THE AKP "CLOSING" IN RELATION TO KURDISH MINORITY RIGHTS IN TURKEY

ELIF GENC

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

November 2012

The AKP "Closing" in Relation to Kurdish Minority Rights in Turkey

Abstract:

Recent developments in Turkey show evidence that the current governing party, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or* AKP), is attempting to address and resolve some of the issues arising from years of suppression of the Kurdish minority in Turkey, in conjunction with establishing European Union membership as a key part of their political platform. Initially these political maneuvers showed some promise of seriously addressing issues of recognition of minority ethnicity in Turkey of the Kurdish people. At the same time the AKP represents a shift or transformation of power from the traditional ruling class, the secularists *"laik"* to the neoliberal "Islamists". However the question arises whether this shift in power in Turkey from that of the nationalist *laik* class to that of the Islamists of the AKP signifies any significant increase in the probability of the Kurdish people in Turkey reaching recognition and emancipation from their perennial socio-economic suppression.

I dedicate this thesis to my father (*Baba*) and my mother.

This thesis would not have been possible without the continued support and guidance of Professors Sergei Plekhanov, Wenona Giles, Thabit Abdullah, Jamie Scott, as well as Fiona Fernandes and Sandy Brian Hager.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The Republic of Turkey has been identified by scholars of "multiculturalism"[1] as one example of a state that has failed to recognize its ethnic minorities. Turkey is considered, within international discourse, to have adhered until recently to the definition of a homogenous state which perpetuates ideas of centralism as a state model. Other countries identified as denying the existence of ethnic minorities within their boundaries include France, Greece and Japan. Turkey, along with these nations, has been regarded within the international community as "immature" in relation to states which recognize multicultural identity rights. Over the last decades, the marked shift towards multiculturalism in the notion of what is considered the "modern nation state" has meant that countries such as Turkey, with a history of ethnic political mobilization and suppression, are seen to be living in the past or not living up to liberal democratic standards (Kymlicka 2007, 42-43):

> In contemporary international discourse, the idea of a centralized, unitary, and homogenous state is increasingly described as an anachronism, a throwback to the nineteenth century....States that rigidly cling to the older centralized and unitary model, and that continue to deny that minorities exist (as in France, Greece, Turkey, or Japan) are increasingly described as backward, unable or unwilling to recognize and deal with the complexity and inherent pluralism of the modern world. (Kymlicka 2007, 42-43)

[1] "Multiculturalism" as used in this paper is to be understood as: "as an umbrella term to cover a wide range of policies designed to provide some level of public recognition, support or accommodation to non-dominant ethnocultural groups (Kymlicka 2007, 16).

The roots of the resistance to policies of multiculturalism as it developed in the modern Turkish state, specifically the ensuing conflicts with the historically secessionist "Kurdish minority" [2], are to be found in the societal reaction to the crisis of Turkey's state nationalist project founded under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk. The origins and foundational experiences of the Turkish nation have led to the denial of demands for cultural autonomy in modern Turkish society, foundations without which, however, the state itself may never have come into existence. The stability of the Turkish state has indeed been cast in opposition to recognition of minority claims. A critical examination of the origins of the official state project reveals which specific contradictions and tensions have led to the denial of multicultural recognition of ethnic minorities, in particular of the secessionist Kurds.

Recent developments in Turkey show evidence that the current governing party, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or* AKP), is attempting to address and resolve some of the issues arising from years of suppression of the Kurdish minority in Turkey, in conjunction with establishing European Union membership as a key part of their political platform. Initially these political maneuvers showed some promise of seriously

[2] The "Kurdish minority" in Turkey here and elsewhere in this paper refers to the national group comprising the Kurds who have historically settled within a particular part of Turkey, and as a result of that historic settlement have come to see that part of Turkey as their historic 'homeland'. This Kurdish minority is now incorporated within the larger state of Turkey, while others are divided between Iraq, Iran, and Syria—but they still have a strong sense of attachment to their homeland, "Kurdistan" and often nurture memories of an earlier time, prior to the origin of the modern Turkish state, when they exercised a certain degree of autonomy over the territory. The Kurds are considered within the international discourse of minority issues to belong to the group known as 'homeland minorities' (Kymlicka 2007, 176)

addressing issues of recognition of minority ethnicity[3] in Turkey of the Kurdish people. At the same time the AKP represents a shift or transformation of power from the traditional ruling class, the secularists *"laik"* to the neoliberal "Islamists". However the question arises whether this shift in power in Turkey from that of the nationalist *laik* class to that of the Islamists of the AKP signifies any significant increase in the probability of the Kurdish people in Turkey reaching recognition and emancipation from their perennial socio-economic suppression.

This research paper examines how and why many of the issues surrounding multiculturalism and freedoms of religious expression in the history of the Turkish Republic, particularly those relating to the "Kurdish Issue", continue to be controversial and divisive in present day Turkey. This focus necessarily embraces the role of the AKP as current governing party in Turkey, and their above-mentioned policy initiatives towards "openings" of democracy. More recent developments show that it remains to be seen whether the AKP's efforts are viable within the fragile situation in Turkey, raising difficult questions. Are they too ambitious for the current state of Turkish society? Or is it that, for the first time in the history of Turkey, the Kemalist nationalist secularist elite, or the "laik", are losing their power over politics which they have exercised since the formation of the Republic in 1923 to the benefit of hitherto repressed groups, in particular Kurds? Or, yet again, does the Kurdish position in Turkey remain essentially unchanged?

---

[3] There is no universally accepted definition of 'ethnicity' and the term has been defined in numerous ways within cultural anthropology. For the purposes of this project, I have adopted Smith (1986) and Hutchinson's (2000) definition of 'ethnic group' and 'ethnicity' in their description of '*ethnie*' and 'ethnic community' (see p.16).

This paper will argue that though there is evidence of an improvement in recognizing some of the basic human rights of the Kurdish people by a national government within Turkey, the transformation of power from that of the ruling secularist class to that of the ruling neoliberal Islamist class has not in fact resulted in tackling some of the deeper socio-economic issues surrounding the "Kurdish Issue" in Turkey. Essentially the established system of power that has kept the Kurdish people in a suppressed socio-economic position within the Republic of Turkey is being replaced by another, that of the AKP. There is a shift from the hegemony of the *laik* ruling class to that of another ruling class perpetuating the system of social injustices towards the Kurdish minority in the southeast. The similar nature of the power structures signifies a continuation of the same system of suppression of the marginalized population of the Kurdish people to the extent that the Kurdish minority themselves have become a product of their own socio-economic repression.

This argument is developed in four chapters. The first outlines major theoretical frameworks of nationalism which apply to the Turkish and Kurdish cases. The second and third chapters review the history of the Turkish state and its Kurdish minority from these theoretical perspectives: the second outlines the nature and development of power by the "*laik*" class; the third outlines the nature and development of Kurdish nationalism. Within these contexts, the ongoing conflict between the Kurdish minority and the Turkish state is revealed as tracing back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire before the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. While in the past there has been ample evidence of dissent against the ruling "*laik*" class in Turkey, generally this has been met with harsh repression of the dissenters with repercussions for Turkish society as a whole. The dynamic that has tended to persist in Turkey from decade to

decade is that the ruling class feels that "Turkishness" is at risk and will take any measures necessary to assure that any such moves do not come to fruition. This pattern has repeated itself over the years from leader to leader. In cases where a governing party did not fall in line with the status quo of the nationalist ruling class, it was generally met with a military coup to ensure that national security was not undermined by what were considered "rebels".

The conduct of the AKP in power initially suggested this pattern may be changing in Turkey. The fourth and final chapter outlines how the AKP came to power in Turkey and what led them to take on issues of multiculturalism and religious freedoms. It reviews existing scholarship which upholds a notion that the significant transformation of power which is taking place in the Turkish state from the "laik" former ruling class to the neo-liberal "Islamists" of the AKP has spelt a positive change for the Kurdish people in South Eastern Anatolia.

However, changes which appeared to indicate potential for Turkey to move towards multiculturalism and religious freedom in fact are largely proving to be creating an even larger divide within Turkish society. An analysis of current Turkish studies reveals key indications of the widening schisms in Turkish political and social life. Evidence from studies covering the current stage of Turkish politics suggests that the policy efforts of the AKP towards alleviating the "Kurdish Issue" do not represent any substantial improvement. Essentially the same power dynamic that has existed for decades under the "laik" ruling class which reinforced the Kurds' socio-economic suppression in Turkey is being perpetuated by this ruling "Islamic" neoliberal class, but in a different form. In fact, unsurprisingly, it is these very neoliberal Islamists who stand to gain the most economically and politically from maintaining this hegemonic power structure, just as the *laik* had done. It is due to this dynamic that, in terms of ruling parties'

policies towards addressing the "Kurdish Issue", there has been very little evidence of any significant measures being undertaken. These developments follow the pattern of cases in states when the ruling class stands to lose its hierarchic position over their repressed minority.

The topic of Turkish state relations with the Kurdish minority under the AKP is an evolving one. In the interest of making the topic somewhat manageable, this paper focuses on the period from 2002 to 2012, before and after the "Democratic Opening" of 2009; it attempts to provide historical context and analysis to allow an understanding and assessment of this overture. But given that the issue continues to be a moving target, any conclusions must be regarded as tentative and subject to revision in light of current developments beyond the scope of this study.

I. Theoretical frameworks of nationalism and of minority relations relevant to Kemalism and the Kurdish Case

The influential theories of nationalism of Anthony Smith, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson all shed valuable light on the ethnic and cultural elements of the formation of the modern Turkish state. While very different in focus, each of these theories of nationalism identify throughout the actors behind nationalist constructions. Though issues of class are acknowledged, they are separated from culture and ethnicity, implying that these last factors alone form the basis of social relations and social movements, and hence are the key factors in ideologies of nationalism. However, while state actors are the catalysts behind these nationalist projects, often the elites and bourgeoisie of each of these imagined communities play central roles in undertaking nationalist projects. In order to understand the conflict of the ethnic Kurds within a nationalist Turkish state, a class-based perspective of nationalism is needed. In other words, every nationalism has its own agents in the form of an elite, and they have specific class interests; by combining analyses of nationalism offered by Smith, Gellner, and Anderson with contemporary class analyses of Turkey offered by the scholars Yildiz Atasoy, Berch Berberoglu, and Cenk Saracoglu, we can identify those class interests and therefore a more comprehensive view of the Kurdish situation in Turkey emerges. An adequate understanding of the development of Turkish nationalism and its manifestation in the ethno-national conflict with the Kurds requires that all elements—culture, ethnicity, and class—be factored in. While a full treatment of the theoretical complexity of the relations between class factors and nationalisms is beyond the limited scope of this paper, an analysis of Kurdish and

Turkish nationalisms would be seriously hampered should class factors go unnoted. A combination of ethnicity, culture, and class analyses of the ideology of Ataturk's state nationalist project, in the context of internal and external historical circumstances leading up to and subsequent to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, can show how these all but ensured that an ethno-national conflict with the Kurdish minority would develop and that an internal struggle against the Turkish state would endure throughout the history of modern Turkey.

Identifying class interests can help to clarify the complex intertwining of issues involved in the case of the Kurds in Turkey. Most generally, the theoretical framework of the notion of "hegemony" as employed by the Turkish scholar Yildiz Atasoy in her description of Kemalism, reveals how the hegemonic forces of a group of military bureaucrats, referred to as the *laik* class, established their rule over Turkish society through a process of modernization, reaching from the late Ottoman Era of the *Tanzimat* up to the recent power transformation through neo-liberalism to the AKP "Islamists" (Atasoy 2009, 3). Ethnic and cultural analyses of nationalism complement and augment this framework: Anthony Smith's theory of "ethno-symbolism"; Benedict Anderson's account of the "imagined community"; and Ernest Gellner's "cultural" analysis, while differing and even opposed in their notions of the origins of nations, reveal and account for key aspects of the complex phenomenon of how the *laik* class established their hegemony over the Turkish people, through consistent reinforcements of national sovereignty. Braided together, these theories shed light on the historical developments leading up to the present circumstances of the Kurds in Turkey.

Hegemony refers to the dominance of one social group over another, i.e. the ruling class over all other classes. A concept developed by Antonio Gramsci, it refers to the process by which ideas of the ruling class come to be seen as the norm; they are seen as universal ideologies, perceived to benefit everyone while really benefiting only the –one -- ruling class. Cultural hegemony is the philosophical and sociological concept that even a culturally-diverse society can be ruled or dominated by one of its social classes; a multicultural society is ruled by one particular class and the subsumed ethnic groups believe it is in their best interests to live in this system.

The root of the socio-economic oppression of the Kurds in the region of Eastern Anatolia has been the extreme assimilationist policies of the Turkish state and mass poverty reinforced by the hegemony of the *laik* over the suppressed Kurdish minority (Atasoy 2009, 3). Atasoy identifies Kemalism as the official ideology of the Turkish state, named after the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal. "It represents a path taken by ruling civil–military cadres in their institutionalization of national sovereignty through a state-led economic developmentalism and secular nationalism known as *laik.*" (Atasoy 2009, 3)

> Kemalism has fundamentally shaped the direction of relations between rulers and ruled and continues to frame the particular content of political struggles over inclusion, exclusion, domination and subordination. With the establishment of the nation-state, civil–military bureaucratic cadres were elevated to a politically dominant position from which they could safeguard that frame. (Atasoy 2005: 23–85)

A foundational element of Kemalism is *Laik:*

> *Laik* is a form of secular nationalism which refers to the state's control over religious institutions and religious practices. It redirects nationalist sentiments around a singular unifying culture. The result has been an authoritarian concept of national culture that emphasizes homogeneity, political unity and solidarity (Koker 1995). The General Staff justified its political intervention by declaring that 'the Turkish Armed Forces is one of the parties in *laik* discussions and its absolute defender . . .. loyalty to the Republican regime must be demonstrated through action, (Genelkurmay Baskanlıgı 27 April 2007) (4)

Through the formation of a particular brand of Turkish state nationalism, these "civil-military bureaucratic cadres" established a position of political domination which has been safeguarded throughout the decades of the Turkish nation state. Kemalism has forged the relationship between this *laik* ruling class and its ruled minorities. It is this relationship particularly that has determined the political dynamic between the *laik* and the Kurdish minority in Turkey (Atasoy 2009, 3).

Turkish nationalism is used as a tool of manipulation to steer the masses into believing that the *laik* ruling class (the army and bureaucratic cadres) are working in the best interests of the people. Through a construction and constant reinforcement that national security is at risk since the formation of the Republic, the *laik* have successfully managed to convince the majority of Turkish society that the nation is constantly in a

state of peril from internal and external forces. In particular, the Turkish state presents the "Kurdish Problem" in a way that consistently demonizes Kurdish activists and their various organizations such as The Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Parti Karkerani Kurdistan* or PKK); The Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* or DTP); and most recently The Union of Communities in Kurdistan *(Koma Civakên Kurdistan or* KCK.

In order to understand the "ethno-nationalist mobilization" by the *laik* ruling class in Turkish society, it is useful to employ the concept of Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolism (Berberoglu 2004, 33). The central premise of Smith's historical ethno-symbolism is that myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage constitute the major driving forces behind nationalism. Myths, memories and symbols of the nation induce deep loyalties and human sacrifice. This premise of Smith's notion of ethno-symbolism criticizes the major classical theories for failing to answer questions concerning the popular appeal of nationalism. He criticizes both the claims of the modernists, who believe that there is a significant divide between pre-modern units and sentiments and modern nations and nationalism, as well those of the perennialists who claim that the latter are larger modernized versions of pre-modern connections and sentiments.

According to Smith, although perennialist and modernist approaches to nationalism each address different aspects of histories of nationalism and nation-states, they all fail to pay attention to the pre-existing framework of collective identities and loyalties in these histories. The ethno-symbolic alternative fills this gap in the understanding of nationalism by emphasizing its popular roots, affective dimension and widespread appeal (Smith 1986: 13).

Understanding identity is crucial to understanding the concept of ethno-symbolism. Smith defines identity in terms of relating to a sense of community based on history and culture. The growth of a sense of the collective self is considered a crucial part of the ethnic community's idea of identity and solidarity. However, here the sense of self is defined through the symbols and myths of the ethnic community. The concept of the *ethnie* or ethnic community and its symbolism are what differentiates ethno-symbolism from other theories of nationalism. According to Smith the dimensions of an *ethnie* include: a collective name; a common myth of descent; a shared history; a distinctive shared culture; an association with a specific territory; and a sense of solidarity. (Smith 1986: 22-29)

The need for identification with a community in order to achieve individual identity and self-respect is a function of socialization experiences in the historic culture-community; and the modes and goals of identification are given by the group and its past experiences as they coalesce into a collective tradition. (Smith 1986, 14)

The goal of the study of ethno-nationalism is to trace the ethnic foundations and roots of modern nations. Emphasis is placed upon the cultural forms of sentiments, attitudes and perceptions, as reflected in myths, memories, values, and symbols (15). An important aspect of ethno-symbolism is its identification of commonalities between different national projects (Canefe 2002,136). The redrawing of geographical boundaries in the aftermath of the Turkish Independence War (1919-22) was the catalyst to the modern nation-formation of Turkey on the ruins of the crumbling Ottoman empire (Brubaker 1996, 414-415). The dominant model in Turkish state nationalism is the French Jacobin

tradition which derives from the French Revolution and the European Enlightenment. These were the ideological and historical inspirations behind the Turkish national awakening conducted by the Kemalists (Lewis 1961, 134). The appeal of Western modernity and the influence of Western intellectuals, such as Ernest Renan, were founding influences in the Turkish nationalist project. Ethno-symbolism augments the explicit territorial/civic model of nationhood

During the initial decades of the Republic, the social and cultural history of the state also suggests that it was following German Romantic concept of a nation, which seeks to construct a homogenous people bound by linguistic affinity, ethno-religious sentiment and collective solidarity. This was the working principle behind modern, patriotic Turkish nationalism which was presented as essential to the survival of the state following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Canefe 2002, 135). According to the Republicans, the Turkish nation is defined by the Turkish–speaking Muslim populace of Anatolia. This shows the ethnic approach to nationalism combined with a mantra of national sovereignty that motivated the Republican cadres and the public.

Turkish nationalism served the purpose of the *laik* ruling class by consolidating a constructed sense and an image of the nation as a distinct conglomeration. According to the territorial/civic model, the nation is a bounded and contractual political community that abides by laws and legal institutions. By contrast, according to the ethnic model, common origins, descent and cultural peculiarities mirrored in chronicles of the national history provide the foundations for the territorialism and institutionalization of nations. Retention of ancestral ties, myths, ethnic symbols of solidarity and uniqueness makes

ethno-symbolic nationalism an effective formula for the attainment of political legitimacy, in this case that of the *laik* ruling class. Where the territorial model is seen to be inadequate as an explanation for newly formed states emerging which lack the above civil criteria, the ethnic model offers an alternative concept of nationhood and national integration as was the case in the formation of modern Turkey (Smith 1986:144)

Through a rewriting of history, the modern Turkish nation, represented by the *laik* class, was able to construct a collective past and destiny and an autonomous collective will of the people (Smith 1986, 144-145). Similar to nineteenth-century nationalisms in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, the *laik* class used ethno-symbolic tools to chart historic territories and political memories of former independence, supplemented by the rediscovery and revitalization of ethnic ties and sentiments. This was achieved through the constructing of kinship by popular mobilization and by the emphasis on culture, religion, language, customs, and institutions, by the nationalist ruling elite. A Turkish Ottoman identity was forged out of the fabled history of the warrior Turkic tribes from central Asia.

The actual ethnic Turkic homogeneity of this shared history was not an issue; the Ottoman empire was in fact made up of variety of *ethnies* which included Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Greek Orthodox and many others. This had already presented a dilemma for the Ottoman elites at that time regarding how to envision a "Turkish" nation with the Turkic speaking Islamic population surrounded by all these different ethnicities (Smith 1986: 142). After the Arab revolt and the British conquests of the Great War following the demise of the Ottoman empire, the focus was on creating a pan-Turkic ideology.

Given the necessary military, social, and cultural conditions, the Ottoman Turks carried notions of their ethnic identities forward into a modern era of Turkish nationalism. Ethno –symbolic elements thus played significant role to a certain degree of instituting this Ottoman ethnic identity in a modern Turkish state (Smith 1986, 82).

An ethno-symbolic perspective on Kemalism reveals that it encompasses: myths of the origins and ancestry of Turkish peoples; memories of a distinct Muslim Anatolian society; traditions pertaining to Muslim Turkish ways of life; related symbols of Turkish ethnicity (Canefe 2002, 134). These constructions of ethno-symbolism did exactly what the *laik* elites intended them to do at the time: to override the history and heritage of almost six centuries of Ottoman rule and hybrid traditions of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire. The Ottomans, though originally members of Turkic tribes, did not capitalize on Turkish ethnicity. In fact they drew from Persian, Arab Muslim, and Byzantine traditions in areas ranging from language and culture to legal practice. In contradistinction to the cosmopolitan and mixed heritage of the Ottoman imperial background, Turkish state nationalists revised the cultural building blocks of modern Turkey (134).

Previous to this process, according to Smith, the term "Turk" referred derogatorily to Anatolian peasants. It was only during the Hamidian period and later, during Enver Pasha's rule, following the Young Turk Movement of 1908, that the term was spun with a positive ethnic connotation in a quest for pan-Turkic ethnic unification. This "extra-territorial ethnic Pan- nationalism" was replaced by a territorial citizen nationalism with

pre-Islamic ideological myths and theories in order to compensate for the diversity in the Turks' ethnic heritage (Smith 1986: 143).

This contradiction set the background, among a plethora of external factors, for the issue of multiculturalism to arise out of the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The Republican denial of the multi-ethnic Ottoman heritage in both cultural and political sphere ensured that issues of multiculturalism would eventually come to the forefront of Turkey's political evolution. However, for the new state there was no multicultural alternative for Turkey in its formation.

The Kemalists' construction of Turkish nationalism benefited from techniques based on ethno –symbolism, without which they never would have been able to pitch the idea of a compact territory, citizenship rights, a common code of law and a secular, political culture or civil religion following the Western model to the Turkish people (Smith 1986, 149). Ethno-symbolic factors reinforced popular acceptance and legitimacy of the new nation state, promoting this territorial/civic nationalism in combination with the state-centric ideology of the French Revolutionary kind, premised on the doctrine of national sovereignty.

Ernest Gellner provides further insights into Kemalism through his assessment of the cultural nature of nationalism.[4] For him culture is used as a nationalist banner to rally the masses around. He sees culture as a unifying factor in defining identity. Significantly for this paper, how nationalist forces manipulate culture determines the way in which a

[4] E. Gellner 1983, *Nations and Nationalism.*

society is impacted by nationalism: "nationalism....sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures (Gellner 1983, 49)." Gellner argues that "it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way around" (55). He acknowledges the actors behind nationalism by showing that "nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically, inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically" (55). However he argues that:

> The great, but valid, paradox is this: nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than, as you might expect, the other way around. It is not the case that the "age of nationalism" is a mere summation of the awakening and political self-assertion of this, that, or the other nation. Rather, when general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit which men willingly and often ardently identify. The cultures now seem to be the natural repositories of political legitimacy (55).

Overall Gellner's emphasis on culture as the source of nationalism contributes to our overall understanding of the cultural aspects of Kemalism and the ensuing ethno-national conflict with the Kurds.

Benedict Anderson' s aim in "Imagined Communities" is to interpret the 'anomaly of nationalism' as he coins it. Clearly Anderson refers here to how nationalism has presented a point of contention for Marxism, given that the only successful revolutions since World War II have been national revolutions against "national bourgeoisies". Anderson's main argument is that "nationality", "nationalism" etc. are "cultural artifacts of a particular kind", and that with these artifacts come deep attachments to the nation-state. (Anderson 1983,4). He attempts to account for these deep attachments by the modern citizen to the extent where people love and die for their nation. He defines the nation as "the imagined political community" in that its limitations and sovereignty are imagined (Anderson 1983, 6). The notion of the imagined community grapples with the fact that the citizens of the nation will never know all of their fellow citizens – seemingly not a community at all. However, there is an understanding among themselves, as citizens of the nation, that they all are part of a bigger shared community. These notions of imagined community are useful in understanding the spread of nationalism in modern Turkey.

Gellner's analysis agrees with that of Anderson in large part. Gellner contributes to the understanding of nationalism by offering the definition: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist". Both theorists show how nationalism is a fabrication or construction. Gellner's interpretation could not be more applicable to the formation of modern Turkey in the idea of constructing a nation that did not exist. In the case of the birth of the modern Turkish republic, the construction of nationalism came before the nation state itself. However

Anderson criticizes Gellner for equating nationalism with invention, implying that it is false as opposed to created or imagined. Anderson reads Gellner as implying that there are "true" communities which are in opposition to nations. Anderson would find this interpretation problematic; his understanding of the community is based on the style in which they are imagined, not on whether or not they are false or real (Anderson 1983, 6). For Anderson a community as much as a nation is imagined considering that, aside from villages, there will be no way of knowing every member of a community either. Gellner maintains that nationalism arises as a result of arbitrarily chosen, even fabricated cultural premises.

Anderson argues that cultures cannot be distinguished by their falsity or genuineness but only by the degree to which they are imaginings. He believes that these imaginings are a result of capitalism's historical trajectory across nations. He sees the nation as limited because of the imaginary boundaries which every nation enforces (7). Anderson finds the nation imagined as a sovereign state as a concept which came about during the period of the Enlightenment and French Revolution :

> Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gauge and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state (7).

Anderson argues that the nation imagined as a community, though rife with inequality and exploitation, maintains a certain level of fraternity among its citizens. It is these nationalist sentiments of an understood brotherhood that leads people to kill and die for their nation.

This interpretation of community by Anderson accurately reflects the mindset of the citizens of the modern Turkish republic, who are willing to lose their lives over the limited imaginings of the Turkish nation as these have lasted from before its formation to present day (Anderson 1983, 7). Anderson argues that the root of this willingness to sacrifice oneself to the state comes from "the cultural roots of nationalism" (7) He argues that in order to understand nationalism one must take into consideration the cultural systems that preceded nation (12). The social construction of cultural traits is generated to create a sense of belonging to an "imagined community". At the same time, on the other side of the coin, the same ideological device was used simultaneously by the Turkish elites to stigmatize others who happen to be outside of the Turkish "imagined community" (17, Atasoy 2009), or want to identify themselves in a different or more comples way. This is the fate of the Kurdish minority.

Anderson's theory has a particularly fitting application to the case of Modern Turkey in his focus on language. According to Anderson, a major force behind the appeal of the nation was the rise of capitalism. Specifically "print-capitalism" facilitated the linking of fraternity, power and time. It allowed for an increasing populace to self-reflect, and relate to others, in ways that the human civilization had never done before (Anderson 1983, 36). Book-publishing was key to the supremacy of capitalism in that book-sellers

sought profit by selling their books which their consumers provided a market for (Anderson 1983, 37-38). Nationalism owes much of its success to print-capitalism (39). Anderson's focus on the role of language and print in forming the imagined community is significant in understanding Turkish nationalism and how Romanization contributed to its becoming aligned with Western European concepts of modernity:

> The fate of the Turkic-speaking peoples in the zones incorporated into today's Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and the USSR is especially exemplary. A family of spoken languages, once everywhere assemblable, thus comprehensible, within an Arabic orthography, has lost that unity as a result of conscious manipulations. To heighten Turkish- Turkey's national consciousness at the expense of any wider Islamic identifications, Atatürk imposed compulsory Romanization[5].(45-46, Anderson 1983)

Accordingly, the merger of capitalism and print technology led to a new form of the imagined community, through its impact on language, which fostered the emergence of the modern nation (Anderson 1983, 46). As is demonstrated in the case of the Turkish state, Anderson explains the development of political boundaries through the inherent limitations of these imagined communities; these nationalisms were considered to be historically "impossible" till the emergence of popular linguistic nationalisms which were "responses by power groups, dynastic and aristocratic threatened with exclusion from, or marginalization in, popular imagined communities...such official nationalisms were

[5] According to Hans Kohn in the "Age of Nationalism" Romanization is considered the alignment of Turkish nationalism with the modern, romanized civilizations of Western Europe (Anderson 1983)

conservative, not to say reactionary, policies, adapted from the model of the largely spontaneous popular nationalisms that preceded them" (Anderson 1983, 110) .

It is clear from this that Anderson is acknowledging that certain power groups with their own "monopolistic" interests were behind the emergence of these "official nationalisms." Once again in a cultural analysis of nationalism the presence of power groups as actors is recognized, who use the nationalist rhetoric as their own means for achieving their own ends. In the case of Turkish nationalism, unless these actors are viewed through a class lens, the analysis is lacking.

Industrial capitalism played a significant role in allowing the development of state nationalism in what Anderson coins the "last wave" of nationalisms. They were a reaction to the new global imperialism. In the notion of the imagined community, construction of nation, nation-ness and nationalisms, was reproduced, copied, adapted, and improved upon. The message of the imagined community was spread as propaganda throughout the nation (Anderson 1983, 139-140).

Anderson's "imagined community" concept can also be used to describe the sentiment of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, where the Turks are seen as the colonialists and the Kurds are seen as the oppressed. This is a prime example of what Anderson calls "anti-colonial nationalism" and demonstrates how nationalism invokes deep emotions such as fear, hatred of the Other, racism, love, and self-sacrificing love (Anderson 1983, 141). An appreciation of the hatred of colonized people towards their imperial oppressors is key to understanding Anderson's account of anti-colonial nationalism (142). In the

Turkish case, the colonized people seen here are the Kurds and the imperialist oppressors are the Turks themselves. The Kurds have imagined attachments to their tribal past, in some cases their exterminated tribes. The affinity the Kurdish people feel towards their mother tongue shows what Anderson describes as the sentiments of anti-colonial nationalism through language loss: "Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed." (Anderson 1983, 154).

Within the Marxist tradition similar to Atasoy, Berch Berberoglu supplements the ethnic-symbolic and cultural analyses of Smith, Gellner, and Anderson by offering an alternative dialectical and historical materialist approach based on a class analysis of nationalism (Berberoglu 2004, 15).[6] According to Berberoglu:

> Nations and national movements are phenomena that cannot be studied in isolation without taking into account the social and class structure of the society in which they arise. National and ethnic divisions (as well as nationalist ideology, as an extension of such divisions) are manifestations of class conflicts and class struggles that are at base a reflection of social relations of production (22).

Through this analysis, the class nature of nationalism and ethnic conflict is revealed in the forces that are the perpetrators of class-driven national interests and cultivate ethno-national conflict.

---

[6] B. Berberoglu 2004, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*

Using the works of G.E. Glezerman and Albert Szymanski, Berberoglu argues that nations, similar to classes, share a set of conditions of the material life of society. In this case those conditions are common territory, a community of economic life, certain national traits, spiritual features, a single language, and national consciousness (22).[7] [8] Berberoglu, using a Marxist analysis, emphasizes that the nature of class relations, based on relations of production, contribute to determining the nature and content of political struggles. When these struggles occur at the international level then they become national struggles (23). Exploitative relations, at the international level manifest as a national struggle; between two contending classes within a national territory, they manifest as internal class struggles. At a national level, the struggle will be led by a particular class, or an alliance of several classes, striving for national liberation and self-determination. This kind of process of self-determination is characteristic of the anti-imperialist national liberation of Turkey following the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

As an internal class struggle, this process can also be seen in the form of the Kurdish nationalist movement against the Turkish nationalist elites. Recently, as the Turkish state has developed into a more advanced capitalist country, the Kurdish nationalist movement has turned into a minority struggle against the Turkish state with demands for limited autonomy, self-rule, and federalism. Berberoglu argues that this shift in demands is characteristic of minority struggles in more advanced capitalist societies such as European or North American (23-24).

---

[7] G. Glezerman 1979, *Classes and Nations.*
[8] A. Szymanski 1983, *Class Structure: A Critical Perspective.*

Szymanski, Berberoglu points out, argues that "nationalism is a product of class forces. Although different kinds of nationalism differ qualitatively in their effects, all serve some classes within a given racial or ethnic group as opposed to others" (25). This approach raises a number of questions that contribute to the understanding of Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish nationalist movement. What interests of the Kemalist elites are being served by Turkish nationalism and to what end? Berberoglu offers this further insight on nationalism, class struggle, and social transformation by stressing that national movements of self-determination are generally against dominant class forces that control the social system. Therefore national movements are often represented by a subordinate, oppressed portion of society whose demands are expressed through revolutionary movements against the dominant state powers (27). In the case of Turkey, this was a struggle against dominance by occupying powers. Berberoglu, notes the rise of right-wing reactionary forces against the occupation and partition of the Ottoman Empire by the Western imperialist powers, -- forces that capture state power through ethno-nationalist mobilization.

He argues that this dispersion of the Ottoman native population led to the current issue with the Kurds in Turkey (Berberoglu 2004, 33). In the case of Kurdish nationalism, the oppressed class is the Anatolian Kurds, whose interests are opposed to the dominant class of the *laik* bureaucratic cadres represented by the state (28). Situating the Kurdish issue within this context of social-economic structures of society adds a critical dimension to ethno-symbolic and cultural analyses of Turkish nationalism.

However, Berberoglu's Marxist analysis of nationalism and ethnic conflicts tends towards "class reductionism" : social classes are considered the only possible historical subjects overriding other ideologies since every area is influenced by class position (Nimni, 10). This approach is problematic in that it overlooks such crucial aspects of nationalism as culture and ethno-symbolism.

Ethno-symbolic and cultural analyses by virtue of their attention to the history, precedents, and cultural roots of nationalist movements and ideologies are effective in deconstructing the principles operating in the development of Turkish nationalism (Canefe 2002, 138). As we claim above, such analyses can be profitably complemented by a class analysis. By combining aspects of ethno symbolic and cultural analyses with class-based analysis of Kemalism class reductionism is avoided. At the same time class analysis is not overlooked in its entirety. This combined approach offers a more thorough understanding of Turkish nationalism and the ethno-nationalist conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state.

This combined approach can be further complemented by a recent account of multiculturalism in various state settings offered by Will Kymlicka.[9] In states which feel vulnerable in geo-political terms, such as Turkey, their treatment of their minorities is heavily shaped by this sense of insecurity. According to Kymlicka, states will never voluntarily accord rights or powers to minorities if they think this will increase the likelihood of minorities forming secessionist movements and acting as potential collaborators with a neighbouring enemy. This is particularly a concern where the

[9] Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Odysseys* (1997).

minority is related to a neighbouring state by ethnicity or religion. These conditions have been termed 'securitization of ethnic relations.' "Relations between states and minorities are seen not as a matter of normal democratic politics to be negotiated and debated, but as a matter of national security, in which the state has to limit the normal democratic process in order to protect its very existence" (Kymlicka 2007, 120).

Under conditions of securitization, minority self-organization may be legally limited (e.g. minority political parties banned), minority leaders may be subject to secret police surveillance, the raising of particular sorts of demands may be illegal (e.g. laws against promoting secession). Even if minority rights can be voiced, they will be flatly rejected by the larger society and the state. How can groups that are disloyal have any legitimate claims against the state? So the securitization of ethnic relations erodes both the democratic space to voice minority demands, and the likelihood that those demands will be accepted (Kymlicka 2007, 118-120).

While Kymlicka focuses on European cases, his account applies to the position of Turkey in relation to its Kurdish secessionist minority. Hence, our accounts of Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms from ethno-symbolic, cultural and class perspectives can benefit from a complementary analysis of securitization of ethnic relations.

The more detailed reviews of the history of modern Turkey which follow in the next chapters reveal that these ethno-symbolic, cultural and class forces have come into play during Turkey's two most significant modernization projects and, in both cases, resulted in the consolidation of a ruling class. The initial modernization project took place

during the late Ottoman period and resulted in the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the consolidation of the *laik* elite class. And the more recent modernization project, undertaken by the emerging "traditional" bourgeoisie since the 1980s, has brought Turkey into the era of 'neoliberalism' and has shifted state power to the AKP neoliberal "Islamist" class. Both of these modernization projects, to some extent, involved Turkey opening itself up to free trade and exposing itself to international markets. In both cases the socio-economic position of the Kurdish people in Turkey has worsened as a result of these state-engineered projects pushing agendas of modernization by manipulating ethno-national and class influences. Similar influences have also occurred where the Kurds have developed their own nationalist project with evidence of the same ethno-symbolic, cultural and class elements at work.

II. First Modernization Project:

Tanzimat Reforms and Consolidation of the *Laik* Class

The origins and establishment of the *laik* ruling class in Turkey, and the consequent disregard for different ethnic minorities, trace back to the political revival movements in the late Ottoman era known as the *Tanzimat* reforms. These reformist policies were undertaken by a new bureaucratic class that emerged during the mid-1800s made up of the *Tanzimat* reformers, followed by the Young Ottomans and thereafter the Young Turks. The reformers were made up of a new bureaucratic class, who, though loyal to the sultan and the Ottoman dynasty, felt a greater loyalty to the state which they no longer saw as represented by the sultan (Ahmad 1993). They launched a set of reforms which were based on Western ideas and modern European principles of the sanctity of private property and constitutional restraints on the authority of the sultan (26).

The initial *Tanzimat* reform was established in November 1839 when a charter was issued known as the Noble Rescript of *Gülhane*. Essentially this document ensured that the government would pass laws as part of the reorganization of society, guaranteeing to Ottoman subjects security of life, honour and property. The *Tanzimat* state, as it became known, was a break from the patrimonialism of the sultan. State intervention became selective and no longer just a means of regulating society but in fact one of social engineering. The idea was to transform society by eliminating certain existing social structures. The reformers sought to strategically intervene on behalf of the interests

promoting links with the industrial European economy and against those interests resisting this process. The reformers saw the only hope for survival and prosperity of the Ottoman dynasty in allowing penetration of industrial Europe into the empire and joining the expanding world market (27). Thus a "trickle down" notion emerged and would persist throughout the nineteenth century and twentieth century in Turkey.

The Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention of August 1838 spelled the end of the existing social and economic structures. Up until that point Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) and Mahmud II (1807-1839) had protected the local economy against European competition. With the 1838 treaty, protectionism was lifted allowing European merchants to infiltrate local trade markets. This treaty would eventually lead to the decline of the guild system, as Ottoman merchants and craftsmen faced foreign competition. The reformers felt these measures were necessary to accelerate Westernization and force Ottomans to forfeit outmoded structures (27-28).

As a consequence, the majority of the population suffered economically. In rural areas under the modified system, there was an increase in commercial activity whereby, in order to meet taxes and buy foreign imports, the peasants were required to produce more for the market.

The *Tanzimat* state's agenda for free trade nearly brought the empire to the verge of bankruptcy. Naturally this left a very disgruntled populace which the new bureaucratic class attempted to appease by increasing national awareness and religious and ethnic tensions (28).

Clearly, though, not everyone suffered from these free-trade policies. During this period rural moneylenders -- mostly non-Muslims -- became more significant, leading to the Turkish peasants' becoming more dependent on them, in some cases forfeiting their land to cover debts. This dynamic set the stage for increased Turkish nationalism and ethnic tensions during the formation of the Republic.

As well, the new bureaucrats of the Porte benefitted from the *laissez-faire* policies and absorption of the Empire into the international economy. In order to sustain a weak and non-interventionist state, these elites attempted to create a social base by increasing the power of the landholders, whereby a foundation for their state was created with land remaining the primary source of state's revenue in the Ottoman economy. More importantly for the *Tanzimat* bourgeoisie, it was the only segment of the economy that remained largely controlled by Muslims and Turks. Since they were not able to benefit from the privileges of the new trade policies that the foreign traders were able to, they remained for the bureaucratic class a dependable source of political power in the empire (29).

The new bureaucrats achieved this transfer of power to the landlords with the charters of 1839 and 1856, the Land Code of 1858, and the Constitution of 1876. All of the above ensured the recognition and legalization of private property and land. The security of private property marked a watershed in Turkey's political and economic trajectory (Ahmad 1993, 29).

In addition to ensuring their private property, the landlords were granted freedoms from state control as stipulated by the 1838 Treaty. The Ottoman elites believed that a division of labour, similar to that of industrial Britain, was necessary in order to achieve European industrialization. Therefore the Porte relinquished their state purchasing monopoly in order that the landlords would be able to sell their goods directly to foreign consumers. The commercialization of agriculture led to the landlords prospering and land value rising at an unprecedented rate (Ahmad 1993, 29-30). This culminated in the formation of a new class, supported by the Porte elites, capable of ensuring that their own interests were met in the Constitution of 1876 (Ahmad 1993, 30).

The reform policies were most consistently carried out between 1839 and 1876 under Sultan Abdulmecid (1839-1861), and Sultan Abdulaziz (1861-1876). The reforms of the *Hatti Serif of Gulhane (Noble Rescript of the Rose-bower)* came into effect on November 3rd 1839. While having an inclusive tone, the reform package produced by the edict aimed primarily at the centralization and increased efficiency of the imperial state. In 1856, *Islahat Fermani or Hatti Humayun (Imperial Reform Edict)* was taken up again. The *Tanzimat* reforms extended their reach through the abolition of traditional tax farming, imposition of direct taxation, reduction of the power of provincial administration and therefore of Ottoman provincial elites *(ayan)* and the weakening of the independent position of the religious elite (*ulema)* by the imposition of the state control of their previously independently run religious endowments and estates (the *vakfs).* Therefore power became concentrated in the hands of the imperial bureaucracy, the Sublime Porte *(Babiali).* The Porte embarked upon passing new legislation to replace the medieval code

of Sharia Law (*Şeriat)* that had been used in combination with a civic tradition of imperial decrees, systematically secularizing the legal workings of the state (Devereux 1963, 140).

In order to integrate these reforms into the Ottoman state, both the bureaucracy and the army had to be re-equipped and enlarged. This resulted in the formation of a new political culture and a new class (Derengil, 180) The new culture was derived from the Western-style schools and training facilities established for the new army and bureaucracy in the empire (Keyder, 140). The rising military-bureaucratic elite then had to take care of the changes within the Ottoman-imperial state apparatus, which was becoming more monolithic and authoritarian than ever in the aftermath of Tanzimat (Ahmad 1993, 345). As the leading members of this expanding new class were trained in elite military schools, Ottoman embassies in Europe or in the Translation Office of the Palace *(Tercume Odasi)*, they were cut off from the traditional sources of knowledge and were almost exclusively exposed to European politics, culture, languages and ideologies (Kushner 1997, 140). The most influential theories that attracted these elites were liberalism, constitutionalism and nationalism (Lewis 1961, 208).

In reaction to the *Tanzimat* reformists, the traditional religious elites from within the Ottoman bureaucracy began a movement called the "Young Ottomans" which was extremely critical of the abandonment of Islam, traditional values, and faith in the Ottoman imperial system, and the top-down reformism of the *Tanzimat* (Ahmad 1993, 28). Idealist thinkers such as Ibrahim Sinasi (1826-71), Ziya Pasha (1825-80), Namik Kemal (1840-88) and Ali Suavi (1838-78) argued for more open, liberal forms of

government and the introduction of an Ottoman Constitution (1876) and Parliament (Zurcher 1984, 140). In their political vision, Young Ottomans reproduced elements of an older tradition that privileged the "Turkish culture" above all others in the Ottoman empire, a factor most significant for understanding Turkey's current issues with multiculturalism. This Turkism of pan-Turkish tenets built its foundation – ironically -- on liberal European, Romantic, pan-Slavic, and Balkan notions of nationhood and national identity (Zurcher 1984, 16).

Of the three pillars of opposition to "Ottoman modernization", the Young Ottomans were closest to a national revival movement. "The original Islamic state" doctrine allowed for democratic virtues. They took pride in Islamic traditions, were devout Muslims, and wished to defend the Islamic civilization against the Western one (Mardin 1973, 226). Western advancement was considered a threat to the empire: therefore defensive measures were to be taken. They believed in the sanctity of the 'Motherland". For them, the core of the empire -- primarily the populace in Asia Minor and the Balkans -- possessed all the qualities of an authentic, distinct community capable of determining a better future for itself (Heyd 1950). Successive groups which opposed the status-quo in the Ottoman Empire adopted their ideas about the Turkish homeland and virtues of Turkishness. Despite the eventual fall of the Young Ottoman movement around the end of the 19th century in its failure to compete with the *Tanzimat* elite, this patriotism which became known as a tradition of "Ottoman/Turkish nationalism" formed an early barrier to multicultural recognition in modern Turkey,

In 1878 the Constitution was overthrown by Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1909), leaving all developments towards liberalism at a standstill for the next 30 years. He came into power during the beginnings of the demise of the Ottoman Empire, in a context which included the prior financial crisis leading to bankruptcy and his having to forfeit financial control to foreign powers. Therefore he implemented a series of capitulations in order to balance the budget, which meant that all liberal economic polices had to be abandoned. Essentially this period was marked by a movement towards protectionism, undertaken in the form of despotism (30).

However, the wheels had already been put in motion towards classical liberalism; Ottoman society took solace from their economic deterioration in the form of a secret political organization in 1889, which would come to be known as the Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*). The CUP would eventually restore the constitution and ignite the revolution of 1908 (Ahmad 1993, 30). This would be later seen as the victory of the *Tanzimat.*

Out of this background subsequently emerged a European-based liberal "opposition in exile" known as the Young Turks. They were the first generation of students of westernized Ottoman colleges and academies such as the *Mulkiye (Civil Service Academy), Harbiye (War Academy) and Tibbiyeyi Askeriye (Military Medal Academy).* In light of their education and their ambition, they became viewed as a threat to the Ottoman system and were expelled from the military (Hanioglu 1985, 142). Their platform was similar to that of their predecessors, the *Tanzimat* reformers: a devotion to saving the motherland and supporting constitutional reformism (Zurcher 1984, 14-15).

These were the events leading up to the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and later to the Independence War (Canefe 2002, 143). The Young Turks became the major driving force behind late Ottoman politics of "Turkification" and Asia-Minor- based patriotism originating mainly from within the empire in the form of a network of secret political organizations. This internal opposition was responsible for the Young Turk Revolution. The Unionist society of *Osmanli Hurriyet Cemiyeti* which was the core of the opposition was established in Salonika in 1906. Later , by 1907, it joined with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of Ahmet Riza in Paris (Zurcher 1984, 41). The motivation behind this unification was to strengthen and save the Ottoman Empire through radical transformations of state (Ahmad 1993, 350).

It is in these developments that the tradition of enshrining the rights and livelihood of the Muslim Turkish population in Turkish state nationalism originates, focused on external and internal threats to the state, predating its formation in 1923. Ethnically this group included Turkish-speakers with a Muslim background, Muslim immigrants from Russia, a few Arabs, Albanians and other Balkan subjects.

The three elements in the Unionists ideology were: Ottomanism, Islam, and nationalism. The focus was on forming the collectivities of Muslim *ethnies* into one Turkish ethnicity. Islam and the Ottoman dynasty were the uniting factors for the Muslim Turks, Arabs, and Kurds (Ahmad 1993, 39). The Unionists understood the importance of Islam as a means of providing maximum unity among a mixed population of Circassians, Lazes, Arabs, Kurds, and Turks. It was essential to their nationalist cause that these different ethnic groups to be mobilized as one *ethnie* (Ahmad 1993, 48).

A critical factor that contributed to the development of ethno-cultural nationalism in the late Ottoman era was that among the Unionists there were essentially no Armenians, Greeks, Jews, or Bulgarians etc. (Canefe 2002, 143). This accounts for the emphasis on "Turkishness" among the political views of the CUP. Any socio-cultural basis for a later development of a multicultural, pluralist state would be absent due to this Ottoman revivalist movement. The focus was on forming a centralized state that was based on the earlier *Tanzimat* reforms aimed at the creation of an Ottoman Turkish Muslim polity in an attempt to maintain the power of the Ottoman Empire against its external enemies (Haddad, Ochsenwald (eds.) 1977)

The pashas of the Sublime Porte seized the opportunity offered by the reinstatement of the constitution to regain their monopoly of power through control of the cabinet acting as grand vezir. They also extended their hegemony through control of the legislative assembly and the senate. The first Ottoman parliament was formed through elections for the assembly, which were conducted by an indirect two-tier system where the deputies were elected by electoral colleges that had already become the domain of the bureaucratic elites of the *Tanzimat* (Ahmad 1993, 32).

Initially the leaders of the religious-ethnic *millets* saw the constitution as an escape from the absolutism of the Hamidian period. Non-Muslims expected to have an influence in their group in a shared cabinet and assembly due to their demographic and material wealth. They felt that this would be achieved only through decentralization, and therefore supported the Young Turks liberal faction. However, as non-Muslim and non-Turks, they remained apprehensive of the growing centralization and Turkification of the

largest group, the Turks. They feared that the traditional *millet* system, which guaranteed a certain level of autonomy in cultural and educational affairs, was under threat by the Young Turks (Ahmad 1993, 32-33).

Five years of revolution and later World War I (1914-1918) had significant impacts on the relations with and attitudes towards the Ottoman's ethnic-religious minorities. By that point the Empire had already lost Libya to Italy (1911-1912) and the Balkan provinces (1911-12). These losses led theYoung Turks to take a much more homogeneous approach towards their remaining population.

World War 1 ultimately led to the demise of the "sick man" of Europe. However, the war also released the Turks from foreign control since the Europeans were unable to enforce their capitulations while they were at war. This allowed the CUP to carry out their modernization project which laid the ground for a social order emerging in 1923 that would last for decades to come in the new nation state (Ahmad 1993, 40).

More significantly for this paper, from this social transformation the ethno-national conflict with the ethnic Kurds in Turkey would emerge: Britain decided to create a Kurdish state between the new borders of Turkey and the British mandate of Iraq (Ahmad 1993, 46). To this unkept promise to the Kurds can be traced the roots of the ethno-national conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state.

The Unionists believed that in order for a modernization project to be achieved, a social revolution was necessary. However all of their reforms obliterated the previous privileges granted to the various ethnic-religious minorities by the *millet* system. In fact,

the end of the old order also meant that the Muslim Turks, Arabs, and Albanians would lose their position in society as well. Needless to say, they were up in arms over the Porte's reforms as well (Ahmad 1993, 40).

Essentially the Unionists were determined to construct a capitalist society out of the existing order. They were particularly concerned with establishing a bourgeoisie out of the *Tanzimat* elites and landowners in order to maintain their hegemony over society. The CUP at that time considered it essential for the survival of the modern Turkish state (Ahmad 1993, 43-44).

> Foundation of the modern state is the bourgeois class. Contemporary prosperous states came into existence on the shoulders of the bourgeoisie, of the businessmen and bankers. The national awakening in Turkey is the beginning of the genesis of the Turkish bourgeoisie. And if the natural growth of the Turkish bourgeoisie continues without damage of interruption, we can say that the sound establishment of the Turkish state has been guaranteed (Ahmad 1993, 44).

However this construction of the bourgeoisie class did not include the non-Muslim merchants and bankers, who were considered to have no claims to the new modern Turkish state since they were accused of siding with the European powers during the war. For that reason they were excluded from the creation of a national economy in 1908. This was achieved through boycotting Austrian and Greek goods in 1908-1909 which increased the demand for local producers. The CUP stressed that the formation of a national economy and a national bourgeoisie would only be possible through foreign

capital in the economy. They felt that only small-scale enterprises would be reached through local capital and that far bigger ventures would require foreign capital in order to prosper (Ahmad 1993, 44-45).

The CUP felt constructing a Turkish entrepreneurial class through the formation of commercial companies would be a means to their ends. By 1918, roughly 80 joint-stock companies, such as the Ottoman National Bank and the Syrian Agricultural Company were established.

The end of the war for Turkey marked the emergence of a national economy dominated by Turks and the rise of a new class which appeared to be bourgeoisie, though it would have been premature to say that at this point the control of the state was in their hands. These new elites were certainly able to influence government policies. When the economic policy of statism eventually emerged it was clear that it would hitherto be to the benefit of this new class (Ahmad 1993, 45). From this point on, it can be argued that the consolidation of the *laik* class had begun and would continue throughout the 1930's, until they eventually established their hegemony in Turkey in 1950.

The Kemalist ideological framework derives from these late-Ottoman reforms which ensured the consolidation of a nation-state-based Turkish nationalism. Reformist, in particular Unionist, policies of the late-Ottoman era initiated the gathering together of Ottoman Muslims irrespective of the ethnic-religious minorities within the empire. These reforms laid the ideological, institutional, and political foundations of many of the core

ideas and tenets of patriotic Turkish nationalism. This empire-based patriotism was the foundation of the strong Republican nationalist discourse. The focus of these reforms was to transform institutional, cultural, religious, political, and economic infrastructure into an Ottoman Turkish polity (Canefe 2002, 138). The *Tanzimat* reforms that continued throughout the mid 19th century were an attempt by the Ottoman ruling classes to counter the threat to the empire of growing European supremacy (Deringil 1993, 170). The aim of their efforts was to restore Ottoman military and state power, and not to be a victim of the new power games and expansionist practices of European, and Russian, imperial states (Davison 1977, 26).

The two political movements, the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks, through revival/rejuvenation programmes, would eventually lead to the formation of the new Turkish Republic in 1923. These movements were facilitated by the assimilation policies towards the Ottoman ethnic minorities. From 1908, based on a combination of older cultural traditions and current European influences, the identification of an ethnically distinct Turkish nation was undertaken. The formula behind Turkish nationhood centered around the motherland, blood, religion, (the Turkish "triplet") comes from the ideology of the Young Ottoman, and later that of the Young Turks, in the late Ottoman period. This later became the same tradition of Kemalism based on secular nationalism and Republicanism (Kushner 1997, 219-22).

Following World War I, the various provinces of the Ottoman Empire were threatened by partition by Greek, American, British, French, and Italian forces. The CUP's way to counter this threat was to link all the ethnic minorities within the empire

from Thrace, Asia Minor, and the Caucasus together behind a Turkish nationalist cause. This included ethnic Kurdish Ottoman subjects of course (Canefe 2002, 144-45). There was essentially an on-going armed struggle of the empire against invading Western and Greek armies. Eventually it was the achievements of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his followers which would dominate and he would succeed in transforming the Unionist agenda into a Republican agenda for the Turkish state.

This embrace of Kemalism was in the interests of the newly consolidated *laik* class at the expense of other ethnic identities in the empire. At the time of the establishment of the Republic, the Armenian population of Ottoman Anatolia was already decimated by the Ottomans, and a significant portion of the Greek Orthodox community was also uprooted.[16] However there remained close to one million non-Muslims scattered across Asia Minor. Republican Turkish nationalists expelled the majority of these remaining communities through forced population exchanges between Greece and Turkey under the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (145-146, Canefe 2002). These measures were taken in the aftermath of World War I when the Ottoman empire was left in ruin and was a common scenario at that time for the losers of the First World War. If anything at that time, the Kurdish minority fared better than the religious minorities in the Turkish nation-state.

---

[16] The Armenian genocide was the Ottoman government's systematic extermination of its minority Armenian subjects from their historic homeland in the territory constituting the present-day Republic of Turkey. It took place during and after World War I and was implemented in two phases: the wholesale killing of the able-bodied male population through massacre and forced labour, and the deportation of women, children, the elderly and infirm on death marches to the Syrian Desert. The total number of people killed as a result has been estimated at between 1 and 1.5 million. The Assyrians, the Greeks and other minority groups were similarly targeted for extermination by the Ottoman government, and their treatment is considered by many historians to be part of the same genocidal policy (Kieser 2006, 127).

As the *laik* elites perceived it, the only option of state formation following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was a campaign of patriotic Turkish nationalism, through policies of forced homogenization of the national polity. The *laik* class fed to the masses the message that enemies within the borders of the Ottoman empire had to be expelled to lessen the threat to the state. An ancient history of the Turks as a racial and ethnic group was constructed in the late Ottoman and Republican eras. This construction of the national bourgeoise would never have been possible had there been significant portions of the native population who could claim non-Turkic ethnic heritage. (146). For this newly emerging class, since the Ottoman empire was multiethnic in nature, the assimilation of ethnic and religious groups into one cohesive Turkish identity was deemed necessary at the time to achieve their domination over Turkish society.

The Kemalist version of Turkish nationalism was named after the military leader and ideologue, Mustafa Kemal, later called Ataturk—"Father of Turks". It proclaimed the "re-awakening of the Turkish nation and its natural spirit" (Kushner 1997, 222). Evidence in studies of Ottoman social and political history point to populist representations of Turkish nationalism through constructions of identity of an ethno-cultural nature. The Turkish nationalist elites emphasized the racial and ethnic factors of the cultural and civilizational achievements throughout history of a people called Turks. The main tenet of Turkish nationalism has been the popular acceptance of the construct of the proud and self-assured "Turk" at the expense of all other identities. Under Turkish national citizenship, the Kemalists, following the French Enlightenment model, promised: Equality of all ethnic groups and versions of Islam-plus remaining Jewish and Christian

minorities; Fraternity (of all ethnic groups and religions based on the premise of popular sovereignty within the sanctified borders of the Republic); and Liberty (from Western invaders and the Greek Army) through modernization, secularization, radical cultural reforms and state-centered economic development (Canefe 2002, 137-139).

In summary then, in the interest of national-identity formation, drastic social transformations of the national ethnic and religious polity had been taking place since the beginning of the late-Ottoman era. The dominance of the *laik* elites within Turkish society arose as a result of the nineteenth-century gathering of exiled Muslim communities from the Balkans and the Caucasus in Ottoman Anatolia who spoke Turkic languages (Karpat 1979, 250-53). This pattern also extended to those who didn't originally speak Anatolian Turkish or Turkic languages, who adopted the identity of Muslim Turks. It is through articulating the national Turkish identity to these Muslim communities stretched across Asia Minor that this new national polity was forged. Without overriding ethnic differences among these populaces, this state formation, under the rule of these old Ottoman elites, would likely never have come to pass.

III. **Kurdish Nationalism and the "Securitization of Ethnic Relations"**

> *" The problem is not that Turkey refuses to accepts Kurds as Turkish citizens. The problem is precisely its attempt to force Kurds to see themselves as Turks."*
>
> (Kymlicka 2007, 132:1995)

In Chapter II, ethno-cultural and class analyses shed light on the modernization project and consolidation of the *laik* bureaucratic class during the late-Ottoman *Tanzimat* reform period. Such analyses also provide a perspective on the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. The rise of Kurdish nationalism was in response to the Ottoman modernization project and the mobilization of the *laik* bureaucrats against any opposition to their centralization process.

Today the Kurdish people are found in different nation states in the Middle East: Iran, Iraq, Syria, and most significant for this paper, Turkey. The earliest recorded division of the Kurds between states traces back to following the battle of 1514 of Chaldiran where Ottoman and Persian borders were established. However most significant to the trajectory of the history of the Kurdish people in the state of Turkey was the division of the Kurds stipulated in the Treaty of Sevres (1920) by which the states of Syria and Iraq were formed. The Kurds were now divided among 5 different states.

At this time there was no united Kurdish nationalism to speak of. This was due to, the Ottoman State's intentionally choosing Kurdish tribal leaders (*aghas*) as Ottoman representatives, thus allowing them to control their various Kurdish regions as a semi-autonomous states. In return for pledging political allegiance to the Ottoman empire, the tribal leaders were granted a *mir-i miranlik* (emirate) to rule over their respective clans. However in order to quell any national aspirations among these clans, the Ottoman state would intentionally pit *aghas* against each other to maintain a constant state of conflict and rivalry in the region.

Despite these despotic tendencies, the Kurdish people maintained a certain level of autonomy and ethnic identity under Ottoman state structure and policies. [17] In these, they were similar to that of other ethnicities in the regions, such as Laz, Georgian, and Pomak. The unifying principle was Islam not ethnicity (Balkan, Savran 2002, 86-87). "

> There were Kurdish uprisings beginning as early as 1806 (Oran 2002: 873). These were largely tribal and religiously inspired mobilizations against the centralized Ottoman administrative system of state-revenue extraction after the *Tanzimat* (Kirisci and Winrow 2002; Oran 2002)." Although these Kurdish uprisings had not yet been connected historically to a notion of Kurdish nationalism, during the early twentieth century the Kurds gradually entered along the path of the process

[17] Until the later years of the 19th century there was virtually no evidence that the Kurdish people thought in terms of Kurdish ethnic identity. Scholars doubt that the Kurds form an ethnically common ancestry. The majority of Kurds most likely descend from Indo-European tribes mainly moving westwards across Iran, probably in the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE. Another indicator of varied origins is language. While all are considered "Kurdish", there is no shared dialect. Kurmanji is spoken by most northern Kurds, and Surani spoken by Southern Kurds. In the south-east from Sanandaj to Kirmanshah, most Kurds speak a dialect much closer to modern Persian than Surani; Gurani,is spoken in southern enclaves of southern Kurdistan and Zaza is spoken in north-western Kurdistan by both Sunni and Alevi Kurds (McDowall, 8-10)

of constructing a distinct sense of peoplehood with the Kurdish language as a distinguishing category (Bozarslan 2003; Caglayan 2007; McDowall 2004: 87–112; Yegen 1999) (Atasoy 2009, 41).

However, under the modern Turkish state, headed by the *laik* establishment and with "Turkish" social conformity as the main tenant of the Turkish nationalist project, the Kurds quickly learned that their identification with their distinctive language would no longer be recognized.

The notion of "Turkishness" simultaneously invites and rejects ethnic, racial, religious, and topographic connotations. Turks ranged from ancient Turkic tribes of Central Asia and the Hittites and Sumers of Ancient Anatolia to immigrant communities arriving from the Balkans and the Caucasus, including former Yugoslavia. This also included the Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox communities of Asia Minor, descendants of the Armenian communities once inhabiting Eastern Anatolia, and most significantly, the Muslim Kurdish population (Canefe 2002, 137). For the first time the Kurdish people found themselves being extended a notion of citizenship to a nation state-- but only as Turks.

Initially during the period of 1919-1925, Kemalists recognized, to a certain degree, the Kurdish population of Ottoman Anatolia as a separate yet allied group (Mango, 17-18). However later, in the interest of their nationalization project over the Muslim populace, this ceased to be the case. The Turkish nation was to be defined as an "indivisible totality", as a result of construction of national identity mobilized against

foreign invaders. The rhetoric of "indivisible totality' bonded the newly gathered masses of Ottoman Muslims with the native Muslims of Anatolia under the banner of a revived, independent Turkish nation at the expense of ethnic and religious minority groups traditionally living there (Canefe 2002, 147). As we have seen in Chapter 2, it was the *Tanzimat* modernization project that had been developed up to this point then that allowed the void left by the complete collapse of the Ottoman empire to be filled by the *laik* military cadres' vision of a nationalist Turkey.

The aftermath of World War I spelled the collapse of the Ottoman empire. The Treaty of Sevres dictated that the land (Asia Minor plus Eastern Thrace) and the resources were either to be shared or divided by the Allied countries of France, America, Greece and the British Empire. Clearly this could be seen as an impending threat to the Turks, which is exactly what it proved to be when the Greek Army invaded Western Asia Minor in 1919. Therefore war measures were taken against anyone who could be seen as an enemy. With the support of the assimilated Muslim communities under threat or siege, this resistance eventually translated into a National Independence War under the leadership of a group of ex-Unionist military officers. With the forces of the Hellenic Kingdom advancing daily, the Kemalists regarded any ethno-religious diversity in the Anatolian region as a threat to the nationalist movement. Total war required the Ottoman masses to bind together as one Turkish Muslim force against their enemies. Multi-ethnicity was seen as causing divisions within the forged brotherhood of saving the "Turkish homeland" from internal and external enemies and foreigners. The only option

the Kemalists found in these desperate situations was to maintain a strong Republican front. Post-Independence War nationalist leadership was to represent the Muslim Turkish populace of Anatolia (Canefe 2002, 148). Essentially in the Kemalists' view it was a time of war; therefore their focus was on unified ethnic-based strategies against internal and external enemies. However, it should be understood that as the Turkish nationalists were undertaking this ethnic-based strategy, the same measures were taken up by the Greek and Balkan nationalists, in many cases against their Turkish minorities (Diamandouros, 250). Forced population exchanges were not committed only by Turkish nationalists; both the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and later history of Balkan states -- and beyond -- include several such movements of dispossession and mass expulsion (McCarthy, 148):

> This 'cleansing impulse' cannot be attributed solely to the southeast European landscape, either. Early modern history of Europe itself contains many examples of forced population movements and expulsion during the forging of new political units or redrawing of borders. (Brubaker 1996, 426)

In fact, the continuation of forced population exchanges between Greece and Turkey, at the inception of the Turkish nation-state (1923) suggests that traumas of inter-religious war and exile were particularly strong among the Muslim refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus who were resettled in Asia Minor during the nineteenth century. To these uprooted Muslim communities, settlement in Anatolia was presented as their last resort for survival. In the midst of the cleansing of Muslim ethnic populations across the Balkans, the Ottoman/ Turkish tradition of nationalism offered a promising alternative for these people in the formation of a homogeneous state (Arnakis 1974, 120-22). Therefore

it became essential for them to be able to claim the Anatolian peninsula and Eastern Thrace as their 'homeland' and defend it against invasion by others. In addition, the late-Ottoman era of Turkish nationalism contained a strong desire, which strengthened in the Kemalist era, to conform to the definition of a *Volk* and to prove the presence of an ethno-religiously distinct Turkish nation in order to claim legitimate political existence. It was incumbent upon patriotic Turkish nationalists to qualify as a well-defined nation through regaining access to the status of 'being civilized' and thereby evading European imperialism or mandate rule. Therefore in this context the prospect of a multiethnic nation-state formation would not appear as an option for the *laik* class in maintaining their hegemony.

Given these circumstances, we see the roots of the *laik* nationalists aversion to what we know as "multiculturalism" that has remained to this day. Clearly in this case, it was the Anatolian ethnic minorities who were the ones who suffered, which included the Kurdish minority. This ethno-cultural nationalism has had its negative repercussions on Turkish society, all -- as has been revealed above —in the interest of the survival of the majority, Turkish-speaking Ottoman Muslims. By maintaining that the very survival of the new Turkish state was constantly in peril the *laik* bureaucratic class was able to consolidate their hegemony over the Turkish population.

The period following the establishment of the Turkish Republic to roughly 1940 saw the dominance of Kemalism instituted by the leading *laik* cadre. Though in theory the new Turkish state was based on a civic notion of nationalism, in fact in practice the notion of ethnic nationalism dominated (Balkan, Savran 2002, 90). The concept of a

single language, single culture, and a single ideal became the premise of the centralized Turkish state. Under the Treaty of Sevres (1920) the defeated Ottoman State was required by the Allied forces to grant local autonomy to the Kurds with the possibility of independence in the near future. However with the consolidation of the *laik* elites in Kemalist Turkey, which replaced the Ottoman empire, none of the provisions stipulated in the Sevres Treaty were accepted and Turkey refused to ratify the treaty. With the annulment of the Treaty of Sevres, the Treaty of Lausanne was put into place in 1923. However there was no longer any mention of Kurdish minority rights being entertained in this treaty and thus the Kurds became divided among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Soviet Union (Balkan, Savran 2002, 91). This point would mark the beginning of numerous political and military conflicts involving Kurds and the various nation states that they were under—most significantly for this research project, that of the Kurds in Turkey (Balkan, Savran 2002, 91).

Kurdish nationalism did not surface until following the formation of the Turkish Republic for a variety of reasons. The divided nature and continuous conflict between the various Kurdish landlords (*aghas)* during the *Tanzimat* period, played a large part in a lack of national unity among the Kurds. As well, Kurds belonged to various religious sects of Islam, such as Alevi and Sunni, which did not allow for national solidarity. In addition the region inhabited by the Kurds at that time was also full of other indigenous groups of the area, such as Armenians, Assyrians, and Keldanis. Therefore we do not see evidence of Kurdish nationalism until the beginning of the 20th century (Balkan, Savran 2002, 92).

Following the formation of the Turkish state many Kurdish tribal leaders felt that they had been betrayed by Ataturk and the Kemalists since their promises of Kurdish autonomy had not been fulfilled by the Sevres Treaty of 1920. Furthermore throughout the independence War (1920-1923), in order to rally the Kurds with the Turkish Muslim populace at that time, Ataturk and the Kemalists deliberately led the Kurds to believe that following the war there would be negotiations concerning an autonomous Kurdish region in the East. However, the Kurds realized after the war that this new Turkish nationalism was determined to assimilate the Kurds into a Turkish nation through the use of military force. The first reactions against the Turkish nationalists came from the Kurdish elite, considering the majority of the Kurdish population at that time were illiterate. The concept of ethno-nationalism was so foreign to the Kurds who had known nothing but the encompassing notion of Islam under the *millet* system of the Ottoman state for six hundred years (Balkan, Savran 2002, 92-93).

There has been a long history of brutality towards and total subjugation and fear-mongering of Turkish "Kurdistan" during the Kemalist years of the 1930s. Most Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s such as that of Sheikh Said (1925), Agri or Khoybun Independence (1930), and Dersim uprisings (1937) were mainly religious inspired movements mixed with nationalistic aspirations against Kemalism which rejected Islam as the main principle of the state. These uprisings were quickly quelled by Ataturk and his armies, with the leaders and supporters of the uprisings hung for acts of treason. The methods used by the army were brutal, including the mass killing of civilians, the razing of homes and the deportation of thousands of people (Balkan, Savran 2002, 93).

In essence the very existence of Kurdish nationalism is based on a reaction to the Turkish modernization project and the *laik* establishment competing with the Kurds for the resources, power, and wealth of their region. Ironically the Turkish nationalist project which allowed for the development of industrialization and modern communication contributed largely to the emergence of Kurdish nationalism. The concept of "Kurdish identity" was very new at that time, in contrast to tribal and sectarian identities, and had developed as a result of the socio-economic and political transformation of Turkey headed by the *laik* bourgeoisie class – a case of Anderson's concept of an "imagined community" through the development of Kurdish consciousness in parallel with the modernization of Turkish society (93, Balkan, Savran 2002).

The eventual association between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Turkish left stems back to the 1960s when the Kurds began to associate the overthrow of capitalism with the development and freedom in the Kurdish areas. The state therefore began to not scrupulously differentiate between the Turkish left and the Kurdish movements, as enemies of the state, which they crushed with policies of violence during the coups of 1960 and 1980 (Balkan, Savran 2002, 94). In response to this continued suppression, the Kurdistan Worker's Party, PKK, (*Parti Karkereni Kurdistan*) was established in 1984. Its founders sought to recreate a traditional identity they felt they had lost through modernization or state attempts to homogenize society. For the PKK, the intensity of Kurdish national feeling was accentuated by the loss of spoken Kurdish among its members this among other things they sought to reclaim through Kurdish revivalism.

According to Saracoglu, the implementation of neoliberalism in Turkey during the 1980s played a significant role in the ongoing worsening of the socio-economic position of the Kurds of eastern Anatolia (Saracoglu 2010, 80-88). The definition of 'neoliberalism' is part of a much larger debate in international relations which goes far beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'neoliberalism, particularly in reference to the emergence of 'neoliberalism' in Turkey, is understood to mean those principles and policy ideas adopted to restructure capitalism and restore an open world market economy. These include: 'the liberalization of domestic economies and trade; the privatization of various forms of public property, services, and policy making, entrepreneurship, and new managerial arrangements"; essentially a "privatization of the state" which consists of the gradual withdrawal of the state from welfare provisions and the privatization of public economic enterprises and services, as well as various state practices in policy, norm, and law-making (Atasoy 2009, 18)

Concurrently, the ongoing political and military conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state has perpetuated the socio-economic repression of the Kurdish people in Eastern Anatolia. The continuous armed struggle between the PKK and the Turkish armed forces is one of the main factors that has prevented the Kurdish people from improving their position in Turkish society. The conflict traces back to 1984 when the PKK launched a series of armed attacks against the Turkish military in Eastern Anatolia. Since 1984 under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK considered themselves a Marxist-Leninist political organization. The organization was inspired by the leftist movements that emerged in Turkey during the 1970s with a mandate of a combination of

socialist revolution and the national independence of the Kurds. The idea was to form a Socialist Kurdistan in the Middle East (Saracoglu 2010, 88-89). In this respect the ideology of the PKK differed from that of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) under Jalal Talabani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KUP) under Massoud Barzani which are not socialist in nature. These latter organizations are mostly made up of influential landowners from Northern Iraq where as the PKK finds that it is the landowner class in Eastern Anatolia that contributed to the demise of the Kurdish rebellion in the 1930s by collaborating with the Turkish state against the uprising led by *Sayid Reza* (Sheikh Said).

Despite thousands of soldiers and PKK militants dying in the armed conflict and millions of people in Eastern Anatolia fleeing the region due to security concerns, the PKK was able to garner support for their cause among the people in the region. This was due in great part to the Turkish state's extreme military measures taken in response to the PKK attacks. In fact it is these oppressive assimilation policies of the state that have contributed in large part to the continuation of this cycle of conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state. It fostered more support for the PKK from the people in Eastern Anatolia, despite the fact that Marxist-Leninist ideology was in opposition to the traditional and conservative social structure of the region. However it seemed the only option for the people of the region as the only form of legitimate representation of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey.

> The crude assimilationist policies of the state and the stark economic inequality in the region alienated the Kurds from the existing system. The declining influence of the landlords, which was due to both the economic transformation in the region

> and the PKK challenges to the tribal structure, presented another difficulty to the state in its attempt to establish ideological hegemony over the Kurds
>
> (Saracoglu 2010, 89).

The record of state atrocities against the Kurds is grim. Admittedly the PKK created a climate of fear by striking ruthlessly at conservatism in Kurdistan, preaching what appeared to be a creed of atheism and social revolution (McDowall, 423). However, "Whatever the methods of the PKK, the population rapidly discovered that there was little it did which was not matched by the ruthlessness of the security forces." In October 1983 Law 2932 by the Turkish state prohibiting the use of Kurdish was established; any trace of Kurdish identity was banned. As well under Law 1587 the use of Kurdish names for children could not be legally registered on birth certificates. In 1986, 2,842 out of 3,524 villages had been renamed to expunge Kurdish identity. State oppression was most overwhelming and pervasive in the field of physical abuse and torture where hundreds of Kurds were arbitrarily arrested and beaten into confessing to assisting the PKK. Detainees were kept in inhumane conditions and frequently received bastinado *(falaka),* electric shocks or sexual abuse. The account of one Kurdish peasant reveals: "I was ready to confess that I had killed one hundred men, because they brought my wife and sister, stripped and threatened to rape them right there." In Diyarbakir prison, 32 Kurds were officially acknowledged to have died in custody between 1981 and 1984; however there remain estimates of twice this number. Reports from 1989 published in Turkey show the increase in army brutality and of mass graves in Siirt and elsewhere, suspected of being where Kurdish detainees unaccounted for had been buried. In 1987, Decree 285 was

expanded to allow the governor general the power to not only evacuate villages at his discretion but to deport the population from the region. "The number of evacuated hamlets and villages, mainly along the border, reached 400 by the end of 1989, climbing inexorably during the next three years, as evacuations and destruction happened elsewhere, to exceed 2,000 villages destroyed by the end of 1994, with over 750,000 rendered homeless."[18] In 1990 the government established *Kararname* 413, giving the government the power to recommend the closure of any publishing house anywhere in Turkey that "falsely reflects events in the region or engages in untruthful reporting or commentary." The intention of this censorship was to ensure that the people were ignorant of the atrocities surrounding them. In addition, *Kararname* imposed tougher conditions on the Kurds by allowing the state extended powers to forcibly resettle "those persons whom it is deemed necessary...in places which the Ministry of Interior shall determine."[19]In the months following this development, a number of villages were razed and the number of people deported reached new heights, with 19 villages in Dersim in April being razed, 27 villages and 81 hamlets in Sirnak being evacuated and razed in August to September, leaving 30,000 homeless, in Buhtan 300 villages and hamlets being evacuated in months up to November with the displacement of 50,000.

In 1986 The Social Democrats party (SHP) spoke out against the human rights abuses against the Kurds stating that the whole south-east was 'a sort of concentration camp, where every citizen was treated as a suspect and oppression, torture and insult the

[18] D. McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds,* 426-428.
[19] Ibid, p.429.

rule."[20] In spring 1991, Law 2932 was repealed; however the introduction of a new anti-terrorism law which defined terrorism as 'any kind of action ...with the aim of changing the characteristics of the republic' in other words any democratic attempt such as a demonstration, rally or publication attempting to pacify the strict character of the state, balanced the repeal. Censorship to the extreme was evident with one of the first Kurdish language newspapers *Yeni Ulke* and its proprietor, Serhat Bucak, in the initial months of publication facing 44 charges with a majority of his issues either confiscated or banned (Mcdowall, 431). The chairman of the new pro-Kurdish People's Labour Party (HEP), had been arrested by the police and in the following days his tortured body was found in an Elazig garbage dump.. The 'disappearances' or unaccounted-for deaths following police arrest, where victims tend to be Kurdish activists continued. (432-33). Journalists and other leftist journalists sympathetic to the Kurdish cause lived in fear as colleagues, were abducted, tortured, and murdered, to the point where even news vendors selling these journals were targets. During the Nawruz festival of spring 1992 which had become assimilated with the Kurdish national expression, 100 civilians were killed by security forces. These atrocities against its own people continued unabashed by the Turkish government reaching a death toll exceeding 35, 000 in 1999 against the PKK with continued evacuations. " Accounts of victims and eye witnesses testified to the extreme brutality with which evacuations were carried out. Including deliberately degrading behaviour, arbitrary arrests, violence, torture, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence or

[20] Ibid.

threats of violence and the wanton destruction (or plunder of moveable property, livestock, and food stocks (440).

The GAP (South East Anatolia Development Project) in the mid 1980s under Turgut Ozal and the Motherland Party (ANAP) constituted initiatives to counter the regional inequality between Western and Eastern Turkey. Thereby, it was thought, PKK support would diminish in the region. However, the results were continued impoverishment and diminishing economic opportunities in Eastern Anatolia, and controversy surrounded the success of the GAP in reducing the economic disparity between East and West Turkey (Saracoglu 2010, 90).

There were four important changes in the character of the political conflict between PKK and the Turkish army in the early 1990s: first was the formation of People's Labour Party (HEP) demonstrating how Kurdish nationalist forces had integrated into the legal and political sphere through the establishment of a legal political party on the national level. During the 1991 general elections a brief coalition was formed between HEP and the centre-left Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) in Eastern Anatolia. This was in order to reach the 10 percent national threshold provision for parliamentary representation. These elections marked a significant victory for the Kurdish movement in South Eastern Anatolia provinces where HEP gained the majority vote allowing for 22 candidates from the coalition to enter Turkish parliament. However when two of the new Kurdish deputies took the parliamentary oath in Kurdish, this resulted in an outcry from Turkish society and political parties, leading to the arrest of four Kurdish deputies from the HEP. Once again the Kurdish movement was removed from the

political table, and any hope of a democratic approach to the conflict was gone, with HEP cast out as a supporter of the PKK (Saracoglu 2010, 90).

The second important change that occurred in the 1990s was the drastic shift in the political discourse of the PKK. Due to factors such as the fall of the Soviet Union, and the ban on socialist movements in Turkey following the military coup of 1980, the party gave up much of their Marxist hard-line approach to nationhood. Demands for an independent Kurdish state were replaced by liberal demands such as political and cultural rights for the Kurds. There was an emphasis on helping the democratization of the political system of Turkey and amnesty for political prisoners. There was a shift from secessionism to federalism as a solution (Saracoglu 2010, 91). In response to the concessions on the part of the PKK in terms of their hard-line policies towards Kurdish nationhood, the Turkish state also became much softer in their approach to the "Kurdish Issue", hence the third change. For example in 1999, Turgut Ozal, the president of Turkey, stated openly that only through negotiations with Kurdish nationalists and even if need be the PKK could there be any viable solution for the ongoing conflict. In addition, Suleyman Demirel, the prime minister of Turkey in the early 1990s, stated that Turkey had acknowledged that there was a Kurdish issue. Still, these open acknowledgements of the issue did not result in any steps to relax the assimilationist policies of the state towards the Kurdish people (Saracoglu 2010, 91).

The fourth and last change was the increasing "internationalization of the Kurdish question" among the international community. Several factors played into this transformation. One was the Gulf War of 1991. Following Saddam Hussein's attempted

genocide of the Kurds in Northern Iraq in 1989, the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees seeking asylum in Turkey brought the issue to the forefront of international politics. More relevant to this thesis project was Turkey's ongoing efforts in the interest of European Union accession. It was clear that Turkey's assimilationist policies towards the Kurds would not comply with the Copenhagen Criteria of the European Union. These would prove to be one of the biggest obstacles that Turkey would face on its path to European membership (Saracoglu 2010, 91). This marks the beginning of how eventually, following the elections of 2002, the AKP found it in their best interests to address the Kurdish issue in order to improve their position in relation to the EU.

Despite these changes, in the early 1990s the Turkish state refused to acknowledge that their militaristic approach towards the PKK was not offering any solution to the Kurdish issue. In fact the conflict was fuelled to the extent that by the mid-1990s, as we have seen above, more then 30,000 people had died, thousands of villages were evacuated and millions of people became displaced persons (DPs). Thousands of soldiers died, most of who were young men between the ages of 18-24 serving their compulsory military service in the areas of conflict (Saracoglu 2010, 92). As always, the *laik* ruling class was up in arms over the state of the conflict and demanding retribution against the PKK. They were the driving force behind the military's aggressive approach to the armed conflict, upheld despite the significant economic consequences of the civil war which included high military expenditures leading to reductions in public spending and lowering as a result the standard of living of the Turkish populace as well.

The capture of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, in November 1998 marked a significant point in the civil war for both sides. The PKK supporters in different nations including Turkey demonstrated against his capture and the overall suppression of the Kurdish people in Turkey. Abdullah Öcalan demands were that: "[The Kurds] should be given our cultural freedoms and the right to broadcast in Kurdish. The Turkish authorities should take the necessary measures to prevent unsolved murders and should recognize the political rights of Kurdish organization." Oddly enough though when Ocalan testified in court in his own defense, he was apologetic and mild in his approach. He emphasized that the PKK militancy that had developed in the 1990s was responsible in part for the escalation of the conflict. In fact he urged PKK militants to cease their attacks against Turkish security forces. The controversy continues to this day surrounding the events of Ocalan's trials. His supporters have preferred to interpret his defense as a hidden tactic or as a conspiracy to discredit him to his supporters (Saracoglu 2010, 92). Regardless, he still received the death sentence though the execution was never carried out due to the abolition of the death sentence in Turkey in compliance with the European Union criteria for accession. Instead he serves out his sentence on Imrali, a small island about 10 km away from Istanbul, where he continues to try to negotiate with the Turkish state as an advocate of a "peaceful and democratic solution of the Kurdish question".

Following his imprisonment in the late 1990s the PKK's discourse in politics shifted from that of a guerilla nationalist movement, to that of a peaceful federalist movement forgoing all military actions against the Turkish armed forces and determined to accelerate the democratization of the Turkish republic. In turn the Turkish state began

to recognize some cultural and political rights of the Kurds (93). It seemed that finally the Kurdish question had been brought to the political table for open discussion of reforms. This change cannot just be accounted for by Turkey's positive response to Ocalan's shift in position though that is a factor.

Also significant at the time was Turkey's need to adhere to EU reforms that emphasized political norms concerning multiculturalism. This brief period marked a watershed in the conflict where for the first time the state had adopted a liberal attitude towards the Kurds resulting in peace in the region after nearly 20 years of armed conflict. Rather, in line with Kymlica's "securitization of ethnic relations" theory, concessions on the part of both parties of the conflict -- in this case the Turkish state and the PKK -- allow room for movements toward a peaceful solution through political debate, as opposed to military actions which escalate the issue. Unfortunately this period did not last long. The question arises: why not? Many accounts point to the US forces invading Iraq in 2003 because this occupation would significantly alter the political circumstances in Iraq, particularly those of Northern Iraq/Kurdistan as the region is referred to. This inevitably affected Kurdish nationalism in the region of South Eastern Turkey.

As it stands today, approximately 2/3rds of Kurds want a measure of self-administration within the Republic and barely 11% favour secession at this point. Kurds still are calling for cultural freedoms with place and personal names of Kurdish society, removal of any barriers on the Kurdish language, for freedom of Kurdish expression including the freedom to form political parties that could represent Kurdish concerns (Mcdowall, 446). Once again notions of the "securitization of ethnic relations"

combined with ethno-symbolic, cultural and class analyses of Turkish nationalism elucidate the *laik* reasoning behind perpetuating the state's aggressive solution to the Kurdish issue.

The Securitization of Ethnic Relations

The contemporary socio-economic position of the Kurds in eastern Anatolia arises from this background deeply unfavourable to multicultural rights. The fact that the Kurdish minority issue in Turkey has not been "desecuritized" accounts for the state policies towards multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is seen as a threat to the Turkish people's geopolitical security. Therefore the dominant Turkish majority are not likely to embrace "liberal multiculturalism" considering the risk it poses to the civic spaces occupied by individual Turkish citizens.

This understanding of this perception of state security dovetails with the lack of development of multiculturalism in Turkey accounted for by ethno-cultural and class analyses. The process of state formation in Turkey in the shadow of imperial breakdown created several distinctive security problems relating to homeland minorities; the boundaries of the newly independent Turkish state left some members of the national group on the "wrong" side of a new international border, in the Turkish case, the Kurds on the Turkish side of the border.

In Kymlicka's terms, the Kurdish minority in Turkey is seen as an example of what are called "kin-state minorities" because their ethnic kin inhabit neighbouring states, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, and they are assumed by the general population to have a higher loyalty to their ethnic kin than to the state they live in. A related problem arises when a particular national group is found in two or more countries, divided by modern international boundaries, and who may have dreams of forming a common state. The classic case in the Middle East is the Kurds, divided between Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, who have longed to create an independent Kurdistan (Kymlicka 2007, 256). The Kurdish separatist movement is considered to be "irredentist" – that is, they wish to redraw the Turkish national borders so that the territory of Southeast Turkey where they live can be joined to Iraqi Kurdistan, their kin state. It is assumed that they would willingly collaborate with their kin-state if it militarily invaded in order to claim this territory. In Kymlicka's opinion, no state is likely to voluntarily accord self-governing powers to a minority under these circumstances, which we see to be the case with the Kurdish secessionist movement in Turkey, represented by the PKK. It is clear the position of the PKK corresponds to the scenario sketched by Kymlicka: where homeland minorities take the form of irredentist kin-state minorities, there is a much higher likelihood that ethnic relations will be perceived as a threat to state security (Kymlicka 2007, 183-184).

By official Turkish accounts, the PKK is one of the most notorious terrorist organizations in the world. According to the Turkish government, it has been waging a vicious campaign of terror against Turkey since 1984 with the external support of certain

states and circles whose aim by this account is to destabilize Turkey (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, 2). The PKK terrorist organization employs the following methods in the perpetration of its crimes: a) indiscriminate terror against the Turkish citizens of Kurdish ethnic origin mainly in southeastern Turkey; targets include children, women, and the elderly; in some places PKK terrorists have wiped out isolated, dispersed settlements and hamlets; the aim is to force the local population into submission, to make them provide sanctuary; b) indiscriminate terror against non-Kurdish population; the purpose is to discredit the state institutions and to cause instability (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, 5).

The securitization of ethnic relations is reflected in assumptions that dominate public opinion of Kurdish minorities in Turkey: that the minority in question is disloyal; they lack loyalty to the state as they are secessionists; they continue to collaborate with current or potential enemies, e.g. Syria, Iraqi Kurds. Therefore a strong and stable state (Turkey) requires weak and disempowered minorities. Ethnic relations are seen through the lens of a "zero-sum game--anything that benefits the minority is seen as a threat to the majority". The treatment of minorities is seen in relation to national security and affording minorities rights is seen in contradiction with the security of the state (Kymlicka 2007, 187).

The conditions that have allowed dominant groups in the West to accept liberal multiculturalism have not existed in Turkey due to this issue of securitization of ethnic relations with its separatist Kurdish minority. These conditions are desecuritization and human rights guarantees which cannot be afforded to minorities because it is considered a

risk of national security. This is similar to the situation that occurred in post-communist Europe in the early 1990s.

> The homeland minorities seeking self-government [are] often perceived as a geo-political threat to the security of the state, and a threat to the individual human rights of people living in the potentially self-governing territory (Kymlicka 2007, 187).

Kurdish nationalist issues must be seen in the context of developing international norms. There has been a development within the international state system where international norms directed at national minorities have been formed. This came as a result of the "European Experiment" in developing international norms that address the difficult challenges raised by such ethno-national groups as the Kurds in Turkey. This experiment involved the formulation of norms that can provide a principled basis for responding to the claims of ethno-national groups which reflects liberal democratic values and provides effective guidance for dealing with the risks of destabilizing ethnic conflict by the European Organizations of the European Union (204-205).

This post-1990 trend to internationalize state-minority relations arose out of fears of the destabilizing consequences of ethnic civil wars in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and reinforced by horrors of state collapse in places like Rwanda and Somalia. The push to identify international norms and best practices of multiculturalism came largely from those within the West who had supported these reforms within their own countries, and who sincerely believed that they were a success. Their goal was not to weaken and

destabilize post-colonial states, but precisely to help make them stable and successful, by diffusing models of state-minority relations that had worked in the "West" (259). However, Turkey feels that it has been faced by double standards of Western powers when it comes to the application of minority rights norms, for example in the treatment by France and Spain of their respective minorities, versus Turkey of theirs. Therefore it is not surprising that there has not been much public interest in Turkey in Western models of multicultural federalism. Instead the state, influenced by the French Jacobin tradition, became focused on being centralized, unitary, and monolingual (188).

Arguments based on historic injustice are often rejected in the case of Kurdish minority rights claims, because it is the Turkish majority that feels that it has been as much the victim of violence at the hands of the secessionists as the Kurds have been victims of the Turkish state. In the West it is generally the minority that is seeking apology and compensation from the state that has historically oppressed it, which is also the case in Turkey with some of its minorities. But the role of victim and perpetrator becomes blurred when both groups have been victims of the violence arising from the situation of securitization of ethnic relations. The majority, as much as the minority, wants the latter to express guilt, and to offer an apology, as a way of saying that never again will the minority be disloyal to the state. Therefore historic justice is viewed as an expansion of the minority's language and culture at the expense of the public welfare (Kymlicka 2007, 189).

However, the securitization of ethnic relations is a construction which is reproduced by certain political elites with their own self-interested agendas. To clarify the

process of securitization, it must be understood that in order for an issue to become "securitized" certain political actors produce this threat to the state and its dominant national group. The Turkish elite, through their own choice and political motives, were successful in persuading the general public, even though it may have been a legitimate threat, that the Kurdish minority in Turkey posed a security concern. Their objectives behind this are obvious, as Kymlicka's arguments would suggest, since securitization issues have the ability to undermine the state; therefore standard democratic processes of debate and negotiation are placed on the back burner. Notions of liberal multiculturalism become a luxury that cannot be afforded since the security of the state is in question. In the account of Turkish politicians who "securitize" multiculturalism in Turkey, this issue must be addressed prior to all others, because, if it is not, the state will cease to exist as a sovereign unit and therefore all other issues become irrelevant. Second, issues of security dominate issues of justice. National security takes precedence over justice. " Disloyal minorities have no legitimate claims to the state. They forfeit any claims of justice" (Kymlicka 2007, 191).

Kymlicka argues that the dilemma of multicultural arrangements in states is that:

multiculturalism policies are most needed precisely when they are most high risk. It is precisely when the members of a particular group are seen as a 'fifth column', or as a threat to the liberal-democratic consensus, that proactive efforts are needed to prevent the polarization of ethnic relations. If there is little or no distrust between ethnic groups, then multiculturalism policies may be easier to sell but less necessary in practice.

Multiculturalism might be most needed when it is least likely to be adopted, and most popular when it is least necessary. (127)

The Kurdish case shows specifically, as Kymlicka outlines generally, that the public acceptance of multiculturalism depends on feelings of both basic individual and collective security; and that when those feelings are eroded, there is a backlash and retreat from a solution to issues of multiculturalism (128). Official Turkish authorities take on multi-ethnicity illustrate avoidance:

> As the first melting pot and encounter point of many different civilizations and cultures, present-day Turkey contains a multitude of ethnic, religious and cultural elements.
>
> Turkey is proud of its great heritage. This centuries-long shared way of life is perfectly second-nature for the people of Turkey. Yet, different ethnic identities, including the Kurdish, are acknowledged and accepted in Turkey. The state does not categorize its citizens along ethnic lines nor does it impose an ethnic identity on them. Population censuses in Turkey never count people on the basis of their ethnic origins. But, this does not prevent an individual citizen to identify himself or herself in terms of a specific ethnic category. That is a private affair and ultimately a matter of personal preference. Public expressions and manifestations of ethnic identity are prohibited neither by law nor by social custom. Folklore is rich and colorful and local variations, customs and traditions are protected and supported...Therefore, it is simply neither understandable nor acceptable for

> Turkey to discuss "the respect for social, economic and legitimate political aspirations of Kurds" as if the Turkish citizens of Kurdish ethnic descent constitute a different and separate community. They are citizens of a nation that has been sharing for centuries the same values with respect to language, religion, culture and patriotic identity, common history and the will for a mutual future (Minister of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, 17).

This analysis of the development of policies of denial of ethnic groups in Turkey and their current reinforcement reveals a common concern with security, both externally and internally. At the time of the birth of the Turkish Republic, the very survival of the Turkish state was at issue. Turkey faced a colossal challenge of transforming the remnants of the Ottoman Empire into a viable state entity. The new state did survive and gained stability through reliance on authoritarian methods while maintaining elements of democracy. But its evolution failed to keep up with the development of Turkish society. This fuelled the rise of competing Kurdish nationalism, which is offering its own model of reorganizing the Turkish state. This competing nationalism is viewed as responding to issue with the modern Turkish state. The issue of multiculturalism has led to the rise of Kurdish nationalism, in a vicious circle fuelled by violence. The concerns with security, though having differing sources in differing stages of the evolution of the state, remain constant, leaving multicultural recognition in Turkey at a standstill.

IV. Current Modernization Project: The AKP and the Kurdish Position

The previous chapters trace the roots of the denial of multicultural recognition of ethnic minorities in Turkey through ethno-cultural and class analyses of the modernization project and consolidation of the *laik* bureaucratic class, beginning in the late-Ottoman *Tanzimat* reform period, and extending through the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 into the 1980s. This account also shed light on the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey since the 1920s; the roots of Kurdish nationalism can be seen to lie in responses to the Ottoman modernization project and the mobilization of the *laik* bureaucrats against any opposition to their centralization process. Further, yoked to issues of minority rights, the same ethno-national and class factors can be seen at work in the suppression of religion in Turkey by the *laik* bureaucrats throughout the modernization process of the Turkish state. The rise to power since 2002 of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet Kalkinma Partisi or* the AKP), and the growing rifts within Turkish society which have followed, call attention to another key element bearing heavily on Kurdish minority relations in the Turkish equation, that of Political Islam.

The more recent modernization project, undertaken by the emerging "traditional" bourgeoisie since the 1980s, represents a current era of neoliberalism and has shifted state power to the AKP neoliberal "Islamist" class. As with the first modernization project, this one has involved Turkey opening itself up to some extent, to free trade and exposing itself to international markets.

The coming to power of the AKP initially seemed to show signs of bringing a shift towards increased recognition of minority rights, specifically those of the Anatolian Kurds. Their platform initiated in 2009 known as the "Democratic Opening" (*Demokratik Açılım*) promised to relax the yoked restrictions against religious expression and minority recognition entrenched in the Turkish state construction.

> Due to the fact that Kemalism formed the state under the tutelage of bureaucratic cadres, the AKP-led reform programme directing Turkey towards the EU also presents a challenge to the power of civil–military bureaucratic cadres. It raises the possibility that Kemalism can be revised to permit political renegotiations around the relations between rulers and ruled. The three most contentious areas in these relations consist of the military's frequent interventions in politics, Muslim women's wearing of the headscarf, and the Kurdish issue. These three issues are closely connected to a transformation in the Kemalist basis of the state which is deeply embedded in the constitution. (Atasoy 2009, 3).

Turkey's traditional secularist elite, most notably the military and judiciary bureaucracy, often views the AKP's pursuit of EU-oriented democratic reforms as an attempt to institutionalize *Islamization-by-stealth*. The AKP is accused of gradually shifting the emphasis in state ideology from Kemalism to Islamism, an accusation which has deepened cultural tension within Turkey. This tension has been partly 'created' by the

military and judiciary to justify their frequent interventions in politics in the name of strengthening the Kemalist foundation of the state.

Within another strand of Turkish scholarship, there has been an understanding that this transformation of power from the *laik* "bureaucratic cadres" to neo-liberal Islamists has signified an improvement of minority Kurdish rights. It would seem reasonable to assume that the extension of power to one group (religious) suppressed under the *laik* would imply the extension to another (ethnicity) and that these would be naturally allied causes. Yet there is growing evidence that again, as with the first state engineering project, the political rights and socio-economic position of the Kurdish people in Turkey have worsened as a result of agendas of modernization pushed by manipulating ethno-national and class influences; that is, that the AKP no less than the *laik* have a growing interest in repressing the Kurdish population of Eastern Anatolia.

The aim of this thesis as a whole is to question the notion that the significant transformation of power from the *laik* former ruling class to the neo-liberal "Islamists" of the AKP represents a positive change for the Kurdish people in South Eastern Anatolia. The pressing question is whether the shift from the "hegemony" of the *laik* ruling class to that of another ruling neo-liberal class signifies a break from or continuation of the established system of suppression of the marginalized populations within Turkey's multicultural society?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to further understand the rise of the AKP in Turkey through an insight into the symbiotic relationship between the secular

establishment in Turkey and repression of religious freedoms. This current chapter thus first traces the rise to power of the AKP "Islamists".

"Political Islam"

The issue of "Political Islam" in Turkey has many links and parallels with the Kurdish issue. Dating back to before the establishment of the Republic, in a way linked to and parallel with the treatment of Kurdish ethnicity, religious expression has consistently been suppressed during Turkey's modernization project and the emergence of the *laik* class.

Yet, just as Kurdish nationalism arose in reaction to Turkish ethnic suppression, so throughout the history of modern Turkey, Political Islam has ironically been fuelled by the policies of the secularist nationalist factions, whether intentionally or unintentionally. While curbing Political Islam, evidence shows that often their approach continues to ensure its existence in Turkey.

Political Islam in Turkey, as in any other country, is multi-dimensional and non-stagnant; it is a construction which is constantly shifting and changing. Since the republican revolution of 1923, Islam in Turkey has been continuously redefined (Tapper 1991, 2). The Turkish constructions of Islam are rooted in Turkish culture, political history, and geography which can be traced to the current Islamic revivalist movements. (3) And Islam has always been present in Turkish politics. For the purposes of this

research paper, the term "Political Islam" is used to indicate some form of "Islamic revivalism" in Turkey.

Since the birth of Modern Turkey, Islam has been defined and redefined. Secularism was one of the main foci of the new Republic. Measures of government supervision and control were placed over religious expression. The caliphate was abolished, along with the Sufi *tarikats* (orders/brotherhoods) including the *Nakşibendis* and *Kadiris*, and an overall narrowing of the definition of "acceptable" forms of Islam. "Turkish Islam in effect became more standardized, circumscribed, and compartmentalized, while republican ideology and associated institutions came to dominate much of everyday life" (Tapper 1991, 2).

Ottoman Reforms

Neither modern manifestations of Islam, nor republican secularism, nor the relationship of religious institutions to the Turkish state, can be understood without some reference to their Ottoman roots (3). As illustrated in previous chapters, the origins of republican secularism and nationalism lie in Ottoman Islamic culture, society and politics. The roots of Turkish "*laik*" can be traced back to the eighteenth century to the Sultan's *kanun* legislation, whereafter a secular bureaucracy emerged to power, followed in the nineteenth century by Ottoman reformers determined to modernize the state by abandoning Political Islam and falling in line with Western powers to address the threat of European economic and political expansion into the Ottoman empire.

The period of radical secularization took place during the *Tanzimat* reforms from 1839, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, by which the military, education, administration, and the judiciary were shifted away from religious control (4). The breakdown of traditional Ottoman social institutions ensured that there were no political institutions, no central ideology or value system, to bridge the gulf between the various nationalist elites (military, bureaucratic, and legal-educational) and the masses. Therefore the *Tanzimat* reforms, by reducing the place of Political Islam in the Ottoman system, enlarged the gap between the ruler and the ruled. The people moved towards a central value system, a source of identity, with which to mobilize and maintain legitimacy of the Ottoman empire. Whereas the attempts of the Young Ottomans (1870s) focused on basing an Ottoman constitutional state on Islamic premises, Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) radically secularized the education, administration, and justice (though he did intend to use Islamic culture and ideology). This was followed by the Young Turks in (1908-1918) who established a constitutional government and continued the secularization process of the crumbling Ottoman empire. These were the beginning stages of the secularist ideology which would later become the nationalist ideology of the Republic in 1923. The state focus on the separation of religion from politics through parallel secular state institutions led to Islam's becoming politicized and ideologized as it became more specialized and relevant at the personal and domestic level. This was ironically achieved through the secularization of the functions of the state (Tapper 1991, 4-5).

The Impact of the Kemalist Revolution:

The process of secularization continued with the formation of the Republic of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. However Atatürk took this process to another level: he wanted not just to remove Islam from politics, but to control religious affairs through the state. Ataturk defined Political Islam, which he opposed, as having " a public function of providing a political ideology, a cultural and communal identity and social solidarity" (Tapper 1991, 6). He was opposed not to Islam itself, buts to its public function. He took this opposition to the extreme of replacing religion with a modern secular ideology and the values of republican nationalism. The social and political side of Islam, including the *tarikat* orders and local and unofficial practices, were outlawed and driven underground (6). However once again his reforms only fuelled Political Islam by restricting the practice of religion to the private, personal sphere, where individuals worshipped alone, even without the leadership of imams.

Following the abolition of the Sultanate in 1922 and the Caliphate in 1924, *Sharia* law was abandoned, and replaced with the Swiss civil code in 1926. The *Vakf* (religious endowment foundation) was abolished, and the *medreses* (religious schools) were closed. In 1927 the *tarikats* were closed. Islam was deleted from the constitution in 1928, and the state was officially declared secular in 1937.

In reaction to these radical reforms, revolts broke out which were suppressed by the state (Tapper 1991, 6). These became associated with Sufism and ethnic separatism, particularly the *Nakşibendi* order and the Kurds of the East. The most serious of these took place in the southeast of Turkey led by Sheikh Said, a Kurdish tribal chieftain, during 1924 and 1925. In reaction to Ataturk's abolition of the caliphate, religious schools, and Islamic Shari'a law courts in 1924,

Sheikh Said combined elements of Islamism and budding Kurdish nationalism as a form of protest. The rebellion was suppressed and the Sheikh and many of his supporters were tried and executed by special tribunals referred to as "independence tribunals." (Yavuz 2006, 201). "Islamic" in Turkey became viewed as an opposition to "republican', where the republican is viewed as modern, secular, and European and the Islamist is seen as backward, decadent, and Ottoman. Essentially it was a reconstruction of Islam (Tapper 1991, 7).

After the 1920s, Islam under the republic took different forms (8). In the view of Tapper, Islam has persisted since 1945, following twenty-five years of secularism, because the materialist values of Kemalism were lacking in what Islam could supply) (Tapper 1991) "Kemalist republican nationalism" was a public ideology. Kemalist republican nationalism, as a dominant ideology, could not replace the multi-level appeal of Islam. In Tapper's estimate, it was no alternative to Islam in providing identity and organizing principles of life. At the public level it was perceived to offer no substitute for the laws of Islam; at the individual level, it could not meet needs for ethical direction.

Atatürk's goal of transforming Turkey into a modern, Western, secular state essentially represented a "revolution from above": a state-instituted, top-down enterprise in social engineering carried out by a small military–bureaucratic elite that imposed its secularist vision on a reluctant traditional society. In carrying out this transformation, the elite made little effort to co-opt or cajole the population or the opposition. Doğu Ergil argues: "Neither the secularization nor the Turkification of the nation was negotiated with the people in a serious way. Instead the nationalists simply tried to use the "strong state" to overwhelm and intimidate any opposition (Ergil 2000, 53,). The opposition to secularization was seen by the *laik* establishment as

religious expression; the opposition to "Turkification" as ethnic freedoms, particularly those of the Kurdish peoples.

The reforms that were undertaken were limited to the urban population; the rural centres were not effected by the radical secularization. What was created was a dynamic of an urban, modern, secular "centre" versus rural, traditional, religious, "periphery", where the urban centres were modern and secular and the rural centres isolated and traditional. Religion was banished from the urban sphere, strictly subordinated to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). However in the rural areas, Islam maintained strong social roots mostly beyond state control, even though there was a ban on religious orders (*tarikatlar*) since 1925 (33, Rabasa 2008). The effect of the reforms was the establishment of what has been labeled a "religious counterculture" within which, due to exclusion from the political sphere, many Muslims formed their own informal networks and educational systems. Examples include the *Nakşibendi* and the *Nurculuk* movement which served as a "counter public sphere" and a more popular Islamic identity than was the case beforehand. Hakan Yavuz argues that "Islam remained the hidden identity of the Kemalist state" and supplied the marginalized majority who were excluded from the top-down transformation a form of association" (Yavuz 2006, 26).

The state domination of the *laik* establishment over Islam, as with that over the Kurds, pushed a populace to the periphery of society full of resentment, estrangement, and hostility towards its rulers. Şerif Mardin frames this urban rural dichotomy in his analysis of centre-periphery relations. The centre in this case represented by the Westernizing bureaucrats, the *laik* class, and the periphery represented by the marginalized masses. Through modernization policies of state repression and abuse, these civil and military bureaucrats wielded their state power over

the pious "periphery" (Atasoy 2006: 5). " Islam thus becomes a strategic tool for peripheral forces in the development of a critical view of the state as a source of repression" (5). In fact Mardin argues that Islamic politics in Turkey are a direct result of Kemalism. By replacing traditional social engagements with westernizing populism through abusive bureaucratic power, any semblance of a formation of community and culture was in Mardin's view "a failed social experiment."

According to Rabasa too, the lack of development of civil society in rural areas caused the periphery to feel associated with religious networks :

> The Kemalist state discouraged the development of autonomous groups outside the control of the state. Autonomous activity, especially religious activity, was regarded by the state as a potential threat to its ability to carry out its modernization effort and consolidate its political control. Dissent or opposition to the regime's nationalist ideology and modernization policies were quickly suppressed. This attempt to suppress expressions of autonomous activity outside the control of the state ... alienated the large majority of the rural population, for whom religion was an important part of daily life (Rabasa 2008, 34).

After the death of Atatürk ın 1938, his successor, İsmet İnönü ruled in a one-party system which continued the radical transformation of Turkish society. However, the majority of the population remained outside of politics and clung to traditional habits and lifestyles over which Islam continued to exert an important influence (Rabasa 2008, 35).

The Multi Party System:

The establishment of a multiparty system in 1946 and free elections in 1950 contributed in large part to the rise of political Islam in Turkey. It spelled the end of the *laik's* monopoly on party politics through Atatürk's very own party, The Republican People's Party, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP). For the first time since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, different parties were allowed to compete for power (Rabasa 2008, 35). The parties that existed at that time were the CHP (as mentioned representing the civil-military cadres), and the Democrat Party (DP). The right-of-centre DP policies were considered more "progressive" then CHP's, oriented economically towards Western capitalism and more supportive of religious freedom. The political and religious extremes included the far left Shi'ites (quarter of population); and extreme right Sunni fundamentalists. The marginalized traditional rural periphery now became an important constituency since parties where Islam was an important factor began to attract votes (35). This period in Turkish politics re-legitimized Islam and traditional rural values.

In 1950, the Democratic Party (DP) under the leadership of Adnan Menderes came into power. The DP appealed to marginalized parts of society and called for the end to some of the draconian secularized Westernization policies of the Kemalists. The DP even went so far as to entertain the idea of reducing cultural restrictions on Kurds. However, though their economic policies were more liberal, they were still very much in line with the state-driven economic model of their predecessors. They were hardly revolutionary in any respect, but nevertheless were viewed by the Kemalists as heretical and dangerous to the secularist establishment (Rabasa

2008, 36). Seeing Menderes' policies as a threat to the state, the *laik* nationalists enlisted the military to intervene in 1960.

Party politics resumed in 1961; however the military, backed by the *laik* cadres, instituted a number of reforms which strengthened its political role, the most substantial being the creation of the National Security Council *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*, (MGK), a national body dominated by the military and "entrusted with ensuring that the government's domestic and foreign policies were in line with the basic tenets of the Kemalist revolution, particularly secularism" (Rabasa 2008, 36).

The establishment of the MGK was a watershed in terms of *laik* domination of the state. The military institutionalized their ability to intervene in party politics as vanguards of Kemalism. Any perceived threat by this body to national security would result in a military coup without hesitation. It was as if the Turkish state was continually under a form of martial law.

These developments form the nexus between securitization of ethnic relations and religious freedoms. However, in allowing for more associational freedom, the military reforms in fact led to the proliferation of autonomous groups, significantly religious groups that flourished and multiplied in the 1970s (Mardin 1973, 185). In the 1970s, religious forces rose in the form of a separate political movement, *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook Movement), under their founder and leader Necmattin Erbakan. The National Outlook Movement (NOM) was one of the most significant and controversial movements within Turkey's experience with Islamic groups. These Islamic groups, formed under Erbakan, included the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*) (NOP) and the National Salvation Party *(Milli Selamet Partisi).* The NOP was banned by

Turkey's Constitutional Court with charges of anti-Kemalism which threatened the secularism of the Turkish Republic. The NOP was succeeded by the NSP in October of 1972. (Cizre, 176). The banning or closing of these Islamic parties by the nationalist authorities led them to reemerge in various guises appealing to certain portions of the Turkish populace (Rabasa 2008, 37).

The 1980 Military Coup

Hence, ironically, it was the military backed by the nationalists that contributed to the rise of political Islam in Turkey. The September 12th military coup of 1980 was presented by the *laik* bureaucrats as a means to restore order and avoid civil war in Turkey between the left-wing and right-wing groups,. This brought Turkey into one of the darkest periods of its history with, as recounted above in Chapter 3, mass suppression of the Kurdish population in the South East, as well as essentially an abolition of the Turkish Left through repression of all civil liberties in the form of mass arrests, torture, and executions. There were 250,000 military tribunals conducted, 650,000 people detained. Of the detainess, 230,000 were tried, 14,000 were stripped of citizenship, and 50 were executed. Hundreds of thousands of people were tortured, and thousands are still missing. A total of 1,683,000 people were blacklisted (Amnesty International, *Turkey: Human Rights Denied*, London, November 1988).

In the grip of securitization to counter communism and leftist ideologies, the military itself ironically attempted to strengthen the role of Islam. Religious education was made a compulsory subject in all schools. Quaranic classes were opened, and state-controlled moral and religious education was promoted. In response to the political circumstances, the military initiated a process of state-controlled "Islamization from above" (Karakas 2007). By fusing Islamic

symbols with nationalism, the military hoped to create a more homogeneous and less political Islamic community and to insulate the population from the influence of left-wing ideologies. Based on the tripod of the "the family, the mosque, and the barracks" this new "Turkish Islamic synthesis" was designed to reduce the appeal of radical leftist ideologies and also to diminish the influence of non-Turkish strands of Islamic thinking from Pakistan and the Arab world. The military also hoped the new synthesis would act as a counter to Islamic radicalism from Iran (Rabasa 2008, 37).

This construction of political Islam in Turkey was drawn by the military from a model of a group of conservatives called the *Aydınlar Ocağı* (Intellectual's Hearth). Behind this synthesis was a moral and philosophical rationale based on an ideology having sources in Ottoman, Islamic and Turkish popular culture which legitimated the hegemony of the new ruling elite nationalists. "The architects of this ideological program hoped to create a new form of depoliticized Turkish-Islamic culture that would reunify society and provide the basis for a unified, strong, and stable state" (Yavuz 2006, 68). The role of religion was strengthened in schools and education as a means of reinforcing Turkish nationalism, weakening the emphasis on secularism and providing opportunities for political Islam in Turkey to grow.

The goal of the military coup was to reinforce an unchanging national culture and to eliminate foreign influences which led to newly active *tarikats* and substantial Islamic funding from abroad of educational facilities and budget increases in the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Tapper 1991, 10). *Nakşibendis* and *Kadiris* had remained active in the east but underground up to this point. Religious education had taken place through the underground *medrese* network. But

the *tarikat* revival became prominent in Western Turkey with newer orders of the *Nurcu* and *Süleymancı.*

The "Islamic" parties do not see themselves as posing a threat of Islamic revolution in Turkey. They advocate a conservative morality focused on belief not practice; on self-improvement not political activism. Islam is seen as a non-revolutionary protest ideology/counter-culture calling for a restoration of *Sharia* law. They are supported mainly by the centre-right Motherland Party (ANAP) and True Path Party (DYP), *Naksibendi* and *Kadiri* support MNP/MSP and their successor Welfare Party (RP) (Tapper 1991, 11)

The military coup of 1980 strengthened the religious right in Turkey. The military leaders prosecuted the NSP National Salvation Party *(Mlli Selamat Partisi MSP)* leaders for their violation of article 163 of the penal code which forbid "the exploitation of religion for political purposes." The NSP took this opportunity to integrate with Prime Minister Turgut Özal's (1983-1989) new party building up a solid base. (Özal had been a parliamentary candidate of the NSP in 1970s.)

Hence, the attack by the military on socialism fuelled Political Islam in Turkey. Through literally abolishing the Turkish left and its Kurdish nationalist affiliations, socialism as a form of political opposition to the religious right became obsolete. This created a political vacuum which allowed the right party with significant NSP representation to fill positions in state bureaucracy and educational systems where the left had dominated (Beinin 1997, 149).

The 1980s was the period of growth of the Islamist movement in Turkey due to a number of factors connected to state nationalism. Of lesser significance was the impact of the Iranian

revolution and USSR occupation of Afghanistan. Islam became regarded as a global movement capable of countering capitalist imperialism and communism. The oppression of the communist movement by state nationalists spurred the rise of the religious right.

The "Anatolian" Bourgeoisie

Among the main factors that contributed to the rise of the AKP were the economic and political reforms carried out under Prime Minister Turgut Özal in the mid-1980s. The primary aim was to integrate Turkey into the global economy and give Turkish companies the ability to market products and services globally. The prime agents of this neoliberal transformation were the new emerging bourgeoisie from Anatolia (Yavuz 2006, 1). Ozal's reforms, backed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank, weakened the state's control over the economy and created a new class of entrepreneurs and capitalists in the towns of Anatolia, including Denizli, Gaziantep, and Kahramanmaraş (Rabasa 2008, 38).

It is crucial to examine the relationship of the "Anatolian" bourgeoisie to the AKP because it was they who provided the financial backing through various channels that led to the Justice and Development Party eventually coming into power in 2002. As an agent of the country's integration into neoliberal economic and political spaces, the rise of the "Islamic bourgeoisie" in Turkey is entrepreneurial and capitalist-oriented. It challenged the state ideology of Kemalism and the secular establishment made up of the military bureaucratic *laik* class. They are the first generation of college graduates coming from an Anatolian petty bourgeoisie who benefited from Özal's neoliberal economic policies which allowed them to establish family-owned small to

medium-sized firms in urban centres (Yavuz 2006, 5). The Islamic aspect of their lives is prominent due to the majority of them being introduced to Islam in their provincial towns and villages and then going on to enter university dormitories, run by mostly *Nurcu* or *Nakşibendi* orders. The largest representation of this group is the members of MÜSAİD (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), conservative Muslim businessmen who are a product of the rural/urban transformation of the Anatolian middle class. Their positions are not in favour of state subsidies for the Istanbul-based business class and are critical of the relationship between the *laik* business class and the state and their modernization projects. They feel that they have been excluded and marginalized by the import-substitution policies undertaken since the formation of the Turkish Republic. The majority of this new Anatolian bourgeoisie can be found in the textile and construction trade (6).

> Increasing 'globalization' and its components have substantially contributed to the reshaping of Turkish politics, including that of the 'Islamist political identity' and the connected rhetoric. This literature has attached a great importance to the growing influence of 'Muslim businessmen' (the MUSIAD) within the Turkish economy. According to this argument, these businessmen are satisfied with the results of the Customs Union as it opened up new business opportunities for them and made them increasingly dependent on Western economies for markets, technology, advertising, consulting and production services (Cizre, 178).

Following the 1980's, these "Anatolian" businessmen went on to become the main constituency behind the Islamic Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* or RP). In nationwide local elections on March 27th 1994, under the leadership of Erbakan, RP gained 19% of the popular vote and captured 26 of the 72 metropolitan municipalities in Turkey. This was followed by RP surprisingly winning the general election in 1995. In national parliamentary elections in 1995, *Refah* won 21% of the vote. Erbakan became Prime Minister in 1996 in a coalition government with Tansu Çiller's True Path Party *(Dogru Yol Partisi)* (Cizre, 176). The formation of the WP-TPP coalition which became known as *"Refahyol"* (Welfare-Path). It appeared that Islam had penetrated the government of a country which was "regarded as a fortress of secularism in the Middle East". (Beinin 1997, 144).

Needless to say, this development put the *laik* bureaucrats up in arms, immediately enlisting the MGK to aid them in the demolition of Erbakan's party. The elimination started at the MGK meeting on February 1997. The MGK's recommendations started a period called the "February 28th process" in which all the state elites waged a constant struggle against the Islamist party's ascent to power. The Council directed the government led by the Islamist party to struggle against the "Islamization" of the country and to strengthen its secular character. Three months later, the government resigned. Afterwards, the Islamic party's marginalization continued without the army directly intervening. The Constitutional Court in January 1998 pronounced the closing-down of Erbakan's party and a five-year ban on his key policy makers, including Erbakan himself, from taking an active part in politics" (Kieser 2006, 133).

The "February 28th process" is considered a watershed of Political Islam in Turkey. It was the abandonment by the military of the idea that Islam could be used to consolidate society. From

this point on the military campaigned against Islamist ideas and ideologies as threats to Turkish security. Both the Welfare Party, and its successor, the Virtue Party, were shut down by the Constitutional Court. This fuelled the Islamic movement by showing that they could only succeed through avoiding a direct confrontation with the secularists and deemphasizing the Islamic agenda. Later the AKP, the offshoot of the Welfare Party, coming into power in 2002, would be the unintended result of the military banishing MSP/MNP (Cizre, 177).

In addition another factor which played a significant role in the success of the AKP was the absence of the Turkish left in the early 1980s as a result of the military's measures. The AKP (offshoot of the Welfare Party), filled the political vacuum that was created by the demise of the left, particularly in the working class areas (Rabasa 2008, 48). Together these factors fostered the "silent revolution" of the Anatolian bourgeoisie in opposition to the Kemalists and the ongoing power shift taking place in Turkey from the nationalist *laik* class to the Islamist neoliberal class, resulting in the rise of the AKP.

Ironically the symbiotic relationship between elements of religion, ethnicity and class in Turkey and the laik nationalists themselves has contributed to the success of the AKP today.

The AKP

The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) (AKP) led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is the dominant political party with Islamic roots which caused a political crisis over the selection of a new president in the spring/summer of 2007 (Rabasa 2008, 1). They formed a solid

majority government as of November 2002 elections, and had strong results in 2004 local elections. They surprisingly won 46.6% of the vote in the July 2007 election. However based on the distribution of seats in parliament, the number of seats held by AKP fell from 362 to 340 --- short of the two-thirds needed to amend the constitution (2).

The roots of the party are Islamist; however so far there has been little evidence of an Islamist agenda for the party. The party has been accused by the Kemalists who feel that the real nature of the AKP's agenda is to infiltrate Islamists into the civil bureaucracy and establishing "Islamization" at the local level (2). They regard Erdoğan's portrayal of religion as a cultural backdrop rather than an active part of politics as a tactic against Turkey's entrenched secularists, including the military/constitutional structures against religious politics.

Despite the nationalist secularist's every attempt to prevent AKP from maintaining power, the party won a majority government on July 22nd, 2007. In fact it was the military's "midnight memorandum" on April 27th, 2007-- threatening military intervention against AKP coming to power-- that significantly contributed to their success. In addition the Constitutional Court's decision was a first attempt to block Abdullah Gül from being president elect. The Turkish people felt that their political rights were being taken from them and in protest they voted Gül in as president on August 28th, 2007 (56).

In June 2008, the chief prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals asked for censure of AKP citing eight of their bylaws that contravened Turkish law

> The judicial bureaucracy continues to accuse the AKP of Islamization by stealth. Only eight months after the AKP's election victory in July 2007 (with approximately 47 per

> cent of the vote), the Constitutional Court voted unanimously to hear a case calling for the banning of the AKP, and the barring of the prime minister, president, and 69 other party members from active politics. Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya, chief prosecutor of the High Court of Appeals, brought the case to court in March 2008. In an 162-page document, he accused the AKP government of aiming to transform a secular country into an Islamic state, indicating that 'this risk has been increasing every day' (Rainford 2008).
>
> In his petition the chief prosecutor claimed that 'the real aim of the party . . . [is] to bring religion into education and into public institutions – and eventually overturn the secular state' (Rainford 2008).

These moves by the nationalists only served to infuriate the people to vote against them. The attempts of the nationalist judiciary to undermine the AKP with their authority have if anything served to increase the party's power.

Another issue fueling the conflict between the secularist nationalists and AKP is the headscarf issue. The headscarf has become a symbol in the debate in Turkey over the role of religion and the state. "For secularists the use of the headscarf in public spaces represents less a personal choice than a political attack on the secular state" (Rabasa 2008, 60). By contrast, in the AKP supporters' view, wearing the headscarf is a matter of personal choice, and restrictions on its use are violations of individual human rights. AKP feels that people should be able to express their Islamic identity in state institutions.

In February 2008, the parliament amended two articles of the constitution in order to create the constitutional framework for the lifting of the headscarf ban in universities. Theses

amendments led to the head of the Higher Education Council (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*)YÖK instructing all universities in the country to admit students wearing headscarves. However only a dozen out of 115 universities complied. These amendments have been met with large resistance by many secular university authorities.

The successes of the AKP in the three most recent national elections demonstrates the rise of political Islam in Turkey. Throughout the history of Modern Turkey, the tendency has always been for the secular, westernized, liberal sectors of society to live in constant fear of Political Islam coming to power in Turkey; the tendency for Islamic parties to gain power has been attributed to a lack of social infrastructure in the nation. In one view, for example, "From a historical perspective, in Turkey, as elsewhere, religion has always emerged as a banner behind which the oppressed and the dispossessed have rallied in periods of economic and social hardship"(Beinin 1997, 144).

From an alternative perspective, the view of Islam as a religion that fuels mass revolutionary anti-Western mobilization is a western fallacy. Indeed, "where it is the official state religion (formerly in the Ottoman Empire, today in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran), Islam is a legitimating ideology for the ruling class and constitutes part of the state mechanism" (Beinin 1997, 145). "Islam has played both stabilizing and destabilizing roles; it has served as a banner for rebellion as well as oppression."

In the case of Turkey, ideologies of secularization and modernization sought to reduce the impact of Islam on politics, but allowed Islam to become an ideology of opposition and conservatism, and Islamic groups to provide a refuge for marginal people suffering deprivation

and alienation from the state and society at large, thereby fueling their development (Tapper 1991, 12). Recently this irony has further developed into a defence of Islamic practices against westernized secularism based itself on equally western notions of human rights.

It is in relation to issues of religious freedom together with a neo-liberal economic policy, then, that the AK party came to power in Turkey. Specifically the relationship to the nationalist secularists determined the party's political platforms on issues of multiculturalism and religious freedoms. The political campaign initiated in 2009 of " The Democratic Opening" (*Demokratik Açılım)*, among others, reveals how many of the issues surrounding multiculturalism and freedoms of religious expression in the history of the Turkish Republic continue to be controversial and divisive issues and what role the AK *Parti* plays in these dynamics.

The AKP attempted to address and resolve some of these issues through establishing a political platform geared towards European Union membership. Initially these political maneuvers showed some promise of seriously addressing issues of minority ethnicity and religious freedom in Turkey. More recent developments raise serious questions about whether the AKP's efforts are viable within the fragile situation in Turkey—that is, the difficult questions posed at the beginning of this paper: Are the AKP's policies towards "openings" of multiculturalism and religious expressions too ambitious for the current state of Turkish society? Or for the first time in the history of Turkey are the Kemalist nationalist secularist elite of Turkey losing their power over politics which they have exercised since the formation of the Republic in 1923?

Having contextualized these questions in the preceding, the remainder of this paper addresses them.

In 2002, the AKP, with a surprising majority of votes, gained enough seats in parliament to nearly form a single-party government. This turn of events in the 2002 elections was a watershed in Turkish politics (Yavuz 2006, 9).

According to Hakan Yavuz, the party's interests in establishing its identity of conservative democracy created a space where the marginalized groups in Turkey such as the Kurds and Islamists could express their demands to the state. In Yavuz's estimate, the AKP is the product of an evolution of a new political discourse in Turkey. This new discourse revolves around notions of democracy, civil society, human rights and freedoms of speech. This new discourse has appeared to hold the promise of empowering the marginalized sectors of Turkish society such as the Kurds, Alevis, and Islamists. This language opened a national debate over key issues of political and national identity centering on the state, security, Turkishness, Islam, Alevism, and Kurdishness (Yavuz 2006, 15).

Also, by claiming its identity as a conservative democratic party, the AKP legitimized itself externally. The AKP found an avenue to voice all of these concerns in the demands of the Copenhagen Criteria. With the EU's support, "new interest groups want to guarantee their intrinsic freedoms and transform state-society relations." The AKP was seen as an outlet for these concerns as opposed to the traditional norm in Turkey where political debates had always been focused on the protection and consolidation of state power, and the "nation is defined as an extension of the state." (15).

There are a lot of overlapping cleavages in Turkish politics centered around debates of Islamism versus secularism, and ethnic Turkish nationalism versus the "Kurdish identity" (161). The secularism versus pro-Islamist cleavage is the most dominant. Interestingly enough for this paper, this cleavage aligns with the centre versus periphery cleavage similar to Western European countries. In this, it also aligns with the second most dominant debate: the ethnic cleavage between Turkish and Kurdish identities (Yavuz 2006, 166). Both of these debates align themselves with the AKP's reform package aimed towards meeting Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership.

In these debates the AKP found a common cause in a political campaign promising more freedoms of expression for Turkey. Interestingly enough religious claims to freedom of expression have become associated with human rights and respect for culture. The question is whether the AKP indeed has realized these promises; in particular in its relevance to this paper, has it realized these promises in ways that have increased the rights and well being of the Kurdish minority?

The AKP within itself has a lot of contradictions: "it seeks to reform the political system and state-society relationships while at the same time declaring its identity as a "conservative democracy."; it champions political participation and pluralism while at the same time not allowing much room for its own internal democracy; the party identifies decentralization and local-based governance as a solution to Turkey's overburdened bureaucracy while its seeks to centralize AKP's own party structure and decision-making. The party eliminated almost all bottom-up channels, and Erdogan rules it with his all-male advisors" (10, Yavuz 2006).

Yavuz argues that the AKP's centralized politics developed due to the party's being made up of a coalition of diverse people who came together prior to the 2002 political conditions; it is not homogeneous and it requires a strong leader to rule over it.

By some estimates, Turkey represents the successful political integration of an Islamic movement within a democracy. However, the AKP denies its Islamic background and claims to be a conservative democratic party – this despite the fact that its Islamic roots trace back to the Welfare and Virtue parties *(Refah Partisi, Fazilet Partisi)* which were closed down by the Constitutional Court on charges of being "anti-secular". In addition the majority of the AKP's deputies are observant Muslims in their daily lives. In general, their spouses continue to wear headscarves, which have been banned at public offices, ceremonies, and universities "because they are regarded as a challenge to the secular nature of Turkey"(Yavuz 2006, 2). Whether or not any of the above factors would qualify the party as "Islamic" is still open to debate.

A denial by the AKP of its Islamic connections could also be seen as a way to appease the state. The AKP is free to govern the country as long as it stays within Turkey's strictly proscribed constitutional framework and ignores many religious claims of its conservative constituency.

Yavuz sees it as problematic to propose Turkey as a model for Islamic democracy; nor can the Turkish experience be recreated in other Muslim countries. In fact, The AKP, instead of dealing with significant issues regarding the integration of political Islam into its system, has done the opposite by transforming it through extrajudicial means to the point where the movement refuses its past and reacts negatively to being called Islamic or Muslim (2). Keeping in mind that " a movement is Islamic to the extent that it is making political claims on religious

Islamic grounds" (2), according to Yavuz, Turkey is experiencing instead a realization/ materialization of liberal politics where political movements is no longer engaged in the politics of identity but rather in the politics of services. This is on the basis of neoliberal economic and political values. The AKP he considers to be the product of these transformations as it does not develop or articulate any claims on the basis of Islam or other forms of identity. In fact it acts as an agent of the country's integration into neoliberal spaces.

The dynamic linking religious claims to freedom of expression with human rights and respect for culture began with the Democrat Party in the 1950s and has continued on in Turkish politics ever since the introduction of the multi-party system (8). In terms of its political history, Turkey has undergone 14 national legislative elections since 1950. There are consistent trends in the Turkish party system such as a lack of institutional continuity, fractionalization and volatility of electoral support. The banning of parties by military regimes or the Constitutional Court has been common practice since the beginning of the multiparty elections. Whenever this occurred, voting was effected by party manipulation in electoral laws; therefore electoral preferences have always been shaped by voters regrouping behind newly founded parties. This has caused a great deal of confusion in terms of understand Turkish party preferences (Yavuz 2006, 161)

During the 2002 elections it was understood by AKP that they did not have a significant portion of the Kurdish vote in the East. This prompted them, prior to municipal elections, to garner support from the Kurdish constituency by winning over voters during the local elections (Yavuz 2006, 177).

The courting of the Kurdish vote by the AKP has a complex history. The driving force behind Kemalism was essentially secularism. Transforming the Turkish republic into a secular state was no easy task. It was achieved, as we have seen, through brutal domestic reforms during the 1920s and 1930s which resulted in many violent protests and even rebellions (Yavuz 2006, 187). The most serious of these took place in the southeast of Turkey led by Sheikh Said, a Kurdish tribal chieftain,,who,in reaction to Ataturk's abolition of the caliphate, religious schools, and Islamic Shari'a law courts in 1924, combined elements of Islamism and budding Kurdish nationalism as a form of protest. The rebellion was suppressed and the Sheikh and many of his supporters were tried and executed by special tribunals referred to as "independence tribunals." (Yavuz 2006, 201). "Kemalist doctrine maintains not only that the Turkish Republic is under constant threat but that the threats have remained essentially unchanged since Ataturk's lifetime," even to the extent where members of the government are seen as a threat.

In April 1998, Erdogan was charged with inciting religious hatred during his speech in December 1997, where he recited a poem by Ziya Gokalp, a theorist of Turkish nationalism, in the majority Kurdish southeastern town of Siirt. The poem has a combination of religious Islamic and military imagery: " The mosques are our barracks, the minarets our bayonets, the domes our helmets and the believers are soldiers." Erdogan reciting these lines to a Kurdish town was viewed as fueling revivalism of the Sheikh Said rebellion. He was found guilty and served four months of a ten-month prison sentence and released in 1999 (203). The fact that to this day there remain fears of reviving a rebellion from nearly a 100 years ago demonstrates how the Kemalist establishment still considers or projects that it is under constant threat.

There were other incidents which seemed to show hope of Kurdish recognition. In a 2005 speech in Diyarbakir, Mr. Erdogan declared, "The Kurdish problem is my problem." It seemed that he had accepted the failure of Ankara's heavy-handed security policy and was setting a new process in motion. "This "Kurdish opening" seemed like a step in the right direction; it offered the possibility of greater language rights, more autonomy and amnesty for antigovernment Kurdish militants.

In 2006, in relation to this issue, the AKP experienced its most difficult time in office during the Diyarbakir incidents that followed the funerals of four of the fourteen PKK militants killed by security forces in an operation in the Bingol-Mus Region. On March 28th 2006, hundreds of youth went on a rampage in Diyarbakir, hurling stones and petrol bombs at the police and destroying shops and public buildings. The riots.spread to Batman, Siirt, and even Istanbul despite the security forces call for a halt to the violence. In total six people, two of whom were children, died during the riots. This gave the opposition ammunition to accuse the AKP of incompetency in fighting terrorism. This public dissatisfaction led to the enactment of the Anti-Terror Law even though it was contested strongly by the Islamic constituency of AKP supporters. This was mainly due to the fact that the Islamists see these measures as a throwback to authoritarian and old Kemalist establishment approaches centered around national security. They fear that these security measures may be used against their organizations to label them as terrorists (Cizre, 99).

During this period, there remained indications that the AKP had embraced the concept of minority rights within Turkey. The party had taken on the issue of the "Kurdish question" in the "East and South-East". While the AKP maintained that it advocates the unitary structure of

Turkey, including upholding Turkish as the official language of the state and education, it argued that there was a need for policies "recognizing cultural differences with the principle of a democratic state." These included provisions for cultural activities including publication and broadcasting, in languages other then Turkish. In these provisions, the AKP aligned their campaign for minority recognition with that of their freedom of religion campaign. By committing to the conditions of the EU, which allowed for accession negotiations, the AKP was able to find a voice for their causes. We see evidence of these commitments being put into practice in 2004 when Kurdish language education and broadcasting was made available to the public, followed by private radio and television channels (Yavuz 2006, 81).

However, more than these measures being in the interest of freedom of expression, there was evidence of their role as AKP defenses against the Kemalist elite. Dagi provides a convincing and comprehensive summary of this dynamic:

> It seemed that European demands for democratization and human rights have also overlapped with the AKP's search for protection against the Kemalist/secularist centre, including the military and the judiciary. They came to understand that the more Turkey was distanced from the West and the EU in particular, the stronger would be the hegemony of the army that treats the AKP as an anomaly and a threat. Thus the EU emerged as a natural ally to reduce the influence of the army and to establish democratic governance within which the AKP would be regarded as a legitimate player (Yavuz 2006, 102).

As illustrated above, the AKP found the EU discourse of human rights and democratization as the perfect ploy to protect itself from the Kemalist authoritarian establishment. They understood that the influence of the army bureaucrats over Turkey would be curbed significantly if the state were expected to meet all the preconditions involved in the democratization process of EU accession. The AKP gained legitimacy through democractic and human rights reforms since the *laik* ruling class upheld the goal of Turkey's EU membership as the ultimate objective of their own project of Westernization dating back to the Kemalist revolution. Thus the resistance that the AKP would have otherwise faced from the military establishment was restricted in order to meet the reforms stipulated by the EU. These conditions have involved: the restructuring of the NSC (National Security Council), the abolishment of the death penalty, and the State Security Courts (2004) which in the past had been rife with human rights abuses especially against Kurdish secessionists. Despite the republican elite's objections to all of the above, the ultimate goal of the Westernization project of the Kemalist establishment was the legitimizing force pushing these EU reforms. Though secretly the *laik* class may have opposed EU membership they wouldn't dare publicly express this as the whole basis of their Turkish nationalist identity is based on the role of Westernization. For the first time the Kemalist establishment saw their bureaucratic reach suppressed by the AKP and their EU ally (Yavuz 2006, 102). Hence, the AKP's platform of human rights and freedom of expression, in particular in relation to the Anatolian Kurds, appears to be largely politically motivated.

More persuasively than upholding democratizing reform, the AKP has reinforced neo-liberal policies. Turkish businesses are generally family-owned with fewer then twenty or so employees. Small shop owners and merchants are the principal supporters of the AKP and its leader, Erdogan, giving him a substantial percentage of votes in comparison to the opposition (Yavuz 2006, 7). Erdogan has come to represent the marginalized poor population in Turkey. They see him as a symbol of their condition in his understanding of "liberty" as removing all impediments and interferences to prospering. Again, the question arises whether this promise has come to any fruition.

Thus we see the continuation of, though unfocused, a "softer approach" to the Kurdish issue, whereby for the first time the debates surrounding Kurdish demands for national recognition were brought to the Turkish parliament. The legal prohibitions on Kurdish publications were lifted. As well, the AKP became the second party in the Kurdish regions, after the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (*Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi or BDP)* in both the 2007 and 2011 elections. Up to this point it was unprecedented that a nationalist party could garner Kurdish votes in the region, let alone a close majority. Also significant was the official national TV channel TRT starting to broadcast in Kurdish in June of 2008. All of the above pointed to a unprecedented discourse of democracy and human rights towards the Kurdish issue, indicating that the Turkish state was moving towards a peaceful resolution of this decades old conflict. This would all quickly change in 2009 .

The Democratic "Opening"

Specifically, between 2009-2010, certain political events related to the AKP party took place in Turkey that are key moments in developments relevant to this research project.

The "Kurdish Initiative" was introduced by the prime minister, Tayyip Erdoğan, and the AKP party in November 2009. The "Kurdish" initiative -- later known as the "Democratic initiative" -- aimed to protect and extend the human rights and freedoms of every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, religion and political or social choices. The initiative comprises what are considered six initial steps essential for a democratic initiative: the creation of an independent human-rights institution; the creation of a commission to combat discrimination; parliamentary ratification of the U.N. Convention Against Torture and a national preventative mechanism; an independent body tasked with receiving and investigating accusations of torture or mistreatment by the security forces; renaming of residential areas in line with demands from locals; freedom of political parties to communicate in languages other than Turkish (*Hürriyet* Daily News Parliament Bureau, Friday, November 13, 2009). The Interior Minister Beşir Atalay was quoted saying, "There is no final list because we see the democratic initiative as a dynamic process, not a closed package. We can revise these steps in light of new developments."

This proposal by the AKP party for a constitutional amendment was critical for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, this initiative suggested Turkey was beginning to

address its issue of minority rights at the government level which had never been common practice in Turkish political history.

Based on these activities, it has been argued that AKP has moved towards consolidating democracy in Turkey. The AKP has taken on the country's marginalized groups, specifically the Kurds in Turkey, as a political platform. Turkey's accession process to the EU has forced the state to adopt EU norms. The "democratic opening" promises extended freedoms to many of the marginalized groups in Turkey.

However it still remains to be seen what AKP's true intentions are; what these measures actually amount to has yet to be articulated clearly. The AKP has attempted to reconfigure old alliances and redistribute political power by creating new institutions and new values, and foremost has attempted to overthrow the ingrained Kemalist progressive and elitist thinking. They claim their main goal is to level society so that top and bottom are not widely separated, by shaping politics along identity and the needs of civil society. However, the AKP does not acknowledge that the issues of that region are those of economic underdevelopment. It is still questionable whether or not the party's intention is to really put " power in the hands of the people" or whether it is authoritarian in nature (Yavuz 2006, 4).

Some evidence of the ideals of the initiative being put into practice could be seen in an attempt by the AKP government to offer PKK (The Kurdistan Worker's Party) returnees amnesty in Turkey in late 2009. Thirty-four people, 26 from the United Nations' Mahmour Refugee Camp and eight from the PKK's Kandil camps, surrendered on October 20th, 2009 at the Habur border gate amid crowded demonstrations organized by the pro-Kurdish

Democratic Society Party, or DTP. (Serkan Demirtaş, *Hürriyet* Daily News, Tuesday, October 20, 2009). The combined efforts of both the AKP party and the DTP seemed to mark the beginning of the Kurdish initiative coming to fruition.

It quickly became apparent that this event was too ambitious for the current political environment in Turkey. The opposition parties viewed the release of the PKK returnees to Turkey from Northern Iraq as negotiating with terrorists. The outrage of the opposition parties, MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) and CHP (Republican People's Party) combined with that of protestors showed how controversial this issue has become in Turkey. MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli said "It's not the PKK surrendering to Turkey, but the Justice and Development Party (AKP) surrendering to PKK." (Serkan Demirtaş, *Hürriyet* Daily News, Tuesday, October 20, 2009). Also, this episode revealed to some degree that the role ethnic nationalism plays in the controversy is still key. The event as a whole illustrates how government efforts in the interest of minority rights continue to be likely to come head to head with security anxieties of the Turkish state.

This controversy escalated to the point where in December 12, 2009, the Constitutional Court outlawed the Kurdish DTP, whereafter the party announced its official withdrawal from Parliament (Soner Cagaptay , *Zaman* ,December 12, 2009). The party was outlawed on the grounds that it was supporting the PKK, which is recognized as a terrorist organization in Turkey, United States, and Europe. These alignments can be traced back to the DTP's cooperation with the AKP party to organize the demonstrations for the PKK returnees to Turkey. However this tentative move towards the "Kurdish Opening" backfired when the demonstrations turned into pro-PKK rallies in Diyarbakir.

Excluding DTP from the parliament took the Kurdish issue out of a government setting and alienated the only legitimate political representation of the Kurds.

This was a step backward from finding any solution to the issue of minority rights in Turkey. It demonstrates that political expediency trumps any idealistic platform of human rights and freedom of expression. In addition, it ironically reinforced the practice that in Turkey it is a common occurrence for political parties to be shut down and reopened by the Constitutional Court -- one of the issues that the AKP party was hoping to address in its constitutional amendment.

The Democratic "Closing"

It has become clear then that, in its of handling Turkish domestic issues in general and the Kurdish question in particular, the AKP has not met its promises. While initially the AKP embarked on a mission to resolve the Kurdish identity issues via a democratic approach to bridging the gap between the centre and the periphery, their combination of ideological opposition to the civilian-military bureaucracy, big business, and media ensured that any transformation of domestic policies would be a challenge, one that indeed proved to be too formidable (Cizre, 90).

Their attempts, as illustrated above, have come to little or no fruition, mainly due to the fact that the party has been unable to remove identity issues surrounding the Kurdish question from being issues of "existential/survival politics". The secularist elite continue to consider the

AKP's platform a security threat to their interpretation of secularism. The AKP has been unsuccessful in "desecuritizing" the Kurdish identity issues of Turkey (Cizre, 93). Erdogan's platform on ethnic identities and EU reforms gave the impression that the AKP government would transform and reform the current system to extend to a redefinition of Turkish citizenship including Kurdish identity and cultural rights. However he maintains his stance that "there is one state, one nation, one flag." staying in line with the conventional nationalist discourse. Due to an increase in PKK terrorist attacks on state and civilian targets since May 2005, the AKP has been compelled to adopt the classical nationalist discourse towards national identity if they have any interest in maintaining civilian support.

In episodes like these, the AKP has come to realize that the ethnic strife in Turkey has fuelled the nationalist tendency and empowered the opposition parties against them. Erdogan's party understands, in their third term in office, that their democratization campaign cannot begin to counter the deep-seated issue of the "Kurdish question". Nor are they willing to risk pressing it at the expense of losing their support among the Turkish electorate. (Cizre, 100).

It is evident that in recent years the party has reverted back to the *laik's* nationalist discourse regarding "securitization of ethnic relations." This can be attributed to a number of factors: Prime Minister Erdogan's definition of the Kurdish question varying significantly from that of the Kurdish actors, particularly the PKK-led political parties; the party facing a lot of animosity from the state institutions over the conceptualization of the Kurdish issue and the foundations of the Turkish republic; one of the party's primary fears being that the Kurdish issue could undermine its support from the Turkish-Muslim provinces in central and eastern Anatolia, as well as split the party itself; last, the Kurdish issue having the potential to lead to civil war

within Turkey with the military versus the Kurdish insurgents. In addition there are such factors as: declining support for the EU among the Turkish population; the rise of Turkish nationalism due to a recent increase in PKK attacks over the year; the controversy surrounding the former Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP); and the current BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) and their lack of cooperation in distancing themselves from PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party).

Therefore recently, there is much more evidence of the AKP shifting its priorities from the Kurdish issue and minority recognition and rights in Turkey, to those of economic concerns; "identity and cultural rights dimension have been put aside for later attention" (Cizre, 100). In Duran's estimate:

> It is reasonable to conclude that the party's new politics toward the Kurdish question is parallel to its policy on the Islamic demands: a strategy of patience for change. This policy has been a result of the awareness that whenever the AKP tries to redress the Kurdish question, it confronts harsh criticism from the conservative-nationalist deputies and groups within the party. ...the search for a new policy of identity would jeopardize the existing coalition within the AKP before the coming presidency election and the general elections in 2010. (Cizre, 100)

However, as recounted from the Kurdish perspective, "patience for change" would not seem to be a valid description of the AKP actions. Sebahat Tuncel, a Kurdish politician and current member of parliament of the BDP, reflects this alternative interpretation:

> Mr. Erdogan's government can follow one of two paths. It can seriously consider these demands, include Kurdish lawmakers in the process of drafting Turkey's

new Constitution, provide constitutional guarantees for the collective rights of the Kurdish people and accept our demand for autonomy that will allow for self-government and bring peace. Or it can insist on the policy of violent suppression that it has pursued to date. If the second path is taken, Turkey could enter a more intense period of conflict than ever before. Unfortunately, Mr. Erdogan's recent comment that he would have hanged Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned Kurdish nationalist leader, had he been in power when Mr. Ocalan was arrested in 1999 gives the impression that he is leaning toward the second path....

..... Despite the Turkish public's approval of the opening, the A.K.P. did not take serious steps toward resolving the Kurdish problem. On the contrary, it stepped up military operations, banned the leading Kurdish party, the D.T.P., and arrested Kurdish politicians, including me. (I was arrested in November 2006 and spent nine months behind bars, until I was elected to Parliament from prison and granted immunity in July 2007.) Since then the government has largely ignored the Kurdish people's grievances. Under the guise of an opening, it has continued the traditional nationalist politics of denial. Rather than meeting the demands of the Kurdish people, it seems that the A.K.P. is now dragging Turkey toward a new confrontation. The election of 36 pro-Kurdish deputies to Parliament will be the most effective check on the A.K.P.'s destructive policy. As Turkey's various political parties debate the drafting of a new Constitution, the resolution of the Kurdish issue will be of paramount importance — and this will require the active participation of Kurdish members of Parliament. The unjustified arrests and

> military operations must come to an end and Turkey's Kurds, after decades of struggle, must be granted the right to learn and pray in our own language and exercise self-government in our cities and towns. (Sebahat Tuncel, "Arab Spring, Kurdish Summer", June 17, 2011)

This account of the failure of the AKP in dealing with Kurdish demands – and indeed illegal repression -- is supported by reports of the ongoing recent KCK operations. Any pretense of the AKP taking the "soft" approach abruptly shifted with the AKP's attack on the Union of Kurdish Communities (Koma Civakên Kurdistan or KCK) in 2009. The KCK is considered an organization accused of being the urban branch of the armed organization of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party).The association was formed in 2005 as a means to pursue non-violent political dissent against the Turkish state. Since 2009, as many as 7748 people have been taken under custody on the alleged grounds that they are associated with the KCK,under the Anti-Terror Law; while 3895 people have been arrested and imprisoned without even the prospect of a trial in the foreseeable future. Among those arrested are academics, mayors, members of parliament of the BDP, trade union organizers, human rights activists, lawyers, journalists and university students have been arrested (Cosar, Ozcan, Socialist Project, 28th December 2011).

> There have been 29 judicial hearings related to the KCK held since the first hearing on October 18th, 2010 in Diyarbakir (where part of the KCK trials are being held). The procedures are jammed with delays, as evidence has not been presented and all interrogations have not been done. Up to now, many defendants

have not been able to present their defense. The charge list, of over 3,000 pages, does not include any obvious violent crime. The evidence, included in the list of charges relies on unidentified eyewitnesses, secretly and illegally recorded phone conversations of the defendants and other secret sources not made public. The lawyers for the defendants contend that mistaken and incomplete translations of the original Kurdish documents have been done by the police officers. They have then been presented to a court whose members do not know Kurdish (Cosar, Ozcan, Socialist Project, 28th December 2011).

One of the principle examples of academics who have been arrested under the KCK operations is Büsra Ersanli , a Professor of Political Science at Marmara University, Istanbul, and a pro-peace feminist activist who is a member of the Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates (*Kadin Adaylari Destekleme ve Egitme Dernegi, Ka-Der*). She is also a member of the Party Assembly of the BDP. Her apparent "crime" is playing an active role within this party. As illustrated above by Sebahat Tuncel's testament, party members have been systematically targeted by counterterrorism units' arbitrary arrests, even as the BDP currently holds seats in the parliament. (http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3015/urgent-appeal_stop-arbitrary-detentions-in-turkey)

Professor Ersanli was planning on attending a conference on "Controversial Issues in the History of the Turkish Republic" at Istanbul Bilgi University on October 29th, 2011, when she was arrested on the 28th of October. That same day, writer Ragip Zarakolu—a founding member of the Human Rights Association and the former chair of the "Writers in

Prison Committee" of the International PEN organization in Turkey—was also taken into custody. Already earlier in October 2011, Ayse Berktay (Hacimirzaoglu)—a renowned translator, researcher, and global peace and justice activist—had been taken into custody by the police from her home in Istanbul five o'clock in the morning. The Anti-terror Law, which is the jurisdiction that has allowed for these prisoners' arrests, prevents full disclosure by the state of these arrests. Their lawyers cannot access information regarding the grounds they were taken into custody and arrested, although it is clear that they are accused of involvement in what are considered "terrorist activities". However the evidence upon which these accusations are based on have not been made available to the public in any capacity. They all remain imprisoned for the foreseeable future. Professor Busra Ersanli, Ragip Zarakolu, and Ayse Berktay are examples among thousands of people who have been imprisoned and silenced by the Turkish state in the last two years (http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3015/urgent-appeal_stop-arbitrary-detentions-in-turkey).

The international community is on the whole unaware of the "KCK operations" being carried out in Turkey by Erdogan and the AKP party since 2009.. Under the pretenses of "fighting terrorism," Erdogan's government has been using the judiciary, state forces, and the media to punish all civic activism in support of rights demanded by Kurdish citizens in Turkey. The KCK operations have been deployed to spread fear amongst activists, to silence public dissent, and to normalize the arbitrary arrest of citizens.

Ironically,the Erdogan government's suppression of dissent and of democratic

politics has visibly intensified at a time when "Turkish democracy" is being hailed as a model for the Arab world (http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3015/urgent-appeal_stop-arbitrary-detentions-in-turkey).

Conclusion

In summary, throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the "Kurdish issue" has been securitized. The institutional power centres of the state have ensured that this has remained the case, through reinforcing an ethno-nationalist discourse which defines any movement towards minority recognition and freedoms as a threat to the Turkish people. The same could be said for "Political Islam" in Turkey, which shares a history of suppression of expressions of religious freedom similar to that of the Kurds. This tendency reached its peak during the 1980 military coup which coincided with the integration of neoliberalism into Turkey. This period eventually culminated in the formation of a new elite in Turkey, issuing from the economic powerhouses of Anatolia. This newly-emerged class would eventually lead to the AKP coming into power in 2002 with a mandate for EU accession and against dominance of the military establishment.

It also is understood, within the field of study, that the rise of the AKP represents a hegemonic transition from the traditional ruling class, the secularists *"laik"*, to what has been coined neoliberal "Islamists". According to much scholarship, this power transformation represented a positive change for the Kurdish people in South Eastern Anatolia. Initially the AKP was viewed by Turkish liberals as a beacon for Kurdish minority rights in their EU campaign for human rights and freedoms of expression. This was especially seen as the case during their "golden era" from roughly 2002 to 2008 where movements towards Kurdish minority rights were made. During the years of 2009-

2010, the AKP's political campaign, "The Democratic Opening" (*Demokratik Açılım*) was introduced which initially promised to increase democratic practices towards Kurdish oppression. The evidence of this research project suggests, however, that there was a distinctive break during the campaign of the "Democratic Opening" in 2009-2010, carried on throughout these last years, whereby the AKP shied away from their initial promises to the Kurdish people, realizing they were losing the support of their main constituency, the new business class of Anatolian bourgeoisie. It became clear that AKP's only interest was achieving dominance over the *'laik'* establishment by reducing the influence of the bureaucratic military elites, and deepening neoliberal spaces in Turkey.

In fact the AKP has alarmingly gone very far the other way, currently, with a restyled McCarthyism under the guise of "fighting terrorism" as embodied in the alleged "KCK " (The Kurdish Worker's Party -- apparently the urban wing of the PKK). Their accusations have resulted recently in the arbitrary arrests of academics and journalists in Turkey who are in support of Kurdish rights.

In Turkey, speaking for structural peace that seeks an end to the ongoing conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state requires offering alternatives to the neoliberal and authoritarian policies of the AKP. A reversion to the concentration of power in the traditional elite is no solution, but the transfer of power from the "laik" establishment of the state to that of the now "neoliberal Islamist" establishment has been and continues to be very problematic, offering no democratic resolution of the issue.

To truly address the "Kurdish Issue" in Turkey would involve a de-securitizing of ethnic relations which would in turn require a demilitarization of social practices and bureaucratic cadres which perpetuate multiple structures of political oppression of the Kurdish people and dissidents against these government policies. Voices outside and within Turkey are recognizing these criteria for any solution. Witness a recent article in the New Left Review :

> Turkey needs to confront its own problems of sectarian and ethnic repression, state coercion and economic inequality before it can offer itself as a model to anyone....On the civil-liberties front, it is true that the AKP has led a determined struggle against the far-reaching powers that the military High Command enjoyed under the old regime; but this has increasingly taken the form of replacing Kemalist militarism with a new police state (Tugal, C., New Left Review 76, July-August 2012)

What hope Turkish liberals held out for the AKP has been eroded.

> Influential liberal intellectuals celebrated the role of the police in Turkey's 'democratization'—read, chipping away at the power of the military—and discovered the human face of the new police cadres. This naivety betrayed a reductionist reading of the Turkish state...and an inability to analyse it as a differentiated set of institutions and social actors with now overlapping, now conflicting, concerns and interests (Tugal 2012).

In the political setting of neoliberal authoritarianism under the hegemony of the AKP, it is clear that basic democratic needs integral to the political, social and economic agenda of minority groups in Turkey, most prominently the Kurdish population of the East and South-East, remain unmet.

WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmad, Feroz. *The Young Turks: the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908-1914.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1969.

Ahmad, Feroz. " Vanguard of a nascent bourgeoisie: the social and economic policies of the Young Turks 1908-1918". Osman Okyar and Halil Inalcik (eds.) *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi.* Ankara, Metaksen, p.329-50.

Ahmad, Feroz. *The Making of Modern Turkey.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1983

Arnakis, George. (1974). *'The role of religion in the development of Balkan nationalism' in Barbara Jelavich and Charles Jelavich* (eds.), The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century. Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 115-44.

Atasoy, Yildiz. *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2009.

Atasoy, Yildiz. *Turkey, Islamists, and Democracy: Transition and Globalization in a Muslim State.* I.B. Tauris:New York, 2005.

Beinin, J., Stork J. *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report.* University of California Press, Berkeley 1997.

Balkan N., Savran S. *The Politics of Permanen Crisis: Class, Ideology and State in Turkey.* Nova Science Publishers Inc. United States: 2002.

Berberoglu, Berch. *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict.* Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2004.

Bora, Tanil. (1995). *'Turkish national identity, Turkish nationalism and the Balkan problem' in Gunay Goksu Ozdogan and Kemali Saybasili* (eds.), Balkans. a Mirror of the Nelti, International Order. Istanbul: Eren Yayincilik, 101-20.

Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationalism and the National Question in the New Europe.* Cambridge University Press, 1996

Brubaker, Roger. (1996). Nationalising states in the old 'New Europe' and the new'. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 19, 2, 411-37.

Canefe 2002, Nergis. "Turkish Nationalism and ethno-symbolic analysis: the rules of exception". *Nations and Nationalism*: European Institute, London School of Economics., No. 8 Vol.2, 2002. p.133-155.

Canefe, Nergis. "Milliyetçilik, Bellek ve Aidiyet." Anavatandan Yavruvatana. İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007.

Cagaptay, Soner. *Islam, secularism and nationalism in Modern Turkey: who is a Turk?* London: Routledge, 2006.

Çandar, Tevfik. *Türkiye'nin Demokrasi Tarihi (1839-1950).[The History of Democracy in Turkey]. Istanbul:*

Davison, R. 'Nationalism as an Ottoman problem and the Ottoman Response' in William Ochenswald (eds.) *Nationalism in a Non-national State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.* Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press. (25-26, 1977).

Deringil, Selim. " The Ottoman origins of Kemalist Nationalism. Nemak Kemal to Mustafa Kemal." *European History Quarterly.* 1993. 23:p.165-91.

Devereux, R. *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament.* Baltimore, MD. John Hopkins University Press. 1963.

Ergil D. Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey. *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, No. 2, Fall 2000, p.53

Gellner, E. *Nations and Nationalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Glezerman, G. *Classes and Nations.* Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1979.

Haddad, W., Oschenwald W. *Nationalism in a Non-national State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.* Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press. (25-26, 1977).

Hanioglu, M. Sükrü. *Osmanlı Itüihad ve Terakki Cemıyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902). [The Party of Union and Progress and the Young Turks].* Istanbul: Iletişim Yayinlari. 1985.

Heper, Metin. *The State Tradition in Turkey.* Beverly, Eothen 1985.

Heyd, Uriel. *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism.* London: Harvill Press.1950.

Hutchinson, John. (2000). "Ethnicity and modern nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 23, 4, 651—69.

Inalicik, Halil. " Tanzimat'in Uygulaması ve Sosyal Tepkiler [The Social Reaction to the Ottoman Reform Movement]. *Belleten.*28: p.623-49. 1964.

Karakas, C. Turkey: *Islam and the Lacisim Between the Interests of the State, Politics and Society.* Report No.78 Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), 2007, p.17-18.

Karpat, Kemal H. *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalisms in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, From Millets to Nations.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Center of International Studies.

Karpat, Kemal H. "The Transformation of the Ottoman State 1789-1908." *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 33:p.243-81.1979.

Kasaba, Resat. "Kemalist Certainties and modern ambiguities" in Sibel Bogazdan and Resat Kasaba.(eds.) *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey.* Seattle: University of Washington Press. p.15-36. 1997.

Kazancigil, Ali and Ergun Ozbudun (eds.) *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State.*London: C. Hurst and Co. 1981.

Keyder, C. State and Class in Turkey: a Study in Capitalist Development. London and New York: Verso, 1987.

Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *Turkey beyond nationalism: towards post-nationalist identies.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Köker, Levent. *Modernlesme, Kemalizm, ve Demokrasi [Modernism, Kemalist, and Democracy].* Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari.

Kushner, David. (1997). 'Self-perception and identity in contemporary Turkey',. Journal of Contemporary History, 32, 219-33.

Kymlicka, W. *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity.* Oxford University Press: New York, 2007.

Lewis, B. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey.* New York: Oxford Unviersity Press, 1961.

Mardin, Serif. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1962.

Mardin. S. Center-Periphery Relations : A Key to Turkish Politics? Daedalus, Vol. 102, No. 1, Winter 1973, p.169-190.

Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Turkey. *PKK Terrorism Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publication,* 2004. http://www.ekonsolosluk.net/eLibrary/eLibrary_Main.aspx

Oba, Ali Engin. *Türk Milleyetçiliğinin Doğuş [The Birth of Turkish Nationalism].* Istanbul: Imge Yayinevi.

Olson, Robert W. *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: It's Impact on Turkey and the Middle East.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996.

Ozcan, Ali Kemal. *Turkey's Kurds: a theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan.* London: Routledge: 2006.

Ozkirimli, Umut, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction.* NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000

Rabasa, A., Larrabee F.S. *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey.* RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2008.

Saracoglu, Cenk. *Kurds of Modern Turkey: Migration, Neoliberalism and Exclusion in Turkish Society.* London :Tauris Academic Studies. 2010

Smith, Anthony D. *Nationalism: Key Concepts.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001

Smith, Anthony D. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism.* Routledge, 1998

Smith, Anthony D. *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Polity Press, 1996

Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations.* Basil Blackwell Ltd. New York, 1986.

Szymanski, A. "Class Structure: A Critical Perspective." Praeger Publishers Inc, 1983.

Tapper, R. *Islam in Modern Turkey.* I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London, 1991.

Taylor, Charles. *Multiculturalism.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Tugal, C. D*emocratic Janisseries?.* New Left Review 76, July-August 2012.

Yavuz, Hakan. *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti.* University of Utah Press: Salt Lake City, 2006.

Yavuz, H. *Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere. Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, No.1, Fall 2000, p.21-42.

Yavuz, H. *Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey,". Comparative Politics.*, Vol.10, No.1, October 1997.p.68.

Yildiz, Kerim. *The Kurds in Turkey: EU Accession and Human Rights.* London: Pluto Press in association with Kurdish Human Rights Project, 2006.

Zurcher, Erik Jan. (1984). *The Unionist Factor.* the Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926. Leiden: E. J.