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The re-birth pangs of New Turkey in the 21st century

Abstract

Turkey has been experiencing a political struggle between the state elite – namely, the military and secular establishments close to it (also called the Kemalist elite) – and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), a pragmatic conservative party. This is embodied in the ongoing Ergenekon court case.[1] *This struggle can be seen as a normal development stemming from the nature of politics but, to a great extent, it serves as a gauge of the substantial change in Turkey's state building process, in which the rule of law has been often ignored by both actors. In other words, this clash is having a significant impact both on society and on politics, replacing old political and economic actors with new ones. Therefore, this article elaborates upon the dynamics and the actors involved in this clash, arguing that this conflict reflects the pain of the reconstruction of the political sphere at the hands of the state elite – or the establishment – and the new-born conservative elite. In this regard, the article analyses the different perspectives of these elites.*

Keywords*: Turkish nationalism, state secularism, state citizenship, state and political elites, military intervention, liberal democracy,* acquis communautaire, *conservative democracy*

The new public sphere: from the Empire to the 1997 post-modern coup d'état

The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, growing out of the ashes of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire following the National Independence War. The country's founding fathers sought to transform the Empire into a new nation state. In fact, the new nation state received some important political legacies of the Ottoman Empire, including the traumatic nationalism emerging after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The elite perceived the west and its 'collaborators' (i.e., the Christian minority) as being responsible for this collapse, yet they turned to the west as a role model in the country's progress.[2]

In fact, Turkish nationalism includes several features of eastern nationalism. As Chatarjee suggests, eastern nationalism, or post-colonial nationalism, consists of paradoxes in itself in that it both accepts the values of the west and simultaneously acts

1 Labelled as the 'case of the century', *Ergenekon* is the name given to the ultra-nationalist organisation that applies an unconventional politics, particularly political violence and the manipulation of the political and public spheres in Turkey, while maintaining strong ties to members of the country's military and security forces.

2 Dönmez, Özgür Rasim (2007) 'Nationalism in Turkey: Political Violence and Identity' *Ethnopolitics* 6(1): 48-50.

against it in a hostile manner. Eastern nationalism aims to transform the nation according to a model loosely based on the western model, but it also wants to preserve and distinguish itself from the reference model.[3]

However, such nationalism leads to strong consequences. Turkish nationalism was constructed based on a citizenship regime, making its Ottoman past the other component of its existence. In addition, nationalism was supported by secularism. The Kemalist elite were strongly influenced by western positivist philosophy which argued that religious thinking had to be replaced by scientific thinking. In other words, secularism is seen as the cardinal principle of being both western and modern.[4]

Hence, these two principles drew a sharp line between east and west; Muslim and Christian; Turk and non-Turk. Paradoxically, by drawing this line, it borrowed from the monist public sphere legacy of the Ottoman Empire. This perspective automatically brings forth a societal engineering perspective, thereby enabling the public sphere and a citizenship regime to gain the paramount role in this project.[5] In doing so, the state elite prioritised western modernity and imprisoned ethnic and religious differences into the private sphere, while confining the public sphere to 'Republicanism, secularism and rationalism'.[6]

Nationalism was the sole complementary element of these principles. The elite used cultural or territorial nationalism as a model. Mustafa Kemal was particularly influenced by Renan's definition of nationalism, which patterned nationalism on a citizenship regime. Common history and a will to live together were the paramount principles of this nationalism. However, Turkish nationalism naturally consisted of its own unique ethnic elements. Replacing Islam with nationalism in the young republic inevitably paved the way to filling this gap with an ethnic nationalism in which the Turkish population – lacking the feeling of membership of a nation – tried to reconstruct itself by inventing a collective myth, history and symbols. This perspective led to the continuation of the Ottoman Empire's minority regime legacy.[7] The regime tried to assimilate various non-Turkish Muslim ethnic and linguistic groups, but the vast majority of the population adhered to the Sunni-Hanafi form of Islam in the name of being Turk, accepting non-Muslims as a minority group in accordance with the Lausanne Treaty. However, non-Muslims have never been accepted as citizens and part of the nation; indeed, they were excluded from holding public office.[8] For example, the beliefs, rituals and symbols of Alevis – the second largest group within the Muslim community – were

3 Chatterjee, Partha (1986) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* Delhi: Zed Books, p. 38; see also Kadioglu, Ayşe (1999) *Cumhuriyet Iradesi Demokrasi Muhakemesi* (*The Republican Will and the Decision of Democracy*) Metis: Istanbul, p. 37.

4 Dönmez, Özgür Rasim (2003) *Europeanisation and Turkey* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter: Exeter, pp. 136-147.

5 *Ibid*.

6 Baban, Feyzi (2008) 'Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Kuruluşunda Vatandaşlık ve Kamusal Kimlikler' in Fuat Keyman (Ed.) *Aydınlanma, Türkiye ve Vatandaşlık*, Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi*:* İstanbul, p. 73.

7 *Ibid*. pp. 70-77.

8 See İçduygu, Ahmet ve Burak Ali Soner (2006) 'Turkish Minority Regime: Between Difference and Equality' *Middle Eastern Studies* 42(3): 447-468.

ignored until the 1990s.[9] Some groups within the Muslim population, such as Caferi and Alevis, also tried to assimilate into the Sunni Hanafi version of Islam.

Such a history makes two important points relating to the continuation of the Ottoman legacy of the country:

- Sunni Hanafi Islam played a cardinal role in the citizenship regime and in arranging the relationship between the public and the state spheres
- Turkish citizenship was defined against non-Muslims.

The role of the state in society was also transmitted from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish state, in which the state had an apparent dominance over society and did not let society dictate politics. Politics was monopolised by the elites. Unlike their western counterparts, the Kemalist elite kept the legal framework of the state–society relationship vague. The bureaucratic and political identification of the sole ruling party, the Republican's People Party (CHP), with the state bureaucracy led the state to become the sole actor in public life. This situation corresponded with the Republican ideal of 'the legitimacy of the state constructed by the will of the nation', which helped to reinforce the hegemony of the state in the public sphere and to make the state ideologically the sole representative of the nation. Statism in the economy literally strengthens this fact. The elite tried to preserve the state's hegemony by means of a 'state of emergency' patterned on the requisite of modernising and westernising the nation and the public sphere. The state elites perceived the citizens as 'agents' of the new nation rather than individuals having their own rights; such an understanding can be perceived as the continuance of the Ottoman Empire's patrimonial state legacy. Yet, this perspective based the citizenship regime on ultimate antagonisms such as west-east, centre-periphery, Islam-secularism, Turk-non-Turk and democracy-security paradigms, which brought instability to Turkish politics.[10]

The centre-periphery framework provides an important tool for explaining this antagonism in Turkish politics. This paramount instrument identifies an organised state elite bearing nationalist, orientalist and laicist characteristics against a periphery which encompasses suburbanised classes that identify with traditional values.[11] However, Turkey's integration into a market economy and the 1950 market reforms displaced the rural masses and led to a migration to the big cities, thereby accelerating politics and involving the masses in the public sphere without, however, letting them engage in politics. In addition, the transformation of a single-party system into multi-party politics relatively strengthened both the political sphere and society against the state elite.[12]

However, Turkey's state elite – particularly the military – had not been keen on losing its monopoly in the public sphere. This gave the state elite power over the pol-

9 Baban, Feyzi (2008) *op. cit*. pp. 75-77.

10 Baban, Feyzi (2008), *op. cit*. pp. 70-71; 77-79.

11 Dönmez, Özgür Rasim (2010) 'The Justice and the Development Party Between Islam and Modernity' *Religion Compass* 4(6): 367; Tanıyıcı, Şaban (2003) 'Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey: Islamist Welfare Party and Pro-EU Turn' *Party Politics* 9(4): 463-83.

12 See Çarkoğlu, Ali & Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2009) *The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

itical elite. The four military interventions – in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997 – nurtured the importance of the state elite, and the military in particular gained important exit guarantees that strengthened its role in the democratic regime. Following Ozbudun, we can categorise these guarantees under four headings: tutelary powers; reserved domains; the irreversibility of the actions of the military regime; and amnesty of indemnity laws.[13]

The first concept focuses on creating certain tutelary powers for the military over the policies of the freely-elected government. Samuel Valenzuela puts it thus:

> Such powers involve exercising broad oversight of the government and its policy decisions while claiming to represent the vaguely formulated fundamental and enduring interests of the nation-state.[14]

Many of the provisions of the 1982 constitution were prepared by the military-dominated constituent assembly, promoting the state's territorial and national integrity as well as the modernising reforms of Kemal Ataturk. The 1961 Turkish constitution, enacted after the 1960 military intervention, created a National Security Council. Under Article 111 of the constitution, the Council was formed from ministers, to be determined by the law; the chief of the general staff; and representatives of the forces chaired by the President of the Republic. The Council had the power to propose its basic views to the Council of Ministers in making decisions and ensuring the co-ordination of national security.[15]

The 1982 constitution, following the 1980 intervention, intensified the constitutional status of the National Security Council. According to the new formulation, the council was composed of the Prime Minister; the Chief of the General Staff; the ministers of national defence, the interior and foreign affairs; the commanders of the army, navy and the air force; and the general commander of the gendarme; with the chair being the President of the Republic. The National Security Council was, as in the 1961 constitution, designed to submit to the Council of Ministers its views in making decisions regarding the formulation, determination and implementation of the national security policy of the state.

However, Article 2 of the constitution defines national security in significantly broader terms:

> ... Protection of the constitutional order of the state, its national existence and its integrity of all fields consisting of political, social and cultural and economic interests; and of interests derived from international treaties against all external and internal threats.[16]

13 Özbudun, Ergun (2000) *Contemporary Turkish Politics* Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 106; see also Dönmez, Özgür Rasim (2003) *op. cit.* pp. 155-157.
14 Cited in Özbudun, Ergun (2000) *op. cit.* pp. 106-107.
15 *Ibid.* pp. 106-108.
16 *Ibid.* p. 108; Dönmez Özgür Rasim (2003) *op. cit.* p. 156.

The second exit guarantee of reserved domains refers to a high degree of military autonomy in certain policy areas. The 1971 and 1973 constitutional amendments increased military autonomy within the state apparatus. For example, Article 127 freed the armed forces from being audited by the Court of Accounts. According to Articles 21 and 32, the constitution was amended to allow military martial law courts to:

> Execute cases involving crimes committed at most three months prior to the declaration of a state of siege and to continue such trials until the end and even after the termination of the state of siege.[17]

Finally, state security courts were established to deal with crimes against the security of the state.

Military regimes often attempt to make certain actions irreversible, or difficult to reverse and the Turkish military regimes were no different. In the 1982 constitution, the National Security Council attempted to restructure the Turkish constitutional and legal system which regulated trade unions, the police, martial law, local governments and the Radio and Television Corporation. Following the example set by the 1961 constitution, the 1982 constitution ensured, by making constitutional amendments difficult, that such laws as were passed by the ruling military council could not be challenged for unconstitutionality; indeed, the presidential veto of constitutional amendments could only be superseded by a three-quarters majority of the full membership of parliament. Lastly, a cardinal exit guarantee for departing military regimes was provided by an amnesty law on crimes as well as human rights violations committed by leaders and officials of the regime: both the 1961 and 1982 constitutions protected members of the ruling military councils and members of government in that no legal action could be taken against them.[18]

Some of these exit guarantees and military legacies have, however, since been removed from the constitution. In the Ozal era (the post-1983 period), the relationship between the political and statist elites became more balanced, and civilian control over the military was achieved, to a certain extent, during these years.[19] However, a strong state tradition – reflecting the strength of the state elite – has been added to by a political elite which has been weak throughout history. Metin Heper and Fuat Keyman named this reality the *double-faced state*.[20] The writers claim that, with the exception of the 1961-65 and 1983-87 periods, the political elite did not put much effort into developing coherent and well-planned socio-economic policies, but rather responded to the demands of particular socio-economic issues. The result was that patronage politics have become institutionalised in Turkish politics after the 1950s.[21]

17 *Ibid*. p. 111.
18 *Ibid*. pp. 114-116.
19 See Evin, Ahmet (1994) '*Demilitarization and Civilianization of the Regime*' in Martin Heper & Evin Ahmet (Eds.) *Politics In The Turkish Republic* Colorado-Oxford: Westview Press.
20 Heper, Metin & Fuat Keyman (1998) 'Double-Faced State: Political Patronage and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey' *Middle Eastern Studies* 34(4): 259.
21 *Ibid*.

Turkey's integration into the global economy strengthened civil society in Turkey after the 1980s and made identity and recognition politics visible in the public sphere. The rising power of Islamist and Kurdish nationalists, as well as Alevis, in the public sphere led them to find 'safe havens' there, positioning themselves against both each other and the state in an antagonistic way. The rising of the Islamist politic embodied itself in the victory of the Welfare Party (RP) as a ruling party in 1995, while the transformation of Kurdish ethno-nationalist demands into ethnic terrorism, led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terror organisation, led the elite to take precautionary measurements against these identity movements.

On 27 February 1997, a 'post-modern coup' was executed against the RP. The military initiated a campaign, supported by the mainstream media and certain civil society groups, to compel the resignation of the coalition government composed of RP and the centre-right True Path Party; the RP was subsequently disbanded by a decision of the constitutional court. The National Security Council (NSC) ultimately came to control the media, universities and civil society organisations. In addition, Turkish security forces, which had been accelerating their military operations against the PKK since 1994, captured Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK terror organisation, in 1998 in Kenya, nearly bringing the organisation to its demise. The 1997 coup and the capture of Öcalan enabled the state elite once again to re-build its monopoly in both the public and political spheres.

AKP – the new-born traditional representatives of the periphery: the struggle against the Kemalist elite through liberal democracy

The victory of the state elite in curbing Islamist and Kurdish movements proved to be the foundation of a victory for the antagonistic politics of the state elite and in maintaining its monopoly in both public and political spheres. However, this victory did not continue for long, as the 2001 economic crisis revealed that military intervention had prevented the elite from forming a strong legitimacy in the political sphere. The coalition government – formed by the pro-nationalist National Action Party (MHP); left-wing pro-nationalists, the Democratic Left Party (DSP); and the liberal right-wing Motherland Party (ANAP) – was demolished.

However, the paramount event that left its mark in 2000 was the process of legislating for the *acquis communautaire*, which sped up the process of democratisation in the country. In February, March and August 2002, several changes were realised in the criminal and the civil law. For example, the right to establish civil society associations and organisations was expanded and the death penalty was abandoned except in the case of treason and during periods of a state of emergency. In addition, a new law was enacted to allow broadcasts in different languages – the target was the Kurdish language – and in accents other than Turkish. Efforts were also made to open language courses under the administration of the Ministry of Education.[22]

22 Soyarık, Şentürk Nalan (2008) 'Türkiye'de Vatandaşlık: Anayasal ve Yasal Düzenlemeler Işığında Bir İnceleme' in Fuat Keyman (Ed.) *Aydınlanma, Türkiye ve Vatandaşlık* Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi*:* İstanbul, p. 35.

Between 1998 and 2000, reformists in the Islamist Welfare (RP) and Virtue (FP) Party demanded the renewal of the party's leadership, ideology and public image, and requested the compromise of the party with secularism, state and western institutions and values. This ideological and administrative cleavage resulted in young members splitting from the party and setting up the AKP.[23] AKP's victory in the October 2002 elections, which promoted an Islamist legacy, heralded a new era in Turkish politics. AKP stated that its ideology was 'conservative democracy', thereby distancing itself from the legacy of political Islam. This choice created some suspicion about the party's sincerity but, to a great extent, it complied with its policies and discourse despite stressing its Islamic values. Some AKP policies corresponded profoundly with Islamism, such as the abolition of drug licences for some pubs and bars and instilling some Islamic values and concepts in the primary school curriculum. Paradoxically, to a certain degree, the AKP's rhetoric and policies revealed the party's mindset to be one which combined western modernity with Islam. However, from the periphery, the AKP perceived the patterns of democratic conservatism as a means of eliminating the gap between state and society by uniting its constituency with the centre, which can be likened to Gramsci's understanding of counter-hegemony. Nevertheless, it is incontrovertible that, in Turkish politics, Islamic and Republican secularism are not separate worlds.[24]

This perspective corresponded with the post-Cold War period – particularly the post-9/11 era – which had drastic effects on the geo-politics of the west. Ultimately, it strengthened the discourse of liberal democracy and human rights, while leading towards making states 'open societies'.[25] The old classical geo-political framework of the post-Cold War, which was predominantly based on tight security, ultimately ended for the west which, however, could not find a place for Turkey in the new architecture. The Kemalist elite did not accept this understanding and continued to define itself within western geo-politics. However, the global geo-political framework thereafter began to define a new civilisational paradigm in which the west, particularly the US under the Bush government, chose to work with a moderate Islamic identity, or conservative democratic AKP government, rather than the radical secularist statist elite as a means of bringing Turkey under the rule of the AKP government and, as such, creating a role model in the Islamic world.[26]

However, prior to the Bush government, the Clinton government had co-operated with Turkey. In the post-Cold War period, given the intensification of the US's open society efforts, the Clinton government chose to work with bourgeois and 'moderate Islamists', such as the AKP's cadres. Washington preferred to continue its relationship with the military on the basis of European Security and Defense Politics (ESDP), and indicated that it would not tolerate any action outside the democratic context. Conse-

23 Dağı, İhsan (2005) 'Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization' *Turkish Studies* 6(1): 29-30.

24 Dönmez, Özgür Rasim (2010) *op. cit.* pp. 365-367.

25 Ikechi Mgbeoji (2006) 'The Civilised Self and the Barbaric Other: Imperial Delusions of Order and the Challenges of Human Security' *Third World Quarterly* 27(5): 85.

26 See İlhan Uzgel (2004) 'Ordu Dış Politikanın Neresinde' in İnsel, Ahmet and Ali Bayramoğlu (Eds.) *Bir Zümre, Bir Parti Türkiye'de Ordu* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 312-317.

quently, after the 2002 elections, AKP manoeuvred to establish alliances with economic players such as TUSIAD, liberals, left-wingers and Kurds in order to break the hegemony of the state elite in state and civil society in order to receive legitimacy from both society and the west.[27]

AKP had internalised the parameters of Kemalism, but its interpretation of these patterns differs from that of the secular establishment. Consequently, the patterns of ideology, legitimacy and religious and societal values, as well as efforts to combine its conservative identity with modernity, are reinterpreted differently as a counter-hegemonic tool against the central elites.[28]

The two patterns of conservative democracy – political legitimacy and prioritised moral values – form profound instruments for the AKP in achieving counter-hegemony against the secular establishment: namely, the centre. This situation stems primarily from the impact of globalisation on Turkey; however, the two are built through electoral victories, thereby establishing conservative or Islamic capital with the help of Islamic and conservative networks.

AKP's 2002 victory was not a coincidence. In fact, its roots can be traced back to the initiation of market-driven economic policies in 1980. Along with the continuation of the liberalisation programme, the newly-rising middle class began to seek a new political establishment that could better represent its interests. By discarding the import substitution policies of the 1970s, economic comfort zones were lost to market competition, which increased the level of migration from rural to urban areas. A second consequence was the augmentation of informal markets that did not accommodate official record-keeping or welfare networks. The family was a cardinal security network found in the cities while other primordial or parochial ties were apparent in shanty-town areas. The non-existence of a significant merit-based welfare system made these areas vulnerable. Over time, the family was slowly replaced by different charity networks, generally connected with the conservative right or with Islamic networks – particularly Islamic sects. These ideological tendencies were supported by functional networks of patronage that also provided some social and economic relief for these masses. The parties of the old centrist establishment were unable to meet this challenge or to respond effectively to the growing demands; the results were evident in the collapse of such parties in the 2002 election.[29]

Thus, the AKP victory in 2002 was not a beginning; rather, it resulted from the domestic and international conditions which had been having an impact on Turkey since the 1980s. However, after the 2002 election, the AKP showed itself to be the party that had given legitimacy to the masses in order to maintain hegemony against the central establishment. The AKP defined itself as 'the will of the nation' – a phrase used by central right parties since the establishment of the Turkish republic and an image

27 *Ibid*.

28 Yavuz, Hakan (2006) 'Introduction: The Role of the New Bourgeoisie in the Transformation of the Islamic Movement' in: Yavuz, M. H. (Ed.) *The Emergence of New Turkey* Utah: Utah Press, p. 8.

29 Çarkoğlu, Ali and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2009) *op. cit*. p. 146; see also Dönmez, Rasim Özgür (2010) *op. cit*. p. 168.

embodied in the charismatic figure of the party, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In order to retain its legitimacy, the AKP criticised and redefined the central establishment's understanding of the nation-state: firstly, even though the AKP garnered votes from every section of society, it stressed that it represents the cultural values of the periphery;[30] and, secondly, the AKP reformulated its liberal American perspective, criticising state-centred nationalism and elevating civil society over the state so as to guarantee social solidarity by establishing an ethical basis.[31]

Essentially, the AKP's cadre and supporters came from these movements. Neither the AKP nor the Islamist circles in Turkey perceived the state as the sole, or even the most important, player in civil society or the political sphere; rather, it was an instrument with which to preserve the Muslim lifestyle. It should enhance this aspect in the public sphere as an alternative to social organisations, such as Islamic sects. The AKP believed that the state-centred nation-state and its ideology of nationalism via 'assertive secularism' had their disadvantages regarding the unification of the country, almost one-quarter of which was populated by Kurds. In this regard, the party used religion as well as moral and cultural values: it saw religion as a socio-political entity that perceived Islam as an asset of civil society and as an instrument to control the public sphere.

Thus, the party saw the state as a necessary instrument for creating opportunities for the masses in general, and for Islamists and conservatives in particular, while reinforcing their lifestyles and the Islamic constructs of civil society.[32] For example, in the discussions about the amendment of a new constitution in 2007, the party deliberately confined the constitution proposal to liberating the veil in universities, which created tension between the secular elites and the AKP. Another tension emerged in the presidential elections in 2006, since the military did want to allow Abdullah Gül, the second name of the party, to enter the presidential elections because his wife wore a veil, indicating a break in the secular tradition of the state. This resulted in a militaristic note to the government.

The AKP reinforced its strength *vis-à-vis* the centrist, or Kemalist, establishment by opening the state's resources to these Islamist and conservative organisations, including MUSIAD, and fully supporting them by employing societal engineering projects to transform society to a conservative mindset. This might have strengthened conservative and Islamist capital in the free market against the centralist establishment, but it also broke the hegemony of the state elite. The party has further inculcated a conservative ideology among society, not only through state institutions, such as the Radio Television Supreme Council (which controls programming content) and the National Ministry of Education, but also through direct media ownership by Islamists such as Samanyolu, Channel 7 and conservative conglomerates (e.g. ATV and Kanal Türk).

30 Dönmez, Rasim Özgür (2010) *op. cit.* p. 369..
31 Cosar, S (2004) 'Liberal Thought and Democracy in Turkey' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9(1): 86-87.
32 See Yavuz Hakan (2006) *op. cit.*

According to Nilüfer Göle (2009: 192), this situation reflects an effort to internalise modernity without denying traditional Islamic and national values.[33] Hence, the free market economy becomes both a stimulus mechanism in attaching Turkey to the west (i.e. Europe), as well as an instrument used to separate its culture from the west. Hence, the free market economy signifies universal values for conservative democrats while its function aims at the achievement of 'civilisation' by protecting traditional values; in other words, conservative democrats have created alternative modernities. However, these 'alternative modernities' cannot be reconciled with each other, nor can the two sectors – the central and the peripheral establishment – try to impose their lifestyles on each other via societal pressure, which is conceptualised as 'neighbourhood pressure' by Şerif Mardin.[34] The safe havens of these establishments offered no room to the other side to persist in its lifestyle.

Kemalism's radical perspective to forbid the symbols of sub-identities was distorted by the entry of conservatives and Islamists into the public and state spheres by their power in the market economy, and as a result of the negative understanding by the AKP of liberty, thereby elevating civil society over the state. For example, in 2007 AKP opened the state television channel Channel Şeş, which broadcasts in Kurdish, offering the first recognition of the Kurdish identity by the state since the establishment of the republic. This was further supported in the policy of the Party to open up to Kurdish and Alevi influences, which required the state to find peaceful and democratic solutions in recognition of Alevi and Kurds. However, these policies are realised not only through domestic dynamics but also by the foreign policy of the Party in assisting AKP cadres to do so.

The domestic politics of the AKP have been further boosted by its international political perspective: that Turkey should act assertively and create its own axis. In this foreign policy consideration, the AKP supports multilateral agreements but offers zero tolerance for conflicts with neighbours. As such, maintaining relations with the EU and the west is a must for two reasons: first, Turkey's place in the European Union and in the western community would enable it to bridge the Islamic world and the west, which would give Turkey immense geopolitical power; and, secondly, Turkey's place in the west and its acceptance of liberal democracy have led to democratisation in Turkey, breaking the power of the centralist elite and the strong role of the state in conducting the public and the political sphere. In this sense, the international understanding of the AKP overlaps with the Party's use of domestic politics to strengthen democratisation and create a space for itself as well as Muslim and non-Muslim minorities.[35]

In this regard, the AKP has tried to change the state's elite mentality in terms of the governance of the state. First, the party has changed the nationalist understanding of a

33 Göle, Nilüfer (2009*) İç İçe Girişler: Islam ve Avrupa (Interpenetrations: Islam and Europe)* İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, p. 192.

34 Mardin, Şerif (2008) 'Türkiye Ne Malezya Olur Diyebilirim Ne de Olmaz' *Hürriyet* 16 September 2007, available at http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=7297050&p=2 [last accessed on 20 October 2008].

35 Öniş, Ziya (2009) 'Conservative Globalism at the Crossroads: The Justice and Development Party and Thorny Path to Democratic Consolidation in Turkey' *Mediterranean Politics* 14(1): 33.

state elite that had perceived the state as the catalyser and sole actor in disseminating national values to society. Instead, the AKP implies a civic nationalism and is supportive of an American type of secularism under which the state should be objective to all religions. Secondly, with the help of its foreign policy understanding and policies – particularly its 'zero tolerance to neighbours' philosophy – the ruling party took over the security apparatus from the Kemalist elite, thereby boosting the position of the central establishment in both the political and public spheres, enabling it easily to intervene in these spaces in the name of controlling 'the domestic and the international enemy'. Cizre and Walker argue that:

> The power and privileges of the Turkish armed forces stem from two sources. First, the TAF bears the torch of the state ideology (called Kemalism or Ataturkism after the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk), the most unfailing tenet of which is secularism, which forms the basis for the priorities and values of Turkish public life... Second, the TAF's unchallenged control in defining and deciding what constitutes security or threats to the nation, built up over the last half century, serves to promote its own legitimacy and to perpetuate its own veto power in politics.[36]

In this way, the AKP ultimately produced a politics from a hard security perspective, or a 'state of emergency'. These two principles inhibited the state elite's instruments in the public sphere and brought relative democratisation and liberalisation to the country, transforming politics in both the political and the public spheres from an antagonistic to an agnostic politics.

On the other hand, even though the Party seems to have democratised and liberalised the public and the political spheres in order to gain popular support from society in the struggle against the statist elite, the AKP has sought a paradoxical policy in that it has tried to fill the ideological gap by promoting conservativism – i.e. Islamic and traditional values – to society. The Party has tried to disseminate a conservative mindset through Islamic sects and philanthropic associations in civil society, but it has also tried to control the public sphere by means of state institutions such as the Radio and Television Supreme Council and the General Directorate of Family and the Social Survey. In other words, the AKP, like the statist elite, has focused efforts on controlling the public sphere by imposing conservative values through philanthropic associations and state institutions. Therefore, the Party has controlled the public and the political sphere by replacing the content of the 'state of emergency' with morality. The Party has defined the state of emergency in two ways. First, it is defined as 'domestic enemies who prevent democratisation and democracy': enemies which are concretely statist elites who erect obstacles to the AKP and its policies.[37] In the second definition, 'enemies' are those who do not follow tradition and Islamic values and who thus have the potential to lessen

36 Cizre, Ümit and Joshua Walker (2010) 'Conceiving the New Turkey After Ergenekon' *The International Spectator* 45(1): 93.

37 The AKP's Kahramanmaraş MP proclaimed that the Kemalist elite would no longer open files for citizens perceived as a 'threat' to the party; 'Şimdi Biz Onları Fişliyoruz' *Hurriyet* 7 June 2010: available online at: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/13858497.asp.

the unity of Turkish society.[38] For example, police officers have imposed penalties on transsexuals walking on the street in Istanbul. This brings doubt to secular sectors of society and the statist elite regarding whether the AKP has a hidden agenda to Islamise society and the state.

These perspectives have led to a power struggle between the old and the new elite – namely, Kemalists and the conservative elite. The state elite has tried to preserve its privileges and commanding position, while the AKP has prioritised the extension of liberalisation and the democratisation of the political sphere in order to obtain legitimacy from society *vis-à-vis* the statist elite. This clash is vividly evident in a number of cases. For example, in April 2007, parliament voted to elect the AKP government's foreign minister Abdullah Gül as President of the country. However, the military issued an ultimatum on its website, threatening to intervene in Gül's Presidency on the premise that his wife wears a headscarf, which is considered by the Kemalist elite to be in opposition to the secular regime. In March 2008, the prosecutor general of the Constitutional Court attempted to close down the Party after the 22 July 2007 general elections on the premise that it had attempted to bring Shari'a to the country.

According to Walker and Cizre, the AKP leadership has not followed the classical agenda of the former political parties as being compromised with the Turkish armed forces.[39] Rather, it has engaged in democratic control of the armed forces and has put forward additional reforms to arrange laws in line with the European Union *acquis communautaire*. Cizre and Walker put it thus:

> As a result, for example, the government, in a long overdue act of defiance, passed a law clearing the way, for the first time in the republic's history, for the prosecution and trial of officers who commit crimes in civilian spheres – thereby, the judicial autonomy of the military. This represents a critical setback for the military institution, in terms of its political role and social prestige, and carries the potential to alter radically the contours of its existence.[40]

The Ergenekon case, above all, gave the government an instrument to force the military to share its power with the Party and compelled the military not to be vividly visible in the political sphere. However, it is likely that this conflict will continue in the foreseeable future, serving as a rebirth pang in the formation of a new political sphere in Turkish politics.

Conclusion

Turkey's founding elites put forth a modernisation dream of monopolising the public sphere; yet this dream has been eroded after the 1950s as a result of the penetration of the peripheral elites. The integration of the country into the global economic system

38 Kahraman, Hasan Bülent (2010) 'Bayramda Baklava Yiyen Türktür' *Radikal Kitap*, 5 March 2010: available online at: http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetay&ArticleID=983530&CategoryID=40.

39 Cizre, Ümit and Joshua Walker (2010) *op. cit*. pp. 94-95.

40 *Ibid*. p. 95.

has led to the growth of a new middle class migrating from rural to urban areas since the 1980s, paving the way to gain strength in the political sphere. These newborn elites challenged the statist elite under the political Islamic ideology in the 1980s by means of various parties, such as the Welfare Party (RP), the Virtue Party (FP) and the Felicity Party (SP). However, following the 28 February 1997 *coup d'état*, Islamist reformists (RP and FP) requested a change in the party's leadership, ideology and public image, demanding that the party comprise with secularism as well as with state and western institutions and values. This ideological and administrative cleavage led young members to split from the party and set up the AKP.

With the changing nature of global politics, particularly in the post-9/11 era, the Party has adapted to the civilisational paradigm of the new geo-politics, using this opportunity to provide legitimacy with regard to the west in the name of compromising liberal democracy and a free market economy with Islam and traditional values – namely, conservative democracy. Conservative elites' perspective is, to a great extent, different than the perspective of state elites in that they do not look at politics from the security perspective and think that the state should be neutral to all religions. These new elites have opposed state-centred nationalism and lifted civil society above the state to guarantee social solidarity by establishing an ethical basis. With profound support from society, the structure of the state and civil society relationship started to change, which has attracted opposition, suspicion and anger among the state elite and the secular, urbanised middle classes of society. These actors – the central elite and the new conservative elite – began to clash with each other as their perspectives on the philosophy of the state differed. The statist elite perceives politics from the perspective of a state of emergency and stresses state-centred nationalism, which is a strong obstacle to democracy and democratisation; whereas the AKP elite perceives domestic enemies which prevent democratisation and democracy as concretely statist elites who erect obstacles to the AKP and its policies. They further define 'enemies' as those who do not follow traditions and Islamic values and who thus have the potential of lessening the unity of Turkish society.

The elite conflict has created relative freedom in society, neither actor seeming genuinely to bring democracy: they clash on the essential patterns of the state ideology. In other words, their clash is patterned on the remaking of the state and in redefining the content of the nation and their relationship. Thus, the future should lead to the birth of a new Turkey.