TURKEY’S DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE:
AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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Washington, D.C.
April 4, 2012
ABSTRACT

The development of democratic political intuitions and a culture of democracy have proven unsuccessful in nearly all Muslim countries with very few notable exceptions. Turkey is one of these exceptional cases. Turkey’s unique democratic experience is attributable to several internal and external factors. The most significant internal factors are: the legacy of the Ottoman Era; a secular ethos; and a strong military as the guardian of the secular character of the Turkish Republic. Most notably, among the external factors are: the Ottoman Empire’s proximity to Europe and interactions through the European State System; membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and special relations with the European Union (EU). This Thesis is an analysis of how these factors have contributed to Turkey’s success in building a relatively democratic political system.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................. ii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1
CHAPTER 2: THE LEGACY OF THE LATE OTTOMAN ERA ............... 3
CHAPTER 3: THE KEMALIST SECULAR ETHOS ....................... 14
CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY .......................... 30
CHAPTER 5: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE’S PROXIMITY TO EUROPE AND INTERACTIONS THROUGH THE EUROPEAN STATE SYSTEM .... 52
CHAPTER 6: NATO MEMBERSHIP ..................................... 58
CHAPTER 7: TURKEY’S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU ... 66
CHAPTER 8: THE UNFINISHED PROCESS OF DEMOCRACY ........... 73
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION ............................................. 80
BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................ 85
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The development of democratic political intuitions and a culture of democracy have proven unsuccessful in nearly all Muslim countries with very few notable exceptions. The Turkish Republic, established in 1923, is one of these exceptional cases. Unlike many other Muslim states, such as Iran, Iraq and Egypt, Turkey has avoided revolution, and other severe political upheavals. On the contrary, over the last nine decades, Turkey’s democratic institutions have grown stronger. Turkey has even succeeded in absorbing Islamist movements into its political institutions, as reflected in the victory of the moderate Islamist party Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), translated to “Justice and Development Party,” in 2002.

Therefore, the question that arises is why Turkey has succeeded, albeit still not completely, where other Muslim states have failed. The primary objective of this Thesis is to examine the reasons for Turkish success in building a relatively democratic political system. The main argument of this Thesis is that a number of specific factors have contributed to the success of Turkey’s democratic
experience. These factors can be divided into two categories: internal and external.

The most significant internal factors are the following:

1. the legacy of the Ottoman Era;
2. the Kemalist secular ethos; and
3. a strong military as the guardian of the secular character of the Turkish Republic.

Among the external factors the following standout:

1. the Ottoman Empire’s proximity to Europe and interactions through the European State System;
2. Turkey’s membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and
3. Turkey’s special relations with the European Union (EU).

What follows is an analysis of how these factors have contributed to Turkey’s success in building a relatively democratic political system.
CHAPTER 2:

THE LEGACY OF THE LATE OTTOMAN ERA

The Ottoman Empire’s geographic proximity and cultural ties to Europe exposed the Empire to European intellectual influences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. New ideas from the European Enlightenment, such as nationalism, secularism, democracy, and popular sovereignty, began flowing into the Empire through embassies and academia.¹ The promise of these ideas created an internal demand for reforms in the Empire’s Ottoman governing institutions based on European models. However, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were also a time of stagnation and decline within the Ottoman Empire. The decline of the Ottoman Empire created a significant power disparity with its European counterparts which led to its military defeats at the hands of more superior European armies. This factor further contributed to a realization of the necessity for reform which ushered in the modernization and reform era known as the Tanzimat.²

Military Reforms


² Ibid., 13-15.
Military reforms led to modernization of the military and infrastructure in the early nineteenth century. The Empire invested in modern military equipment and sent Ottoman officers to be educated in modern military tactics by European militaries. Military reforms later contributed to modernization of infrastructure which focused on telegraph and railroads to connect the Military in the vast regions of the Empire. The telegraph network was also used to communicate with foreign governments, the Empire sent Ottoman civil servants to Europe for language training to ensure they were well versed in European languages as translators.

While training in Europe, the Ottoman military officers and Ottoman civil servants were exposed to European political progress through democratic ideals such as representative government and secularism. Many of these European-educated Ottoman military officers and Ottoman civil servants embraced the modernizing ideas and spread them throughout the Empire when they returned. Consequently,

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4 Ibid., 72.

5 Ibid., 184.

6 Ibid., 185.

7 Ibid., 83.
modernizing ideas, such as nationalism, secularism pluralism and popular sovereignty spread throughout the Empire. These ideas were further spread and embraced through subsequent educational reforms.

**Educational Reforms**

Tanzimat educational reforms contributed to the modernization of the Ottoman education institutions.⁸ Prior to the Tanzimat period, religious curriculums were taught in most Ottoman educational institutions, significantly limiting Ottoman intellectual progress. New secular educational institutions were created based on French education system and curriculums.⁹ The French curriculum included political philosophy and science.¹⁰ The history of the French Revolution can be found in secondary school text from this period.¹¹ Subsequently, the new Ottoman educational institutions organically spread European political philosophy throughout the Empire. New educational institutions also created opportunity for a new generation

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¹⁰ Ibid., 282.

of Ottomans to rise to prominence that demanded reforms to Ottoman legal reforms.

**Legal and Institutional Reforms**

The most important reforms were to the Ottoman legal and governing systems. Tanzimat reform and modernization efforts began in 1839 and culminated in 1878. The first legal reform of the Tanzimat era was the Rescript of the Rose Chamber, which granted non-Muslims full citizenship within the Empire in 1839. The Rescript also provided equal protection under law and repealed taxes for Non-Muslims. The Rescript reform was significantly influenced by European powers, as discussed in the chapter on external influences.

The Rescript was followed by later legal reforms secularizing reforms that limited the role of Islam in Ottoman law. The first legal reforms remodeled the Ottoman legal penal code based on the French model in 1840. These reforms partially secularized the penal code by limiting the role of Islamic jurisprudence. Legal reforms later extended

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12 Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 108.

13 Ibid., 106-107.

14 Ibid., 106.

15 Ibid., 109.

16 Ibid.
to the Ottoman commercial code in 1850, which created new financial opportunities for a group of Ottomans known as the Young Ottomans.\textsuperscript{17,18} The prominence of the Young Ottomans led to the creation of a movement to challenge the absolute rule of Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid. The Young Ottomans achieved reforms to the Sultan’s absolute rule with the creation of the first Ottoman Constitution in 1876,\textsuperscript{19} ushering in the First Constitutional Era.

**The First Constitutional Era**

The Ottoman Constitution established the first Ottoman parliament to represent the interests of both Muslims and non-Muslim ethnic groups within the Empire in 1876.\textsuperscript{20} The empowerment of the parliament was the first Ottoman experience with a representative form of government and a departure from an absolute authority of the Sultan which previously existed for nearly six centuries.\textsuperscript{21} The authority of the first Ottoman parliament and Constitution was severely limited by Sultan Abdulhamid who was not satisfied with the limitations that parliament imposed on his absolute

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 150.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 106-111.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 151.
authority. Consequently, the first Ottoman experimentation was short-lived. As a result, the Ottoman parliament was blamed for the financial crisis and military defeats that plagued the Empire.

The end of the first constitutional experience led to Abdulhamid centralizing power increasingly to the Sultan. This process of centralization limited the authority of the Ottoman parliament. As a result, the first Ottoman parliament was not given the opportunity to accomplish any reforms of significance and was suspended by Sultan Abdulhamid in 1878. Nevertheless, the brief recognition of parliamentary representation was a power symbol of progress, and the suspension of the Ottoman parliament did not deter a new generation of Ottomans. Inspired by the Young Ottoman Movement, demands for the reinstatement of parliamentary representation grew in prominence under the Young Turk Movement.

The previous 20 years marked a period of sharp military decline for the Empire. The Empire’s Eastern European provincial holdings in Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro

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achieved independence from the Ottoman Empire. Military defeat left the Empire virtually bankrupt. Sultan Abdulhamid attempted to reunify the Empire through Islam and policies, known as Islamization, that repealed many of the reforms granted under the Tanzimat reforms.

**The Young Turk Movement**

By 1900, a new generation of educated elites, known as the Young Turks, rose to prominence in the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks began a movement to bring an end to the regression of Islamization and absolute power of the Sultan by reinstating the Ottoman Constitution and parliament. The membership of the Young Turk Movement included many members of Ottoman military. In 1904, influenced by the ideas of the European Enlightenment, the Young Turks published treaties on governance and proposed a policy of Pan-Turkism as an alternative to the Islamization. Pan-Turkism was based on the creation of a state that focused on the Turkish identity rather than on Ottoman or Islamic identity. For the previous six centuries, the Turkish character was defined by Islamic

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24 Ibid., 74–78.

25 Ibid., 183–207.

and Ottoman tradition; Pan-Turkism represented a fundamental shift in the political philosophy of the Ottoman reformers.

The Young Turks’ discontent with Sultan Abdulhamid boiled over in the summer of 1908. Ottoman military officers in the Young Turk Movement organized a revolt to reinstate the Ottoman Constitution and parliament. The army, alongside Muslims, Ethnic Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, marched in revolt on the Ottoman capital city, Constantinople. Out of fear that these protests would lead to dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdulhamid announced the reinstatement of the parliament on July 24, 1908, which ushered in the Second Constitutional Era.

**The Second Constitutional Era**

The second Ottoman parliamentary and constitutional era (1908-1918) lasted much longer than the first constitutional (1876-1878) era. In the spring of 1909, Sultan Abdulhamid organized a countercoup by mobilizing conservative Muslims throughout the remaining Empire and called for a reinstatement of Islamic rule. The countercoup was quickly put down by the Ottoman Military, and Sultan Abdulhamid was deposed and succeeded by Sultan Mehmet V, thereby giving the

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28 Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 206-209.

29 Ibid., 32-36.
Young Turks an opportunity to put democratic ideals into practice. The Ottoman parliament soon discovered the difficulties of governing an Empire that was deeply divided along ethnic lines. The 275-seat Ottoman parliament allowed representation for every ethnic group within the Empire.\(^ {30} \) The Turk contingent maintained the largest presence in parliament (142 seats), followed by Arabs (60 seats), Albanians (25 seats), Greeks (23 seats), and various other small ethnic groups.\(^ {31} \)

The first term was characterized by ideological division within the Turkish contingent. The division was over the treatment of non-ethnic Turks within the Empire. Liberals favored decentralized authority that granted some rights to non-ethnic Turks, whereas nationalists favored reserving all authority for Turks.\(^ {32} \) Those favoring centralization of authority for Turks formed the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) party which maintained a narrow majority in the new parliament.\(^ {33} \) Non-Turks were divided over political interests based on their ethnicities. The divisions within the Turkish contingent and non-ethnic Turk

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 378.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 213.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 213.
divides resulted in the Ottoman parliament not accomplishing much during its first term.

During its second term, the Ottoman parliament attempted to modernize and reform the Empire; however, there was no money to fund the modernization efforts. The parliament was financially crippled by a lack of tax revenue and high foreign debt. The lack of parliamentary action created a growing feeling among constituents that the Ottoman government was beyond repair by 1913. The following year, the Ottoman Empire entered World War I with the Central Powers. The Ottoman Empire suffered eventual defeat to the Allied Forces in 1918. Constantinople was occupied by Allied Forces in the summer of 1918. The failure of the Ottoman Empire to embrace modernization and reform resulted in the occupation of the Ottoman Empire. This was the final blow to a debt-ridden and ethnically divided Empire. The Young Turk vision of an independent Turkey was soon realized through the Turkish War for Independence.

**The Impact of Ottoman Legacy on Turkish Independence**

Ultimately, neither the Tanzimat reforms nor Ottoman parliament saved the Ottoman Empire. However, experiences gained during the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman parliament, and the Young Turk Movement influenced a national movement to establish an independent Turkish nation. The advances of

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34 Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire: 1908–1923*, 91.
European secular notions and the failures of the Ottoman Empire over the previous four decades generated a desire among many of the new elites to create an independent Turkey.\textsuperscript{35} The desire for a new secular and independent Turkey was realized under the leadership of an Ottoman military officer named Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In the summer of 1919, after the Empire’s defeat in World War I, Atatürk was in command of the majority of ground forces left in the Empire. Atatürk mobilized these forces in the Turkish War for Independence. Atatürk achieved independence for Turkey on July 24, 1923.\textsuperscript{36} Atatürk set forth in building a new Turkish Republic with foundations in secularism and modernization, rather than Ottoman traditions or Islam.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Jacob M. Landau, \textit{Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey} (Boston, MA: E. J. Brill Press, 1984), 48.

\textsuperscript{36} Lewis, \textit{The Emergence of Modern Turkey}, 254.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 257.
CHAPTER 3

THE SECULAR KEMALIST ETHOS

The Republic of Turkey was built on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. Atatürk, the founding father of Turkey, set forth in building a new Turkish republic based on secularism and modernization. He recognized that building a new secular and modern Turkey presented a formidable challenge to the future of the Republic. The identity of the majority of Turks was deeply rooted in the Islamic and Ottoman traditions of the past six centuries. The Kemalist ideology, with its basis in European secular principles, was the ideological foundation for a new Turkish national identity. Atatürk transformed the Turkish identity to a Kemalist ethos by pursuing secularizing reforms in order to diminish the influence of Islamic and Ottoman traditions. These shifted the focus of the identity of a fairly large number of Turks from Islam to Turkish nationalism and secular ethos. Rather than remove Islam from the Turkish identity, these reforms weakened it overtime. This shift eventually contributed to the success of Turkey’s democratic experience. The Kemalist ethos established a nationalist and secular identity earlier than other Muslim countries. The transformation to a Kemalist ethos occurred through the following:
1. the development of the Kemalist ideology; and
2. secularizing reforms.

In August of 1921, Atatürk said, “our point of view, which is populism, means that power, authority, sovereignty, administration should be given directly to the people, and should be kept in the hands of the people.” Atatürk maintained strong base of support within the Turkish elite after his successful war of independence. However, much of the pastoral rural populations of Turkey defined any notion of secularism as blasphemous to Islam. In 1923, these rural populations made up a majority of the new Turkish republic populace. This, in essence, created a political dichotomy that favored maintaining the traditions of the Ottoman past. Therefore, Atatürk had to institutionalize secularism through radical reforms designed to create a national character. A new political ideology called Kemalism was created to replace the Ottoman past.

**The Ideology of Kemalism**

The new Turkish nation was to be built upon the governing principles of the European Enlightenment. Atatürk, among others within the Turkish National Movement, were significantly influenced by the democratic principles of the European Enlightenment and served as the philosophical basis

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1 Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 256.

for the Kemalism. The primary objective of the Kemalist ideology was to create a secular Turkish nation-state guided specifically by educational and scientific progress. The ideology was based on six pillars: republicanism, secularism, nationalism, statism, revolutionism, and populism.

Each one of these pillars was chosen to address a failure in the government of the Ottoman Empire. Republicanism defined Turkey as a constitutional republic in which the people elected their representatives and sought to ensure popular sovereignty, which had been absent during the Ottoman era. Secularism sought to separate the religious establishment from that of the state. The Ottoman Empire was an outright theocracy. Atatürk and the other founders of the Republic wanted to ensure that this was not replicated in the new Republic. This was not necessarily a prohibition of Islam but rather an acknowledgement that Islam would not be a governing force within Turkey. Atatürk recognized the cultural value of Islam but strove to ensure that it would not usurp the will of the Turkish people. Nationalism

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4 Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 369.

5 Ibid., 403.
defined that the Turkish nation was comprised of people who were ethnically and culturally Turkish. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated after it could no longer maintain a cohesive identity through Islam. Atatürk recognized the need for a cohesive identity for the new Republic; however, the Turkish national identity, not Islam, would serve as a unifying force in the new Republic.  

There was widespread acknowledgement that the late Ottoman Empire had scientifically and technologically fallen behind the rest of Western Europe. Kemalist statism would ensure that this never occurred again. Statism gave the Turkish state authority over the economy. Atatürk believed that the state should control the economy and industry. Revolutionism was an outward manifestation of the desire to replace old institutions with modern ones. Finally, populism was recognition that the future of Turkey was self-determined by its citizens and by an absolute ruler.

**Secularizing Reforms**

From the onset, Atatürk, with his Kemalist ideology, was determined to create a state that was inherently different from the Ottoman Empire. First and foremost, the

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6 Ibid., 333-340.

7 Ibid., 469.

8 Ibid., 463.
new Republic was to be based on democratic ideals. However, some democratic ideals were suspended while establishing the Turkish republic. The majority of Turks still embraced the traditions from the past. To ensure that the legacy of the Ottoman Empire would no longer have a place in Turkish politics, Atatürk institutionalized a series of top-down reforms. Atatürk realized that instituting these reforms would have to be implemented with little consultation of those that still embraced the past. These reforms would focus on developing, removing, or outlawing Ottoman traditions, especially those based on Islam.

The first reform that Atatürk pursued after the creation of the Republic of Turkey was to disband the Office of the Caliphate. On March 3, 1924, the Grand National Assembly officially declared that the Caliphate no longer maintained authority over the Turkish people. This reform, as a practical matter, was of little significance. The Sultan and his family were already exiled from Turkey. The Sultan, the embodiment of the Caliphate, had lost all governing power in the Turkish War of Independence. However, this reform had profound significance symbolically because the Caliphate represented the political unification of all Muslims. The disbanding of this institution was a significant step toward secularism and a commitment to depart from the old ways of the Ottoman Empire.
The second major reform was the establishment of the Constitution of 1924. This Constitution established a representative government elected by the people popular. The first Eight Articles of the Constitution of 1924 defined the separation of powers within the Republic. The first article defined the Turkish state as a republic. Article Two identified the official language of the Turkish Nation as Turkish and the official religion as Islam. Article Three stated that sovereignty belonged to the people, without any restrictions. Article Four defined the Turkish legislative branch, named the Grand National Assembly, as the sole lawful representative of the nation and granted it sovereignty in the name of the nation. Article Five vested the Grand National Assembly with all legislative and executive powers. Article Six gave the Grand National Assembly the direct power of enacting law. Article Seven defined the President of the Republic as the intermediary of

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
executive power for the Grand National Assembly.\textsuperscript{14} The President would be elected by and voted upon by the Grand National Assembly. Finally, Article Eight defined judiciary power to be exercised by the independent tribunals and governed by the laws of the Grand National Assembly.\textsuperscript{15}

The foundations of both penal and civil code under the Ottoman Empire had its basis in Islamic jurisprudence, which created an obvious need for legal reforms. In 1926, Atatürk sought secular reform to the legal system in the newly formed Republic. On March 1, 1926, the Grand National Assembly ratified a new penal code based on the Italian penal code.\textsuperscript{16} On October 4, 1926, the Grand National Assembly ratified the new civil code based on the Swiss model.\textsuperscript{17} The Constitution and the secular penal and civil code severed as the secular legal foundation for Turkey. Atatürk recognized that reforms needed to extend beyond government into Turkish society. Atatürk believed that the removal of Islam from the public sphere was necessary to convert Turkish identity to Kemalist ethos. Therefore, Atatürk removed Islamic symbols

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\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 273.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
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in Turkish society through a process called "Turkification".\textsuperscript{18}

**Turkification**

The reforms of Turkification assisted in converting the Turkish identity to a Kemalist ethos through criminalizing the display of symbols of Islam in society. These social reforms outlawed any dress or institutions that were associated with the clerical class; they were an attempt to depart from the ways of the religious enlightenment and actively engage in positivism. The first of these societal reforms included the banning of turbans, fezes, and headscarves in public areas on November 25, 1925.\textsuperscript{19} This was followed by the closure of religious convents and dervish lodges on November 30, 1925.\textsuperscript{20} In 1934, these social reforms culminated with the abolishment of Ottoman family titles and the establishment of a family surname requirement for all citizens.\textsuperscript{21} The surname reforms sought to eliminate any association with the theocratic hierarchy that was established through family titles in the Ottoman Empire.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 219.

\textsuperscript{19} Dankwart Rustow, "Atatürk as Founder of a State," *Daedalus* 97, no. 3 (Summer 1968): 793-813.

\textsuperscript{20} Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 262-271.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 267-271.
Turkification might be perceived as undemocratic; however, Atatürk deemed it necessary to transform the Turkish identity.

**The Directorate of Religious Affairs**

In 1924, Atatürk created the Directorate of Religious Affairs to administer tight state control over Islam.\(^{22}\) The principles of secularism require religion and the state to be separate autonomous entities. Atatürk did not grant Islam autonomy in the new Republic, he created the Directorate of Religious Affairs to administratively control Islam could present to the state. Therefore, the Directorate of Religious Affairs did not separate the Islamic religious institutions form the state, but it did control these institutions to ensure they did not present a challenge to Kemalism.\(^{23}\) The official stated role of the Directorate of Religious Affairs was to administer the Islamic affairs, to enlighten society about Islam, and to govern Mosques.\(^{24}\) The unstated role of Directorate of Religious Affairs was to monitor Islamic education and ensure that it did not challenge the Kemalist ethos of Turkey.\(^{25}\) Atatürk did not

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\(^{22}\) Ibid., 48.

\(^{23}\) Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 48.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 49.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
believe that Islam should not play a role in Turkey, but rather he believed that religion should be controlled by the state.\(^{26}\)

**Very Limited Democracy: Single-Party Representation**

Perhaps, the most enduring reform that Atatürk institutionalized was the practice of single-party representation. In Atatürk’s eagerness to change Turkey, he did not encourage the development of a multi-party system which could delay some of his reforms which created a preference for single-party system. Obviously, this was not democratic, but nevertheless it introduces a limited form of party politics into Turkey. Atatürk’s political party, the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP), or the “Republican People’s Party,” was the sole political party in the Turkish Grand National Assembly for over 20 years from 1923 to 1945. The single-party representation of the Turkish republic was seen by Atatürk as a necessary measure to protect the young Republic because he feared that it was not yet strong enough to support multiple political parties. He assumed the formation of an alternative party would immediately draw the support of those who were seeking to undo secularism. His concerns were validated by two failed attempts at introducing a second party.

Early Challenges to the Kemalist Ethos

Atatürk attempted to secularize Turkey through the Kemalist ethos but Islamist influences still remained in Turkey. Occasionally, there were Islamist political efforts to challenge the Kemalist character of Turkey, such as alternative parties from 1923 to 1952.

The CHP was the sole representative party in the Turkish Grand National Assembly from 1923 to 1945 because Atatürk feared that the Republic was not strong enough to sustain a political system with two parties. Nevertheless, the first attempt to introduce an alternative party was the establishment of the Progressive Republican Party in 1924.\textsuperscript{27} The following year, the Progressive Republican Party was tied to an attempted rebellion to overthrow the Republic and reinstate Islamic rule in Eastern Turkey.\textsuperscript{28} The rebellion was put down, and the Progressive Republican Party was banned from politics.\textsuperscript{29}

The second attempt to introduce an alternative party was in the summer of 1930. Atatürk asked his political ally and confidant Ali Fethi Okyar to establish the Liberal

\textsuperscript{27} Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 275.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 266

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
Republican Party.\textsuperscript{30} Despite its secular charter, the Liberal Republican Party was infiltrated by Islamist and anti-Kemalist sympathizers who sought to undo Atatürk’s secular reforms. In November 1930, Ali Fethi Okyar disbanded the Liberal Republican Party just a few months after it had been established.\textsuperscript{31} Notwithstanding these two unsuccessful attempts at creating an alternative party, the CHP remained the sole political party without competition until 1945, thus giving Atatürk the political support in the Grand National Assembly required to actualize the radical reforms required to institutionalize Kemalism. The CHP existed as the single political party within Turkey until 1946.\textsuperscript{32}

**The Introduction of Mult-Party Politics**

Domestically, pressure arose from powerful constituent groups that grew tired of two decades of democracy without an alternative party to the CHP. Industrialists wanted an alternative to the state controlled economy of the CHP. Intellectuals sought greater freedom of speech and expression of their ideas. Turkish commoners sought a political alternative that more closely aligned with their

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 275.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 381.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 379.
traditional cultural values. In 1946, at the insistence of the United States (U.S.), Turkey embraced the notion of a multi-party system, which will be discussed in length in the external factors chapter. The introduction of a multi-party system significantly broadened the spectrum of political ideologies in Turkish politics. However, the introduction of these new ideologies posed a threat to the singularity of Kemalist character of the Republic.

In 1946, the Turkish government officially recognized the Demokrat Parti (DP), or the “Democratic Party,” as the only other legitimate alternative political party. The DP based its political platform in Kemalism and depicted its members as the “...voice of the peripheral and marginalized masses.” The DP’s political platform differed from the CHP on two major issues: The first issue was that the DP wanted to reform the statism control of the economy, which was institutionalized by the CHP in 1923, by increasing privatization of state-owned industry. The second issue was that the DP supported pluralism which was absent in the single-party period. In the 1950 election, the DP won 408 of

33 Yavuz, Islamic Political Identity in Turkey, 59.
34 Ibid., 60.
465 parliamentary seats and subsequently elected Adnan Menderes as the Prime Minister.35

Prior to the DP, the Grand National Assembly was dominated by the military and members of the government loyal to the CHP. The accession of the DP created a new class of political elites from smaller towns and provinces. Greater access to the political system for the marginalized masses and the promise of economic opportunity created a substantial amount of support for the DP. However, by 1955, support for the DP waned as the Turkish economy began to significantly falter, a result of the Prime Minister’s attention to military modernization rather than economic stability. Additionally, Prime Minster Menderes forcefully subdued opposition within his own party, drawing concern from the CHP.

As the sole opposition party to the CHP, the DP drew a diverse base of support from those that opposed Kemalism including Islamists. Therefore, the DP immediately became a bastion for voters with strong Islam religious and cultural ties to voice their politics. In exchange for their support, there was an unwritten expectation for political favors that

35 Ibid.
furthered these groups’ opposition to Kemalism. The DP was more tolerant of Islam and eased some of the cultural restrictions put in place by Atatürk; however, it certainly was not an Islamic political party. The leadership of the DP was supportive of Kemalist ideology, but the DP’s image as a voice for the marginalized massed meant that the majority of their grassroots following was decidedly anti-Kemalism. This juxtaposition dictated that, in order to maintain support among its base, the DP pursued confrontational policies with the CHP.

The DP’s confrontational polices sought to normalize strict secular laws against Islam put in place by Ataturk in the 1920s. The first attempt at normalizing the secular establishment was to reinstate the call to prayer in Arabic rather than Turkish. The call to prayer in Arabic had been outlawed since 1928. This modest attempt at repealing secular reforms was met with considerable animosity by the CHP. Meanwhile, this action was seen by Islamic sympathizers within the DP’s base as a sign of absolute support. Emboldened by this perceived support, factions of the DP began anti-Atatürk protests. These protests included the


38 Ibid., 62.
defacing of statues and other public symbols dedicated to Atatürk.\textsuperscript{39} The protests, in addition to the reinstatement of the call to prayer in Arabic, were met with a great deal of consternation from the CHP, which saw the DP’s actions as an attempt to unseat the sacred Kemalist ideology that Turkey was built upon. The DP leadership recognized that they needed to take action to counteract the perception that they were anti-secularist. In 1951, the DP passed legislation to criminalize defacing Atatürk’s legacy.\textsuperscript{40}

Throughout the 1950s, the DP continued a careful balancing act between the Islamist and the Kemalist. After a decade of DP economic policies, Turkey’s economic situation was dire in 1960. Confrontational policies, anti-Atatürk protests, and violent opposition of political challenges under Prime Minister Menderes had created a great deal of civil unrest and a tenuous political environment. The Kemalist ethos was in danger and soon required the Turkish military to intervene.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY

The role of the Turkish military as the custodians of secularism is an internal factor in the success of a Turkish democracy. Atatürk attempted to secularize Turkey through the Kemalist ethos, but Islamist influences still remained in Turkey. Atatürk was not completely successful in his attempt to secularize Turkey. Among the changes that Atatürk could not achieve were the elimination of the Islamist movements and their political influence. Occasionally, there were Islamist political efforts to challenge the Kemalist character of Turkey; however, the military confronted and removed Islamist challenges on several occasions. Consequently, this meant that to function within the new Turkish political system, the pro-Islamist required Islamists to embrace the Kemalist ethos. The military confronted several Islamist challenges to Kemalist ethos; it acted as the custodians of secularism on the following occasions:

1. the 1960 Coup d'état;
2. the 1971 Coup d'état;
3. the 1980 Coup d'état;
4. the 1997 Coup d'état; and
5. acceptance of Turkey’s secular character by the AKP.

The introduction of multi-party politics created a political opportunity for Islamists to challenge the Kemalist ethos. The DP, as the sole alternative party in
Turkish politics, attracted a strong base of support from Islamists. The DP attempted to appease its Islamist supporters by pursuing confrontational policies to reverse Atatürk’s secularizing reforms. The DP’s economic policies from 1951-1960 created a dire economic situation for Turkey. Confrontational policies, anti-Atatürk protests, and violent opposition caused many Turks to question if the DP had been subverted by Islamist. The Turkish military intervened in 1960 to protect the Kemalist character of Turkey.

**The Role of the Military: The 1960 Coup d'état**

The military’s fear that the Kemalist character of the Republic was at risk materialized on May 27, 1960, when senior generals within the Turkish military organized a coup d'état. In 1961, the military returned power to the politicians, but not before significantly influencing a new Constitution. The new Constitution embodied four new principles to preserve the Kemalist character of the Republic. The first principle limited the power of elected officials, specifically those who were opponents of Kemalism. The second principle increased the number of parties authorized to participate in the political system,

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thus diminishing the ability of a single party to create a majority based on an anti-Kemalist platform. The final principle empowered the Turkish military with the authority to remove political parties or movements that posed a threat to the Kemalist character of the Republic.

Specifically, the 1960 coup sent a powerful message to political parties that did not support the Kemalist character of Turkey. The authority of the Turkish military was embodied through a National Security Council, and the empowerment of the military through this new authority in the Turkish Constitution was a powerful deterrent that moderated future political movements. Consequently, the empowerment of the military created a forcing function for Islamist to embrace the Kemalist character of the Republic. Islamists that did not support the Kemalist character of the Republic were forcibly removed from the Turkish political system.

**The Emergence of Islamic Parties: Millî Nizam Partsi (The Party of National Order)**

 Atatürk’s reforms, did not, however, eliminate Islam’s influence from the Country. Consequently, as soon as the circumstances permitted, the more Islamicly oriented segments of the population also organized. In the late 1960s, the lack of economic development from westernization produced a new Islamist counter-ideology to Kemalism. In 1969, Necemettin Erbakan wrote his manifesto, Millî Görüş,
or the "National Vision." It promoted Islam as an alternative to westernization. Millî Görüş outlined a return to Turkish cultural values, namely Islam, would bring about a new era of prominence in Turkey. The ideas proposed in Millî Görüş had a powerful draw for those who had not reaped the benefits of Turkey’s attempts to modernize and led to the formation of a new political party in 1970 more closely associated with Islam. The Millî Nizam Partsi (MNP) party, translated as "National Order" or the "National Order Party," was led by Erbakan and maintained a small but extremely political influential following.

By 1970, the Adalet Partisi (AP), or "Justice Party," administered government was running into significant political and economic problems. These problems caused civil unrest throughout Turkey. Communist movements in Western Turkey used the political and economic problems as an opportunity to gain support. Radical Islamic groups were becoming increasingly troublesome and sometimes violent. The military determined that the Turkish Republic was in danger of falling into complete crisis. To bring stability to the

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3 M. Hakan Yavuz, Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 50.

disorder, the military administered another coup in March of 1971.⁵

**Role of the Military: The 1971 Coup d'état**

The Turkish military executed a coup in March of 1971 to take control of the government. The National Security Council considered the MNP to be supporters of the Islamic groups responsible for the actions of radical Islamic groups.⁶ Two months after the coup, the MNP was officially disbanded, and Erbakan was forced to flee to Europe to escape prosecution.⁷ For the following two years, the military controlled the government. The 1971 Coup confronted the Islamist threat in the MNP and removed them from politics. Political Islam returned in a moderated form due to the role of the military.

**Millî Selamet Partsi (The National Salvation Party)**

The military returned power to the civilian government in 1973. There was recognition among the military establishment that political Islam was a critical counter force to leftist ideologies. The recognition of Islam’s utility against leftist movements gave the Islamic political movement an opportunity for rebirth. In the summer of 1972, 


⁶ Ibid., 209.

⁷ Ibid., 210.
several generals from the National Security Council sought allies of Erbakan to reestablish a political party for Islamists. The new party was the Millî Selamet Partsi (MSP), or “National Salvation Party.” In 1973, Erbakan returned to Turkey to become the MSP chairman.

The MSP significantly moderated its conservative Islamist rhetoric in comparison to the MNP. This moderation was due in large part to the omnipresent threat of interference from the National Security Council. The MSP adopted a more Turkish nationalistic tone while maintaining its loyalty towards Islam. The platform of the MSP was a call to retuning to a Muslim way of life. For the MSP, this was the only way for Turkey to return to prosperity. The MSP also directly confronted the westernization of Turkey. The MSP demanded that Turkey rebuke the West and focus internally to industrialize and create a strong nation, rooted in Islam, in order to lead the rest of the Muslim world. The MSP platform was a reorientation toward the Turkish-Islamic character; it became an instant coalescing force for disparate Islamic movements, and so the MSP won

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8 Ibid., 212.

twelve percent of the vote in the 1973 Turkish elections. Notably, the majority of the support for the MSP came from the rural areas of Turkey.

The AP suffered a significant defeat in the elections of 1973 after the military returned power to the civilian government. Their support dropped from 46.5 percent of the vote in 1969 to 29.8 percent in 1973. In the view of many voters, the AP had been complicit in the military coup. This dramatic drop in the popularity resulted in the formation of an unlikely coalition government between the CHP and MSP, which had deep ties to political Islam. The coalition government pursued policies for rapid industrialization in rural areas and economic improvements, and it remained in control throughout 1970s.

The 1970s witnessed a sharp increase in ethnopolitical polarization throughout Turkey. The ethnopolitical environment was characterized by two ethnic populations: The first ethnic population was the Kurds. The Kurds were considered to be closely aligned with Marxist and Communist ideologies of the left extreme. The second population consisted of devout Turkish Sunnis, especially in Eastern

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Turkey, who were considered staunch supporters of the pro-Islamist of the extreme right. The tension between devout Turkish Sunnis and Kurds boiled over in 1978 when sectarian violence broke out in Eastern Turkey. Sporadic conflict continued over the next two years, and by 1980, approximately 5,000 Turks had died from ethnic violence.

By the end of the 1970s, the Turkish economy was encountering significant problems. From 1979 to 1980, the per capita Gross Domestic Product in Turkey fell by 2.6 percent, and manufacturing output declined by 5.6 percent. This was due in large part to high tariffs on foreign goods, which not only limited foreign competition but also restricted direct foreign investments. The precipitous decline in GDP required the Turkish government to devalue its currency to counter inflation, directly contributing to civil unrest. With the economy on the verge of collapse and ethnic violence increasing, the Turkish military intervened through a coup d'état in 1980.

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14 Ibid., 16-18.


The 1980 Coup d'état

The Turkish military detained approximately 650,000 Turkish citizens accused of being associated with radical leftist or Islamic groups and 49 death sentences were carried out over the next two years.\footnote{Ibid., 69.} After the 1980 coup and the ratification of the 1982 Constitution, the military had politically positioned itself as the ultimate decision-making authority on legitimacy of political parties. Accordingly, in 1983, the military administered general elections, and the National Security Council implemented its newly established authority to screen candidates. The Council legalized three of the 17 parties that applied for membership.\footnote{Yavuz, \textit{Islamic Political Identity in Turkey}, 75.} Of the parties that were authorized to participate in the elections, two were headed by former Turkish army generals. The third party, Anavatan Parti (ANAP), or the “Motherland Party,” was headed by Turgut Özal.\footnote{Lovatt, \textit{Turkey Since 1970: Politics, Economics and Society}, 91–93.}

The military openly criticized ANAP on the evening prior to the election. This critical stance by the military had the unintended consequence of coalescing support for ANAP. Consequently, ANAP won 45.2 percent of the vote in the
1983 election.\textsuperscript{20} The military had just returned power to the civilian government and had little choice but to accept the outcome of the election. After the 1983 election, ANAP had a significant opportunity to sustain power through actualizing the demands of the Turkish electorate. Özal, ANAP leader, was the Prime Minister of Turkey from 1983 until 1989.\textsuperscript{21} He then severed as the President from 1989 until 1993.


The Military did not allow an Islamic political party to participate in the 1983 elections. Consequently, Islamists after the 1983 elections organized a new political party named Refah Partisi (RP), or the “Welfare Party.” The RP still espoused greater integration with the Muslim world over than with the West. It also promoted a greater role for Islam in the education system.\textsuperscript{22} However, in comparison to the MSP, the RP significantly moderated its political platform. Perhaps the greatest difference between the RP and the MSP was the RP’s acceptance of the Turkish state as a legitimate entity.\textsuperscript{23} For the first time in the republican

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 93.


\textsuperscript{22} Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, 217.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 211-217.
era, the focus of Islamic politics in Turkey was on state reforms, not retrenchment of the Ottoman-era, Islamic-style governance. The RP set forth an ideology in which the state and Islam were complementary to one another, rather than in diametric opposition. Thus, the party’s emergence marked a monumental shift to redefine Islamic political rhetoric from traditionalism to an alternative political ideology in order to cope with the challenges of modernity. In doing so, it also more broadly redefined the role of political Islam in Turkey. Islam and Kemalism no longer stood in direct opposition to each other.

The RP’s monumental concession of accepting the legitimacy of the Turkish state took a half-century of evolution for Islamic political ideology to occur. This acceptance can be largely attributed to the unique rigid political constraints enforced by the Turkish military. It is difficult to imagine that Islamists acceptance of the concession would have occurred without the custodial role that the military played as the protectors of secularism.

The RP gained political traction in the 1994 elections when its support rose to 21.4 percent.\textsuperscript{24} The RP’s new found support can be partially attributed to Ozal’s economic reforms which caused a mass migration of Turks from rural to

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 219.
urban centers. Many of the rural immigrants clung to their traditional Islamic traditions to cope with economic depravity associated with their new urban life.\textsuperscript{25} Ozal’s economic reforms also created a new middle class that was likewise dedicated to traditional Islamic values. These rural immigrants and the new middle class created a powerful new political force in Turkish politics.

Throughout the 1980s, the RP maintained a fairly low level of political relevance. In the 1984 elections, the RP only garnered 4.4 percent of the vote and then 7.16 percent in 1987.\textsuperscript{26} Özal’s popularity during the 1980s provided little political opportunity for the RP. During Özal’s decade in power, he focused ANAP’s political platform on reforming the Turkish economy. Decades of cronyism and strong state control of the economy did little to create economic opportunity for the majority of Turks. Özal focused his economic policies on opening new market space for the Turkish middle class. The distribution of wealth was oriented toward bureaucrats and small inclusive circles defined through cronyism. The ANAP administration worked closely with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to establish large-scale foreign investment and privatize industry. Meanwhile, Özal’s economic reforms focused on

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 218.
privatizing the economy and opening the market to small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Turkish economy, even in the Ottoman era, had been dominated through state control. In 1980, public sector salaries were 25 percent higher than comparable salaries in the private sector.\textsuperscript{27} By the end of Özal’s term as Prime Minister, private sector salaries were 30 percent higher than public sector salaries.\textsuperscript{28} This was a difficult transition to achieve against strongly entrenched supporters of the status quo; however, it would have an indelible effect on reshaping the Turkish politics.

The emergence of a new middle class in 1994 resulted in the RP gaining 21 percent of the popular vote and becoming the ruling party in Turkey. However, the Turkish political environment was extremely fragmented during these elections. The remaining 79 percent of the public vote was split among six other parties.\textsuperscript{29} ANAP, which had dominated the political spectrum for the last decade spilt the moderate center-oriented vote with the Doğru Yol Partisi (DYP), or Right Path Party.\textsuperscript{30} The military exerted pressure on ANAP and DYP

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 230.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 239-241.
to form a coalition government. The coalition between ANAP and DYP lasted less than a year; after a bitterly fought election, the relationship proved irreparable. On June 28, 1996, Erbakan, the leader of the RP, became the Prime Minister of Turkey.\textsuperscript{31} However, Erbakan was not elected by popular support. Instead, his accession to Prime Minister was the result of the collapse of the coalition government.

\textbf{The Role of the Military: The 1997 Coup d'état}

While there had been some gradual concessions in recognizing the importance of Islam in Turkey, the military was not prepared to see a political party with deep religious ties to Islam run the secular Republic. Therefore, the results of the 1994 elections were alarming to the military and represented the realization of the greatest fear of the Kemalist establishment.

On February 4, 1997, the military intervened at an Islamist protest over the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem in the town of Sincan.\textsuperscript{32} On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council deemed Political Islam the greatest threat to internal security.\textsuperscript{33} The military leveraged its power against Erbakan’s administration by forcing it to adjust

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 219.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 237.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
domestic policies to counter the Islamist threat. Sensing a more forceful coup was in the works, Erbakan resigned from office on June 17, 1997.\textsuperscript{34}

The aftermath of the 1997 military intervention was a predictable military repression of Islamic identity within Turkey. In January 1998, the Turkish Constitutional Court revoked the RP’s charter, citing them as the greatest threat to the internal security of Turkey and banned Erbakan from politics for five years on the basis of anti-secularism.\textsuperscript{35} The military continued to broadly criminalize popular Muslim leaders and associations as internal security threats. These actions, in the aftermath of the 1997 intervention, were a genuine attempt by the military to preserve the Kemalist identity from what they viewed as an internal security threat of political Islam. However, their actions, in reality, acted to the contrary by reinforcing a growing perception among Turks that democracy had been replaced by military-led authoritarian government.

The 1997 forced removal of the RP was an abject failure of Islamist to adequately adjust to the secular character of the Turkey. The RP’s leadership failed to adapt its ideology to reflect the acceptance of the Turkish state as a

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 247.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 245.
legitimate entity, thereby leading the RP’s leadership to be ideologically dominated by the anti-Kemalist minority. Erbakan’s radical ideology and caustic personality further antagonized fears of the Kemalist establishment. The end result was a military coup that defined Islamist as a security threat rather than focusing on the underlying cultural, political and economic issues.36 These failures led to an ideological split within political Islam.

**Ideological Split Within Political Islam**

The transition from an Islamic political identity to a conservative democratic party did not occur without conflict in the Islamic political establishment. In December of 1998, Political Islam reformed under a new party called the *Fazilet Partisi* (FP), or “Virtue Party.”37 Recai Kutan, a close associate of Erbakan and his former Minister of Energy, was appointed FP party chairman.38 In the immediate aftermath of the 1997 military intervention, the military was successful in convincing the Turkish electorate that political Islam posed a real threat to the future of the Republic. As a result, the 1999 elections were dominated by

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36 Ibid., 238.
38 Ibid., 75.
nationalist-oriented parties supported by the military, including the National Action Party.39

FP fared well in the 1999 elections, garnering 15 percent of the vote. However, when compared with the RP election of 1995, it was clear the voter supported had dropped (21 percent to 15 percent). The FP adopted a non-confrontational approach to politics due in large part to outright fear of the military and the Turkish Constitutional Court banning them from politics.40 This non-confrontational approach created discontent from both the moderate and radical elements of the Islamic political establishment. Many within the establishment became frustrated with the neutral position of FP. This frustration and discontent represented a deeper ideological conflict over the future of the Islamic political establishment. The moderate wing of FP, led by Abdullah Gül, pushed to redefine the FP political platform as a more moderate ideological vision which embraced secularism. Gül recognized that in order to be accepted as legitimate political party by the Military, the FP needed to consider openly accepting secularism and redefining political Islam.

Political Islam made significant concessions toward secularism over the last 60 years. The 1997 coup was a

39 Yavuz, Islamic Political Identity in Turkey, 252.

40 Ibid., 247.
reminder that the concession toward secularism made by Islamists did not go far enough in embracing secularism. Gül recognized that the military would always view political parties of Islamists as a threat to national security regardless of the party’s platform. Gül, among other moderates in the FP, recognized that Islam played a central role in the identity of Turks. The role of Islam in the Turkish identity was moderated by acceptance of secularism. Consequently, Political Islam would not never achieve widespread political support unless secularism was openly embraced. The success of the

Gül wanted to completely and openly embrace the secular character of Turkey and rebrand political Islam in model of religiously conservative political parties of the U.S.\textsuperscript{41} This created an ideological conflict for the future of the FP. Gül, along with other moderate members, of the FP were willing to openly accept secularism and redefine political Islam as a conservative party. Accepting Kemalism as part of the Turkish national identity was an important step in the evolution of political Islam and also necessary to prevented the Military forcibly removing future political parties from politics. This step also served to insulate future political movements there were previously associated with political Islam from Military intervention. Gül also

\textsuperscript{41} Yavuz, Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey, 2.
recognized the future success in Turkish politics required that rethinking the confrontational policies businesses, democracy, and relations with the West.

Others within FP, including the party leader, Recai Kutan, still gravitated toward the more radical platforms of reintegration of Islam into Turkish institutions. The more radical wing of the FP was going to be harder to convince to openly embrace secularism. The difficulty of convincing the traditional wing was further compounded by the omnipresent role of Erbakan in FP. Although Erbakan had been banned from politics, he maintained an influential proxy role in the FP. Erbakan’s entire political career was based on confronting secularism and reorienting Turkey away from the West. His continued presence represented a barrier to those who wished to moderate.

The ideological split came to a head at the first FP’s convention in May of 2000. Gül ran for the party chair and eloquently argued for the FP to moderate. His argument was that the Kemalism and Islam are not ideologically incompatible and both are important characteristics of the Turkish national identity. To bridge the ideological gaps between Kemalism and Islam, he promoted three areas of synthesis. The first area was religion which is a critical

\[\text{iibid., 256.}\]
factor in promoting social cohesion. The second area was embracing Kemalism is not an affront Islam because both ideologies are compatible. The third factor was the most significant point was accepting secularism was a necessary measure for the future of political Islam. Gül lost the party chairmanship by a narrow margin to Recai Kutan. Despite losing, the narrow margin of defeat demonstrated a desire within the ranks of the Islamic political establishment to shift to a more moderate platform.

Gül received another opportunity to redefine Islamic political ideology when the Turkish Constitutional Court outlawed the FP in the summer of 2001. After the FP was disbanded, the ideological rift within Political Islam created two independent political parties in the Islamic political establishment: the Saddet Partisi (SP), or “Felicity Party,” and the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), translated “Justice and Development Party.” The AKP was

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43 Ibid., 75-77.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
founded by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül in August of 2001. The continued role of the Turkish military as the custodians of secularism caused an ideological spilt in the political Islam establishment in 2001, and this ideological split created the AKP, which accepted secularism.

**The AKP: Open Acceptance of Secular Character**

The AKP represented a significant shift in Islamic politics from anti-establishment and anti-Western to acceptance of relations with the West and a willingness to work within the confines of the Kemalist state. The AKP is a self-described conservative democratic party rather than an Islamic political party. Its acceptance of the secular character was a result of the role of the military in Turkish politics. This acceptance was achieved after decades of Islamist challenges to the Kemalist charter of Turkey. The military’s ever-present role as the custodians of secularism achieved a moderate political Islam that accepts secularism.

The fundamental changes that the AKP made to moderate its Islamic political discourse allowed it to broaden its appeal to voters. In the 2002 Turkish political elections, the AKP won 34 percent of the popular vote and was awarded

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49 Yavuz, Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey, 86–88.
nearly two-thirds of the seats in parliament. The second most popular party was the CHP which garnered nineteen percent of vote. The AKP’s wide margin of victory meant that it would not need to form a coalition government.

One of the contributing factors to this massive influx of popular support was that AKP was able to mobilize so much of the new urban middle class that had developed during the Özal reforms. The new urban middle class typically consisted of first-generation migrants from rural Turkey who tended to have more traditional and culturally conservative values. The AKP’s pro-business approach and identity as a conservative political party that supports Islam but embraces secularism played particular dividends with this constituency.

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50 Ibid., 80.
51 Yavuz, Islamic Political Identity in Turkey, 262.
CHAPTER 5

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE’S PROXIMITY TO EUROPE AND INTERACTIONS THROUGH THE EUROPEAN STATE SYSTEM

Turkey’s proximity to Europe and greater interaction through the European State System is an external factor in the democratic success of Turkey. This proximity and interaction with European powers allowed European economic and political influences to flow into the Empire. Ottoman interactions with Europe were then deepened by the Empire’s accession to the European State System. These alliances, to some extent, protected the Empire from imperial conquest by other European powers and shielded the Ottoman Empire from colonial experiences that hindered democratization in other Muslim countries. The exclusion from these experiences allowed Turkey to establish a state earlier than other Muslim countries. Turkey’s proximity to Europe and greater interactions through the European State System contributed to the success of democracy in Turkey in the following ways:

1.) early European military and diplomatic relations;
2.) the Ottoman Empire and the European State System; and
3.) European economic influence.

Historical ties between the Ottoman Empire and Europe date back to 1453, when the Ottomans conquered Istanbul, after which Istanbul became the seat of power for the
Empire. The Ottomans wanted Istanbul to become a city of influence across the greater World. The Ottomans granted preferential tax and trading privileges to draw Europeans to Istanbul. As a result, Istanbul emerged as a world city and served as early connection between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. In the late 15th century the Ottoman Empire expanded provincial holdings throughout Eastern Europe. Ottoman provinces in Eastern Europe, especially the Balkan region, acted as a bridge to the rest of Europe. The emergence of Istanbul as an influential city and expansion of the Ottoman Empire into Eastern Europe ushered in a new era of military and diplomatic interactions with Europe which exposed the Ottoman Empire to European influences earlier than other Muslim states.

Early European Military and Diplomatic Relations

Ottoman provincial holdings in Eastern Europe were commonly challenged by Russia, which resulted in a series of

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1 Hunter and Malik, Modernization, Democracy, and Islam, 282.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Macfie, The End of the Ottoman Empire: 1908–1923,
6 Hunter and Malik, Modernization, Democracy, and Islam, 282.
wars in the 18th century. These conflicts with Russia caused the Ottoman Empire to enter into a period of decline. However, in the late 18th century, the Ottoman Empire expanded diplomatic relations with Western Europe. The Empire was then able to station diplomats in London, Paris and Berlin in the 1790s in order to form alliances against Russia. The Paris, London and Berlin diplomatic missions were founded in the 1790s and expanded through the early and mid-1800s. This expansion of diplomatic and military relations with Western Europe culminated with the Ottoman Empire's inclusion in the European state system in 1856. The Ottoman Empire was the first non-Christian and only Muslim country to be included in the European State System.

**The Ottoman Empire and the European State System**

The Ottoman Empire’s inclusion in the European State System, to some extent, protected the Empire from imperial conquest and prevented its collapse. The Empire’s accession to the European State System deepened the already

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9 Ibid.

established military and diplomatic ties with the British and other European powers.

Russia’s long history of supporting separatist movements within the Caucasus and Balkan had already resulted in war, but renewed Russian support of the Balkan separatist movement lead to the first major conflict in 1853 during the Crimean War. The British and French allied with the Ottomans through the European State System against the Russians to preserve the balance of power in Europe. Consequently, after three years of conflict, the Ottoman Empire did not suffer defeat or collapse. In 1856, conflict ended when the two sides signed a peace treaty pledging to respect the independence of the territory held by the Ottoman Empire. The integration of the Ottoman Empire into the European State System and the experiences of the Crimean War created even stronger ties among the Ottoman Empire, Britain, and France. In turn, stronger ties meant increased interactions and exposure of the Ottoman Empire to European Powers throughout the nineteenth century, thereby

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11 Karpat, The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State (Studies in Middle Eastern History), 73-74.

12 Ibid.

13 Karpat, The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State (Studies in Middle Eastern History), 74-78.
significantly increasing European influence over the Empire in both financial and political realms.

**European Economic Influence**

Inclusion in the European State System also had economic benefits for the Ottoman Empire. For example, Western European powers quickly became the primary source of loans for the Empire in regards to modernization efforts and costly wars.\(^{14}\) European debt ownership also resulted in the increase of foreign industries throughout the Empire. Ottoman railroad and telegraph infrastructures were owned by foreign companies, who also owned the news printing and services.\(^{15}\) The Europeans continued to invest and grow colonial industries throughout the Ottoman Empire. There were few beneficiaries were the new generation of educated in the languages of foreign companies.\(^{16}\) However, debt ownership and colonial industries eventually had a negative effect on the Empire.

European debt ownership caused the Ottoman Empire annual debt inflation rate to increase by approximately 300 percent by the mid-nineteenth century.\(^{17}\) The Empire initially

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\(^{14}\) Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 184.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 453.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 458.

\(^{17}\) Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire: 1908-1923*, 91.
forfeited on its significant debt burden in 1875.\(^{18}\) Debt forfeiture greatly contributed to the significant decline of the Ottoman Empire over the next four decades, which eventually culminated in the Empire’s collapse in 1923.

\(^{18}\) Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 453.
CHAPTER 6
NATO MEMBERSHIP

Membership in NATO is an external factor in the democratic success of Turkey that sets it apart from many other Muslim countries. NATO membership has provided Turkey with a shield from the effects of the Cold War and regional conflicts which have profoundly limited democratizing efforts in other Muslim states. The membership has also positively contributed to the success of democratization in Turkey. The U.S., as a pre-condition to NATO membership, required Turkey to introduce an alternative party to its political system. The U.S. and NATO have also provided significant amounts of Military aid to the Turkish Military. The power of Turkey’s Military has contributed to its role as the custodians of secularism against internal challenges to Turkey’s democracy. The following contributed to the success of Turkey’s democracy:

1.) a shield from the Cold War;
2.) expansion of democracy in Turkey through NATO membership;
3.) NATO support to the custodians of secularism; and
4.) NATO membership insulates Turkey from regional conflict.

A Shield from the Cold War

The Soviet Union emerged as a major economic and military power at the end of World War II. The emergence of the Soviet Union began an economic, military and ideological
Cold War. The Cold War, in turn, ushered in an era of ideological and economic competition for the Third World. Many Muslim countries in the Third World experienced significant upheaval during the Cold War. The West and the Soviet Union asserted their influences over the development of the economic and political futures of the rest of the world. This competition, or Cold War, “fundamentally altered the international context within which the modernization efforts of affected Muslim countries were carried out.”

There were many key battlegrounds in this U.S.-Soviet competition for global influence. Turkey stood out as a country of particular political, military, and strategic importance to both the West and Soviet Union. Turkey’s close proximity to the Soviet Union presented the West with a very strategic and unique potential partnership, making it a much sought-after ally. The geographic position of Turkey on the Black Sea, which was the “soft underbelly” of the Soviet Union, made it a vital position of interest for the West. Turkey also exerted a significant degree of influence over the rest of the region and could possibly serve as a sort of buffer between the Soviet Union and other nearby countries.

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1 Hunter and Malik, Modernization, Democracy, and Islam, 14.

2 Ibid., 284.

These factors weighed heavily in the decision of U.S. President Harry Truman to extend protection over Turkey through the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and membership into NATO in 1952.¹

Turkey’s inclusion in NATO set it drastically apart from the experience of many other Muslim countries during the Cold War. The West’s treatment of Turkey compared to other key “battle ground” countries was significantly different. For example, unlike many other countries in the Muslim world, including Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Afghanistan, Turkey never suffered occupation at the hands of either the United States or the Soviet Union.

NATO membership insulated Turkey from other negative implications of the Cold War as well. The first being that, unlike much of the Third World, Turkey did not succumb to the example or encouragement of the Soviet Union to experiment with political or economic models of socialism. In other countries, these experiments often resulted in “the growth of state-controlled economies at the expense of the development of an entrepreneurial class and a non-bureaucratic and non-state-dependent middle class,” all of which created lasting effects on democratic development.⁵

Second, as a member of NATO, Turkey had to procure the

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¹ Ibid.

⁵ Hunter and Malik, Modernization, Democracy, and Islam, 33.
approval of NATO to engage in warfare. This acted as shield preventing Turkey from becoming involved in destabilizing regional conflicts or wars of aggression stemming from ideological differences among neighboring countries, as was the case with Kuwait and Iran.⁶

**Expansion of Democracy in Turkey through NATO Membership**

One of the greatest impacts of Turkey’s acceptance into NATO was that it gave the West a profound economic, military, and political influence over the country. Following World War II, Turkey had limited funds to invest in either development or defense, but as a member of NATO and an important strategic ally of the West, Turkey received generous aid from the United States. The U.S. economic aid was helpful in increasing the annual Turkish GDP and stabilizing the Turkish economy.

The West’s political influence over Turkey as a result of its acceptance into NATO originates from the fact that a prerequisite of Turkey’s membership was for it to create a multi-party political system. By opening the political system, the country was eventually able to transition from single-party politics to Turkish democracy. An interesting dynamic of Turkey’s political system was the significant role its military played.

**NATO Support to the Custodians of Secularism**

⁶ Ibid., 284.
NATO and the U.S. also contributed significant aid to develop and strengthen Turkey's military institution. In 1952, Turkey set forth on a program of military modernization to strengthen the military. The extreme power and size of the Turkish military extended its role in politics allowing it to challenge any internal threats to the democratic character of Turkey. When compared to other Muslim countries, Turkey already had a professional military that was loyal to the democratic and secular institutions of the Republic. However, this strengthening of the military meant that the Military became the most powerful institution within the Republic. This strength, coupled with deep seeded loyalty to the Republic, made the military the self-appointed custodians of the secularism. Under this role, the military, with support from the West, would use its power in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 to protect the secular character of the Republic against Islamist challenges.

NATO membership also shielded Turkey democratic regression und military authoritarian regimes or dictatorships. These self-interested military authoritarian regimes significantly hindered democratic development in other Muslim countries. NATO membership excluded Turkey from these experiences which significantly contributed to the growth of democratic institutions in Turkey. This was

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7 Ibid., 33.
particularly significant to Turkey’s ability to democratize. This significance is evident when comparing the path of democratization of Turkey to that of countries that underwent occupation or prolonged authoritarian rule as a result of the Cold War, especially when considering that many Muslim countries continue to suffer from the lasting ramifications from Cold War experiences to this day.

**NATO Membership Insulates Turkey from Regional Conflicts**

NATO membership has protected Turkey from military incursions that have profoundly influenced attempts to democratize the Muslim world, with drastically varying effects depending on the type of Western involvement and the circumstances under which it took place. In the case of Turkey, there are several specific Western foreign policy and historic factors that have uniquely influenced the formation and development of democracy in Turkey. The first unique factor is that Turkey lacks a domestic oil production. This has protected Turkey from self-interested Western military incursions into its domestic affairs. For example, unlike Iranian and Egyptian experiences, Turkey has not experienced Western backed coups to preserve access to oil.\(^8\) U.S. influence over the Turkish Military played a role in Turkey’s aforementioned limited involvement in regional

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\(^8\) Ibid., 28.
conflicts but also had interesting and unexpected implications on its democratic development.

NATO and the U.S. also contributed significant aid to developing and strengthening Turkey’s military institution. This aid enhanced both the power and size of the military, leading the Turkish military to become the second largest military establishment within NATO. Having such a large military not only improved Turkey’s international and political role, but also acts a powerful deterrent to any nation in the region seeking to expand through Military conquest. Additionally, NATO membership requirements and U.S. influence, has limited Turkey’s ability to act unilaterally with its powerful military. This dynamic minimizes Turkey’s exposure to regional conflicts which have hindered democratic efforts in other Countries.

Turkey’s membership in NATO is an external factor in the democratic success of Turkey that sets it apart from many other Muslim countries. NATO membership provided Turkey with a shield from the effects of the Cold War. Unlike many other countries in the Muslim world, including Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Afghanistan, Turkey never suffered occupation or became an ideological battleground for the United States or the Soviet Union. Turkey’s membership in NATO also insulates it from regional conflicts which have hindered democratic efforts in other Countries.

Ibid., 289.
development in many other Muslim countries. NATO membership has also contributed to the success of democratization efforts in Turkey. The U.S., as a pre-condition to NATO membership required Turkey to introduce an alternative party to its political system. The U.S. and NATO have also provided significant amounts of Military aid to the Turkish Military. This aid has made the Turkish Military a powerful force in protecting Turkey from regional hostilities. Membership to NATO is a mutual protection pact meaning that other members will come to Turkey’s aid if it is attacked. This acts a power deterrent to any would be challengers. NATO membership requirements and U.S. influence, has limited Turkey’s ability to act unilaterally with is powerful Military and, in turn, the power of Turkey’s Military has contributed to its role as the custodians of secularism against internal challenges to Turkey’s democracy.
CHAPTER 7
TURKEY’S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

Turkey’s special relationship with the EU is the final external factor that has contributed to the development of a successful Turkish democracy. The draw of EU membership has significantly expedited Turkey’s democratic growth. Accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU formally began in 2004; however, Turkey has long aspired to integrate into the European economy. Turkey has a long history of economic ties with Europe. Turkey was granted associate membership to the European Economic Community (ECC), the predecessor to the EU, in 1963, and it has remained committed to gaining full EU membership since then. In order to achieve full EU membership, Turkey has improved its democratic institution and limited the military’s role in domestic politics. The start of EU negotiations in 2004 has proven influential in democratizing reforms in Turkey. Turkey’s special relationship with EU is a unique external factor in comparison to all other Muslim countries and sets it apart. The following have contributed to a successful democracy in Turkey:

1.) extension of human rights and democratic liberties;
2.) the AKP and the EU; and
3.) continued EU accession negotiations.

The Extension of Human Rights and Democratic Liberties.
In 1973, additional protocols were added to the associate membership to abolish quotas and tariffs on Turkish goods.¹ Turkish and European economic cooperation continued to flourish until the 1980 Turkish coup. The ECC froze all economic relations until after the 1983 Turkish elections, which returned to civil control of the government. Turgut Özal was elected Prime Minister of Turkey in 1983.² Özal aspired to achieve full ECC membership for Turkey. He recognized that the Turkey would have to make significant economic progress to achieve full membership. Decades of cronyism and strong state control of the economy had done little to create economic opportunity for the majority of Turks. Özal focused his economic policies on opening new market space for the Turkish bourgeoisie. Özal also recognized the need to reform in order to further democratic liberties for a competitive bid to the ECC.

These reforms contributed to increased political inclusion of both rural Turkish and the Kurdish minority populations. Prior to these reform Kurds were relegated to the political periphery. Part of these reforms repealed repressive and Draconian laws against the Ethnic Kurdish minorities. In 1991, for the first time in the republican era, the Kurds were legally allowed to speak Kurdish which

had been previously outlawed. Later that same year, Kurdish political parties won 22 seats in the Grand National Assembly. Ultimately, Özal’s economic and social reforms did not achieve full ECC membership. Turkey’s application was denied because Turkey’s economy and democratic institutions were not sufficiently developed. Even though Turkey’s full ECC membership was denied, the incentive of joining the ECC had a profound impact on economic and social reforms in the 1980s.

Frustrated by the rejection of full ECC membership, Özal was focused on building economic relationships with former Soviet countries in the Caucus and Central Asia during early 1990s. Economic partnerships were renewed in 1995 with the creation of the European Union-Turkey Customs Union (change from ECC to EU in 1993). The main objective of the European Union-Turkey Customs Union was to increase chances for full EU membership. The agreements made in European Union-Turkey Customs Union were intended to improve the Turkish economy through lowering Turkey’s trade deficit and increasing foreign direct investment (FDI).

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3 Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, 76.

4 Ibid.


6 Ibid., 207.

7 Ibid., 206.
Turkey also agreed to extend democratic freedoms. Turkey’s record of military operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was of particular concern to the EU. Turkey agreed to amend portions of the anti-terrorism law that limited the legal rights of Kurds. Ultimately, the European Union-Turkey Customs Union did not produce the desired effects. The Turkish trade deficit increased, and there was not a significant increase in FDI. The Turkish military forced Erbakan out of office in 1997, which was strongly criticized by the EU.

**The AKP and the EU**

Despite the lack of success of previous efforts, Turkey still remained committed to accession to the EU. The next attempt was led by the AKP under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. When he took office in 2002, Turkey was in the midst of a deep economic crisis. Erdoğan recognized that EU accession had several positive outcomes for his administration: First, EU accession was strongly supported by business and generally supported by the public. Second, EU membership would encourage international investment. Last, and perhaps most importantly, the EU was

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8 Ibid., 202.

9 Ibid.

immensely critical of the Turkish military’ incursions into domestic politics. AKP’s strong ties to political Islam made it a likely target for military incursion. Erdoğan acknowledged the potential of the EU to provide protection from the military and to help ensure future economic success for Turkey.

Also, Erdoğan knew that he would have to improve the Turkish economy to achieve accession to the EU. After decades of crony capitalism and limited international investment, the Turkish economy was beset with a high debt ratio. In order to attract foreign investment and lower its debt ratio, Erdoğan’s administration would have to closely coordinate with international financial institutions. Erdoğan’s administration quickly developed a collaborative relationship with the IMF and adopted their recommendations to stabilize the Turkish economy. The first recommendation was to transfer ownership of state industry to private investors. The AKP fully embraced this recommendation and encouraged international investment in banking and manufacturing.

AKP economic reforms for accession to the EU immensely improved the Turkish economy from 2002 to 2007. Inflation

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12 Ibid., 214
rates have fallen significantly from 37.4 percent (2002) to 6.2 percent (2007), stabilizing the currency.\textsuperscript{13} By 2007, the government debt declined to a more reasonable rate of 44.4 percent of the GDP.\textsuperscript{14} After years of low levels of foreign direct investment (FDI), Turkey attracted $22 billion in FDI in 2007, as compared to $1.1 billion in 2002.\textsuperscript{15} The net effect of AKP economic policies created an economic environment where the Turkish economy grew an average of 6.0 percent per year from 2002 to 2007.\textsuperscript{16} This was one of the highest sustained rates of growth in the world during this time period.

**EU Accession Negotiations Continue**

The EU agreed to start accession negotiations in 2004 after determining that Turkey meets all of the Copenhagen criteria for accession. The criteria states:


1\textsuperscript{6} Onis, *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*, 229-231.
Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.\footnote{Onis, The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, 46.}

The fact that Turkey meets these criteria by EU standards is a significant achievement in its own right. The negotiations are still currently on-going. The slowness of the process has been frustrating for the people and government of Turkey; however, all remain committed. The negotiations have taken such a considerable amount of time because Turkey must satisfactorily comply with all the laws of the EU. Ensuring compliance to EU laws is having a significant democratizing effect on Turkey. The earliest accession could occur for Turkey in 2013.
CHAPTER 8
UNFINISHED PROCESS OF DEMOCRACY

The process of democratization in Turkey remains unfinished and faces challenges in the future. In the 2002 Turkish political elections, the AKP won 34 percent of the popular vote and was awarded nearly two-thirds of the seats in parliament.¹ The second most popular party was the CHP, which garnered 19 percent of vote.² The AKP’s wide margin of victory meant that it would not need to form a coalition government. Consequently, the AKP could pursue significant reform with little political challenge. After the 2002 elections, many questioned the intentions of the AKP. Opponents of the AKP contended that the AKP would attempt to subtly develop laws favorable to Islam and erode the secularism. Opponents believed the AKP would not attempt to pursue overt Islamic policies; rather, a bottom-up approach to Islamizing Turkey through “Islamization creep.”³ For example, by being lenient on headscarf enforcement and appointing Islamist sympathizers to high-ranking positions, the AKP could covertly challenge the Kemalist state.⁴

¹ Yavuz, Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey, 80.
² Yavuz, Islamic Political Identity in Turkey, 262.
³ Yavuz, Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey, 86-88.
⁴ Ibid., 164.
The first “Islamization creep” controversy erupted in 2004 when Erdoğan’s administration supported legislation to outlaw adultery. This drew a strong response from opposition who claimed that this was the beginning of the manifestation of the AKP’s Islamic political agenda. The AKP removed this proposed legislation out of concern of internal military intervention from the National Security Council.

The AKP’s opponents quickly made assertions that the AKP was attempting to undermine the Turkish secular education system by allowing graduates of religious universities to be accepted into non-religious schools.

2007 Elections: A Reminder of the Role of the Military

By 2007, the AKP had fully reinvigorated Turkey’s economy. The AKP immensely improved the Turkish economy from 2002 to 2007. Inflation rates have fallen significantly and the government debt declined to a more reasonable rate. Foreign investment has also significantly increased over the last decade. Consequently, Turkey’s economy grew an average

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5 Yavuz, Islamic Political Identity in Turkey, 165.

6 Ibid., 163.

of 6.0 percent per year from 2002 to 2007.\textsuperscript{8} This is one of the highest sustained rates of growth in the world during this time period which ranks among other emerging economies such as Brazil and India. The emergence of Turkey’s economy contributed to job growth.

The dramatic economic growth witnessed from 2002 to 2007 broadened AKP’s support across Turkey. As such, the AKP received 46 percent of the popular vote in the 2007 elections.\textsuperscript{9} In addition to widespread support for the AKP’s economic policies, the military inadvertently helped the AKP in the 2007 elections by openly threatening the AKP leadership.\textsuperscript{10} This veiled threat, known as the “midnight memorandum,” was posted on the Turkish military’s general staff website the day prior to the 2007 elections. The message declared the military as the protectors of secularism and stated that they “maintain their sound determination to carry out their duties stemming from the laws to protect the unchangeable characteristics of the

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\textsuperscript{8} Onis, The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, 229-231.
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\textsuperscript{10} Yavuz, Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey, 240-241.
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Republic of Turkey." This threat encouraged many voters to show their support for the AKP in the face of the military meddling.

Despite opposition assertions that the AKP was actively pursuing a bottom-up approach to Islamization, the election of 2007 showed an even further advance in popular support for AKP. It was able to garner 46 percent of the popular vote and nominated Abdullah Gül to become the President of Turkey. The Turkish President must be voted in by two-thirds of the members of the Grand National Assembly. The CHP made every attempt to block the vote on Abdullah Gül, but he was eventually sworn in as President, making him the first devout Muslim President of Turkey.12

Constitutional Reforms

The AKP’s decade in power has come with controversies. The AKP’s dominance in the 2007 elections was the largest margin of victory since Atatürk. The AKP politics have been defined through Erdoğan’s fiery temperament which many characterize as polarizing and divisive.13 The AKP’s political dominance in the 2007 elections allowed them to

11 Ibid., 241.
12 Ibid., 257.
take a unilateral approach in Turkey’s Grand National Assembly\textsuperscript{14} that led to the pursuit of a constitutional referendum in 2010. The proposed referendum challenged several of the reforms instituted by the military during the Coup of 1980. These reforms included restructuring the Constitutional Court and holding the military accountable for its actions in civilian court. The referendum passed on September 12, 2010, and symbolized the most significant erosion of the military’s power in the republican era.\textsuperscript{15} In a twist of irony, the military that had fought to repress the power of the AKP had its power limited by the AKP through democratic processes. However, this legislation also removed a powerful check and balance in the military’s role as the custodians of secularism from Turkey’s government.

The 2010 constitutional referendum authorized the prosecution of military generals for their role in the 1980 coup. This contentious legislation has led to the arrest and pending prosecution of the leader of the 1980 coup, General Kenan Evren.\textsuperscript{16} The 2010 constitutional referendum


has also allowed the AKP to arrest more than 60 generals on allegations of plots to stage a coup against the government.\textsuperscript{17} These arrests signify the most significant obstacle to the role of the military in protecting the secular character of Turkey. To date, none of these arrests have led to successful prosecution, but they do suggest a trend toward authoritarianism. There is additional evidence to suggest there may be seeds of authoritarianism present in the AKP.

\textbf{Seeds of Authoritarianism}

The AKP has arrested and detained several journalists for reporting on the influence Islamists have on Turkey’s government.\textsuperscript{18} The AKP has also detained a significant amount of Kurdish journalists on accusations of sedition.\textsuperscript{19} To date, there are more than 100 journalists in prison, which is more than China and Iran.\textsuperscript{20} The AKP has also fired prosecutors and


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
police officers for allegedly being part of a movement to challenge its authority.\textsuperscript{21}

The AKP’s political dominance has resulted in several alarming authoritarian measures. The 2010 constitutional reform has significantly reduced the military’s ability to challenge the AKP’s authoritarian measures. On June 12, 2011, Turkey held a general election, and the AKP continued its dominance with nearly 50 percent of the popular vote.\textsuperscript{22} Consequently, the AKP will likely continue its trends toward authoritarianism.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

The forgoing has shown that Turkey’s success in developing a relatively democratic political system has not been due to the unique character of Turkish Islam; rather, it is attributable to a number of specific internal and external factors. The internal factors have included: the legacy of the Ottoman Era; a secular ethos; and a strong military as the guardian of the secular character of the Turkish Republic. First, Turkey’s proximity to Europe and greater interactions with European Powers required the Ottoman Empire to pursue modernizing reforms earlier than other Muslim states. The legacy of these modernizing reforms created a new generation of educated elites who pursued further democratizing reforms, culminating in the first Ottoman Constitution and parliament. Ultimately, the Ottoman legacy of modernizing reforms was not sufficient to save the Empire, or create truly modern institutions. Nevertheless, these reforms left a legacy that later helped in the democratization of Turkey.

The second internal factor has been Turkey’s secular and Kemalist ethos. Atatürk recognized that building a new secular and modern Turkey presented a formidable challenge to the future of the Republic because the identity of the majority of Turks was deeply rooted in the Islamic and
Ottoman traditions of the past six centuries. Atatürk transformed the Turkish identity to a Kemalist ethos by pursuing secularizing reforms in order to diminish the influence of Islamic and Ottoman traditions. These reforms shifted the identity of a fairly large number of Turks from Islam to Turkish nationalism and secular ethos. Rather than remove Islam from the Turkish identity, these reforms intended to weaken it overtime. This shift eventually contributed to the success of Turkey’s democratic experience. The Kemalist ethos established a nationalist and secular identity earlier than other Muslim countries.

Third has been the military’s role as the custodians of secularism. Because Atatürk’s reforms did not eliminate Islam’s influence from the Republic, as soon as the circumstances permitted, the more Islamicly-oriented segments of the population organized. The military acted as the custodians of secularism to answer Islamist political challenges to the secular character of the Turkey in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997. The empowerment of the military acted as a forcing function for Islamists to embrace the Kemalist character of the Republic. Otherwise, they would be face being forcibly removed from the Turkish political system that was achieved in 2002 election with the victory of the AKP.
The main external factors which have had an equally important role in Turkey’s success have been: the Ottoman Empire’s proximity to Europe and interactions through the European State System; membership in NATO; and special relations with the EU. First, the Ottoman Empire’s inclusion the European State System created military alliances with European Powers. These military alliances to some extent protected the Empire from imperial conquest by other powerful European countries. The protection from imperial conquest shielded the Ottoman Empire from undergoing colonial experiences that hindered democratization in other Muslim countries; the exclusion from these experiences allowed Turkey to establish a state earlier than other Muslim countries. Indeed, Turkey’s proximity to Europe and greater interactions through the European State System contributed to the success of democracy in Turkey.

NATO membership has been the second factor that has contributed to Turkey’s success. Turkey’s membership to NATO has insulated it from regional conflicts such as those that have hindered democratic development in many other Muslim countries. In addition, NATO membership provided Turkey with a shield from the effects of the Cold War. Unlike many other countries in the Muslim world, including Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Afghanistan, Turkey never suffered occupation or became an ideological battleground for the United States or
the Soviet Union. Likewise, NATO membership has shielded
Turkey from military authoritarian regimes supported by the
United States or the Soviet Union. These self-interested
military authoritarian regimes significantly hindered
democratic development in other Muslim countries. NATO
membership served as incentive to implement an alternative
party in Turkey’s political system, thereby contributing to
the democratization in Turkey. This alternative party was
required by the United States, as a pre-condition to
Turkey’s NATO membership. The United States and NATO have
also provided significant amounts of military aid to the
Turkish military, making the Turkish military a powerful
force in protecting Turkey from regional hostilities.

Finally, Turkey’s special relationship with the EU has
played a vital role in Turkey’s success. The draw of EU
membership has significantly expedited Turkey’s democratic
growth. Accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU
formally began in 2004; however, Turkey has long aspired to
integrate in the European economy. Turkey was given
associate member status to the ECC, predecessor to the EU,
in 1963, and it has remained committed to gaining full EU
membership since then. In order to achieve full EU
membership, Turkey has improved its democratic institution
and limited the military’s role in domestic politics. The

\[1\] Hunter and Malik, Modernization, Democracy, and Islam, 33.
start of EU negotiations in 2004 influenced democratizing reforms in Turkey. Turkey’s special relationship with the EU is the final external factor that has contributed to the development of a successful Turkish democracy. Turkey’s special relationship with the EU is a unique external factor in comparison to all other Muslim countries and sets.


