

## Turkish Politics: structures and dynamics

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### Introduction

Turkish politics is a part of the general political tendencies in the World following some universal ideologies such as nationalism or capitalism. , But it is also the fruit of a specific social and historical context as well. It has some solid structures due to Ottoman and Byzantine roots on the one hand, and on the other hand it copies Western templates in its institutions.

Nevertheless, the political *habitus* of this country presents original political behaviours that are difficult to name using the usual political science jargon. For example, “right” and “left” as political categories cover in the Turkish context very different realities compared to their European (French) roots. There are in Turkey five major political currents that an external qualification by an observer does not fit with the internal qualification and with the perception in the eye of the Turkish population.

Place in the spectrum	Sees it self as	Main political parties	Active years
Extreme Right	Nationalist - Statist	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Party of the Nationalist movement, MHP)  Büyük Birlik Partisi (Party of the Great Union, BBP)	1969 –  1993-
Islamist Right	Nationalist - conservative	Millî Görüş movement (National vision) and it's parties  Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Party of Justice and Development, AKP)	1969-  2001-
Liberal Right	Economically Liberal, nationalist, conservative	Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party, DP)  Anavatan Partisi (Party of the Motherland, ANAP)	1946 – 1960  1983 - 2009
Secularist Right	Centre-Left, Kemalist, nationalist	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party, CHP)  Demokratik Sol Parti (Democratic Left Party, DSP)	1923 –  1985 -
Kurdish movement	Left – Kurdish nationalist	Partiya Karakerên Kurdistanê (Party of Workers of Kurdistan, PKK) tradition parties  Halkların Demokasi Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party, HDP)	1978 –  2012 -

In the universal understanding of the political spectrum, Turkish politics, -in the sense of the management and governance of the public affairs of the country- is clearly situated at the right wing. In case of a “common enemy”, these right wing movements cooperate and interact, creating *de facto* and sometimes *de jure* “National Fronts”. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century these common enemies have been

communism, political Islam and the Kurdish movement. Thus, the main characteristics of the Turkish politics are nationalism (Islamic and secularist), jacobinism, and statism.

This chapter aims to analyse the guidelines of the Turkish politics chronologically since its foundation, but in a thematic perspective.

## 1. « First Republic » 1920s 1960s

Turkey, as a Republic, has passed through three steps of foundation: On 23 April 1920, during the national war (called “the war of independence” in Turkish historiography), the Great National Assembly has opened in Ankara as an opponent of the Sultan’s Parliament of Istanbul; 2) On 24 July 1923 the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed, setting up the State and recognizing the legitimacy of the Ankara Government; 3) On 29 October 1923 Mustafa Kemal set up the Regime by declaring the foundation of the Republic and, by consequence, the end of the Ottoman Monarchy. Starting by this date and during the 1920s and especially 1930s, a new political system was established.

The main characteristic of this “new” system found its roots in the Ottoman Empire: the sacralisation of the State. Indeed, since the establishment of the very strong State apparatus, much more centralized than the Ottoman system, the State, as the incarnation of the nation, has been placed above everything, especially above liberal values such as democracy, human rights or the rule of law. The sacralisation of the State<sup>1</sup> justified an authoritarian regime, rarely contested, and in particular, four military interventions in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997.

The foundation of the Turkish political system between 1930s and 1960s followed two main interconnected guidelines: the installation of structural fears, and constant identity engineering.

The Turkish political system after 1923 is an authoritarian presidential unicameral administration, in a single party regime controlling the government, the State apparatus, the military and the local and regional administrations. During this period, the Republican People’s Party founded in 1923 is the master, at the same time, of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary but also of the media and civil society.

This period can be divided into two with regard to two different personalities: Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) (1923-1938) national hero who became over decades the main political reference of the Turkish Politics alongside with Islam; and Ismet Pasha (Inönü) (1938-1960), who followed, in the very precarious atmosphere of the interwar years a pragmatic, balanced, multilateral, and very cautious foreign policy, at least until 1950s.

Atatürk’s period is characterized by very radical Westernizing “reforms” in order to construct an homogeneous nation, with two attempts at a multi-party system, in 1924 because of internal scissions in the RPP, and in 1930 by the will of the President Atatürk to build a “His

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<sup>1</sup> Symptomatically, in the Turkish political vocabulary the State is associated to the father, *Devlet Baba*, and the Homeland is associated to the mother, *Anavatan*, Delaney Carole, “Father State, Mother land and the Birth of Modern Turkey” in Yanagisako Sylvia, Delaney Carol (eds), *Naturalizing Power : Essays in Feminist Cultural Analyzes*, New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 179-181 (177-200).

Majesty's most loyal opposition". Both attempts failed and the opposition parties were shut down.

Inönü's period is more fragmented. Between 1938 and 1946 the authoritarian system worsened. Between 1946 and 1950 however, Turkey adopted a multi-party system under the pressure of the UN. And between 1950 and 1960, Democrat Party (DP), more liberal in economic matters but more permissive concerning Islam, governed the country until the military *coup d'état* of 27 May 1960.

During this period that can be qualified as the "first Republic" (that the internal political jargon rejects), the political system was based on two main "structural fears" that will be constant until today.

### a) "Division"

Turkey has been founded on a fear: a disappearance due to the Peace Treaty of Sèvres fragmenting the defeated Ottoman Empire. This Treaty signed in 1920 between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire, has, not only completed the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the Middle East but also divided the Asia Minor for the benefit of the victors. (Here, a map of Sevres? ). The Peace Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, guaranteeing the Turkish sovereignty on Anatolia and a small section of Thrace, has certainly avoided the measures imposed by Sèvres, but the *fear* remained as a perfect "Chosen Trauma", to this day. Every time that some sections of the Turkish population claimed rights, or every time that Western allies of Turkey asked for liberal reforms, the "Sèvres Syndrome" has been reactivated<sup>2</sup> to the point of becoming a "Sèvres Paranoia" in the hands of nationalists and conservatives.

As the core ideology of any nation-state<sup>3</sup> consists of building the "national" homogeneity, the Turkish specimen, using that "sacrosanct fear", tried, as in many other nations built *after* the establishment of a State, to accomplish this aim in three different steps:

First, it tried to extinguish the non-Muslim minorities which were impossible to assimilate due to their different religion. Impossible, because in the Middle East and the Balkans where the historical conditioning of the *Millet* System is almighty, the main determinant of national identity is not language or ethnicity, but religion and even denomination.

Therefore during the first decades of the Republic an extermination policy, which had already been started at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Armenians, very repressive policies were directed at the religious and ethnic minorities that were remaining in the newly established Turkey as the silts of the Ottoman tide. Especially between the 1930s and the 60s, the main target of these repressive policies was the *Rums* (Constantinopolitan Greek orthodox) but also smaller non-Muslim groups such as Armenians, Syriacs, and Jews as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Schmid Dorothee, "Turquie : le syndrome de Sèvres, ou la guerre qui n'en finit pas" in *Politique étrangère*, vol. 1, Spring 2014, p. 199-2013.

<sup>3</sup> Nation-state should not be confused with National State. The latter (that dates from 1789) refers to a type of State based on the concept of "nation" in contradistinction to God or King. The former (that dates from the last quarter of the 19th century) is a type of State claiming that the nation it seeks to build has a unique identity (supra-identity), that of the dominant ethno-religious group, and refuses to recognize, and suppresses, other ethno-religious identities (infra-identities). This of course amounts to a sheer refusal of democracy.

The milestones to this process are 1915 (extermination of Anatolian Armenians), 1923 (compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey), 1941-1942 (abusive measures towards Jews, Armenians and Greeks), 1955 (6/7<sup>th</sup> of September pogroms) and 1964 (expulsion of *Rums* bearing Greek citizenship).

Secondly, the Turkish nation-state tried, not to exterminate, but to assimilate the Kurds because were considered assimilable due to their being Muslims like the Turks. It should also be noted, however, that the Turkish State, exasperated by a strong Kurdish resistance against assimilation especially after the PKK took up arms, lost hope of assimilating this people considered thus far as “Prospective Turks”.<sup>4</sup> After the Nawruz festivities of March 2005 the Turkish General Staff in an official declaration used a term amounting to a “spiritual deportation”: “The so-called Citizens”.

Concomitantly, a second wave of assimilation was started immediately after the advent of the Republic and has been very successful: Assimilation of non-Turkish Muslim groups, mainly originating from the Balkans (such as Albanians, Bosniacs, or Pomaks) and also the Caucasus (such as Circassians, Laz or Georgians). Successful, because these immigrants had not only escaped massacres in their host-states, but were also very fit to assimilation due to their being allochthonous Muslims.

A third and important step should be added to these two: the on-going process of folklorization of the regional, ethnic and cultural differences, applied to regional identities and also, (but only after 1990s) to the small remaining non-Muslim minorities.

Since the beginning of the Republic, the major systemic “problem” of Turkish politics has been the way to deal with Kurds. The Kurds also were targeted at the beginning of the nation-building process but the triangle of Extermination / Assimilation / Folklorization didn’t (couldn’t) work for them. In contradiction to the allochthonous non-Turkish Muslims referred to above, the Kurds enjoyed a specific clan-based social organization, they were (are) too many, -forming 15 to 20 % of the Population of Turkey- and they were autochthonous. Autochthonous people are incomparably very jealous about their identity. Therefore the Kurds have been only partially assimilated and have not been fit to be folklorized to become a “cute” local culture.

Thus, the first violent reaction (actually, action) of the freshly established Turkish State was against the Kurds, in 1925, i.e. only two years after the proclamation of the Republic. The so-called Sheik Said revolt of 1925, was the pretext to legitimize a coordinated violent attack against Kurdish tribes, considered as dangerous in three ways: One, Kurdish identity wasn’t welcome anymore in the Turkish nationalistic discourse of 1920s; two, Islamic character of the “revolt” was considered incompatible with the secularist agenda; and three,, tribal organisation of Kurds was considered as rival to compete to sovereignty of the newly centralized Turkish Nation-State. Starting by the Nestorian uprising in 1924, until 1937 no less then 20 regional uprisings to the central authority, led by Kurdish sheikhs or landlords

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<sup>4</sup> Yeğen Mesut, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaş'a – Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2006, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p. 74-82.

were violently quelled by the Turkish army<sup>5</sup> although many of them were simple incidents of perturbation and protestation.

During the first decades of the Republic many central “reports” have been written to underline the necessity of assimilating the Kurds to Turkishness and annihilating their traditional social organization<sup>6</sup>. The last and the most known of this repressive policy, that became a structural violence, took place in Dersim in 1937-1938. There was no revolt or anything like it in Dersim; this operation was simply the liquidation of the last region of differentness, resulting in 13.160 killed and 11.808 exiled.

Starting by this pitiless repression, Kurdish question has been frozen, at least until 1960s.

## **b) Islam**

The second structural fear, motivating the establishment of a specific Turkish political system, is “Islam”, considered as dangerous in two ways. On the one hand, the founders of the Republic were almost all of them secularized, westernized positivist soldiers and bureaucrats<sup>7</sup>. In their vision, Islam was the main responsible for the “backwardness” of the Turkish nation and may be one of the main causes of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the nation that would be built, in an endless and coercive identity engineering, ought to be without the visibility of this Islam, associated in their minds with the backward Orient.

But there was also a second reason for the anti-Islamic measures of the first decades. After having removed from the power the Ottoman dynasty and after having quelled regional ambitions of the Greeks, Armenians or Kurds, the Kemalists saw in religious brotherhoods possible rivals to their complete domination on the society. Thus, in 1924 the caliphate was abolished alongside with the creation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) for three purposes:

- To eliminate Ottoman dynasty as a possible rival;
- To eliminate popular Islam in order to construct a normative and “national” Islam.
- To control religious discourse, the latter becoming more nationalist than spiritual

Therefore, it is not possible to qualify Turkish politics between 1920’s and 1960’s as “*laic*”, if this term means, as in post-1905 France,, the separation between religion and State. Quite the contrary, the Turkish *laiklik* of the period is an *apprivoisement*, a domestication of the Islamic

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<sup>5</sup> Olson Robert, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1989, p. 111-117.

<sup>6</sup> Reports by the President of Assembly Abdülhalik Renda (1925), the Minister of Interior Cemil Uygadın (1925), the Inspector of Public Administration Hamdi Bey (1926), the Governor Ali Cemal Bardakçı (1926), the General inspector İbrahim Tali Öngören (1930), the General Fevzi Çakmak (1931), the General Ömer Halis Bıyıktaş (1931), the Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya (1931), the General inspector Abdullah Alpdoğan, (1936), the Prime Minister İsmet İnönü (1935), the General inspector Abidin Özmen (1935), the deputy Celal Bayar (1936), the People’s Republican Party on minorities 1940, the General inspector Avni Doğan (1943), the Inspector of Finances Burhan Ulutan (1947)

<sup>7</sup> Akgönül Samim, “Young Turks’ et Kemalist Reforms: Continuities or Ruptures” in Atabaki Turaj (ed.), *Modernity et its agencies: Young Movements in the History of the South*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishing, 2010, p. 113-130.

religion for serving the Nation-State. The *Diyanet*, a minor institution between 1924 and 1960, became step by step the major, if not the biggest State apparatus since the military coup d'état of 1980<sup>8</sup>. One may detect four steps in the evolution of this institution, creating a specific political system:

1924-1960 : Creation of *Diyanet* and the control of popular Islam;

1960-1980: A more liberal political system, institutionalisation of Political Islam against *Diyanet* considered as the tool of secularisation;

1980-1990s: *Diyanet* becomes the tool of the military junta and then of the bureaucracy and the political elite for an ultranationalist discourse (“Turkish-Islamic Synthesis”) mainly against leftist and Kurdish movements;

1990s-2018: *Diyanet* becomes the largest State institution with huge financial and human resources, meant to de-secularize the society. Its budget, 2.34 times that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, surpasses that of 12 ministries put together, including the Health Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and the Energy & Natural Resources Ministry.

Another measure against popular Islam as major policy of the Turkish State was implemented in 1925, with the reunification of the National education, in order to diminish the power of the religious education by brotherhoods and to complete the identity engineering mentioned above through the main ideological State apparatus. The same law in 1925 banned sacred places of brotherhoods such as the *Tekkes*. Thus these *tarikats*, one of the main social organizations of the Anatolian society, had to go underground, at least until the 1960s where, step-by-step, they have been legitimized, until becoming an important part of political and social power after 1990s.

Thus, if the “fear of division” as a structural constant of Turkish politics motivated repressive policies that succeeded until now, the “fear of Islam” had an opposite effect, created a reaction and brought Political Islam to the power which now uses the same oppressive policies to suppress non-Islamic behaviours especially since the 2010s.

## 2. “Second Republic” 1960s-1990s

Between 1960s and 1990s, what characterises Turkish politics is violence. This violence should be understood in two meanings of the term: a physical one and a symbolic one that Hamit Bozarslan sees in the entire region called “Middle-East”. According to Bozarslan this violence is defined in two registers, material and emotional<sup>9</sup>.

In the same manner, Etienne Balibar considers this “state of violence” as “ultra-objective” because it is institutional in the sense of State violence or non-State political movements’ violence, but also “ultra-subjective” because the violence is sacralised, passionate, and sometimes the only source of legitimation of an institution or movement<sup>10</sup>.

In the Turkish context, both registers are present, both targeting the same social and identity categories: non-Muslim minorities, Alevis, Kurds and left wing political movements. In short,

<sup>8</sup> Gözaydin Istar, “Religion, Politics, and the Politics of Religion in Turkey”, Jung Dietrich, Raudvere Catharina (eds), *Religion, Politics, and Turkey’s EU Accession*, New York, Palgrave, 2008, p. 159-176.

<sup>9</sup> Bozarslan Hamit, *Révolution et état de violence. Moyen-Orient 2011-2015*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2015, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Balibar Etienne, *Violence et civilité*, Paris, Galilée, 2010, p. 34.

those who are one way or the other different from the “ideal citizen”, *i.e.*, *laik*, Hanefi, Sunni, Muslim, and Turk).<sup>11</sup>

### a) Physical violence

Physical violence has been one of the constants of the Turkish politics since the Committee of Union and Progress (1908-1912 / 1913-1918), so before the foundation of the Republic (1923), and still is nowadays. However, this violence is often concentrated in some areas and relatively short slots in the country, except during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where a generalized violent context has dominated the entire Turkey. The first responsible of this context is unquestionably the Army. If the Turkish State was founded by the military, during the first decades of the Republic these former militaries who became civilian politicians (such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, or Kazım Karabekir) continued to dominate the Army, and thus, the military considered itself the “founding father” and the “owner” of the country.

Dynamics changed in 1950s when civilian leaders who did not take part in Turkey’s liberation war as military officers such as Adnan Menderes or Celal Bayar took the power, step by step, pushing the Army in a defensive position. Therefore, between 1960 and 2000, four military interventions (two direct in 1960 and 1980 and two indirect in 1971 and 1997) placed the Turkish politics solidly under military tutelage.

The 27 May 1960 coup was relatively lenient compared to its “successors “. After ten years of DP rule, who took the government of the country from its military founders united in the People’s Republican Party (CHP) , the army intervened for several reasons, especially because of the dissatisfaction of the officers about their politically and economically weakened position,<sup>12</sup> but also because of what they considered pro-Soviet foreign policy choices. After the coup, DP politicians were jailed and three of them, Prime minister Menderes and Foreign Minister F. R. Zorlu and Finance Minister H. Polatkan were hanged, becoming since, martyrs for the right wing politicians.

The 12 March 1971 memorandum of the General Staff was an “indirect” coup, installing not the military at the power but a technical civilian government under the direct tutelage of the Military. Following the coup, left wing political movement and student movements was harshly repressed. The Worker’s Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) were shut down. Following the coup, more than 10.000 people, especially leftists, intellectuals and Kurds were jailed.

The following years were particularly violent. After 1975, the military violence turned the whole country into a permanent tension arena. During the decade leading to the 1980 coup, a polarization between “left” and “right” engraved in the political vocabulary categories such as

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<sup>11</sup> Concerning the citizen, the official ideology of the Turkish nation-state has, from top to bottom, a four-level hierarchical stratification that can be described as:

1) **Laic Hanefi Sunni Muslim Turks** (LAHASÜMÜT); 2) Non-Turkish Muslims (Bosniacs, Pomaks, etc.); 3) the Kurds; 4) the non-Muslims. It’s important to note that, after AKP came to power, the first word of the first/dominant level was dropped to read HASÜMÜT without *Laik* (Oran Baskın, *Etnik ve Dinsel Azınlıklar - tarih, teori, hukuk, Türkiye*, İstanbul, Literatür Y., 2018, p. 444).

<sup>12</sup> At the end of the 1950s hyperinflation dominated the country and impoverished the fixed-income public servants including officers.

“nationalist”, “Islamist” or “revolutionary”.<sup>13</sup> Especially between 1977 and 1980, streets of Turkey became permanent crime scenes where the ideological divisions led to a physical segregation, through specific cities and “liberated area” neighbourhoods. During these three years, each day brought several deaths from one “side” or the other. The “state of violence” increased to such a point that a popular newspaper summarized the situation in its front page with a sharp sentence: “to survive has become difficult!”<sup>14</sup>.

Paradoxically, the 12 September 1980 coup terminated this three-year street violence in a span of one single night. Much later, Turks learned that the “Anarchy” (as Turkish newspapers and politicians were calling “political violence”) was encouraged by the Military to justify and legitimize their direct intervention.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1980 and 1983, Turkey lived under a ludicrous junta that installed a civilian regime after 1983 but under solid military control. 1.683.000 were taken into custody, 230.000 of these were taken to military courts, 1.683.000 citizens were blacklisted, 14 died during hunger strikes, 171 during interrogations and tortures in military prisons, 49 were hanged. The number of deaths in military prisons reached 229 in total, court rulings established that only 73 of them could be classified as “natural death”. 43 inmates committed suicide, 16 were killed while “trying to escape”, 74 in “clashes”. Under custody and in military prisons 146 deaths were found “questionable”, with innumerable physically and mentally crippled individuals.

If, as Ilter Turan says, the Turkish democratisation process advances with two steps forward and one step back<sup>16</sup> like the Janissary band walk, 1980-1990 period is, doubtless, a many steps back period.

## b) Symbolic violence

The physical violence of these thirty years was a part of general political, social, cultural and economic violence that characterizes Turkish politics. Indeed, these three decades were under constant direct or indirect military tutelage and, thus, adopted the codes and behaviours of a military structure: hierarchy, chain of command, strict respect without questioning of all instructions coming from the top, sacralisation of the State and its chief and, legitimation of generalized violence in everyday life, etc.

Another reason of this generalized atmosphere has been the confirmation of Jacobinism and the reinforcement of bureaucratism. During these decades, Turkish politics was firmly against decentralisation process (and claims) because the centre (the nation-state) does not trust at all the periphery, and much less the Kurds. For example the seven “regions” of Turkey, invented by military junta have never had any administrative reality. Correspondingly, the political and

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<sup>13</sup> In Turkish: “*devrimci*”. This has a double, therefore ambiguous meaning: it means reformist (referring to Westernizing Kemalist reforms of the 20s), as well as revolutionary. This ambiguity helped the leftist youth to escape the wrath of the Military for some time. The same was true for the term “socialist” used instead of communist, the *bête noire* of the Military.

<sup>14</sup> “Sağ kalmak zorlaştı”, *Tercüman*, Septembre 7th 1978.

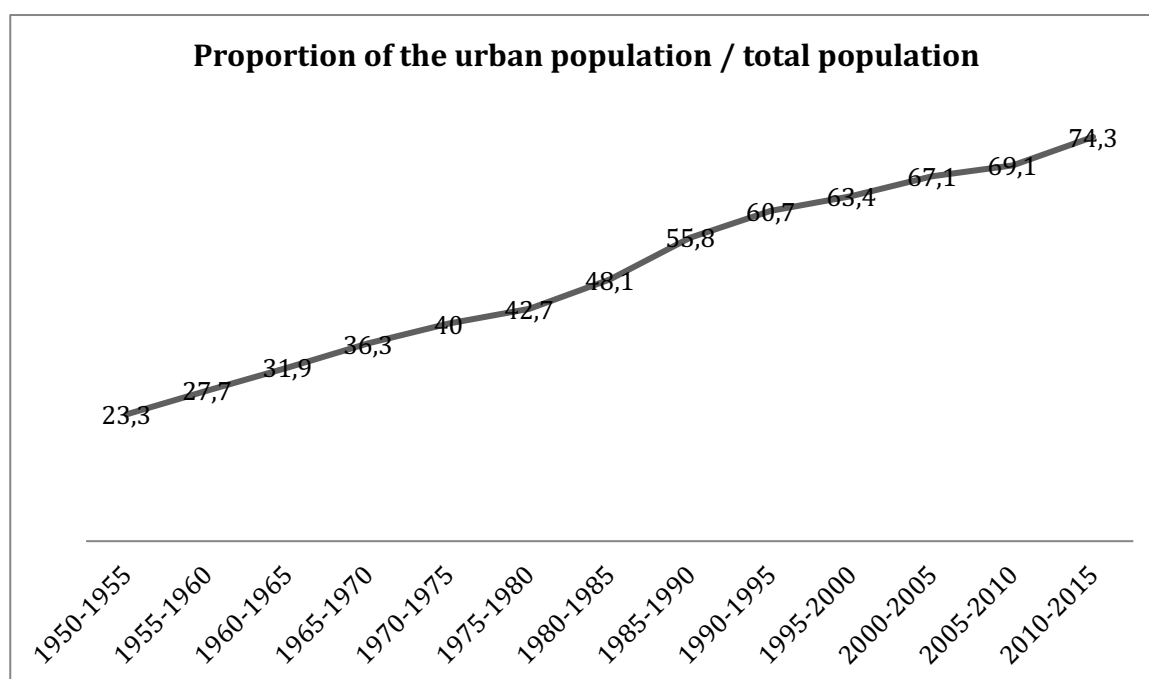
<sup>15</sup> After his retirement, 4-star general Bedrettin Demirel gave an interview to Yener Süsoy of the daily *Milliyet* on 5 July 1987: « I believe 12 September [coup] arrived very late. I’d have preferred to do it right away but the majority of my [General Staff] friends said : ‘Let the conjuncture get ripe enough so that [our coup] gets the full approval of the nation.’ Thus we waited for one more year, during which too much blood was shed.»

<sup>16</sup> Turan Ilter, “Two steps forward one step back, Turkey’s democratic transformation”, Rodrigez Carmen, Avalos Antonio, Yilmaz Hakan, Planet Ana (eds), *Turkey’s Democratization Process*, London, Routledge, 2014, p. 43-66.

bureaucratic class were decidedly against the development of a “civil society” and / or a “participatory democracy” simply because the State doesn’t trust its citizens<sup>17</sup>.

Paradoxically, the same years coincide with an increase in the number of “citizens” in the sense of city dwellers. Between 1960s and 1990s, Turkey witnessed an unprecedented rural exodus, consequently creating more “citizens” living in urban areas and not in rural areas where the socialisation respects other rules. This trend that begun in 1960s became then structural, preparing an electoral basis for populist, conservative and eventually Islamist movements.

### Urbanization of Turkey<sup>18</sup>



Especially 1970s and 1980s are the age of *gecekondu*<sup>19</sup> and *arabesk*<sup>20</sup>. It’s obvious that until 1990s former Kemalist, secularist and statist political elite did not or could not produce a comprehensive policy for this specific social category that became over the years the majority and took the power at the end of 1990S. As this section of the population suffered from constant domination and symbolic social violence in its everyday life, because devoid of social, cultural and financial capital to participate in the city’s public life (*i.e.* politics) despite its growing number, that period left resentment, frustration, and vindictiveness. That is

<sup>17</sup> Dönmez Rasim Özgür, “Beyond State-Led Nationalism: Ideal citizenship for Turkey” in Dönmez Rasim Özgür, Enneli Pinar, *Societal Peace and Ideal Citizenship for Turkey*; New York, Lexington, 2011, p. 9, (1-26)

<sup>18</sup> Data compiled from the figures of Turkish Statistic Institute, TUIK : <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=95&locale=tr>

<sup>19</sup> *Gecekondu* means a house put up quickly without proper permission (slum). The zones of *Gecekondu* constructed in the 1970s became the electoral basis of populist and Islamist movements in 1990’s promising them a regularisation. Erman Tahire, Eken Aslihan, “The “Other of the Other” and “unregulated territories” in the urban periphery: *gecekondu* violence in the 2000s with a focus on the Esenler case, Istanbul”, in *Cities*, vol. 21, n° 1, 2003, p. 57-68.

<sup>20</sup> *Arabesk* is an urban underclass music produced and consumed by former rural fringes born in the city, particularly considered as the symbol of degeneration by elite urban population. Yazar Betül, “Politics of/and popular Music: An analysis of the history of *arabesk* music from the 1960s to the 1990s in Turkey, in *Cultural Studies*, vol. 22, n° 1, 2007, p. 35-79.

maybe why when the *plebus* finally obtained the economic and political power at the beginning of the 2000s it's oppression became more violent than in previous periods, but this time towards former secular bourgeoisie<sup>21</sup>.

All the more so, the very same period is the beginning and the acceleration of an economic liberalization, under strict State control (a Turkish paradox<sup>22</sup>) that improved thereby widening the already existing gap between rich and poor classes. Unsurprisingly, the children of the former rural populations in the big cities formed, step by step, a new bourgeoisie, conservative but capitalist, economically liberal but ultranationalist, creating one of the several contradictory bourgeoisies in the Middle East like in Egypt or in Tunisia<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, the new dominant population of Turkey was ready to take the power in every meaning of the term, but a resistance from the old bureaucratic, military, and business establishment confronted it, at least until the end of 1990's.

### 3. "Third Republic" 1990's – Today

Despite its specificities, Turkey has a relatively open political system and society. Therefore, the global upheaval that occurred at the beginning of 1990s strongly affected Turkish politics too. In the "second new deal" of the century, Turkish politics was adapted while keeping some structural characteristics such as nationalism, centrism or statism. This adaptation had two directions: in domestic politics Turkish politics mutated towards populism and Islamism step by step. In the field of foreign policy, Ankara began to search a new role in the new world.

This period can be divided into two sub-periods. From the half of the 1990s until the end of the 2000s a quick transfer of political capital has occurred from the ancient dominant class to a new conservative but pro-European regime. The 1990s are characterized by a low intensity conflict between Kurdish militants on one side and the Turkish Army and The Establishment, on the other. In the same period the main problematic of Turkish politics re-became the place of Islam in the public and political sphere. The second period that corresponds to the last decade witnesses a very strong authoritarian, Islam and capital based regime that is changing the tenets of the politics.

#### a) Kurdish and Islam issues are back

Turkish politics is a matter of fears, and the resurrection of "old demons" is lumpy but cyclical. After the period of 1920s, the Kurdish question did come back in the Turkish politics in 1960 within the general Turkish leftist movement. Its third resurrection is in the 1990s making of this period one of the worst sanguinary eras of all times with not only a military repression of the PKK<sup>24</sup>, founded in 1978 and entered in a violent cyclone since 1984, but also through extra-judicial executions and assassinations of Kurdish businessmen,

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<sup>21</sup> The best work drawing a long-term overview of this transformation is not an academic but a literary one, Orhan Pamuk's, *A Strangeness in My Mind*, (New York, Penguin, 2015). It tells the story of Istanbul from the 1960s to the 2000s from the eyes of a street yogurt vendor.

<sup>22</sup> Szyliowicz Joseph, *Politics, Technology and Development: decision making in the Turkish Iron and Steel Industry*, London, MacMillan, 1991, p. 71-74.

<sup>23</sup> Osman Tarek, *Islamism: What It Means for the Middle East and the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> For a general view of the cruelty of the 1990s see Bozarslan Hamit, "Human rights and the Kurdish issue in Turkey: 1984–1999", in *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 3, n° 1, 2001, p. 45-54.

kidnappings and murders of intellectuals, torture in prisons, and so on and so forth. In the meantime, all political parties defending the Kurdish rights have been, one by one, shut down.

### Political parties banned because of Kurdish question<sup>25</sup>

Name of the Party	Date of closure	Political affiliation
Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Turkish Workers' Party)	1971	Socialist
Türkiye Emekçi Partisi (Turkish Labour Party)	1980	Socialist
Türkiye Birleşik Komünist Partisi (Unified Communist Party of Turkey)	1991	Communist
Sosyalist Parti (Socialist Party)	1992	Socialist
Halkın Emek Partisi (Party of People's Labour)	1993	Pro-Kurdish
Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi (Party of Freedom and Democracy)	1993	Pro-Kurdish
Sosyalist Türkiye Partisi (Socialist Party of Turkey)	1993	Socialist
Demokrasi Partisi (Party of Democracy)	1994	Pro-Kurdish
Demokrasi ve Değişim Partisi (Party of Democracy and Change)	1996	Pro-Kurdish
Emek Partisi (Party of Labour)	1997	Socialist
Demokratik Kitle Partisi (Party of Democratic Mass)	1999	Pro-Kurdish
Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (Party of Democracy of People)	2003	Pro-Kurdish
Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Party of Democratic Society)	2009	Pro-Kurdish

It is true that with the 2000s and with the relative detente in Turkish politics, the Kurdish question has lost, for a short moment, its intensity. Especially after 2002, when the Party of Justice and Development (AKP), defending at the time liberal values, came to power, the approach to the Kurdish question, exclusively militarist, changed. AKP came to power in 2002, with a discourse of rupture in many structural fears of Turkey. When the traditional Establishment was sceptical about the Europeanization process, thinking that it was a trap, AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accelerated Europeanization reforms, not only economic liberalization but also societal matters such as the compatibility of Islam with democracy and, also, the Kurdish question. Indeed, after the second election of the AKP in 2007, consolidating firmly its power on the State, an unprecedented policy of “opening” was applied towards the Kurds, aggregating Kurdish vote especially of those who were committed to Islam. The first period of the AKP, with structural EU reforms, can be seen as the second flow of westernisation reforms after those implemented coercively in 1920's. This second flow has fixed and completed the lack of democracy of the 1920's westernisation reforms. Actually radical reforms started by 2001, by Bülent Ecevit, who was a heir of the kemalist tradition, but deepened strongly by the AKP, especially between 2002 and 2004. Surprisingly, the resistance to these reforms came not from the people but from the elite created by the first flow of reforms in 1920's, i.e. by the bureaucracy, army and judiciary of the “nation-state”, simply because the very same elite was thinking that these Europeanization reforms would bring more rights to Kurds, islamists, and non-Muslims, leading eventually to the dislocation of Turkey. As a result, especially with the new law of “struggle with terrorism in 2006, the AKP came back step by step towards the structural fears.

<sup>25</sup> Sancar Mithat, Akgönül Samim, « İnsan Hakları », in Oran Baskın (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası 2001-2012*, İstanbul, İletişim, 2013, p. 747.

This policy, however, did not last for long. AKP saw that it was easier to go back to the former nationalist and warmonger discourse to attract nationalist vote than resolving this century-old problem. Thus, since 2010, especially since the 12 September referendum that year, Turkish policy became traditional again, using societal cleavages to keep and strengthen the power. Among these cleavages, the long-term rivalry between conservative Muslims and seculars, Sunnis and Alevis, and, as expected, between Turks and Kurds, have been instrumentalized successfully. AKP came to power to heal cleavages; it understood that the opposite was more beneficial and easier.

Precisely, another structural divide of the Turkish society was the opposition between traditional Sunnis on the one side, secular Sunnis and Alevis on the other. It's true that Islam has always been one of the main political parameters of the Turkish Politics. But, the outbreak of the Political Islam in 1970s changed radically the Turkish political deal. Nevertheless, this Political Islam, - organized under the *Millî Görüş* (National Vision) movement and embodied by Necmettin Erbakan- was tightly controlled by Military and Bureaucratic elite between 1970s and 1990s. As is the case for the Kurdish movement, for political Islam too the main tool of brake was party bans.

#### **Political parties banned because of Islamic activities**

<b>Name of the Party</b>	<b>Foundation</b>	<b>Closure</b>	<b>By</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Millî Nizam Partisi (Party of National Order, MNP)	1970	1971	Constitutional court	"Activities against secularism"
Millî Selamet Partisi (Party of National Salvation, MSP)	1972	1981	Military court	Banned with all political parties
Refah Partisi (Party of Prosperity, RP)	1983	1998	Constitutional court	"Activities against the principles of Secular Republic"
Fazilet Partisi (Party of Virtue, FP)	1997	2001	Constitutional court	"Continuation of an already banned party"

In 1990s, *Millî Görüş* movement became very successful especially in local elections. Thus, the local elections of 1994 asserted this success where the movement won the municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul. In Istanbul, a young Islamist of 40 years old, Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the mayor. Between the general elections of 1995 and the indirect military coup d'état of 28 February 1997, the Party of Prosperity settled as the foremost political movement of the country and its leader Necmetin Erbakan became prime minister. During this period, Islamic activities and de-secularisation of the Turkish society caused and accelerated the secularist reaction of a coup d'état. Paradoxically, this "28 February" intervention caused and accelerated a democratic reaction in the country, resulting in the foundation of the AKP in 2001, which took the power in 2002 and kept it until this very day under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Therefore, Islamization of politics and society started in 1990s continued since, becoming one of the three mainstream political currents of Turkey, alongside with the secularist movement and the Kurdish one.

## b) More authority, less ethics

Since its foundation in 2001, the AKP won

- Five general elections: 2002 (34%); 2007 (46,5%); 2011 (49%); June 2015 (40%); and November 2015 (48%)
- Three local elections: 2004 (46%); 2009 (42%); 2014 (45,5%)
- Three constitutional referendums: 2007 (69%); 2010 (58%); 2017 (51%)
- One Presidential election: 2014 (51%)

As it is clear, except for the elections of June 2015<sup>26</sup>, election-by-election, AKP consolidated its power, not only at the level of votes but also at the level of domination of the entire State apparatus, annihilating step by step the very fragile Aristotelian separation of powers, conceptualized by Montesquieu, between Legislative, Executive and Judiciary. Particularly between the 2008 and 2012 era, where via *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* trials military power has been dominated, but especially since 2010 referendum, AKP has tackled a tremendous task in order to transform the traditional politics of Turkey. But if the purpose of this mutation was at the beginning within the framework of more democracy to liberate Islamic behaviours, it became after 2010 the instrument to impose the general domination of Islam on the country, restraining non-Islamic behaviours. Islam passed from the status of an object of politics to the status of THE subject of politics.

It's true that one of the main characteristics of Turkish politics, since its foundation, was and still is, the ideology of "shaping generations" in the sense of a social engineering. It was applied excessively by the pioneer Kemalists in the 1920s or by the military junta of 1980. But this objective has never been applied that openly since the 1920s as it is now by AKP. Changing political behaviour and public appearance, shifting the educational system from top to bottom to fix the Islamist agenda especially by opening a multitude of preacher schools (*Imam-Hatip*), building the unprecedented growth of the political and social role of the *Diyanet*, bringing the judiciary under strict control of the party, and finally legitimizing all superficial Islamic discourses, even those against the legal rules of Turkey, are some of the patterns of this "shaping generations" project. Children born in 2001 are today 18 years old and have seen only Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a leader, and are educated under Islamist and nationalist programs. Moreover, this exasperating cocktail of Islamism and Nationalism of the last decade, is susceptible to profoundly reconstruct Turkish politics.

That being said, if at the level of identity politics Turkey is moving away by giant steps from the western political values, at another level, it is completely within it. As a matter of fact, one of the main political masters of the "post truth" era with "alternative facts" becoming realities hiding the real realities (!), is Recep Tayyip Erdogan alongside with Vladimir Putin or Donald Trump. Turkish politics is worshipping capitalism but a dirigist one of which nepotism, endemic corruption within and outside of the State apparatus, lack of coherence in the internal and external policy are, today, mainstream characteristics. Therefore, there is a huge ethic crisis of Political Islam that, dominated the society precisely by constantly preaching on moral and ethics.

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<sup>26</sup> This is the only election where AKP lost 8% compared to the previous elections, especially thanks to the/because of the Kurdish movement that set up a coalition with liberals, ecologists and human rights defenders. This loss caused a radical change in the AKP's policies towards Kurds, from open negotiation to pitiless repression, and also started a very repressive era against any opposition.

## Conclusion

Foucault's pendulum is an illusion explaining reality. In its rotation, the pendulum comes always back to its initial position but turning around a circle. In Turkish politics, cycles are present but the pendulum turns around the same pivotal problem: identity. As Turkey is the last nation born from the remains of the Ottoman Empire, it keeps repeating over and over again debates on its own identity related to the imperial past, to the religion, to the language and to the ethnicity. Thus, if politics changed over time, not only did they come back to their initial positions but also they still turn around this identity centre. Turkish politics therefore is in a constant legitimation process of the Muslim Turk<sup>27</sup> in Turkey. In this country the political positions are mainly related to nationalism and Islamism with a distorted perspective on History. Is Republican Turkey the heir of the Ottoman Empire or was it founded against the Ottoman Empire? Is Turkey a Muslim country or, on the contrary, is its specificity coercive secularism? Are Turks an ethno-religious group or citizens of Turkey?

These questions, and many others touching the permanent identity crisis, constitute the heart of Turkish politics. Politics throughout the Republic consisted of the management of the identity divisions. In the third period, but especially during the last decade the islamonationalists of the AKP understood that a management was ineffective, at least not effective enough as the instrumentalization of these divisions. Thus, with the referendum of 2017 changing the parliamentary regime into a presidential one, without any balance of power but with a "convergence" of the executive, legislative and judicial powers under the incontestable leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkish politics is deepening the very existing interpenetrated identity divides, to defend, each time, the majority's side: AKP is Islamist in the divide between Islamists and seculars, it is Sunni in the divide between Sunnis and Alevis, and it is Turkish, in the divide between Turks and Kurds, and so on and so forth. The new generation of Turkish politics seems to come back to its centre, identity matters, but in an opposite way.

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<sup>27</sup> A Turk is by necessity a Muslim, HASÜMÜT being the alla turca WASP; non-Muslims are called "citizen" (*vatandaş*), nickname for non-Muslim citizen as portrayed in the nationalist motto of the 1920s and 30s in particular: "*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!*" (Citizen, speak Turkish!)"

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