

# Transformation of Turkish Politics: Socio-Political, Economic and Ethnic Peculiarities

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**Abstract:** This article is based on a fieldwork conducted in the second half of October 2007. The sampling has been designed to represent whole of Turkey. Modern Turkey has reached its 85th anniversary and still deals with problems related to the discussion on ethnic and religious identities in Turkish society. By conducting this survey, we have portrayed general peculiarities of Turkish voters in terms of political, socio-economic, ethnic, and religious identities. We have obtained three main socio-political upper identities and called them Modernist-Kemalist, Conservative-Nationalist and Leftist-Social Democrat. The most common identities in Turkish society are lined up as Modernist-Kemalist, Conservative-Nationalist and Leftist-Social Democrat. It is interesting that the AKP has a high level of acceptance among all groups. This means that this party has moved to the center (center-right) and that the largest part of the Turkish population does not consider it a serious threat to the regime. The main divide within Turkish society, and the source of its conflict, is not so much among the majority of people, but rather between them and a traditional secular elite that continues to use its influence to deny those who do not share its particular vision of westernization access to the public sphere.

**Key Words:** Turkish politics, conservative democracy, transformation of Turkish politics, Turkish secularism.

## Introduction

### Background

Modern Turkey has reached its 85th anniversary and still deals with problems related to the discussion on ethnic and religious identities in

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Turkish society. Until the free elections of 1950, only one official left-wing party ruled the country, almost like in the former Soviet Union, where governors of provinces were also official chairs of that party.<sup>1</sup> The founding fathers of Turkey are also founders of left-wing CHP (Republican People Party). Therefore, representatives of the CHP have always seen themselves as the guardians of modern Turkey and its “Republican values” (Kadioglu 1998, Özdalga 1998). The remaining political parties, mainly right-wing, have consequently been seen as potential threats to modern Turkey and its “Western values” regardless of how often the representatives of these right-wing parties declare their sincere allegiance to Republican or Western values.<sup>2</sup> The CHP and its elite circles have effectively maintained a monopoly over those principles. Modern Turkey has had 60 governments in 85 years, giving each government an average lifespan of 1.4 years. Modern Turkey has had coups d’état -1960, 1971, 1980, 1997 and 2007- three of them being conventional, one being “post-modern”, and the last one being “e-letter” (seen on the military website). All of these interventions have been against right-leaning parties in power.

The CHP, and more generally the secularist state elite, remains convinced that the Turkish people require their “enlightened” guidance in order to develop what they consider appropriate “modern” values. They think the evolution of Turkey have been misdirected by multi-party period started in 1950. Paradoxically, right-wing governments have actually been responsible for the most important breakthroughs toward Westernization and Western organizational forms.<sup>3</sup>

The developments in Turkey concerning the controversial presidential election of 2007 attracted the attention of Turkish and international public opinion to a great extent because debates at the time centered around a perceived imbalance of power in the ruling right-wing party (the AKP). The AKP (Justice and Development Party) allegedly harbored a hidden agenda to change Turkish democratic state into an Islamic regime, and some feared that by electing a new president, the party would be in a position to apply their agenda with greater ease (Baran 2008).<sup>4</sup> The Turkish government, with its Islamist origins, did have a sufficient majority in the Parliament to elect a new president. Moreover, the Turkish people were broadly satisfied with the successes of the government in economic and social fields, and did not see any problem in such an election. However, the memorandum issued by the military on its website on April 27, 2007, paved the way for the initiative of the Turkish Constitutional Court, which made it impossible for the existent parliament to elect the president. This, in fact, constituted a turning point in Turkish politics in terms of democratization and liberalization.

Initially, the effective opposition of secularist circles, leftist parties and the military deepened the polarization of Turkish society. Organized social actions, including public demonstrations, were aimed at preventing the election of a politician whose wife wears a headscarf, as president and they were supported and provoked by various media organs, retired generals and members of the secularist elite. While the traditional elite was busy with the project of preventing the election of a conservative president by the conservative AKP, their actions brought the criticisms directed of the government over ineffective economic policies to an end, and instead concerns over democracy came to the forefront.<sup>5</sup> The protests, which the international media cast as a struggle by the secularist sections of society against fundamentalist Islamists, were perceived differently inside Turkey, and they brought unintended results for their organizers. The Turkish people saw the public demonstrations as undemocratic actions calling for a military coup and demonstrated their opposition to undemocratic intervention in politics by supporting the AKP in general elections of 22 July 2007. Thus, the great victory of the AKP in the elections was a result of the people's choosing stability and moderation over what they perceived as involvement in artificial crises stemming from initiatives to prevent the election of the son of an ordinary Turkish family as president because of his wife's headscarf -a common traditional garment.

The latest developments in Turkish politics underline the importance of the direction Turkey takes, with its repercussions in terms Western and global security and stability.<sup>6</sup> Western, as well as regional states should be deeply concerned about whether or not Turkey will continue to be a secularist, democratic and stable country, and it is therefore vitally important to interpret the developments in Turkey correctly. It is clear that Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish separatism have long been considered as major threats for the Turkish regime.<sup>7</sup> The demands and successes of the Islamist and Kurdish movements have always been treated with caution and fear. The rise of Islamism has been seen as the threat for secularism, and the actions of Kurdish political movements have been perceived as threats to the integrity of the state. The fact that the great majority of the parties dissolved by the Turkish Constitutional Court in recent history were Islamist and Kurdish parties (religious- or ethnic- based parties) supports this observation. Turkish authorities, of course, have the right to take necessary precautions to defend their state against radical separatism or discriminatory movements. However, it is extremely important to assess correctly the impact of these political movements on the country's stability and democratization.<sup>8</sup> The major question here is whether Turkey will be polarized deeply or moderation will be opted for in the process following the electoral victory of the AKP and public demonstrations against this party's actions.

## **Overview**

The main purpose of this article is to try to find out which political, ideological and ethnical groups exist and are active in Turkey by taking the recent shifts in Turkish politics into consideration. “Secularism” is understood in Turkey not as the separation of religious and state affairs, (i.e. not allowing religion or religious authorities to intervene in state affairs and vice versa), but as the *control and use of religion by the state*<sup>9</sup>. Additionally, “nationalism” is generally perceived not from the perspective of a comprehensive identity such as citizenship but as ethnic Turkism. These two problematic approaches have generated mutual animosity and fear between different groups, and the traditional elite have especially excluded Islamists and Kurds from the public sphere (Yavuz 1996).<sup>10</sup> While the traditional elite maintains its undemocratic and intolerant approach for the sake of the state’s integrity and survival, the activities and propaganda of Islamists and Kurds are condemned as major threats to the regime regardless of their nature. In fact, whether or not these are indeed sufficient reasons to fear friction and conflict in the Turkish politics makes little difference. The polarization creates problems for Turkey’s internal order, as well as regional and international security and stability. By shedding light on the true nature of Turkish political, religious and ethnic groups, this article attempts to provide clues about future political developments in Turkey, whose fate is closely bound to Western countries because of its peculiar credentials as a democratic, secularist, Westernized and also Muslim country.

The topic of the article is also related to the following questions regarding Turkey, some of which will be answered in the follow-up articles<sup>11</sup>:

- Have the rate of radical Muslims and the strength of the radical movement reached a worrying level?
- Does a political and social separation exist?
- Has the experience of democracy created a culture of tolerance?
- Are there common values, which are adopted and shared by different political and social groups?
- Does the left, as the opposition of the right-wing political tradition, have a future in Turkish politics?
- Are the transfers between the leftist and right-wing blocs typical?
- Is the headscarf an ideological-political symbol, or can it be considered in the context of freedom of speech and belief? How far does it polarize Turkish society?

To what extent is “the Western connection” supported by different political and social groups?

What is the place of the Justice and Development Party (the AKP) in the Turkish politics? How have different social groups reacted to it in terms of considering it a legitimate party?

### **Research Methodology**

*Respondents:* This article is based on a fieldwork, which was conducted in the second half of October 2007. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 2,903 individuals in 12 cities, which constitute NUTS-1 regional system developed by the Turkish Statistical Institute to represent the whole of Turkey. Sex, marital status, age structure and the provinces are listed in Table 1. We excluded institutional population and sampled only adults over 18. The number of the registered voters is 42,799,303 as of July 27, 2007 general election. Our sample size is 2903, confidence level is 99 percent, and confidence interval is .02391.

*Sampling Design:* While constructing the sample, we have applied multi-staging, stratifying and clustering. After determining provinces (stratified), districts and blocks (clustered, proportional to population), we have also applied gender and age quotas. Once the blocks were fixed, then we selected the first dwelling units randomly and then followed systematic building (flat) numbers.

*Questionnaire Design:* The questionnaire was structured and composed of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Almost all of our questions have been tested and implemented several times in various surveys in the past. So reliability and validity of questionnaire items were assured.

*Procedure:* We used cross-sectional survey method to gather data. A very well-known pollster (Pollmark Research) implemented and coded the survey. We, as researchers, accompanied Pollmark staff during every step of the fieldwork. Face-to-face interview technique was used to fill out questionnaires. Pollmark field inspectors audited fastidiously the interviewers. Experienced interviewers were used and retrained for the questionnaire. After collecting all questionnaires at coding center, we carried out telephone checking to randomly selected interviewees as a second quality control step. Data processing and debugging were the ordinary procedures.

*Data analysis:* Initially, we carried out non-parametric test (chi square) for variables, which would be used further at analyses that are more complex. Then, we conducted multi-dimensional scaling and factor analysis for data reduction. Thirdly, we analyzed these findings (new variables) which we

obtained from factor analyses and then implemented one-way ANOVA test to figure out significance level.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Female	1383	47,7
Male	1520	52,3
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	1876	64,6
Single	900	31,0
Widow/Divorced	127	4,4
<i>Age Structure</i>		
18-25	769	26,5
26-35	715	24,6
36-45	585	20,2
46-60	567	19,5
61 and over	266	9,2
<i>Provinces (NUTS 1)*</i>		
Adana (7 districts)	355	12,2
Ankara (11 districts)	340	11,7
Bursa (5 districts)	284	9,8
Erzurum (3 districts)	110	3,8
Gaziantep (5 districts)	186	6,4
Istanbul (18 districts)	516	17,8
Izmir (11 districts)	401	13,8
Kayseri (4 districts)	170	5,8
Malatya (3 districts)	97	3,3
Samsun (4 districts)	184	6,3
Tekirdağ (4 districts)	130	4,5
Trabzon (3 districts)	129	4,4

\*NUTS-1 - The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics.

## Socio-political Identities

Eight different identity definitions were given to the subjects and they were asked to state whether those definitions were appropriate to define their social and political identities. It was assumed that the eight definitions (Kemalist<sup>12</sup>, secularist, nationalist, idealist<sup>13</sup>, conservative, religious, social democrat and socialist) would be sufficient to represent socio-political groups in Turkey (Bozdoğan et al. 1997).<sup>14</sup> We applied non-parametric test to these identities and found that all have statistical significance (Table 2). To classify those identities under fewer titles, we conducted multi-dimensional scaling and factor analysis, using the Euclidean distance model and partial correlation. We have obtained three main socio-political upper identities and called them *Modernist-Kemalist*, *Conservative-Nationalist*<sup>15</sup> and *Leftist-Social*

*Democrat* (Table 3). According to our findings, the Modernist-Kemalist group contains Secularists and Kemalists; the Conservative-Nationalist group is composed of religious, conservative, ethnic-Turkists, and nationalists and the Leftist-Social Democrat group includes leftists and social democrats<sup>16</sup>.

**Table 2.** *Non Parametric Test (Chi Square)*

“Is it applicable for you?”	Chi-Square(a)	df	Asymp. Sig.
Religious	2954.68	2	0.000
Kemalist	1066.81	2	0.000
Secular	3256.40	2	0.000
Nationalist	3440.79	2	0.000
Conservative	770.48	2	0.000
Social Democrat	556.11	2	0.000
Socialist	1562.82	2	0.000
Idealist (ethnic Turkist)	1614.21	2	0.000

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5.

**Table 3.** *Factor Analysis: Rotated Component Matrix*

State whether the following features are appropriate to define you.	Modernist-Kemalist	Conservative-Nationalist	Leftist-Social Democrat
Kemalist	.793	.002	.160
Secularist	.784	-.122	.135
Nationalist	.563	.463	-.177
Idealist- Nationalist	-.072	.681	.205
Conservative	-.069	.636	-.166
Religious	.161	.612	-.322
Social democrat	.292	-.162	.685
Socialist	-.003	.005	.868

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Equamax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The most common identities are lined up as Modernist-Kemalist, Conservative-Nationalist and Leftist-Social Democrat (Table 4). While there is a positive correlation between the Modernist-Kemalist group and the Leftist-Social Democrat group, the correlation between the Conservative-Nationalist group and the other two (Table 5) is negative (Çarkoğlu et al. 2007). When we look at scores obtained from the subjects (Table 6), we see that while the most broadly-accepted identities in Turkish society are sequenced as nationalist (83.1%), secularist (81.7%), religious (79.4%), Kemalist (58.7%), and conservative (53.3%); the least accepted identities are sequenced as socialist (18.0%), idealist-nationalist (23.5%), and social-

democrat (39.9%). It appears that the mainstream left and right identities are commonly shared. It can further be concluded that the Turkish society broadly reconciles nationalist, secularist and religious values. For example, religious persons can be nationalist, ethnic-Turkist and conservative as well as Kemalist.

**Table 4.** *The Most Common Identities*

	Applicable (%)
Modernist-Kemalist	63.6
Conservative-Nationalist	59.0
Leftist-Social Democrat	18.6

**Table 5.** Correlations

Pearson Correlation	Modernist-Kemalist	Conservative-Nationalist	Leftist-Social Democrat
Modernist-Kemalist	1	-.010	.156(**)
Conservative-Nationalist	-.010	1	-.145(**)
Leftist-Social Democrat	.156(**)	-.145(**)	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

**Table 6.** *Self-Identification by Different Socio-Political Groups*

%	Religious	Kemalist	Secularist	Nationalist	Conservative	Social democrat	Socialist	Idealist-Nationalist
Modernist-Kemalist	81.5	91.0	98.6	91.4	53.3	48.7	21.7	24.3
F test	7.633 (.000)	8056.714 (.000)	732.581 (.000)	135.298 (.000)	3.896 (.020)	90.524 (.000)	23.967 (.000)	7.322 (.001)
Conservative-Nationalist	98.4	56.2	78.7	89.2	83.5	32.6	12.3	26.6
F test	692.555 (.000)	13.646 (.000)	13.265 (.000)	57.852 (.000)	4497.956 (.000)	52.595 (.000)	50.286 (.000)	22.179 (.000)
Leftist-Social Democrat	66.2	76.3	95.7	79.6	45.0	95.9	81.8	20.4
F test	46.822 (.000)	43.262 (.000)	45.467 (.000)	9.960 (.000)	20.731 (.000)	621.627 (.000)	2924.920 (.000)	3.784 (.023)
Total	79.4	58.7	81.7	83.1	53.3	39.9	18.0	23.5

Significance levels are in parentheses.

When we look at the values shared by the basic three socio-political categories, main characteristics of Turkish society emerge more clearly. Modernist-Kemalists tend to identify as Kemalist, secularist, nationalist, and social-democrat. On the other side, conservative-nationalists are more religious, conservative, nationalist and ethno-Turkish nationalist,



respectively. Finally, leftist-social democrats identify as social democrat, socialist, secularist and Kemalist.

### **Socio-economic Structure**

The number of official publications on income distribution and welfare studies in Turkey has increased recently. According to these works, the income distribution in Turkey occupies a place somewhere between developed and developing countries<sup>17</sup> in terms of equality. Our findings are also parallel to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institution (Table 7). More than half part of Turkish society is composed of people of low socio-economic status; one third of Turks are of a middle socio-economic status, and only 15 percent of the population qualifies as being of high socio-economic status (Table 8). Of course, the variation within each status is quite wide.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 7.** *Income Distribution*

	In 2005
First 20%	6.1
Second 20%	11.1
Third 20%	15.8
Forth 20%	22.6
Fifth 20%	44.4
Gini Coefficient	0.38

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute.

**Table 8.** Socio-economic Status (SES)

	%
Low SES	51.3
Middle SES	33.7
High SES	15.0
Total	100.0
F test	573.906 (.000)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### **Preferences for Political Parties**

In Turkey's current parliament, four parties with at least 20 seats have established groups.<sup>19</sup> The AKP identifies itself as conservative democrat; the CHP considers itself to be social democrat; the MHP (Nationalist Action Party) propagates Turkish nationalism and DTP (Democratic Society Party) claims to be democratic and the representative of the Kurdish people. Demographically, while the MHP depends heavily on ethnic-Turkists and the DTP's policies are based on the Kurdish ethnicity, the AKP targets center-right and religious voters as its base, and the CHP attempts to rally social democrats and secularists to its cause.<sup>20</sup> Apart from this characterization, the AKP and the MHP are also regarded as right-wing parties, while the CHP and the DTP are mostly situated on the left.<sup>21</sup> As it is seen in the above findings, secularism and religiosity are two common features of Turkish society.<sup>22</sup> When people are categorized according to left and right leaning political parties, the voting potential of the right is 75% and of the left is 25% (Table 9).

**Table 9.** *Electorates' Likely Support for Political Parties*

Political Parties	July 22, 2007 Election (Official Results, Row)	July 22, 2007 Election (Distributed)	Political Parties	November 2007 (Survey Result) (Row)	November 2007 Survey Result (Distributed)
AKP	38.0	46.5	AKP	43.6	52.8
CHP	17.1	20.9	CHP	14.8	17.9
MHP	11.7	14.3	MHP	12.5	15.2
DTP	4.3	5.4	DTP	2.3	2.8
Other	10.6	12.9	Other	9.3	11.3
Non-participation rate	18.3	-	Undecided/None	17.3	
Total	100.0	100.0	Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute and Pollmark Research Company.

Of course, voters also take candidates' personal attributes and the parties' particular programs into consideration. Psychological research has shown that both normative and heuristic criteria simultaneously influence political judgments (Ottati 1990). Consequently, to analyze and explain the voters' political behavior, various approaches have been developed (Zuckerman et al. 1998). When we consider ethnic and religious factors as crucial determinants for political behavior, we are faced with the question of whether people behave rationally. Statistically main universe always distributes normally. In addition, general public opinion is always accepted to operate rationally, though academic discussions on this issue continue (Druckma 2004).

### **Ethnic Composition**

Turkish censuses since 1965 have ceased to inquire about ethnicity and native language, and accordingly the hard data on Turkey's ethnic structure dates from before that year. The data related to the ethnic structure of Turkey is provided by the censuses until 1965. The proportion of Kurds in Turkey's total population, estimated according to the average population increase of Turkey, is broadly accepted by public opinion polls<sup>23</sup> and international institutions as 20% (Table 10).

**Table 10.** *Ethnicity*

	%
Turks	76.4
Kurds	19.2
Others	4.3
Total	100.0

Source: Ihsan Dagi & Metin Toprak, *Freedom of Expression in Turkey*, a project financed by European Commission, published by Association of Liberal Thinking, Ankara, 2001.

## The Relationship of Fundamentals

### ***Political Party Preferences of Socio-political Identities***

The level support among various socio-political groups for political parties can be read as an indicator of how mainstream or marginal those parties are. The first choice of the Modernist-Kemalist group is the AKP, followed by the MHP and the CHP at a much lower rate. The AKP also comes far ahead of the MHP and the CHP in the choice list of the Conservative-Nationalist group.<sup>24</sup> The Leftist-Social Democrat group tends to prefer the CHP, while the other parties come in the following order: AKP, DTP and MHP (Table 11).

**Table 11.** *Political Party Preferences of Socio-political Groups*

PARTIES	Modernist-Kemalist	Conservative-Nationalist	Leftist-Social Democrat
AKP	36.4%	54.8%	25.8%
CHP	19.3%	8.0%	32.8%
MHP	12.9%	12.7%	4.8%
DTP	1.1%	.5%	8.2%
Others	9.8%	8.8%	10.8%
Undecided	20.5%	15.2%	17.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
F test	50.671 (.000)	69.628 (.000)	12.850 (.000)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

It is interesting that the AKP, which has Islamic origins and is led by former Islamists, has a high level of acceptance among all groups. This means that this party has moved to the center (center-right) and that the largest part of the Turkish population does not consider it a serious threat to the regime. This can also be considered a sign of moderation in Turkish politics as compared with the polarization, tensions, crises, conflicts and clashes witnessed elsewhere in recent Turkish political history. Although some sections of society (mainly leftists and secularists) are adamantly opposed to the AKP's rule, fearing that they will transform the regime into an Islamic one, the general public -including some leftists and secularists- believes that the AKP has neither the intention nor the power to change the regime. Effectively, most Turks seem to want to give this party a chance to solving the country's chronic problems.

### ***Political Identity and Socio-economic Status***

Differences in political identity often mirror important socio-economic patterns. While members of the Modernist-Kemalist and Leftist-Social Democrat groups are generally concentrated in more affluent circles, the Conservative-Nationalist demographic tends to be relatively low socio-economic standing, and

consequently tends to be both poorer and less educated. It is a fact that mostly these people support the AKP, and neither views it as a threat nor sees any reasonable possibility of regime change. Combined with the previous finding, some may interpret the Conservative-Nationalist base as a sort of “lumpen proletariat” tending to be easily swayed by charismatic populist leaders of the right-wing, being unable to clearly see present realities and or anticipate future developments (Cagaptay 2005). Conversely, the same data suggest the possibility that the wealthy and educated members of the traditional political, social and economic elite fear they may be supplanted by an emerging Islamist elite, or generally that right-wing’s use of power will be to their material and social disadvantage (Table 12).

**Table 12.** *Socio-political Groups and Socio-economic Status*

	Low SES	Middle SES	High SES	Total
Modernist-Kemalist	60.7%	64.1%	72.3%	63.6%
Conservative-Nationalist	68.4%	51.4%	43.8%	59.0%
Leftist-Social Democrat	16.9%	18.9%	23.6%	18.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %
F test	9.796 (.000)	61.709 (.000)	5.129 (.006)	

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### ***Socio-political Structures of Political Parties***

Taking the average of the sampling as a reference, it becomes apparent that political party affiliations vary considerably along socio-political lines. The Modernist-Kemalist group supports mostly the CHP and the MHP; the Conservative-Nationalist group greatly prefers the AKP and the MHP; and the Leftist-Socialist group inclines more towards the CHP and the DTP than other groups. When the average of the sampling is taken as reference again, similar results are obtained for eight different identities. People who are identified as religious and conservative both preferred the AKP.<sup>25</sup> Kemalists and secularists supported the CHP, as did social democrats. Those identifying as nationalist opted for the MHP, as did those who considered themselves ethnic-Turkists. Those identifying as socialist showed a preference for the DTP (Table 13).

**Table 13.** *Socio-political Structures of Political Parties*

PARTIES	Modernist-Kemalist	Conservative-Nationalist	Leftist-Social Democrat
AKP	53.0%	74.0%	11.0%
CHP	82.8%	31.8%	41.2%
MHP	65.6%	59.9%	7.1%
DTP	29.4%	13.2%	64.7%
Others	66.8%	55.7%	21.4%
Undecided/ None	75.2%	51.6%	18.8%
Total	63.6%	59.9%	18.6%
F test	41.545 (.000)	72.497 (.000)	73.166 (.000)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### **Political Party Preferences of Ethnicities**

The impact of ethnicity on politics has been studied for decades (Laumann et al. 1971, Andersen 1982). Interestingly, our study indicates that the AKP was by far the favorite among both Kurds and ethnic Turks. Its presence on the political scene, however, has not entirely eclipsed ethnic divisions, which the breakdown of those identifying with the other parties reveals. We note that ethnic Turks, after the AKP, prefer first the CHP and then the MHP<sup>26</sup>, whereas among Kurds the DTP beat out the CHP, with the MHP faring poorly<sup>27</sup>. We will also note that the AKP's level of support per capita is actually stronger among Kurds than among ethnic Turks, perhaps suggesting that many Kurds with serious problems have come to look for their deliverance to a mainstream, right-leaning party rather than the more radical DTP –often accused of being the political wing of the illegal PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). This analysis, by no means unreasonable, can also be taken as a sign of a trend towards moderation in Turkish politics (Table 14).

**Table 14.** *Political Party Preferences of Ethnicities*

Political Parties	Turk	Kurd	Others	Total
AKP	43.7%	48.3%	38.6%	43.7%
CHP	15.1%	10.4%	17.6%	14.9%
MHP	13.7%	1.9%	11.6%	12.5%
DTP	0.8%	18.1%	0.9%	2.3%
Others	9.1%	7.7%	13.3%	9.3%
Undecided	17.7%	13.5%	18.0%	17.3%
Total	100.0%			
F test				.881 (.415)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### ***Ethnic Structure of Political Parties***

It can be easily said that there has been a huge asymmetry between the party preferences of ethno-ideological Turkists and Kurdist. However, the factors have impact on both pro-Turkish and pro-Kurdish politics are more common (Çarkoğlu et al. 2006). Among people of Turkish ethnic origin, the DTP found the least support of any party, and similarly among those of Kurdish<sup>28</sup> origin the MHP was the least popular. Ethnic Turks prefer the MHP above the average, while ethnic Kurds prefer the DTP above the average. This clearly shows that the DTP and MHP try to obtain support by resorting to ethnic nationalism. Therefore, their successes in elections would amount to further polarization and tension in Turkish domestic politics and increase the possibility of conflict and confrontation between ethnic groups. On the other hand, their preference for moderation to come to power by gaining support among broader sections of the society will encourage a peaceful, democratic transformation. The MHP can benefit from the AKP example in becoming a centrist party, and the DTP can condemn PKK and its terrorist tactics to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question and the structural integration of Kurdish people into the mainstream of both Turkish society and the state (Table 15).

**Table 15.** *Ethnic Structure of Political Parties*

	AKP	CHP	MHP	DTP	Others	None
Turk	83.0%	84.2%	91.2%	27.9%	81.1%	84.7%
Kurd	9.9%	6.3%	1.4%	69.1%	7.4%	7.0%
Others	7.1%	9.5%	7.4%	2.9%	11.5%	8.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
F test	11.996 (.000)					

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### ***Ethnicity and Socio-economic Status***

The percentage of ethnic Turks among those of low, middle and high socio-economic status does not vary considerably, although the proportion of Kurds decreases in the upper parts of the status ladder. It can be said that Kurds are mainly concentrated among those of lower socio-economic status (Table 16).

**Table 16.** *Ethnicities and Socio-economic Status (SES)*

	Low SES	Middle SES	High SES
Turk	82.5%	84.7%	81.2%
Kurd	10.9%	7.3%	6.2%
Others	6.6%	8.1%	12.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
F test	3.231 (.040)		

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### **Socio-political Structures of Ethnicities**

Taking the average of the sampling as reference, Modernist-Kemalist values are revealed to be more common among Turks whereas Leftist-Social Democrat values are adopted mostly by Kurds (Table 17).

**Table 17.** *Socio-political Structures of Ethnicities*

	Turk	Kurd	Others	Total	F test
Modernist-Kemalist	65.8%	40.5%	66.8%	63.6%	33.907 (.000)
Conservative-Nationalist	59.4%	57.5%	56.5%	59.0%	.517 (.000)
Leftist-Social Democrat	17.4%	28.6%	19.7%	18.6%	9.774 (.000)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

Generally, it seems Turks are more likely to cling to the regime's main values and ideology, helping maintain the integrity and structure of the country's "official" homogeneity, while Kurds opt for socialism to help protect their distinct identity against the assimilationist policies.<sup>29</sup> There are no statistically meaningful differences between ethnic groups in espousing Conservative-Nationalist values. Therefore, it is necessary to look again at ethnic origins from the perspectives of the eight sub-identities. Turks are under the sampling average only in social democrat and socialist values whereas Kurds are above the sampling average only in these values and are under the average in all other values -religious, Kemalist, secularist, nationalist, and idealist-. Kurds prefer socialism or social democracy as a mark of protest against a political culture dominated by the Turkish majority. While Kurds seem to prefer consensus democracy as a guarantee for minorities, Turks tend to understand democracy as administrating the will of the majority.<sup>30</sup>

### **Fasting as Religious Common Denominator**

In discussing religion in Turkey, we must bear in mind that there is no sharp, absolute divide between Islam and its partisans on one hand, and secularism and its proponents on the other. Those who consider themselves devout

Muslims will inevitably incorporate modern, secular, realities into their lives – sometimes even those, which are in tension with traditional Islam-, and at the same time, many secularists do not hesitate to perform certain religious duties. This large and ambiguous area of overlap can be read as good evidence of the possibility of harmonious coexistence and shared values among Turkish people of different social backgrounds and political orientations based on mutual respect and moderation.<sup>31</sup>

There are, of course, certain practices which have become distinctly characteristic of *devout* Muslims in Turkey, such as praying five times a day (generally in mosques), the use of distinctly religious words in discourse, and wearing certain types of clothing, as in compliance with Islamic jurisprudence. At the same time, though, other religious activities such as fasting, funeral prayers and Friday prayers are common both those who identify as secularist and those who identify as devout.

In particular, it would behoove us to examine the practice of fasting during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan, which requires a great deal of personal patience and self-restraint, and therefore cannot be overlooked as an insignificant religious exercise. While there have indeed been tensions over this issue, with some secularists accusing pious Muslims of attempting to punish those who do not fast, fasting itself remains common enough throughout Turkish society that classifying people based on whether or not they partake is extremely difficult. The relatively small differences between social groups in terms participation in fasting suggest a very real potential for different sections of what may otherwise seem to be a deeply divided society to coexist in peace.

Those identifying as Conservative-Nationalist reported the highest percentage observing the fast (91.4%), followed by Modernist-Kemalists (82.7%) and finally Leftist-Social Democrats (74%) (Table 18).

**Table 18.** *Fasting by Socio-political Groups*

Did you fast during the month of Ramadan?	Modernist-Kemalist	Conservative-Nationalist	Leftist-Social Democrat
I did not fast	17.3%	8.6%	26.0%
Yes, occasionally	17.0%	12.4%	18.0%
Yes, regularly	65.7%	79.0%	56.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
F test	21.040 (.000)	229.910 (.000)	64.129 (.000)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

Observing of the fast operates in rough proportion to socio-economic status; comparatively fewer of those with high levels of income and education



fasted. Fasting is also most popular among the AKP's supporters and least among the CHP's base. However, it is particularly noteworthy that among all political parties, the fasting rate is well above 50%. Supporters of the CHP and DTP reported the highest rates of nonobservance.

It is interesting that both the rates of fasting in the whole month and not fasting even in one day are quite high for the DTP's supporters (Table 19). This may be considered as the sign that DTP isolated from the main Kurdish ethnic group and encompassing different "marginal" sections of that ethnic group.<sup>32</sup> There is a common understanding that rural people or Kurds are more traditional or likely religious people comparing with city-dweller or others. However, our findings indicate that the distance between Kurds and religious worships is growing (Table 20).

**Table 19.** *Fasting by Political Party*

Did you fast during the month of Ramadan?	AKP	CHP	MHP	DTP	Others	Undecided / None	Total
I did not fast	6.4%	31.9%	14.3%	29.0%	27.4%	20.5%	16.1%
Yes, occasionally	8.8%	22.3%	17.9%	1.4%	17.0%	20.5%	14.6%
Yes, regularly	84.8%	45.8%	67.8%	69.6%	55.6%	59.0%	69.3%
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
F test	68.733 (.000)						

Significance levels are in parentheses.

**Table 20.** *Ethnicity and Fasting*

Did you fast during the month of Ramadan?	Turk	Kurd	Others	Total
I did not fast	15,1	20,1	22,4	16,1
Yes, occasionally	14,6	13,1	15,9	14,5
Yes, regularly	70,4	66,8	61,6	69,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
F test				5.973 (.003)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

It can be said that Turks consider fasting increasingly as a part of their tradition, strengthening their national feelings and separating them from the others. Ethnic-Turks have the tendency of using the words Islam and Turk together to emphasize their greatness; but being terrorist, separatist, and

peasant come to their mind when they hear the word ‘Kurd’. The use of the concept of ‘White Turks’ (Yalcin 2004)<sup>33</sup> by Turkish intellectuals and the publication of books on this subject underline the importance of the issue. This is in fact a dangerous development in terms of non-solution of the Kurdish problem and the deep polarization and conflict between Turks and Kurds. The same danger exists for religious and secularist people given the harsh reactions of the sides even in minor issues not having the capacity of causing a crisis.

There is a strong negative relationship between fasting and socio-economic statuses. While fasting rate is the highest (77.1%) for low socio-economic status, non-fasting rate is the highest (24.1%) for high socio-economic status (Table 21).

**Table 21.** *Fasting by Socio-economic Status*

Did you fast during the month of Ramadan?	Low SES	Middle SES	High SES	Total
Yes, regularly	77.1%	63.1%	56.9%	69.3%
Yes, occasionally	10.1%	19.4%	19.0%	14.6%
I did not fast	12.8%	17.5%	24.1%	16.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
F test				37.687 (.000)

Significance levels are in parentheses.

### **Unconciliatory Attitudes Based on Prejudices and the Polarization of the Turkish Society**

We have suggested from the above findings that despite the divisions present within Turkish society, there exists a clear set of shared values, practices, and understandings, which constitutes a solid basis for harmonious coexistence. Put negatively, we have seen nothing in our data to suggest that polarization, clashes, or discord between the various identity groups that comprise Turkish society is inevitable. This is not, however, to obscure the reality of past and present tension.

Indeed, repeatedly, Turkey witnessed politics driven by intransigent attitudes and provocative actions of small groups, which have succeeded in creating unnecessary crises, retarding the normalization and moderation of Turkish politics. The contentious nature of attitudes toward Kurdish cultural rights and the demands of Islamists for recognition of their identity are an excellent example.

Hardliners on this issue haven been often publicly or privately espoused a particularly dim view of the Kurds as a group, which bias has unquestionably

contributed to ill-advised decisions and problematic situations. At the same time, even among many ethnic Turkish nationalists who do not necessarily harbor any contempt towards Kurds as such, a substantial current of thought considers Kurdish cultural demands and the politicization of Kurdish identity to be a fundamental threat to Turkey's peace, stability, and integrity –and often as a front for terrorism.

While wishing to preserve the important conceptual distinction between uninformed prejudice and legitimate security concerns, we cannot deny the practical connection between presuppositions about the motivations, characteristics, and values of a group, on one hand, and the strategies employed in interacting with it on the other. Indeed, in the interviews conducted by Turkish journalist Fikret Bila, some retired Turkish army generals admitted to having made mistakes or held misconceptions regarding the cultural and political aspects of the Kurdish movement. We can identify certain presumptions as having been particularly impactful in misdirecting the government's struggle against Kurdish separatism –and indeed as continuing to constitute barriers to the kind of courageous action needed to affect a real solution to the problem. These include the following assumptions: (i) Kurdish identity is “monolithic across Turkey and northern Iraq”; (ii) This identity is the main “source of group identity for the Kurdish-speaking people”; (iii) It is “birth-given and involves little or no individual choice” (Somer 2005a: 113); (iv) Turks view their identity as mutually exclusive to that of Kurds, and view Kurds as the “other”; (v) Alternative political movements based on factors other than ethnicity, such as class, ideology, gender and religion are not attractive for Kurds; and (vi) “An Iraqi Kurdish state or autonomous entity would necessarily support Kurdish secessionism in Turkey.” (Somer 2005a: 114)

In the remote and recent past, though, moderates have supported and encouraged initiatives, which have helped, raise hopes for the peaceful solution of the Kurdish problem. Moderates are aware that the Kurds living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria are not a homogenous group, and that important religious, tribal, socio-economic, linguistic, political and ideological differences exist among them. They have varying levels of ethnic and national self-consciousness, diverse political-institutional experiences, and different relations with international actors and their host countries (Somer 2005a: 116-7).

Moderates also believe that it is possible to dissociate the identity and security aspects of the Kurdish problem and to accommodate Kurdish cultural and political demands without damaging the social, political and territorial integrity of Turkey. Instead, they maintain that this

accommodation is actually the best way to counteract Kurdish secessionism, since it will decrease the appeal of this option for Turkish Kurds, and thus diminish support for the PKK's political-territorial demands. Thus, moderates have encouraged recognition of Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights, without compromising their dedication to combating the PKK's often violent secessionist campaign (Somer 2005b: 603).

The military rule of the early 1980s was accompanied by harsh oppression of leftists, Islamists and Kurdish activists –even going so far as to ban use of the Kurdish language in public. More moderate views, like those described, became more prevalent beginning in the late 1980s, with President Turgut Özal. Many Kurds saw him as someone who genuinely cared about their welfare and was capable of solving the Kurdish problem through constructive measures.

Hardliners did not share Özal's approach, which they accused of underestimating the gravity of the PKK threat, and opposed even consideration of measures related to Kurdish identity and cultural demands until the PKK's violence had totally ended. Meanwhile the pro-Kurdish DTP did not distance itself from the PKK, and instead tried to present the PKK as a legitimate political organization representing the Kurdish people. As a result, with the resumption of PKK violence despite its self-declared ceasefire, hard line nationalist Turks felt that their worst misgivings about the sincerity of Kurdish desires for a political solution had been confirmed, and initiated a new campaign against pro-Kurdish partisans without distinguishing carefully between radical Kurdish nationalists and moderates.

In 2000, hardliners had emerged as the dominant voice within both the army and the Ecevit government, and began emphatically arguing that Kurdish demands for access to television broadcasting and educational curricula, along with an alleged politicization of the Kurdish movement, amounted to "the second dimension of separatist terrorism." They insisted that it represented "the revival and restructuring of the separatist movement through political means" and therefore constituted a genuine threat to Turkish security and territorial integrity (Aydınli 2002: 214-5).

Turkish civilian authorities and political forces yet to develop non-military solutions for the economic, cultural, political and social problems facing the southeastern part of Turkey –which has the highest concentration of Kurds. Consequently, despite impressive military successes against the armed factions of the PKK, the actual needs of the region's people have not been addressed –much less satisfied- sufficiently to create a real atmosphere of stability. The Kurdish population's widespread support for the AKP government and its leaders strongly implies that they anticipate new

initiatives from the civil authorities to improve their social, cultural and economic situations.

Our statistical data has suggested that they are not particularly different from ethnic Turks in many respects. It seems, then, that a conciliatory and tolerant attitude toward them will likely be met with Kurdish sympathy and support, and contribute to the stability of domestic politics. Of course, this is easier said than done. To be effective, new approaches to the Kurdish issue require the support of state institutions and resources and efficient administration.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the biggest challenge, though, will be overcoming the opposition of hardliners without further polarizing the country or generating new crises.

The military, bureaucratic and civilian elite's long-standing history of imposing their particular vision of modernizing Westernization on the masses, usually under the name of Kemalism, has created problems for groups seeking the recognition and representation of any alternative identities in the public sphere –particularly for conservatives and Islamists. These elites have long believed that their paternalistic control over public space and discourse has been the only thing preventing a total disintegration of Turkish society into chaos and “backwardness,” and many are quite worried about the recent successes of conservative parties. These elite are so insistent on Kemalism to believe that if Kemalism, harboring the elements that centralize human beings, is exhausted, the unity of the state will be lost and it will not be possible to maintain the idea of society (Kaya 2007: 716). They have most frequently used the principle of secularism to attack opponents whose world views they see as in conflict with the Kemalist order. Their understanding of “secularism,” however, is not simply keeping affairs of state outside the purview of religious authorities –as it is in most of Euroamerica- but instead as the active subservience of religion to the authority of the state through legal and constitutional channels (Keyman 2007: 222).

Effectively, this paternalism results in a striking denial to conservatives of any meaningful self-expression in the public sphere, the most visible manifestation of which is the controversy over the headscarf. The state, at the behest of hard line Kemalists, only permits women to participate in the public sphere if they adopt “the particular secular identity of womanhood, which is constructed as the public identity” (Seçkinelgin 2006: 757).

On a civil society level, secular women's organizations and feminists, who share the state's interpretation of secularism, severely criticize and condemn women who wear the headscarf as having chosen “backwardness” by surrendering to the pressures of Islamist men who want to impose an Islamic order. Consequently, such groups also do not see any place in the public

sphere for these women (Seçkinelgin 2006: 762-5, Marshall 2005: 109, 110).

Ironically, policies such as the headscarf ban serve not only to prevent women wearing the headscarf from working in the public sphere, but it also amounts to gender-based discrimination, and actually helps reinforce the existent patriarchal system by denying those women access to higher education and other opportunities to develop their personality and welfare. The effect is felt most keenly among those non-elite women who, supposedly, need “emancipation” the most.

Like the Kurdish problem, the question of how to react to Turkey’s “Islamists” is a very sensitive issue. While the accusation that “Islamists” want to impose an Islamic regime upon Turkish society has occasioned significant tension and anxiety, the main purpose of the mainstream Turkish religious conservative movement is to obtain public recognition for their identity, which, despite frequent portrayal as rigid and monolithic, in fact represents a very diverse, complex, and dynamic set of beliefs, inevitably having a “plural and multidimensional nature.” (Keyman 2007: 217). Indeed, we have mentioned how our data shows enormous areas of overlap between those identifying themselves as “secular” and those identifying as “religious” –including among those who support conservative parties. Despite the ubiquity of the charge, to accuse the mainstream conservative movement in Turkey of being “anti-secular” is quite simply to ignore the demographic reality of a population, which overwhelmingly refuses to situate its identity within a simplistic secular-religious binary.

These kinds of accusations, typical of anti-conservative members of the Kemalist establishment, collectively constitute a hegemonic discourse to speak for conservative and religious Turks while refusing to allow them any authentic voice or will of their own (Dağı 2008a). Hence, members of the traditional elites may allege that the conservative demand for public recognition of Muslim identity indicates an intention to impose certain values on the rest of society, but they may only do so by overlooking the fact that most conservatives understand their goal as coexistence with secularists based on mutual understanding, equitable access to public benefits, and the right to free and fair political, economic, and cultural competition.

Consequently, the resulting assumptions made about the motivations, values, and intentions of conservative-religious Turks frequently do not withstand even casual scrutiny as valid representations of all or even most members of the movement. A prime example of this is the headscarf issue, where women who wear headscarves in fact have a wide variety of complex motivations for their actions, and to reduce these simply to “patriarchal

oppression” does tremendous violence to how many women actually understand their own beliefs and actions. For example, many consider it to be a personal ethical and religious duty, or an act of freedom and the expression of cultural rights –rather than as a symbol of a revolutionary ideology. Indeed, far from being an act of submission to Islamist men’s orders not to participate in public life, many women see the headscarf as enabling them to become more deeply involved in activities in the public sphere without compromising their personal standards of modesty (Marshall 2005: 111).

Particularly since it is the ban on headscarves for university students that is the main target of criticism, it is difficult to understand how women’s demands for equal access to better opportunities for education and career advancement can be so routinely portrayed as passive acceptance of a patriarchal culture that relegates them to quiet, domestic existence. Moreover, “Islamism” as a unified ideological movement universally aiming to establish an Islamic regime, has not had a substantial presence in Turkish politics for well over a decade –and the prevalence of such monolithic Islamism even before this time is debatable. Over the last twenty years at least, a very wide diversity of “Islamism” and conservatism has been evident, with a broad spectrum of appeal for different reasons to Turks of different classes, ethnicities, genders, and political affiliations (Houston 2002: 433).

It is, of course, true that with the activities of Islamists and conservatives, the impact of Islam on society has become more pronounced. Today, “it is not possible to analyze Turkish politics without reference to Islam” and it is “impossible to understand the Turkish political-economy without taking into account Islamic capital and its institutional structure, or the cultural sphere without recognizing the symbolic and sociological power of Islam (Keyman 2007: 223).

In general, the resurgence of religious piety can be read as a popular reaction against the paternalism of long-dominant elite enabled by increased economic opportunity and social mobility. The insistence of conservative women on wearing the headscarf can also be seen as a challenge to the state’s imposition of a particular identity on not only their public expression, but even on their bodies (Seçkinelgin 2006: 762, Keyman 2007: 226). However, this mark of protest should not to be confused with a desire to overthrow the entire regime, which conservatives overwhelmingly benefit from and wish to maintain. In fact, their activities are better interpreted as a perhaps natural expression of a suppressed conservative identity in a modern context, which has finally begun to allow free competition between the different forces within society.

## **Conclusion**

This article's statistical data has demonstrated the growing prospect of a Turkish society, which opts for moderation and compromise rather than radicalism and confrontation. While nationalism seems to be on the rise among Turkish people, ultra-nationalism (idealism) is the least popular political strain after socialism, which has long been disliked by the Turkish public due to the historical Russian-Turkish rivalry and the association of communism with atheism.

As our statistics show, while a great majority of Turkish people consider themselves religious, which could be seen as a threat to the Turkish Kemalist regime, an even greater majority defend secularism as the basic characteristic of their state. The great election victory of the AKP can also be seen as the sign of moderation in Turkish politics. Although the AKP has Islamist origins, it has used discourse, which encompasses all sections of society and has proved through its actions that it does not make its political decisions on a religious basis. People from many different sections of society were impressed by the AKP's tenure in government and had no qualms re-electing it with an even stronger mandate. The re-election of the AKP and its popularity among so many sections of Turkish society demonstrates that most Turkish people, including most who earnestly believe in secularism and other characteristics of the regime, do not see any reason for tension and confrontation.

The main divide within Turkish society, and the source of its conflict, is not so much among the majority of people, but rather between them and traditional secular elite, which continues to use its influence to deny those who do not share its particular vision of westernization access to the public sphere (Dağı 2008b). The state's rejection of the identities of large sections of society and the undemocratic interventions have created great social tensions and prevented the normalization of politics, in turn stunting the development of Turkish democracy and damaged Turkey's ambitions of recognition as a developed nation. The "Kurdish nationalists" and "Islamists," who have long since ceased to harbor any plan to fundamentally change the system, mainly struggle for the recognition of their identities and the right to participate in the public sphere on an equal footing with others. The reality of their intentions even aside, toppling the existent regime and gaining control of the state is patently neither a viable nor reasonable goal for them, given the strength of the state's protection mechanisms and an international climate that would not tolerate undemocratic or anti-pluralistic developments. What is needed for the normalization of Turkish politics is a transformation of Turkish secularism away from its old statist, elite-centered



model and towards a more democratic secularism. If the traditional elites continue in the same pattern of refusing to compromise with what has clearly emerged as the dominant worldview of the majority of the increasingly mobilized Turkish society, tensions are likely to continue and perhaps even spiral out of control. However, if they adopt “a more dialogical, tolerant and accommodating strategy of living with difference,” (Keyman 2007: 228-229) and a far broader section of the Turkish people can participate in and identify with the state –which is ultimately the insurance for its survival.

The minimum expected cell frequency is 1023.0.

## Notes

1. For the evolution of early Turkish political parties and ruralization of elections and democracy see Frank Tachau and Mary-Jo D. Good (1973).
2. For discussions on the center-right party tradition in Turkey see Cizre-Sakallioğlu (1996). We think that Kuran’s preference falsification framework also works well for the Turkish right-wing parties (Kuran 1987)
3. For the impact of EU membership process on Turkish politics, see Thomas (2005).
4. For the rise of political Islam in the Middle East see Rubin (1997).
5. For the struggle between establishment and religious political tradition see Umit Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Menderes Cinar (2003) and Keyman (2007).
6. Mete Tuncay compares Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey in the context of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, and concludes that while Ottoman Empire was authoritarian, Turkey is totalitarian. In addition, some other articles have discussed the ideological public sphere argument and its crisis in modern Turkey (Çaha 2005; Çaha 2004).
7. In literature, some papers have analyzed the relative effects of religion, social class and linguistic factors on voting comparatively. In Turkey, the argument of “threat to the regime” is used generally to keep the civil society’s institutions under pressure (Lijphart 1979).
8. Atilla Yayla suggests a liberal constitution for solution (Yayla 2007).
9. For the use of Islam both as a threat against and as a tool for the state see Tank (2005).
10. We use secularist elite, state elite and traditional elite interchangeably.
11. The following articles are going to be related to terrorism, reactionism, perception of the West, and transformation and evolution of Turkish politics from fundamentalists to compromisers.
12. Kemalism refers to “Mustafa Kemal ATATURK”, the founder of modern Turkey.

13. The term 'idealist' stands for ethnic Turkist. The symbol for idealists is a wolf's head which depicted by right hand fingers. This sign is very similar to the hand sign of certain rock groups.
14. Jonathan Friedman (1992) uses an anthropological approach and concludes that construction of identities is the result of particular social positions. Ergun Özbudun (2006) discusses the adventures and meanings of left-wing and right-wing parties in the context of AKP victory in 2002.
15. For the making of Islamic political identity in Turkey see M. Hakan Yavuz (2003a).
16. Long-term interaction of Turkey and Europe has created some interruptions in terms of identities. For a review see Robins (1996), Akgün (2002), and Güllalp (1995).
17. Poor Economic outcome, and income or wealth inequality, by fueling social discontent, intensifies socio-political instability. For cross-country analysis, including Turkey, see Alesina and Perotti (1996). Also for an analysis on a specific period in Turkey see Akarca and Tansel (2004).
18. As well known, many researches find positive relationship between socio-economic development and political/economic freedoms and civil rights. Heritage Foundation, Freedom House, Fraser Institute, Transparency International, World Economic Forum, World Bank and UN Development Program publish many indices and reports support this argument.
19. In the long-run, as in the present day, four main political trends dominate directly or indirectly Turkish political arena: center-right, center-left, ethnic-Kurdist and ethnic-Turkist. Until recent years, the destiny for religious, ethnic-based and leftist parties were only coalition or opposition in Turkish Parliament. However, since parliamentary election in 1994 (with the exception of 1999 early parliamentary election), religious oriented parties have led Turkish politics. For rise of political Islam see Çaha (2003) and Öniş (2001). More interestingly, ethnic Turkism has begun to be shared also by social democrat opposition party. See Kütahyalı (2008), Özipek (2008a) and Bayramoğlu (2008).
20. However, with the presidency of Devlet Bahçeli, MHP's politics has changed dramatically. See Yılmaz (2008).
21. For the increasing role of ethnicity and religion on voting behaviour see Güneş-Ayata and Ayata (2002).
22. Y.Ziya Ozcan concluded that social class and demographic factors are also important determinants for both municipality and parliamentary elections (Ozcan 2000).
23. For example, Konda Research has found ratio of Kurds 15.7% (Konda 2006). Findings of this research were seen at Milliyet daily on 22 March 2007. CIA website also gives 20% for Kurdish population in Turkey. Nevertheless, our survey result shows that the ratio of Kurds represented in sampling is about 10%. Turkey has several other ethnicities and sects. However, collective or overlapping

- identities or peculiarities of those groups with Turks and Kurds lead intellectuals or analysts to ignore their presence. For a discussion on Zaza ethnic group see Kehl-Bodrogi (1999). For a discussion on official policy change against Kurdish issue see Yılmaz (2007b).
24. Tarhan Erdem (2007), one of the leading pollsters and well known social democrat figure, takes the developments in Turkish political arena positively. See also Kalaycıoğlu (1994).
  25. For a critical view on AKP's definition of its conservatism see Özipek (2008b). Narlı (1999) and Özipek (2003) have analyzed the rise of Turkish political Islam in detail.
  26. For an evaluation of politicization of Kurds see Somer (2004).
  27. For an analysis on a previous election see Candar (1999).
  28. For an analysis on pro-Kurdish political parties see Watts (1999).
  29. For an evaluation of Turkish politics in the context of modernization, see Turan (2007).
  30. For a comprehensive democracy analysis see Blaug (2001).
  31. For mis-exaggerating role of religion on politics see Tessler (2002).
  32. There is an interesting trend in the issues of Kurds and Alevis. Alevis have been marginalized and discriminated in the Ottoman Empire era and also in the modern Turkey to some extent. Then Alevis have begun consciously to identify themselves as a political group on the basis of a unique religious identity. Alevis' leftist commitment may be understood as a kind of protest against state-based-Sunni dominance. Marginalization of Alevis by forcing them to the corner has created an outlier for the mainstream social tradition. Now, we think that Kurds also have been on the similar route. Kurds have been marginalized by state-based-Turkist tradition. Consequently, Sunni Islam and Turkishness have not been used as denominators but used as dividing means in the Turkish society. For the formation of Alevi identity and general discussions on Kurds and Alevis see Shankland (2003), Bruinessen (1996), Olsson et al (1998), Yavuz (2003b), and Zeidan (1999).
  33. The term *white Turk* has been developed by late journalist Ufuk Guldemir. For a further discussion, see Yıldız (2003).
  34. Murat Yılmaz (2007b) argues that talking Kurdish issue so much means that there has been enormous development in that field.

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# Türk Siyasetinin Dönüşümü: Sosyo-Politik, Ekonomik ve Etnik Özellikler

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**Özet:** Bu çalışma, 2007 yılı Ekim ayında gerçekleştirilen ve Türkiye'yi temsil niteliğine sahip bir alan araştırmasına dayanmaktadır. 85 yıllık modern Türkiye'nin bugün uğraştığı temel meselelere ışık tutması bakımından Türk toplumunda egemen sosyo-politik kimliklerin tespiti ve temel meselelerde, bu sosyo-politik grupların yaklaşımları ve bu kimliklerin siyasi arenadaki somutlaşmış görünümleri analiz edilmektedir. Araştırma bulguları, Türk toplumunda başlıca sosyo-politik kimliklerin *Modernist-Kemalist*, *Milliyetçi-Muhafazakar* ve *Solcu-Sosyal Demokrat* başlıklarında toplanabileceğini göstermektedir. Mevcut siyasi partilerde, geleneksel olarak sağ ve sol ana-akım partilerinin önemli bir dönüşüme uğradığı ve toplumsal teveccühün ciddi şekilde kayma gösterdiği dikkat çekmektedir. Hem geleneksel ve marjinal sağdan, hem modernist ve sosyal demokrat kesimlerden destek alan bir parti geçeceği Türkiye'nin siyasi tarihinde pek de aşına olunmayan bir fenomendir. Etnik yapı ve din olgusu bağlamındaki tespitler, alışageldik kır-kent çerçevesindeki analizleri ters yüz etmektedir. Türk sosyal ve siyasal hayatını resmeden bu araştırma, mevcut örgütlü siyasi mimarinin, sosyal gerçeklikle önemli ölçüde uyum içinde olmadığını ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyo-politik kimlikler, muhafazakar demokrasi, Türk siyasetinin dönüşümü, Türk laikliği.

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## Преобразование турецкой политики: социально-политические, экономические и этнические особенности

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**Резюме:** Эта статья основана на исследованиях, проведенных в октябре месяце 2007 года и имевших характер отражения всей Турции. В работе проанализированы вопросы определения правящей социально-политической идентичности в турецком обществе, подходы этих социально-политических групп к основным вопросам и конкретное видение (отображение) данной идентичности на политической арене с точки зрения освещения основных проблем современной Турции. Результаты исследований показали, что в турецком обществе можно выделить основные социально-политические идентичности, как модерн-кемалисты, националисты-консерваторы и левые социал-демократы. В существующих политических партиях привлекает внимание, что традиционные правые и левые, как основные течения подверглись важным преобразованиям и общественные предпочтения также значительно изменились. Партия, которая состоит как из традиционных и маргинальных правых, так и социал-модернистов демократов, является непривычным для политической жизни Турции феноменом. Определения, исходящие из этнической структуры и религиозного состояния противоположны традиционному анализу в рамках сельских и городских районов. Данное исследование, отображающее турецкую социальную и политическую жизнь, показывает, что существующая организационная политическая система не вполне соответствует социальным реалиям.

**Ключевые Слова:** Социально-политические идентичности, консервативная демократия, трансформация турецкой политики, турецкий атеизм.

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