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Atatürk and Erdoğan: Islam's Impact on Turkish Nationalism

Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak¹

Abstract: This paper will focus on the essence of Turkish nationalism and the strong influence of religion on Turkish nationalism. Two different types of Turkish nationalisms will be examined in the paper. The first is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's secular Turkish nationalism, and the second is the current Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's moderate Islamic Neo-Ottoman. The thesis seeks to answer the question: In light of Atatürk's and Erdoğan's nationalisms, what is religion's impact on Turkish nationalism?

This paper will focus on and explore such basic concepts as: nation, nationalism, types of nationalism, different definitions of nationalism, ethnic, ethnicity and religion using the theories of Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson, Walker Connor and others.

The history of Turkish nationalism will also be laid out. In the first section, the dominant ideas of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Ottoman Empire, such as Turkism, pan-Islamism and Westernization, will be examined. This section will also include Yusuf Akçura's and Ziya Gökalp's theories of nationalism, which are reflected in Atatürk's type of nationalism. This section will attempt to define the Turkishness of 1920s and the Turkishness of 2000s, as well as locate religion's position and impact in Turkish nationalism and political life.

This paper will also compare the two Turkish leaders and their nationalistic approaches. One section will be dedicated to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Here I will lay out such topics as Atatürk's pro-religious political acts he used to mobilize the masses during the independence war, his secularizing revolution after his victory, the emphasis on Turkishness instead of the concept of ummah, his downgrading of political-Islam through the abolishment of the Caliphate and pro-Islamic political parties, and finally, the creation and modernization of modern Turkey by establishing the Turkish ethnic based nation state. In this section, the policies that had an impact on Turkish politics such as "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş" ("Citizen Speak Turkish"), the establishment of the Turkish History Association, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, the Turkish Language Association, and the "Turkish Ezan* Policy" (*Muslim call to prayer) will be examined.

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In the last part of this paper, the policies and ideas of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's moderate Islamic Neo-Ottoman type of Turkish nationalism, Turkish-Islamic synthesis, Erdoğan's policy regarding the Kurdish question, his dual identity based Turkish citizenship definition, and his Neo-Ottoman foreign policy will be examined. As Erdoğan is the current prime minister of Turkey this section will also rely on today's press and current Turkish politics.

In light of the theories which will be examined in the theoretical background and the dominant ideologies of Turkish nationalism, in its conclusion, the paper will seek to answer how was, is and will religion be an important and indispensable element of Turkish nationalism. Moreover, this paper will seek to prove that there is a deviation in Turkish nationalism's perception today when comparing it with pre-Erdoğan Turkey. This paper will show religion's increasing influence on Turkish nationalism.

Keywords: Atatürk, Erdoğan, Islam, Kemalism, Nationalism, TBMM, Laiklik, AKP, CHP, Religion.

Theoretical Background

Ethnicity refers to the cultural practices and outlooks of a given community of people that set them apart from others. The word ethnicity is derived from the Greek word for nation: *ethnos*.² Members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groups in a society and are seen by those other groups to be so in return. The most common characteristics of ethnic groups are language, history, ancestry, religion and style of dress.³ The word nation etymologically comes from Latin. It was derived from the past participle of the verb *nasci*, meaning to be born. The term was used for signifying blood ties and also to describe the inhabitants of a country regardless of the population's ethno-national composition.⁴

Anthony D. Smith, in his book *National Identity*, defines "nation" as a distinct human population sharing historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and duties for all members.⁵ Shared language, religion, culture, and a common descent can also be added to Smith's definition of nationalism.

Another important definition of the concept of the nation was made by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. In his article "The Nation," he argues that "nation" is a

² Walker Connor, "A Nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a..." in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) *Nationalism*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 43

³ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 4th Edition, Polity, 2001, p.246

⁴ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a..." in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) *Nationalism*, op cit, p.38

⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1991, p.14

community of people which is not racial or tribal. He strengthens his point of view by giving examples, such as the modern Italian nation's formation, which was based on the joining of the Romans, Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs and so forth. Thus Stalin came to the conclusion that a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.⁶

Like Stalin, the father of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp who was originally a Kurd, defines nationalism as neither an ideology nor race, nor as belonging to a certain group of people either geographical or political, but rather as a desire. Gökalp argues that a nation is composed of people who were raised in a certain type of education, in terms of language, religion, morality and esthetically. Gökalp emphasized that the components of nationality, such as societal and cultural unity, can be transferred to the next generations through education. According to Gökalp, blood ties are not required for the composition of a nation; instead, the core issue was education.⁷

Before analyzing specific types of nationalism, the difference between nation and ethnicity should be clarified. In his book *Nationalism*, Anthony Smith argues that nations are differentiated by their attributes of common rights and duties for members, and in having a single economy. Likewise, ethnies need not have a public culture but only some cultural element like language, religion, customs, etc.⁸

Nationalism has different schools of thought in it, such as modernism, perennialism, primordialism and ethno-symbolism.

Briefly, modernism argues that the concept of nation came into a being with the 1789 French Revolution. According to modernists, nations are derived from socio-economic, socio-cultural, political and ideological factors. According to Eric Hobsbawm, nations are invented. Perennialism, however, argues that the modernity of nations is simply assumed, and yet, was not always so. Perennialists argue that even if the nationalist ideology is a recent development, nations have always existed in history. On the contrary to modernism and perennialism, primordialism argues that nations are primordial because they existed in the first order of time and lie at the root of subsequent processes and developments. One of the most important features of primordialist nationalism is that at its essence is organicist nationalism. Cultural symbols like religion, language, and color are good examples of

6 Joseph Stalin, "The Nation," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) *Nationalism*, op cit, pp. 32-33

7 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkcülüğün Esasları*, Ankara, Elips Kitap, 2006, pp. 22-23

8 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001, p.14

determinants of organicist nationalism. Lastly, the ethno-symbolic approach, unlike other paradigms, focuses on subjective elements in the persistence of ethnies, the formation of nations and the impact of nationalism.⁹

Having examined the types of nationalism that exist, we will now analyze the essence of Turkish nationalism. In my opinion, Turkish nationalism has perennial roots. While not rejecting the existence of new nations, the Turkish national discourse has tried to base Turkey's history at the center Asia's Hun Empire; Ziya Gökalp in fact states that the Turks' history should begin with the Asian Hun Empire (Huyong-Nu in the Chinese sources), who's history was inscribed in the Orhun Inscriptions.¹⁰

Despite the "old history" of the Turkish nation, Turkish nationalism does not constitute organicist national elements. Although Turkish nationalism has marks of perennialism, we should not ignore the modernist concept of civic nationalism and its influence on Turkish nationalism.

Anthony Smith makes a distinction between ethnic and territorial nationalisms. In ethnic/organic nationalism, individuals are born into a nation and wherever they may migrate, they remain an intrinsic part of their nation of birth. On the other hand, where territorial nationalism is concerned, the national is based on residence, history, and public culture, not on genealogy and ethno-linguistic culture. In order to be a part of territorial nationalism, a citizen should fulfill his/her obligations while enjoying his/her rights. Such instances include learning and conducting affairs in the dominant language (Turkish), learning the history and the literature (Turkish), observing customs and Turkish political symbols and institutions. Territorial nationalism aims to assimilate the different elements into one host nation.¹¹

Walker Connor (1993) uses the term *Staatsvolk* to illustrate the process by which the dominant ethnic group comes to determine the "national essence" of the nation-state.

Staatsvolk describes a people who are culturally and politically preeminent in a state even though other groups may well be presented in significant numbers. Connor suggests that through their preeminence, the dominant group's culture and language come to be represented as the core or national culture and language. Minority groups--their cultures and languages--consequently tend to be excluded from "national" recognition. At the same time, minority groups are also vigorously encouraged, and/or coerced, by the

9 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, op cit, pp. 45-57

10 Enver Behnan Şapolyo, *Ziya Gökalp İttihadi Terakki ve Mesrutiyet Tarihi*, İstanbul, 1974, p.276

11 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, op cit, pp. 39-41

dominant ethnies to assimilate to national norms.¹²

The Turkish Republic's essence and her relations with her citizens of the republic are defined in Articles 2 and 66 of the Turkish Constitution. According to Article 66 of the current 1982 Turkish Constitution, everyone who is bound to the Turkish Republic in terms of citizenship is defined as a Turk. Hence every Turkish citizen, regardless if he/she is a Turk, Kurd, Jew, Armenian, Greek, Laz or Circassian, is recognized as an equal citizen. Article 2 states, "The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular, and social state governed by the rule of law, bearing in mind the concepts of public peace, national solidarity and justice respecting human rights, loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk (Atatürk Milliyetçiliği) and based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the preamble."¹³ In order to understand the essence of Turkish nationalism, the concept of Atatürk's nationalism should be examined. According to Necmi Yüzbaşıoğlu and Bülent Tanör, the term "Atatürk's Nationalism" is a synonym for Turkish nationalism. Yüzbaşıoğlu and Tanör state in their book that this nationalism is based on several principles: Turkey's openness to Atatürk's reforms and principles, the state's indivisibility, the interpretation of the term "Turk" on the basis of citizenship and not on ethnicity the policy of seeking peace, the idea that the citizen is bound to the state, and finally on secularism and sovereignty.¹⁴ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk summarized his perception of citizenship with his famous motto, "Happy is the man who says he/she is a Turk" (*Ne mutlu Türküm diyene*). Hence Turkishness/Turkism became the only identity for all citizens of the republic regardless of religion and ethnic origin.

The Turkish National Education Ministry's 8th grade textbook, *Turkish Republic's Revolution History and Kemalism*, states that Atatürk's perception of Turkishness is whoever is proud of defining him/herself as a Turk, who feels proud of being a Turk, and whoever believes in the future of the nation is considered as such.¹⁵ Moreover, the Turkish National Education Ministry's 5th grade Social Studies textbook defines the Turkish nation as a nation that lives together, protects the homeland, and shares a common language, culture and sense of self. Furthermore, the book states that anyone who declares "I am a Turk," is considered a Turk.¹⁶

¹² Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights, Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p.81

¹³ 1982 Turkish Constitution, Istanbul, 2010, Article 2 and Article 66

¹⁴ Bülent Tanör and Necmi Yüzbaşıoğlu, *1982 Anayasasına Göre Türk Anayasa Hukuku*, Istanbul, Beta, 2004, p.66

¹⁵ Mehmet Saray (ed.) *T.C. İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Ders Kitabı İlk Öğretim 8*, Istanbul, MEB Devlet Kitapları, Kelebek Matbaacılık, 2009, p.151

¹⁶ Samettin Başol, Fatma Ünal, Hikmet Azer, Abdullah Yıldız and Ömer Faruk Evirgen, *Sosyal Bilgiler İlköğretim 5*, Istanbul, MEB Devlet Kitapları, Bediralp Matbaacılık, 2010, p.45

Another important aspect of nationalism is the official uniting language concept. Benedict Anderson, in his article "Imagined Communities," argued that print languages laid the bases for national consciousness. People began to comprehend one another via print and paper.¹⁷ Hence the different dialects became united in a more dominant one. In the case of Turkey, as Ziya Gökalp put it in his book *Türkleşmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak (Turkification, Islamization, Modernization)*, that while giving importance to local dialects, he argued that the dialect of Istanbul should be recognized as the main and national dialect of the Turkish language.¹⁸ Article 3 of the Turkish Constitution states that the Turkish language is the sole official language within the boundaries of the Turkish Republic today.¹⁹

Another vital aspect for this research is the concept of religion. Anthony Giddens, in his book *Sociology*, defines the concept of religion in terms of a European point of view. Briefly, religion is a belief in a supreme being who commands us to behave in a moral fashion on this earth and promises an afterlife. In addition to his definition, Giddens emphasizes that the concept of religion should not only be identified with monotheism.²⁰

After defining the concept of religion, in order to understand the impact of religion in Turkish political history, we should focus on the roots of the religious formations and institutions and the concept of secularism.

As is well known, Islam was the sovereign religion of the Ottoman Empire. In order to enforce an efficient government mechanism on its subjects, the Ottoman Empire introduced the Millet System. This system organized the population on the basis of religion and sect. The Millet System determined the relationship between communities and the state. All Muslims, regardless of their ethnic origin, formed the *Millet-i İslam* (The Muslim Nation). In addition to the Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians (Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs) and Gregorian Christians (Armenians, Georgians) were recognized as different Millets. The society was mainly composed and identified on the basis of religion, or in other words, the society was composed of Muslims and non-Muslims. Consequently, an individual's status was based on religion.²¹

In the Ottoman periods the religious affairs were handled by the Sheikh Ul-Islam (*Şeyhülislam*). From 1923, the year the Turkish Republic was established,

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.) *Nationalism*, op cit, p.94

¹⁸ Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, Istanbul, Toker Yayınları, 2007, pp.61-62

¹⁹ 1982 Turkish Constitution, Istanbul, 2010, Article 3

²⁰ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 4th Edition. Cambridge, Polity, 2001, p.531

²¹ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *A Culture of Peaceful Coexistence*, Istanbul, Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture – IRCICA, 2004, p.39

until 1924, the Sheikh Ul-Islam Institution was transformed into the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Charitable Foundations (*Şeriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti*). That same year the most important Islamic institution, the Caliphate, was abolished. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Charitable Foundations shared the same destiny. The Turkish nation-state issued law No. 429 and established the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*).²² The Diyanet began operating, and continues to operate, under the auspices of the government. Its position is defined in Article 136 of the Constitution.

The Constitution of 1924 still preserved Islam as the state religion. Despite the secularization effort in the public spheres and the promotion of secular values, Islam remained as one of the major identities. It should be noted that the abolishment of the Caliphate started the transformation from an *ummah* to a national entity. With the enactment of this drastic reform, Islam was no longer a legitimate political player in Turkish politics.²³ Islam's political position deteriorated when Article 2 of the Turkish Constitution was re-amended. Article 2 of the 1937 Constitution defined Turkey as a secular state.²⁴ Even today, the preamble and Article 2 of the current Constitution mention secularism as among the fundamental principles of the republic and the revolution laws.

Mehmet Özgüneş clarified the basic differences between Kemalism (Turkish Secular Nationalism) and the theocratic approach in the following chart:²⁵

Kemalist View	Theocratic View
Nation	Ummah
Secularism	Based on Religious Interpretations
Populist Nationalist	Ummah Consciousness
Revolutionary	Dogmatic
Science	The scholasticism of Madrassas

The Turkish Constitution uses the word *Laiklik* to denote secularism. The word *laikos* was first used in ancient Greece. The word signified people who

22 Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Resmi İnternet Sitesi, "Kuruluş ve Tarihi Gelişim" [The Official Site of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, "Establishment and History"], <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/turkish/dy-Diyanet-Isleri-Baskanligi-Duyuru-8221.aspx>, 11.01.2010

23 Ali Bardakoğlu, *Religion and Society: New Perspectives from Turkey*, Ankara, Publications of Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2006, pp.104-105

24 Necip Bilge "Atatürk Devrimlerinin Temel Ögesi Laiklik" in Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, Taha Müftüoğlu and İdris Karakuş (eds.) *Atatürk Düşüncesinde Din ve Laiklik*, Ankara, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2008, p.92

25 Mehmet Özgüneş, "Neden ve nasıl bir laiklik," in Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, Taha Müftüoğlu and İdris Karakuş (eds.) *Atatürk Düşüncesinde Din ve Laiklik*, op cit, p.341

were not affiliated with the clergy class. Likewise, the Christian sources used the word *laici* for the same purpose.²⁶

The Office of the Turkish Chief of Staff defines *Laiklik* as separation of religious affairs from the state, intellectual and economic affairs. In the same definition, the state's non-integration with the religious principles and the state's dedication to democracy is also emphasized.²⁷

Ahmet Vehbi Ecer, in his article about Atatürk's opinions on Islam and religion in general, argues that the *Laiklik* has 5 basic elements:

1. Freedom of religion and conscience
2. Absence of an official state religion
3. Non-discrimination towards religions and sects
4. Separation of state and religious institutions
5. Government's non-reliance on religious laws²⁸

However, the Diyanet's existence as a state institution violates the basic elements of *Laiklik*. Consequently, one can argue that Turkey is a semi-Laik (semi-secular) state.

Now that the basic concepts have been introduced, the following section will focus on Ottoman political discourse in the later periods of the Ottoman Empire, thus providing a better understanding of the roots of the Atatürk's and Erdoğan's nationalisms.

The Dominant Political Discourses of the Late-Ottoman Era

When the Europeans deemed the Ottoman Empire as "the sick man of Europe," the subjects of the empire began to look for a solution in order to save the empire. Naturally, the subjects of the empire sought the solution in different ways due to the fragmentation within society. In short, the dominant political discourses in the late-Ottoman Era were Ottomanism, Islamism, Westernization and Turkism.

The 1789 French Revolution's nationalist ideas had begun to infiltrate the Ottoman Empire. The empire's non-Muslim subjects were greatly influenced by nationalist ideologies. During this period Mahmut II was in the power. In

26 Cemal Avcı, "Atatürk Din ve Laiklik" in Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, Taha Müftüoğlu and İdris Karakuş (eds.) *Atatürk Düşüncesinde Din ve Laiklik*, op cit, pp.57-58

27 Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, "Din," in Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, Taha Müftüoğlu and İdris Karakuş (eds.) *Atatürk Düşüncesinde Din ve Laiklik*, op cit, p.53

28 Ahmet Vehbi Ecer, "Atatürk'ün Din ve İslam dini hakkındaki görüşleri," in Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, Taha Müftüoğlu and İdris Karakuş (eds.) *Atatürk Düşüncesinde Din ve Laiklik*, op cit, p.134

order to tackle the French and British influence in the region and confront the wave of nationalist sentiment, in 1839 Mahmut II issued the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayun* Decree. According to the *Gülhane* Decree, every Ottoman subject was an equal part of society regardless of religion and sect. However this decree ignored the individual's political rights. With the declaration of this decree the Tanzimat period had begun. Although the *Gülhane* had been issued, the political rights of non-Muslims were not granted. Again, due to British and French pressure, Mahmut II issued the *Islahat* Decree. According to *Islahat*, the Christians could enjoy equal political rights in addition to enjoying religious privileges.²⁹ As a result, the new ideology of Ottomanism came into being. The Ottomanism ideology asserts that each subject of the empire is equal in the eyes of the law.

Another important political discourse at the time was pan-Islamism. According to pan-Islamists, Ottomanism did not serve the interests of the empire. The secessions of non-Muslim subjects from the empire strengthened their argument. The ideology was led by Sultan Abdülhamit II who downgraded the importance of Ottomanism in favor of Islamism. Abdülhamit II defined the empire as "the country of religion and faith,"³⁰ and saw Islam as the source of progress. Moreover, the Islamist point of view rejected Europe as a state model, since Islam believes that Europe received its core principles from Islam itself. The Islamists' main argument was that of *İttihad-ı İslam* (the Union of Islam). The argument asserted that by dividing the *ummah* for the sake of national interests and borders was a criminal act. According to the Islamist point of view there is no difference between being a Turk and being a Muslim. In a romantic sort of way, the Islamists described the relationship as such: Turkishness is the body while Islam is the spirit. In other words, the body can not live without its soul.³¹

Unlike the Islamists, the supporters of Westernization saw Europe in the mirror of Ottoman decline. According to their perspective, there was no other model of civilization other than Europe. The Westernists supported the women rights movement, the modernization of the family, the anti-*madrassah* policy, the installation of the Latin alphabet, and more reforms. The Westernists regarded the *İrfan* (Enlightenment) as a superior concept. In his article "*Pek Uyanık bir Uyku*" (A Very Awake Sleep), Abdullah Cevdet, a Westernist, defined the new European individual and model society. Cevdet called on the Sultan to accept the concept of monogamy, to abolish the wearing of the traditional hat, fez (*fes*), to abolish the *madrassas*, and to nationalize and liberate the

29 Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 7.Cilt, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1956, pp.298-299

30 Bekir Şahin, *Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi*, 7. Cilt, İstanbul, İz Yayıncılık, 1996, p.6

31 Şükrü Nişancı, "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e önemli siyasal akımlar ya da Türkiye'de siyasetin üç/ iç yüzü" in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya and Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı'dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, Ankara, Savaş Yayinevi, 2009, pp. 66-70

economy from foreign powers. The Westernists, however, were not excited by the nationalist discourse of the Turks, since the *İrfan* was their sole concern.³²

Just like Islamism, Turkism appeared with the decline of Ottomanism. The early Turkists attained self-awareness thanks to foreign writers like Arthur Lumbey Davids, Mustafa Celaleddin Paşa (originally from Poland), and more importantly, Leon Cahun.³³

Turkism had two important leaders: Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp. The main difference between the two was that Gökalp based Turkism on the state, whereas Akçura based Turkism on society.

As a reaction to pan-Slavism in Russia, Yusuf Akçura advocated for the unity of the whole Turkish community into an imaginary geographic region called "Turan." Gökalp defined the concept of Turan as such: "The homeland [which] is neither Turkey nor Turkistan [but rather] the homeland is [one] big and eternal country: Turan."³⁴ Ziya Gökalp signaled World War I as an opportunity to realize Turan. However the defeat of the Ottomans in World War I sidelined the Turan ideal.³⁵ At that point, Gökalp emphasized the importance of *Türkiyecilik*, meaning Turkish nationalism within the boundaries of Turkey, instead of *Turanlılık*, the unity of the whole Turkic world.³⁶

Gökalp didn't regard nationalism as an ideology or race or by belonging to a certain group of people; neither was it geographical or political, but as previously stated, it was a desire. Gökalp argued that a nation is composed of people who were raised in a certain type of education with regard to language, religion, morality and esthetic. According to Gökalp, blood ties are not required for the composition of a nation, but rather at the core issue was education.³⁷ Gökalp defined the ideal education as based on three principles: Turkism, Islam and Modernism.³⁸ As such, he placed the Turkish nation under an all-embracing definition which included the Ural Altay family, the *ummah* of Islam, as well as European civilization.³⁹ By doing so, he answered the Turkists, Islamists and the Westernists all at once. In the end, Gökalp

32 Ibid, pp. 60-63

33 Ibid, p.76

34 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, op cit, p.63

35 Şükrü Nişancı, "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e önemli siyasal akımlar ya da Türkiye'de siyasetin üç/ iç yüzü" in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya and Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı'dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, op cit, pp.76-81

36 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, op cit, 2006, p. 27

37 Ibid, pp. 22-23

38 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, op cit, p.48

39 Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, op cit, p.63

sought to create "a modern Islamic Turkishness."⁴⁰

Islamic ideologies regarded Turkism as a unified nationalist anti-Islam ideal. However, Ziya Gökalp argued that Turkism and Islam are not in a state of conflict. Gökalp referred to Turkism as an element of a nation, while Islam he regarded as an element of international unity. Therefore, the two elements could not be in conflict.⁴¹ In contrast, Yusuf Akçura, in his famous article "Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset" [Three Styles of Politics], argued that Islam and Turkism are indeed in a state of conflict. According to Akçura, Islam could weaken Turkism by dividing the Turks into Muslim Turks and non-Muslim Turks. As a result, Akçura suggested that Islam should allow for the birth of new nations just as Christianity did.⁴²

Turkish Nationalism in Atatürk's Perception

Before analyzing Atatürk's political life and policies, this paper will first analyze his personal background and the environment in which he lived, which had a great impact on his political life.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was born in Salonika in 1881. In contrast to the eastern provinces of the empire, Salonika was a cosmopolitan city inhabited by Turks, Greeks, Jews, Bulgarians, Serbians and Armenians, and became the center of the enlightenment. Indeed, most of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* – ITC), also known as the Young Turks and the supporters of constitutional monarchy, came from this city. Newspapers and periodicals were published here in what was considered the modern part of the empire.⁴³

Atatürk's father, Ali Rıza, was the determining actor in his educational life. Thanks to him, Atatürk began his education in a modern primary school as opposed to a traditional Islamic school. After finishing primary school, Mustafa Kemal started his military career in Salonika's military school; he then began his high school studies in Bitola (Manastır), today's FYR Macedonia. Eventually he moved to Istanbul for his military training where he finished his studies with the rank of captain. During his stay in Istanbul, Mustafa Kemal learned French and began following the French press.⁴⁴

The empire under Abdulhamit II was governed in a despotic way. Abdulhamit hindered any attempt at reforms, and moreover, torture and political murders and executions became a part of the daily lives of the empire's citizens. At the same time, the Turks of Salonika were deeply influenced by the nationalist

40 Ziya Gökalp, *Türklesmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, op cit, p.16

41 Ziya Gökalp, *Türklesmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, op cit, p15

42 Yusuf Akçura, "Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset," in *Türkçülük*, op cit, p.230 and p.238

43 Mehmet Saray (ed.) *T.C İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Ders Kitabı İlk Öğretim 8*, op cit, pp. 16-17

44 Mehmet Saray (ed.) *T.C İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Ders Kitabı İlk Öğretim 8*, op cit, pp. 18-19

principles of the French Revolution. As a result, a group of concerned Turks founded the Committee of Union and Progress in 1906.

Owing to the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877 (The War of 93), Sultan Abdulhamit II banned the parliament and did not call a new session until 1908. However, the parliament's re-installation was not enough to quiet the ITC since it demanded the restoration of the Constitution of 1876. Furthermore, the Young Turks demanded a new de-centralized administration.⁴⁵ The instability of the government, Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria's declaration of independence, Crete's unification with Greece, and more importantly, due to unsolved political murders, the political situation of the empire was tense. Consequently, the Ottoman soldiers who were members of the 4th Avcı Battalion rebelled and demanded the installation of Islamic law, *sharia*.⁴⁶ The ITC, however, could not tolerate the calls for *sharia*, and so the *Hareket Ordusu* (The Army of Movement) of the ITC marched into Istanbul, bombed the city's suburbs and occupied the city. Sultan Abdulhamit II was taken prisoner. At the time, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was only a young officer in the Army of Movement.⁴⁷ The Revolution of 1909 would prove to be an important turning point for Atatürk.

Another important milestone in Atatürk's life was when he was appointed as military attaché of the empire in Sofia. During his service in Sofia he examined and analyzed the Bulgarian parliament meetings and sent reports to Istanbul.⁴⁸

Salonika, Bitola, Istanbul and Sofia all had a great impact on Atatürk's life. Thanks to these cities he benefited from growing up in a modern environment. Thus he became an open minded intellectual soldier.

As is well known, Mustafa Kemal was the leader of the Turkish national independence movement. Its struggle began in 1919 and concluded with a military victory in 1922 that was fought specifically against Greek forces but the fighting in general extended to the allied forces.

On July 24, 1923, the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed between the Allies and Turkey. This treaty drew the borders of an independent Turkish state. In addition, the Lausanne Treaty declared the economic independence of the Turkish Republic from the Western powers through the abolishment of the economic privileges which were granted to the West under the Ottomans. Atatürk had accomplished his task on the battlefield; now he could begin

45 Richard Peters, *The Story of the Turks*, New York, C.S.Publishing Company, 1959, pp. 164-165

46 *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt 34, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, İstanbul, 2007, p.10

47 Richard Peters, *The Story of the Turks*, op cit, pp. 164-165

48 Mehmet Saray (ed.) *T.C İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Ders Kitabı İlk Öğretim 8*, op cit, p 25

his mission of shaping the Turkish nation into an "architect" through his new ideology: Kemalism. One of the quintessential examples of Atatürk's decisiveness in implementing his comprehensive reforms was during the Turkish Grand National Assembly's (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi* - TBMM) committee session where he threatened the pro-sultan members of TBMM with beheading if they refused to verify the annulment of the sultanate.⁴⁹ According to Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Kemalism is an ideology that is based on rational and humanist values, and addresses the demand of a modern society through its liberation from backwardness.⁵⁰ Kemalism is based on the concept of nationalism within the basis of territory; Turkey was a geographical concept and the Turkish people were defined as those living on that territory. Kemalism introduced the concept of the "three columns" as the basis for Turkish nationalism. These three columns were national unity, revolution and independence.⁵¹

The Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - CHP) was the driving force of the Kemalist revolution. CHP's party program of 1935 defines nation as a political unit composed of citizens bound together through the bonds of language, culture and ideal. As can clearly be seen, the nationalism of Ziya Gökalp had been adopted. Moreover, CHP underlines the essential principles of the party, also known as the principles of Atatürk, as: republicanism, nationalism, populism, etatism, secularism and revolution. In addition to these essential principles, Kemalism included the concepts of national independence, populism, popular sovereignty, anti-pan-Turkism, anti-pan-Islamism, and anti-Ottomanism.⁵²

Atatürk, in his famous speech "Nutuk", explains his perceptions on pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism by discrediting the chances of implementing either of the two ideologies. In the speech, he emphasizes his position by stating that neither pan-Islamism nor pan-Turkism could gain any achievement in history. Instead, Atatürk advocates the implementation of *Milli Siyaset* (National Policy). He defines National Policy as a policy that remains within its own borders, relies on self-power (meaning not expecting any aid from external powers), as working for the welfare and happiness of the nation, and one that doesn't hurt the nation with any non-applicable policies, such as pan-Islamism or pan-Turkism.⁵³

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk summarized his perception of citizenship with his famous motto: "Happy is the man who says he/she is a Turk" [*Ne mutlu Türküm*

49 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk*, İstanbul, Alfa, 2009, pp. 493-494

50 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, *Kemalizm, Laiklik ve Demokrasi*, Ankara, İmge Kitabevi, 2007, p.19

51 Hikmet Tanıy, *Atatürk ve Türk Milliyetçiliği*, Ankara, Elips Kitap, 2007, p. 17

52 Suna Kili, *Kemalizm*, İstanbul, Menteş Matbaası, 1969, p.40

53 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk*, op cit, pp. 310-311

diyene). Hence Turkishness/Turkism became the only identity for all citizens of the republic regardless of religion and ethnic origin. This motto had an even broader meaning; accordingly, each Turkish citizen regardless of his/her ethnic origin was identified with the dominant ethnic identity of Turkish. According to Kemalist elitist political discourse, the name of ethnicities like Kurdish, Circassian, Laz or Pomak, were given to these people by "external powers"; as such, these ethnic groups had to be re-acknowledged as Turkish.⁵⁴

An important example of the non-recognition of different ethnic identities was that of the Kurds. For instance, the Kurds were not acknowledged by the Turkish administrations as a different ethnic group nor as a minority. The Kurds were seen as "Mountain Turks" who had forgotten their native language.⁵⁵ This being so, Kemalism is considered a monist type of nationalism since it ignores ethnic and cultural differences.⁵⁶ An article published by the Turkish Historical Congress in 1937, "*Ali Fuat Başgil*," further emphasized this point when it defined the factors of the Turkish nation as: "being a Turkophone, having a racial or kinship relationship, sharing a common past, being bound to Turkishness with his/her heart and culture, and by declaring that he/she is a Turk."⁵⁷

The Turkish National Education Ministry's high school history textbook defines the etymological meaning of "Turk" according to Uyghur sources as "power and force." According to Mahmud of Kashgar, Turk refers to an "age of maturity," and according to Chinese sources, an "army helmet." Lastly, Ziya Gökalp defined Turk as a "law abiding people."⁵⁸ All of these etymological definitions glorify the Turkishness by reflecting its essence as heroic, courageous, lawful and mature.

Kemalism reflects a disharmony between the legal/political identity and the ethnic identity of Turkishness. The emphasis on pre-Islamic Turkish history left ethnically non-Turkish Muslims downgraded within the new Turkish definition. Indeed, Atatürk himself in his "Nutuk" speech specifically addressed the Turkish youth and finished by reasserting "the noble Turkish

54 Adem Çaylak and Adem Çelik, "Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Modernleş(tir)mesinde tarih din ve etnisite algısı" in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya and Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı'dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, Ankara, Savaş Yayınevi, 2009, p. 123

55 John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, *No Friends but the Mountains*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 168

56 Adem Çaylak and Adem Çelik, "Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Modernleş(tir)mesinde tarih din ve etnisite algısı" in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya, Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı'dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, op cit, p. 125

57 Hikmet Tanıy, *Atatürk ve Türk Milliyetçiliği*, Ankara, Elips Kitap, 2007, p. 95

58 Yasemin Okur, İlhan Genç, Tuğrul Özcan, Mevlüt Yurtbay and Akın Sever, *Ortaöğretim Tarihi 9*, İstanbul, MEB, 2009, p.73

blood.” A vital term that was used by Kemalists was *Öz-Türk* (Real-Turk), which meant assimilated to Turkishness and to the republican revolution’s values.⁵⁹ It should also be noted that, like Atatürk’s famous speech, the Turkish national anthem contains a racial element by alluding to the line: “a rose to my hero race.”

CHP ideologist and justice minister, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, had delivered a speech in 1930, in which he had stressed the leading role of the Turks in Turkey: “It is my firm opinion, and let friend and foe hear it, that the lords of this country are the Turks. Those who are not real Turks (*Öz-Türk*) have only one right in the Turkish fatherland, and that is the right to be servants and slaves.”⁶⁰ Hikmet Tanyu, in his book *Atatürk ve Türk Milliyetçiliği* (Atatürk and Turkish Nationalism), uses the term ID Turks for non-*Öz-Turks*. Tanyu argues that Turkish racists do not want to see the ID Turks in any key positions.⁶¹

In order not to weaken nationalist ideology, Atatürk and the Kemalist elite introduced a new type of Islam called *Milli İslam* (The National Islam). Kemalism absorbed the *Milli İslam* in opposition to the pan-Islamic *ummah* ideal. Kemalists began to “Turkify” Turkish-Islam by installing Turkish-Islamic services, such as the Turkish call to prayer (*Türkçe Ezan*). The legitimacy of these kinds of policies was bound to the people’s lack of knowledge of Arabic.⁶² Besides the *Milli İslam*, Atatürk and the Kemalists elite created a secular religion whose basic features included saluting the flag, celebrating public holidays (like the 29th October, the 19th May, the 23rd April, the 30th August), believing in the cult of fore fathers and martyrs, and more.⁶³

The core institution of the new secular religion was the Turkish History Institution. This institution was founded in 1931 by Atatürk in order to form and rewrite Turkish history. The need to establish such an organization grew out of the European history textbooks’ claims that the Turkish race was

affiliated with barbaric invader horde⁶⁴ and described as a yellow race.⁶⁵ The secularization of the republic paved the way to research pre-Islamic Turkish history. Orhun monuments, dating back to 732 AD in Western Mongolia, were inscribed in pure Turkish and played a crucial role in reshaping Turkish history.⁶⁶

In order to gather more information about Turkish history, Atatürk ordered the translation of non-Turkish historical books into Turkish and even demanded a report on this issue. His efforts bore fruit in the form of *The Turkish History’s Keys* and *The History Book*, a school textbook that contained the pre-Islamic Turkish history of Central Asia up to the days of the newly founded republic.⁶⁷

To further the cause, the emergence of the Turkish Historical Thesis marked the redefinition of Turkish nationalism. This thesis stressed that the Turks were a great and ancient race. The thesis claimed that due to climatic changes the Turks left Central Asia and moved in all directions (west and south, and towards Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Persia, India, etc.) in order to civilize the rest of the world. Thus the Turkish race became defined as the creator of civilizations.⁶⁸

Another important institution in architecting a new nation was the Turkish Language Institution, established by Atatürk in 1932. His source of inspiration sprang from Namık Kemal, “the poet of liberty,” who called for the annihilation of all languages within the country except for Turkish to be carried out through compulsory education.⁶⁹ The Institution’s mission was to bring out the beauty and richness of the Turkish language and elevate it to the place it deserved.⁷⁰ Within a few years many of the Arabic and Persian words that had infiltrated Turkish over the years were discarded. And furthermore, all official statements had to be written in *Öz-Türkçe* (pure Turkish).⁷¹

Speaking Turkish was encouraged through public campaigns. The most famous of these campaigns was “*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!*” [Citizen Speak Turkish!] The non-Muslim minorities, especially Jews, were targeted since

59 Adem Çaylak and Adem Çelik, “Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Modernleş(tir)mesinde tarih din ve etnisite algısı” in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya, Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı’dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi*, op cit, p.119

60 Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, cited in Martin Van Bruinessen, “Race, Culture, Nation and Identity Politics in Turkey: Some Comments,” http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/let/2007-0320-200716/bruinessen_97_racecultureandidentity.pdf 26.01.2011

61 Hikmet Tanyu, *Atatürk ve Türk Milliyetçiliği*, Ankara, Elips Kitap, 2007, p.45

62 Adem Çaylak and Adem Çelik, “Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Modernleş(tir)mesinde tarih din ve etnisite algısı” in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya and Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı’dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye’nin Politik Tarihi*, op cit, pp.116-117

63 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, op cit, p.42

64 Turkish History Institution’s Official Webpage – History, <http://www.ttk.org.tr/index.php?Page=Sayfa&No=1>, 27.01.11

65 Mehmet Saray (ed.) *T.C İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Ders Kitabı İlk Öğretim 8*, op cit, p.115

66 Suna Kili, *Kemalizm*, op cit, pp. 49-50

67 Mehmet Saray (ed.) *T.C İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Ders Kitabı İlk Öğretim 8*, op cit, p.115

68 Soner Çağaptay, “Reconfiguring the Turkish Nation in the 1930s,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.8, No.2, 2002, pp. 69-70

69 Andrew Mango, “Atatürk and the Kurds,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35:4, p.4

70 Turkish Language Institution’s Official Web Page, <http://www.tdk.gov.tr/TR/Genel/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFFAAAF6AA849816B2EF2858DA18F4388CDD> 27.02.2011

71 Suna Kili, *Kemalizm*, op cit, p.50

they did not speak Turkish but rather Judeo-Español (Ladino). Besides the Jews and other minorities, the Kurds were also affected by these campaigns since their mother tongue was also not Turkish. Many banners with the aforementioned slogan were displayed throughout the country, especially in neighborhoods of non-Muslim minorities. As a result, many people faced violence merely for speaking his/her mother tongue.⁷²

Atatürk's vision was not simply the imitation of the West; his dream was the adoption of the universal values that flourished through the power of science.⁷³ Such words as science, technology, knowledge, education, rationalism, realism, nationalism, progress, civilization and modernization were among the words most often uttered in Atatürk's speeches⁷⁴ and reflect this desire.

During the first days of the national struggle that began on July 8th 1919, Atatürk asked Mazhar Müfit (Kansu) to make note of his political plans clause by clause. Later on in his memoirs, Mazhar Müfit would report that he had been totally astonished by what he had noted. The clauses he had been asked to note were none other than the proclamation of the new republic that dealt with the sultanate, the abolishment of the obligation of Islamic dress for women, the installation of the western hat, and lastly the utilization of the Latin alphabet in place of Arabic script.⁷⁵

From 1920 until his death in 1938, Atatürk managed to implement radical secularization and Turkification reforms that changed the face of the modern Turkish Republic from the previous Ottoman Empire. It should be noted that in order not to lose Kurdish support during the national struggle, Atatürk placed a strong emphasis on Islamic unity instead of an ethnic Turkish entity. Sivas Congress' decisions reflected this policy which stated that all Muslim elements living in Ottoman lands were defined, regardless of their ethnic origin, as brothers. Atatürk even declared his intention to grant rights and privileges to the Kurds⁷⁶. In addition, despite his opposition to the Caliphate, Atatürk never once spoke against the institution in order to preserve the unity of the resistance.

72 Rıfat Bali, "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş", http://www.rifatbali.com/images/stories/dokumanlar/turkce_konusma_birgun.pdf 30.01.2011

73 Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam Women, Religion and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey*, London, Tauris, 2002, p.144

74 Suna Kili, *Kemalism*, op cit, p.43

75 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, *Kemalizm Laiklik ve Demokrasi*, op cit, pp. 21-22

76 Andrew Mango, "Atatürk and the Kurds," op cit, pp.7-10

The reforms of Atatürk aimed at the complete modernization of Turkish society in the shortest possible time.⁷⁷ Science, Westernization and Turkishness were the core elements of these reforms. His most influential reforms were the abolishment of the Sultanate and Caliphate, after which the TBMM became the sole sovereign power within the boundaries of Turkey.

The ratification of a new constitution in 1924 provided the legitimate basis of the young republic. The abolishment of the fez in favor of a western style hat was a symbolic show of strength. The adoption of the international calendar, European measurement units, Swiss civil code, abolishment of polygamy, civil marriages, and utilization of Latin alphabet all brought Turkish society closer to the West and provided the necessary integration process into the modern civilized world. Furthermore, the unity of education law (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat*) led to the abolishment of the *madrassas*. Undoubtedly, the most important of all his reforms was the adoption of secularism as a principle and new religion. Consequently secularism, science and Turkish nationalism were acknowledged as the sole sources of advancement while Islam was downgraded.

Turkish Nationalism in Erdoğan's Perception

Turkey's current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was born in one of Istanbul's poorest neighborhoods called Kasımpaşa. He was sent to Piyale Paşa Primary School. His religious studies teacher at primary school may have been the most influential person in his life and the one who encouraged him to continue his studies in the religious Imam Hatip Schools.⁷⁸ During his studies at Imam Hatip Schools, Erdoğan learned Quran, Islamic Law (*fıkıh*) and *hadith* (the Prophet's sayings). He later joined the National Turkish Student Union (*Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*-MTTB) where he started his political career, and became the head of the Islamic National Salvation Party's (*Milli Selamet Partisi* - MSP) youth branch in the Beyoğlu neighborhood. Ironically, according to Erdoğan, Kasımpaşa symbolized the East and its traditions, while Beyoğlu symbolized for him the West and immorality.⁷⁹ Beside his political activities, Erdoğan engaged in the *İskender Paşa Cemaati* (Society) where he was outfitted with Islamic disciplines.⁸⁰

The Turkish Islamic parties -- National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* - MNP) National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* - MSP), Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* - RP), Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* - FP), Happiness Party (*Saadet Partisi* - SP) -- named their ideology *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook). According to the principles of *Milli Görüş*, there exists a clash between the West (Judeo-Christian) and Islamic civilizations in which the West is doomed and will cease

77 Suna Kili, *Kemalism*, op cit, p.40

78 Sefa Kaplan, *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*, İstanbul, Doğan Kitap, 2007, pp.57-59

79 Ibid, pp.63-64

80 Ibid, p 65

to exist. The typical characteristics of *Milli Görüş* are being against such organizations as the European Union (EU), Customs Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Israel. *Milli Görüş* has always praised the Ottoman legacy, and one of the most vital goals of the party is to return Turkey to those glory days. Their slogan "*Yeniden Büyük Türkiye*" (Greater Turkey once again) is a reflection of this ideology.⁸¹ *Milli Görüş's* attitude to Turkey's Kurdish Question is also remarkable because it emphasizes the importance of Islamic solidarity⁸² by focusing on the concept of *ummah* instead of Turkish ethnicity.

Ironically, the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri* – TSK) played a crucial role in the rise of political Islam in Turkey. During the 1980s, in order to avoid a societal schism and risk anarchy, the TSK promoted Islam and introduced the concept of the Turkish-Islam Synthesis which is based on the trinity of "barracks, mosque and family."⁸³ At the same time, the Cold War Brzezinski doctrine of Green Crescent surrounding the south Soviet Union was also influential concerning the rise of Islam in Turkey. As a result of this Islamic oriented policy Turkey began receiving cheaper oil from Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the Saudis began paying the salaries of Turkish imams in Germany.⁸⁴

As a disciple of political Islam and *Milli Görüş*, Erdoğan gave anti-system speeches during the 1990s in which he clearly displayed his loyalty to political Islam. Some examples of his statements: "Democracy is not the objective but a tool;" "I banned alcohol, because I believe that I am the doctor of this society;" "You can not be secular and Muslim simultaneously;" "My reference is Islam;" "I am against birth control;" "We always say that we are not Kemalists but we do adopt Atatürk's principles."⁸⁵ Due to such statements secular society began following Erdoğan and his actions.

A turning point came for Erdoğan on March 27, 1994, when he managed to defeat his political rivals to become mayor of Istanbul. He succeeded in the

81 Ergun Özbudun and William Hale, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık, Demokrasi ve Liberalizm AKP Olayı*, Istanbul, Doğan Kitap, 2010, pp.34-36

82 Yusuf Sarfati, *The Rise of Religious Parties in Israel and Turkey a Comparative Study*, The Ohio State University, 2009, p.244

<http://etd.ohiolink.edu/send-pdf.cgi/Sarfati%20Yusuf.pdf?osu1244742003> 23.02.2011

83 Fulya Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP" in Ali Çarkoğlu and Barry Rubin (eds.) *Religion and Politics in Turkey*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p.37

84 Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "The Mystery of the Türban Issue," *Turkey's Foreign and Domestic Policy Agenda Conference Proceedings*, Tel-Aviv, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel-Aviv University, 2005, pp.43-44

85 Ergun Özbudun and William Hale, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık, Demokrasi ve Liberalizm AKP Olayı*, op cit, p.40

elections due to his radical working method. His method entailed organizing groups of party volunteers and dispatching them to the neighborhoods and streets of Istanbul where these groups asked the support of the people for Erdoğan's cause.⁸⁶

Erdoğan made important decisions during his election campaign. For instance, despite opposition from his party's loyalists he used women to gain support from the people. He sent women who were not wearing head-scarves (*türban*) and who had a modern look to the secular neighborhoods.⁸⁷ Another tactic of his was visiting a poor neighborhood and having a dinner to ask for support in the elections. Finally, as a typical pragmatist, Erdoğan did not hesitate to visit a beer-house.⁸⁸ With his slogan: "Silent masses' voice" Erdoğan identified himself with the oppressed and downgraded level of the society.⁸⁹

February 28, 1997, was a milestone in Turkish political history. On this day the military-led National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* – MGK) formulated the "February 28 Decisions" which declared that Turkish Islamic fundamentalism (*İrtica*) had become as dangerous as Kurdish separatism. MGK advised the government to take the necessary measures against anti-secular activities in Turkey.⁹⁰

In this political atmosphere, Erdoğan was invited to Siirt, Southeast Turkey. In December 1997, he gave a speech and read a poem by Ziya Gökalp, "The minarets are our bayonets, the domes are our helmets and the mosques are our forts." This verse was interpreted by the State Security Courts as a crime under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code. Erdoğan was accused of inciting people by using religion and racial concepts. Consequently, Erdoğan was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment and fined.⁹¹ According to Turkish law at the time, due to his imprisonment Erdoğan could no longer be elected for any ordinary government position.

The 28 February intervention of the army shook the *Milli Görüş* Movement. The younger members of FP did not approve of the policies of the closed RP concerning the 28 February. They wanted to have change in the party, hence they decided to confront Erbakan's candidate *Recai Kutan* in the FP primaries. Abdullah Gül, the current president of Turkey, was the candidate of the younger

86 Sefa Kaplan, *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*, op cit, p.68

87 Hüseyin Besli and Ömer Özbay, *R.Tayyip Erdoğan Bir Liderin Doğuşu*, İstanbul, Meydan, 2010, pp.44-45

88 Ibid, p.90

89 Ibid, p.122

90 Fulya Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics at the crossroad: AKP-SP" in Ali Çarkoğlu and Barry Rubin (eds.) *Religion and Politics in Turkey*, op cit, p.51

91 Hüseyin Besli and Ömer Özbay, *R.Tayyip Erdoğan Bir Liderin Doğuşu*, op cit, pp.202-208

FP members. By the end of the primaries, Gül had been defeated and the split of the *Milli Görüş* was inevitable.⁹² Two new parties were established: SP of Erbakan and AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) of Erdoğan.

On August 14, 2001, while reading the Proclamation of Establishment, Erdoğan declared that the leading oligarchy (Kemalist elite) had collapsed due to the establishment of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP).⁹³ In contrast to SP, AKP members denied their connection with the *Milli Görüş* Movement. Instead of *Milli Görüş*, AKP adopted the term “conservative democrat” to identify their ideological position on the political spectrum.⁹⁴

The AKP's party program was designed to prove that it was not the continuation of the *Milli Görüş* Movement. As such, in the party program AKP showed a loyal stance to republican values. At the same time, the AKP party program defined religion as one of the most important institutions of humanity, while simultaneously defining secularism and the principles of Atatürk as indispensable elements of democracy. It should also be noted that in their party program AKP emphasized its intolerance of discrimination against religious people in the public sphere.⁹⁵

According to AKP's perception there are two types of secularism: the first is one which can not tolerate religion's appearance in the public sphere, which is called “Oppressive Secularism;” the second is “Passive Secularism,” which is based on the state's non-partisanship towards all religions and its tolerance to the appearance of religion in the public sphere. It is clear that AKP's ideology is compatible with Passive Secularism,⁹⁶ or in other words, it can be said that AKP is a moderate Islamic party.

Despite the fact that AKP strongly denies being an Islamist party, according to many Turks AKP's republican values are just a façade.⁹⁷ The Kemalists accuse AKP as being a continuation of the Islamist *Milli Görüş* Movement which adheres to Islamic nationalism.

92 Fulya Atacan, “Explaining Religious Politics at the crossroad: AKP-SP” in Ali Çarkoğlu and Barry Rubin (eds.) *Religion and Politics in Turkey*, op cit, pp. 51-52

93 Hüseyin Besli and Ömer Özbay, *R.Tayyip Erdoğan Bir Liderin Doğusu*, op cit, p.285

94 Ergun Özbudun and William Hale, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık, Demokrasi ve Liberalizm AKP Olayı*, op cit p.57

95 AKP Party Program, http://www.akparti.org.tr/parti-programi_79.html, 24.02.2011

96 Ergun Özbudun and William Hale, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık, Demokrasi ve Liberalizm AKP Olayı*, op cit, pp. 59-60

97 Ibid, p.65

The most important characteristics of Islamic nationalism are its aspirations for the Ottoman past, anti-Western xenophobia, and accepting religion as the backbone of the nation. Consequently this approach views Islam as the core element of Turkish national identity.⁹⁸

As far as the Kurdish question is concerned, the AKP program highlights Turkey's unitary state formation and Turkey's inseparableness. In respect to the Kurdish language, AKP upholds the utilization of Kurdish in the cultural sphere but disagrees with its usage in the educational sphere.⁹⁹ Another important aspect of the Kurdish Question is the definition of identity. In a remarkable speech he gave on August 15, 2005, Erdoğan stated, “There are ethnic elements. There are Kurds, Lazs, Circassians, Georgians, Albanians and Turks. All of these are ‘sub identities;’ we also have an upper identity which is being a citizen of Turkey.”¹⁰⁰ Hence, contrary to Atatürk and the Kemalists, Erdoğan introduced a new modern-day definition of Turkishness by inserting the concepts of sub-identity and upper-identity.

Undoubtedly, AKP's most important achievement was the November 3, 2002 elections. Two vital events in Turkey had a great influence on these elections. The first was the “soft coup” of the TSK which took place on February 28, 1997, which has been interpreted as a military intervention on behalf of democracy by the Turkish people. The second was the economic crisis of 2001, in which the Turkish Lira lost 60% of its value. In a national survey 79.8% of respondents said that the 2001 crisis affected how they voted.¹⁰¹

As a punishment to the ruling parties the November 3, 2002 elections concluded with an unambiguous victory for AKP, taking in 34.28% of the vote. Due to Erdoğan's imprisonment, Gül became prime minister. Later, with the support of the Kemalist Republican Peoples Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP) Erdoğan's ban on political life was lifted and he became the 30th prime minister of Turkey.¹⁰² Another determining factor was the 10% threshold. Sixteen small parties running in the election failed to cross the national threshold therefore their votes were transferred to the winning parties. In

98 Tanel Bora, “Nationalist Discourses in Turkey: Relocating the Fault Lines: Turkey beyond the East-West Divide,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102.2/3 Spring/Summer, 2003, p.449,

99 AKP Party Program, http://www.akparti.org.tr/parti-programi_79.html, 24.02.2011

100 “Kimlik tartışmasını Erdoğan başlattı,” *Radikal*, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetayV3&ArticleID=931194&Date=15.04.2009&CategoryID=98> 24.02.2011

101 Sultan Tepe, “The Promises and Paradoxes of the Justice and Development Party,” *Turkey: Between the European Union and the Middle East Symposium Proceedings*, Tel-Aviv, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel-Aviv University, 2006, pp. 17-18

102 B. Berat Özüpek, “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) Dönemi İç ve Dış Politika (2002-...),” in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya and Hüsnü Kapu (eds.) *Osmanlı'dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, Ankara, Savaş Yayinevi, 2009, pp.661-662

the end, 46% of the Turkish people had no representation in the TBMM.¹⁰³

On April 27, 2007, the "web based military intervention," or in other words the "E-memorandum" of Chief of Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt, was again influential regarding the rise of AKP votes. Büyükanıt warned AKP from the official website of the TSK about the *İrtica* (radical Islamic threat against the secular republic) and, essentially, of secularism. Despite this, the July 22, 2007 elections confirmed that AKP rose its voting percentage to 47%. One can argue that the E-memorandum even assisted the AKP¹⁰⁴ since February 28 had already been punished in the 2002 elections.

Another unique aspect of AKP is its perception on foreign policy. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of the "Strategic Deepness" doctrine, assigned Turkey a key role in the regional political systems. According to this doctrine Turkey should re-define perceived threats and should have key responsibilities.¹⁰⁵ To emphasize this fact, the Foreign Minister, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, said Turkey may act as a leader in the formation of a unified body that bears resemblance to the British Commonwealth, or in other words an "Ottoman Commonwealth."¹⁰⁶ The current Turkish administration identifies itself with the Muslim nations that are located in Europe and the Middle East and more interestingly, with the pro-Palestinian policies against Israel. This AKP policy orientation can be called Neo-Ottomanism.

Conclusion

The struggle for Turkey's soul has continued since the rise of the AKP to power in 2002. Many important events have taken place, like Kemalist "Cumhuriyet Mitingleri" (Republican Political Rallies) against the AKP, and an approved constitutional referendum which enabled AKP control of the judiciary. The constitutional amendments of September 12, 2010, strengthened the AKP against the TSK which allowed for soldiers to be brought before civilian courts instead of military. As such, AKP has not missed an opportunity to block any attempted future coup d'état. For the AKP, the need for the amendment stemmed from the Ergenekon affair. Ergenekon, an "ultranationalist covert

103 Sultan Tepe, "The Promises and Paradoxes of the Justice and Development Party", op cit, p.20

104 B. Berat Özipek, "Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) Dönemi İç ve Dış Politika (2002-...)", in Adem Çaylak, Cihat Göktepe, Mehmet Dikkaya, Hüsnü Kapu (eds.), *Osmanlı'dan İkininli Yıllara Türkiye'nin Politik Tarihi*, op cit, pp.672-673

105 Ergun Özbudun and William Hale, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık, Demokrasi ve Liberalizm AKP Olayı*, op cit, p.195

106 "Davutoğlu'nun Hayali Osmanlı Milletler Topluluğu", 07.12.2010, Milliyet <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/davutoglu-nun-hayali-osmanli-milletler-toplulugu/dunya/haberdetay/07.12.2010/1323171/default.htm>, 24.02.2011

network," refers to a series of indictments against former and active senior military leaders and Kemalist civilians and journalists who allegedly plotted to overthrow the AKP government.

AKP is going further in their attempts to alter the face of Turkish society. It is attempting to promote the İmam Hatip Religious Schools in university admissions examinations and attempting to make adultery a crime. In addition, such issues as the wearing of the headscarf in the public sphere, rapprochement towards Muslim nations, the non-recognition of Alevi houses of worship (*Cemevi*) as places of worship, and the enactment of anti-alcohol regulations of January 7, 2011 are all remarkable Islamist policies of the AKP administration.

Bernard Lewis, in an interview with Turkey's *Cumhuriyet*, argued that the ultimate goal of AKP is to establish an Islamic democracy in Turkey. According to Lewis, an Islamic democracy would resemble a one-way street in which you can arrive at your destination [power] through your tool [democracy], but won't be able to return on the same path you came. Furthermore, Lewis claimed that the political systems in Iran and Turkey may switch at some point in the future if the current political situation continues.¹⁰⁷

Through the policies and actions of the current government, the Turkish people are beginning to feel that Turkey's reputation in the international arena is on the rise. These policies include AKP's Neo-Ottoman foreign policy and Turkey's intervention in such world affairs as the Iranian nuclear problem, the Israeli-Syrian conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Lebanese domestic crisis, the Egyptian Revolution, and the cancellation of visas with several countries. The *Radikal* newspaper's survey proves this point. Sixty-six percent of Turks think that their country's reputation is growing stronger in the world.¹⁰⁸

Another survey which was carried out by the American Associated Press shows the strengthening of the Neo-Ottoman Moderate Islamic views in Turkey: 85% of the participants polled expressed that religion is "very important" in their lives. However, 65% of participants think that religious leaders should not interfere in politics. The survey also shows a growing support for Prime Minister Erdoğan and his policies, with a total of 54% in favor.¹⁰⁹

Regarding the domestic and foreign policies, while Turkish ethnic nationalism

107 "AKP'nin hedefi İslami demokrasi," Cumhuriyet, 17.01.2011, <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=208876> 25.02.2011

108 "Vatandaş ülkesi Türkiye'ye güveniyor ve inanıyor mu? İşte yanıtı," Radikal, 12.01.2011 <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1036217&CategoryID=80>

109 "Türkiye'nin yüzde kaçını Erdoğan'ı destekliyor," Vatan, 20.02.2011 <http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Haber/360618/1/Gundem> 25.02.2011

has almost been completely excluded and has tried to be formulated in such terms as sub or upper identities, the Ottoman legacy and Islam have become the new key elements. Turkey is trying to solve its domestic problems like the Kurdish question, and desires to become an affective regional player by implementing the new Neo-Ottoman in the form of moderate Islamic policies.

Today, Turkish ethnic nationalism is in clear decline, whereas the Neo-Ottomanist moderate Islamic doctrine of the AKP is getting stronger. In the end, being a "Turk" has become an upper-identity, or in other words, a "mosaic"¹¹⁰ element of Turkish nationalism, leaving "religion" to become the new unifying cement of Turkey.

List of Acronyms

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – Republican People's Party

EU: European Union

FP: Fazilet Partisi – Virtue Party

FYR: Former Yugoslav Republic

ITC: İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti - Committee of Union and Progress

MGK: Milli Güvenlik Kurulu – National Security Council

MNP: Milli Nizam Partisi – National Order Party

MSP: Milli Selamet Partisi – National Salvation Party

MTTB: Milli Türk Talebe Birliği – National Turkish Student Union

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

RP: Refah Partisi – Welfare Party

SP: Saadet Partisi – Happiness Party

TBMM: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi - Turkish Grand National Assembly

TSK: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri – Turkish Armed Forces

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110 Andrew Mango, "Atatürk and the Kurds," op cit, p.22

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