

**“THE CONSERVATIVE - DEMOCRATIC”
IDENTITY OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY IN THE
TURKISH CENTER – RIGHT TRADITION**

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ABSTRACT

“THE CONSERVATIVE - DEMOCRATIC” IDENTITY OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY IN THE TURKISH CENTER - RIGHT TRADITION

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Through this thesis, it is aimed to study “the conservative-democratic” identity of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which was established just before the November 3, 2002 elections and has still been running the country as the single party, in the context of the Turkish center-right tradition. Although the AKP comes from the political legacy of the National View Tradition (MG), it has presented itself as a new political formation at least aspiring to a centrist location in the political spectrum. Thus, the AKP puts itself in the political tradition inherited from the Progressive Republican Party, the Democratic Party, the Justice Party, and Turgut Özal’s Motherland Party with an attempt to forge a synthesis between liberal and conservative trends within Turkey around a new social consensus. In this thesis, the components of the “conservative-democratic” rhetoric of the AKP is analyzed to shed light over its conceptualization of democracy, pluralism, social change and secularism. This analysis is presented through an overview of the debates surrounding the AKP’s identity, in particular, over its rhetoric of “change”. It is argued that the conservative-democratic rhetoric of the party is characterized by ambivalent points, if not contradictions, which

reflect the party's ongoing search for a distinct position and identity and its aim of appealing to broader sections of the conservative electorate.

Key Words: The Justice and Development Party, The Turkish center-right, Conservatism, Change, Conservative Democracy.

ÖZ

TÜRK MERKEZ-SAĞ GELENEĞİNDE ADALET ve KALKINMA PARTİSİ’NİN “MUHAFAZAKAR-DEMOKRAT” KİMLİĞİ

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Bu tezde, 3 Kasım 2002 seçimlerinden hemen önce kurulan ve günümüzde halen tek başına iktidarda olan Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisinin (AKP) “muhafazakar-demokrat” kimliği Türk merkez-sağ geleneği bağlamında incelenmeye çalışılmıştır. AKP siyasal miras itibarıyla Milli Görüş Geleneğinden gelse de, parti kendisini siyasi spektrumda en azından merkezi konumu arzulayan yeni bir oluşum olarak sunmuştur. Parti Türkiye’deki liberal ve muhafazakar trendleri yeni bir toplumsal mutabakat etrafında birleştirmeye çalışarak, kendisini Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası, Demokrat Parti, Adalet Partisi ve Turgut Özal’ın Anavatan Partisiyle aynı geleneğe bağlamaktadır. Bu tezde, partinin demokrasi, çoğulculuk, sosyal değişim ve sekülerizm anlayışını aydınlatmak amacıyla partinin “muhafazakar-demokrat” söyleminin unsurları analiz edilecektir. Bu tartışma, özelde AKP’nin değişim söylemi üzerinden yürütülen ve parti kimliğini hedef alan tartışmalarla sunulacaktır. Partinin “muhafazakar-demokrat” söyleminin çelişkili olmasa da belirsiz noktalarla karakterize edilmekte olduğu tartışılmaktadır ki bu, partinin devam eden farklı bir pozisyon ve kimlik arayışını; ve partinin daha geniş muhafazakar seçmene ulaşma amacını yansıtmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Türk Merkez-sağı,
Muhafazakarlık, Değişim, Muhafazakar Demokrasi.

To My Mother and Father,

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

European Union	EU
Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association	MUSIAD
National Security Council	MGK
National View Tradition	MG
The Democratic Party	DP
The Democratic Left Party	DSP
The Felicity Party	SP
The Free Party	SF
The Justice Party	AP
The Justice and Development Party	AKP
The Motherland Party	ANAP
The National Action Party	MHP
The National Order Party	MNP
The National Salvation Party	MSP
The Progressive Republican Party	TCF
The Republican People Party	CHP
The True Path Party	DYP
The Virtue Party	FP
The Welfare Party	RP

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Rise of a New Actor in the Turkish Center-Right

This study aims at exploring the ‘conservative democratic’ identity of the AKP on the axis of centre-politics in the Turkish context. It analyzes the major components of the AKP’s self-declared ‘conservative democracy’. How the party compares to the parties of the Turkish center-right tradition that was embodied firstly by the Democratic Party (DP), and followed by the Justice Party (AP), the True Path Party (DYP), and especially by the Motherland Party (ANAP) is another question to which this study addresses itself. In regard to its identity, this study will also be an attempt to answer the question of how the party approaches some fields such as politics, economy, the state, democracy, and the West. It may be said that the main aim of this study, in general, is to define and to analyze the ‘conservative-democratic’ identity of the party in its rhetoric and in particular, in a comparative perspective in terms of the center-right tradition in Turkey.

The Turkish general election of November 3, 2002 seems to have opened a new page in the Turkish political landscape. It is the first time, since 1954, that only two parties have succeeded to share the seats in the parliament, and sixteen parties failed to pass the 10 percent national threshold. This means that almost 45 percent of votes have not been represented in the TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly) due to the 10 percent national threshold. One of the most important results of this election is the erosion in the voter support of the political parties that had participated in governments in the last two decades of Turkish politics. However, the most striking result of this election is the Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) surprising victory with 34.2 percent of popular vote, which gave a single-party government for the first time in the last fifteen years.

The election took place in a period when the legitimacy of political parties and political elites was questioned since they were no longer considered as part of the solution, but the cause of the problems. Moreover, especially after the 1970s, parties and the party system have been decaying with growing fragmentation, ideological polarization and declining public support and identification with individual parties (Özbudun, 2003; 73). During this period, the two parties' dominance had been eroded and centrist parties had been weakened (Kara, 2004:43).

In the 1990s, there was a system based on a highly fractionalized parliament in which governments could only be formed through coalition arrangements (Kara, 2004:26-28). The major characteristic of the parliaments between 1990 and 2002 was a high level of fragmentation. The proportion of votes going to the largest parties declined, along with their number of seats in the parliament, as shown in table 1.¹ As a result of these fragmented coalition governments that were unable to produce effective economic and social policies, dissatisfaction among voters increased. This period, which is characterized by highly fragmented coalition governments, ended with the last general election, held on November, 3, 2002.

One of the general characteristics of the Turkish party system which leads to the formation of a highly fractionalized parliament and ineffective coalition governments in the 1990s is volatility, that is sudden and significant changes in party votes from one election to the next (Özbudun, 2003: 74). Besides the volatility, the Turkish electorate has tended to divide its votes among a number of parties (Çarkoğlu and Avcı, 2002; 115). Rising volatility and the lack of stable partisan support has hindered the stabilization of the party system (Sayarı, 2002: 10). However when we examine the recent election results, the support given to the party families on the right and the left has not changed significantly.²

¹ Table 1 in Appendix A.

² For the shares of the vote (%), in the November 3, 2002 Election, see Table 2 in Appendix B.

In sum, in the 2002 elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) very effectively took advantage of the weakness of this centre-right by filling the political vacuum which both liberal-pragmatic parties, the parties of Islamic tradition and the above-mentioned characteristics of the Turkish party system, had created.

Consequently, in the election of November, 2002, the Justice and Development Party which claims to be conservative mainstream party, won a landslide victory. The party presented itself as ‘conservative-democrat’, and stressed that it was not a religious party. Although the AKP leadership denies its Islamic background and claims to be a conservative-democratic party, it emerged out of the ashes of the Welfare Party (RP) and the Virtue Party (FP), which had been closed down by the Constitutional Court. Yet from its foundation onwards, the party has maintained its claim and emphasized that they have adopted a stance that is not very different from the positions of the other center-right and center-left parties. Moreover, it should be noted that the party leaders, who had a National View Tradition (MG) background, had come to be known as the ‘reformist’ within the movement, when Abdullah Gül, a leading moderate figure in the party, ran for the leadership of the FP in the party congress of May 2000. Gül and his supporters not only acted against the wishes of party leadership of the National View Tradition, but also in the process they broke from the ideology symbolized by the leadership. This naturally did not take the place in a vacuum; it was rather a response to a number of challenges facing Islamic politics in the late 1990s, notably the *February 28 Decisions* of the National Security Council (MGK) that displayed the determination of the military to exclude an Islamically-oriented party from exercising governmental power.³ By the new period, when the FP were closed down, the members of the new movement tried to promote a specific political discourse in a new formation, hence they established the Justice

³ The process of February 28 was the MGK’s Declaration of a list of the measures to struggle against the supposed threats to the secular Turkish Republic and presented to the government. As a result of this process, the coalition government collapsed; the RP was outlawed, and the leaders of the RP were banned from politics for 5 years. Moreover, while the process of February 28 was drawing the limits of Turkish political landscape with the characteristics of secular, unitarian, nation-state, it also brought about a breaking point for the National View Tradition (MG).

and Development Party (AKP) with a new ‘conservative-democratic’ identity. This new discourse was non-confrontational, a low-profile discourse, and a moderate stance based on avoiding social tension and conflict with the established order of the state (Cizre and Çınar, 2003:323). Thus reformists tried to make it clear that it was not an Islamist party; on the contrary it presented itself at least aspiring to “a centrist location in the political spectrum.”⁴

As a result, the leadership of the party tried to persuade many people with no Islamic background to join the party in an attempt to reach out to wider social and political groups. The attempt to recruit people from other center-right parties, continued during the election period, e.g. the ANAP, and the DYP, by which the AKP signaled that it would no longer be stuck with the National View Tradition cadets. In other words, it has not developed or articulated any claim on the basis of Islam or other forms of ideological identity, but has acted as an agent of the country’s integration into the neo-liberal economic and political spaces. In the 2002 elections, its electoral success had also indicated that the new address of the center-right votes was now the AKP (Çarkoğlu, 2002:37). The party managed to appeal to voters not only from its Islamist roots, but also from other sources like conservative the DYP, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), and the liberal-oriented ANAP, and even from the leftist Democratic Left Party (DSP). That is the reason why some scholars claimed that the composition of the party has repeated the success of Özal’s ANAP in the 1980s which then claimed to have four wings: conservative, religious, nationalist and liberal (Çarkoğlu: 2002:37; Keyman: 2003:1-5; Coşar and Özman, 2004:63; İnsel, 2003:295).⁵

Indeed, not only the ANAP but also the other Turkish center right parties, including the DP, the AP, and the DYP of the same conservative tradition, played mainly crucial role in shaping Turkish Politics and in leading democracy to take roots among

⁴ Tayyip Erdoğan, Sabah Daily, 04.07.2001.

⁵ Also see; Dağı, İhsan, Zaman Daily,21/11/2002; and Keyman Fuat, Zaman Daily, 02/12/2002.

people (Mert, 2000:50-97; Çetinsaya, 2002:34-37; Gönenç, 2006:148-149). Under the leadership of the DP and the ANAP, the center-right was seen as a protest movement against the hegemony of the bureaucratic elite from the absolutism of the majority, thus, with these parties, periphery had come to center (Mert, 2000:50-51; Gönenç, 2006:136-147). Besides their challenge to the elitist perspective of the centralist bureaucratic elite, they defended the evolutionary transformation of the society rather than a revolutionary one, and liberal economic policies rather than statist policies. Also in the footsteps of the DP, the center-right parties always stood close to the religiously-conservative groups. According to some scholars, as a matter of fact, this served the democratization and moderation of Islamic groups (Mert, 2000:67-73; Göka, Göral, Güney, 2003:302-313; Çaha, 2003:97-112). The political tradition of the center-right in Turkey, particularly that of the DP and the ANAP, shared a consensus-oriented political style. For many students of Turkish politics, since the AKP has presented itself as a centre-right party from its foundation onwards, the discourse of the AKP and its new “conservative-democratic” identity has gained an importance in terms of the evolution of the centre politics in Turkey (Coşar and Özman:2004:55-74).

1.2 Research Procedure and the Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is based on both a descriptive and exploratory study. In trying to understand the identity of the AKP, the Party Program, published statements and speeches of both the party leaders and officials, and especially the party publications on the AKP’s self-proclaimed identity, Conservative-Democracy, were used. In addition, face-to-face interviews, which were done with both the MPs (Members of the Parliament) of the party and two scholars of the Turkish politics in May and June of 2006, provided data for analyzing the identity of the party.⁶ In addition to these primary sources, major studies of Turkish politics and selected articles from

⁶ Interviews were done with the following deputies (MP)s of the AKP, Mehmet Dülger, Ali Ayağ, Ahmet Ertürk, Ertuğrul Yalçınbayır, İbrahim Aşkar; and with the liberal-oriented academicians, Atilla Yayla and Mustafa Erdoğan in May and June 2006. The interviewees agreed that their names are not kept anonymous throughout the study.

newspapers on center-right politics in Turkey and parties were also studied. With these sources, a combination of historical analysis and party analysis is combined. Hence, this study discussed the party by describing its rhetorical strategy and by exploring its different aspects to understand its ‘conservative-democratic’ identity in the Turkish center-right tradition.

In accordance with the objectives of this study, firstly the definition and meaning of the center and center-right politics in the contemporary world and within the context of the Turkish political development should be clarified. A theoretical account about the general characteristics of center-right politics both in the literature and in Turkish politics is provided. Therefore, in the first chapter, the main trends and tendencies in center-right politics will be mentioned briefly starting with the party families, since center-right politics is a part of these families. Following this part, the concept of the ‘center’ in the political literature and in Turkish politics will be focused on. After elucidating this concept, other related concepts such as ‘right’, ‘center-right’, ‘conservatism’, ‘neo-conservatism’, ‘liberalism’, ‘neo-liberalism’ and ‘the new right’ will be briefly defined since our study is based on the ‘conservative-democratic identity’ of the AKP, and also the center-right politics is closely linked with liberal and conservative views, and with their new versions, neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism and the new right. The rise of the right in the late 1970s and the 1980s was highly related to a large extent with raising these new political movements. In the 1980s, the partly conservative and partly liberal ideas also shaped Turkish politics to a certain extent. For instance, the Motherland Party seemed to be an advocate of this ideology. These ideas, however, continued to affect political debates, and the policies after the demise of the Özal administration. And now, the AKP tries to formulate both its political and economic targets in accordance with this conservative-liberal tradition. Thus, liberalism and especially conservatism gains significance both of answering the questions of how conservatism is viewed in the literature of politics and Turkish politics, and how these ideologies affect the AKP’s ‘conservative-democrat’ identity.

In the second chapter, the Turkish center-right politics and political parties will be dealt with, by touching upon the emergence and the historical development of the Turkish center-right politics. This will start with the Progressive Republican Party (TCF), since the roots of the Turkish center-right politics and political parties can be traced back to these times. As the thesis covers the Republican era, it will be evaluated under two subtitles: from 1923 to 1980 in which the Progressive Republican Party (TCF), the Free Party (SF), the Democrat Party and the Justice Party will be discussed; and post- 1980 era where the elaboration of two major center- right -the Motherland Party and the True Path Party- will be provided.

In the third chapter, the Justice and Development Party's historical background, the process of disintegration of the National View tradition (MG), and the process of the emergence of the AKP will explained. Starting with its historical precedents, from the National Order Party (MNP) to the Welfare Party (RP), the history of the Islamist parties associated with the tradition of National View Tradition will be discussed, because the AKP comes from this tradition. Then, in the context of the Turkish center-right politics, the identity of the AKP will be studied. In addition to the basic discussions stemming from the 'conservative-democratic' rhetoric, in particular the question of how this identity shapes the field of politics, society, laicism, democracy and economy will be addressed. Finally, conclusions will present both answers to these above-mentioned questions, and will restate the common points of the 'conservative-democratic' identity and the Turkish center-right politics.

CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING THE CENTER-RIGHT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Clarifying the Concepts of Center, Center Parties and the Center-Right

One theme that recurs in the study of Western European politics concerns the role of the left-right dimension in structuring politics. The terms 'left' and 'right' have been widely accepted as part of the common political currency of Western Europe. To be on the left has traditionally meant supporting a communist or socialist party claiming to represent the interests of the organized working class. Every Western European country, without exception, has such a party. This, more than anything else, is the common theme in the politics of representation in Western Europe, and it also, incidentally, marks off the Western European experience from that in the United States.⁷

To be on the center and right has meant supporting those who stand against the communist or socialist parties. On the center-right, however, there are few features common to all the Western European countries. In some countries, parties of the right have a distinctly religious basis; in others, they are secular. In other countries again, parties of the right traditionally have reflected rural or farming interests; in others, they have represented a particular cultural or linguistic subculture.

One of the most striking features of Western European party politics is thus that while the left has been reasonably homogeneous and has normally been represented by at most two parties, the right has been more fragmented, including religious, secular, agrarian, nationalist, and other parties under the same broad umbrella.

Describing the right and the left in terms of the class interests, which were traditionally represented by particular parties, is only part of the story. There is also

⁷ For more information about the party politics and parties in Western Europe see, Bartolini S. and P. Mair, (1984). *Party Politics in Contemporary Western Europe*, Frank Cass., London; Von-Beyme K., (1985). *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, Aldershot, Gower; Gordon S. (1989). *Politics in Western Europe*, London, Heinemann.

clearly a separate ideological sense in which we can speak of such parties as having programs that are on the left or right of the political spectrum. The problem here is that, while it is easy to identify parties which mobilized in defense of particular social interests, it is less easy to specify who is on the left or the right in purely ideological terms.

In addition to this problem, there are also differences in each of the countries. Despite such problems, at the same time, each party does represent something of a pattern, with elements that can be found elsewhere. One of the most convenient ways of providing an overview of the combination of uniformity and diversity that characterizes the Western European party mosaic is to speak of “party families” (Bartolini and Mair, 1984; 211-226; Ware, 1988:21-47; Von Beyme, 1985: 30-41;Gordon,1989: 73-88). Thus, while there are differences between ‘Christian democratic parties’ in different countries, there are also striking similarities that go for beyond mere name and religious affiliation. These different families of parties can be divided into three broad groups: families of the left, families of the center and ‘other’ parties.

Moreover, there are four basic party families to be found on the left-hand side of Western European party systems. Social democratic parties are the strongest and most enduring of Western Europe’s political families, not only on the left, but also in European politics taken as a whole (Ware, 1988: 21-47). Communist parties are a very clear-cut group, comprising those parties which began as pro-Soviet splits from social democratic parties in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The third and fourth families on the left are the ‘new left’ and the greens, which represent more varied collections of more recently formed parties, often grouped together under the general label “left-libertarian parties” (Kitschelt, 1988:30-41). While all four families can be seen as representing the contemporary left in Western European politics, they clearly incorporate between them some huge variations both of ideology and of interest representations.

The party families of the right are more heterogeneous than those of the left. There is the Christian democratic family, made up of parties that temper mainstream conservatism with a defense of religious values. There are the secular conservative parties, distinguished from the Christian democrats by a more strident antisocialist rhetoric, as well as by the absence of traditional links with organized religion. There is also a family of liberal parties, a heterogeneous group that includes centrist parties, such as the British Liberals, and quite right-wing parties such as the Dutch Liberals. Notwithstanding this heterogeneity however, these parties have forged a quite strong transnational link. There is a group of agrarian parties that mobilized the public in defense of farming interests in a variety of Western European Countries. Finally, there is a family of parties composed of neo-fascist, racist, and / or xenophobic parties of the extreme right (Von Beyme, 1985: 30-41; Gordon, 1989: 73-88; Ware, 1988: 21-47).

The third families are the parties of the strong regional or ethnic concerns. They vary immensely in their other policy positions and in their general positioning on the left-right scale. Given the strength of their primary ethnic and regional concerns however, it is clearly more appropriate to think of these parties as making up a distinct family in their own right rather than being members of other ideological families (Von Beyme, 1985: 30-41; Gordon, 1989: 73-88; Ware, 1988: 21-47).

If one elaborates on the concept of center, on the other hand, it is conceptualized as a locus at the midpoint between the two extremes by Duverger, and a political space in between substantial political alternatives by Sartori. For Duverger, the center is a temporary phenomenon, which will fade out or be split by the power of the attraction exercised by the two poles of the predominant axis of cleavage. Scully (1992: 181) is not as pessimistic as Duverger, claiming that democratic politics is at least in part about a compromise, despite the fact that it is not always possible for the center position to be a viable option.

With reference to Duverger, Scully (1992: 7) mentions that even in situations in which a two-party system does not reign, there is almost always a 'duality of tendencies' since

every policy implies a choice between two kinds of solutions: the so-called compromise solutions lean one way or the other. This is equivalent to saying that *the center does not exist in politics, there may well be a center party but there is no center tendency, no center doctrine* (Scully, 1992: 7). [Emphasis is by Scully]

Thus, according to this understanding, the 'center' itself is not a doctrine. It is meaningful together with the 'right' and the 'left'. In a case when no single issue predominates, the interaction of different issues paves the way to multiple positions. Since there is always a natural tendency towards dualism, "the political center is fatally flawed, divided against itself and separated into two halves: left-center and right-center" (Scully, 1992:7).

On the other hand, Sartori (1976: 347) offers a multiparty or pluralist party system, which is either moderate or polarized. In the moderate form, there is a relatively small ideological distance, whereas in the polarized pluralism there is a significant ideological difference between the political parties within the political system. The distance between the two edges brings out a space. A short space does not allow or facilitate the perception of center, since there is no room for it: "A short space is defined simply by its ends - left and right... The center becomes meaningful and perceivable only as the space extends ... as two poles apart" (Sartori, 1976: 179). This polarized mode is characterized by centrifugal (center-fleeing) parties towards extremes in search for new votes.

While exploring polarized pluralism in a political system, Sartori (1976:134) points out that

the center of the system is occupied. This means that we are no longer confronted with bipolar interactions... The system is multipolar in that its competitive mechanics hinge on a center that must face both left and right.

In Sartori's argument, the more moderate the right and the left, the less need there is to be preoccupied with moderation. This might be useful in understanding the Turkish center right in the 1990s. In the 1990s, the parties of center-right resembled each other both in terms of their discourses and their programs. Thus, while their differences were lessening, the space for the center shrank.

There are two types of center parties according to Scully (1992: 184-6). The first one is positional, while the second one is programmatic. A positional center party places itself on the middle position along the major axis of cleavage without an extensive commitment to any single specific outcome or set of policies. On the contrary, a programmatic center party has a specific in-between program on which it might even not be willing to find the middle ground. This classification can also be used in studying the Turkish center right in the last decade. In the 1990s, centrist positions have been shrinking while the right-of-center has been growing in size; hence, the center was left in a vacuum (without a party) before the November 2002 elections (Çarkoğlu, 2002:32).

The voter basis of the center right parties is mentioned by Wilson (1998:247-8) in the middle and upper classes who living in rural and small towns, and also the more religious. However, he also mentions that the impact of the class in structuring the voter basis is much less influential compared to the past. Regardless of the voting alignments, the center-right parties attempt to extend their voter basis beyond the traditional electoral bases. In that sense, in many Western democracies for instance, the center right parties have changed their party programs both to increase their voter basis and to respond the challenges from extreme right. Thus, they incorporated part of the agenda of the extreme right into their programs (Wilson, 1998: 257). This interesting case, too, might be a guideline while analyzing the Turkish center-right before the November elections, since the era of 1990s witnessed that the programs and discourses of the Turkish center-right parties was influenced and shaped by both the nationalist and Islamists rhetoric.

However, before moving to the Turkish center-right, centrist tendencies should also be clarified. One of the inclinations is conservatism which is a vague term itself. It simply means preserving the status quo. Its emergence goes back to Edmund Burke when he emphasized the importance of traditions, institutions, evolutionary change as opposed to the individualism and abstract ideas with artificially designed political systems (Robertson, 1991: 107). This does not necessarily imply an absolute opposition of a conservative to change itself. However, they are skeptical about changing a model in which a society is living with the fear that it will lead to destabilization. In terms of politics, a conservative is against the state interventionism in politics but believes that the state should set and enforce moral standards (Comfort, 1993: 122).

Huntington counts three theories of conservatism.⁸ The aristocratic theory defines conservatism as the reaction of feudal, aristocratic, agrarian classes against the French Revolution, liberalism, and the rise of bourgeoisie. It is the ideology of aristocracy just as liberalism is the ideology of bourgeoisie. The autonomous theory takes it as an autonomous system of ideas, universally valid without restricting it to particular classes. The situational theory sees it as the ideology which arises when a distinct challenge is directed at established institutions, and in which the defenders of these institutions use conservative ideology in their defense. Here there is a passionate support towards existing institutions. This situational theory seems to be the most applicable one in analyzing conservative ideology, according to Huntington.

Table-1 will further clarify the meaning of conservatism amongst other political ideologies. It suggests that there are conservatives and conservative reformists. The latter allows gradual change while the former preserves the status quo. The conservatives want to preserve social order and authority, with a strong central government, and they justify state intervention in basic health care and education as a

⁸ Mentioned in Zig Layton-Henry,(1982). *Conservative Politics in Western Europe*, St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 4-6.

model. In economics, conservatives suggest releasing the market from the control of the government. They want more freedom and prosperity while cutting taxes, domestic spending and regulation with a limited government? (Rabkin, 1993: 183-5).

Neo-conservatism, which was the most influential ideology in terms of the center-right parties of the 1980s, was first coined to refer to a tendency to reject some important assumptions of liberalism, such as 'progress is inevitable' and the 'government can ameliorate various social problems'. The neo-conservatives oppose both interventionist conservatism and liberal conservatism with the claim that the latter is concerned with liberty too much at the expense of order, and the former has a tendency to compromise with the left instead of opposing it (Robertson, 1991: 341-2).

Table 1 The Typology of Major Political Stances

RIGHT	Fascist	Supports the establishment of an elitist, totalitarian state by violence through the exploitation of extreme nationalism.
	Reactionary	Restoration of previous regime, order or “golden age”, if necessary by violence.
	Conservative	Preservation of the status quo; opposition to any change.
	Conservative Reformist	Gradual change through reform with the intention of preserving the substance of existing institutions, power and privilege.
	Social Democratic	Gradual change through reform with the long-term aim of achieving fundamental change.
LEFT	Marxist	Fundamental change of the entire system, if necessary by revolution

Source: Zig-Layton-Henry, (1982: 6).

Robertson (1991: 341-2) counts four themes central to neo-conservatism: firstly neo-conservatives support Western values and are hostile to communism. Secondly, they are skeptical about the role of the government in social life. Thirdly, they have a strong traditionalist approach towards issues of religion and morality, rejecting trends such as sexual liberation. Finally, they oppose the broad vision of equality, such as affirmative action and quotas. The equality of opportunity is enough in their understanding.

The other two concepts related to centrist tendencies are liberalism and neo-liberalism. Liberalism emerged with Adam Smith's rationalist and individualist beliefs. There are some basic characteristics of classical political and economic liberalism, such as competitive individualism, the limited role of state, a largely self-regulating economy and social order with the principle of 'laissez-faire', and a strongly protected sphere of privacy and individual rights.

It was the ideology of the bourgeoisie or middle class movement for freedom from monarchical or remaining feudal control. With incorporation of civil liberties and basic rights it has become a modern doctrine defending the independence of the ordinary citizen against any powerful authority. It has also become the triumphant ideology at the turn of the century. There are doubts about the suitability of standard left-right politics to liberalism, since it holds the commitment to equality proposed by the left politics and also contains the approval of individual human effort and freedom proposed by the right politics (Robertson, 1993: 284).

The revival and development of classical liberal ideas, such as the importance of individual, the limited role of the state, and the value of the free market is referred as Neo-liberalism. This took place following the Second World War with the pioneering of intellectuals led by Hayek. They suggest that allowing individuals to pursue their own interest will be much more beneficial compared to the government action. The market itself usually works better than when the government makes it work (Ashford, 1991: 185-6), because the market has the flexibility of the voluntary exchange of goods and services which will result in better satisfaction of the individuals.

Lastly, the concept of the "New Right" should be elucidated in this context. The right as a concept originally emerged from the French Estates General. It means belief in authority and obedience, and defense of whatever system of privilege exists in the society. This is different from conservatism.

Over the last three decades a new era of conservatism emerged in the advanced democracies in the world. It was an ideological and economic challenge to the mixed economy, interventionist state, and the welfare programs. This new neo-liberal or neo-conservative approach was pioneered by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the political arena, who paid attention to the writings of Hayek and Friedman, instead of Keynesian economics. They were also challenging government economic planning. The logic behind those criticisms was that the old system was dangerous to liberty and adversative to long-term economic growth. These movements or policies are labeled as new right, which is anti-socialist in character (Davies, 1991: 187). In fact, the entire collection of conservative and neo-liberal movements, which have emerged in North American and in Europe since 1960s, is labeled as new right. Those movements or tendencies are divided into two main groups as neo-liberal and neo-conservative (Davies, 1991: 187).

2.2 The Center Right Politics in Turkey

Within the context of Turkish politics, political parties have been traditionally classified as the leftist political parties, the rightist political parties, political parties in the center-left, and political parties in the center-right depending on their standing in the political spectrum, suggesting a center. Therefore, initially the meaning of 'center' in Turkish politics should be elucidated.

2.2.1 Center in Turkish Politics

The cultural center-periphery cleavage in Turkish politics has been dominant for a long period of time. The center in that cleavage was equated with the state and the centrality of the state by Mardin (Mardin, 1973:169-190). The traditional republican elite supported their bureaucratic political representative in the Republican People Party (CHP), while the countryside periphery was to be recognized as representatives of the middle class supported the parties of center-right tradition, the DP, the AP, and the ANAP. This cleavage was between the political ins and outs. However, this cleavage and the concept of center in this cleavage are completely different from the

concept of center, which was evaluated above with the approaches of Duverger and Sartori.

Apart from this, it has to be kept in mind that the center is moderate in the sense that its approach or ideology is acceptable by most of the society. The societal center is an area of values, understandings and attitudes accepted by the majority of the society, and regarded as the common characteristics of that society (Bilgin, 1999: 7). As a result, the center political parties are the ones who accept the worldviews of the average accumulated societal center, at least as one and propose to make politics and policies in parallel with their expectations. In that sense, the DP-AP line was in the center, since they have tried to meet the demands of the societal center rather than the statist center. The center-left, CHP of Ecevit in 1970s, was also in that parallel, since Ecevit wanted to meet the demands of that societal center. The DYP and the ANAP in 1980s were also reflecting the demands of this societal center.

Çalık (1998: 142-4) suggests that there are two centers in Turkey. The first one is 'political center' shaped by the official ideology, and all political parties on the left and right wings forming the 'center' of Turkish politics attempt to stay within the boundaries of this center in parallel with this official ideology. They perceive it as a vital necessity for their survival. However, the more they are within the boundaries of this official ideology, the further they are from the 'societal center', which is the other center reflecting the expectations, beliefs of the society. His understanding of 'societal center' is taken from Shils. According to Shils, society has a center. This center or central zone is a phenomenon of beliefs and values. It is the center of the values, beliefs and symbols dominating that society (Çalık, 1998: 122-123). With an interpretation of this center, Çalık claims that, in the 1990s, the Welfare Party (RP) and the National Action Party (MHP) are in the first place amongst the center parties, thus they are 'the most center' political parties. However, he says, 'societal center' is not equal to 'political center'. Societal center might become the political center, but this has not been achieved in Turkey due to fact that the 'authoritarian elite' have not let the society realize the above-mentioned fact. According to some

scholars of Turkish politics, the problem Turkey faced in the 1990s was the erosion and weakening of this traditional political center and in the 2002 elections the vacuum arising through this erosion or weakening is fulfilled by the societal center (Çarkoğlu,2002:35-37;İnsel,2003:295;Çaha,2004:120-48). According to this analysis, the most significant example of this occurrence was initiated by the DP in the 1950s, by the AP, and by the ANAP of Özal in the 1980s, and now by the AKP (Demirel, 2004:68). All off them can be evaluated in the societal center, since these parties have considered the interests and expectations of this political periphery (Çalık, 1998: 127-128 Çarkoğlu, 2002:35-37; Insel, 2003:295). Consequently, it might be said that in the 1990s, the center-right leaned more towards this traditional political center dominated by the official ideology and as a result has become more distant from the societal center. The center-right or the center-left as a defender of this status quo would be unavoidably weakened, and hence the rise of the AKP has been seen as a continuation of this peripheral challenge to the statist center of Turkish politics.

Çandar (1999: 135-8) claims that there has been a transformation of the Turkish political landscape through social and cultural changes in the society. These social transformations and the new demographic dynamics necessitate a re-definition of the Turkish political center. In the 1995 general elections the [political] center started to vacate the periphery, implying that the political center did not pay enough attention to the expectations of the periphery. In the 1999 general elections, with the evaporation of the periphery, everybody has come to the center (Yılmaz, 1999: 56-60). The point is that, especially during the process of February the 28th, the 'political' arena has been narrowed with the intervention of the outside factors. Politics has been restricted to the 'center'. When we look at the election campaigns, there were no concrete promises or ideological differences amongst the political parties. In other words, Turkish politics has been 'de-ideologized': it has been kept away from the ideologies.

The general values and attitudes of society might range from nationalist, religious ones, to cultural, moral ones. However, Bilgin counts, (1999: 8) honesty, having principles, keeping away from corruption, and tolerance might be some basic guidelines representing the behavioral codes of the values of the societal center. In that sense, in 1999, the honesty of Ecevit with no tinge of corruption might have increased the support of the societal center for his Democratic Left Party (DSP). And in the 2002 elections, the honesty of a newly established, uncontaminated party has increased the support of the societal center for the AKP. Before moving to the next chapter, Turkish conservatism and its relation with the center-right tradition in Turkey should also be clarified due to its importance in terms of both the centrist political tendencies in Turkey, and the political identity of the AKP.

2.2.2 Turkish Center-Right Politics and Conservatism

Conservatism in Turkey is one of the main arteries of right-wing politics together with liberal, nationalist and Islamic tendencies, so that it is considered an integral part of the right wing politics. Bora proposed that nationalism, conservatism and Islamism have been components of Turkish right (Bora, 1993: 8-9). According to Bora, nationalism was perceived as 'solid phase' of Turkish Right, because nationalism constituted the grammar of Turkish right. Islamism was conceptualized as a 'liquid phase' of the Turkish right since Islamism was one of the most blessed sources of means, values, images and rituals of the Turkish right. Conservatism was a kind of posture and perception; it was a style and 'a gas form' of the Turkish Right. According to Bora, "conservatism was the major position in the Turkish right in coping with modernization" (Bora, 1993: 11).⁹

Öğün explained conservatism in the Turkish right as tension between the political sphere and the civic sphere. It was a tension between the 'progressive republican ethic' and the 'conservative ethic' (Öğün, 1997: 114). In progressive

⁹ The Issue of Turkish Center-Right Politics and Conservatism will also be elaborated in the following chapters under the title of the Motherland Party and the Justice and Development Party.

republican ethic, paternalistic state, citizenship, and loyalty to the state were emphasized. In the conservative ethic, the stress was on an ethical individual. According to Ögün, conservatism tried to decrease the tension between these spheres. That was the tension between state and civil society and it could only be reduced if a harmony could be achieved between cultural values and political action. In other words, conservatism in the Turkish center-right can be seen as a moderator between the tension in the civic and political spheres (Ögün, 1997: 114-116). Furthermore, he argues that the meaning of conservatism in the Turkish center-right is not 'to preserve'; on the contrary, conservatism in the Turkish center-right is associated with change which is the indispensable element of the community in order to survive. In other words, community is seen as an organism and should be evolved in its nature (Ögün, 1997: 114-120).

Şerif Mardin wrote about the above-mentioned tension by using firstly the terms of the center-periphery relations in the study of Turkish politics. Mardin has examined center-periphery relations from Ottoman Empire to the present. He has stated that the relationship between the center and periphery always remained in its conflict with each other. The Ottoman Empire was a "two-tiered" society. This structure could be explained through the dichotomies of folk versus elite, palace culture (elite culture) versus folk culture (little culture), palace language versus folk language, and *Şeriat* (by *Kur'an*) versus *Kanun* (by *Sultan*) (Mardin 1991: 114-123).

By the use of 'center', Mardin meant the group of leaders, namely the militaristic and bureaucratic intelligentsia, who saw themselves as responsible for the elaboration of policies for the country, and who had the power and the authority to carry those policies through (Mardin, 1994: 162). Moreover, among them, the idea of backwardness of periphery and the opposition of periphery to innovations, modernization and development was the dominant idea. The modernization of cultural life and mass communication widened the space between the high and low culture, namely the center and the periphery. In that situation, the

association of Islam and Islamic culture with the periphery had been witnessed. The periphery was associated with backwardness. These developments were the seeds of the tension *vis-a-vis* the issue of secularization.

Hence, the conservatism of the Turkish center-right politics appears to be a cultural movement. One might say that its political aspect could not grow because of the lack of a platform on which it is allowed to oppose the status quo of Atatürk's reforms, and the regime established through the Republican reforms, so that conservatism in the Turkish center-right spread as a cultural and a populist movement of the public opposition (Mert, 2002: 46). It is obvious that in Turkey, it is impossible for political conservatism to challenge Kemalism. Therefore, the relation between conservatism and the Republicanism / Kemalism order can turn sour and problematic at any time. The mentioned relation arose from the division in the Turkish conservatism. Şerif Mardin explains this struggle with the concept of bureaucratic conservatism suggested by Mannheim (Mardin, 1992:40-50). The cadres that founded the Republic of Turkey continued this bureaucratic conservatism, because it came from the same social background as the Young Turks.¹⁰ The present political division of the Turkish electorate is based on the above-mentioned differentiation. The traditional republican bourgeois supported the bureaucratic conservatives and their political representative (CHP), while the countryside bourgeois to be recognized as representatives of the middle class supported the parties of the center-right tradition (Karpat, 1991:42-43). Thus, two different kinds of modernization movements were seen, owing to the above-mentioned division. The former aimed to modernize the state, law and culture and imposed its own model as a life style on the society. The latter give priority the economic and social progression, the free market, civilian and democratic freedoms via partial and gradual change that were based on traditional, religious and national values of a society. This is why the DP, the AP and the ANAP used such slogans as

¹⁰ For information on the Young Turks Movement and bureaucratic conservatism see Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri, 1895-1905*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992; Şerif Mardin "Culture change and Intellectual: A Study of the Effects of Secularization in Modern Turkey", in *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East*, ed. by Şerif Mardin, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1994.

“Brighten Horizons” (*Nurlu Ufuklar*), “A Greater Turkey” (*Büyük ve Muvaffak Türkiye*) and “Jumping to a New Age” (*Çağ Atlamak*) respectively (Demirel, 2004: 68). In other words, the ideological background of the rightist political attitude, which can be identified as the effort of reconciliation of the economic development and the national moral values, is constituted by conservatism (Mert, 2000: 45-78).

Overall, the Turkish center right-wing parties did not question the myth of industrialization and/or technology, despite the fact that such questioning is one of the distinctive attitudes of the right-wing parties worldwide. The Turkish right-wing parties advocated technological progress and industrialization, so that they acted as modernists for practical purposes and pioneered innovations. They had two ideals which may be summarized as ensuring economic progress and respecting the public’s will. Parallel to those ideals, anti-rationalist theses and critiques were developed by the Turkish center-right parties as a reaction to rapid social changes that were seen as an inappropriate.

Besides, the approach of leadership is another important aspect in conservatism of the Turkish center-right. In the center-right conservatism, the leader is primarily seen as a man of action and activity. The leader, who is the mirror of the tradition and values, should establish a direct and symbolic connection with the masses. However the power of the charismatic leader is also not limited in any way. What restricts him is just the variety in life itself (İrem, 1997:60-62).

At this stage briefly, the political approach of rightist conservatism in Turkey becomes more obvious. In the center-right conservatism, politics is the activity to achieve what is possible without falling into rationalism and radicalism. However, from the view of conservatism, radicalism and the policy of total change are approaches full of traps of mind (İrem, 2004: 15). In fact, conservatism is more and more dominant as an attitude and thought in Turkish politics, and advocates the evolutionary political practices that are to be reviewed and redesigned under the light of the traditions and experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TRADITION OF THE TURKISH

CENTER-RIGHT PARTIES

In this part, the development of the Turkish center-right will be analyzed from a historical perspective. After an overview of the general characteristics of the center-right politics both in the contemporary world and in Turkish politics, a brief history of the Turkish center-right and their ideas will be provided to prepare the background for comparison purposes, and to describe the identity of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) as it has unfolded in its rhetoric in the axis of the Turkish center-right politics.

3.1 From the Turkish-Right to the Center-Right

As mentioned in the previous Chapter, the fundamental political cleavage in the late Ottoman and early Republican era can be described as a center-periphery drift which always keeps its importance in Turkish politics, as proved by Şerif Mardin (1973). Until the 19th century, in the Ottoman Empire, this center-periphery drift had been among the incumbents of the Ottoman institutions, and people who were excluded from the state. During the 19th century, this cleavage was complicated with another one which resulted from the efforts of westernization that ended the old intra-elite unity and produced a new conflict. Under such circumstances, the Young Ottomans, who played a crucial role in the reforms of the Tanzimat ending in the first constitutionalist period were the constitutionalist and autocratic. The democratic experiment of the second constitutionalist period (1908-1918) was dominated by the Society for Union and Progress, *İttihat ve Terrakki Partisi*. The Unionists (ittihatçılar) were simply called nationalist, authoritarian, modernist, centralist and statist. Because of these characteristics of the Unionist, they were against three types of political groups. First one was the liberals who favored parliamentary democracy, administrative decentralization, more reliance upon the private initiative, and more

Ottomanist policy (a policy aimed at creating an "Ottoman" identity around the common fatherland and dynasty). Second were the religious traditionalists who were opposed to the secularist aspects of the Unionist policies (Ahmad, 1993:25-30). Last one was the non-Turkish minorities (Özbudun, 1988: 9). For our study, the opposition of the liberals is much more significant than other opposition groups, because this opposition re-emerged in the early years of the Republic as the Progressive Republican Party (TCF) which opposed the statist, centralist, revolutionist attitude of the People's Party (Karpas, 1991:42-3). In other words, the People's Party maintained the tradition of the Society for Union and Progress. In the early years of the Republic, the Free Party was another political party which partially defended the views of the liberals. And until the transition to the multi-party system, the center had always been in power. Yet, with the transition to the multi-party system the power relationships changed. The Republican People's (CHP) was the party of the center, and the Democrat Party (DP) was the party of the periphery at the time of transition (Ahmad, 1977:248).

With the transition to a multi-party system, the Democratic Party (DP) tried to represent the values of the liberal-democratic tradition connected with the views of Prince Sebahattin, the TCF and the SF. However, the DP was not able to free itself from the legacy of the single-party period; for example, its perception of the state was not different from the CHP, hence it was not successful in implementing liberal policies (Ahmad, 1993:132). Like the DP, the Justice Party (AP) did not apply the liberal economic and political policies, despite its emphasis on some liberal ideas in its Program in the early 1960s. One may state that Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party (ANAP) was the first center-right party which tried to apply the liberal economic policies. Consequently, Turkish politics in the late Ottoman period and in the Republican era, has experienced a sort of dualistic character: statist, centralist and positivist values, on the one hand, and liberal, pluralist and conservative-traditionalist values, on the other hand (Karaca, 2000:84-8). However, the political parties

espousing the liberal and conservative ideas have not fully escaped from the centralist and positivist characteristics of the Ottoman-Turkish legacy.

3.1.1 The Progressive Republican Party

The Progressive Republican Party (TCF), *Terrakıpperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, had a very important place in the formation of a center-right tradition in Turkey, as the first opposition political party advocating liberalism (Tosun, 1999:79-80). The TCF that was the short-lived party was founded in November 1924 by a number of leaders of the War of Independence - Rauf Orbay, Kazım Karabekir, Refet Bele, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Cafer Tayyar, Adnan Adıvar – in the aftermath of the Kemalist reform. After 1923, the nationalist movement evolved into a movement with a far reaching goal of radically transforming Turkish society and cultures (Ahmad, 1991: 67-8). At the same time, the plural political structure of such movement paved the way gradually to a monolithic power structure which was dominated by the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. This change involved the elimination of rival power centers within the nationalist movement and, in several cases, those who showed some resistance. The most serious resistance potentially dangerous to M. Kemal's position was the formation of the TCF, challenging the Kemalists, until it was closed under the *Takrir-i Sukun Kanunu* (Law on the Maintenance of Order) passed by the TGNA in June 1925.

Zürcher argued that the main reason for the TCF's opposition was that its founders and leaders were fully convinced that they had as much right and legitimacy to govern Turkey as M. Kemal and his "new" men. For prominent nationalist leaders, the heritage of the movement "was being monopolized illegitimately by one guardian of the true traditions of the move-merit" (Zürcher, 1991: 111) Also, they declared that they were opposing personal rule (*Şahsi Saltanat*), an obvious reference to M. Kemal's personal ascendancy, and attacked the anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies of the government (Zürcher,1991:111-3).

However, the clash of personalities is not itself enough to explain the emergence of the TCF's opposition. It was also much more: it was a fundamental clash of world views. The men who formed the TCF preferred continuity in contrast to the revolutionary approach of the Kemalists; that is, the TCF wanted *Islahat* (reform) rather than *Inkilap* (revolution). Furthermore, they were against the centralization of power envisaged in the Kemalist program, and proposed local initiative involving the people in their own affairs as the vital step towards democracy (Ahmad, 1991: 66).

Both in the TCF's manifesto and program, the party advertised itself as liberal. In its manifesto, it emphasized economic and, particularly, political liberalism by which the will of people had to be expressed continuously (Tosun, 1999:79). Although this could be done partially through public opinion and the press, this was not effective enough. The real solution was the formation of competing political parties. In this way, the manifesto stated its opposition to despotism, and stressed individual rights, judicial independence, and administrative decentralization (Tosun, 1999:79). In the general principles of its program, The Turkish state was a Republic based on the sovereignty of the people. In short, liberalism and democracy formed the basis of its actions, supporting general and individual liberties, promising a reduction in the role of the state, and establishing clear separation of powers. In the chapter of its program on social policies, which was a good example of its decentralization, welfare was the responsibility of the municipality and city districts, but that the fulfillment of this responsibility to be found in supporting and encouraging private initiative. The emphasis was clearly on solidarity through charitable and mutual help organizations, not state interference (Zürcher; 1991: 97-102). It is on all these points that there is a clear difference of emphasis among the TCF's program and manifesto, on the one hand, and the TCF's policies, on the other hand.

The label "post-independence conservative" seems an appropriate label quite adequate for the TCF (Zürcher, 1991:98). Frey has argued that there lay the "conservative aim of making the new Turkey conform as far as possible to the customs and traditions of the old change was to be gradual and evolutionary, not

swift and revolutionary in the Kemalist mode" (Zürcher: 1991: 98). They were conservative only in the sense of being the conservative wing of the same Young Turk/nationalist movement, of which Kemalists formed a radical wing.

3.1.2 The Free Party

The Free Party (SF), *Serbest Firka*, was the second important opposition party of the Republic. The experiment with the SF came about as a result of several reasons and conditions emerging in the late 1920s. The reforms that had taken place during the period of 1922-1930 brought about some sort of antagonism to the government and the regime. Moreover, adverse economic conditions, substantially affected by the world economic crisis in 1929, and continuing rebellions in Eastern Anatolia greatly added to the discontent which threatened to an important degree the Republic and its reforms. Under such circumstances, the SF was established by Fethi Okyar with the encouragement of M. Kemal who urged others to join it, including his sister. The choice of Fethi Okyar and the selection of other SF leaders were possible because they were not challengers to M. Kemal. It is generally accepted that the purpose of establishing this party was to absorb the accumulated discontent and to control existing social opposition.¹¹

Mustafa Kemal did not only determine the people who founded the SF, but also the nature of the SF's program. Its program consisted of several points, such as republicanism, secularism and liberalism: direct elections; abolition of monopolies, tax reductions and a free exchange, and importation of foreign capital (Tosun, 1999:80). The main objective of the SF was to oppose the CHP and to criticize its failure in the economic field (Tosun, 1999:81). This attracted to it immediately a large group of enthusiastic followers who courageously supported' the party. Growing popularity of the SF and its criticism of the government were interpreted by

¹¹ On the establishment of the the Free Party (SF) and this period, see Tevfik Çavdar,(1985), "Serbest Fırka" in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, p. 2053; Kemal Karpat,(1966) *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to A Multi-Party System*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 64-65.

the Republicans not only as a threat to their own rule, but to that of the regime itself. In the eyes of government, this support came chiefly from reactionaries (Tosun, 1999:81). M. Kemal and the CHP justified the abolition of the SF, which was dissolved by its leader in November 1930, by alleging that it had become the vehicle for counter-revolutionaries. Consequently, the objective of founding the SF, one may argue, was not to pass to the democratic system through compromising the single party system. The SF which had some similarities by the TCF especially in terms of economic policies, prepared the ground for the Democratic Party, established in 1945 and dominated Turkish politics in the 1950s.

3.1.3 The Democratic Party

The transition to multi-party politics started in 1946 when the CHP regime allowed the formation of opposition parties. The reasons that stood behind the decision of passing to the multi-party system were the favorable international environment following the victory of the democratic regimes in the Second World War, the long tradition of westernization that implied democratization and the social unrest due to wartime shortages and profiteering (Ahmad, 1993:70-89).

The Democratic Party (DP), which was the most significant and influential opposition party, was founded on 7 January 1946 by four prominent parliamentarians of the CHP - Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Koprülü and Refik Koraltan. Only four years after its establishment, the DP came to power with an overwhelming electoral victory on 14 May 1950, and also it won the 1954 and 1957 elections. After remaining in power for ten years, it was ousted by the military on 27 May 1960 (Eroğul, 1998:100-130).

The DP as a coalition of various types of oppositions to the CHP brought together urban liberals and religious conservatives, commercial middle class and the urban poor, etc. (Tosun, 1999:84-5). Such heterogeneity of the DP coalition suggested that the dominant social cleavage of the era was cultural rather than socio-economic in nature. The common denominator of the DP supporters was their

opposition to the state officials (Özbudun, 1988: 16). In this sense, it shares some similar characteristics with the TCF which emerged because of the cultural cleavage and the world view differences, and both share the views on liberal economic and democratic policies. Unlike the TCF, the DP was permitted to be established with a limitation that it would respect Atatürkist principles (Eroğul, 1998: 29-45; Ahmad, 1999:125-140).

The specific issues put forward by the DP in general involved the high cost of living, lack of freedom, the existence of anti-democratic laws, and some abuses by the government. The Democrats saw the concept of democracy as a ‘panacea’ for almost any problem, from tax inequality to gendarmerie pressure (Tosun, 1999:84-5). In its four years in power, the DP aimed at advancing democracy by preventing government interference and with expanding individual freedoms. However, in the later years, because of the failure of the economy, a number of freedoms were limited – e.g. serious measures against opposition were taken - in order to ensure stability. Beside the economic failure, the DP's perception on the state, which was not so different from the CHP is another factor responsible for the failure of democracy (Tosun, 1999:87-91). Like the CHP, it considered all institutions to be at the service of the party in power; here, it did not oppose itself to the transcendentalist state. However, differences between the two parties were not so great; yet some distinctive features emerged in their perspectives to the role of the state, bureaucracy, private enterprises, and the local initiative. The lack of political culture conducive to a democratic government was a third factor. It can be said that the legacy of the single-party period continued to influence the DP's attitude, such as intolerance towards political opposition.¹²

As noted above, political conflict between the CHP and the DP emerged as a difference of attitude in terms of values and norms. In this respect, Islam was seen as

¹² For further elaboration, see Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, (1991), “*The Democrat Party, 1945-1960*”, in *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, ed. by M. Heper and Y.M. Landau ,London: I. B. Tauris p. 125-7.

the most potent issue. The DP government, which itself became associated with the resurgence of Islam, permitted wider grounds for religious practice and education, without compromising Atatürkist's reforms (Sarıbay, 1991: 129). With appeals to religion and religious symbols, it emerged to be such a party that fought to hinder the domination of the bureaucratic state over civil society. The conflict between the DP and the bureaucracy, which retained its CHP loyalties under multi-party politics and resisted the DP's efforts to consolidate its political power, was perhaps the most significant factor leading to the breakdown of the democratic regime (Tosun, 1999:116-119).

3.1.4 The Justice Party

After the 1960 military intervention, Ragıp Gümüşpala, Şinasi Osman, Tahsin Demiray, Mehmet Yorgancıoğlu, Cevdet Perin participated in the establishment of a new party which would be a continuation of the Democrat Party. Only four of the eleven founders of the party had any relations with the DP. The Justice Party (AP) was set up in 1960, and Gümüşpala became its chairman. As one of the three political parties - the Justice Party, the Nation Party (MP) and the New Turkey Party (YTP) - competing to the successors to the Democrats, the Justice Party won only 35 percent of the votes in the 1961 elections (Kara, 2004:48). Following a period of unstable coalition governments, the AP gradually established itself as the principle heir to the DP. In the elections of 1965, it gained an absolute majority and formed a government under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel (Kara, 2004:48; Çavdar: 2004:158). In spite of the decline of its votes, in 1969, it retained its absolute majority in the Assembly, and continued to be in power until the military forced AP government to resign in March 1971(Kara, 2004:97-104). While its votes decreased fully by one-third in the 1973 elections, the AP remained the dominant party of the center-right; then, it returned to power as a series of Demirel-led coalitions, after the short-lived CHP-MSP (National Salvation Party) coalition of 1973-4 (Ahmad,1993:165-6).

The support received from a number of influential groups seemed to be a major factor in the success of the AP in its formative years. A body of former officers and DP members became actively involved in its foundation. In turn, for Demirel, the AP was a mass party which represented the interests of all class-city dwellers and villagers, workers and employers (Ahmad, 1993:166). For example, the AP aimed at representing the interest of both the industrial workers and businessmen: it was able to do this successfully (Levi, 1991: 139; Çavdar, 2004:158). The coalition on the right based on the periphery that was forged first by the DP and followed by the AP, showed signs of breaking down during the late 60s and early 70s, and so the situation to the right of the AP was more fragmented. Emerging religious and nationalist movements in addition to the personalistic type of leadership were aided by such fragmentation (Tosun, 1999:119-128).

The AP and its Democrats predecessor were identified in the 1950s and 1960s more with liberal and pro-private enterprise policies, while the CHP leaned toward estatism, emphasizing the leading role of the state in economic development (Tosun, 1999:94-106). The AP always accorded an important role to the private sector, and also its liberal anti-statism was stronger than that of the DP. In its programmatic theme, the private sectors and free-market economy were regarded as necessary for a democratic regime; the public sector may start when the private sector ends (Tosun, 1999:100-119). However, as it came to power, the share of the governmental sector in economy was not limited and the state economic enterprises continued to powerfully exist (Levi, 1991: 140; Weiker, 1981: 131-2). At that point, it may be regarded to be a pragmatic party. Following the years of its government, the AP thus gradually arrived at the idea of mixed economy. Furthermore, the AP as a center-right platform was identified mainly with business and modernized agrarian interest (Weiker, 1981: 130-2). Like the DP in the 1950s, the AP in the 1960s and 70s continued to represent a peripheral discontent with the policies of the modernizing bureaucratic-intellectual elite during the single-party period. Because it was a party based on 'national will' and on a majoritarian democracy conception, the AP was anathema to the bureaucracy which had already received quite a big share of power

thanks to the 1961 Constitution (Levi, 1991: 135-150). As the opposite of the DP, the AP was very cautious in its relations with the military. For instance, in order to show the good will to the military, the AP-dominated parliament elected Cevdet Sunay, the President of the Republic, and Demirel turned the National Security Council (MGK) into an active tool in everyday politics. At the same time, the AP skillfully used patronage and clientelistic ties in its grassroots organization inherited from the strong DP organization. During the 1970s, it was an ideologically pivotal party, while it was weaker than before (Tosun, 1999:116-119). Ideological differences between the AP and the CHP were so great, creating hostility among two parties, and among electorates.

In fact, it should be mentioned here that not only for the AP but also the DP and other center-right parties after the 1980s, the term ‘national will’ became a key term and the core concepts of the center-right politics of democracy. Hence, democracy in the Turkish center-right politics first meant to transfer political power from the minority to the majority; that is, it was equated with majority rule. However, after the military interventions, the term ‘national will’ also started to refer to the civilian politics. For instance, Demirel, as the leader of the AP, used this term to refer to the superiority of elected politicians over appointed military bureaucrats in the same way as its successor, the DYP, who would re-try the same reference to the ‘national will’ in the 1990s (Mert,2000:52-60).

3.2 The Center-Right Parties of Turkey in the Post-1980 Era

After the 1980s, center-right wing discourse was transformed from a losing to a winning position by the ANAP under Özal (Mert, 2000:73-9). Starting in the 1980s, the center-right politics in Turkey changed both its style and discourse to accommodate social changes; that is, the culmination of ongoing urban migration and the impact of changes in media and communications. Thus, in this part it looks at the continuities and / or changes in the center-right politics after the 1980s.

3.2.1 The Motherland Party

In this section, an attempt will be made to explain the Motherland Party (ANAP)'s position in centre politics and its ideology since it successfully established itself as a center-right party and in effect became the representative of the centrist political orientation that emerged in the late 1970s (Ergüder, 1988:152-153; Tosun, 1999:222). This analysis would enable us to provide a background for a comparison of the two parties: the ANAP and the AKP. In so doing, we can define the center-right political tradition which shows some similar characteristics from the DP to the AKP, such as compromising liberalism with conservatism, reflecting pragmatic-realistic side more than a coherent ideology, moderating religiosity to reconcile it to modern life style, and representing an anti-elitist anti-bureaucratic stance. Especially via this comparative analysis, one can find an answer to the questions whether the policies and the identity of the AKP reflect this Turkish center-right tradition.

3.2.1.1 The Major Objective of the ANAP under Özal Leadership: Targeting the Center of the Politics

In the post-1980 period, the ANAP governments under Özal's leadership rose in the Turkish political landscape with no claim to represent a pre-coup party and addressed a new set of issues. In this period, the ANAP displayed a more clear center-right identity based on a liberal economic stance, on an appeal to nationalist and conservative values, and on the elimination of ideological rivalries by means of a consensus-oriented approach. Moreover, the party presented itself as a catch-all party by being pragmatic and realistic rather than doctrinaire. In sum, Özal's ANAP became the dominant figure in Turkey during the 1980s.

The Motherland Party was founded in 1983 by Turgut Özal, a former economy bureaucrat who was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister by the military administration in 1980, and who later became the president. In the 1983 elections, ANAP received 45 percent of the votes and 53 percent of the seats in the National

Assembly (Çavdar, 2004:276). This trend was further accentuated in the 1987 elections, when the ANAP won 46.9 percent of the Assembly seats with only 36.3 percent of the votes (Çavdar, 2004:280). The military coup of September 12, 1980 was a turning point in Özal's career. Following the coup, the National Security Council (MGK) administration asked Özal to remain in charge of the economy as Deputy Prime Minister. After assuming this position, Özal continued to implement the economic austerity and reform measures that he had begun under Demirel, who was the Prime Minister. He resigned from his post in July 1982 in the wake of a financial scandal that shook the country's banking sector. When military rule moved toward limited political liberalization by removing some of restrictions on electoral politics, Özal formed his own political organization, the Motherland Party (ANAP), in May 1983. Although no fewer than fifteen parties were set up, the armed forces permitted only three parties, including Ozal's, for clustering of votes around a few central parties (Cemal, 1989:24-44; Güner, 2000:35-36).

Since the MGK regime disbanded all the parties that existed before 12 September 1980 and also banned their leaders and rank and file from politics for ten and five years, respectively, the majority of the ANAP were new comers to Turkish politics. Özal's objective was to form a party representing four different tendencies of ideas at the same time: conservatism, nationalisms, social democrat and liberal (Tosun, 1999:221). Turgut Özal, in his speech after he had formed the party, claimed that, "Our party is based on the values nationalism, conservatism, social justice and free-market. Our party will be the voice of the moderate (*ılımlı*) right, and no extremist values can find a place in our party" (Tuncer, 1987: 17). Thus, we may say that he tried to strike a balance between the multiple fractions in his party, and identified the party with a centrist position which meant the articulation of a consensus-oriented, pragmatic, and conciliatory attitude to political issues. Namely, the party projected an image of a moderate force in politics in sharp contrast to the instability of the 1970s. Therefore, the party's central administrative organs looked as if they were representatives of the center of the Turkish left-right spectrum, as broadly as possible

(Ergüder and Hofferbert, 1991:152-169; Ayata A., 1993:32-37). Many commentators saw the ANAP as indicative of an emerging trend among the Turkish electorate. According to the prominent students of Turkish politics, progress towards a centrist political orientation had been made via the Motherland Party.¹³ This led them to see the ANAP as representative of a new cleavage in Turkish politics that went beyond the traditional party alignments in Turkey (Ergüder; 1988: 155; Sakallıoğlu, 1996 a: 1249; Köker, 1996: 203). In fact, the heterogeneous structure of the party facilitated the conciliatory style of politics and moderation in contrast to the polarized and non-conciliatory style of politics of the pre-1980 days.

Turgut Özal, the founder and the leader of the ANAP from 1983 to 1989, was formerly close to the Justice Party and its leader, Demirel. Özal had served under Demirel – the Prime Minister of the AP governments – on several occasions: in 1969 as the Director of the State Planning Organization (DPT), and in 1979 as the economic adviser to the Prime Minister. In addition, because his brother was one of the influential members of the MSP, he was also related to the MSP. He first tried to enter national politics on the eve of the 1977 national elections on its İzmir list. It is for this reason that Ergüder (1988: 155) defines Özal's position in Turkish pre-1980 politics, somewhere between the moderate and more secular right of AP, and the religious right of the MSP.

Scholars identified many factors that brought about unexpected victory of the ANAP in the 1983 elections. In the first place, the success of the ANAP appears to be associated with the tendency of the masses commitment to free elections linked with better living standards and the dramatic socio-economic development in the eyes of the people. Amidst poor performances of the Demirel and Ecevit governments in managing the economy and the conflict-ridden politics between 1974 and 1980, the Turkish electorate had already searched for a new centrist solution to the maladies of

¹³ To evaluate this trend among the Turkish electorate see, Ruşen Çakır, Kemal Can, "Merkez Nasıl Çöktü", Milliyet Daily, 12.08.1996.

the party system in order to ensure regime stability. Instead of ideological polarization, the Turkish electorate preferred stable government and efficient delivery of services and solution of the problems (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 48; Tünay, 1993: 21; Mert, 2000: 56). The ANAP seemed to have sensed this centrist and pragmatic leaning of the Turkish electorate. The party leadership responded to this demand of the electorate with a conciliatory and moderate style of politics. Ergüder argued that the ANAP appeared to have opened up a place for itself at the centre-right of Turkish politics that had been occupied by the AP in the pre-1980 days (Ergüder, 1988: 159).

Moreover, Özal projected himself as a “qualified technician” who turned to politics, and who “knows the rational formulas of Turkey’s problems and as ready to implement them without political considerations” (Ergüder, 1988:164). Özal was accepted as a figure capable of legitimizing the supremacy of civilian control in politics through elections and providing the civilization the state apparatus, since most of the elected mayors and local officials had been replaced by retired military officers (Cemal, 1989:222-238). Although he had worked as the military regime’s economic policy-maker from 1980 through 1982, he managed to represent himself and his party as competent of facilitating the transition from authoritarian rule and the restoration of competitive politics (Köker, 1996: 23; Özkazanç, 1995: 1220).

Scholars, then, credited the ANAP for its significance in successfully establishing itself as a political force for the “softening of political conflict” and in creating “policy-oriented dialogue” in the post-1980 political life (Göle, 2000: 425). In addition to this new style of politics, the most outstanding aspect of the ANAP’s identity was its insistence on the policies aimed at reducing the role of the state in the economy (Heper, 1989). It was the ANAP governments that raised the question of the reorganization of the state administrative set-up and bureaucracy to promote efficiency and the state’s capacity to serve the people, the need to strengthen local government, and challenging the existing relationship between the military (Cemal,

1989:11-112,115-118). This style of politics is not unfamiliar, as it always becomes one of the most potent aims of the center-right tradition from the beginning (Çaha, 2004: 131). The ANAP's emphasis on the efficient delivery of services to the citizens made the well-conducted campaign to show the relationship between taxes and service delivery. These were the other reasons which opened up the place for the ANAP at the center-right of Turkish politics (Ergüder, 1988: 159; Tünay, 1993: 22).

Following an extended period of economic austerity measures under the Özal's control during the military regime (1980-1983), Özal's economic experience and his policies gave the impression of being responsive to the strengthening economically of the "main pillar" (*orta direk*) of the society and securing economic growth. In fact, throughout his political career, Özal remained a devotee of the free-market economy. Critical decisions for the transformation of the economy from an import-substituting one to an export-oriented one were taken under his leadership. In order to render the Turkish economy an internationally competitive one, he was ahead of the others in recognizing global economic trends of the 1980s. As a result, this characteristic remained the most consistent feature of his politics that went on also with the ANAP (Özkazanç, 1995: 1219; Tünay, 1993: 21; Acar, 1991: 177).

This means that, unlike former center-right parties, the ANAP's success was shifting a hitherto state-dominated economy to an export-oriented free-market economy where the state would be cut down size by proceeding with the economic program of the military administration. Also, this represented an effort to divorce economic policy from decisions and priorities dependent upon the patron-client relations associated by the politics of the DP and the AP (Ergüder 1988: 157).

However, the ANAP did not give the same importance to political liberalization as did in the economic realm. In 6 September 1987, the constitutional referendum was held on the question of lifting the ban on the political activities of the pre-1980 political leadership. Prime Minister Turgut Özal and his party actively campaigned against lifting the ban; Özal argued that the return of the prominent party leaders of

the 1970s, such as Demirel and Ecevit, to politics would destabilize the fragile political system and jeopardize the chances of consolidating democracy in Turkey (Cemal, 1989:211-221). In terms of the ANAP, this kind of behavior may result an idea that the ANAP could not be expected to commit itself to the politics of democracy. Furthermore, it signaled that the ANAP leadership was leaving from the conciliatory and moderate style of politics.

In the 1987 elections, ANAP's electoral performance gave clear indications of a downward trend. Especially the result of the referendum, which was in favor of pre-1980's leaders, led to this decline.¹⁴ However, the ANAP held on to power thanks to the electoral law, which was amended before the 1987 election by the ANAP majority in the TBMM to favor the front-runner. Thus the ANAP received 36 percent of votes, a fall from 45 percent in 1983. But thanks to the new electoral arrangements it managed to get a higher percentage of the seats in the TBMM (Sakallıoğlu, 1996: 1251). Despite the high rates of economic growth between 1983 and 1987, Özal's economic modernization program had run into serious problems in the second half of the decade, such as a runaway inflation that increased from 30 % in 1983 to 80 % in 1988 (Ergüder, 1988:160; Cemal, 1989:256-283). Furthermore, the economic policies had worsened the gap between the rich and the poor, as the latter experienced a drastic decline in their standard of living and real income. Electoral competition with the comeback of the pre-1980s politicians also gave way to a more confrontation approach that was effective in the steady decline of the electoral support for the ANAP government (Ergüder, 1988: 160-161; Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 47; Özkazanç, 1995: 1222- 1223; Tünay, 1993: 25).

By the end of 1986 and early 1987, Turkey witnessed the rise of party competition and fragmentation in the party system because of the emergence of the old parties and leaders of the right. To maintain its position, the ANAP therefore resorted to the same economic policy measures popular at election time, as in the 1970s: higher

¹⁴ In the referendum, 50.3 % of the voters voted 'yes', and 49.7 % 'no' to the Constitution.

agricultural support prices, and heavy spending in constituencies, which led to the rise of economic deficiencies and problems. Here, it might be asserted that these policies caused the re-emergence of the patron-client relations, excessive expenditures at election time to win, and a less conciliatory attitude toward the press and the opposition (Ergüder, 1988: 165; Özkazanç, 1995: 1221). With the result of the 1989 local elections, the party's downward trend further sped and it captured a mere 21.8 percent of the votes, whereas other political parties of the left and the right, especially DYP, strengthened their positions (Sakallıoğlu, 1996: 1251). As a result, the discourse of the ANAP that based on the claim of being the representation the four strands became increasingly visible, so the party started to search for a new image and "a return the spirit of 1983" started to be openly discussed within the party (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 49).

In 1989, the Özal era in the ANAP was ended by his election as the President of the Republic. In the general elections held a few months after, Mesut Yılmaz was selected as the new leader of the party. The ANAP was defeated at the polls in October 1991.

3.2.1.2 The Approach of the ANAP to the Economic Liberalism and Democracy

As a political project, the ANAP had three overriding objectives: to introduce market liberalism, and to create the conditions for the market economy by limiting the scope of the state in the economic realm, and to restore the harmonious social environment by restoring the authority of the government. The first objective was deliberately promising to set out an alternative political regime in the realm of economics that had not been fully established. The second objective was a solution to the specific political condition of the 1970s but behind that, the idea was the restructuring of the society *via* the regulation by the authority of the government.

The party had come to the power with the motto of 'freer market, smaller state'. In fact, the ANAP governments accused the previous governments of being too closed

in both international relations and in the economic sphere. Özal pointed out that “with the ANAP, we aim to change these closed policies, and we will succeed to an extent. Not only in the international sphere, but some economic changes were held, because being open to the international environment politically necessitates a strong market economy. For this purpose, we indulge in a serious of both political and economic reforms” (Özal, 1986: 20). This change from the state-led economy to the free-market economy had started in the January 24, 1980 Economic Program, and it was followed by the military administration. The ANAP government dedicated itself to that program, and therefore the essential change “was in the economic realm, which was undoubtedly a top priority for Özal” (İnsel, 2003: 25).

The January 24, 1980 economic program had brought about a drastic shift towards the market economy. Liberalization attempts during 1980-86 were introduced as part of Stabilization Program. After more than seven years of uninterrupted implementation of the program, the results were mixed: remarkable achievements were paralleled by complete failures. This adjustment program was implemented in three stages. During the first state in 1980-81, the aim was to achieve some degree of economic stability by adopting fiscal and monetary policies and emphasizing export-oriented growth. In the second stage, 1982-83, the government tried to maintain the climate of economic stability and to set a relative price realignment. Finally, the third stage started with the transition to ‘civilian rule’ in November 1983 under the leadership of Turgut Özal, and continued until the 1987 general elections¹⁵. Therefore, what the ANAP government mainly did was proceeding with deeper liberalization of the trade and monetary regimes by adopting this liberalization program (Yeşilada, and Füsunoğlu, 1992; 191).

Thus, the major policy objectives of the Özal era in the realm of the economy were privatization, abolishment of restrictions on importation, cutting government

¹⁵ To learn more information about this liberalization program, see; Boratav Korkut (1988), *Türkiye İktisat tarihi 1908 – 1985*, İstanbul. Gerçek Yayınları.

expenditures, promotion of export-oriented and / or supply-side economics and the like, accompanied with an effort to renew bureaucracy by disregarding already existing institutions in favor of recently formed ones (Yeldan, 2002: 25). However, this transformation did not occur within a short time period. The party was supporting the gradual change. That perhaps may originate from the effect of the military, since both the political and economic policies of the party were under tight scrutiny by them and / or due to the political environment of the time, the proposed changes in the economic activities took place in accordance with a step-by-step strategy in order not to disturb both the opposing sections in society and the more conservative supporters and participants of the party.

Economic liberalism was the most important policy plank of the ANAP government. For the ANAP, economic liberalism was very important, because it would pave the way for democratization. According to Özal, political liberalization could only be achieved via economic liberalization (Cemal, 1989:294). This was perhaps the first time that the economy had priority over politics. Economic policies were legitimized by claiming that these policies were going to promote the future interests of the society. Ideologically, economic liberalism and political liberalism were separated from each other (Özkazanç, 2005:637-641; Toker, 2005:116-117). As Özal put it;

If there is controlled and strong etatist economy in any country, one can not speak of the full existence of freedom of expression and freedom of the press... the reason why we support a free market competition system is that it paves the way for freedoms in expression (Çalık,1992: 11).

Özal explained political freedoms in economic terms. Ideas were like goods in the market. The supporters of the ideas were firms. Suppliers of those particular goods anticipated the demands from customers. If a particular good in the market could not find demand, then that firm was destined to go bankrupt. An idea could not be rejected a priori before it entered the market: “If you label an idea deserving freedom of expression and if you label another not fit for that freedom, this would not be

compatible with economic liberalism... Freedom of expression and free market mechanism should co-exist” (Çalık, 1992:48). Free competition and the free market were advertised as the best environment for freedom of the press and expression of thoughts.

Owing to the overemphasis of the prerequisites of the free market economy, the role attributed to the state by the ANAP government is worth focusing on. This issue can best be dealt with under two subtitles because of the both liberal and conservative aspects: the state in economic realm and the state in the social realm. The change in the role granted to the state is because of the economic and social problems of the 1970s. The deep economic crises of the 1970s necessitated the reformulation of the relation between the state and the economy in the 1980s, and the political polarization and social unrest in society necessitated a different type of relation between the state and society (Yayla, 2005:584-588; Özkazanç, 2005:637-640). In the economic realm, a dramatic shift of philosophy occurred concerning the role of the state in economic affairs. The structural program of the 24 January Decisions represented a fundamental break with the policies of the previous decades. The ANAP was against the direct intervention of the state in the economy. Turgut Özal and the top leaders of the party encouraged private entrepreneur-ship and attempted to leave the market to its own devices. Özal said that “the main role of the state in economic progress is allocative. The state should encourage the private entrepreneur, co-ordinate the economic relations of individuals and institutions and solve the problems which may arise between the economic entities” (Özal, 1987: 50). The state in the economic realm supported by the ANAP is, therefore, a night-watchman state; not intervening but correcting and allocating.

As for the conservative aspects, the role of the state in the social realm in the 1980s was seen as that of the construction and preservation of peace and trust among different groups in the society. Formation of a peculiar idea of justice was another important task of the state. There arose a different understanding of justice, since the

moral values were determining in the society, and since the notion of public good had a privileged status over the private one. The notion of justice implied virtue. The state provided for the unity, security, and order of the nation, and preserved a stable environment for social and economic activities. The co-ordination and allocation of justice, trust, aid, social service and activity were the main tasks of the state: "The aim is not the wealth of the nation as a result of wealth of the state, but the wealth of the state via the wealth of the nation"¹⁶. "[I]f the state engages in the facilities that a citizen could do, then the state cannot fulfill its own tasks. The state cannot be a shopkeeper. We have seen the examples of that in ...[the] past and we have witnessed the failure of those policies" (Özal: 1986). Özal argued that the state should be rolled back and the individual should be rolled forward. The concrete structures are the individual and society; the state and nation are only abstract terms. At the centre of society, there lies the individual, as "the coming century is that of the individual. We have to make the state smaller. The state is not a father or God. The state is not the solution of unemployment. A strong state has less but able and elite officials" (Çalık, 1992:24).

This understanding is a distinguishing feature of the Özal governments from the pre-1980 center-right parties. The term elite officials referred to the "princes" of Turgut Özal, a small group of high level bureaucrats having extra administrative power (Cemal, 1989:148).

In sum, the process of liberalization of the economy and the "neutralizing and reintegration, if not eliminating the anti-system tendencies on the right" (Ergüder, 1991: 565) - and primarily on the left - called for a strong state. Existence of a strong state implies a state distinct from society. Political struggles in society diminish and people become only interested in the economic activities. The political one turns out to be a profession and that sphere is believed to be those who are talented to be a

¹⁶ Party Program of the ANAP.

politicians. Thus the political, economic and the social domains began to be thought as compartmentalized in and after the 1980s (İnsel, 2003:296).

The state was conceptualized, namely, as strong and limited, and one that stands above the society (Özkazanç, 2005:637-640). This emphasis on economic liberalism did not only change the state's role but also everything in the market shared the same fate. As democracy too was considered from the same perspective, then freedom, equality, participation, and civil society came to have some specific meanings (Köker, 1995: 203 – 6; Özkazanç, 1995: 1221-1223; Mert, 2000; 61-65). Freedom was defined as freedom to invest. Equality was defined as equality in opportunity. Participation could not be equated with demonstrations and strikes, because they were considered detrimental for the country since they were based on sectional interests. Participation was defined as participation in economic affairs. Participation of the masses in politics would have degenerated the neutrality of the state institutions and the decision-making institutions. Civil society was seen as an instrument in strengthening the market. In other words, for the ANAP governments political liberalism was considered as a second step following the economic liberalism. This trend was not unique to Turkey. In the 1980s, both in England and America were affected by the same wave. The new right ideology was the common path in the 1980s in all rightist governments (Özkazanç, 2005:640-644; Bora, 2005:599-600; Sarıbay, 2000:456).

However, it must be noted that Özal played a critical role in the transition to the democracy in the post-coup era in Turkey. Firstly, he emphasized legitimizing the supremacy of civilian control in politics through elections and referendum. One of his first moves after coming to power was to hold local elections in early 1984. This was a critical step in the civilization of the state apparatus, since most of the elected mayors and local officials had been replaced by retired military men following the 1980 coup. A parliamentary election in 1987 and two referendums in 1987 and 1988 can be interpreted as his efforts to legitimize his own role, and to consolidate the

ANAP's position as the leading party of the center-right. However, this strategy also included the legitimization of the institutions of electoral competition, interest representation, and executive accountability (Yayla, 2005: 584-585).

The ANAP's further impact on democratization in the 1980s can be seen in his different solutions and in Özal's personal courage to freely debate many "taboo subjects" (Acar, 1991: 177). One such topic was the policy towards the Kurds. Özal displayed a non-conventional approach with the Kurdish question. He took this as a cultural rather than economic issue, and suggested that the option of the federation should be debated (Gençkaya, 1996: 63). But this approach to the Kurdish question was very much debated. He did not actively pursue a policy contrary to the military's position (Bora, 2005:594-596). Other than the Kurdish problem, the Turkish public sphere was introduced with many new actors like environmentalists, religious people, and repressed woman (Göle, 2000:430-3). This was a new case for Turkish politics. These new identities have emerged with the claim that their identities should be accepted as equal to the others. In the 1980s, with the help of the mass media, these issues became topical. Class struggle, in the 1980s, had become marginal and the discussions had twisted towards the new identities. It is claimed that class struggle could not be the solution for the management of the complex societies. Micro-scale struggles have taken the place of the macro-scale struggles. Therefore, the 1980s witnessed a successful attempt to diminish the potential in the society (Sakallıoğlu, 1996: 76) *via* imposing imaginary struggles of identities. Indeed, consensus and toleration have begun to be the two defining key terms of the post-1980 period. Following these, the ANAP encouraged people to pay attention to concrete and individual policies rather than ideology. Thus criticism towards the system as a whole diminished and instead criticism have been directed to such policies for avoiding the situation that disturb the national harmony, like it did in the 1970s (Ayata, 1993:32-33, 37; Göle, 2000:425-434).

However, although Özal's impact on Turkish democracy had its positive aspects, promoting democracy in Turkey was not Özal's top priority. While lifting Turkish democracy to a new level, he also did a great disservice to it by emphasizing the procedural rules of democracy. According to Mert (2000: 65), democracy had acquired the meaning of "true representation of the nation" in the center right-wing discourses of the time. Besides the term democracy, for her, some other concepts also can lose their own meanings and they started to attain their peculiar meanings to the center right-wing discourses (Mert, 2000: 66). The ANAP government can not be excluded from this tradition. Özal, for instance, used the term civilization to refer to democratization (Köker, 1995: 204). Also, the ANAP government combined their attitudes to civil society with political pragmatism (Köker, 1995: 204). The events that took place during the Gulf War in 1990-91 and Özal's statement on this issue were one of the examples of his pragmatism. After the resignation of General Torumtay, the Chief of General Staff, over his disagreement with the government's policy during the war, he made a nonchalant public statement in which he said "resigning from a post is a normal act in a democracy" (Heper and Demirel, 1996: 133).

In sum, Özal and the ANAP government prioritized economic transformation over democracy. Since his primary interest was the economy rather than politics, Özal was instrumental in widening the parameters of the terms such as democracy, civil society and pluralism in Turkish democracy. However, during this period Turkey experienced principally economic, but also very powerful cultural and social transformations. This transformation could not be attributed only to Özal and his Motherland Party, and in fact was only triggered by the January 24 decisions. But attempts to alter some significant political, social and cultural patterns as a complementary set of policies for the primary goal of forming a neo-liberal economic structure, that Özal period did manage to realize certain vital and even irreversible transformations.

This brief account of the ANAP's approach to economic liberalism and democracy may provide us some perspectives and some alternative views as an analysis of the AKP, which will include both descriptive and critical accounts in order to locate the position of the AKP in Turkish Politics more properly. To this end, the following section turns to a brief analysis of the ANAP's political identity

3.2.1.3 Progressive-Conservatism of the ANAP

Özal believed that he had established a political party that was different from any other party organization ever founded before (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 45). Some critics mildly argued that ANAP was “both a continuation of the Democratic Party tradition of the 1950s, and also a renewal of the conservative liberal legacy, attempting to synthesize market modernism and Muslim identity” (Göle, 1996: 30). Yet, Özal emphasized that the ANAP represented the interests of the *Orta Direk*, or literally “the central pole of the nomad's tent”, to denote small agricultural producers, workers, government employees, craftsman and artisans which were symbolically taken to constitute the center of Turkish society; and the party hosted four different and seemingly irreconcilable ideological strands of conservatism, nationalism, economic liberalism and social democracy within its rank. According to Göle (1996: 31), all that is a combination of “engineering pragmatism with cultural conservatism [and it] can be termed Islamic social engineering.” The discourse of the ANAP could be considered accordingly as not only an attempt to evade political tensions and debates accompanied by a strategic and pragmatic maneuver to capture as much votes as possible, but also a complimentary attitude for the justification of the idea that there does not exist sharp ideological cleavages between different positions anymore. Looking at the electoral returns, it proved itself as a catchall party by appealing to different social segments of the society (Ayata, 1993: 37). However, this political identity was also chosen to build up its economic policies. Actually, for Tünay, this kind of political attitude also reflected a new ideological system, whereas ANAP's policies were reflecting its pragmatic – realistic side more than a coherent

ideology. In Tünay's words, (1993: 21) "the new right after 1983 tried to shape a new ideological system by harmonizing all the contradictory elements of the traditional ideologies, and strove for the formation of an organic ideology" that built up, a neo-liberal hegemony. However, it should not be ignored that Özal was instrumental in bringing harmony and consensus to Turkish politics by personally representing and articulating this identity (Acar, 1991: 177).

This identity of the party was called "conservative nationalism" by Özal himself (Özal, 1987: 137), and described as a variant of the nationalism the 1970s. The nationalism of the ANAP was to provide national unity and national integrity, since all the evils of the past stemmed from the political divisions in society (Mert, 2000: 65). For instance, the term *ortadirek* was used by Özal to bring together as many people as possible under the ideology of the party for this national unity. In other words, the nationalism of the 1970s was tamed in the ANAP discourse and it was used to guarantee law and order that were necessary for developing the Turkish economy. In this way, the ANAP combined its liberalism with nationalist views and justified its position by presenting itself as the end of national humiliation *vis-à-vis* the developed countries (Mert, 2000: 72). The term *ortadirek* and conservative nationalism thus were instrumental in articulating the interests of different groups into a compact whole (Tünay, 1993: 21). With this policy, the ANAP aimed at ensuring stability necessary for the fundamental transformation in the Turkish society.

Nevertheless, the ANAP did not only manage to combine its liberalism with nationalist themes but also appealed to Muslim sentiments. For Özal, Islam always remained a crucial personal reference, and Islamic ties appeared at critical junctures of his political life (Ayata, 1993: 95). Moreover, in terms of his close associates in bureaucracy, business and politics, *Nakshibendis* formed a deliberate alliance with the ANAP and remained the core of his support network (Ayata, 1993: 38). However, religion was not the most important factor in shaping his political and

social views, although Özal was a devout Muslim. Since he refrained from acting with blind ideological inclination or partisan loyalty, he also showed his flexibility in religious matters. He believed that Turkey should keep clear of fundamentalist Islam, and emphasized a non-doctrinaire worldview in spite of the critiques from the partisans (Cemal, 1989:179). His effort were only in order to combine a strong devotion to Islam with a modern life style, and he tried to show how large segments of people had no difficulty in reconciling traditions with progress, the values in their day-to- day existence in the secular republic (Ayata S., 1996: 40-56). Namely, this kind of conservative outlook, preservation of national-traditional values with due regard to progress, would enhance the integration between state and society (Taşar, 2000). As Heper said (1991: 50-51) through reconciling the former cultural orientations with the requisites of economic growth and Western democracy, Islam became embedded in the policies which emphasized the market forces, the privatization of the state enterprises, and the decentralization of government. In doing so, indeed, it reflected the constitutive element of the Turkish center-right tradition. According to Açikel (2003:192), Islamic populism in the discourse of the Turkish center-right parties, including ANAP, “have been secondary in many terms and served symbolic objectives.”

With a similar approach, Mert (2000: 80) asserted that the conservatism of the ANAP combined with nationalism and liberalism represented “the culmination of right-wing conservatism.” In the post-1980 era, the Turkish centre right-wing conservatism was shaped by the notion of ‘Turkish-Islamic Synthesis’, and thus Islam was reincorporated subtly into Turkish nationalism (Çaha, 2004: 477). This synthesis, the integration of Turkish nationalism to Islam, was an effort to enforce the nationalist aspect of social identity. For right-wing conservatism, religion and nationalism implied national unity for tolerance, respect and social peace (Çaha, 2004: 477-8). Also, the Turkish right-wing conservatism always advocated ‘modern Muslim’, and supported the integration of religious people into modern social life since the 1950s (Mert, 2000: 83). Although the centre-right parties did not ignore the importance of the state-sponsored training of the religious personnel; they became

the supporter of religious freedom according to the Anglo-Saxon model of secularism (Mert, 2000: 83) in which changes and traditions were not considered as disparate entities. Changes were perceived as tradition's renewal of itself and therefore continuity, progress and change are considered rather two complementary values than two opposite entities excluding each other. That is the reason why the center-right parties have emphasized both modernization and religious symbols at the same time since the 1950s. To integrate religious symbols successfully into social and political life, they wanted to promote a tolerant attitude toward Islam (Karaca, 2000: 84-8). Since the state "sought to replace the Islamic value system with a 'scientific' one" (Köker, 1995:166,168,224), and denied any autonomy to Islam, secularism has been accepted in the center-right parties as a reaction against this attitude of the state, that was based on removing Islam's power base in society and subordinate it to the state. As a result, in the discourse of the center-right parties, secularism has been expressed by the claim that religion should not be excluded from the public sphere; rather the religious practices of devout Muslims should be tolerated (Cemal, 1989:159-165; Erdoğan, 1999:102-117).

In sum, the conservative discourses of both the center right-wing parties and ANAP was formed by the efforts that aimed at the modernization in Turkey via being respectful of national and Islamic sentiments (Mert, 2000: 83). Indeed Özal's major project was called in his motto of 'skipping age' which referred to the modernization and liberalization policies compatible with a pious Muslim. Hence, generally the right-wing conservatism and particularly the ANAP found a way to give a chance for people to become members of Western life with their both traditional and national values. In doing so, in the 1980s, economic rationality and growth-oriented liberal economic policies were successfully combined with conservatism, and this effort seemed to fully coincide with the electoral support for these parties (Karaca, 2000: 84-8).

3.2.1.4 The Post-1987 Challenges to the ANAP; towards Electoral Decline and Institutional Problems

After the disappointing results of the 1987 election, in the local elections of March 1989, the ANAP's vote again fell to an alarming 21.8 per cent (Çavdar, 2004:280). Since the newly emerging political parties of the left and right successfully challenged the ANAP, it became increasingly difficult to claim to be the center of even the broadened Turkish left-right spectrum.

At the end of 1987, apart from the failure in decreasing the inflation rate, there was also some growing concern about the economic growth rates, unemployment and income distribution (Tünay, 1993: 24-25; Ergüder, 1988: 161; Özkazanç, 1995: 1222-1223). Together with the rise in unemployment, there was fall in real wages and salaries affected social life unfavorably. Moreover, individualism, competition, and acquisition of status on the basis of consumption were promoted by the policies of 1980, and the ANAP became less sensitive to the daily problems of common people (Ayata S. and A., 2000: 98). The emergence of patron-client relations, excessive expenditures at election time to win votes and less conciliatory attitude towards the opposition discredited the government both in political and economic terms.

Furthermore, after Özal was elected President by the Parliament in 1989, the hidden struggle between the liberals and conservatives in the party sharpened. There began a new phase in the political identity of the party with overemphasis on the free-market economy and less emphasis on the conservative values of religion and tradition (Mert, 2000:73-9). Although Özal supported his wife's candidature for the ANAP leadership in the Istanbul province, the conservatives were defeated both in Istanbul and more importantly in the national congress of the party in which the leader of the liberal wing in the party, Mesut Yılmaz, was elected as party chairman. Özal obviously affected the party identity as the founder of the party, but this does not mean that, after Özal, a transformation had occurred because of personal characteristics of Mesut Yılmaz (Mert, 2000:70-1). Mesut Yılmaz tried to hold the

party together, and to realize this aim he emphasized both the importance of religion and conservatism and the liberalization of the economy in his speeches: “since there is a danger of it leading to reactionism in Turkey, conservatism should be under the control of nationalism and liberalism” (Yılmaz in Mert, 2000:71).

The post-Özal identity-question arose within the party due to the pragmatic, non-ideological nature of the party identity from its beginning. The party elite had been divided into two separate segments; the liberal wing and the conservative wing each were informed by an explicit ideology. The tension between these two strands could be expected concerning certain issues (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002, 49-56). This tension with the catalyzing effect of the political opposition became increasingly more pronounced in the second half of the 1980s. Ziya Öniş analyses the situation as

the tension between the two groups... manifested itself in the context of the economic strategy. The ‘liberal view’ in close association with the ‘new bureaucratic elites’ wished to proceed with the program of economic liberalization while at the same time maintaining monetary and fiscal discipline. The ‘conservative wing,’ in contrast, favored using the discretionary powers of the states as an instrument for broadening the electoral base of the party itself. These sets of pressures help to illuminate why the government has increasingly relaxed fiscal discipline and followed an expansionary strategy in the post-1982 (Öniş, 1992: 13).

According to Öniş, all this had nothing to do with the change of the leader; significant here were the internal characteristics of the ANAP itself. For Öniş, since the party has two poles one being conservative and the other being liberal, witnessing some shifts of the place where the party identity stands should be expected. At one time, one group may be more dominant in the formation of the party identity and another time, the other group may be decisive in the party identity (Öniş, 1992: 13-14). In addition to the fractions in defining the identity of the party, each of the four strands of the party were challenged and successfully occupied by the SHP and the DSP as the representative of the left of center, and by the DYP as the competitor of the ANAP in the right of center (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 51-55).

Briefly, in spite of the developments of serious challenges to the ANAP government of the late 1980s, Özal and the ANAP remained the dominant figure of the Turkish center-right politics. A brief account of these features of the center-right identity of the ANAP in the Turkish landscape would enable us to comprehend the AKP's role in Turkish centre-right politics on the basis of its ideological stance and the policies that the party pursued when in power.

3.2.2 The True Path Party

Another important Turkish center-right party was the True Path Party (DYP), which was established in June 1983 following the order of the National Security Council closing down the Great Turkey Party by a group of people who were orientated by Süleyman Demirel, the leader of the closed AP. Ahmet Nusret Tuna, as a former AP minister, became its first chairman, and then Yıldırım Avcı and Hüsamettin Cindoruk became its second and third chairmen respectively (Tachau, 1994: 602-3). The DYP became influential in the Turkish center-right especially under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel, who became chairman in 1987 after his political ban was rescinded. The DYP claimed to be a continuation of the former AP and the heir of the DP of the 1950s in an implicit way, since legally no political party could claim inheritance of a pre-1980 political party.

The DYP as a political party was heavily identified with the name of its leader during the chairmanship of Demirel. The ANAP of Ozal had captured lots of the traditional votes of Demirel's party. What is more, his party was opposed by the military. Acar (1991a: 189) notes that under those circumstances Demirel was able to stay in politics, since "in the post-September 1980 period he followed a deliberate strategy of keeping his contacts alive with his supporters all over Turkey." This strategy was possible through his personality and leadership style. The former AP's organizations were also useful in this strategy. The patron-client type of relationship between the DYP and its supporters was another reason making such a personal touch possible.

However, those clientelistic policies became unfavorable since his party was in opposition. The populist policies of the 1960s and 1970s were not that influential in the 1980s for the new urban class, young technocrats, and professional elite and so on, especially in the existence of an alternative rightist discourse presented by the ANAP of Özal (Acar, 1991a). These developments forced Demirel to change his old image together with the image of the DYP. Their new image was intertwined with a discourse of democratization, struggling against the military and anti-democratic policies. Hence, the rhetoric and the programmatic appeal of the DYP during the opposition years were based on an emphasis on democracy, nationalism, and conservatism.

The DYP's understanding of democracy accepts “unquestionable superiority and unhindered exercise of the national will” (Acar, 1991a) like its precedence, the AP. After the *28 February process*, Tansu Çiller, the new leader after Demirel's Presidency, tried Demirel's strategy of using the discourse of democracy against the indirect military intervention. The DYP also viewed this process as a direct insult to the ‘national view’ (Mert, 2000:57). Another aspect of this understanding is that there is a conflict between the bureaucratic will which includes the civilian and the military bureaucracy, and the national will that is the ordinary people of the country. Despite the fact that the roots of that kind of a conflict can be found in the traditional center-periphery cleavage in Turkey, this perception paves the way for a negative implication about the minority rights, the legitimacy of opposition, and peaceful transfer of power (Tachau, 1984). Since this approach is built on the exclusion of other political groups and parties, and the refusal of their claims to represent civil societal elements (Acar, 1991a: 195), it may cause misunderstandings; this does not mean, however, that the DYP opposes the basic secular and Atatürkist principles of the Turkish State.

The DYP's understanding of Turkish nationalism means social cohesiveness, territorial integrity, and the promotion of a higher national consciousness amongst the citizens. Another aspect of its ideology, the conservatism of the DYP, means the

protection of national tradition and culture, including sensitivity to Muslim values and practices of the population. Economically, it seemed to accept the liberal economic policies when it came to the early 1990s. In this case, the role of the state would be coordinating and stabilizing the economy without a rigid planning, while giving the opportunity for the private sector to take the necessary initiative. Privatization was also one of the economic targets of the DYP, but they were not successful enough in their coalition governments.

After Demirel became President in 1993, Tansu Çiller tried to eliminate the pro-Demirel elements in the party just like Mesut Yılmaz did after Özal, and she was successful after a while. This was another example of a leader-based party and politics in the center-right. Both Mesut Yılmaz's ANAP and Çiller's DYP were not successful in the center-right to prevent institutional decay of their respective parties, and both parties have undergone a dramatic erosion of their voter support by the end of the 1990s.

As a consequence, one may be assert that the center-right politics in Turkey share some common points from the DP to the DYP, such as their understanding of democracy based on 'national will', their demands about religion, which was understood in the context of freedom of religion (freedom of belief), or their liberal-oriented economic perspectives. As a result of this brief history and the common points provided in this chapter, one can explore the AKP's identity in the axis of the Turkish center-right tradition through a comparative insight.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LINEAGES OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY

In addition to a historical survey of the parties of the Turkish center-right, Islamist politics, a part of the extreme right, should be tackled with, since most of the founders and members of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came from Welfare Party (RP) of the National View (MG) tradition. This chapter overviews the history of the pro-Islamist parties associated with this tradition, then explains the dynamics behind the internal divisions of the RP, which led to the rise of the Justice and Development Party.

4.1 Historical Precedences: From the National Order Party (MNP) of the National View Tradition to the Welfare Party (RP)

4.1.1 The National Order Party (MNP) and the National Salvation Party (MSP)

In Turkey, the Islamist movement emerged soon after the founding of the secular Republic in 1923.¹⁷ It is true that Democratic Party (DP), under Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes, attracted the support of the peripheral Islamist voters with policy decisions that reversed some of the Kemalist's bans on Islamic practices, like the call for prayer in Turkish and the ban on Koran schools. In the ensuing years, those who played important roles in the establishment of the other religious political parties made use of similar phrases of religious significance. During the 1960s, the Justice Party (AP) came to represent the "home" of the "democratic Islamists" in Turkey (Yeşilada, 2002:64). Those, who had wanted to guarantee their entity and use the opportunities that the central government provided for the advantage of the

¹⁷ The history of the Islamist movements goes back to the 19th century Ottoman rule. In the context of the study, I focus on the parties of the MG tradition in the Republic. Yet, it should be noted that The Islamic Democratic Party (İslam Demokrat Partisi- IDP) was the first Islamist political party to enter into politics during the multi- party period in 1951. It was established by Cevat Rifat Atilhan, known for his anti-Jewish views, yet the party lasted for only six months. See, Yusuf Akgün and Birol Tekin, (2004), "*İslamcılar-Demokrasi İlişkisinin Tarihi Seyri*", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, cilt: 6, İslamcılık, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul: 652-663.

congregations and their members, supported this party owing to this strategy (Çakır, 2004:545). However, after Süleyman Demirel had become the party leader, the crisis between the AP and Islamic congregations occurred. A nationalist-conservative faction of the AP had been discharged from the party following the leadership of Süleyman Demirel. Thus in 1967 a number of deputies from the AP and a senator, namely, A. Tevfik Paksu, Hasan Aksay, A. Hikmet Güner, Osman Turan had begun to oppose these new events in the party and began to search for a new political formation that would have been based on conservative and religious features. Necmettin Erbakan, who latter become the leader of the National View Tradition, had also taken part in that new political formation. In 1968, Necmettin Erbakan had been elected as the president of the Chambers of Commerce (TOBB) with the support of the small and middle businessman, traditional artisans, and merchants of Anatolia, after a campaign for presidency that had harshly criticized the AP because of being dependent on big and especially foreign capital, being the servant of the Zionist and Freemasons (Alemdaroğlu, 1999:12).

Erbakan's presidency to the Chambers of Commerce (TOBB) was not confirmed because of the rejections of İstanbul and İzmir Trade Unions. This development together with the religious political formations within the AP stimulated the preparations for the foundation of the new party. However, the preparations could not be completed before the general elections of 1969. Consequently, the members of the new political formation participated in the elections as independent candidates. Yet, among those members, only Erbakan who was elected as a Konya deputy, the city known to be the bastion of conservative religious opinion, succeeded in the elections. After the elections in January 1970, Necmettin Erbakan and his 17 friends founded the National Order Party (MNP). The founders of the MNP were mostly rurally originated religious professionals, theologians, merchants, artisans and small and middle entrepreneurs. Also religious communities, known as tariqats, especially the *Nakşibendi* community, supported the MNP after the establishment (Çakır, 1994:21; Mardin, 1998:109). The basic aims of the party were the realization of "the potential of the Turkish nation for morals and virtue, bringing order, freedom from

anxiety, and social justice, happiness and peace to all Turks and moral recovery” (Landau,1974:190, Sarıbay,1985:100).

The parties of the National View Tradition differed from other center-right political parties in claiming the relevance of Islam to economic and political development, and in seeking a space for Islamic identity in the public sphere (Çınar,1999:231) Also, the MNP identified two categories of problems that Turkey had faced: the material problems involves the dependency of Turkey on foreign markets and capital, a low level of income per capita and unjust wealth, and a weak financial situation, as a result of which Turkey became dependent on foreign aid and consequently lost its autonomy in the foreign policy. It has created moral problems, and all of these were all related to the western worldviews in Turkey. In the spiritual category, the MNP complained about the failure of the education system that was based on the inadequate western worldview, which is itself the cause of spiritual crises, in educating the youth for national ends (Toprak, 1981:98).

However, the Constitutional Court shut down the MNP on May 21, 1971 on the grounds that it violated the principles of laicism laid down in the Constitution and in the Law of Political Parties during the interim regime following the 12 March coup by memorandum (Çınar, 1999:231). As a result, the National Salvation Party (MSP) was founded in October 1972 to succeed the MNP. The MSP achieved a surprising electoral success in the 1973 general elections, obtaining 11.8 percent of the total vote, mainly in central and eastern Anatolia.

After the 1973 general elections, the MSP became a coalition partner in successive governments. First, it formed a government with the staunchly secularist People’s Republican Party (CHP), led by Bülent Ecevit. Soon it managed to place its members in the bureaucracy, particularly the ministries that it controlled, and caused governmental crises during its coalition governments (Sarıbay, 1985:204-205). Moreover, it succeeded in passing a bill that made theological high schools (*imam-hatip*) equivalent to secondary schools and enabled these schools to often send pro-

Islamist students to attend universities. A large number of girls also enrolled in these schools. Many graduates have gone on to political power as Islamists in the 1980s and 1990s, (e.g. the mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) and have formed a powerful pressure group (Yavuz, 2005:286).

Ecevit's coalition government was dissolved following Turkey's July 1974 military operation in Cyprus to protect the Turkish-Cypriot community. The MSP then became a coalition partner in a new "National Front" government on March 31, 1975 formed under the premiership of the center-right Justice Party (AP) led by Süleyman Demirel. This coalition also included the ultra-nationalist National Action Party (MHP) led by Alpaslan Türkeş (Kara, 2004:134-137).

In the June 1977 general elections, the MSP suffered a setback, winning only, 8.6 percent of the vote, but was included in the second National Front Government formed by Demirel after the elections (Kara, 2004:185). In July 1977, Demirel resigned, but returned to power in August, at the head of an almost identical coalition including the MSP, MHP and AP. However, Demirel was forced to resign again following defections from the AP in December (Kara, 2004:145-158). Ecevit formed a coalition government in January 1978, promising to deal with the economic problems and political violence that were increasing as a result of the clashes, between left-right clashes as well as between Sunnis and Alevis. But AP's victory at by-elections in October 1979 deprived Ecevit of his working majority, and he resigned. In November 1979, Demirel formed an all AP minority government with the backing of the MHP and MSP (Kara, 2004:187-210; Tosun, 1999:112-119).

In short, the MSP had quickly grown to become a regular member of government coalitions. In these coalitions, the MSP always claimed that "moral development was the main requirement and basis for material development; like many developmentalist approaches at that time; the MSP believed that industrialization and particularly heavy industry were the only way to reach the living standards of the developed countries" (Atacan, 2005:188). The MSP's aspiration of 'Grand Turkey'

(Yeniden Büyük Türkiye) passed through its promise of a factory for each city. According to Toprak (1981:99), in the same line with the MNP, the major issue, which the MSP sought to politicize, was the question of how and why the powerful empire came to be one of the less developed countries of the world. The answer of the MSP leaders involved were the Turkish loss of power as a result of their alienation from their own cultural heritage, which was accompanied by their failure to industrialize. The MSP leaders were arguing that Turks took the Western culture, what they needed least, but failed to take what they needed most, the Western technology (Toprak,1981:100). They were seeing the origins of the Western technological development in Muslim civilization, and arguing for the West's indebtedness to Muslim civilization. The MSP was claiming that the only way of the development for Turkish nation was to re-appreciate its own history and culture and regain its Muslim consciousness as a society. The MSP called its ideology National View, and declared a third, alternative, superior way based on morality in contrast to the leftist Republican People Party (CHP) and the liberal Justice Party, which was based on a morality that was imported from the West (Landau, 1976:10). Mardin (1998:106) summarizes the official doctrine of the MSP as a religious worldview, rapid industrialization, populist economic distribution and social morality. According to Metiner (1987:63) the originality of the party lies in its political identity which it bestows on Muslims within the politicization process.

However, in the late 1970s, successive governments failed to solve the country's serious economic and political problems, as antagonism between the radical left and radical right escalated into violent clashes bordering on civil war. In order to hold their ranks and constituents together, each party tried to maximize the ideological distance between itself and the others, those which it saw as its major rivals. It was hoped that such a strategy would make it psychologically costly to members and supporters to change their preferences. As the supporters of one party began to view those of the others as the enemy, the cohesion of each party would be maximized (Ahmad, 1977: 332-3; Tosun, 1999:107-112). Besides polarization of the party system, each party attempted to enlarge its own clientelistic network (Erguder and

Hofferbert; 1988: 87; Erguder, 1988: 121). To this end, some parties worked to create new associations under their domination. To cite an example, MSP organized an extensive network of activist groups known, as the Raiders (*Akıncılar*), that were to become the grass-roots organizations for the future (Atacan, 2005:195).

Many occupational, professional, and other voluntary associations which, in the past, had only been marginally interested in political activity, also become arenas in which militants of rival parties competed for domination of the organization (Ergüder and Hofferbert; 1988: 87). Moreover, these parties and movements harbored orientations and pursued behaviors which ran contrary to the fundamental values on which the Turkish Republic was established. These values included secularism, a non-racial conceptualization of nation and nationality, the non-recognition of religious affiliation and ethnicity as a proper basis for representation, together with the rejection of the idea of class struggle (Turan; 1991:45). Facing challenges from right and left, the AP and the CHP moved to co-opt the sympathizers of these parties and movements. Slowly, the political center began to erode (Heper, 1982:398; Özbudun, 1981:233). In this process however, ethnicity and religion had been rendered political, and an explosive situation obtained as demonstrated by communal riots and fighting, as well as increasing terrorism which characterized the period preceding the 1980 intervention (Kalaycıoğlu, 1992: 110).

At 12 September 1980, the government of the National Front Coalition had been outlawed by a military intervention. The military government, established after the military intervention, closed down all the political parties. The military administration, instead of showing secular disregard for Islam, “gave unprecedented recognition to Islam as a bulwark against communism and a substitute for class-based ideologies” (Sakallıoğlu, 1996 a: 17). The military elite then started to promote the role of Islam as a harmonizing feature for the Turkish society, which was divided by ideological polarization and suffered from communal violence before the military intervention of 1980. This promotion had been realized by a series of events among which made for the opening of new quranic schools, making religious courses

compulsory, and employing new preachers (*imams*). Moreover, during the next three years, the military rewrote Turkey's Constitution and tightly controlled the process of new political party formation and the transition to civilian rule which started in October 1983.

4.2 The Welfare Party

After the military intervention on September 12 1980, the military regime closed all existing political parties down. As a result, during the transition from military rule to democracy in 1983 onwards, supporters of political Islam followed a multi-track strategy in re-entering political life. Under the leadership of Turgut Özal, the Motherland Party (ANAP) initially attracted many former MSP followers, because most of them could not enter into politics due to three vetos of the military; however the return of Erbakan in the 1987 ended the Islamist voters' mass support of the ANAP.

When military leaders decided to allow elections, on July 19, 1983 the Welfare Party (RP) was established by Ali Türkmen and his thirty friends. The party was not allowed to participate in the first national elections held in 1983, as the generals vetoed 27 members of 33 founders. Yet, on March 25, 1984 the RP gained 4.4 % of the votes in the local elections under the leadership of Ahmed Tekdal (Çavdar, 2004:276). In the 1987 general elections, the party increased its electoral strength to 7.7 %. However 10 % of the electoral threshold rule of the new constitution did not allow the RP's representation in the parliament. In 1987, also the politicians, who had been prohibited from politics by the former military regime, were allowed to enter into politics. Hence, Necmettin Erbakan was able to become the chairman of the RP in the second general congress of the party; and under his presidency, the party turned to the line of MG tradition again (Yavuz, 2004:596).

The RP would not have to wait long for political success, however. It increased its vote share in each of the four subsequent elections.¹⁸ In the general elections 1991, in alliance with the Alparslan Türkeş's National Work Party and Aykut Edibali's Reformist Democracy Party, the RP received 16.88 % of the votes and 62 seats in the parliament. In the local elections in 1994, the party received 19.1 % of the votes. Its candidates were elected as the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara metropolitan municipalities among many others. Finally, the party emerged as the largest party in December 1995 general elections and took 158 seats in the parliament. After came the success of 1994 local elections by receiving 21.38% of the votes and 158 seats in the Grand National Assembly which eventually allowed it to form a majority coalition with the DYP on June 28, 1996 (Çınar, 1999:234). This coalition government made an Islamist leader the prime minister for the first time in the history of Turkish Republic (Yavuz, 1997:63)

The RP's victory in the 1995 elections resulted from a complex set of factors. One major reason for the popularity of the RP is the expansion of the economy that resulted from Turgut Özal's free market policies in the late 1980s and 1990s. The economic liberalization process was supported by "small-scale provincial businessmen and the *petite bourgeoisie* of the big cities" (Yeşilada, 2002:72). This sector, which includes peddlers, dealers, builders, restaurant owners, small industrialists, textile shop owners, and food producers, does not want state intervention in the economy, and is thus, the main supporter of economic liberalization. It finds Islamic symbols and ethics as the best weapons to generate public opinion against the state and big industrialists, and formed the MUSIAD (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), so it become effective in rising of the Islamic values in economic and thus the political arena. According to Yeşilada (2002:72), "the MUSIAD has emerged as an advocator of full liberalization

¹⁸ The subsequent four elections were: 26 March 1989 (Local), 20 October 1991 (National), 27 March 1994 (Local), 24 December 1995 (National), see Kara M. A. (2004), *Kolalisyonlar*, İstanbul, Otopsi Yayınları.

and privatization of the Turkish economy with the socially Islamic and economically liberal ideology,” and has been a key element in the rise of the RP in the mid-1990s.

Additionally, the RP was distinctive both in its party organization and in the unconventional policies. As a party organization, the RP was uncommonly effective at creating a connection between the party and its potential constituency. Unlike the mainstream Turkish parties, which are notably elitist in their orientation and lacking substantive organic ties with their voting base, the RP was able to develop substantial support at the grassroots level through an extensive organizational structure (Sarıbay, 1985:264; Özbudun, 2003:83-89; Yavuz, 2005:293-4).

After Erbakan became Prime Minister at the head of the coalition government in 1996, Welfare initially pursued domestic and foreign policy goals seemingly at odds with its coalition partner and the secularist political establishment. For example, contrary to its coalition partner, the DYP, the RP rejected Western civilization and membership of the European Union, claiming that if Turkey joined the EU, it would be a province of Israel. The RP also saw Zionism as the source of evil. Moreover, the RP, in contrary to its partner, suggested a common market created with other Muslim countries, and advocated the idea of “Greater Turkey,” which meant that Turkey would follow an independent foreign policy from the West and would be economically powerful (Mert, 1998:69-76; Yıldız, 2003:187-193; Dağı, 2004:24-26). Erbakan's efforts to establish an economic bloc of Muslim countries (D-8) his visits to Iran and Libya, and a plan to build an imposing mosque in the heart of modern Istanbul (Taksim square) while Tayyip Erdogan was mayor were the other examples of the RP's policies led to considerable controversy among the secular establishment (Gülalp,1999: 30-37). Besides these policies of the party, its economic program was also strongly criticized both by Islamist writers and leftist writers. According to them, the party program under the name ‘just order’ had socialist content and subjective -not scientific- solutions for problems in general¹⁹.

¹⁹ Please see Çakır Ruşen, 1994, *Ne Şeriat Ne Demokrasi*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul.

However, after the RP came to power with a coalition, it did not carry out its campaign promises (Çakır, 1996:91). Due to the RP's contradictory policies with its coalition partner and the political boundaries set by the military establishment, this government is remembered largely for being ineffectual and controversial. For the RP, the period in the coalition government was a period of attempts to guarantee the continuation of the government and prevent the party from closure. In with these constraints, Erbakan also had to maintain the loyalty of those who voted him into office, many of whom expected the Welfare to inaugurate a new era in Turkish politics (Mert, 1998:81-89; Gülalp, 1999:22-41; Gülalp, 2001:433-448).

In the end, the RP's conflicting demands and a new openness to Islamic identity and symbolism in the public sphere exacerbated tensions between the military and the RP, which had been building due to disagreement over the expulsion of Islamist officers from the army in December 1996. Since this tension escalated, on February 28, 1997 at the National Security Assembly, the Turkish General Staff handed in a memorandum to the government, called "measures for the fight against reactionism (*irtica*)," which had 18 articles. In the process, the coalition government was collapsed; the RP was outlawed for being the center of anti-laicist actions by the decision of the Supreme Court on January 16, 1998, and the leaders of the RP were banned from politics for five years.²⁰ By June 1997, Erbakan was forced to resign, and the President called on opposition parties to form a new government. The new government, led by the centre-right ANAP, quickly showed its determination to implement the Security Council's recommendations.

As it became apparent that the RP would be closed by the Constitutional Court, a new party was established to provide an institutional base for the parliamentary deputies of the Welfare Party. Thus, then the Virtue Party (FP) was founded in December 1997 by a number of Islamists close to Necmettin Erbakan.

²⁰ Further discussion on what came to be known as 28 February process can be found in Hulki Cevizoğlu (1998), *28 Şubat: Bir Hükümet Nasıl Devrildi*, İstanbul: Beyaz Yayınları; Ali Bayramoğlu, (2001), *28 Şubat: Bir Müdahalenin Güncesi*, İstanbul, Birey Yayınları.; Hakan Akpınar, (2001). *28 Şubat Postmodern Darbenin Öyküsü*, Ankara:Ümit Yayıncılık.

4.3 The Division of the National View Tradition: A Split in the Virtue Party

The Virtue Party (FP) was founded by 33 former RP deputies under the leadership of Recai Kutan on December 10, 1997. At that time, it had 144 seats in the TBMM which it had obtained since RP's MPs transferred to the newly established Virtue Party (FP). As from its foundation, both Turkey's leaders and the party's own supporters asked how the FP differs from the RP. Although there were suspicious of the party's policies, the FP has signaled that it would take some new approaches, so it had tried to change its image in a number of ways. For instance, in contrast to its predecessor -the RP- the FP adopted a positive approach to the West and particularly to the European Union (EU). Namely, the FP declared support for Turkey's European Union membership, a step the RP opposed for three decades. Their attitudes towards the Copenhagen Criteria (put by the EU) were also shaped, in great part, by the February 28 process, and the members and followers of the FP realized that democracy and human rights were basic needs that also applied to themselves. In this process, especially, the influence of the growing class of middle-sized Anatolian businessmen, MÜSİAD was an important factor, because MÜSİAD was happy with the EU as it opened up many new business opportunities for them (Dağı, 2004:97-98).

In addition to the changing stance of the Virtue Party towards the EU, another change in the FP's rhetoric can be seen in its approach to the theme of "nation," (*millet*) as opposed to the RP's strong organic link between "*millet*" and "state" (*devlet*). The implication in the Virtue Party's stance is that the state should be in the service of the people rather than -in the RP's view- a holy state that stands far above the people (Gülalp, 2002:97-101). The FP promised to create a humanitarian state that meets the *millet's* needs without totally dominating it, a more democratic rather than more authoritarian state (Şen, 2004:212). Another transformation in their policies is the FP's position on, in general, the minority rights, in particular, the Kurdish issue (Şen, 2004:363-365). In the party program, the FP was in favor of "cultural rights" (Şen, 2004:365). The FP accepts different identities as a constructive part of the nation, and

also pledges to preserve their rights in accordance with international norms (Şen, 2004: 365). Thus, it can be stated that coalitions and crises such as that of February 28, and consecutive closures of parties by the Constitutional Court, were all learning experiences for the National View Tradition.

Although the FP discarded much of RP's rhetoric, this was considered by many to be nothing more than a show that masked the party's true motives. Indeed, prominent members of the Virtue Party were regularly accused of Islamic dissimulation (*takiyye*) or hiding their true motives until they were in a position to act on them. However, when one examines the discourse of the FP, the MPs, and their attitudes in this period, one may conclude that "change was mainly rhetorical since they were still skeptical about some issues, such as close relations with the EU" (Doğan, 2005:427). Furthermore, statements of the party members recalled and expanded these suspicious attitudes of the National View Tradition. For instance, previous statements by Tayyip Erdoğan, for example, were brought forward in which he was quoted as saying "You will be either Muslim or a Secularist. These two can not exist together" (Cemal, 1998)²¹ and "Is democracy a means or an end?... We say that democracy is a means, not an end"²² (Cemal, 1996).²² Erdoğan subsequently dismissed the quotes as inaccurate, or argued that they had been taken out of context and needed clarification (Ergin, 1998).²³

In late 1998, a new case was prosecuted against the Welfare Party in an effort to retrieve money that may have been also passed onto the FP. Erdoğan's conviction of subversion was also upheld by the High Court of Appeals, forcing him to vacate his mayoral position and sending him to prison the following spring. Meanwhile in December 1998, a new minority government was formed after defections from the Motherland Party's leadership. Although the FP was the largest party in the TBMM,

²¹ As quoted in Hasan Cemal, *Sabah Daily*, 8 July 1998

²² As quoted in *Milliyet Daily*, 14 July 1996.

²³ See Serdar Ergin, *Hürriyet Daily*, 12 July 1998.

President Demirel agreed to a minority government led by the Democratic Left Party (DSP), the fifth-largest party in the National Assembly, in an effort to prevent the FP from participating in government (Kara, 2004:334-338).

New elections were ultimately scheduled for April 1999. In the lead-up to the elections, the military issued multiple public warnings against the dangers of Islamic politics in an apparent attempt to caution the electorate against voting for Virtue. The most pressing dangers to Virtue in the election, however, appeared to come from divisions within the party itself. Splits between Erbakan's close associates and a younger generation, close to the 'reformists' Erdoğan and Gül, became ever more apparent in the month before the election, and led to a brief period of political chaos. In this indistinct situation, some efforts such as removing Erbakan's political ban or postponing the election, had appeared (Kara, 2004:387-8), and caused the FP's internal rift to exacerbate. In the end, the elections proceeded on schedule and led to a disappointing outcome. The party's national vote share fell from over 21% in the previous election to about 16%, making it the third largest party in the TBMM. While Erbakan had argued that the party's electoral disappointment was a result of its increased moderation and compromise with the establishment, Gül and Erdoğan made the opposite case and criticized the party leadership and its policies (Atacan, 2005:193). Since they did not want to be identified as party dividers, they waited for the party congress before any attempt to change both the party's stance and its leader. On May 14, 2000, at the general congress, Recai Kutan and Abdullah Gül become candidates for presidency which was the first time in the MG tradition (Çakır, 2004:540-575). In the conference's balloting for party leadership, Kutan managed to retain control of the party, but with an unconvincing margin of 633 delegates to Gül's 521.

After the congress, the polarization sharpened in the movement, and against the traditionalist's attitude that based on their insistence on the traditional policies of the MG tradition, the reformist wing wanted to transform both the movement and the party (Tekin, 2004:68). Actually, this young generation represented a different stance

in the party during the establishment of the FP; thus they were called “the reformist” while the others were called “the traditionalists” (Çakır, 1994:77). Their emphasis, as from the party’s foundation, was the need for a change of both political style and discourse. For Ruşen Çakır (1994:77), the difference between them emerged from the fact that the reformist wanted to be a mass party, while the others wanted to keep themselves as an ideological cadre party. The new generation also insisted that the new party must be headed by one of the younger generation of politicians. As Atacan said (2005:193), the reformists were “uncomfortable with the intervention of the Erbakan in the party politics; they accused him and some other party leaders for the undemocratic structure of the party”. They asserted that Erbakan’s style of leadership was increasingly out of touch with the Turkish electorate, and argued that Virtue should redefine itself as a contemporary political group with internal party democracy and with European-style sensitivities (Yavuz, 2004:602-603). When the Virtue Party was outlawed by the Constitutional Court for acting contrary to the principles of laicism on June 22, 2001, they caught an opportunity in order to formalize the party’s split. Thus, the traditionalist wing founded the Felicity Party (SP) on July 20, 2001 under the leadership of Recai Kutan, whereas the reformist wing founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Abdullah Gül on August 14, 2001 with the claim that a party that would go beyond the RP/FP in an attempt to appeal to a wider public could now move to the political center²⁴.

²⁴ As Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was not eligible due to a Court decision, Abdullah Gül was selected for the leadership of the new party as a caretaker.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEW POLITICAL STANCE OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY

5.1 “Conservative Democratic Identity” of the Justice and Development Party

The transformation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP)’s discourse as it emerged as a split party from the main successor to the Welfare Party has triggered a discussion and confusion on how to label the party both in Turkey and the West. Though some suspicious circles have continued to call it Islamist and claimed that the AKP was engaged in dissimulation (*takiyye*), and that it would sooner or later try to bring back in Turkey a state based on Islam (Bölügiray,2004), some renamed Erdoğan and his friends as “secular Islamist” (Owen and Power, 2002: 19), “a European social – democratic party of the third way type” (Öniş and Keyman, 2003: 102), “revolutionary conservatives”²⁵, “Muslim democrats” (Jenkins, 2003: 45-66), or “a Turkish version of Western Europe’s Christian Democrats.”²⁶ Although ideologies and identities of the parties is only portrayed in their rhetoric as images the party elites wish to reflect to outsiders, according to a 2005 survey, only 2.84 percent of those who voted for the AKP in the 2002 elections attributed their support to the party’s self-proclaimed identity, conservative-democracy. What lies behind this finding is the puzzling fact that the AKP did not offer a clear ideological program before the 2002 elections. The AKP embraced its current identity as a brand new identity after its rise to power. In spite of its Islamist roots and a natural association in terms of its leadership and core bases of political support with the Welfare (RP) and the Virtue parties (FP), the AKP has rejected affiliation with the National View Tradition (MG) and political Islamism, and has stressed that the AKP was not “religion centric” but “conservative democrat.”²⁷ More briefly, it was claimed that

²⁵ Murat Belge, Radikal Daily, January 23, 2003.

²⁶ Oliver Roy, Vatan Daily, January 18, 2003.

²⁷ Tayyip Erdoğan, Radikal Daily, November, 4, 2002.

the AKP will not stand on a specific ideology, including Islamism. Likewise, Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the AKP, once stated that: "... our political party is not Islamic. It is not based on religion. A political party can not be Islamist. It can not be for Islam. These are inaccurate terminologies...."²⁸

Explanations of conservative democracy put forth by the party leadership converge on the idea that conservative democracy is not an ideology but reflects an organic synthesis that give voice to the Turkish people's values, and bridges the gap between the state and the people. In the party's first congress, Erdoğan introduced the party as a movement that brings the "political wisdom" and the "demands of society" to the politics of Turkey, because, as he explained, "... the conception of 'the nation for the state' will not be imposed any longer, the conception of 'the state for the nation' shall flourish instead"²⁹

Thus, the AKP portrays itself as the meeting point of different value systems, political styles, and individuals from across the political socio-economic spectrum. It is claimed that it does not espouse 'identity politics', and argues that such politics leading to an 'us versus them' mentality has polarized Turkish society. The AKP instead emphasized a political style that rejects making one's religious beliefs, sect, or ethnicity the center of the party's platform. In other words, from the beginning, it tried to play the role of a 'catch-all party' concerned with the problems that the society faces in general (Yavuz, 2005: 351-356; Bostancı, 2004: 28; Laciner, 2002: 11-20; Bora, 2002: 29-31; Aktay, 2005:63).³⁰

It can be argued that this kind of policy which emphasizes a pragmatic approach to politics by refraining from taking any ideological position, springs from Erdoğan's own experiments in Istanbul. In local politics, it is about service delivery to the

²⁸ Tayyip Erdoğan, Radikal Daily, November 8, 2002.

²⁹ Tayyip Erdoğan's speech in the international symposium on conservatism and democracy in İstanbul on January 10-11, 2004. For this speech see, *Uluslararası Muhafazakarlık ve Demokrasi Sempozyumu*, Ankara, 2004: 7-13. The full text of the speech can be also found, in the official web page of the party at: www.akparti.org.tr.

³⁰ Also see, Yalçın Akdoğan, Radikal Daily, October 8, 2003.

people, not about grand ideologies. Politics at the local level generally requires a different approach in ‘service’ to people, not in ‘ideology’. It is not a field of ‘grand politics’, but politics of possibilities within social and economic limits. Recognizing differences in social space that encircles the city is important; mayors have to be cooperative and pragmatic, able to form alliance with broader social sectors to get various services done (Çamurcu, 2004: 65-72; Kutlu, 2005: 119-123). As pointed out by several scholars, Erdoğan’s experience in İstanbul has certainly influenced him to a great degree to become a pragmatic, service-oriented politician. As a mayor, he came to see politics as a non-ideological domain, instrumental for solving the daily problems of people, namely politics as problem solving, not a means to build an ideologically oriented Islamic community (Heper and Toktaş, 2003:160-167).

However the AKP’s self-declared identity of conservative democracy and its efforts to be a catch-all party with the conciliatory and unifying style of politics has been subject to different intellectual and political debates. Therefore, before analyzing the conservative democratic political identity of the AKP and its role in the formation of the new discourses and perspectives in Turkish politics, these different approaches firstly will be mentioned. Looking at these debates and the questions that have been raised surrounding the concept, one may reach a more critical and detailed conclusion regarding the political identity of the AKP.

5.1.1 An Overview of the Debates Surrounding the Concept of “Conservative-Democracy”

According to leader of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the new approach introduced by the party upon which the political identity is based, is to have,

a more colored and multidimensional picture rather than a sharp black-and-white image. The objective here is to look at all sorts of different approaches and attitudes to find out what the party accumulates from them.

Hence conservative democrats have a significance goes beyond the borders of the Turkey.³¹

Owing to the novelty of this concept, it remains to be seen whether established schools of political thought will further the debate and conceptualize the diverse bundle of abstract ideas contained within it. For instance, Yayla argues that, “if conservative democracy becomes an accepted term in political science, this will only occur in future.... Though the term liberal democracy designates a political government style, it is sometimes used to define an ideological label (i.e., a liberal democrat).”³² According to Yayla, ‘conservative democracy’ may become a term to designate a specific socio-political line in time. Like Yayla, Türköne claims that “political thought always comes after action in order to explain events that have taken place... The essential duty of intellectuals lies in generating theories that will help the leader explain and gain support for his/her actions.”³³

In addition to the debates revolving around the scarcity of the literature on the concept, there is also an ongoing controversy regarding actual political identity of a conservative democrat. Çaha notes that it is not possible to make a serious distinction between liberal democrats and conservative democrats.³⁴ Today in Europe and in America, conservative politics are defended not only by Christian Democrats, but also actively supported by right-wing parties in general; the Conservative Party in England and the American Republican Party typify this trend. These parties conceptualize politics by synthesizing both conservative and liberal values. Furthermore, according to this argument, the assertion that a democrat can not be conservative and vice versa seems artificial. Yayla argues that “first, the very application of modern democracy denies this assertion through practice. Can we say that English conservatives or American conservatives are not democrats? There are powerful conservative parties existing in all the strong democracies of the world.

³¹ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech at the American Enterprise Institute, January 29, 2004.

³² Personal interview with Atilla Yayla, liberal-oriented academician, in May 2006.

³³ Mümtaz’er Türköne, Zaman Daily, January 15, 2004.

³⁴ Ömer Çaha, Zaman Daily, August 31, 2003.

They alternately come to power and then go away. Democracy remains in place. The very application of democracy validates the existence of conservative democrats.” According to another liberal intellectual, if conservatism is not compatible with democracy, then the necessary effort must be expended in order to make it so. In relation to the AKP, he argued that,

The party’s search for identity supplies it with a viable political platform, recognized universally, thereby making it possible for the party to have a lasting impact on the Turkish political stage. Conservative democrats’ emphasis on the process of redefinition automatically opens the door of criticism, but it also opens to door to political participation. After this point, whether conservative democrats are accepted intellectually is simply a question of sociological ‘digestion’.³⁵

Besides these intellectual attempts to evaluate the party’s label, ‘conservative democracy’ is often critiqued as lacking both conceptual and political legitimacy. For example, Ali Bayramoğlu, a columnist of the religiously-oriented daily *Yenişafak*, has argued that it is antithetical to put ‘conservatism’ and ‘democracy’ together to create a new political identity, and he claimed that it was a misleading label.³⁶

In addition to these debates surrounding the concept, there are also some who allege that it is impossible for the AKP to project a conservative identity and modes of action and while at the same time to ignore concepts of piety and Islam that have previously been taboo in Turkish politics.³⁷ Some journalists, including Etyen Mahcupyan, argue that the AKP uses the label ‘conservative democrat’ simply because its members can not term themselves ‘Muslim-Democrats’. Mahcupyan writes “it is not easy to use the term Muslim in a country that has transformed authoritarian secularism into an official ideology. This is especially the case if one

³⁵ Etyen Mahcupyan, *Zaman Daily*, August 20, 2003.

³⁶ Ali Bayramoğlu, *Yeni Şafak Daily*, January,13,2004.

³⁷ Akdoğan, Yalçın; *Siyasal İslam: Refah Partisi’nin Anatomisi*, İstanbul, Şehir Yayınları, 2000.

wants to avoid any offense.... On the other hand, it can be said that conservatism in Turkey encapsulates elements of Islam.”³⁸

However, the leaders of the AKP frequently state that the label of ‘Muslim-Democrats’ is not appropriate, and they note that they are to give priority to the solution of economic and social problems of the country, rather than to religious issues.³⁹ It is declared by the party chairman that such urgent problems as economic recession, unemployment, unequal income distribution, political freedoms, social security and health-care system problems were to be handled first.⁴⁰ Erdoğan has always stressed that they welcomed a democratic and even a Western-type of secular system. In the party program and election manifesto, he claimed the end of ideologies, including Islamism, in the age of globalization. It can be contended that the main lesson that the AKP learned from its predecessors was the danger of playing Islamist politics and the tension that such an approach would inevitably cause in Turkey. For this reason, the AKP prefers to present itself as a conservative democratic party whose members and supporters consider religious values important, not Islamist politics (Çaha, 2003:95-114; Dağı, 2005: 21-37).

Kanra (2005:527-528) argues that “the public image of an Islamic party created by the Welfare Party was challenged by the AKP, which branded itself as a centre-conservative party committed to secular principles.” Also, Yıldız (2004: 54) positively interprets the AKP’s rejection of a ‘Muslim Democrat’ identity for a ‘conservative democratic’ identity,

It is significant that the AKP has not adopted a Muslim Democratic identity. This particular approach has strengthened the connection between religion and policy in a democracy without injuring the religion and its believers by negatively distorting the religion’s fundamental philosophy.

³⁸ Etyen Mahcupyan, Zaman Daily, August 25, 2003.

³⁹ The AKP’s understanding of laicism will be studied in the following sections of this chapter.

⁴⁰ Erdoğan, Hurriyet Daily, July 7, 2001; Milliyet Daily, July 15, 2001.

According to Dağı, the attempt at describing the AKP as Muslim Democrat can be best regarded as an invention that would reflect neither the social base nor the political language of the party (Dağı, 2005; 30-34). According to this argument, the AKP seems to have played a role in merging conservative / local / national sentiments with developmentalist and globalist objectives. The party leadership is aware that a Muslim Democratic identity does not help resolve its problems of legitimacy in the system; on the contrary, it exacerbates them.

In addition to these assertions, there is another approach to the AKP's self-declared identity. According to some scholars, the AKP belongs to same modernization perspective parallel with the DP and the ANAP tradition. Çaha states that the AKP has tried to pursue a politics which emphasized two points: integrating Turkey into Europe with local values, and bringing about a free-market economy to reach at the level of contemporary civilization (Çaha, 2004: 95-114). Moreover, for Çaha and also for Yavuz, the party wants to develop a secular system that respects religious rights and values (Çaha, 2003: 95-114; Yavuz, 2005: 346-356). Following the DP, the center-right parties, especially the ANAP, always stood close to the religious groups in Turkey. According to these scholars and for İnsel (2003: 293-306), Laçiner (2002: 11-20) and Bora (2002: 29-35), the AKP potentially broadens the framework of the opportunity spaces that were created by the ANAP, and narrowed by the February 28 process. As a consequence of these political activities, a synthesis of conservatism and liberalism - which was once proposed by the ANAP under Turgut Özal's, and also by the DP, religious groups, like the *Nakshibendis* - would start to re-appear in public life; and also, it may create a political environment in which a high level of reconciliation could be achieved between Islam and democracy.

5.1.2 The Uneasy Relationship between the Identity of the AKP and Political Islam

As explained in the previous chapter, the AKP emerged from a tradition of Islamically-orientated political parties that have challenged the secular policies of the Kemalist

tradition. However, according to the students of Turkish politics, despite its Islamist roots, the AKP has nevertheless managed to present itself as a new face with a claim to the very center of Turkish politics (İnsel, 2003; Hermann, 2003; Çaha, 2003). In retrospect, a break from the rhetoric of the 30-year-old Islamic politics was crucial for the success of the AKP. The leadership of the party was keen not to commit the errors made by its predecessor, the RP, which had developed an increasingly aggressive tone throughout the ascendancy of the party. The findings of the several Turkish politics studies also underline a strong resentment among the Muslim community of this aggressive style, which led to the closure of the RP by the Constitutional Court (Heper and Toktaş; 2003; 157-185; Çakır and Çalmuk, 2001; Kanra, 2005: 526-530). Thus, since its establishment, the founders of the AKP have emphasized the claim that their party was a new formation, based on ‘change’, that is, the transformation of Islamic politics. Hence, they named the new political position of the party as ‘conservative democracy’, and introduced the AKP as a conservative democrat party. However, more important than the change of the identification was the change in their discourse on the relationship between Islam and the state.

It is very important to note that in its attempt to forge a conservative democratic identity the AKP has paid special attention to the compatibility of Islam “as a social entity and part of tradition, rather than an ideological approach” with democracy (Akdoğan, 2003: 112-124). In other words, the AKP wants to keep its ties with Islam in the social realm but abandon it as a political program. It is argued that as a consequence of the party’s legacy that pushed Islamists in Turkey toward a moderate, centrist direction, the AKP symbolizes the withdrawal of Islam from the political sphere in return for safeguarding its social network, which is the basis of ‘conservatism’ to which Erdoğan refers.⁴¹ The stand of the party on religion did not greatly differ the other center-right parties, that is, in terms of religion, the AKP’s ‘conservative-democratic’ discourse followed the same way that was opened by the DP and went on till today by the other center-right parties. According to Abdullah

⁴¹ For ‘Social Islam’ in Turkey, see M. Hakan Yavuz, “Towards an Islamic Liberalism?: The Nurcu Movement of Fethullah Gülen”, in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 1999: 584-605.

Gül, who was the first Prime Minister of the AKP government after the elections of 2002 and now the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the demand of the party about religion was “freedom of religion (freedom of belief) in the context of universal values,” Gül has claimed that the approaches which are manipulative of religion are left behind and do not exist any more....”⁴² In a similar way, Ertuğrul Yalçınbayır, the AKP’s deputy of Bursa, indicated that the AKP’s goal was to transform cultural values in such a way that religion as a political identity is acceptable, rather than to simply reduce religion to an ideology.⁴³ Erdoğan claimed that Islam could not be a reference for any political party; Islam should be a reference only at a personal level. That is, Erdoğan took Islam as a source of personal morality; however, if politically speaking, only the constitution and democratic principles should be accepted as a reference.⁴⁴ In that context, the demands of the AKP about the religious issues such as the headscarf issue or imam-hatip schools, should be realized normally in the context of individual rights and freedom both before and after the election of 2002⁴⁵. At this point, Kanra explains the change in the AKP by arguing that “the muddling of Islam with politics was seen as the main reason for the stagnation of the relationship with broader sections of the Turkish electorate” (Kanra, 2005: 528).

He argues also that during the election campaign, the AKP continuously reiterated its loyalty to the main principles of the secular system. This continued after the election as well (Kanra, 2005: 528). It is also emphasized that the intention of the AKP was for keeping the state and the government neutral in terms of religion and separating the political and religion affairs.

⁴² For Abdullah Gül’s statement see Ruşen Çakır, Vatan Daily, September 28, 2003.

⁴³ Personal Interview with Ertuğrul Yalçınbayır, in May 2006.

⁴⁴ Tayyip Erdoğan, Hürriyet Daily, August 28, 2001.

⁴⁵ The AKP and also some other rightist parties, such as the DYP, support the right of young women to wear headscarves at universities. The AKP also wants to make relative improvements in the conditions that allowed graduates of all vocational schools, including the İmam Hatip schools, to enter universities, in this issue, the only support for the AKP came from other rightist parties, again such as the DYP. On this issue see, Zaman Daily, February 10,2005; Sabah Daily, May 6,2004.

Indeed, as R. Tayyip Erdoğan, puts it,

the AKP's predecessors (referring to the tradition of the RP, the FP and the SP) were acting as a 'political community', on the basis of an ideology and appealing only the supporters of that ideology. This politics is a dangerous politics since it led to a polarization and drew a clear line between religion and politics. Establishing a party in the name of religion would be an injustice done to the religion, and the solution to this problem should be to maintain a secular system.⁴⁶

One week later, Erdoğan repeated his views to a different audience within a different context. Attending a business conference in Saudi Arabia, he stated that:

I do not find the idea of an Islamic common market to be a suitable one. Whatever happens, we will not base relations on ethnic and religious roots. Polarization will emerge if we start to establish institutions as such.⁴⁷

As scholars also indicated, as the most important secular principle, the separation of religious and political affairs is of primary importance to the enhancement of democratic aspirations in Turkey. This is a clear paradigm shift in Islamic politics, responding to the conditions of the day (Kanra, 2005: 528). It is argued that the AKP breaking from the long-running National View Tradition, Islam has lost its backbone role in Turkish Politics. Likewise, Türköne claimed that

the reason behind the AKP's clear break from a politics oriented to Islam is their determination to escape from the pressures of the Kemalist elite and the state. The AKP leadership found a once and for all solutions that is, the social, political and economic rights of Muslims could only be protected under a Western universal law system based on the protection of individual rights (Türköne, 2002:5-10).

This point is also reflected in the party program, which is highly apologetic, consisting of statements in line with the *February 28 Decisions*.⁴⁸ For instance, the program committed the AKP to Kemalism, stating that "Our party regards Atatürk's

⁴⁶ Available at; <<http://www.akparti.com.tr>>, accessed on 25 April 2006.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For the comparison of the AKP and National View party programs, see Serdar Şen, *AKP Milli Görüşü mü: Parti Programlarında Milli Görüş*, Nokta Kitap, 2004.

principles and reforms as the most important vehicle for raising the Turkish public above the level of contemporary civilization and sees this is an element of social peace.”⁴⁹

In fact, many Islamist circles, including politicians of the reformist wing, intellectuals and businessman, have come to conclude that Islamist politics are not possible, and more importantly that such politics would escalate the authoritarian style of the Kemalist secularist establishment. Moreover, it is also realized that this escalation would further narrow the domestic political arena even at the expense of meeting religious demands of the Muslim society.⁵⁰ According to one view, the AKP understood that they needed the West, and modern / Western values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in order to build a broader front against the Kemalist / secularist center, and to acquire legitimacy through this new discourse in their confrontation with the Kemalist / secularist center (Tanıyıcı, 2003: 463-83). Consequently, it could be said that, as a conservative party, the AKP, while not ignoring the importance of religious values in politics, tried to place the religious values within its wider platform of social justice and the importance of the social structure. Hence, for example, it aims to raise the issue of the ban on the wearing of headscarves in educational institutions in the political arena as a matter of basic rights, but not as an issue of religion or religiosity. The AKP cites its attempt to address itself to a broader public, while taking up the issues related to public visibility of Islamic identity as evidence of its will to reconcile secularism and Islam through a pluralist public sphere in Turkey. The AKP believes that Turkey’s Kemalist establishment will respect moderate religiosity in their conservative democratic party,

⁴⁹ www.akparti.org.tr/program.

⁵⁰ See Burhanettin Duran, “Islamist redefinition(s) of European and Islamic Identities in Turkey”, in *Turkey and European Integration: Accession Prospects and Issues*, ed. M. Ugur and N. Canefe, London: Routledge, 2004: 125-46; İhsan Dağı, “Rethinking Human Rights, Democracy and the West: Post-Islamist Intellectuals in Turkey”, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 13, Summer 2004: 135-51, Hakan Yavuz, “Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere and the February 28 Process”, *Journal of International Affairs* 54, fall 2000: 42.

if the party refrains from employing a rhetorical discourse and maintains a transparent political agenda.

Based on such interpretations, some foreign observers have seen no challenge to Kemalist secularism from the AKP. For instance, John O’Sullivan pointed out that the AKP’s actions conformed to the basic paradigm and rules of the Turkish Republic: “the AKP works for moderate reform that will accept the spectrum of Muslim beliefs and expression in public life. This shows the AKP wants to be a conservative party and as such, poses no threat to Turkey’s secular system.”⁵¹

Obviously the founders of the AKP were very determined to cooperate with the Kemalist establishment from the beginning. In its party program, the AKP showed a strong need to declare its loyalty to republican values and the “indivisible unity of the Turkish Republic” (Atacan, 2002: 194). It also promised not to use religion or ethnicity, both of which were considered as two main threats to the republic by the National Security Council, as a tool for its political goals.⁵²

In this respect, the AKP from its foundation onward has projected itself as a political party aspiring to a centrist location in the political spectrum. In his public statements, Tayyip Erdoğan has stressed that the AKP was now a center party in terms of both its political language and expression.⁵³ Hence, Coşar and Özman (2004: 62) noted that “the AKP aims to... rebuild the fragmented identity of the center-right in Turkey”⁵⁴ in the sense that,

[center-right] is a platform formed by the people who avoid excess... these are the people who search for ‘sound’ [policies]. Sound, that is, center-right is a locus composed of sound people, in some respect, who express mild demands. They are conservatives, but they do not pay tribute to fanaticism. They are religious, but they do not like fanaticism. They

⁵¹ John O’Sullivan, Zaman Daily, November 13, 2003.

⁵² www.akparti.org.tr/program.

⁵³ Tayyip Erdoğan, Zaman Daily, January 10, 2004.

⁵⁴ Coşar and Özman took Erdoğan’s statement from the article of Metin Sever, “Merkez Sağ Geleceğini Arıyor, 5” ,*Radikal*, 17 October 2002.

stand at a distance from the state, they want to change [state] structure, but they do not even imagine causing harm. They adhere to their traditions, but they inherently have an enormous will to change. They want freedom, but they do not overlook the destruction of order. They have developed national sentiments, but they oppose ethnicity or racist nationalism. They are against state control over the economy, but they aspire to a regulatory state. They support democracy to the extent that it does not threaten the unity of the state.⁵⁵

With a similar approach, Laçiner argues that the AKP should not be considered as representative of the National View; on the contrary, it resembles the Motherland Party of the 1980s and Democrat Party of the 1950s, especially in terms of its electoral base. According to Tarhan Erdem, a public opinion analyst, in the November elections the AKP received votes from the electorates who, in the previous elections, had voted for other political parties. Compared to the 1999 general elections, 69 percent of the Virtue Party, 38 percent of the National Action Party, 28 percent of the Motherland Party, 21 percent of the True Path Party, and 14 percent of the Democratic Left Party voters voted for the AKP in the November 2002 elections.⁵⁶ According to Laçiner, this shows that the AKP appealed to almost all sectors of society and was supported by the conservative right. In addition, the provinces where the AKP came in first were also the provinces where the Motherland Party (under the leadership of Turgut Özal) had been the front-runner in the 1983 and 1987 elections. Some attributed this to the AKP's successful appeal to the poor and the oppressed (Laçiner, 2002:11-20). In other words, like the ANAP's voters were, the voters of the AKP are also pragmatic, owing to the economic preferences of this electorate. Obviously, whether this support would be permanent depends mostly on the ability of the AKP's government to fulfill its promises of economic stability and growth in the middle term. However, this suggests that politics again came to depend on fluctuations of economic performance, as it was during the ANAP governments in the 1980s (İnsel, 2003:296).

⁵⁵ Coşar and Özman used Nur Vergin's definition which was taken from Metin Sever; "Merkez Sağ Geleceğini arıyor, 7", *Radikal*, 19 October 2002.

⁵⁶ *Radikal Daily*, November 6, 2002.

Briefly, a specific interpretation of the party suggests a transformation in the AKP from its former Islamist identity. The concepts of ‘Islamic state’ and ‘Islamic ideology’ have lost their significance in the AKP’s discourse. Although the ideological change in the Islamists can be traced back to the public debates during the presidency of Turgut Özal (1989-1993), it has been the influence of the February 28 process that has accelerated the change.⁵⁷ According to İbrahim Aşkar, the AKP’s deputy of Afyon, this process has brought about some significant changes in Islamist conceptualizations of Europe, democracy, and the West in Turkey. The different circles of Turkish Islamism have abandoned their anti-European discourses and have supported Turkey’s integration with the world. In Aşkar’s view, this change of mind can be related to the conviction that the EU accession process and the integration with the world are likely to force the Turkish political system to undertake significant reforms that will make the official ideology less repressive and more inclusive.⁵⁸ In this vein, it may be asserted that the party hoped that these processes would bring about a liberal democratic political environment in which their Islamic demands, related to living religious values, might be met. To sum, after February 28, most of the Islamist understood that they would not be able stay in power if they insisted on their Islamist identity. Hence, the AKP has taken pains to avoid defining itself as a religious party, and insisted that their aim is to take its place as a center-right party in the political arena, in terms of both the values it represents and its economic-social program.⁵⁹

In the following parts, both the constituent principles of the identity and its potential effects to center politics in Turkey will be investigated in order to explain how the AKP differs and / or resembles other parties of the Turkish center-right, and to what extent it represents the Turkish center-right tradition.

⁵⁷ Nuray Mert’s assertion in Vatan Daily, October 6,2003; also Ahmet İnel has a parallel view in his article of “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey”, *The Atlantic Quarterly* 102, spring-summer, p: 293-308.

⁵⁸ Personal interview with İbrahim Aşkar, the AKP MP, in May 2006.

⁵⁹ Tayyip Erdoğan, Zaman Daily, January 10, 2004.

5.2 The Basic Parameters of the ‘Conservative Democratic’ Political Identity of the AKP

As underlined in the previous section, the AKP attempts to get rid of its Islamist identity, it tries to formulate a new political stance which it calls conservative democracy.⁶⁰ As it may be understood from the term, this formulation has two dimensions; one is to be conservative and the other is to be democrat.⁶¹ Conservatism, as we mentioned in the previous chapters, has always been a strong current in Turkish politics and has manifested itself in many party platforms, from the Democrat Party of Adnan Menderes to the Justice Party and the post-83 DYP of Demirel, and the most recently in the Motherland Party of Turgut Özal. Following in the footsteps of these parties, the AKP aims at creating for itself a conservative political identity to enlarge its electoral following beyond the traditional religiously conservative voters. Accordingly, the following section looks at the basic parameters of its identity, beginning with their approach to social change and transformation.

5.2.1 Concepts of Social Change and Transformation in the Discourse of the AKP

According to Tayyip Erdoğan, the AKP tries to reshape the concept of conservatism within the socio-cultural structure of Turkey through the developments of the modern world while at the same time learning from the past failures.⁶² In other words, the AKP attempts to regenerate and localize its own brand of conservatism by learning from the negative lessons of the past. Since Islamist political movements in Turkey generated negative public reactions in the secular sections of the society (Akdoğan, 2003:100-104), Erdoğan may therefore want to create a new political party identity

⁶⁰ The principles of *Conservative Democracy* had been introduced to people by a book in the year of 2003, which is titled *Conservative Democracy* and authorized by Yalçın Akdoğan, an important figure in the theorization of the identity.

⁶¹ The dimension of democracy will be analyzed in the following section

⁶² Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech in the international symposium on conservatism and democracy in İstanbul on January 10-11, 2004. For this speech see, *Uluslararası Muhafazakarlık ve Demokrasi Sempozyumu*, Ankara, 2004: 7-13.

by avoiding radical change, and which would function within the well-defined parameters of the Turkish political process. For instance, Mehmet Dülger, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission and the AKP's deputy of Antalya, who previously served as the deputy of the DYP in the TBMM, defines the conservatism of the party with the following statement:

This new understanding of conservative democracy is developed on the basis of general principles of conservatism which have stood the test of time. It also rests upon the social and cultural traditions of our people. Our aim is to reproduce our system of local and deep-rooted values in harmony with the universal standards of political conservatism. We are for a conservatism that is modern and open to change, not one which rests on keeping the status quo.⁶³

As underlined by Dülger, the conservative democracy platform of the AKP supports a gradual and progressive transformation in order to bring about significant changes for the improvement of society. For Dülger, such gradual improvements can produce societal transformations that are more fundamental and permanent, as long as they reflect the historical experience and cultural wealth of the nation and as long as they are produced within their own natural processes. In his view, changes that have not materialized gradually are not considered viable and permanent. For Murat Belge, a leftist-oriented intellectual, this kind of transformation could be called “a conservative revolution,” a normative revolution, in that it seeks to moralize the political institutions and networks. By conservative revolution, he means “creating new cognitive spaces for different imaginations of the past and the reconstruction of the present.”⁶⁴ At this point, we can say that the party's sources of inspiration reflect classical conservative conception of change. The AKP defines itself conservative, because it insists on balance and on gradual, evolutionary change, and rejects radicalism and societal engineering. According to a conservative understanding of the AKP, in order to enable gradual change vis-à-vis the overall structure, it is necessary to maintain some of the values and features of the existing structure. In its 2002

⁶³ Personal interview in June 2006 with Mehmet Dülger.

⁶⁴ Murat Belge, *Radikal Daily*, January 23, 2003.

election manifesto, the party interpreted its commitment to conservatism mainly in cultural terms, by arguing that society renewed itself within the context of basic institutions such as the family, school, property, religion and morals. Also, the party opposes any interference by the state in these institutions and values since they believed that it would lead to conflict and disorder.⁶⁵ In this sense, the AKP puts itself in the line of a political tradition that comes from the Democrat Party, the Justice Party and Turgut Özal's Motherland Party. For this view, the AKP's conservatism did not mean the conservation of established institutions and relations, but refers to the protection of important values and principles while pursuing progress. In this context, according to scholars, it is possible to observe a parallelism between conservatism of the DP and of the ANAP, because all of them aimed at synthesizing local and universal values, tradition and modernity, and morality and rationality (Çetinsaya, 2002:3437; Laçiner, 2002:11-12; Bora, 2002:29-35).⁶⁶

However, with the above-mentioned components of the party discourse are considered, it may be argued that there remains a discourse of Islamic civilization that has long been central to Turkish version of political Islam since the late Ottoman times (Çaha, 2001; Gülalp,2002; Dağı,2004:135-151; Yavuz,2005). It should also be remembered that the concepts of justice and progress/development have contributed much to the evolution of Islamist discourses in Turkey, including the Welfare Party's Just Order. Islamists of the Ottoman Empire were heavily influenced by the European notion of progress. Since then, Islamists have accepted taking the good aspects of European civilization that means the adaptation of technical field, but rejection of cultural programs⁶⁷. Today, the AKP combines these two important themes (progress/development and justice) by naming their party as 'justice and development'. This leads us to think that the AKP aims at transforming the Islamist

⁶⁵ *Her şey Türkiye için: AK Parti Seçim Beyannamesi*, www.akparti.org.tr,2002:7.

⁶⁶ For more information on this comparison also see, İhsan Dağı, "AKP İslamcı Bir Parti mi?" ,*Zaman Daily*, November 27, 2002; Ömer Çelik, "Merkez Sağ, Özalizm, ve AK Parti", *Star Daily*, July 7, 2002.

⁶⁷ Islamic political literature underlines the principle of justice. İbrahim E. Kozak, *İnsan Toplum İktisat*, Değişim Yayıncılık İstanbul 1999: 243.

political rhetoric by dropping the claim of establishing an Islamic state (as its change aspect), but it still embraces some of the basic concepts of Islamism such as justice, progress and Islamic civilization (as a dimension of continuity with them). That is, the AKP seems to use modernization and Europeanization as interchangeable by leaving the Islamist differentiation between these two. However, at the same time, it combines modern (democratic) and conservative/local (Islamic) values to create a new synthesis. In the AKP's discourse, "to conserve should not prevent changes and advances. It should allow for getting adapted to development without losing 'the self.'"⁶⁸ The platform for this synthesis is the idea of Islamic civilization, covered by the concept of conservative democracy. This idea was put by Erdoğan in the following way: "I want to see Turkey make a meaningful contribution to the mosaic of cultures that one observes in Europe. My motto is a local-oriented stance in a globalizing world"⁶⁹. According to Erdoğan, a significant part of the Turkish society desires to adopt a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition, a belief of universalism that accepts localism, an understanding of rationalism that does not disregard the spiritual meaning of life, and a choice for change that is not fundamentalist. In other words, one can conclude that the AKP believes in the need to reach a new synthesis without following a sort of traditionalism that rejects modern achievements.

By settling the above-mentioned points of change as the basis of its political identity, the founders of the AKP have attempted to define the AKP as a new political formation, which broke its connection with its past. When the approach of the party to the social change and transformation concepts is considered, it may be realized that the AKP attempts to develop a conservative stance towards the nature of social change. However, in their statement and approach, there also seems to be a contradiction. This contradiction emerges from the discourse of the AKP, since it

⁶⁸ Personal interview with Ahmet Ertürk, the deputy of the AKP, in May 2006.

⁶⁹ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech at the American Enterprise Institute, January 29, 2004.

declares itself as a conservative party, then at the same time it declares that it is a new political movement which completely broke off its past. If the AKP uses the terms conservative and a radical change in the same context, this usage includes some problematic points. As Islamist writers such as Ali Bulaç asserted, the statements about being a new political movement altogether and denying its past completely contradict with each other;⁷⁰ there can be different perceptions of some issues such as politics, religion and democracy than the National View had, but this does not mean that the AKP is a totally new party. Along these lines liberal-oriented scholars, e.g. Coşar and Özman, view the AKP as “an offspring of the National View Tradition,” rather than as a radical transformation. In their view, the only ‘difference’ between two strands - traditionalist and reformists - was spelled as one of ‘political style and discourse’ (Coşar and Özman, 2004: 62).

Besides this contradiction, some undefined and grey areas can also be detected in the party’s approach to the concepts of social change and transformation. To start with, the core of conservative democracy is the idea that the party voices society’s collective reason and informs its proposed policies with society’s common values (Akdoğan, 2003: 39-61). What lies behind this perception is that the party not only assumes the presence of a set of shared social values, but it also claims full knowledge of society’s needs and desires. The reification of shared values and full knowledge of values makes the party’s ideology self-affirming. By treating cultural values as the foundation of its political system, the party can present many issue positions as natural choices dictated by collective demand. This view becomes susceptible to authoritarian expansion as the party assumes that it can exercise ‘collective reasoning’ on behalf of the public without making its rationale clear to those it is governing. Moreover, posing potential problems with such reifications indicates that the AKP’s conservatism aims at protecting and at the same time transforming the current structure. According to Akdoğan (2003: 128), a theoretician of the AKP’ identity, “what we (AKP) understand from conservatism is not the

⁷⁰ Ali Bulaç, Vatan Daily, October 8, 2003.

protection of (all) the existing institutions and relationship *but only some of them*. To conserve does not mean resistance to transformation and progress, but rather it means adjusting to changes without losing your *essence*.” Yet, one can hardly elicit from this and comparable statements how the party would define this essence, which values are the ones to protect, who will select them, and how the party expects to pursue the selective transformation.

Moreover, the party objects to reject a dichotomy of tradition and modernity completely, and emphasizes the necessity of reaching a synthesis between traditional and modern values in this transformation. It is the promise of this synthesis that constitutes one of the pillars of the party’s identity. Nevertheless, the question of how this fusion would also be formed points to more ambivalence:

it is necessary to accept modernity in its full extent, especially its progressive pillar of advanced technology, higher education and urbanization. Nevertheless its philosophical foundations, individualism, secularism, rationality, and materialism should be first differentiated from their misconceived practices and descriptions, and only then must be mixed with local values (Akdoğan, 2003: 133).

Although such prescriptions indicate that modernity and tradition are not necessarily in conflict, they do not address whether and how modernity’s philosophical foundation can be adopted selectively. By doing so, the AKP’s ‘conservative democracy’ fails to provide an original answer to the questions whether and how local values can be integrated with the norms of modernity, unless modernity’s foundations in individualism and rationality are accepted. If the selective adoption is viable, then what aspects of individualism or rationality can be accepted and how?

5.2.2 The Approach of the AKP to Politics, Society and Laicism in the Context of the Conservative Democracy

According to the ‘conservative democratic’ rhetoric of the AKP, the field of politics should be firmly grounded in the culture of reconciliation.⁷¹ It is believed that it is possible to solve social differences and disagreements in the political arena on the basis of reconciliation. The Party Program states that “A variety of cultural groups should participate in politics in order to enrich public debate in a forum of tolerance generated by democratic pluralism.”⁷² According to the Program, reminiscent of the ANAP’s approach under Özal leadership, politics should be established on that basis of integration and tolerance instead of conflict, the formation of cliques and polarization. For instance, for Bülent Arınç, the speaker of Turkish Grand National Assembly and also a leading figure of the party coming from the MG, the RP’s policies had reached an impasse, because it had let religious issues dominate its political agenda, it underplayed the importance of consensus-seeking and dialogue-building with the other sectors of the society, and it did not address itself to a broader public.⁷³ This moderate discourse and its commitment to reconciliation would provide us with some inferences that could help us comprehend the other characteristics of the identity.

Firstly, as a corollary to this consensus-oriented politics, the AKP defined its worldview as a combination of liberal, conservative, nationalist and social-democratic views. Hence, politics for the AKP requires a different approach in which not ideology but service to people matters. This kind of politics - “synthesizing tendency” - is not unfamiliar to the Turkish centre-right tradition (Coşar and Özman, 2004: 66). As mentioned in previous chapters, an emphasis on tolerance and addressing the people from different sections of society were also part of the political rhetoric of the

⁷¹ The main arguments in the book of *Conservative Democracy*, written by Yalçın Akdoğan, will be accepted as a reference to illuminate the subjects that will be discussed on this part.

⁷² The AKP party program.

⁷³ Bülent Arınç, *Milliyet Daily*, February 22, 2003.

previous Turkish center-right parties, especially, in the 1980s, with Özal (Çoşar and Özman, 2004: 58-61). As the ANAP had done, the AKP may have proposed this identity for different reasons. It may be chosen as a ‘space’ where people with diverse identities and interests meet to express their desires. This choice, at the same time, can also be seen as a strategic positioning by the party with the intent to carve out a new and a safe place in Turkey’s ideological spectrum. This inclusive identity and “opening arms to everybody” can also be interpreted as an attempt to play the role of a mass or catch-all party to address the problems of all social classes in general (Yılmaz, 2001: 81). Thus, in contrast to other parties such as the parties of National View Tradition whose emphasis on a specific identity has led to radicalization and marginalization, the AKP wants to become an inclusive catch-all party with popular support.

This idea was put forward by MP Dülger in the following way:

Islamists in Turkey have experienced a serious learning process in recent years that effectively taught them to avoid some of the mistakes of the previous era. This learning process became particularly pronounced following the *February 28 process* that effectively marked the end of the coalition government led by the Welfare Party and its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, in 1997. It became increasingly clear that if a party failed to respect the principles of secularism, it would have no chance of sustained and effective participation in the Turkish political system with its constitutional boundaries. Hence this learning process was extremely important in dividing the National View Tradition and pushing ‘the reformist’ in Turkey toward a moderate, centrist location.⁷⁴

To sum up, there was a learning process in the sense that the recognition was that hard-line Islamist politics would appeal only to a small segment of the Turkish population. Moderation, compromise and unity were, therefore, the key toward the construction of a catch-all party of broad electoral support.

⁷⁴ Personal interview with Mehmet Dülger, May 2006.

Likewise, again related to this consensus-oriented politics, one could come to another conclusion about the distinctive characteristics of the AKP's identity. Ahmet Ertürk, the AKP's deputy of Aydın, offers one of the most popular explanations of the party's identity, according to which conservative democracy serves as a pluralist and inclusive political platform that attracts many different people: "a key intersection in the heart of the Turkish politics."⁷⁵ In the 2002 election manifesto, the party put forward its commitment to conservatism mainly in cultural terms, and it stated that "...owing to this consensus politics, the identity welcomes social differentiation on the basis of ethnic, cultural and religious peculiarities, and considers them as indispensable for social stability and order." It is also stated in the AKP's party program that, "... differences are perceived not as a source of conflict, but as richness"; Turkey was seen as a country which is formed by social, cultural or religious differences and, in this context, the party presented itself as "the party of all people, living within the same geography for millennia in peace, friendship and brotherhood, and sharing a joint destiny and common shares."⁷⁶ The party's objective, accordance to this circumstance, is "...to product the values that form the identity of this family in the light of contemporary developments."⁷⁷ Moreover, like the other Turkish center-right parties, the party compares society to "living organism that survives by restoring itself in the cultural environment.....In this cultural environment, the institutions such as the family, education, property, religion, and morality should be produced within their own natural processes without any intervention."⁷⁸

In this framework, it may be concluded that 'conservative democracy' both in the official discourse of the party and in the view of the moderate figures of the party represents a departure from the Islamism of the National View Tradition. The AKP differs from the Welfare Party, for example, in its understanding of politics. As Çınar

⁷⁵ Personal interview with Ahmet Ertürk, May 2006.

⁷⁶ *Her şey Türkiye için: AK Parti Seçim Beyannamesi*, available from www.akparti.org.tr.

⁷⁷ *Her şey Türkiye için: AK Parti Seçim Beyannamesi*, available from www.akparti.org.tr.

⁷⁸ *Her şey Türkiye için: AK Parti Seçim Beyannamesi*, available from www.akparti.org.

states, the Welfare Party had, similar to the Kemalist outlook, an “anti-political grammar that asserts the primacy of culture in development/modernization and that sees society as a homogenous entity and as an object of government only.”⁷⁹ The AKP, by recognizing the heterogeneous structure of the Turkish society, advanced an inclusive and compromising political style: “while the parties of National View Tradition downplayed the undemocratic nature of state-society relationship by concentrating on its secularist substance, the AKP primarily emphasizes the institutional set up of Turkish politics, and problematizes the top-down or ‘bureaucratic-statist’ structures.”⁸⁰ Conservative democracy, in a sense, is an answer to the ideological clash between Islamism and secularism. Although it is not declared as such, it claims to resolve all the tensions of Turkish politics such as global and local, secular and Islamic, Turkish and Kurdish; that is, politics is defined by the AKP as a field of possibilities within social and economic limits. Erdoğan has often declared “politics to be an art of solving problems, but not creating them”⁸¹ in order to decrease the tensions generated by the ideological fault lines of Turkey.

Thirdly, by consensus politics and refraining from the conflicts, which could potentially occur among different cultural identities, also shaped the AKP’s views on secularism.⁸² The program depicts secularism as “an assurance of the freedom of religion and conscience” and rejects “the interpretation and distortion of secularism as enmity against religion.”⁸³ It considers discrimination against pious people because of their religious preferences as anti-democratic; so secularism needs to be crowned with democracy in order for fundamental rights and freedoms to be accorded as constitutional guarantees. This allows, according to the Program, secularism to

⁷⁹ Menderes Çınar, “The Justice and Development Party in Turkey”,

http://www.networkideas.org/themes/world/jan2003/print/prnt290103_Turkey.htm, available in 15/06/2006.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Erdoğan’s speech in international symposium on conservatism and democracy, 2004.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

function like an arbiter institution and provides an environment of compromise. As another deputy of the AKP explained, “while attaching importance to religion as a social value, we do not think it right to conduct politics through religion, to attempt to transform government ideologically by using religion, or to resort to organizational activities based on religious symbols.”⁸⁴ According to the AKP MPs⁸⁵, to make religion an instrument of politics and to adopt exclusive approaches to politics in the name of religion harms not only political pluralism, but also religion itself; religion is a sacred and collective value:

This is how we should interpret it, how we should understand it. It should not be made the subject of political partisanship causing divisiveness. Therefore it is important that conservatism – as a political approach which accords importance to history, social culture, and, in this context, religion as well – reestablishes itself on a democratic format.⁸⁶

Indeed, the Party Program stated that “it is also unacceptable to make use of religion for political, economic and other interests or to put pressure on people who think and live differently by using religion.”⁸⁷ Erdoğan frequently emphasized “state neutrality toward all religions and doctrines” to define his understanding of secularism.⁸⁸ In the AKP’s practice and rhetoric, Islam’s role is reduced to a role at the individual level; as Erdoğan said, “the state could be secular, but not individuals.”⁸⁹ It should be remembered that right-wing politicians, from Özal to Erdoğan, have argued that secularism has been a constitutional regime and characteristic of the state, not a required worldview for individuals. It may be claimed that for them, secularism implies state neutrality toward various religions, and allows the public visibility of religion. Even one step further, Arıncı, the AKP’s speaker of the TBMM, argues that secularism should be reinterpreted in Turkey in a more liberal manner, one that

⁸⁴ Personal interview with, Haluk İpek, the AKP’s deputy of Edirne, in May 2006.

⁸⁵ Ertuğrul Yaçınbayır, Ahmet Ertürk, Mehmet Dülger, Ali Ayağ, Haluk İpek and İbrahim Aşkar.

⁸⁶ Personal interview with, Haluk İpek, the AKP’s deputy of Edirne, in May 2006.

⁸⁷ The party program.

⁸⁸ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, *Konuşmalar*, Ankara, AK Parti, 2003:72.

⁸⁹ Tayyip Erdoğan, *Hürriyet Daily*, August 28, 2001, in Çakır and Çalmuk, 2001: 115.

emphasizes the individual's religious rights and freedoms. This new version of secularism, for him, should attach importance to the fact that Turkey is the crossroads of civilizations. On the one hand, it is a part of the West; on the other hand, its population is overwhelmingly Muslim. For Arınç, secularism in Turkey ought to take into consideration this dual socio-cultural context. A reinterpretation and true implementation of secularism in Turkey, he stresses, will greatly contribute to the worldwide debates to secularism.⁹⁰

On secularism, the AKP's theoretician Akdoğan, argues that secularism in Turkey needs to be empowered by democracy in order to better protect religious freedoms. For him, "a particular understanding of secularism, that is, Kemalist secularism, as a monopolistic, totalitarian and Jacobin ideology or way of life, would result in conflict, rather than social peace." (Akdoğan, 2003: 105) Akdoğan also rejects the use of religion as a political tool (Akdoğan, 2003: 132). The AKP MPs⁹¹ have also appreciated secularism of the American-style that is very sensitive to the freedom of conscience and interprets religious values as moral values guiding social behavior. They wanted to imitate the American model especially, because of the absence of an ideological state, and its emphasis on religious freedoms. According to another deputy of the AKP, Ali Ayağ, "The AKP opposes a version of secularism according to which the state favors a secular worldview in the public sphere and aims to confine religion to the private sphere."⁹² As for the conservative dimension, the AKP sees religion "as one of the most important institutions of humanity," and the emphasis is placed on "preventing behavior that offends religious people."⁹³

To summarize, a strong commitment to consensus and tolerance in their rhetoric has been on the forefront in the conception of secularism of the AKP understood as a

⁹⁰ Bülent Arınç, Vatan Daily, September 29, 2003.

⁹¹ The AKP parliamentarians whom I interviewed: Ertuğrul Yaçınbayır, Ahmet Ertürk, Mehmet Dülger, Ali Ayağ, Haluk İpek and İbrahim Aşkar.

⁹² Personal interview with Ali Ayağ, the AKP's deputy of Edirne, in May 2006.

⁹³ The party program.

principle of freedom and social peace. In contrast to the National View Tradition, especially represented by the RP, the AKP does not explicitly criticize the current practices of laicism in Turkey, but rather it becomes a defender of a different approach based on criticizing any established doctrine that defines the ‘good’ for its citizens, either religious or non-religious. However, it can be argued here the AKP leaders have faced a trade-off between two contradictory policies. On the one hand, the state establishment has required to them to show their loyalty to secularism in order to be legal and legitimate actors in Turkish politics.⁹⁴ On the other hand, their constituency has demanded that they reinterpret the established conception of secularism in Turkey. At this point, the AKP is criticized by some observers for searching only for ad hoc solutions to profound problems of secularism in Turkey.⁹⁵ In sum, the absence of a straightforward discussion of Islam in conservative democracy suggests that, despite its clear Islamic roots, the party shies away from addressing issues pertaining to Islam. As it is apparent both in the party program and in other publications, the AKP perspective is that the field of politics should be firmly grounded in the culture of reconciliation.

However, beyond its initial promise of solving controversial issues, such as the headscarf issue or imam hatip, ‘conservative democracy’ becomes a highly vague political project. For example, on the one hand, it says that it welcomes the diversities in the society and it supports their participation in politics for pursuing their own interests; and on the other hand, it declares that it is against making politics over identities and claims identity politics has the danger of polarization and confliction in the society. Since raising politics over the identities based on ethnicity, religion and / or ideology causes separation between ‘they’ (us) and ‘other’ (them), the AKP sees

⁹⁴ See Yüksel Sezgin, “Can the Israeli Status Quo Model Help Post-February 28 Turkey Solve its Problems”, *Turkish Studies* 4, Autumn 2003:47-70.

⁹⁵ For instance, Fehmi Kuru, an influential columnist from Yeni Şafak Daily and who also has strong personal connections with the AKP, has emphasized that the solution to state-religion controversies in Turkey is “more secularism”. By “more secularism” Kuru has implied a more liberal and less statist perspective that depends on a real mosque-state separation. He has criticized the AKP for not being bold enough to defend such a separation. *Yeni Şafak Daily*, February 9, 2005; and *Yeni Şafak Daily*, February 16, 2005.

them as a potential danger that would harm the social stability. Based on this understanding, the AKP argues that there has been a difference between tolerating and caring for the diversities and subjecting the diversities to an exclusionary discourse, and it claims that identity differences should be considered as the natural field of freedoms. However, this kind of AKP's conciliatory approach also includes some weaknesses and contradictory expressions. Firstly, while the AKP defines the 'nation' as the pluralist whole, at the same time it believes that the 'nation' should be kept together with common values and citizenship consciousness. However, with such a definition there emerges a contradiction of, on the one hand, accepting diversities in society as richness, but on the other hand, underlining the values that are common to all nations and consider politics as serving for 'nation' (Akdoğan, 2003: 71). Also, some unanswered questions arise from this definition, e.g. what in the AKP's eyes, are these common values, or if one value comes into conflict with another, which one prevails?

5.2.3 The AKP's Definition of Democracy in the Context of Conservative Democracy

In rhetoric, the AKP seems to appropriate and offer the basic principles and institutions of representative (liberal) democracy model as rule by people, through representation based on free elections. At the same time, it accepts the principle of majority rule as the form of the government; the AKP also claims that political legitimacy should be based on the sovereignty of the people, which was defended by the AP in the 1970s and by the DYP in the 1990s. Thus, the first component of political authority is the 'national will', which is based on the consent of the people. The second component of political authority is that the consent, by which the political authority conveys itself and expresses its organizational identity, in other words; the laws, the rules and values should be in accordance with the needs of the

era and should reflect people's consent.⁹⁶ These arguments naturally raise the question of how this consent will be determined or what the needs of the era are.

In addition to the acceptance of the liberal values as the basis of its conception of democracy, the AKP promises to consolidate the Turkish democracy in an effort not just to make the country liberal democracy with all of its basic principles and institutions in place,⁹⁷ but also for the sake of meeting the Copenhagen criteria.⁹⁸ Therefore, its definition of democracy has been conditioned by not only internal dynamics, but also formed by external ones. According to the party program, the EU membership is regarded as an important step to "reach at the level of contemporary civilization."⁹⁹ That is to say that, the Copenhagen criteria are to be internalized and implemented as 'the Ankara criteria'. The AKP claims that it will embrace the EU norms on democracy and human rights as also it believes that having a democratic and European agenda would open a new path for transforming Turkish domestic politics. Abdullah Gül, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed this belief in 2004 in the following way:

We are fully aware that it is in Turkey's own interest to proceed with the reforms. This will benefit to our people. The reform process in Turkey is not completed; however, it is already irreversible.¹⁰⁰

It should be remembered that the adoption of European norms and institutions has been a significant incentive especially for Turkey, which continues the process of

⁹⁶ Part Program of the AKP.

⁹⁷ 2002 Election Declaration.

⁹⁸ In the Copenhagen summit of December 2002, the EU council postponed its decision to give Turkey a specific date to membership negotiations with the EU until its 2004 summit, at which a decision would be taken to start. An important aspect of this review would be to see whether Turkey has fulfilled the political aspects of the Copenhagen Criteria such as calling for the broadening of individual and liberal freedoms and for the lessening of state intervention into cultural identities and beliefs.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Abdullah Gül, *At the Symposium "Turkey and the EU –Looking Beyond Prejudice" Maastricht*, April 4- 5, 2004, [http:// www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/EN/Main.asp](http://www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/EN/Main.asp)., available in 05/05/2006.

democratic consolidation.¹⁰¹ In other words, it was claimed that the EU influence on Turkey is an important factor in the dual process of ‘political harmonization’ and ‘domestic democratization’ (Rumford, 2001: 97; İnsel, 2003:301, Dağı, 2005:21-37; Göle, 2003). In this process, the program of the AKP is presented as a program on democracy and development which adopts a discourse on democracy, human rights and the rule of law and claims to contain elements of a democratic and liberal political movement.¹⁰²

Yet, the AKP’s outlook and mission in carrying out the democratization program in accordance with EU is indeed directed to the creation of a platform that would integrate Turkey with Europe without excluding our traditional values. According to Gül, “we are to prove that a Muslim society is capable of changing and renovating itself, attaining contemporary standards, while preserving its values, traditions and identity.”¹⁰³ So, one would conclude that the AKP sees the modern values of democracy, human rights, rule of law, transparency, and answerability as the universal values shared by humanity. For Gül, “these values are universal because no one can claim monopoly over humanistic values that are the common inheritance of civilization”.¹⁰⁴ In this way, the AKP sees these universal values as the product of the collective wisdom derived from different civilizations. According to Ertuğrul Yalçınbayır, the AKP’s deputy for Bursa,

Civilizations have a lot to gain from inter-acting with each other. Communication and dialogue is the path to peace and compromise. Countries which fail to integrate with today’s world, which can not

¹⁰¹For more information on the democratic process of Turkey see, Özbudun *Ergun*, (2003). *Çağdaş Türk Politikası: Demokratik Pekışmenin Önündeki Engeller*, İstanbul, Doğan Kitap,; Esmer Yılmaz (2002), “Introduction”, in *Politics, Parties and Elections in Turkey* eds. by Sabri Sayarı and Yılmaz Esmer, Colorado: Lynne Reiner Publishers, p: 1-9.

¹⁰² See the Party Program and election declaration.

¹⁰³ Abdullah Gül, *At the Symposium “Turkey and the EU –Looking Beyond Prejudice” Maastricht*, April 4-5,2004, [http:// www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/EN/Main.asp](http://www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/EN/Main.asp).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

internalize universal values and develop concepts such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are being driven into isolation.¹⁰⁵

This kind of approach to EU is not unfamiliar to the center-right parties of the post-1980 era; that is, the democratization program of the AKP that is formed in accordance with the EU coincides with the dominant arguments that shaped ANAP and DYP discourses in the 1980 and 1990s. According to Nuray Mert, the center-right conservatism in Turkey claims to provide for the people an opportunity to become members of a modern society by combining their culture with their inspirations to become modern individuals (Mert, 2000: 82-83). The statement of the DYP's former leader, Tansu Çiller, in a speech on 12 March 1995, that "we shall enter Europe keeping our culture..." is a genuine example of this kind of politics.¹⁰⁶ For Mert, "bringing our culture to Europe" is a popular center right-wing motto and is not peculiar to Çiller or the DYP. According to Çaha, the center right-wing parties repeated this same idea and believed that the Turkish people's experiences in history and their multidimensional cultural accumulation would enrich Europe (Çaha, 2003:110-114). To become a part of the "civilized world," and to reach the aspirations of the Turkish people to gain stability, peace and prosperity, center right-wing politics have approached the issue of EU in an instrumental vein; that is, it may be concluded that their usage of the concept is directed to the creation of a platform to integrate Turkey with Europe, which would in turn promote Turkey's significance in the world. The ANAP leader Turgut Özal had stated in the 1980s that:

With its own successful model of development, its place in the Western world and its rich historical legacy and identity, Turkey will be a symbol of the harmony of cultures and civilizations in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Personal interview with Ertuğrul Yalçınbayır, in May 2006.

¹⁰⁶ The statement is quoted from Nuray Mert (2000:74), based on Çiller Tansu, *AB ile Bütünleşiyoruz; Gümrük Birliği*, Başbakanlık Basın Merkezi, 12 March 1995.

¹⁰⁷ The statement is quoted in Laçiner, Sedat, "Özal Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası", *1980-2003 Türkiye'nin Dış,Ekonomik, Sosyal ve İdari Politikaları*, ed. by Turgut Göksu,Siyasal Kitabevi, Ankara,2003:73.

In addition to the EU influence on the AKP's democratization program, its emphasis on non-confrontational and consensus-oriented is also reflected in its approach to democracy. The AKP's attempts to establish its perspective of democracy on the liberal principles and values such as plurality, human rights, tolerance and consensus show us that it defines democracy not only as a form of government, but also as a value system. Its acceptance of the Turkish society as a heterogeneous entity and the AKP's encouragement of those to participate in politics with their identities emerge from the AKP's emphasis on dialogue and tolerance. According to Dülger,

Much distance has been covered in Turkey toward establishing and institutionalizing democracy in its fullest sense, a democracy which incorporates pluralism and tolerance, not a self-styled democracy. The ideal is not to have a mechanical democracy that is reduced to elections and certain institutions, but an organic democracy that pervades into the administrative, social and political fields. We refer to this as deliberative democracy based on a democratic culture.¹⁰⁸

Briefly, the AKP aims to establish such a culture that every part of the society finds an opportunity to join a decision-making process. To promote this culture, the Program of the party also claims to fulfill basic rights and freedoms of the people, promising not only legal guarantees but also proper implementation of human rights provisions.¹⁰⁹ Hence, participatory democracy is improved by including these diverse groups and voices in the political process.

Furthermore, in the context of the pluralist aspect of democracy, the AKP also frequently refers to the issue of respect to the minority rights. Its consideration of democracy is based on the protection of minority rights.¹¹⁰ In this process, the party's basic argument is based on sustaining a dialog by settling the conditions for the citizens to make, implement and control the implementation of the public decisions.¹¹¹ However, in this formulation, some questions might arise. What makes

¹⁰⁸Personal interview with Mehmet Dülger, the AKP MPs, in June 2006.

¹⁰⁹The Party program.

¹¹⁰The Party program.

¹¹¹Ibid.

the AKP's discourse of democracy uncertain is the party's paradoxical approach to politics. While the party recognizes the diversities in the society, at the same time it emphasizes a political style that rejects the diverse groups and voices because of their potential for creating crises and polarization. Furthermore, it does not give an exact answer to which groups should be accepted as minorities. Moreover, it accepts diversities in society and encourages them to participate in politics, but it does not accept that there should be a dilemma due to the differentiation of interest and demands. Also, if these demands come into conflict with each other, again they do not offer any method for reconciliation.

Although these are important points of inconsistency and ambiguity in the party's rhetoric, in its program and the Election Declaration the AKP adopts a modern political language that aims to be a platform for secularization and democratization, civilization and the rule of law, freedom of faith and thought, and equality of opportunity. The party program thus gives the image that the AKP would embrace the modern values attained during the Republican era in Turkey.

To sum up, it may be concluded that there are three specific components that frame both the AKP's identity, and its democratic understanding portrayed in its discourse: international norms, traditional values, and the official institutions brought to life by the Republican regime. There is no doubt that the adaptation of such a political stance, based on an advocacy for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, has several significant implications for the AKP's political strategy. İnsel claimed (2003: 301) that the AKP "has undertaken the mission of ending the September 12 Regime whether it likes it or not." In other words, we may expect that Turkey's integration with the world is likely to force the Turkish political system to undertake significant democratic reforms that will make the official ideology less repressive and more inclusive. In this vein, the AKP hopes that this process will bring about a liberal democratic political environment in which the needs of the AKP and the demands of the EU might be overlapped, that is, European demands for democratization has been instrumentalized by the AKP. The electoral success of the AKP has not resolved its

problem of legitimacy; on the contrary, it has worsened it.¹¹² The AKP adopted a specific discourse on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Experiencing the pressures of the Kemalist / secularist center on every aspect of their lives, they sought protection within the language and institutions of modernity whereby they discovered the utility of human rights democracy (Yavuz, 2005:344). Responding to the pressures originating from the military's adamant opposition, the AKP leadership has realized the legitimizing power of democracy. Thus, its adoption of this language can be also interpreted as a strategically-motivated approach that aims to protect itself against the power of the Kemalist / secularist center, and a strategy that enabled it to forge broad coalitions at home and abroad with liberal democratic groups (Dağı, 2004: 135-51). Both through the ballot box and language of political modernity, the AKP has tried to secure legitimacy, and for the party democracy has turned out to be a matter of survival.

The AKP developed a similar attitude toward the value of human rights, as they saw their political parties closed down and leaders banned from politics. In response they moved to embrace a language of civil and political rights that provided both an effective leverage against the pressures of the state and a ground upon which to build international coalitions (Yavuz, 2005:344-5). So one may say that those political groups, who oppose the modern political agenda put forward by the AKP, have found themselves in the awkward position of being described as resisting changes toward modernization in Turkey. The language of human rights has therefore provided the AKP with discursive legitimacy over their opponents, while that of democracy has enabled it to display popular legitimacy.

¹¹² For legitimacy discusses see, Tanıl Bora (2002), "2002 Seçimleri ve..."; Kemal Can (2002), "Ne Oldu Şimdi", in *Birikim*, Vol. 163/164, November/December, p: 48-49; Gürüz Kemal (2004), "Two Years of Islamic Government in Secular Turkey", in *Wheatherland Center for International Affairs*, December 3-4, Cornell Univ.; Atilla Yayla, "3 Kasım ve Demokratik Meşruiyet", *Zaman Daily*, 20.11.2002.

As a result of such a language based on advocacy of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, the government has continued packages of democratization laws through the Parliament to meet the Copenhagen political criteria.¹¹³ These were also in accord with the above-mentioned needs of the AKP. To illustrate, with the first harmonization package, a number of changes were introduced; however, most important of all was that the closure of political parties was made more difficult, and extended their protection under the Constitution. Therefore, it was argued that the AKP's search for security overlapped with the requirements of the EU membership bid (Robins, 2003: 547-66. Similarly, with another package, the National Security Council (MGK) representatives on the censor board and the Radio and Television Supervision Board were removed, and also the package passed by Parliament in August 2003 introduced a significant reform with regard to civilian-military relations, limiting the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians, enabling the auditing of military expenditure and property by the Court of the Auditing, civilianizing the secretariat of the MGK, increasing the time period of regular MGK meeting from once a month to once every two months. Briefly, with these and other similar changes, the weight of the MGK structure in the political system was altered,¹¹⁴ and thus the AKP's desire to limit the power of the military over domestic politics via the MGK or more directly to enhance civilian control over the military, to strengthen civil society including pro-Islamic associations and endowments, and to expand freedom of expression have been harmonized with the demands of the EU.¹¹⁵

It is also argued that the AKP came to understand that the more Turkey was distanced from the West and the EU particular, the stronger would be the hegemony

¹¹³ Packages of democratization laws had been started by the previous government and taken up by the AKP government.

¹¹⁴ For these packages see, *Briefings* May 5, 2003; July 28, 2003; December 15, 2003; April 26, 2004; June 14, 2004 available from, the booklet of the AKP, *3 Yılda Neler Yapıldı?*, Ankara, Ak Parti Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Merkezi (AKİM).

¹¹⁵ For the justification of the Islamists for supporting the EU, see Ali Bulaç, "Niçin AB" *Zaman Daily*, December 11, 1999; Ali Bulaç, "FP, 312 ve Demokrasi", *Zaman Daily*, March 25, 2000; Hakan Yavuz, "Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere and the February 28 Process", in *Journal of International Affairs*, 54, Fall (2000); 21-42.

of the army that treats the AKP as an anomaly and a threat (Yavuz, 2005: 345). By settling these points of EU to the bases of the AKP, it is realized that the EU emerged as a natural ally to reduce the influence of the army and to establish democratic governance within which the AKP would be regarded as a legitimate player. The expectations was the army's interventions in politics would be significantly lessened as result of the further democratization that was a precondition for Turkey's entry to the EU; a Kemalist state ideology guarded by the army would not be sustainable in an EU-member in Turkey.¹¹⁶

In sum, the AKP seems to have instrumentalized their democratization policies to enhance and support their legitimacy. However, at the same time it may be said that the search for protection in human rights constitutes the practical, if not moral, ground on which a human right regime can be established. Instrumentalization in the sense of recognizing its utility may therefore serve to institutionalize a human rights regime (İnsel 2003; 293-309). It has also been argued by observers and students of Turkish politics that these policies of the AKP would have a transformative impact on Turkish political culture. According to party figures, the AKP also has tried to legitimate universal human rights among Turkey's conservative masses. They also argue that a similar phenomenon has developed with regard to the EU in particular and the West in general. In this view, the AKP's quest for EU membership also led its conservative voters to view the EU in a more positive way¹¹⁷; in a way, the AKP has led Europeanization of the center-right conservative/Islamic sectors in recent years with its pro-human rights, democracy and the EU policies.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ For such justifications for the EU, see Ali Bulaç, "Niçin AB", *Zaman Daily*, December 11, 1999; Ali Bulaç, "Türkiye'nin Ev Ödevleri", *Zaman Daily*, February 16, 2000; Ali Bulaç, "AB Tartışması", *Zaman Daily*, March 19, 2002.

¹¹⁷ Personal interview in June 2006.

¹¹⁸ For more information on relations between the AKP and the transformation of center -right see, Ali Bayramoğlu, "Seçim Sonuçlarının Dip Akıntıları", *Birikim* 162, 2002, p:35-38; Nuray Mert, "Türkiye'de Sağ Siyaset: Nereden Nereye", *Birikim*, Vol: 152-153; 136-140; Bahadır Türk and Emrah Beşir,(2003) "Yeni Sağ ve Muhafazakar – Demokrasi Arasında AKP" *Birikim*, p:100-104; Erol Göka, "Bir Merkez Hikayesi", *Türkiye Günlüğü* 76, p:10-24.

5.2.4 The Political Economy of Conservative Democracy

According to Ziya Öniş and Fuat Keyman (2003: 96-7), since the country was being torn between Kurdish ethnic separatism and the rise of the Islamist movement in mid-1990s, the elections of 1995 and 1999, respectively, focused on how best to protect the state, not how best to address the needs of people. However, owing to the economic crisis with negative repercussions on all segments of Turkish society, Turkish citizens viewed the 2002 election in terms of economics rather than ideology. The AKP successfully linked traditional identity and issues of social and distributive justice to its neo-liberalism, which is formed by the synthesis between neo-liberal and religio-conservative values. It is liberal because the party recognized that “the strength of private enterprise of our nation is the most important source of economic progress. The basic role of the state in the economy is to ensure the conditions for free competition in the market, and to remove the obstacles facing private enterprise.”¹¹⁹ It is conservative because it supported privatization of the lumbering state industrial sector and the integration of Turkey into the global economy, while “at the same time recognizing that globalization created new threats as well as opportunities for the developing countries.”¹²⁰

An analysis of the Party Program and the other sources in terms of their economic policies indicates that the AKP advocates the principle of a social state that would ensure for the needy citizens a way of life “befitting human dignity.”¹²¹ Owing to its commitment to this principle, they have given priority to the issue of social justice. However, to provide social justice, in contrast to more statist overtone in the DP’s, the AP’s, and the DYP’s discourse, the party aims at maintaining and the strengthening of “traditional relationships of charity, solidarity and cooperation

¹¹⁹ *Her şey Türkiye İçin: AK Parti Seçim Beyannamesi (2002)* from JDP website, www.akparti.org.tr,23, 35-36.

¹²⁰ Personal interview with Ertuğrul Yalçınbayır, he mentioned their conservatism in this respect.

¹²¹ *Her şey Türkiye İçin: AK Parti Seçim Beyannamesi (2002)* from JDP website, www.akparti.org.tr,23, 35-36.

rather than strengthening of individual and social rights.”¹²² The AKP believes that social solidarity through the mediation of the state so as to secure social justice and human welfare, would not only lead to the weakening of the some traditional values and institutions, but it would also encourage laziness and dependence. In the ‘conservative-democratic’ perspective of the party, the state’s role in social justice is likely to cause damage to social order and stability, therefore “such traditions especially those related to the family” is emphasized (İnsel, 2003: 298). The party’s understanding of social justice which is based on the principle of traditional social solidarity and its special emphases on the family is another well-known components of the center-right tradition. One may agree with Insel’s statement that the AKP reflects “a mature, more consistent, and more authentic version of the American-style liberal-conservative development that had partially started with Özal” (İnsel, 2003: 303). Likewise, Coşar and Özman (2004:59-60) also stated that the ANAP’s and the AKP’s understanding of social justice resemble each other in terms of their preferences, because the parties’ approach to social justice is based less on social democratic concerns than on a combination of classical liberal emphasis on equality of opportunity and a neo-liberal one appealing voluntary solidarity, especially to the principle of traditional social solidarity and related institutions. In other words, compared to the other center-right parties such as the DP and the DYP, they appeared to be less statist but more neo-liberal in their approaches, aiming to come to grips with the forces of globalization, meaning to capitalize on its material benefits while aiming to correct some of its negative consequences at the same time. In this context, with the parallel views of Coşar and Özman, some other researchers also tend to regard the AKP experience as a reflection of a global Third Way policy, which “attempts to establish a linkage between state, economy and social justice” (Öniş and Keyman,2003:100;Smith,2005:322). Indeed, the AKP claims to give equal prominence to a democratic state, regulated economy, and social justice in its

¹²² Keyman quoted in Insel, “The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey”, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, 2003:298.

policies. In this vein, Ahmet Ertürk, the deputy of Aydın for the AKP, pointed out that “the state should be active in social policy, whereas the private sector should take the lead in the economy.”¹²³

In addition to this similarity, if one goes on examining the earlier-mentioned AKP booklet on democratization and development, *Conservative-Democracy*, one can see that the AKP also resembles other Turkish centre right parties in terms of the grounds over which it accords priority to the economy. The party argues that economic stability leads to the political stability. According to center-right tradition in Turkey, such as the ANAP, the free-market economy can not develop if the state takes part in economic activities, nor does a democratic regime develop in such a situation. Thus in the AKP’s Party Program, instead of becoming an economic actor, the role of the state is mentioned as an order-obtaining and competition-inspecting entity for both economic and democratic development:

the chief duty of the state is to provide security. This is the only way the Turkish economy can be integrated into the international economy, and so the possibility toward a democratic regime which distances itself from both strict state planning and bureaucratized economic management would be found.¹²⁴

Briefly, like neo-liberalism in its Özalist version, once the private sector and the mechanism of the market were empowered, the AKP argues that this would contribute to democracy since the economic reason preceded the political reason.

Explaining its economic policies, the AKP puts forward three strategies: the first, is “integrating the Turkish economy with global markets” by privatization and foreign investment; the second, is creating an alternative to the bureaucratic state tradition, in other words, de-bureaucratization will be evolved as a deliberate economic strategy;

¹²³ Personal interview, in May 2006.

¹²⁴ The party program.

and thirdly, in these economic policies, a moralist perspective that prioritizes “social dimension” and “social justice.”¹²⁵

According to Erdoğan, Turkey first needs a strong economy in order to build a robust Republic and safeguard democracy. A viable economy depends upon the adaptation of a new governmental philosophy based upon morality (Pamuk, 2001: 174-175). When these components that the AKP uses and discusses for elaborating its perspective of economic policy are considered, it may be argued that the economic policies of the AKP is a coalition of the elements that was suggested once by the ANAP under Özal’s leadership and by the DYP in the 1980s and 1990s. (Coşar and Özman: 2004: 57-74). In addition to these similarities, the AKP’s approach to the economy, however, has indicated some weaknesses that also could be seen in the ANAP.

When we make a detailed analysis of the AKP’s discourse on the concept of civil society, one may conclude that the concept of civil society is actually identified “first and foremost with the private sector which casts doubt on their understanding of democracy” (Coşar and Özman, 2004: 64). In fact, when analyzing the AKP’s understanding of democracy, Coşar and Özman notes that the party adopts a pluralist notion of democracy, and it gives importance to the principle of participation. These two principles, as they explain, are also more obvious in their economic policies and preferences. In other words, although the pluralist discourse of the AKP rests on the significance of the participation of civil society and “network of agencies” in the decision-making process, these forces and agencies are basically grasped as private sector and market forces. In that respect, the AKP has another common point of view with the other center-right parties’ in terms of the notion of democracy (Coşar and Özman, 2004: 64-65; Köker, 1996:1255). In this context, it may be said that the AKP offers a decision making process that the interest groups, defined in economic terms, could participate, rather than the process through which different identities could participate (İnsel, 2004: 19-28). Thus, according to Insel, the AKP’s perception of

¹²⁵ The party program.

pluralist democracy derives from its economic preferences, and so participatory democracy is limited in this interest based on plural democracy.

In sum, with a parallel approach to that of the ANAP, free market economic policy was considered a political decision to promote civil society by the AKP. Namely the concept of civil society in the AKP rhetoric was limited to political pragmatism and market economy, like the ANAP,. Owing to their economic preferences, they made no distinction between pluralist and participatory democracy. By doing so, they aimed at preserving the social order and stability. Since demonstrations and strikes that derived from different interests of different identities were considered detrimental for the country, participation was defined as participation in economic affairs.

All in all, despite its crucial role in defining the party's worldview, conservative democracy is a rather ambivalent identity owing to some contradictory and unanswered points. However, it should be remembered that since the AKP is a new party and conservative democracy is a new identity, they face the challenge of be institutionalized at time passed, and only with this institutionalization process one would find the answer to the question whether these contradictions and questionable points still exist and whether, as İnsel asked (2003: 300), the AKP can successfully present itself as ushering "a new stage in the democratic transformation" or not.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the Justice and Development Party's self-declared 'conservative-democratic' identity by enlarging the limits of our interpretative framework within which we seek to evaluate the AKP's identity vis-à-vis the center-right tradition in Turkey. At this point, it is possible to argue that in its ideological posture the AKP represents an attempt at a synthesis between the neo-liberal context that has been proposed by the center-right policies of the ANAP, and traditional-conservative values. Even though traditional-conservative values have always become significant components of its identity, the AKP was also concerned with the question of the compatibility of Islam with democracy by its 'conservative-democratic' identity, since Islam as a de-politicized form still occupies an important place in Turkish politics.

As discussed in the Second Chapter, Turkish politics started to be characterized by political competition between the center-right and center-left in the late 1970s. Between 1960 and 1980, the center-right tradition in Turkey was represented by the AP, followed by the DP, and after the transition to competition party politics in 1983, firstly by the ANAP, and then by the DYP by inheriting some political premises of these parties. Currently, the AKP seems to be the new address of the political representation of this tradition. In fact, in the party's policies and discourses, it is possible to observe a parallelism with this tradition, and especially with that of the ANAP. Using the slogan 'Everything for Turkey', the party published an election manifesto in the 2002 elections, which reminded us of the dominant arguments that shaped the ANAP and the DYP discourses in the 1980s and 1990s. The election manifesto pledged the party's support for democracy, Turkey's traditional pro-Western foreign policy, particularly EU membership, and reiterated the AKP's commitment to free-market capitalism. In addition, an emphasis on economic rationality and growth-oriented liberal economic policies

was combined with a conservatism that respected the national and traditional values in Turkish politics. The party claimed that its aim was to re-constitute the fragmented identity of the center-right in Turkey by means of consensus, which was also once proposed by the ANAP in the 1980s. With these premises, in line with its aspiration to be a 'catchall party', it enjoyed the support of all social groups and classes in the elections of 2002.

Also, the center right tradition in Turkey always referred to ambitious economic liberalization and modernization policies that were also considered to be a guarantee for the protection of the traditional values in the face of rapid social and economic alterations. This is the reason why their conservatism, including the AKP's, is also understood as an attitudinal stance toward social and political issues. In particular, this tradition emphasized respect for people's religious beliefs together with a commitment to secularism understood in such terms, which these parties saw as the essential guarantee for the freedom of conscience and religion.

The November 3, 2002 election marks a stunning defeat for the center-right unforeseen before. For instance, in the 1983 election, the center right parties demonstrated a striking performance with 68.4 percent of the popular vote, yet, the graphic of center-right has fallen consecutively in the following election. The AKP claimed that they were the face of conservative Turkey, as was verified in the ballot box where old guard center-right parties collapsed and the center right vote in Turkey found a new venue.

In fact, in the 2002 elections, the AKP very effectively took advantage of the weaknesses of this tradition by filling the political vacuum which liberal-pragmatic parties created. From its inception, the AKP sought to portray itself as a conservative-democrat party aspiring to a centrist location in the political spectrum. However, the AKP has remained vulnerable to secularist opposition directed not only by the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party, but also by the military and some civil sectors that see the AKP as a party with a secret agenda to

undo the secularist/Kemalist reforms. Given the closure of two Islamic political parties, from which the AKP leadership sprang, by the constitutional court since 1998, the portrayal of the AKP as an Islamically-oriented party has created an unsettling problem of legitimacy for the party, generating insecurity in its relations with systematic forces. Although, the party leadership insisted that the AKP was not religion-centric, but conservative-democrat, leading many to accuse the party's leaders of engaging in the religiously permitted dissimulation known as *takkiye*. Adding to this, it is also frequently suggested that the AKP could be considered as the Muslim equivalent of a Christian democrat party, on the grounds that it supports to liberal democratic values, but is influenced and informed by Muslim beliefs. However, some students of Turkish politics argued that in addition to the AKP's pro-Islamist tradition, it inherits the DP, the AP and the DYP tradition together with that of the market-oriented and developmentalist ANAP of the ,

The dominant interpretation of the electoral victory of the AKP after the elections of 2002 has been that the AKP developed solely as a result of feelings of antipathy among the general public toward the political situation preceding the AKP's rise to power. It was dominated by weak coalition governments and replete with repeated economic crises, corruption, poor management, and social crises precipitated by significant economic downturns, with the result that the country's international prestige was being eroded. This political situation had the effect of galvanizing diverse social classes, whose expectations for the future were being dashed, and in whose eyes Turkish political institutions were losing credibility. It was also claimed that negative public opinion and widespread dissatisfaction with established political parties on both the right and the left of the political spectrum culminated in the "soft" coup of February 28, 1997 (Yavuz, 2005: 329-334). In this turbulent atmosphere, decent politics and honest, hardworking politicians who sought to represent the Turkish people seemed non-existent. It is precisely for this reason that the AKP, untested but also untainted, emerged as the only party possessing the momentum to fulfill the expectations of the discouraged electorate. Moreover, the political success of the AKP was thus not based on its ability to articulate and

project on identity that resonated with a large portion of the population, but rather on the electorate's dissatisfaction with the general state of politics in Turkey.

Despite the fact that its political success has been based on public dissatisfaction with the status quo than on its own political views, the AKP has worked to carve out a separate political identity for itself. This identity is 'conservative democracy', announced by Tayyip Erdoğan during the establishment of the AKP. In their discourse, the aim of introducing this concept was to carve a separate political space for the AKP, as well as to introduce 'a new path of politics' in Turkey to normalize the current the Turkish political system that has been influenced and buffeted by tensions arising from several sources, including conflicts between religion and politics, tradition versus modernity, religion and the state, and the relationship of the state, society, and the individual. By making this new path of politics the engine of the normalization process, the party has tried to reform the system by solving some of these problems without upsetting the status quo entirely.

Some basic characteristics that form the party's discourse and its identity deserve attention and closer look. One of them is the emphasis on moderation, general continuity, and the fact that it has made 'people and service' its central platform. As a result of this strategy, the AKP portrays itself as a meeting point of different value systems, political styles, and individuals from across the political and socio-economic spectrum. In this regard, 'conservative democracy' is portrayed as a pluralist and inclusive political platform in order to play a role of a mass party concerned with the problems that face society in general. According to 'conservative democracy', politics requires a different approach not ideological, but pragmatic and service-oriented. Stated somewhat differently, by distancing itself from any ideology and describing itself as a 'synthesis tendency', 'conservative democracy' has attempted to establish a political culture that does not espouse identity politics. In this way, it is argued that the field of politics can be firmly grounded in the culture of reconciliation. Hence in the party's discourse, the AKP was presented to wide segments of Turkish society as a new force in Turkish

politics which can capitalize on the failures of conventional political parties. Moreover, it was introduced as a progressive force that could come to terms with the positive aspects of both political and economical globalization based on active participation and competition in the global market.

Another defining element in the AKP's discourse is the party's aim to play a role in merging conservative/local/national sentiments with developmentalist and globalist objectives. In the party's discourse, a 'conservative party' is supporting a process of change that is evolutionary, and based on transformation in its natural course and emphasizing the importance of preserving values and achievements, rather than the preservation of the present institutions and relations. The 'conservative democratic' identity, hence, places the AKP in a historical and social context, socializes and historicizes the party, and enables it to claim to represent a major political currency that has existed since 1946. Namely, by defining itself as a 'conservative democrat', the AKP introduced itself from the Democratic Party line in which the parties of this line tried to forge a synthesis between liberal and conservative trends within Turkey around a new social consensus. Thus 'conservative democracy' is depicted as a local-oriented stance in a globalizing world.

Like the ANAP of Turgut Özal or the DP of Adnan Menderes, the identity of the AKP reconstructs the concept of conservatism within the socio-cultural structure of Turkey. The AKP's conservatism, hence, stresses cautious change. In other words, it tries to combine modern and conservative values to create a new synthesis for reaching at the level of contemporary civilization. At this point, in the discourse of the AKP, the issue of the EU membership and the European demands for democratization and human rights that was initiated by the previous governments and now intensified by the AKP has been instrumentalized in its search for systematic legitimacy and security. Namely, the EU's demands for reforms have overlapped with the AKP's search for consolidating its power and acquiring wider legitimacy within the system *vis-a-vis* the army and other radical secularist forces through a policy of enhancing democracy, human rights, and civilian supremacy

over the military. The results have been a speedy process of political reforms in Turkey. This kind of politics, based on compromise and cooperation as a result, is evolving in the case of Turkey on the basis of neo-liberal economic and political values. The discourse of the AKP hence strives to provide better services and it acts as the agent of the country's integration into neo-liberal economic and political spaces. Like the pragmatic-liberal wing of the Turkish center-right that strenuously defended a non-state-led economic model of development, the AKP considers state intervention of an unregulated type is seen as a threat, not only against economic enterprise, but also against individual liberties. Both strict state planning and bureaucratized economic management are also approached with reservations.¹²⁶

Having emphasized the economic pragmatic side of the centre-right generally in Turkey, particularly in the AKP, it should also be stated that the conception of liberalism that the centre-right accepted was closer to economic liberalism than to political liberalism. The discourse of these parties and the AKP has been based on commitment to democracy because of the economic preferences. As a result, pluralist and participatory approaches to democracy and the role of civil society are valued in accordance with the functioning of market mechanisms. In line with such a stance, the AKP supports the private sector and the mechanism of the market because of the belief that this would contribute to democracy, since economic reason preceded the political reason.

Other factor that should be mentioned in the AKP's identity is the party's rejection of political Islamism. Many observers of Turkish politics identify the competing claims between state power and the public role of Islam as one of the defining fault lines in Turkish politics; therefore, the rise of the AKP, for many have been viewed as a litmus test of whether and how a party can successfully reconcile the forces of Islam and liberal democracy. The AKP's commitment to liberalize Turkey's

¹²⁶ The controversial law on public administration reform that was prepared by the AKP once it was in power reflects this perception, and also become the follower of the transformation that was once proposed by the ANAP under Özal's leadership.

political and economic system despite its Islamic background led an increasing number of observers of Turkish Politics to declare that under the leadership of the AKP Turkey is moving towards a resolution of its traditional issues, becoming a genuine model for the Muslim world.¹²⁷ Others have taken the argument further and have concluded that the AKP's policies proved the avoidability of so-called 'democratic gap' in the Muslim world and the conflict between Islam and democracy. However, a closer look at how the AKP tackles the controversial issues derived from the public role of Islam shows that the party adopts a policy by not addressing the issues directly although these issues occasionally have a voice in the party's policies. Realizing that the rise of political Islam was detrimental to Islam's social and economic influence in Turkey, the AKP escaped from the self-defeating success of political Islam. In the AKP's rhetoric, Islam's role is reduced to a role at the individual level and the party shies away from addressing issues pertaining to Islam. Like other right-wing politicians, for instance Özal, Erdoğan also have argued that secularism has been a constitutional regime and characteristic of the state not a required worldview for individuals.¹²⁸ Hence, the AKP's core view, conservative democracy, has been shaped in accordance to the rightist parties' tradition based on the idea of Islam as a social entity and part of a tradition, rather than an ideological approach.

Briefly, in spite of its Islamist roots, the party has skillfully moved toward the center of Turkish politics and has by and large successfully evaded the kinds of conflicts that could have emerged through open clashes with the state elites and the secular segments of the Turkish society. In retrospect, the AKP has capitalized on the deficiencies of both center-right and center-left parties in the Turkish setting. Clearly, the party itself is a hybrid formation. From a certain perspective, as argued by several scholars of Turkish politics, especially for the majority of the liberal-

¹²⁷ Graham Fuller, "Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities", *Washington Quarterly* March 27, 2004.

¹²⁸ Tayyip Erdoğan, *Hürriyet Daily*, August 28, 2001.

oriented observers, in line with its emphasis on religion, conservative values moderate politics, economic-pragmatism; and with its broad-based appeal, the current profile of the AKP resembles more the Menderes-style Democratic Party of the 1950s or the Özal-style Motherland Party of the 1980s than the more narrowly situated Welfare Party led by Erbakan in the mid- 1990s.

However, despite its popularity and electoral base, still the party's worldview, conservative democracy, is an ambivalent identity. The components of the party's identity in its rhetoric, as analyzed in this thesis, are very appealing, but do not explain exactly the premises of conservative democracy; instead they bring to the fore its aim to be a mass or catch-all party. Missing from these definitions in any discussion of the role the party is expected to play in the resolution of controversial issues and in the formulation of new policy options. A coherent ideology requires a clear set of ideas and the definition of an ideal political order that guides the party's policy choices. Thus, this conflation of electoral strategy and ideology requires us to inquire more deeply into the principles that inform the AKP's policies.

Nevertheless, the way conservative democracy has been discussed within the party shows that its role as an anchor for competing political views is questionable. In fact, many party members seem skeptical of endorsing a clear ideology. Instead, the leadership, as we mentioned before, emphasizes the necessity of realistic policies and refrains from taking any ideological positions. As it explained above, there seems to be a contradiction in the discourse of the AKP. There is a contradiction in the discourse of the AKP because on one side, it declares that 'conservative democracy' is not an ideology, and claims the AKP will have no stand on ideology; on the other side, it declares that a coherent ideology is necessary to guide the party's policy choices.

In addition to this dilemma, conservative democracy also has premises drawing on dichotomies; for example, between individual and state, collective values and state values, and offer a questionable selective adaptation process, led by the party, in

order to achieve a democratic society. Paradoxically, one can argue that because of its ambiguities and vague structure, conservative democracy serves three significant purposes: it defines the party's identity in an unthreatening way to the international community, it appeases the concerns of the secular public by aligning it with a political tradition that evolved into Turkey's center-right movement, and Islam continues to play a major role in the party's identity, as it forms the foundation of the common values that the party seeks to represent. However, because of the very same ambiguities, conservative democracy, in its current form, is far from being a blue print for a social transformation project; it reduces Islam's political role by introducing a set of innate traditional values, and precludes a debate on the possible ways in which Islam can be incorporated into the Turkish public sphere without being marginalized.

To conclude, as it is argued in the thesis, the AKP, by rejecting being an Islamist party and effectively severing its Islamist roots, define itself as a democratic, conservative, reformist and modern center-right party in its rhetoric. It is argued that the AKP government acted as a center-right party that is a political representative of the people, who "is culturally conservative, politically nationalist and moderately authoritarian, economically liberal, or rather, on the side of free enterprise..." (İnsel, 2003:298). Taking into account the above mentioned characteristics of a center-right party platform, these also fit the characteristic of the AKP's identity.

This study aimed at an analysis of the AKP's identity, conservative democracy, in the context of center-right politics in Turkey. As it was argued in the thesis, the AKP's policies and its vague identity have strategically proved useful in the short term; but the party seems to be increasingly undermining its own power and long-term contribution to Turkey's democracy by its vague identity and the lack of clarity in the AKP's policies. It can be argued that the party may consolidate its position and maintain its electoral dominance in Turkish politics if relations with Europe will develop smoothly and contribute further both to the economic recovery

and the democratization process in Turkey if the party moves from politics of avoidance to politics of open debate and consensus forming in term of the public role of Islam, and lastly if, as a political party and an agent of social transformation, the ambivalence of the identity should be eliminated and theorized properly. However, if this benign scenario fails to materialize, the party, in spite of its success so far, may experience a significant reversal of its popularity and electoral base, or it might weaken as an institution just like other examples, such as the ANAP in the 1990s.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Tablo 1. Party Fragmentation, 1961-1999

Year	Percentage of Vote Won by two Strongest Party	Percentage of Seats Won by Two Strongest Party	Number of Parties Winning seats
1961	71,5	73,5	4
1965	81,5	83,1	6
1969	74,0	88,6	8
1973	63,1	74,2	7
1977	78,3	89,3	6
1983	75,6	82,2	3
1987	61,0	87,9	3
1991	51,1	65,1	5
1995	41,1	53,2	5
1999	40,0	47,2	5

Source: Tachau (2002:42).

Appendix B: Table.2 Share of the Vote , % * in the November 3, 2002 Election

Party / Party Leader	2002	1999
Justice and Development Party (AKP) <i>Recep Tayyip Erdoğan</i>	34.3	-
Republican People's Party (CHP) <i>Deniz Baykal</i>	19.4	8.7
True Path Party (DYP) <i>Tansu Çiller</i>	9.6	12
Nationalist Action Party (MHP) <i>Devlet Bahçeli</i>	8.3	18
Young Party (GP) <i>Cem Uzan</i>	7.3	-
Democratic People's Party (DHP) <i>Mehmet Abbasoğlu</i>	6.2	4.8
Motherland Party (ANAP) <i>Mesut Yılmaz</i>	5.1	13.2
Felicity Party (SP) <i>Recai Kutan</i>	2.5	15.4**
New Turkey Party (YTP) <i>İsmail Cem</i>	1.2	-
Democratic Left Party (DSP) <i>Bülent Ecevit</i>	1.1	22.2
Others	5	6

Source: Çarkoğlu (2002:33).