-7SVFBA/$FILE/DP%2010.2009.pdf) accessed on May 4 2011

to handle the flow of migrants, to high levels of hidden unemployment in light of the incapacity of the authorities to provide basic public services. These social and economic factors were essential in the loss of confidence by citizens in the state and its institutions. On the other hand, domestic changes led to greater influence by Turkish civil society, one of the actors that have been rising since the end of the 1990s along with the loosening of domestic and international restraints.¹⁰⁸

In 1999 and 2001, Turkey faced a grave economic crisis. Corruption and lack of political leadership in policy-making were the main factors which led the International Monetary Fund to press for reforms that provide more transparency in addition to those imposed by the EU in the field of democracy and human rights. The AKP thus declared that its aim was “to reform the elitist and strict secularism in place in Turkey.”¹⁰⁹ This aim, however, was to be achieved by building a new liberal pluralism and maintaining secularism. The AKP’s stated goal was to achieve economic modernization by actually abandoning ideology, not imposing a new one. This was in line with global ideological trends marked by convergence in politics and economics, across religious and ideological divides.

This view has its impact on AKP foreign policy priorities as seen in a variety of significant choices. First, accession to the EU continued to be a primary goal, a strategy that is important for winning elections and for decreasing the role of military through reforms. Second, the AKP sought to achieve of a “strategic depth” aiming to position

¹⁰⁸ -Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ -Ibid, 14.

Turkey as a regional force for peace and stability. Third, the objective became a “zero-problem” policy or a “good –neighbor” policy.

Hamlet Davutoglu is considered the godfather of the Turkish foreign policy pursued since 2002. His doctrine as presented in his “*Strategic Dept: Turkish International Position*” shaped the path of the Turkish foreign policy with its particular attention to Turkey’s potential as a major factor in the region. One cannot analyze Turkey’s foreign policy without taking into consideration Davutoglu’s ideas.

Davutoglu's “*Strategic Dept: Turkish International Position*” published in 2001(one year before the AKP came to rule) focuses on the nation's value in world politics, based on its geo –strategic position and historical depth. According to Davutoglu, Turkey possesses both the geo strategic position based in its control over the Bosphorus and its connections with the Balkans, the Middle East, and even Central Asia as well as the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire that once had unified the Muslim world and had been a superpower. In addition to Turkey’s regional position m Davutoglu stressed its global strategic role.¹¹⁰

He rejects the notion of Turkey as a simple bridge between the West and Islam. Rather, in his view, Turkey should take advantage of its soft power potential in order to develop a policy that copes with its geographic and historical depth. Therefore, it should change the militaristic image showed during the past era and instead focus on promoting conflict resolution and regional economic cooperation. In other words, Turkey has two

¹¹⁰ - داوود أوغلو، مترجم، أحمد، محمد جابر تلجي، طارق عبد الجليل، العمق الإستراتيجي: موقع تركيا و دورها في الساحة الدولية (بيروت: الدار العربية للعلوم، 2010).

fronts to focus on in order to achieve its global strategic ambitions. The first is domestic politics in which Turkey needs to resolve its own Kurdish question, as well as bridge the growing rift between the Islamist and secularist elements of Turkish society. The second is the relations with neighbors. Turkey, he argues, needs to resolve all bilateral disputes which have worsened its relations with its neighbors in the quest for a “zero problem policy.”

Taking socio-economic developments, the transformation of the ruling elite, and the strategic thinking of Davutoglu together, along with electoral outcomes, the following generalizations may be made regarding the new foreign policy:

IV.2.1 Multi- level identity rather than pure westernization:

During the cold war, Turkey’s identity was defined according to the international context at that particular time, mainly according to the ideological stance of countries. Therefore, Turkey joined NATO and identified with the western bloc with pro-western and pro-American interests.¹¹¹

When the Cold War came to an end, Turkey’s fixed identity faced a problem in light of the increasing importance of other, long suppressed identities in Turkish society and there was no room for the isolation and stagnancy in the foreign relations that Turkey witnessed during the Cold War.

Under the AKP Turkey defined itself as “central country” with multiple regional

¹¹¹ - Yilmaz Kaplan. “Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the AKP Era: Has There Really Been a Change?” *e – International Relations* August 22, 2011 <http://www.e-ir.info/2011/08/22/turkey%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy-in-the-akp-era-has-there-really-been-a-change-2/> Accessed on Sep 3 2012

identities which force it to have a more active role in the region especially with the countries with which it shares borders as well as constituting a de facto bridge between the West and Muslim World. Erdoğan claims that “our responsibilities are not just internal anymore but in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus [...]”.¹¹²

This shift in identity led the AKP to follow a more multi - dimensional foreign policy having in mind Turkey’s geo – strategic position in line with the political, economic and social structure, power and potentials of Turkey. Thus, Turkey plays a role in regional and world politics, taking an original position regarding the occupation of Iraq and the Kurdish dilemma, the Iranian role in the Middle East, the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, political economy and the clash of civilizations.¹¹³

For many years the military was the guard of Turkish identity in terms of its secularity and westernization which entails a strategy of de-orientalization at home and moving away from the Middle East in foreign policy. However, this identity was not negotiated with the society’s minorities that have their own identities which were considered threats to the security of the state’s identity.¹¹⁴

After the rise of political Islam in Turkish public life during the late 1990s, the debate between the Islamic and secular identity of the Turkish state was intensified and reflected in foreign policy choices.

¹¹² -Ibid.

¹¹³ - GulBahar Yelken, “Turkish Foreign Policy.” 85.

¹¹⁴ - Enver Gulseven. “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post - Cold War Period”, 81.

For decades Turkey has followed a unidimensional security - oriented foreign policy perceived under tough threat perceptions. In this context, Turkey could not put forward its own strategic thought as a result of its fixed defensive position, and just tried to eliminate the threats in perception with reactive short term counter tactics. Passive reactions with strategic deflections were determined in international politics, instead of a self-initiated active policy formulation with a strategic persistence.¹¹⁵

On the other hand, the Kurdish crisis is another matter of identity conflict in Turkey. The Kurdish issue has been festering for a long time, and has achieved crisis proportions over the past several decades, characterized by clashes with the PKK, in fact, as it has been a problem since the foundation of the republic and is a real challenge facing the AKP. The AKP is aware that getting the support of the Kurdish population through solving the Kurdish problem is a must. The AKP can separate the Kurds from the PKK naturally by meeting the needs of identity of the Kurds rather than a policy seeking to separate the Kurds from the PKK with no vision of a future reconciliation. Rebuilding the confidence of the Kurdish people is a prerequisite for social peace. The PKK is likely to resist such efforts, and bring to bear the incompatibility of the Turkish state and Kurdish aspirations.¹¹⁶ After having first thought the Kurds would fit into the plan for zero problems, the AKP has had to recognize that the issue is much more complicated, and it would appear that the revolution neighboring Syria makes matters even more difficult to resolve, since the Assad regime will try its best to exacerbate social problems in Turkey.

¹¹⁵ - GulBahar Yelken, "Turkish Foreign Policy", 51.

¹¹⁶ - Ferda Fahrioglu, "The Kurdish Issue and the AKP," *Strategic Outlook*, September 24, 2012. <http://www.strategicoutlook.org/middle-east/news-the-kurdish-issue-and-the-akp.html>. (accessed October 6, 2012)

Identity and Turkish – EU relations:

When the AKP came to power it realized that Europeanization required more open, democratic, plural and civil society on the basis of EU norms which would help them to emancipate their identity from the Kemalist limits.¹¹⁷

When analyzing EU – Turkish relations during the rule of AKP one can divide it into two major phases, where the first one from 2002 till 2005 and the second from 2005 to the present. The year 2005 can be considered a distinctive one in terms of Turkish enthusiasm towards EU membership as it was then that EU accession negotiations began.

The first phase can be titled the “golden age of Europeanization in Turkey” where the reforms at several levels in Turkish life took place. Economically, the IMF and EU motivated regulatory reforms that helped the achievement of economic growth in Turkey as explained earlier in this thesis. Moreover, the civil reforms reflected in more democratization and a more active role for civil society was also achieved during this golden era. However, the main area affected by the Europeanization process was foreign policy.¹¹⁸

Just after the announcement of the electoral results of November 2002, the leader of the AKP Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a series of visits to EU leaders. These aimed at

¹¹⁷ -Ibid, 95.

¹¹⁸ - Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz. “Between Europeanization Ana Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era” *Turkish Studies* 10.1 (2009): 8.
http://www.ata.boun.edu.tr/scanneddocuments/Course_Material/ATA_682_final/3B2%20Onis-Yilmaz%20Foreign%20Policy%202009.pdf accessed March 3 2012

explaining the AKP's point of view and Turkey's willingness to achieve the needed reforms according to the criteria of the Copenhagen (1993) and Helsinki (1999) summits including the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, minority rights and a functioning market economy that matches the competitive European economy. The AKP's government passed the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th harmonization packages within two years, to July 2004. The reforms presented by the harmonization packages included increased powers for the civilian bureaucracy vis – a – vis the state elites, the abolition of the death penalty and State Security Courts, more space for freedom of expression and organization. The EU commission approved these harmonization packages in October 2004 and Turkey was declared a candidate to start the process of negotiations for full membership.¹¹⁹

After the year 2005 there was an obvious decline in Turkish enthusiasm towards westernization and EU membership which affected the reform process. The matter of Turkey's identity became an obstacle with German and French insistence to keep the Christian nature of EU members which would, Merkel and Sarkozy argued, be threatened by the entrance of a country with a Muslim majority like Turkey led by Islamists in their point of view. This was also reflected in the decline of public support for EU membership among Turks.

IV.2.2 The use of soft power:

The term “soft power” embeds a country's ability to influence events through

¹¹⁹ - Hakan Koni, “Foreign Policy Vision of the Turkish Religious Right: From National View to Justice and Development Party”. *International Journal of West Asian Studies*. 3.1 (2011) : 77
<http://journalarticle.ukm.my/2037/1/index.pdf> accessed 29 -4-2012

persuasion

and attraction, rather than military or financial coercion. In other words, the country has more soft power if its culture, values and institutions incite admiration and respect in other parts of the world. For example, diplomacy and a nation's standing in international bodies enable it to build alliances and serve its national interests.¹²⁰

Different elements can play a role in a state's soft power such as culture, education, arts, film, poetry, literature, print and visual media, architecture, higher education, NGOs, science and technology, tourism, diplomacy and the political system.

After the attacks of 11 September 2001, the global context went towards the emphasis on "securitization" and the importance of hard power represented in fighting terror through military means. This, however, was the very context in which Turkey preferred to place emphasis on democratization and the state's soft power.¹²¹

From public diplomacy, education, arts, media, sciences, foreign policy and economy emerged Turkey's potential and active role in the region, taking into consideration its history and geography as well as global transformations. The post-11 September era witnessed the emergence of new actors that influence regional systems such as international courts, media, public opinion, human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations. Thus, this pushed the global system to be more dynamic, multidimensional and less controllable. Turkey's shift thus corresponded to a greater shift

¹²⁰ - Tysha Bohorquez, "Soft Power -The Means to Success in World Politics" review of the *importance of soft power*, by Joseph Nye, *UCLA International Institute* December 01, 2005.

<http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=34734> (accessed on February 5, 2011)

¹²¹ - Yilmaz Kaplan, *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the AKP Era*, 1.

at the global level¹²²

In this context, an opportunity for Turkish intellectuals was provided to develop their own concepts and theories and to see the world from a non –Eurocentric perspective, as evidenced in Davutoglu’s “ Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position” with its focus on soft power. One can argue that a main pillar of Turkey’s soft power lies in its democratic experience which has helped in positioning the country as a global actor and was an inspiration for emerging social and political movements in the region especially the Arab World, with its radical transformations and popular struggle beginning in early 2011.¹²³ Here too the explanatory value of constructivism is patent.

Negative perceptions of Turkey at the international level were the result of policies pursued by successive Turkish governments such as extra – judicial killings, torture in prisons, human right abuses, suppression of freedom of thought and expression. Over the past decade, the country has been able to change this image and the world now focuses more on Turkey’s social change and economic development and new foreign policy. Here, the importance of public diplomacy as strategic communication tool to understand, inform and influence the public is very important and the “story of Turkey” was the result of successfully using this tool a significant one from east to west.¹²⁴

In other words, Turkey managed to preserve its conservative values as it entered the 21th century with high dynamism abandoning the calculations of the Cold War era in

¹²² - Ibrahim Kalin, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey,” *Perceptions* XVI.3 (2011):5-6.
<http://sam.gov.tr/soft-power-and-public-diplomacy-in-turkey/> Accessed on April 2012

¹²³ - Ibid, 8-9.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 16-18

which relations and role are determined by the tensions of the polarized world system, and adopting a new vision that is based on its own geographical and historical background. Thus, Turkey was able to fuse traditional Islamic – Ottoman culture with socio- economic modernization.¹²⁵

Turkey started to have a more active foreign policy in the surrounding regions aiming to have a leadership role in it. However, in some regions like Balkans and Central Asia the leadership role was limited in contrast to the Middle East. Therefore, the Middle East including North Africa became a major arena for Turkish foreign policy during the last decade but at the same time it pursued its humanitarian interventions and peace – keeping role in Afghanistan and Balkans.

Resolving the Kurdish dilemma through soft power was the aim of the AKP when it first governed the country. For the military, the Kurdish issue is about terrorism but the AKP realized that the rise of democratic standards in Turkey depends on the resolution of the Kurdish issue. The resolution of this issue depends on the rise of democratic standards. After 2007, the military's monopoly over the Kurdish issue was ended, and this helped the AKP to expand its sphere of action. The military is currently able to have a word over the Kurdish issue only to the extent that the civilian government allows it. Moreover, more than half of the Kurds are natural supporters of the AKP which promotes a civilian resolution instead of a military resolution. The ruling party clearly stated that the policy of forced assimilation is off the table. Moreover, it creates an economic attraction for the Kurds that is to integrate them with the rest of Turkey. This

¹²⁵ - Ibid, 19.

situation isn't widely accepted by the PKK as it started to lose the Kurdish ground to the AKP.¹²⁶ Paradoxically, things are going back to square one, taking into consideration the complications of the surrounding countries facing troubles such as Syria. The recent upsurge in fighting with the PKK caused by the latter's ambushes of Turkish soldiers seems to reopening the door to the use of power and a reassessment, for this particular problem, of soft power strategies.

The Middle East and Turkish soft power:

Turkish soft power was deployed in the Middle East at many levels during the past few years especially in media and foreign policy.

Concerning media, Turkey, like many other countries that broadcast TV and radio channels in Arabic to the Arab world such as Russia, Great Britain, Iran and the USA, established direct communications with the Arab countries in April 2010 when the Arabic-language service of the TRT, TRT Arapça, began broadcasting, although it is still not as powerful as those of other countries in term of celebrity among a Middle Eastern audience because of its novelty. On the other hand, the audience for Turkish TV series in the Arab world is very high and one series titled *Noor* (Gümüş) reached an Arab audience of 85 million, while another, *Under the Lime Trees*, known to the Arab audience as *Al-Awraq Al-Motasaqeta - (Ihlamlar Altında)*, has 67 million Arab viewers. Though *Noor* was the first Turkish TV series to enter the Arab world, a total of 42 series have now done so. Turkish TV series along with Turkish policies towards the Middle East have all helped make Turkey an important tourist destination for the Arab countries. Visitors to

¹²⁶ - Mumtazer Turkone, "Kurdish Issue and AK Party's Soft Power," *Today's Zaman*, August 8, 2011. http://www.sundayszaman.com/sunday/columnistDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=253152

Turkey in 2002 from the Arab countries numbered 975,000, but by 2010, this figure had risen to 3.6 million. The percentage of citizens of Middle Eastern countries within the total number of visitors rose in the same period from 7.3% to 12.6%.¹²⁷

The Turkish echo in the Middle East found unexpected support in the Turkish cinema and music industries. In addition to the above – mentioned TV series, Turkish music, movies, and other television programs have become instant hits in Arab societies; the finale of the Turkish TV series *Noor* was watched by approximately twenty-one million Arab viewers in 2009. They were heavily impressed by the alternative films and videos provided in term of how predominantly Muslim societies can live, illustrating increased societal freedoms—especially in the case of Turkish women—and higher living standards, thanks to the Turkish liberalized economy.¹²⁸ One can speculate that these initiating spectacles probably played a role in predisposing Arab peoples to revolt against their repressive regimes.

In the field of foreign policy, the Turkish relations with neighbors progressed positively to a certain extent in light of the “zero problem policy” pursued under the AKP and Turkey’s ambition to play a major role in the region. For Turkey the Middle East can be divided into three parts: the Arab World, Israel and Iran. During the first years of AKP rule a pro – European policy was pursued. Greater emphasis on Turkey’s regional

¹²⁷ -Ozdem Sanberk, “How Strong is Turkey in the Middle east,” *Turkish Weekly* May 9, 2012. <http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3621/how-strong-is-turkey-in-the-middle-east.html>. (Accessed 9 June 2012)

¹²⁸ - Dalma Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill: The Syrian Uprising,” *The Middle East Quarterly* XIX.2 (2012): 45 <http://www.meforum.org/meq/pdfs/3206.pdf> (Accessed on July 19, 2012)

relations was considered later on. As for countries like Iran, Iraq and Syria which had hostile relations with Turkey in the past, relations transformed dramatically under the AKP. Economic relations and investments played a major role in this rapprochement. In 2000 Turkey exported \$184 million to Syria, whereas in 2010 the figure had leaped to \$1.6 billion. Meanwhile the Turkish exports to Iraq have mushroomed from \$829 million in 2003 to over \$ 6 billion in 2010.¹²⁹

After the second AKP victory in the 2007 elections, having consolidated its position at home, they found an opportunity to set new foreign policy priorities taking into consideration the changing regional circumstances and popularity of the zero problem policy. As found in the constructivist paradigm, which thus refutes neorealist structuralism, classical realist rigid Hobbesianism and neo-liberal market reification, foreign and international affairs slowly rotate and develop, based on profound (re-) construction of identities, economies and polities.

Thus, the zero problem policy was a serious attempt to diversify all possible relations especially economic and diplomatic ones with all surrounding states. The government began with Iraq, where Turkey brought about a change in relations with Kurdish parties in Northern Iraq. Commercial ties expanded in spite of frozen diplomatic relations with Iraqi Kurdistan, in the hopes that a chance would ultimately be offered of a peaceful solution.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ - Bakery Henri J., *Turkish Foreign Policy and the Middle East*, 6.

¹³⁰ - *Ibid*, 7.

Iranian- Turkish relations had been tense during the 1990s because of Turkish claims that Iran was helping the PKK by permitting it to use Iranian territories as camps for their attacks on Turkey, and Iranian claims that Turkey was providing shelter to Mujahedeen Al-Khalk, who aimed to overthrow the Khomeini regime in Iran. Hostile relations peaked in 1999 when the countries went to the brink of war due to Turkish bombing of some PKK targets within the Iranian borders. Tensions decreased thereafter somewhat, but after 2002 relations became multidimensional with more focus on economic and diplomatic issues.¹³¹

Regarding the Iranian nuclear program and in particular, uranium enrichment, Turkey opposed the aggressiveness of the US and EU, adopting an intermediate position, offering to mediate between Iran and the West, yet convincing Iran to abandon its ambitions. However, the AKP government believed in the value of a historically – based good neighborhood policy and promised to oppose any Western attack on Iran. This was followed by active diplomatic initiatives with official exchanges of visits between the leaderships of the countries, such as the official visit of Ahmadinajad in 2008 in which he met Erdogan and Gul and during which the Turkish tune regarding Iran’s nuclear program was softened and Turkey declared that it would not oppose Iran’s production of nuclear energy for civilian purposes. In 2010 Erdogan visited Iran with the president of Brazil Lula Da Silva for an agreement on the import of enriched uranium to Turkey. This

¹³¹- Hakan Koni, Foreign Policy Vision of the Turkish Religious Right: From National, 80.

time, Erdogan gave a speech denouncing Israel's nuclear program and the countries' mediation efforts failed primarily because of Western opposition.¹³²

Relations with Syria also improved during the first years of the AKP rule after a period of tense relations that ended in 1999 with the signing of the Adana agreement, calling for cooperation of the two countries in security and military matters followed by other trade and military agreements as well as the exchange of high level official visits.

Bilateral relations entered a honeymoon under the AKP with Erdogan referring to the Syrians as "brothers" in some speeches even as trade relations developed significantly. Turkish-Syrian trade increased, from \$824.1 million in 2003 to \$1.84 billion in 2010. In 2011 alone, Turkish companies invested a total of \$223 million in the Syrian metal, food, cement, and open sea fishing industries. In addition, there was a considerable increase in the number of Syrian tourists visiting Turkey, up from 154,000 in 2003 to 500,000 in 2010 while the abolition of visa requirements for visits shorter than ninety days undoubtedly played a role in the success of both tourism and trade.¹³³

Meanwhile, Turkey played a mediator role between neighboring countries and Syria, including Lebanon and Israel. In this context, Israel sent a secret message to Syria through Turkey in June 2007 in which Israel asked Damascus to take some constructive steps toward peace in return for Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights. In addition, when Hezbollah abducted two Israeli soldiers in July 2006, Erdogan sent Davutoglu to Damascus at Olmert and President George Bush's request to ask that Assad use his

¹³² -Ibid, 80-81.

¹³³ -Ibid.

influence on Hezbollah. Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora sought the help of Ankara to convince Damascus and Tehran to abandon their politically destabilizing strategies toward Lebanon. Although these efforts apparently failed, the fact that they were undertaken at all indicates a role for Turkey hitherto not contemplated within the Middle East's various conflicts.¹³⁴

The bilateral ties were turning into personal ones between Erdogan and Bashar Al-Assad and future expectations for these relations were promising until the Arab uprisings in early 2011. Turkish – Syrian relations were best explained by Abdullah Gul's proclamation that Turkey's trust in the Syrian government had vanished as a result of the massacres committed by the Syrian regime against its own people. Ankara revealed in late 2011 that it was preparing targeted sanctions against Damascus, which might include a buffer zone on Syrian territory in addition to its support for the Syrian resistance and its acceptance to host thousands of Syrian refugees in areas bordering Syria. These events ended the zero problems approach pursued by Turkey towards Syria and after a 10-year honeymoon; Turkish-Syrian relations are back to square one.¹³⁵

Lebanon was also the object of Turkish activism in the Middle East. According to Davutoglu instability in Lebanon would affect the whole Middle East. In other words, any intervention in Lebanese affairs on behalf of one group usually leads to the intervention of regional and global actors, which in turn results in transforming the

¹³⁴ -Ibid, 46.

¹³⁵ -Ibid,47

domestic crisis into a regional and global one.¹³⁶ Economic relations were as usual a priority for Turkey. The volume of trade between the countries increased from around a quarter million dollars in 2003 to more than a billion dollars in 2008.¹³⁷ Turkey had intensified its diplomatic relations with Lebanon in the early 2000s and the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri was invited to Turkey in 2004 before being assassinated. In Lebanon too, Turkey tried its hand at mediation. The Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006 was a milestone in Turkish engagement. Turkey condemned the Israeli attacks and endeavored to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible. After the end of the war in 2006 , Turkey participated in the reconstruction of Lebanon, donating around 50 Million dollars.¹³⁸

Away from the Arab world, Turkey made positive steps towards a rapprochement with Cyprus and Georgia under the “zero problems” logo. A remarkable rapprochement was achieved in relations with Russia and Caucasian neighbors, taking into consideration economic and security matters.¹³⁹

In summary, Turkey under the AKP entered a new phase in transforming rigid relations with neighboring countries into active ones through following a win –win strategy in which both sides would benefit from cooperation. And the old and new

¹³⁶ - Tayyar Ari and Ferhat Pirincci, “Turkey’s New Foreign Policy towards the Middle East and the Perceptions in Syria and Lebanon,” *Akademik Bakis* 4.7(2010): 12.<http://academos.ro/sites/default/files/biblio-docs/837/01-tayyar-ari-ferhat-pirincci.pdf> (Accessed on February 10, 2012)

¹³⁷ - Ibid,14

¹³⁸ -Ibid, 13.

¹³⁹ - Heinz Kramer, AKP’s “new” foreign policy between vision and pragmatism , 36

hostilities were tackled in a different manner in which the emphasis was placed on the collective benefits to be gained by all regional actors as a result of increased regional stability.

Turkish soft power and the zero problem policy pursued since 2002 is now facing a crucial test in light of the Arab uprisings in which Turkey took sides in favor of the people, which affected its relations with regimes, when these survived, most notably in Syria. It remains to be seen how the crisis in Syria and in Syrian – Turkish relations develops. This is of the most importance, for Syria is an essential bridge to much of the rest of the Arab World and the Middle East. But the Turkish leadership has gambled that the strategy, in the longer term, is a winning one.

IV.2.3 A more independent foreign policy:

During the Cold War Turkish foreign policy lived in the shadow of Western policy, especially that of the US, creating a negative image in the minds of Middle Eastern countries which Turkey saw as the poodle of the West in the region and a strategic ally for USA and Israel, something which precluded Turkish initiatives in the Middle East. This image was transformed as a result of Turkish – American tension over the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the firm stance taken towards the Israeli siege and onslaught of Gaza in 2008.

Changing political discourse with USA and Israel:

Regarding relations with the USA, these were affected by Turkish policy shifts towards the Middle East in particular and the region in general. The milestone in bilateral

relations was the refusal of the Turkish parliament to allow U.S. troops to use the Turkish territory in their invasion of Iraq in March 2003, a decision taken under the pressure of the Turkish grassroots and public opinion. This led to greater trust in the Arab World as a whole and a gradually increased willingness to trust Turkish initiatives throughout the area.

As a gesture to placate the U.S, Ankara offered to send 20,000 Turkish troops to help reconstruction. The U.S did not agree, and took little notice of Turkish anxieties regarding Northern Iraq. Turkey also demanded 92 billion dollars in compensation for the harm done by the Iraq War to the Turkish economy. The Bush administration also ignored this request.¹⁴⁰

At this moment the USA realized that it could no longer take Turkish support for granted. Relations were thus strained but far from broken, reflecting the now complicated nature of bilateral relations, and notably the ambiguous perception of political Islam in Washington.

In addition, Turkish – US relations continued to face challenges in light of Turkish support for aspects of the Iranian nuclear program, and Turkey’s “NO” vote on sanctions against Iran at the United Security Council, as well as Turkish support of the Palestinian cause. Turkey continues to recognize the importance role of relations with the

¹⁴⁰ - Mustafa GÜN, “The USA- Turkey Relationship after 2003 Iraq Crisis,” *Bilge Strateji* 1.2 (2010): 140.
<http://www.bilgesam.org/en/images/stories/makaleler/THE%20USA-TURKEY%20RELATIONSHIP%20AFTER%20THE%202003%20IRAQ%20CRISIS.pdf>

U.S, but through the political, economic, and identification changes noted here, it displays far greater confidence in its choices.

Turkey and the U.S have a series of long – term common interests which mark the limits of disagreement, including: NATO, EU, War on terrorism, Economic concerns.¹⁴¹The rational choice for U.S policymakers, which they seem to have made, is to argue each of its cases, in the hopes that a self- confident and rather successful Turkish government will come around, within the limits imposed by the Turkish government in the form of soft power and the quest to minimize problems with the states of the region.

Turkish – Israeli relations went through ups and downs under the AKP affected by the Palestinian issue in particular. In November 2007, a meeting between the Israeli president Simon Peres and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas took place in Turkey, seen then as a regional mediator. Relations dramatically deteriorated after the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in 2008-2009 and even before that when Khalid Mashal visited Ankara and met with Abdullah Gul. Turkish relations with Hamas under the AKP improved greatly, something the AKP justified by Hamas’s electoral victory in 2006 and the perceived necessity of including Hamas in the quest for an end to the Palestinian- Israeli conflict.¹⁴²

On January 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan strongly condemned Israeli aggression against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during the Davos Conference and in

¹⁴¹ -Ibid,142

¹⁴² -Heinz Kramer, AKP’s “new” foreign policy between vision and pragmatism, 18.

the presence of Simon Peres. In June 2010, the Flotilla incident further strained relations and led to the freezing of diplomatic ties, as nine Turkish activists were killed by Israeli soldiers while trying to break the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, the Israeli government refused to apologize for the killing but softened the blockade slightly under international pressure.¹⁴³

Moving away from the “zero problems policy”, Erdogan was following public support of the Palestinian issue and this succeeded in raising the public image of Erdogan and Turkey in the Middle East. Improving Turkish relations with Middle East was also an indication for Israel that Turkey was following an Islamization agenda, a matter that contributed to worsening relations.¹⁴⁴

In conclusion, the Turkish foreign policy during the last decade has been undergoing dramatic changes in which Turkey has started to estimate its real potential and power especially at the regional level, keeping in mind that Turkey is one of the secular, democratic and pro-Western countries with a Muslim majority. Changes in foreign policy were linked to the transformation of identity based on social, economic and political shifts domestically, rather than simply an adaptation to a transformed international system. Turkey’s greater self- confidence, linked to greater power and wealth it is true, made it possible for the AKP to adopt a policy of equidistance from all foreign actors, the current crisis in relations with Syria notwithstanding. Continuing international issues, notably Palestine and Iran, also suggest limitations to the construction of a new Turkish posture internationally.

¹⁴³ - Ibid,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 19.

A proper understanding of the transformation of Turkey's standing in the world-order over the last decade needs also to take into account global events, starting from the end of the Cold War, 11 September 2001, the American "war on terror", and the financial crisis. The Syrian crisis represents another major rupture for Turkey, placing the Turkish soft power predilection under momentary threat.

Conclusion:

One decade after the first elections won by the AKP and its accession to power, Turkey's internal, regional and international politics have changed dramatically, with significant results in terms of the enhancement of the country's position. Through its three electoral victories, the party was able to achieve impressive results, measured in terms of economic growth despite a global crisis, and its refusal to sign an agreement

with the IMF. This realism in internal affairs, combined with pragmatic decisions, made success possible, and show that the idea that an Islamic link did nothing to limit the capacity of the AKP to act as a political, a highly political party, increasing its share of the vote through three successive elections. In foreign affairs, the AKP transformed the country into a major regional power, again through a proactive, pragmatic, non-ideological approach to its partners, with whom it wished to work towards a zero problem” relationship. In keeping with requirements for EU admission, which the AKP continues to pursue, although not always with the same amount of enthusiasm, one of the interests of Turkey in foreign relations has been that governments of the region be receptive to the demands of their peoples. When clearly this was not the case, particularly beginning in 2011, Erdogan and his ministers did not hesitate to support the replacement of an existing region, as was seen in Libya, Egypt and Syria. At the same time, the Turkish government has been unwilling to use force and has relied on techniques related to soft, as opposed to hard power. All of this seems to have appealed to the population, because of its combination of nationalist and conservative yet forward-looking elements.

The “Turkish model” has thus emerged rapidly, and has proven attractive to states in the region and beyond. The particular combination of conservatism mixed with liberalism in the economic sphere and certain elements of modernization appeared to show that a pragmatic discourse is compatible with the ideological roots of the AKP, and makes it possible for it to rule a country which continues to be secular in its institutions and its recent practices. Erdogan, it should not be forgotten, was once imprisoned for a poem judged anti-secular, has managed to become one of the most popular politicians in the largely Islamic Middle East, including the Arab world.

How was this degree of openness and development achieved in such a relatively short time under the rule of a party labeled “Islamist”? The application of constructivism as a theoretical paradigm enables us to understand this. First of all, the element of change is part of the constructivist perspective. The AKP learned from the trials and errors of its predecessors, especially the Welfare Party. It learned quickly from its own mistakes. Its members understood that the military council would never tolerate an explicitly religious party, although it could not easily object to the ideological inspirations of the AKP. It will be recalled that a particular group of reformists within the National View Movement (NVM) decided that the road to success required a shift in political discourse. Thus, from the 1970s on, the long road to change was undertaken. The reformist leadership labeled itself conservative rather than Islamist, and proved themselves persuasive over time. They also understood that the quest for EU membership, supported by a large majority of the population and the elites, would have as an important side effect the weakening of the military, stronghold of Kemalism, since this corresponded to European prerequisites for membership. The application was wanted in itself and pursued also as a tactic in internal politics. By the time the AKP had been formed, the transformation needed for success had been achieved, and this strategic transformation resulted in genuine changes in the party and the electorate which made it possible to maintain power once it had been achieved, and render impossible a new coup d’état by the military, which was now on the defensive. The democratic system required by the AKP to ensure success and by the EU for purposes of membership, helped to promote Islamic social and political forces to the level of legitimate players even as Turkish political life opened up and liberties became a routine part of political life in Turkey.

The AKP had also understood that the citizens would not welcome any kind of aggressive confrontation with the secular state and preferred a moderate political party working to achieve domestic reforms, including of course religious (and not only political) freedoms, particularly if prosperity was to be part of the formula. All of these mechanisms are to an extent predicted in the constructivist model, which combines political economy and cultural transformations in its explanation for the posture of states domestically and internationally, refusing to place the society in the fixed context of a static structure, the international system.

In short, the AKP's journey from Islamists to conservative democrats was a result of a long political adaptation process in which respect for the Turkish secular red lines and the embracing of a pragmatic program were the main lessons. Moreover, the interaction between the party and surrounding social changes as well as an evolving international environment led to a change in the party's attitude and self definition. At the same time, Turkish voters were tempted by the AKP's emphasis on issues directly related to the standard of living and improved social services, most particularly in the health and housing sectors. Dealing with people's daily concerns rather than abstract ideological matters helped the AKP gain the public trust. The party was seen as focusing mainly on problem identification and problem solving. Once again, a strategic consideration became a formula for success and then a genuine characteristic of the ruling party and of the policies it pursued. The economic success which they registered over the years was most certainly the principal cause of their repeated and growing political success, and this can be seen as a matter of luck, or of design. In either case, it contributed significantly to the

construction of an image, a policy, and thus, a changed country which strongly attracted and influenced the policies of Turkey's neighbors as well.

In other words, the AKP with its sometimes ultra-liberal policies was able to take advantage of the economic and political situation and successfully managed the economic crisis politically which impressed the Turkish voters.

Third of all, after a long period of Kemalist suppression of aspects of collective identity, the society was ready for change of some sort. At the same time, this change brought with it renewed polarization and debate. The AKP, through this polarization, appears to have emerged at least for the moment, as that party which shows greatest respect for the multilayered and complex nature of Turkish identity. The long suppression of political Islam and Islamists is perhaps what in the end provided the AKP with the understanding, the tools, the adaptability and the political wisdom to win the necessary combination of credibility and legitimacy which made possible their accession to power and the maintenance thereof.

It has been pointed out that “democracy involves a process of trial and error,” a joint learning experience. It has also been indicated that “through a painful experience and impasse those who hope to win everything understood that the possibility of winning something is better than winning nothing. The Turkish experience noted here supports these views.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ - Zeyneb İmisiker, *the Changing Nature of Islamism in Turkey*, 59.

Finally, the transformation of the international context after the end of the cold war provided a global, then a regional environment in which the emerging social, economic cultural and political factors at work within various levels of the society could emerge as a renewed force, a new and dynamic construct.

Political Islam, it is known, comes in a variety of forms. It is now seen that these forms and the environment in which they exist, are subject to change, sometimes slow and otherwise rapid. Each experience is particular, one might even say unique, and based on the specific context in which they operate. It can be seen with the example of the AKP that what we are talking about is politics and not a reified form of “Islam”, and this changes the picture, making Islamists appear as less a threat to their secular counterparts and more as normal players of the political game.¹⁴⁶ Their inclusion in the political system opens a way for them to become moderate and for Turkey to go forward in the consolidation of democracy.¹⁴⁷ The constructivist paradigm conceives international relations as a series of evolving pyramids (representing states), in which transformations at the deepest, economic and identitarian levels of a social formation, and their gradual but solid eruption at the regional and global level, bring about willed transformations. In this view, we are no longer prisoners of the rigid structures of human nature, the market or the international system posited by realism, neo-realism and liberalism, nor is one limited by the abstract and formalistic prescriptions of institutionalism. Constructivism, with its emphasis on the slow, tortuous and complex transformation of domestic and

¹⁴⁶ - Mohamad Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 2008)
https://www.csidonline.org/.../Mohammed_Ayoob_CSID_paper.pdf

¹⁴⁷ - Zeyneb İmisiker, *the Changing Nature of Islamism in Turkey*, 2.

international social identities, is never far away in attempting to explain what remains one of the most extraordinary transformations of the past half century, that of Turkey in the early twentieth century.

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