



Rethinking Turkey's relationship with the EU: postwestern Turkey meets postwestern Europe

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Conventional approaches to understanding Turkey's relationship with the European Union centre on problems of integration and Turkey's chances of full membership. It is argued that it is more productive to situate Turkey and Europe within a broader process of social and political transformation: postwesternisation. Europe is postwestern because it is no longer divided along an East-West axis, does not possess fixed Eastern borders, and accommodates multiple modernities. Turkey's postwesternisation originated with its post-Cold War geopolitical disorientation and is today manifested by, for example, an Islamic-conservative government which actively seeks to reposition Turkey vis-à-vis the West. In postwestern Turkey the traditional Kemalist (secular) elites have lost ground due to their rigid and inflexible world view and adherence to outmoded forms of top-down statist social engineering, while the grass-roots driven, Islamic-orientated AK Party combines a drive for global competitiveness with the need to deliver social justice via individual rights. It is argued that a postwestern framework helps us understand the dynamics of contemporary European and Turkish politics in general, and the pro-EU orientation of the AK Party, in particular.



Introduction

Discussion of Turkey's relations with the European Union (EU) usually centres on Turkey chances of full membership and how it might eventually be incorporated within the Union's institutional architecture, unless that is the debate has not already floundered on the question of Turkey's perceived cultural differences and the problems of offering membership to a country in which respect for human rights is still perceived as less than wholehearted. This paper argues that this is by no means the most productive way of framing discussion of Turkey's relation with the EU. It is proposed that a more important and productive line of enquiry is to consider how Turkey is responding to, (and contributing to) the social, political, and economic transformation of Europe, and, in turn, is responding to and managing its own processes of transformation. It is further argued that the dynamics of these processes of transformation cannot be captured by the simple idea that what is occurring in Europe is 'integration' or even 'enlargement' - notions which seek to resolve complex processes into familiar and accessible terms, but in doing so sacrifice much explanatory power. In the European Studies literature the idea of integration has come to represent the entire post-war transformation of Europe, notwithstanding the fact that mass unemployment, responses to the war in Iraq, and the European Union's democratic deficit, to take just a few examples, point to a more complex (and less teleological) process of transformation (Rumford and Murray, 2003).

The transformation of Europe is more complex and wide-ranging than can be accounted for by the idea of integration. Moreover, this transformation is not limited to the economic and institutional spheres as suggested by the idea of integration; it is to be found also in the realms of societal cohesion, political communication, transnational networking, and the nature of citizenship. In addition, European studies is becoming increasingly multidisciplinary, one consequence of which is a recognition of the importance of global processes in shaping the contours of European transformation, the nature of the EU, and its transnational spaces and networks (Delanty and Rumford, 2005). One key theme to have emerged from this global awareness of the dynamics of change is the idea that Europe is becoming postwestern (Delanty, 2003 and 2006; Therborn, 2006). This paper focuses on the changing relationship between Turkey and the EU and views this from within the frame of postwesternisation. It is argued that there are many benefits to be gained from adopting such an approach.

Turkey's relationship with the EU has long been a puzzle for social and political scientists, except where essentialised differences are evoked (Huntington, 1996) or geopolitical clichés employed (Kramer, 2000). The difficulty of understanding Turkey from a conventional EU studies perspective stems from the persistence of an East-West dichotomy which structures thinking about European development. For example, Turkey is still seen as a bridge between East and West, despite those terms having lost much resonance over the past two decades or so. Similarly, Turkey's key position in the West's defense architecture was not consolidated by the collapse of the communist East, but was made less secure. Indeed, Turkey's uncertain position on the East-West axis has been exacerbated by the recent successes of its Islamicist government. In fact, it is no longer possible to employ an East-West model of European politics in the Turkish context (if at all). Rather, it is argued that understanding the shifting political orientations of Turkey's ruling AK Party and the Kemalist elites they have to a large extent displaced can be only understood in the context of postwesternisation: postwestern Turkey meets postwestern Europe. The process of postwesternisation is of course not limited to the interactions of the EU and Turkey: it is a much wider process taking in the whole of the continent and incorporating major changes to Europe/Asia relations (Delanty 2006).

Postwestern Europe has its origins in the decline of the Cold War world. Whereas the West was once unified against the communist threat (under US hegemony) it is now more fragmented and no longer has a common enemy (although it could be argued that George W. Bush's 'war on terror' has attempted to give form to such a notion). The US-led invasion of Iraq has led to an increasing sense of Western disunity, recognized on both sides of the Atlantic with the US aligning with 'new' Europe in opposition to 'old' Europe represented by France and Germany. Europeans themselves have suggested a division between 'core' Europe and the rest (Levy, Pensky, Torpey, 2005). However, postwestern Europe is more than a consequence of the ending of the Cold War. We can identify several processes which have contributed to its emergence: first, the recognition that Europe is a meeting place for different modernities - western, post-communist, Islamic (Therborn, 2003), rather than the site of a singular western modernity; second, the emergence of a new East shaping the continent (Delanty, 2003) means that Europe can no longer equate itself with the West when much of what used to be the Eastern bloc is now part of the European Union.



The incorporation of Central and Eastern Europe into the EU continues to orientate the EU around a new set of concerns, for example the idea of a European Neighborhood Policy (Lavenex, 2005; Rumford, 2006). Thirdly, enlargement means not only becoming bigger, but also means that the EU is becoming more diverse. Future enlargements, assuming that there are any, will further increase the diversity of EU membership. At the same time as the EU is becoming more internally differentiated it is also becoming arguably less exclusively European in its sphere of operation, with an increasing interest in developing mechanisms of global governance, exporting its Social Model (seen as major badge of identity vis-à-vis the US) (Delanty and Rumford, 2005: 106-119), and developing what some see as a more cosmopolitan set of concerns.

The idea that Turkey might be postwestern is perhaps more contentious (although it is certainly within the purview of the general processes of postwesternisation outlined above). The secular elites who, since Atatürk's revolution in the 1920s, have dominated Turkish political life would not wish to deviate from one of core principles of Kemalism: Westernisation. Nevertheless, the case for Turkey being postwestern is a compelling one and is not dependent upon her new, and perhaps temporary, orientation under an Islamic-leaning government. Despite the best efforts of the Kemalists during the Cold War period, being Western was not enough. The 'fast-track' accession for many former communist countries from Eastern Europe was a blow to Turkey's self-image as a highly valued ally, staunch defender of the West, and bulwark against communism. Nowadays, former Eastern bloc countries are more firmly embedded in the architecture of the emerging European Union order. Turkey remains an outsider waiting to join the EU and the idea of a Western vocation which sustained the Kemalists throughout the Cold War has now lost its referent. Another image which has lost much of its resonance (save in travel brochures) is the idea that Turkey is a bridge between East and West. The East no longer has a fixed frontier and Turkey finds it impossible to use this geopolitical reference point to orientate itself to the European order. As we shall see, the Kemalist fixation with points West has led to a degree of disorientation for Turkey in the post-communist world (Onis, 1995). The Islamicists in Turkey have been much more successful in projecting a new role for Turkey in a globalizing world. From their perspective, an Islamicist

Turkey is aligned with the universalism of European style democracy, human rights, and individual freedoms. Significantly, Turkey is seen as being simultaneously in both Europe and the Middle East. Such a conception of multiple belonging is founded on a vision of Europe (and Turkey) as postwestern.

When we talk of postwestern Europe and postwestern Turkey we are deploying analytical categories by means of which we can reinterpret a familiar reality in order to obtain a better understanding of complex processes of transformation. Postwesternisation applies to both Turkey and wider Europe, and, is advanced as a framework for understanding the cultural integration of the continent in the post-Cold War world. It also acts as a counter to the rather one-dimensional notion of integration in assuming that both Europe and Turkey are being transformed both by the processes of EU accession and by wider global forces.

A concrete example of what is meant by postwesternisation in the Turkish context may be useful at this point. The phenomenon of 'Islamic Calvinism' in Turkey has been the subject of some reflection recently (ESI, 2005). The Christian (Protestant) values of thrift, piety, and hard work, which Max Weber famously identified as underpinning capitalist emergence in Western Europe, have been identified as values contributing to the rise of the Anatolian Tigers (dynamic economic centers in central Turkey, such as the regions centered on the city of Kayseri). As one commentator has noted, Kayseri demonstrates that 'Islam and Western values can coexist without problems in Turkey, and Kayseri is the best answer to those who oppose Turkey's EU membership because of cultural, religious and social differences' (Zengin, 2006) quoted at

www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=114). The idea of Islamic Calvinism, it should be noted, is much contested, not least in Turkey, where critics have argued that it is a European attempt to westernize or 'Christianize' Islam (Lodhi, 2006). Other commentators have pointed to the clear continuity between what are seen as traditional Christian values and the contemporary conservative Anatolian values which Islamic Calvinism embodies (Judson, 2005). From the perspective of this paper, the phenomenon of 'Islamic Calvinism' indicates that Turkey is simultaneously 'eastern' and 'western', inside and outside: in short, postwestern.



Changing places: secular fundamentalists and 'third way' Islamicists

In the November 2002 (i.e. most recent) Turkish General Election the Islamic-leaning Justice and Development (AK) Party won 34.3 per cent of the vote, and, aided by the failure of all but one other party to cross the 10 per cent national threshold required to return MPs to the Grand National Assembly, achieved an outright majority of parliamentary seats (363 of 550 seats, or 66 per cent). This outcome was significant for several reasons. First, previous governments had comprised fragile coalitions of often disparate parties: now a single party had the potential to pursue its own policy agenda without the need for routinised parliamentary compromise. Second, that this party had a strong Islamic provenance was of concern to the traditional Kemalist elites (secular politicians, the military, senior state bureaucracy) who feared a deviation from Turkey's secular, Western vocation. Third, the Kemalist political elites were reduced to the status of a parliamentary minority and official opposition, represented by the secular-nationalist Republican Peoples' Party (CHP).

The outcome of the election is indicative of the growing challenge faced by the Kemalist vision of a modern secular Republic and a unitary and homogenous nation-state. Indeed, the Kemalists have come under pressure from a number of sources. In addition to the domestic challenge mounted by a succession of Islamicist political parties, who prior to the success of the AK Party in the recent election had enjoyed considerable success in local and municipal elections for over a decade, the Kemalists have had great difficulty in adapting to the realities of the post-Cold War world, and to the demands of international organizations (the UN, the Council of Europe), particularly where they seek to modify the nature of Turkey's democracy and its appreciation of human and minority rights (most evident in dealings with the European Union). In short, the Kemalists are not fully conversant with the emerging global order (Rumford, 2003). Moreover, the Islamicists have fared much better in this respect, taking advantage of opportunities provided by

international organizations for increasing domestic political leverage in matters of minority and cultural rights, and freedom of personal expression, and utilizing sources of political legitimacy emanating from bodies such as the EU (Arikan, 2002). It could be argued that whereas the Kemalists have viewed globalization mainly in terms of outside interference and threats to sovereignty, the Islamicists have associated it with a range of political opportunities hitherto denied them in the domestic arena.

One consequence of these shifts is that the Kemalists have struggled to maintain their position as the dominant political force within Turkey, and, importantly, their credibility as the bearers of modernity, civilization and progress. In consequence, over the past decade, they have become increasingly concerned with maintaining their political dominance through domestic repression of ethnic minorities (particularly the Kurds) and Islamicist political parties. Party closures (and bans on opposition politicians) have been the favoured tools of political regulation. This has led to criticism that the Kemalists are in fact more fundamentalist than the Islamicists whose rise they seek to block (Buzan and Diez, 1999: 46), an interpretation reinforced by the Kemalists' hesitant embrace of the pluralism and respect for minorities required by the European Union's Copenhagen criteria (stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities; a functioning market economy and the capacity to handle competitive pressure from the EU's internal market; public authorities capable of implementing and enforcing EU law).

From a Kemalist perspective, the threat posed by Islamicist political parties resides not only in their electoral successes but also in their ability to usurp Kemalist claims to embody Turkey's modernity. Islamicists, often portrayed as traditional and backwards (not least by Kemalists themselves) actually offer an alternative version of modernity, more attuned to global human rights regimes and notions of individual liberty and freedom of expression. What is often doubted (again, most vocally by the Kemalists) is the extent to which the Islamicists genuinely believe in rights and pluralism or whether they merely appropriate the language of rights for political advantage. The strategy of the current AK party government is notable for blending



(conservative) social democratic initiatives with a respect for global markets in such a way as to invite comparison with the 'third way' politics developed by Prime Minister Blair in the UK and Chancellor Schroeder in Germany (Onis and Keyman, 2003). It is argued that, in part, the success of the AK Party can be attributed to their ability to contest domestic politics on a global terrain, thereby evading the judicial strictures of the Kemalist elites and obviating the possibility of the 'postmodern military coup' (Bacik and Aras, 2002) which terminated the coalition government led by the Islamicist Erbakan's Welfare Party (RP) in February 1997.

Before proceeding further there are two related issues that require elaboration. The first concerns the degree to which Kemalists and Islamicists constitute relatively homogenous and cohesive groups. The second is the extent to which it is legitimate to portray them as antagonistic. In relation to the first issue, the unity of both Kemalists and the Islamicists is often overstated. There exist many divisions within the Kemalists in the military, the judiciary, business elites, and political parties in relation to particular issues - European Union membership, for example. There are even divisions within the military elites as regards rights for minorities and the trajectory of Turkey's Western vocation. In sum, it would be wrong to see Kemalism as a monolithic force and there are frequently clear differences between the military and political parties in terms of domestic and international priorities. Despite internal differentiation, Kemalists share a secular-statist consensus which sees Atatürk's revolution as an incomplete process in need of vigorous prosecution. For their part, the Islamicists comprise a 'broad church' within which a variety of positions can coexist, ranging from occasional fundamentalist calls for Islamic law to very moderate pro-Islamic positions (Onis, 2001: 281; Houston 2001: 92). Currently, Islamicist positions are organized under the umbrella of the AK Party, whose parliamentary successes have bestowed a good deal of authority over disparate and potentially troublesome factions.

Secondly, the terms of the antagonism between Kemalists and Islamicists are often misunderstood (Cosar and Ozman, 2004). For example, Kramer (2000: 86) identifies three 'socio-political cleavages' in contemporary Turkey, one of which is between 'Kemalist modernizers (secularists) versus religious traditionalists (Islamicists)' (the other two being Turks versus Kurds, and Sunni Muslims versus Alewives). This paper takes issue with interpretations such as that advanced by Kramer which equate Kemalists with modernity and progress, and Islamicists with conservatism and tradition.

These categorisations both reinforce a Kemalist interpretation of the terms of the conflict and over-simplify a complex reality. Islamicists advocate an alternative modernity not a rejection of it, and the Kemalists are frequently more conservative than their opponents. Similarly, it is not possible to support the thesis that the conflict is between Kemalist universalism and the particularism of the Islamicists: the latter embed their claims for greater freedoms within universalistic discourses of human and personhood rights (Rumford 2002; Soysal 1997), while the former have to come to terms with the fact that they are but one group comprising Turkish society.

In short, rather than be seen as bearers of tradition or conservatism (Kramer 2000: 86) the Islamicists represent an alternative modernity, and, as we shall see, a recasting of Turkey's Western vocation. This, in part, accounts for both their popular appeal and for the threat they pose to more established elites. It is argued that what is at stake in the current contestations between Kemalists and Islamicists in Turkey is, on the one hand, the meaning of modernity and, on the other, the nature of Turkey's participation in the emerging global order. Previously, modernity was associated with Kemalist dominated top-down social engineering (Sofos 2001: 244), and globalization with Turkey taking her rightful place in an international order of nation-states. These interpretations are increasingly contested. Islamicists pose a pluralist civil society rather than authoritarian state as the marker of modernity, see no necessary link between modernity and the West, and view Turkey's entry to the post-Cold war global order as being conditioned by its embrace of human rights and tolerance of difference.

Historically, the Kemalist project has been centred on the need to modernize and Westernize: to reproduce Western civilization in Turkey. Sayyid (1994, pp.270-1) points out that this necessarily involved the production of an Oriental subject (as well as its repression). The Kemalists had to articulate an identity of the Orient in order to constitute themselves as Western. This was accomplished through the characterisation of the Anatolian population as backward, rural, and traditional. The Western Turk to be constructed was progressive, urban and modern. The gap opened up by these binary divisions was to be bridged by modernization, provided by the Kemalist elite. Understood in these terms, the Kemalists operated according to a tried and tested modernisation strategy: construct a 'bipolarized social space' and advocate modernization as a means of closing this very same space. In Sayyid's words;



It is precisely this gap between the modern and traditional, between the urban and the rural, between the West and Islam, that Kemalism articulated, and presented itself as the only means of suturing ... Muslim societies are seen in terms of a lack: the absence of technology, the absence of rationality, the absence of civil society, the absence of modernity. Conveniently, this lack can only be filled by imports from the West.

The idea that the Western orientation of Kemalism required an Eastern 'other' in order to give content to the concept of modernity which was at the centre of its ideology is a compelling one. As we shall see, this analysis has a contemporary relevance, and helps shed light on the ways in which contemporary Islamicists in Turkey seek to bridge the gap between East and West. However, the terms in which Sayyid describes the polarisation between the West and Islam in the Kemalist imagination (as in the above quote) are unhelpful. It is not only Muslim societies that can be accused of lacking many of the trappings of modernisation. What counted as key components of modernization in other national contexts were in fact absent from Ataturk's Turkey: a national railway network; mass literacy; 'civil society'; even a bourgeoisie (Keyder 1987).

The AK Party in power: beyond West and East

Turkish politics is going global. It is no longer possible for political actors to maintain the boundaries that previously separated domestic from international. In addition, there have been two major factors which have worked to channel the activities of both Islamicists and Kemalists onto a global terrain. First, the strictures applied to Islamicist politics through party closures imposed by the constitutional court and pressures from the military-dominated National Security Council. According to Balkir (2001: 46), this pressure encouraged the Islamicists to focus their attention on human rights, civil society and democracy, rather than emphasise the cultural differences between Turkey and Europe. On this reading, the Islamicists came to realise that civil society issues were both safer ground for political contestation and areas in which substantial international support could be garnered. Second, during the 1990s the Kemalist elites came to realize that in pursuing statist, top-down programmes they had yielded civil society to the Islamicists who were mobilising

effectively at 'grass-roots' level and beginning to turn their popularity into municipal electoral victories. In consequence, Kemalists have since turned their attention to questions of society in order to neutralise the threat. The result, according to Navaro-Yashin (2002: 153), is that '[c]ivil society was transformed into a symbolic ground on which legitimate state power was going to be based.'

The rise of the governing AK Party has been associated with a more moderate version of Islamic politics in Turkey, and importantly, one which is able to win support from a broad constituency of voters not limited to the traditional Islamic electoral base developed through the 1990s by the AK Party's predecessors, Refah and Fazilet. As Onis and Keyman (2003:97) comment, prior to the 2002 general election the AK Party were successful in shifting the political agenda away from the traditional Kemalist concerns with the state and national security and towards a more generalised concern with society, and its prosperity. Moreover, their success has been attributed to their ability to present themselves not as primarily Islamic, but as centre-rightist (Keyman, 2003).

The AK party has developed a distinctive position on Turkey's Western vocation, generating a political discourse which incorporates key themes that were largely absent from Kemalism, such as respect for individual freedoms, human rights, and a concern for global standards of democracy. According to Prime Minister Erdogan, what is aimed for is a situation where 'freedom, tolerance and mutual respect come together in a democratic environment where human rights are protected and the rule of law and good governance reign' (Erdogan, 2004). This signals an interest in themes neglected by their Kemalist predecessors: pluralism, respect for difference, and openness to global norms. Interestingly, the AK Party seeks to distance itself from the type of Western orientation celebrated as a mission by the Kemalists. Now, Turkey is as much a part of the Middle East as it is of Europe, and one message that the AK Party is keen to communicate is that democracy, freedoms and rights are not incompatible with Middle Eastern politics. According to Erdogan, 'people in the Middle East want democracy, though not necessarily with the Western cultural trappings' (quoted in Powell, 2004). Furthermore, he criticises the West for adopting a 'reductionist approach' when considering Muslim societies, particularly the idea that underdevelopment and conflict are the fate of Muslim societies, and the assertion that democracy is incompatible with Muslim culture or religion. Erdogan thus seeks to counter the European perception identified by Baykan which 'homogenises Turkey into a society



essentially reduced singularly to Islam' (Baykan, 2003): yet more evidence of AK Party's postwestern bent. Erdogan (2004) asserts that 'Islam is a producer of, and contributor to, humanistic values that are the common heritage of civilisation.' In this way, Erdogan seeks to deconstruct the notion of the West that has determined Turkey's political trajectory since the 1920s. For the Kemalists, a Western vocation was the emblem of the universalism necessary for Turkey to take its place in the world of nation-states. Erdogan sees an 'Eastern' orientation as no barrier to Turkey becoming a global player, because the East also shares in this global culture, and indeed, has contributed to it.

The AK party's positioning of Turkey as a Middle Eastern country has possible strategic benefits. In arguing for (the potential for) greater democracy in the Middle East, Erdogan is able to reinforce Turkey's position as a key player in the development of the region – a model of Islamic democracy: particularly important in strengthening relations with the US. Equally, importantly, Erdogan is able to satisfy his Islamic supporters at home for whom relations with the wider Muslim world - particularly the Middle East - are important, especially at a time when Turkey is moving closer to EU membership (not to mention the existence of tensions between Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries over Turkey's tradition of support for Israel). According to Erdogan, Turkey's mutually beneficial relationship with the West is based on Turkey's ability to fuse its Muslim identity with its Western orientation. In doing so, 'the West and the East have been brought closer to each other' (Erdogan 2004). Turkey 'rests on a synthesis between its Moslem identity and modern values' (Erdogan 2002). The result is that Turkey is pivotal in contemporary world politics. 'Turkey is a center that combines Asia and Europe ... [b]y becoming a member of the European Union, Turkey will not only contribute to the economic, social and legal structure of Europe but will also become an important center for communication of the Asian countries with Europe' (Erdogan 2005). In Erdogan's rhetoric, Turkey's role is to promote the 'compatibility and harmony of civilisation'. This is a theme that he has returned to on several occasions. For example, he has portrayed Istanbul as 'not only a centre combining the continents but also a central symbol combining and synthesising the civilizations' (Erdogan, 2005), thereby reinforcing the image of Turkey as both Western and Eastern. The choice is no longer between East and West as it was for the Kemalist. It is now possible to imagine a blurring of the borders

between Europe and the Middle East, East and West, with Turkey occupying a pivotal postwestern role.

The AK party's message is that Turkey is a country which has formed a 'vision of the world on the basis of universal values' (Erdogan 2004). Significantly, these values are not the same universal values espoused by the Kemalists. The emphasis on the indivisibility of the nation-state, the homogeneity of the Turkish people, and the need to Westernise, has given way to a privileging of democracy and a defense of tolerance and pluralism, as they underpin a 'democratic, secular legal and political order that views the world of faith at the level of the individual' (Erdogan 2002). In this formulation, religious expression and individual autonomy are virtually synonymous, which means that the freedom of religious expression sought by the AK Party is not incompatible with the maintenance of the secular state. As Erdogan (2003) makes clear, the (global) 'community of shared values stands tall not on the foundations of any religion. It's built on adherence to democratic values.' Underpinning the concern with individual autonomy and democracy is the universality of human rights:

Paramount is the need to secure human rights. The form of rule should be such that the citizen does not have to fear the State, but gives it direction and confidently participates in its administration. Similarly, gender-equality, supremacy of law, political participation, civil society, and transparency are among the indispensable elements that are the imperatives of democratisation (Erdogan, 2003).

The discourse of rights embraced by Erdogan and his Islamicist-conservative party is shaped by several concerns. Firstly, the need to assert an alternative narrative of universalism and modernity, for so long dominated by Kemalist ideology. Their new vision of universalism and modernity is designed to allow for the participation of the Islamic world on its own terms. Secondly, the need to transcend East and West in order to become free of the political agenda imposed on Turkey by the Kemalists. Erdogan is not simply offering an alternative reading of Turkey's relation to modernity. Rather, he is recasting the relation between modernity and the West. The identification with universal norms of democracy and human rights and the preference for framing political contestation in terms which take it beyond the borders of the nation-state have allowed Islamicists to refashion the relationship of Turkey with the West (which is itself undergoing



redefinition). This does not involve a rejection of modernity, but a reconceptualisation of it. Modernity is now equated with pluralism, individual rights, and civil society rather than with 'the people,' homogeneity, and the state. Universalism has become disengaged from Westernisation and is given expression by human rights and individual freedoms. Further, it is consonant with Islamic aspirations: democracy without Western trappings. Thirdly, the need to create a niche for Turkey in global politics. The struggle for democracy, for so long depicted by Kemalists as requiring considerable domestic repression, is recast as a question of how best to accommodate Turkey to global norms (via preparation for EU membership, for example). Fourthly, the need to ensure that political contestation between Islamicists and Kemalists is not played out within national space. A focus on universal rights transposes a domestic conflict onto a public sphere which knows no national boundaries, and across which the Islamist state instruments, particularly the judiciary and the National Security Council, have a very limited reach.

Conclusion: the politics of postwesternisation

The global orientation suggested by the political discourse of the AK Party allows an escape from Islamist state strictures, and represents both new opportunities, political resources and a setting in which new networks of allies can be formed. Importantly, it posits a realm where issues can be contested on the grounds of individual rights and democratic norms (more advantageous to the Islamicists), distinct from the domestic terrain which is still 'home' ground for the Kemalists and their apparatuses of state. This version of global politics offers enhanced international legitimacy – and consequent domestic political leverage – for those who embrace the universalism of human rights and global democratic norms. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the AK party has already taken Turkey into formal accession negotiations for EU membership – the Islamist dream. Strengthening relations with the EU has helped the AK party consolidate its democratic credentials beyond all doubt, and achieve sufficient credibility (and international support) to counter the residual threat of the Islamists embedded in state structures such as the army and the National Security Council. Islamists have begun, belatedly, to appreciate the opportunities to strengthen their own position that globalization entails. The recent (July 2001)

decision by the European Court of Human Rights upholding the Constitutional Court's 1998 decision to ban one of the AK Party's forerunners, Refah Partisi, is a very good example. Not only has the decision of the ECHR bolstered the legitimacy of the Islamist vision of the Turkish state, it has confirmed that Turkey's statist version of democracy (in one respect at least) is aligned with European and global norms. The ability of the Islamists to perpetuate themselves stems less from their ability to insulate against the effects of transnational democratisation and external 'interference', and more from the way an embrace of emerging global norms and standards can work to stabilise a global order of nation-states, at the same time as it works to regularise and police their activities.

That 'going global' does not only work in favour of the Islamicists can be seen in the way the AK Party has approached the issue of the Islamist ban on women wearing the Islamic headscarf in public institutions in Turkey (Rumford, 2003). To the disappointment of many of their supporters the AK Party refrained from challenging the ban, choosing not to be drawn into a confrontation with the secular elites which would inevitably take place upon Islamist 'home ground'. Instead, they have been content to observe the unfolding of the very same issue across France, as Chirac and the French parliament work to ban the headscarf from French schools (te Brake 2004). In such a climate a direct confrontation over the issue in Turkey would still be ill-advised. Significantly, the AK Party frames the headscarf debate as a human rights issue, not as an issue framed by narrow domestic political interests; 'an AK Party spokeswoman said it considered the headscarf problem to be one of human rights – if Turkey's overall human rights record improved, the issue would be resolved' (Morgan, 2004). The universalisation of a local issue is undoubtedly a high-risk political strategy. Prime Minister Erdogan was criticised by some of his Islamic supporters in Turkey for sending his own (headscarf-wearing) daughters overseas to study 'instead of properly waging a political struggle right here to lift this ban for everybody's benefit' (quoted in Gulalp, 2003).

Postwestern Europe exists in a state of becoming; the broad contours can already be observed and the finer details are beginning to emerge. That a postwestern Turkey can also be discerned places Turkey at the very heart of contemporary European affairs, not on the periphery where it is normally located. More significantly, a postwestern Turkey can be an active shaper and molder of Europe in ways that a more conventionally geopolitically positioned Turkey



could not. An examination of Turkey's relations with the EU within this framework is valuable for several important reasons. First, it calls into question a number of accepted truths which have become ossified by European studies scholarship: the fixity of the West; the magnetic attraction represented by integration; the developmental logic of enlargement. That 'Europe's centre of gravity is shifting Eastwards' has been understood for some time. This formulation does not however do justice to the dynamics of European transformation in which the terms East and West no longer have meaningful referents. A narrative of European change which places Turkey as a bridge between East and West tells a very different story from one which situates a postwestern Turkey within a postwestern Europe.

Second, the politics of the AK Party can be better understood within a framework of analysis which sees Turkey as postwestern. Islamicist politics in Turkey are often accused of paying lip service to human rights, freedom of the individual, and tolerance of difference, whilst masking its 'real' interests: majoritarian rule and the introduction of Islamic law. What this interpretation fails to account for are the strategic political benefits that Islamicists gain by translating domestic political contestation into the language of universal rights. Not only does this shift politics away from the favoured terrain of the Kemalists (the constitutional courts and the National Security Council) and towards the realm of 'network Europe' with which Islamicists feel more comfortable, but it allows for a repositioning of Turkey within the emerging postwestern order. The skepticism towards the AK Party's concern with human rights, seen as a 'smokescreen' for hidden fundamentalist intentions, and the allegations of political opportunism leveled at Prime Minister Erdogan for his pro-EU stance are examples of how Islamicist politics appears when viewed through the lens of conventional European studies thinking about Turkey's position on an East-West axis. The AK Party has demonstrated that there is more than one way to conceive of the West, and Turkey's relation to it. Where the Kemalists once reified the West, the Islamicists have sought to deconstruct it.

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