

“We Ask the Prime Minister: Where is the Justice in that?”
An Analysis of the Justice and Development Party
and the Impact of Social Conservatism on Women in Contemporary Turkey

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Abstract

In May 2012, Republican People's Party (CHP) deputy Aylin Nazlıaka openly criticized the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) for attempting to ban abortion stating, "Prime minister [Erdoğan] should quit playing politics over women's bodies... To put it in a nutshell... quit standing guard over women's vaginas" ("Deputy PM argues..."). This illustrates Turkey's most recent debate over women's bodies, and has raised the question of women's status in society.

Although the party has initiated key domestic reforms, women contend the AKP continues to misrepresent their interests, namely the party's conservative stance on preserving the traditional roles of women as mothers and wives. Though the AKP continues to pursue democratization and is still a candidate country for EU membership, the party also continues to encourage the secondary status of women through weak implementation of international and domestic reforms. The international community and women in Turkey are left to wonder what happened and why?

In this thesis, I seek to understand the motivating factors behind the AKP's shift of the political agenda and its impact on women in society. Through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of newspaper articles published during the AKP's tenure (2002 to 2012) and interviews with local experts (academics) and activists, my research has revealed the party has indeed shifted toward a socially conservative agenda that aims to preserve the secondary-status of women. From my findings, I present the implications and impact of this shift on women in Turkey, its role in the development of the Third Wave of Feminism in Turkey, and finally its implications for burgeoning women's movements in the Middle East and North Africa regions.

Introduction

On an international level, Turkey has committed itself to upholding the international standards of women's rights through the support of Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1986 and the Additional Protocol to CEDAW in 2000 (Rodriguez, 2009; 30). Additionally, Turkey continued to support the empowerment of women by lending its support to the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (1993), Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) (Rodriguez, 2009; 31).

In 2002 the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power and continued its commitment toward improving women's rights through its ratification of Optional Protocol to CEDAW. Throughout its three consecutive terms, the AKP has continued to support gender equality policies through landmark legislation. Beginning in 2002 the party oversaw several pivotal Constitutional amendments, including the 2004 amendment to Article 10 stating that "women and men have equal rights [and] the State [is] obliged to put this equality into effect" (Dedeoğlu, 2012; 125). The adoption of the new Civil Code (2001), Labor Law (2003), and Penal Code (2005) collectively functioned to ensure this renewed status of women (ibid., Dedeoğlu). In 2008, the AKP amended Law 4320 on the Protection of the Family and created more explicit provisions toward preventing domestic violence (Rodriguez, 2009). During that same year, the AKP fought to lift ban on headscarves in public universities to allow women to exercise greater freedom of expression.

The aim of these reforms intended to legally recognize women as individuals outside their traditional roles as mothers and wives, and thus enable women to become more independent, self-sufficient citizens. Azer Kiliç, Ph.D. candidate at the Max Planck Institute for

the Study of Societies (MPIfG), described the result of these reforms as “changing the perception of women in society, where [this] shift in perception saw women move from being dependent citizens to independent participants in society” (Dedeoğlu, 2012; 126). To the international community, these international commitments and domestic reforms indicated a transformative shift in the status of women, moving women away from their secondary position in the home and family, and toward empowering women as active members of society.

However, despite these international obligations and improved domestic legislation, women within society argue the AKP continues to misrepresent their interests. For example, amendments to Law 4320 have improved the personal freedoms of women on a legislative level, yet women contend this legislation excludes unmarried or divorced spouses from adequate protection, leaving women vulnerable to domestic violence. Though the government has initiated programs to increase the number of women’s shelters, the state has yet to provide adequate resources. In 2009 the Directorate General for the Social Services and Child Protection Agency cited there were only 14 women’s shelters listed in the whole country (Çarkoğlu, Asli, et al., 2013; 49). A more recent report from 2012 estimated 79 shelters nationwide, but for a country of 80 million this number is still extremely low (Bilefsky, 2013). With limited outside resources, rates of domestic violence and honor killings continue to be on the rise. According to an article published by *Hürriyet Daily News*, the rate of domestic violence in Turkey increased nearly 70% between 2008 and 2011 (“Domestic violence,” 2012).

Opportunities for women who seek to leave abusive homes or pursue independent lifestyles have also been thwarted by similarly weak legislation. The Social Security and General Health Insurance Amendment introduced in 2006 and finalized in 2008, aimed to ensure equal treatment of men and women in the retirement process, but ultimately restricted the conditions

for women's retirement, and consequently discouraged women away from the labor market by taking away the "lure of a retirement benefit" (Arat, 2010; 871). Similarly, the 2003 Labor Law intended to encourage equal employment opportunity, treatment, and pay for women in the workforce, yet the rate of women in the work force remains below 25%, suggesting opportunities for women to work outside the home [remain] severely limited (ibid., Arat). Additionally, this legislation also intended to help women continue their careers after becoming mothers, yet an absence of promised child care and a father-as-breadwinner-mentality have made it more difficult for women to be working mothers.

The most recent turn of events occurred in May 2012 when the state imposed regulations on Cesarean sections and then attempted to quietly ban abortion. While abortion has been legal in Turkey since 1983, this seemingly sudden attempt to ban the practice both baffled and enraged many women. Yet, concerns over the increasing rate of Cesarean sections began several months leading up to the official regulation, and which was then closely followed by the attempted abortion ban. The timing of both these events indicates neither was a coincidence, and suggests a decisive shift in government policy related to women.

Despite being a signatory to numerous international obligations committed and domestic reforms, it appears the AKP has shifted toward a more socially conservative agenda committed to protecting the traditional roles of women. Given the picture presented above, a theme centered on the secondary-status of women has emerged, and subsequently triggered a domestic debate regarding the AKP's position on women. After almost a decade of support toward improving the status of women, what is to account for this shift in policy and overall change in attitude?

Initially, international pressures, compliance with European Union (EU) accession requirements and external pressure from the European community led the AKP to endorse

legislative improvement of the status and rights of women. The improved legislation during the first two terms of the AKP (2002-2008) suggested pivotal social improvements for the status and rights of women. However, the lack of enforcement during the party's most recent term (2008-2012) suggests women's position in society remains at a standstill. Women contend the government politicized these issues in an effort to protect the familial role of women as mothers, and not as individuals. What is to account for the distinct change in the AKP's political agenda toward women during the first two terms of the party and its most recent term?

From a domestic perspective, institutional pressures from the secular elite (including Constitutional Court, military maintained, and secular deputies) and high EU incentives served as a check on the AKP during its first two terms. Though the AKP acted as a single-party, the will of the party was mitigated by the looming threat of closure by the Constitutional Court. Thus from 2002 to 2008 the AKP pursued economic reforms in compliance with EU requirements, and temporarily turned away from its social agenda. Yet by 2005, a decline in EU soft power was caused by public mistrust in the EU accession process. Furthermore, in 2011 the party's won its third consecutive electoral victory, enabling the AKP to emerge as a dominant party and allowing it shift the political agenda toward a socially conservative agenda.

Despite threats by the military in 2007 to close the party when Prime Minister chose then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül as his candidate for president, and the 2008 attempt to close the AKP for "undermining Turkey's secular state with a stealth agenda to impose Shari'a Law," the AKP persevered, winning re-election in 2007 and 2011 (Boland, 2012). In short, from 2008 to 2012 political discourse shifted away from EU driven reform, leading to increased public visibility of socially conservative issues, primarily issues related to women. Through its international commitments and domestic initiatives, the AKP increased the visibility of

contentious issues related to women, including the nature of the headscarf controversy, the secondary status of women, restrictive reproductive regulations, and limited opportunities in the workforce. However, since shifting the course of the political agenda, the AKP has displayed a decline in legislative reform related to improving the status of women. Compared to the 2002 to 2004 period when EU incentives and leverage were still strong, the AKP has produced fewer reforms from 2005 regarding the status of women. It can be argued the AKP has in actuality produced more legislation limiting opportunities available to women, thus encouraging the secondary status of women.

This thesis is divided into two parts and seven chapters. Part one will introduce the dynamic relationship between secularism and religion within the political realm, and how pivotal shifts in the political climate affected this relationship on a social level. Part one will explain the re-emergence of religion in the public sphere, which played a role in the politicization of women. Chapter one will begin with a political context, including the political history of Turkey to illustrate the fluidity of secularism and the re-emergence of religion in the public sphere. Chapter two will present the decline of religiosity and emergence of conservatism. More specifically, this chapter will address how the AKP used democratization to validate itself and the public presence of religion via social conservatism. Finally, this chapter will present the AKP's strategic use of democratization to play within the political constraints set by the secular institutions of the state and to garner support from the EU and Western world. Chapter three will present the rise and development of the AKP, specifically the factors leading to the party's rise as a dominant party. This chapter will address the waning leverage of the EU and the democratization process, which curbed the power and influence of the Constitutional Court and military, and thus enabled the AKP to shift toward its socially conservative agenda.

Part two will draw the connection between the party's more adamant execution of its socially conservative agenda and its encroaching impact on the status of women. Chapter four will introduce the waves of feminism in Turkey. This chapter will focus on the how changing political climate affected the development of the women's movement, and how this most recent shift has aided in the proliferation of the third wave of feminism. Through a content analysis of articles published from *Hürriyet Daily News* during the AKP's tenure (2002 to 2012), chapter five will present the impact of the AKP's socially conservative agenda on the status of women. This chapter will address recurring contentious issues relevant to women, including issues related to the headscarf, physical body, labor laws, political participation, and women's rights. In chapter six, I will provide concluding remarks on the AKP's socially conservative agenda and its impact on the status of women and the role of the third wave in Turkey's democratization process. Finally, I will present implications for other feminist movements in the Middle East and North Africa regions that were affected by the Arab Spring and are transitioning towards democratization.

Literature Review

Given the recent timing of this debate, there is limited scholarly work available that specifically addresses this emerging issue. However, recurring themes in Turkish politics of conservatism, political Islam, and controversy over women in society help create a framework to approach this debate. First, the concept of conservatism creates an understanding of the social and political domain in Turkey. Conservatism in the Turkish context refers to the revival of traditional, Islamic values as a means to improve the deficient government coalitions that characterized the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2009) outlined the series of events that led to the social origins of conservatism and its development in the political realm. While Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu explain conservatism on a broader level, this does not completely explain the motives behind the AKP's recent actions toward women.

A survey conducted by Hakan Yılmaz (2012) explored the social origins and impact of conservatism, and he found there are two variants of conservatism, political conservatism and social conservatism. Yılmaz's findings revealed public demand for social conservatism was higher than demand for political conservatism. Simply, social conservatism seeks to apply traditional, Islamic values on a social level (e.g. gender relations and family life). Although Yılmaz's work does not explicitly answer the question at hand, his findings rightfully suggest the AKP's actions are indeed socially conservative in nature.

In expanding the concept of social conservatism to women, most scholarly resources discuss the headscarf controversy of the 2000s. Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee (2008) briefly describe the controversy and its relevance to the rise and development of political Islam. Similarly, Hilal Elver (2012) retells the controversy within the grand scheme of international politics, religion, and secularism. Though Saniye Dedeoğlu and Adem Y. Elveren (2012) also

frame their work within the context of EU accession and political Islam, their work presents the headscarf controversy and issues related to gender equality. Dedeoğlu and Elveren assert legislative changes toward gender equality can be attributed to the influence international, yet domestic implementation remains slow toward protecting women's rights.

While these resources assemble the framework to answering why the AKP has shifted away from its international commitments to ensuring women's rights, they do not fully address the AKP's shift toward a socially conservative agenda as it relates to the status of women. This returns us to the recent debate over women's bodies and subsequent question of women's status in society. In this thesis I seek to understand the motivating factors behind the AKP's shift of the political agenda and its impact on women in society. Through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of articles analysis of newspaper articles published by *Hürriyet Daily News* during the AKP's tenure (2002 to 2012) and interviews with local experts (academics) and activists, my research has revealed the party has indeed shifted toward a socially conservative agenda that aims to preserve the secondary-status of women. From my findings, I present the implications of this shift on women in Turkey, its role in the development of the Third Wave of Feminism, and implications for women's movements in the Middle East and North Africa regions.

Chapter 1 Historical Framework: The Foundations of Conservatism

This chapter will present the rise of secularism under Atatürk and how religion became a state controlled entity. More importantly, this chapter will present how secular reform led by the Republican People's Party (CHP) aimed to disconnect the Republic from its Ottoman past by relegating religion to the private sphere. Though these reforms effectively regulated the public presence of religion in urban areas, it also created greater distance between the urban elite and rural masses. As a result, the disconnect between the urban "center" and rural "periphery" became increasingly apparent, and ultimately led to transition from single-party rule to a multi-party system.

Under a multi-party system, political parties need to broaden their constituency beyond the urban elite and sought to engage the rural vote. Mostly unaffected by the Atatürk's secular reforms, the rural masses still retained old-world values based in Islamic tradition. Thus, parties such as the Democrat Party (DP) increased public religiosity in an attempt to secure electoral victories. Though this strategy yielded the desired results, it also prompted secular elites to act against this perceived threat against the founding secular principles of the state. The closure of the DP for anti-secular activities (e.g. public religiosity endorsed by a state institution) set the tone for the future relationship between secular state institutions and the burgeoning Islamist movement.

Finally, this chapter will present the impact of the 1980 military coup d'état and its role in the development of the Islamist movement, specifically addressing the after-effects of the 1980 military coup d'état and how it laid the foundation for the emergence of conservatism. The rise of conservatism would go on to directly influence the rise of the AKP and social conservatism.

1.1 The Formative Years (1923-1950)

In 1923 the leader of the Turkish independence struggle, Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), abolished the Sultanate, effectively ending the Ottoman Empire and replacing it with the Republic of Turkey. Atatürk sought to break away from the Ottoman past, and to modernize the new Republic through secular reform. The impact of World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire left the newly formed Republic economically distraught. Atatürk attributed the failing state of the country to the backwardness of the Islamic legacy left by the Ottoman regime, and asserted the only option for recovery was to become a Westernized state through progressive reform.

For Atatürk and his party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), Islam posed the biggest threat to achieving the idealized goal of becoming a secular, westernized nation-state. Yet to completely abandon religion meant to negate a key facet of what defined a Turk (a Muslim, ethnic Turk who speaks Turkish) in this new nation state (İnce, 2012). Rather than completely abandon Islam, the state sought to control its influence in the public domain. Similar to the French concept of *laïcité*, the Turkish concept of *laiklik* subordinates religion to the control of the state. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon concept of secularism, which calls for the separation of church and state, *laiklik* seeks to protect the state from the constraints of religion. Within the context of the Republic, Islam was seen as the buttress to the former power and status of the Ottomans, and to allow the public presence and influence of Islam to persist was counterproductive for Westernization. The concept of being secular was also reinterpreted within *laiklik* to refer to “a non-religious identity or one that cosigns religious beliefs to the private, rather than the public, realm” (White, 2008; 357). Thus within this framework, Kemalists as

secular actors institutionalized *laiklik* reforms to relegate the presence and influence of Islam from the public and political arena.

Under *laiklik*, Islam became a state controlled entity both on a legal and popular level. According to Turkish law, religiously symbolic clothing was forbidden in public; religious specialists were not allowed to wear insignia of their office in the streets; civil servants and university students were not allowed to cover their heads, though veiling was not outlawed (White, 2008; 360). On a popular level the state closed brotherhoods, religious orders, convents, and sanctuaries in an effort to “sever links the masses had to popular Islam in the public domain” (Arat, 2005; 4). Kemalists understood the necessity of controlling the influence of Islam as a means of asserting the authority of the state. Historian Bernard Lewis described the aim of the state as “to end the power of organized Islam and break its hold on the minds and hearts of the Turkish people,” and to replace Islam with the secular ideals of the state; in short, secularism “from its inception was intimately linked to state authority” (Arat, 2005; 4).

Major Westernization reforms led by Atatürk included the adoption of the European civil, commercial and criminal codes of law, replacing Arabic script with the Latin alphabet and universally used numerals, adoption of the “originally Christian (but by then universal) calendar and working week,” and the implementation of European dress (Mango, 2008; 164). During this reform period, Atatürk also initiated reforms directed at improving the rights and status of women. Primarily geared toward urban, educated women, Kemalist elite used these women as “an ideological instrument to break the connection of Turkish society with Ottoman and Islam traditions within the reforms about women” (Özdemir, 2010; 109). Replicating social gender statues seen in Western Europe, reforms related to empowering women’s position in society were pursued in an attempt to complete Atatürk’s vision of a Westernized Turkey.

Among these reforms, women were granted the right to vote, obtain a divorce, and access to education. These reforms will be explained in more depth in later sections, but for the purposes of this section we conclude that Kemalist elites brought urban, educated women to the forefront of society to serve as evidence of Turkey's progress toward Westernization. In other words, women became a reflection of modernization, and the presence of women outside the home as educated, career-oriented professionals indicated Turkey was indeed modernizing.

1.2 Decline of the CHP

The authoritarian nature of the regime enabled Atatürk and the CHP to successfully carry out these reforms relatively unopposed. The CHP was established in 1923 coinciding with the abolishment of the Sultanate, and became the single permitted political party. In principle, Atatürk accepted party competition. However he opposed the possibility of competition leading group interest at the expense of the “general interest” (Ayan, 2010; 199). Thus, the CHP authoritarian regime came to dominate the political system, committing itself to upholding the general interest of the Republic, e.g. modernization.

Alongside its modernization reforms, the Republican state also committed itself to the creation of a homogeneous nation-state. Through forced assimilation policies known as “Turkification” the state forced ethnic minorities such as the Kurds, Bosnians, Albanians, Circassians, and Arabs to surrender their culture, language and religion, and assimilate as “Turks” to gain full-citizenship (ibid., İnce). To be Turkish meant to an ethnic Turk, who practiced Islam and who spoke Turkish; and in this sense, the CHP politicized religion by requiring its citizens to be practitioners of Islam.

The 1941 Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) exacerbated religious differences by imposing fixed taxes. Though the explicit aim of the Wealth Tax was to raise funds for Turkey’s defense in case Turkey was required to enter World War II, the actual application of the tax severely diminished the economic power of non-Muslims including Jews, Greeks, and Armenians (Levi, 1996). Those who were unable to pay these high taxes were arrested and sent to forced labor camps in eastern Turkey. During this period, 1941 Wealth Tax served as an example of the overt authoritarian nature of the CHP and the contentious nature of religion. The “general interest” the CHP committed itself to promoted modernization, but exercised authoritarian rule and

implemented exclusionary policies. To fall outside the parameters of a Turk left one susceptible to state persecution.

The exclusionary tendencies of the CHP also affected the rural masses who were considered Turks. Although secularization reforms were intended to modernize life throughout the Republic, these policies only extended to urban life, leaving rural areas untouched by secularism. Those living within rural communities were left unaddressed in Atatürk's modernization project, subsequently marginalizing the majority of eastern Turkey. As the dominant elite became the urban, modern, secular "center," the majority of the population in rural areas who lived traditional and pious lives was isolated to become the "periphery" (Larrabee, 2008; 33). This would later come back to hurt the CHP as emerging parties saw opportunity in the untouched rural vote.

By 1945 and the end of World War II, authoritarian regimes became increasingly unpopular, thus several opposition parties emerged during this period including the Liberal Republican Party (SCF), National Development Party (MKP), and the Democrat Party (DP). As Turkey shifted toward a multi-party system, competition for votes from the untouched, rural constituency made Islam a "burning issue" and forced parties to readdress their religious policy (Ahmad, 2012). Public dissatisfaction with the CHP's statism-based policies and stagnant nature of the economy created a lack of confidence in the party. Ultimately, the secular ideals of the CHP worked against the party. The CHP's interference in religious life effectively alienated a significant number of the Muslim population, and created a disconnect between the CHP and its citizenry (Ahmad, 2012). By 1946 public discontent with the party and created an opportunity for the more liberal wing of the CHP to breakaway and establish the Democrat Party (DP). By

the 1950 elections the CHP and its secular idealism declined and the DP campaigned itself as viable alternative, which led the party to a landslide victory.

1.3 1950-1960: The Era of the Democrat Party

The increasing presence of religious freedoms conflicted with the stringent boundaries between religion and politics set by the secular CHP. Leading up to the DP's victory in 1950, religion made its way back into the public sphere in an attempt to capture the rural vote. By the time the DP took office religion had become an integral facet of the party's agenda. A moderate-right party, the DP adopted a more liberal interpretation of secularism to provide more religious freedoms to society, thus insuring its rural vote share. The increased religious freedoms gave greater visibility to religion on a social level through religious education and prayer, bringing the religion back into the public forum. During the DP's first term, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and President Celal Bayar permitted broadcasting of religious programs and readings of the Qur'an on the radio and religious education became compulsory (Ahmad, 2012). The rising threat of communism furthered aided the reintegration of Islam into the public domain. The Director of Religious Affairs Ahmed Hamdi Akseki declared "Islam rejects communism absolutely, its ideology in any form and all its practices. Faith and spirit are the most powerful weapons against communism. It is not possible for a genuine believer to reconcile himself to the ideas and practices of communism" (ibid., Ahmad). During the first term of the DP, religion resurfaced through government initiatives, which conflicted with the stringent boundaries between religion and politics.

In 1954 the DP won re-election. Though the DP sought to increase its vote share by improving religious liberties, the party's victory can be attributed to its liberal, laissez-faire policies, "which initially brought the country prosperity as well as a great sense of dynamism and hope" (ibid., Ahmad). However, as economic conditions began to slow down the DP became more dependent on its religious constituents for votes. The DP heavily invested in mosques,

spending 37.5 million liras (over thirteen million dollars) in seven years while the CHP had only spent 6.5 million liras in its twenty-seven years in office (ibid., Ahmad).

Unfortunately this emphasis on religious policy did not give DP its desired boost in the polls, and the party's vote share decreased from 56.6 percent in 1954 to 47.3 percent in 1957 (ibid., Ahmad). As the DP's poor economic performance became apparent in the steady decline of the economy, the party attempted to retain its vote share through increased religious activities. Yet by 1958 the lira devalued by almost four hundred percent, devastating the economy (ibid., Ahmad). Though for the most part the military stayed out of the DP's way, increasing religiosity raised serious concerns, as the secular elite perceived as a threat to revert to an Islamic state. The military was finally forced to act when Menderes' attempted to abolish the CHP.

1.4 The Decline of the DP

Distraught by economic turmoil, fear of returning to single-party rule, and possibility of reinstating Islamic law, the military finally stepped in. The 1960 military *coup d'état* was welcomed by the people as the military was seen as an “impartial, nonpartisan, trustworthy element of the state, and one dedicated to protecting citizens” (Harris, 2011; 203). Thus, many of the people welcomed the 1960 military coup as “a move to save the state” (ibid., Harris). The outcomes of the 1960 coup lead to the banning of the DP for violating the secular founding principles of the nation. More importantly, the coup led to the implementation of the 1961 Constitution, which enabled a system of checks and balances to prevent any future threats to the state. Among these institutional checks was the creation of the Constitutional Court, which was given the authority to “invalidate laws that were seen to contravene the constitution,” and the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC) “to give the military a forum to share their views with civilian authorities” (Harris, 2011; 204). The roles of the Constitutional Court and NSC gained increased oversight and power with later coups.

The decline of the CHP to the closure of the DP characterized the resurgence of Islam in the public and political domain. The transition to a multi-party system and subsequent decline of the CHP expanded the democratization process by opening the political arena to “religious and ethnic groups” who had been marginalized by the CHP (Larrabee, 2008; 37). This incentivized competition among political parties for the rural vote through increased visibility of religion. After the closure of the DP, Islam had re-integrated itself into the public and political life, creating a space for religious groups to resurface and organize (ibid., Larrabee). However, the DP’s closure also served as a warning to moderate parties with religious leanings.

1.5 After the DP: The Era of the National Security Council

Following the closure of the DP, the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s were characterized by the rise of leftist parties and high political instability. During the 1970s, two distinctively Islamist parties were formed by industrialist, Necmettin Erbakan, and his associates. In 1970 the National Order Party was founded with a strong religious orientation. The National Order Party avoided confrontation with the National Security Council until 1971 when economic and social chaos caused the NSC to initiate a second coup. During this time, the Islamist movement began to gain some momentum. Perhaps emboldened by this, the National Order Party publicly denounced rejected Atatürk and Kemalism (Ahmad, 1993). Shortly after the National Order Party was banned for violating the secular principles of the constitution.

Undeterred by his close call with the military, Erbakan went on to establish the National Salvation Party, which endorsed a similar platform focused on public morals and virtue. The National Salvation Party found success as a minor party, winning parliamentary seats in the 1973 and 1977 elections, which gained the party considerable power in several coalition governments (Mecham, 2004; 341).

However, by the late 1970s civil unrest and political violence between left-wing and right-wing organizations led to the military junta to intervene in politics once again. The 1980 *coup d'état* reinstated martial law for the third time in Turkish history. In 1983, the civilian government was restored with the 1982 constitution, which was designed to eliminate politicians and parties of the 1970s from participating in politics. The NSC purged parties from the 1970s, claiming it was necessary to protect Kemalist traditions from religious based parties (such as the National Salvation Party) that threatened the unity of the secular state.

1.6 Development of Political Islam & Conservatism: The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis

The 1980 *coup d'état* and the subsequent military reign was seen as a harsh response to rising tensions and violence of the 1970s between left-wing and right-wing organizations. In an effort to “suppress communists, socialists, social democrats, and left-of-center politicians, intellectuals, and voters,” the military junta promoted a new ideology called the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was designed to curb the appeal of leftist ideologies and limit the influence of “non-Turkish strands of Islamic thinking from Pakistan and the Arab world” (Larrabee, 2008; 37). Employing the legacy of Ataturk’s *laiklik*, the military sought to institute a state-controlled process of “Islamization from above” by fusing Islamic symbols with nationalism to create a “more homogeneous and less political Islamic community and to insulate the population from the influence of left-wing ideologies” (ibid., Larrabee).

To legitimize the hegemony of the new ruling elite, a new ideology was created to include facets of Ottoman, Islamic, and Turkish popular culture (Larrabee, 2008; 38). Once again bringing Ataturk’s notions of the family as the state, engineers of this new ideology used Ottoman-Islamic ideas to “cement differing interests by emphasizing the danger to family, nation, and state posed by ideological fragmentation” (ibid., Larrabee). Beginning in the early 1980s, Islamic (Sunni) and ethnic Turkish nationalist ideals were systematically promoted in the media and religious education in schools. Though the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis successfully deterred the influence of leftist ideology, it inadvertently strengthened the role of religion and weakened the emphasis on secularism (ibid., Larrabee). Through this synthesis the military junta ironically created a space for Islamists to organize, expand, and develop their own message.

Following the end of martial law in 1983, the civilian government under Prime Minister Turgut Özal showed greater tolerance to religion through reforms by including granting greater

freedoms to Muslims to finance religious schools and creating greater political space for emerging Islamic-based groups. Under these reforms, Islamic-based groups gained access to media outlets and newspaper chains that aided in propagating their message to a wider audience (Mardin, 2005).

Additionally, the influx of rural migrants to urban areas expanded the Islamic-based audience. The rural migrant population served as an important constituency base for Islamic-based groups because both opposed Westernization and globalization. As part of Turkey's ongoing industrial and modernization policies, rural migrants left their homes to pursue work and better futures. The majority of migrants faced challenges in integrating within urban culture, and continued to function as the "periphery" to the urban "center." The close proximity between the "center" and "periphery" exacerbated social tensions throughout the 1980s.

The economic decline of the 1980s deepened public mistrust in the government and fueled support for emerging Islamist parties. During this time, Turkey shifted from a state-led mixed economy and toward a liberal capitalist, modern market economy, which appeared promising as state-initiated liberalization averted recession at the time. However, this was short lived as economic liberalizations, relaxation of government controls and regulations over domestic and foreign trade, and privatization soon left the masses at an economic disadvantage (Çarkoğlu, 2009). The liberal economic policies of the 1980s continued into the early 1990s, and the failure of the Right Path Party (DYP)-Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) government to produce viable economic policy led Turkey into an economic recession.

Public frustrations over economic hardship continued as the 1994 financial crisis worsened the recession, forcing the coalition government to adopt an austerity program. For the masses, "the laissez-faire liberal policies of the moderate left and right had become associated

with corruption as big corporations and propertied classes,” that led to the sharp depreciation of the Turkish lira, which skyrocketed consumer prices that “pauperized” small business owners (Çarkoğlu, 2009; 20) Increasing public dissatisfaction over the failing state of the economy and corruption within the state led to “a popular call for morality, fairness, justice, and decency in socioeconomic interactions” and clean politics (ibid., Çarkoğlu). This initiated a strong demand to revive traditional values in society.

Turkish historian Kemal Karpat described the shift toward conservatism in the 1990s as “stress[ing] adherence to religious values, and social customs and traditions” (Çarkoğlu, 2009; 24). For the masses, conservatism meant solidarity based shared experiences and heritage, which were all derived from a shared religion of Islam. The dimensions of conservatism expressed nostalgia for the traditions and values of the Ottoman past. Though the public continues to reject the Ottoman system, it also continues to hold its tradition close. Ali Çarkoğlu, professor from Sabancı University, described this nostalgia as a “clearly intangible and idealized lifestyle of core values reflected in customs and traditions...[that] called for a return to the realm of old values” (Çarkoğlu, 2009; 91). Conservatism in this sense does not reflect a demand for institutional change, but a regression to traditional values for improved treatment and expansion of opportunities for the masses.

1.7 Overview of Conservatism

While the Western notion of conservatism is based on political or theological concepts denoting the preservation of society and the opposition of radical changes, Turkish *conservatism* emerged as a means of protest against the ineffective government system and called for a revival of old world values. This form of conservatism is distinct in the sense it did not defend the political order or institutions that existed from the 1960s to the 1990s; rather it sought to improve the government system through Islamic-based values and traditions.

Though conservatism in the Western and Turkish context both adhere to notions of preservation, Turkish conservatism is understood as preserving cultural and religious values within governmental institutions to deter corruption and to ensure economic efficiency. As conservatism of the late 1990s under the Welfare Party suggested Turkey would revert to an Islamic state, secularists began to crack down on Islamists. Though secularists successfully eliminated anti-system parties, the crackdown inadvertently aided in the rethinking of the Islamist movement, and lead to the rise of the AKP and social conservatism in the early 2000s.

A survey conducted by by Hakan Yılmaz from 2005 to 2006 titled “Major Variants of Conservatism in Turkey” found political and social conservatism were the two most prominent forms of conservatism identified by the public (Yılmaz, 2010). Yılmaz found political conservatism was defined by the public as “new nationalism marked by anti-Western sentiments, primarily Euroskepticism and anti-American feelings, purporting to ‘conserve’ the nation state and national values in the face of Europeanization and globalization” (Yılmaz, 2010; 59). In contrast, social conservatism was defined as an “Islamic variety geared at conserving the religious regulatory mechanism in the area of sexuality, gender relations, and family values” (ibid., Yılmaz). Though one may assume Turkish society considers political conservatism more

important than social conservatism, Yılmaz found this to be the opposite. In other words, Yılmaz found there is little public demand for institutional restructuring in the political arena; rather, there is a demand for change on a social level. According to Yılmaz's findings, key points in public demands include the "protection of family; change [in] the economy; ensure political stability; and, make us a member of the EU without sacrificing our national customs and traditions"(ibid., Yılmaz). The emergence of social conservatism influenced the development of the AKP.

Chapter 2 The Rise and Development of the AKP

With the emergence of conservatism, it became clear the once rural “periphery” successfully integrated itself within urban, modern life, and began reacting against the illiberal nature of the political left. The increased presence of public conservatism allowed the Islamist movement to gain a stable foothold in government. In the 1990s, conservative ideological preferences allowed Erbakan’s Welfare Party to enter office. However, Welfare’s brand of conservatism provoked secular elites to close the party for anti-secular activities. Following the closure of Welfare, affiliates of the party went on to establish the Virtue Party in an attempt to re-enter politics.

In an effort to differentiate itself from its predecessor, Virtue employed a pragmatic strategy by moving away from overt religiosity and anti-systematic rhetoric and toward democratization. Though this strategy allowed Virtue to participate in politics, controversy eventually led to the party’s closure for anti-secular activities. However, the adoption of a more pragmatic strategy set a pivotal precedent in the Islamist movement, and went on to influence the development and strategy of the AKP.

With a pragmatic approach, the AKP was able to enter, survive, and thrive within the political sphere by appealing to “the hearts and minds” of its religious and non-religious constituency through its viable economic policies and socially conservative values (ibid., Arat, 2005). This chapter will introduce the impact of institutional constraints on the rise and demise of Welfare and Virtue, and its impact on the rise and development of the AKP.

2.1 Paving the Way for the AKP: The Rise and Fall of the Welfare and Virtue Party

In the 1980s, Erbakan established the Welfare Party and re-entered politics. To avoid another banning, Erbakan re-defined his new movement as a party for radical change” and committed itself to social justice, as opposed to the ““conservative’ religious movement” that defined the National Salvation Party (Mecham, 2004; 341). This allowed Welfare to broaden its support. Populist support from the urban poor and grassroots organizations headed by volunteer women further strengthened the party.¹

By 1991 Welfare won a position in the coalition government. In 1991, Welfare captured 17% of the vote, and the party continued to increase its vote share in 1994 securing over 21% of the vote (ibid., Mecham). Though other parties attempted to create a coalition government that would exclude Welfare’s power, their efforts were unsuccessful. In 1996, Erbakan became Turkey’s first Islamist prime minister. Although Erbakan learned to play within the constitutional redlines set by the military, the Welfare ideology was characterized as anti-system and party leadership exuded strong religious tones. Additionally, Welfare’s campaign for “Just Order” promoted increased religiosity, leading the Constitutional Court to become suspicious of the party.

By 1997, the 28 February Process sowed the seeds of Welfare’s demise.² The National Security Council sought to force Erbakan’s hand with demands that would delegitimize Welfare

¹ Women were among the Welfare Party’s largest group of supporters who played an instrumental role in recruitment. Though women with religious backgrounds supported Welfare, the women who worked to mobilize the party came from secular backgrounds (Arat, 2005; 9). According to Arat, these women moved beyond the religious/non-religious boundaries for the personal satisfaction they received from fostering “solidarity, comradeship, and patriotism” (Arat, 2005; 10).

² Preceding the 28 February Process, Erbakan’s foreign and domestic policies were too overtly religious for the National Security Council. For example, upon entering office Erbakan attempted to establish an economic bloc of Muslim countries (D-8) and controversy over Erbakan’s Ramadan dinner invitation to leaders of religious brotherhoods (Mecham, 2004; 343). Finally, the NSC saw the restrictions on alcohol

and its Islamist supporters. These demands included “the closure of hundreds of religious schools, tight controls over religious brotherhoods, and restrictions on Islamic dress” (Mecham, 2004; 344). Though Erbakan conceded, the military continued to issue threats against the party, and galvanized society and media through an “anti-Islamic drive” (ibid., Mecham). By January 1998, Welfare was formally closed. Through the 28 February Process, secular institutions imposed stringent constraints against Islamists groups with an overt Islamic agenda to survive. As a result, the Islamist movement was forced to rethink itself once again.

Soon after the closure of Welfare, Islamists close to Erbakan went on to found the Virtue Party. Virtue made a conscious effort to emphasize it was “not just the Welfare Party under a new name,” but a new, pro-democratic party (ibid., Mecham). The strong institutional constraints of the National Security Council and Constitutional Court, and recent closure of Welfare further incentivized Virtue leadership to differentiate itself from its predecessor. In contrast to Welfare’s anti-system attitudes and ideology, Virtue adopted a more democratic agenda to appease the secular elites.

Among its principle messages, Virtue promoted the necessity of real democracy in Turkey, the importance of human rights, and a focus on expanding political liberties (ibid., Mecham). Despite its efforts, the Constitutional Court was already suspicious of Virtue and mistrustful of Erbakan’s presence in the party. Divisions within Virtue between the old guard Erbakan supporters and the vanguard reformists began to cause a rift in the party. Controversy and anti-democratic moves sealed Virtue’s fate and the party was banned for anti-secular activity and remaining an extension of the banned Welfare Party (ibid, Mecham). From the remnants of Virtue emerged the Erbakan’s Felicity Party (SP) and the AKP.

sales, increased spending on mosque construction, and changes in landmarks to give a more religious tone as infringements upon the secular foundation of the state (ibid., Mecham).

2.2 The AKP Strategy: Conservative Democracy

The closure of Welfare and Virtue had significant influence over the development of the AKP in terms of organization and political strategy. With Welfare and Virtue controversies still fresh in the minds of the public and secular elite, the fledgling AKP was faced with the challenge of succeeding where Virtue failed. Institutional constraints, including the possibility military intervention and fear of closure by the Constitutional Court, threatened the party's political survival. In addition to this, a need to maintain and expand the AKP's electoral base weighed on the party's shoulders.

Following the split from Welfare, the Felicity Party and the AKP took two different approaches. While the Felicity Party remained under Erbakan's leadership, the AKP distanced itself from its Virtue past and established itself as a center-right party. As a center-right party the AKP directly responded to institutional constraints and democratic incentives. By moving away from the radical right reputation of Virtue and the Felicity offshoot, the AKP determined its position as a center-right party would not solicit military confrontation. Second, the party was motivated by democratic incentives, "recognizing the majority of Turks had consistently voted for centrist parties" (Mecham, 2004; 354). By creating a balance between "behaving like a religious protest party and brandishing secular credentials," the party could broaden its support base beyond its religious constituency to include the more liberal votes (ibid., Mecham).

In breaking away from the old guard ranks of the Virtue Party, the AKP was able to establish itself as a formidable opponent, opting for a populist style agenda that would serve the interests of the secular elite and the party's religious constituency. Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced the AKP would work to serve as a "bridge between traditional and modernizing Turkey" by pushing for a transition to a market economy and Turkey's admission into the European Union (ibid., Mecham). The party described itself as a group of conservatives

whose agenda promulgated neo-liberal economic policy and democratic reform that sought to enhance personal freedoms and liberties. Within this framework the AKP protected itself from military confrontation, broaden its constituency, and supported democratic freedoms that enabled the expression Islamic faith, lifestyle, and identity in the public sphere.

2.3 Switching Camps: The Anti- and Pro- EU Blocs

The AKP's moderate position and avid support for democratization and EU accession further legitimized the party in the eyes of its new constituency and the international community. In striking a balance between adhering to the secular principles of the Constitution while also appealing the party's more religious constituency, the AKP adopted the Anglo-Saxon concept of secularism to endorse EU accession. Whereas the Turkish *laiklik* aimed to control and privatize religion, the Anglo-Saxon understanding enabled AKP leaders to support the foundations of secularism but also contest state interference in people's private lives (Patton, 2007; 343).

Although throughout Turkey's history Kemalists and secular elite stood as at the helm of modernization and integration into Europe, further democratization threaten their institutional stronghold over religion. The AKP argued "this formulation [was] incompatible with democratic norms and individual rights-based freedoms that all Turkish citizens deserve to enjoy" (ibid., Patton). The AKP officially endorsed these democratic norms and goal of EU accession through its support of the Copenhagen Criteria, which states "membership requires that a candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities" (Avci, 2011; 411).

However for Kemalists and secularists, the Copenhagen Criteria demanded reforms "guaranteeing individual and minority rights" were perceived as "a ready-made breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalism and separatist terrorism" (Patton, 2007; 341). This moment gave way to a pivotal change within the secularist-Islamists dynamic: as Islamists (as led by the AKP) abandoned their rejectionist stance on EU integration, Kemalists and secularists renounced their pro-EU position. As the AKP used its new pro-EU position to broaden its domestic appeal and gain international approval, the party's legitimacy became contingent on the accession process.

Thus, the AKP had high incentives to ensure successful integration. If the party reneged, its claims as a proponent of democracy would be unfounded and leave the AKP vulnerable to sharing the same fate as Virtue and Welfare.

Chapter 3 The Political Dominance of the AKP

Through its commitment to the EU accession process, democratization, and liberal economic policies, the AKP truly appealed to the “hearts and minds” of its broad constituency (ibid., Arat). First, by adopting a center-right position, the AKP appealed to the conservative ideological preferences of the masses. Second, the party’s viable economic strategy delivered the state from its once distraught economic conditions to a major manufacturing and export player in the global market. Most importantly, the AKP was able to overcome institutional constraints through democratization, which curbed the power of the judiciary and military. This effectively allowed the AKP to loosen institutional constraints.

Although the EU accession process validated the AKP’s presence in politics, public support for EU accession began to wane as incentives declined. As EU-driven reforms required Turkey to concede on politically sensitive issues such as the Cyprus issue and cultural rights for the Kurds, Sèvres syndrome resurfaced among the masses and fueled increasing nationalist sentiments.³ Instead of abandoning its EU commitment, which would have effectively delegitimize the AKP, the party chose to not actively pursue or implement EU driven reforms as it did in the past. These efforts allowed the AKP to consolidate its power by increasing its vote share from 2002 to 2007 and 2007 to 2011. With its rise to political dominance, the party was able to move away from EU reforms and toward its own agenda.

³ Sèvres syndrome describes the impact of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres on the formation and development of the Turkish state. The treaty partitioned the Ottoman Empire establishing land holdings for Armenians and added Greek-speaking parts of Thrace and the Aegean coasts to Greece. Defeated by World War I, the division of Anatolia left Turkey humiliated and led to Ataturk’s creation of the modern state. In short, Sèvres syndrome describes the lingering threat of external forces dismembering what Turks perceive is their rightful national territory (Hovsepyan, 2012).

This chapter will introduce how the AKP's rise to political dominance and the declining influence of the EU enabled the party to shift away from its economic agenda and toward pursuing its social agenda.

3.1 EU Conditionality and Political Incentives

Since Turkey received candidate status in the 1999 Helsinki Summit, EU conditionality has played a decisive role in AKP reform policy. For Turkey, EU conditionality offered “rational incentives for domestic actors to undertake reforms in expectation of the credible perspective of EU membership” (Avci, 2011; 410). In other words, if Turkey were to complete the required Copenhagen Criteria, full member status into the EU would be achieved. EU conditionality is based on two factors: the consistency in EU’s official application of conditionality, and the credible membership perspective.⁴ So long as Turkey continued to comply with the democratic reforms (especially the political criteria), then integration into the EU would follow soon after. Thus, the EU simultaneously signaled the necessity of democratization to membership, as well as threatened exclusion if Turkey did not fully comply with the required criteria (Saatçioğlu, 2011; 25).

The period following 1999 Helsinki Summit was marked by high incentive, high credibility for accession. Following the AKP’s first electoral victory in 2002, the party initiated a strong reform period from 2002 to 2004. Among these reforms included “abolishment of the death penalty, the extension of minority rights to the Kurds, and broader definitions of freedom of association and expression, as well as bringing the Penal Code in line with European norms” (ibid., Avci). However, pressing domestic and international issues left the EU uncertain of Turkey’s place in the European community. The increasing political violence by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the Cyprus issue in particular left the EU uneasy. These events also led to increasing nationalist sentiments, leaving Turkey uncertain if the EU was somewhere the state wanted to be.

⁴ Frank Schimmelfennig and his colleagues developed the original argument of conditionality; their work was published in 2005 (Avci, 2011; 410).

In 2004, the Cyprus issue was brought to the table when the AKP willingly proposed the Annan Plan as an internationally acceptable solution to alleviate the Cyprus dispute. Though Cyprus endorsed the proposal, the majority of the Greek Cypriots rejected the referendum. Soon after, Cyprus gained EU membership, leaving the AKP disappointed with the EU for not pressuring Greek Cyprus and for not following through on sending economic aid to the Turkish Cypriots (ibid., Avci). Although Turkey conceded to Cyprus by proposing a viable solution for both parties, the EU did not back Turkey's initiative, but instead pressured Turkey to compromise, which "facilitated in the role of Cyprus as a veto player" (Avci, 2011; 413)

The EU's uncompromising pressure on Turkey to concede to Cyprus fostered paranoia promulgated by militant extremists, which included right-wing Turkish ethno-nationalists and anti-western, anti-imperialists from the left (Patton, 2007). Sèvres Syndrome resurfaced with full force, and its spread was further facilitated by the CHP and the ultra-nationalist MHP. In addition to this, the EU's continued push for cultural rights for the Kurds provoked a strong reaction from nationalists who asserted these reforms, "weakened the Turkish state [by making it] impossible to effectively fight terrorism and encouraged Kurdish separatism" (Patton, 2007; 346). The threat of terrorism was especially relevant at this time as the Iraqi war strengthened the likelihood of an independent Iraqi Kurdistan, thus threatening the resurgence of the PKK in Turkey. By 2005, the PKK re-launched its violent campaign, and reinforced the burgeoning nationalist position.

Nationalist sentiments continued to rise as EU credibility began to fall in 2004 when accession negotiations opened and member states voiced alternatives to full membership. Preceding the 2004 Brussels Summit, the Christian Democratic Union led by Angela Merkel "[pledged] to block Turkey's full membership prospect if [CDU] assumed power in 2005;"

France and Austria also insisted on a “privileged partnership” as opposed to full membership (Saatçioğlu, 2011; 31). Though the 2004 Brussels Summit reaffirmed Turkey’s candidate status, the reactions of member states to Turkey’s seemingly imminent membership left Turkey uncertain of EU credibility, as well as raised suspicions of Europeans wanting to keep the EU as a “Christian Club” (Patton, 2007; 345). The 2005 Negotiating Framework signaled, “Turkish membership would be extremely difficult, and if Turkey was granted membership it would be second-class status” (Saatçioğlu, 2011; 26). By December 2006, membership prospects continued to fall further as a partial freeze in membership negotiations. Despite completing the necessary requirements to open negotiations, the EU continues to block talks, further slowing the accession process.

The strong reform period that characterized 2004 began to wane as the EU’s inconsistent application of conditionality and absence of credible membership left the AKP feeling shorted by double-standard treatment and one-sided negotiations. Erdoğan stated that the outcome of the 2004 Brussels Summit showed Turkey was being judged by a different standard. Erdoğan stated Turkey continued to be “faced with tougher criteria compared to other candidate countries” and despite fulfilling the necessary requirements, “the Europeans [were still] hesitating” (Saatçioğlu, 2011; 29). Following the 2004 period and the 2005 ECHR decision, public Euro-skepticism based on the failing credibility of full EU membership began to dissuade the public and de-incentivize the AKP to adamantly pursue EU criteria.

3.2 Moving Toward a Dominant Party System: The AKP's Rise to Dominance

Despite the slowing down of the EU accession process, the AKP continued to increase its vote share. Since capturing its first electoral victory in 2002, the AKP has emerged as the dominant, single party in government. Winning the 2002 elections with 34.3% of the popular vote, the AKP emerged as a single party government with 363 of the 550 seats in parliament (Arat, 2010; 871). The party's won re-election in 2007 with 47% of the popular vote and 340 seats in parliament (Arat, 2010; 872). The party went on to win a third consecutive term in 2011 with its largest vote share of 48.9% of the popular vote and secured 327 seats in parliament (Çarkoğlu, 2011; 45). With its three consecutive electoral victories, the AKP has been able to retain and consolidate its position in power. Unlike the Democrat Party, the AKP was able to increase its popular vote share from each election (Ciddi and Esen, 2011;15). The emergence of the AKP as the dominant, single party in government has played a pivotal role in shifting the political agenda.

In determining the AKP's dominance, Çarkoğlu conducted an electoral analysis based on the Satori model.⁵ According to this model, three defining characteristics determine dominant parties in a competitive parliamentary system: 1) "vote or seat shares in representative assemblies obtained by the party in the system;" 2) "the nature of the opposition against such parties;" and 3) "the time-span over which these parties acquire a certain majority of votes and seats" (Çarkoğlu, 2011; 44).

Çarkoğlu's findings determined that the AKP has indeed met these requirements outlined by Satori. First, the AKP has fulfilled the first requirement simply by retaining its seats in government. To obtain seats in parliament, parties must meet a 10% threshold. The 10%

⁵ According to Çarkoğlu, the Satori model provides a "clear operationalization" and explains that three consecutive electoral victories are criteria to qualify a party system as dominant (ibid., Çarkoğlu).

threshold was initiated in an effort to prevent multi-party coalitions and to end high fragmentation that characterized the 1960s and 1970s (ibid., Çarkoğlu). According to Satori, a “10 percentage point spread between the stronger and the other parties suffices for it to qualify as a dominant party” (Çarkoğlu, 2011; 45). Second, the AKP overcame the fragmented nature of Turkish politics by remaining a single party; this allowed the party to concentrate on broadening its geographic reach. This is evident in the AKP’s electoral victory margin over the CHP, which was about 15 percentage points in 2002 and then it increased to about 25 in 2007, and was about 24 percentage points in 2011 (ibid., Çarkoğlu). Furthermore, the results of the June 2011 general elections gave the AKP its third consecutive electoral victory, satisfying Satori’s third requirement of time. Thus, it can be concluded the AKP sufficiently fulfills the requirements to be considered a dominant party.

The sustained dominance of the AKP can be attributed to several reasons, namely its ability to overcome institutional constraints; its viable economic policies and successes; and finally, the party’s conservative ideological position. First, the AKP was able to overcome institutional barriers when it first entered politics in 2002 by establishing itself as a center-right party. More importantly, in 2008 the party survived constitutional closure. The 2008 closure case against the AKP was sparked by the headscarf controversy. The Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation started prohibition proceedings against the AKP for prompting anti-secular activity (Hale, 2010;74). The party was accused of infringing on the founding secular principles of the constitution through its attempt to introduce its 2007 constitutional referendum, which would have allowed for the lifting of the headscarf ban in universities in addition to other controversial changes.⁶

⁶ According to article 175 of the 1982 constitution, if any amendment receives over 367 parliamentary votes (two-thirds of 550), the president can choose to send the amendment back for reconsideration,

Among these amendments, the most controversial changes would affect the composition and appointment of the judiciary (primarily the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Board of Prosecutors and Judges) and removing special privileges from the military, which would make it more difficult to close political parties (Ciddi, 2011). The outcome of the referendum would effectively curb the powers of the military and judiciary, thus loosening the looming threat of closure. The approval of the referendum would also allow Turkey to comply with the EU democratic requirements and to move forward with the accession process. While the 2008 closure case stalled the referendum, in 2010 it was sent to a public vote and 58% voted “yes” for the constitutional amendments. Since winning re-election in 2011, the AKP has prioritized the promulgation of a new constitution (ibid., Ciddi).

Second, the factionalized history of Turkish politics and economic hardships heavily influenced the AKP’s economic policies. The preceding coalition was unable to prevent the 2001 economic crisis, which led to steep drop in GDP and a spike in unemployment.⁷ The AKP was able to win the 2002 elections because it presented itself as a viable alternative by appealing to “the economic demands of its grassroots supporters and offered policies that promoted growth in a market economy and globalization” (Hale, 2010;100). The 2002 and 2007 economic platforms encouraged a move toward capitalism, focusing on the service sector and privatizing large state industries geared toward manufacturing and exports as well as integrating Turkey into the global

submit it to a national referendum, or sign it into a law. If the proposal receives between 330 and 367 votes (three-fifths and two-thirds majority), the president can choose to call it a national referendum or send it back to parliament for reconsideration. However, if the proposal goes to a public referendum, the proposed amendment must obtain a simple majority to pass (Ciddi, 2011).

⁷ Following the 2001 economic crisis, GDP dropped between 5.7 % and 7.5% in 2001; consumer price inflation rose to 68.5%; and unemployment in final quarter at 10.4% of work force (ibid., Hale). From 1999 to 2002, an estimated 6000,000 enterprises went out of business causing 2.3 million people total job losses (Hale, 2010; 101). Needless to say, the 2001 economic crisis affected everyone.

economy.⁸ The AKP also sought to ensure greater social justice by reducing unemployment and disparities in income distribution. The party's economic policies balanced the demands of entrepreneurial and technocratic middle class alongside the demands of the urban poor (ibid., Hale).⁹ The success of these policies can be seen in Turkey's economic growth. Currently, the Turkish economy is ranked sixteenth in the world, and its annual growth rate is estimated to be near 11.4%, which is second only to China and India (Toledano, 2011). In short, the AKP's economic performance has validated the party's presence and garnered support for the party.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the AKP's conservative ideological position has helped sustained the party's dominance. A survey conducted by Çarkoğlu revealed the 2011 elections were largely determined by ideological rather than economic points. Given that the party oversaw and achieved economic stabilization, ideology became a more prominent issue. The AKP's center-right position was adopted not only as a means of political survival, but also to broaden its electoral bases.

The AKP recognized Welfare's overt religiosity and anti-system ideology was an unsustainable approach because it turned off the technocratic middle class and provoked the secular institutions to act. The center-right position of the party was also important because it reflected social preferences. According to Çarkoğlu's findings, utilizing the left-right ideology scale was more effective than religiosity in garnering votes. Çarkoğlu attributes this to the "more comprehensive" nature of left-right ideologies because it reflects "not only belief and religious

⁸ The AKP has helped sustain the Turkish economy through manufacturing and exports. Currently, Turkey is Europe's leading bus manufacturer, its third largest commercial-vehicle producer, and the world's seventh largest ship exporter; 4/5ths of all household appliances sold in EU countries are now Turkish made; and worldwide turkey's exports of refrigerators, washing machines, and dishwashers are booming. Sales abroad of Turkish textiles and processed foods are also growing (Müftüler-Baç and Keyman, 2012; 90).

⁹ Among the technocratic middle class include members of MÜSİAD (The Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association). MÜSİAD is an Islamic-oriented business association.

practice, but also views on economy, social issues, stances on specific domestic as well as international affairs” (Çarkoğlu, 2012; 518). The party’s performance record correlates to Çarkoğlu’s findings that claim the conservative Turkish electorate stands more center right than to the left of the ideological spectrum. In other words, the social conservatism of the general public and the AKP are intimately interlinked. The AKP’s policies related to women is a reflection of this.

Chapter 4 Waves of Feminism

This chapter will present the development of the first, second, and third wave of feminism in Turkey through a political lens. Following the legacy of Atatürk, women became the paradigm for modernization. The reforms under the first wave, otherwise known as “state feminism,” worked to nurture a collective state identity, thus women’s rights were framed within collective terms rather than individualism. In short, the *family* symbolized the *state* and vice versa; and women’s rights and duties were centered on her role as a mother and caretaker rather than as an independent citizen.

The emergence of the second wave in the 1980s was a liberal reaction to the shortcomings of the first wave, namely the lack of individual rights for women. The second wave emerged as a result of the 1980 military coup, which created a vacuum liberal women were prepared to fill. Through organized campaigns against domestic and sexual violence, honor killings, and rape, the second wave publicized taboo social issues. The second wave also helped foster solidarity among women from religious and non-religious backgrounds, as violence in the home affected both camps.

In the 1990s, the emergence of conservatism and Islamist parties aided in the emergence of the third wave. Unlike the second wave, which sought to move completely away from the legacy of “state feminism,” the third wave adopted the liberal concepts of the second wave and applied them within an identity and gender specific framework. This allowed Kurdish, Islamist, and LGBT cleavages within the movement to develop. The more recent development of the third wave will be further examined in upcoming sections.

4.1 The First Wave of Feminism: “State Feminism” and the Republican Woman

During the fledgling years of the Republic, the reforms on women’s rights were considered to be progressive and modern. As previously mentioned, Atatürk’s modernization project sought to modernize the state by replicating Western counterparts on both an institutional and social level. Reforms aimed toward improving women’s rights included the introduction of the 1926 Turkish Civil Code based on the Swiss Civil Code, which replaced the Ottoman Civil Code that was based on *Sharia*. The Turkish Civil Code gave women some positive rights including improved divorce laws, an age limit for marriage, equal inheritance rights to men, necessary civil marriage for marriage, an end to gender discrimination for valid testimonial, and outlawed polygamy (Eslen-Ziya, 2010). Through reforms on women’s rights, the state aimed to develop the model, modern woman.

Kemalism offered legal equality to men and women in an effort to align the new state with civilized societies. These reforms resulted in women becoming more active in the public sphere by working outside the home and being encouraged to pursue higher education. Nilüfer Göle, a professor from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), described these reforms as “women’s breaking the privacy circle and the collapse of the isolation wall between sexes show that the life sphere order by Islam went under the influence of Western values” (Özdemir, 2010; 102). These reforms recreated the urban, elite woman into a Republican woman who acted as ideological instrument symbolizing both a break with the Ottoman past and a paradigm of state modernization.

The Republican woman also helped foster the development of “state feminism.” The state depicted the lives of women during the Ottoman Empire as being oppressed by the Islamic order. In contrast, the new, modern Republic represented the emancipation of women from the chains

of Islamic patriarchy. In essence, Republican women were conditioned to believe the state-sanctioned reforms toward improving women's rights made the state the "main defender of women's rights and equality," and these women supported the idea that "Turkish women owed their rights to Atatürk as well as the Republic" (Korkut, 2010; 316). Armed with "state feminism," Republican woman espoused the ideals of the modernization through her dress, actions, education, and overall loyalty to the state.

Although the intentions behind gender equality reform reflected a desire to encourage the empowerment of women, the actual legal rhetoric and overall social mentality continued to promulgate the traditional roles of women. This is most evident in the rhetoric used in the Turkish Civil Code. According to the code "Man presents family in his capacity of head of the family (Article 154);" "Woman's working is dependent on husband's approval (Article 155);" "Parental right is paternal (Article 160/2);" and "Woman is responsible for nursing of family and children (Article 153/2)" (ibid., Özdemir). In addition to this, the rights and duties of women outlined in the Civil Code included "[k]eeping the house (Article 153/2)" and "[w]anting the husband to look after her and looking after the children and the house (Article 161)" (ibid., Özdemir). Instead of working to empower women, the Civil Code continued to perpetuate the role and status within a patriarchal framework.

Other reforms that reflected the contradictory position of the state included the 1924 Law on Unification of Education, which allowed girls and boys to be educated together in primary school and university. Atatürk asserted a woman's access to education was imperative for social progress because women had the "important mission for bringing up the next generations because they are the first to educate children"(ibid., Özdemir). Atatürk saw women strictly in a familial context, their sole role being to act as mothers of the state. Atatürk was later quoted as

stating, “ ‘the greatest duty of a woman is maternity.... if it is accounted that the first education is given in the mother’s bosom, the importance of this duty is understood thoroughly’ ” (ibid., Özdemir).

Although reforms for women’s rights continued to promote traditional roles of women, the state still feared women entering public sphere, earning their own incomes and overall independence that would jeopardize foundations of family and community. To circumvent too much autonomy, the concept of “family means nation; nation means family” made motherhood a “patriotic duty” (White, 2003;154). A woman’s citizenry was reflected by her role as a wife and a mother. In this sense, women were seen as part of a collective, family unit and the Civil Code reinforced their maternal role both in the home and in society. Similarly, state feminism further supported this view of women as a part in a collective of Republican women whose shared duty was to nurture the youth of the state.

Simply put, Republican women armed with state feminism served to act as public symbols of modernization and propagate the unity of the state. Though reforms seemingly attempted to empower women, strong patriarchal attitudes within society continued to reinforce traditional gender roles that promoted the maternal image of women. Professor Deniz Kandiyoti described Republican women as being “emancipated, but not liberated” (White, 2003; 158). Though no longer trapped within the confines of the home, the social status of the Republican woman remained stagnant as women were viewed as part of collective, familial rather than as an individual.

However, state feminism was important because it drew women into the public sphere for the first time. Women were exposed to educational and professional opportunities, and were integrated into Turkish society. This laid the foundation for successive women’s movements in

the 1980s and 1990s. In a similar vein, Atatürk's view of women also fostered patriarchal attitudes, which would continue to influence the social climate and later lay the foundation for conservative social policies. In summary, Atatürk viewed the role and duties of a "modern Turkish women" to "study, be a teacher, make contributions to the state's modernization and be the ideal wife, look after her husband and children, be the chastity symbol bringing up them" (ibid., Özdemir). And this was the image endorsed by the Republic and its reforms on women's rights.

The rise of a multi-party system in 1950 led to the contestation of Republican idealism and secularism. Yet political instability after the closure of the DP led to the implementation of the 1961 Constitution. For the women's movement, the 1961 Constitution enhanced the importance of personal rights and freedoms, leading the movement to address class-related issues but not the role or status of women. As a result, the women's movement during the 1960s and 1970s became extensions of political parties and movements (ibid., Eslen-Ziya).

Eslen-Ziya and Korkut assert the women's movement at this time was "reluctant" to directly address the role and status of women because it threatened the survival of the movement (ibid., Eslen-Ziya). Although Turkey had progressed to a multi-party system and toward democratization, women continued to be viewed through a traditional perspective. Forced to adhere to the status quo, and to rely on political parties for validation and support, women's organizations could not openly challenge parties as such a radical move would put an end to the movement all together. Subsequently, "state feminism" continued until the 1980s.

4.2 The Second Wave of Feminism: The Rise of Liberal Feminism

The second wave of feminism emerged in the 1980s in response to the shortcomings of state feminism. According to Ayata and Tütüncü, the second wave emerged as a result of the 1980 military coup by suppressing the leftist movement it created a niche for women to fill to “express their feminist concerns” (Ayata, 2008; 367). Thus, the 1980 military coup inadvertently enabled the organization and mobilization of the second wave. Characterized by a younger generation of education, middle class professionals, and women of the second wave raised issues common to the second wave in the West during the 1960s. The influence of the second wave in the West and with the support of the international community, the discourse of the second wave publicly addressed taboo social issues. While state leaders and women of the Kemalist era supported reforms because they served communal goals (e.g. the unity of the state and family), liberal feminists sought recognition for individual rights, including the expression of sexuality and protection against sexual harassment or domestic violence. Feminists further argued the women’s rights articulated by the Republican elite suppressed autonomous feminists initiative by forcing all women to fit within its Republican paradigm. Thus, for feminists a voice was needed for liberal values.

Moving beyond ideological boundaries, the movement galvanized support by taking up the issue of violence against women. Discourse included elimination of violence against women, of oppression of women within the family, of the use of sexuality as a medium for male dominance, of misrepresentation of women in the media and of challenges to virginity tests (Diner, 2010). In 1987, a demonstration with 3,000 women in Istanbul catalyzed the liberal women’s movement, as it was the first time women were on the streets openly fighting for women’s rights. Adopting the Western slogan “the personal is political,” Turkish women framed

violence “not as an individual matter in the domestic realm,” but as a relevant, political topic that needed to be discussed in the public realm (ibid., Eslen-Ziya).

The rise of transnational feminism continued to aid in the support of the second wave. As Turkey began to progress in its accession talks with the EU, women’s rights organizations gained significant leverage with government authorities. The second wave facilitated several key international commitments including the CEDAW (1986); the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (1993); Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993); and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). The EU also helped strengthen the hand of women’s rights groups through donor programs and required legislative changes as part of the accession process (Coşar, 2003; 331).

In summary, the second wave publicly addressed the “illiberal communitarian nature” of Atatürk’s conception of modernization by claiming such reforms “bridled respect for women’s individuality” (Arat, 2005; 21). The reforms implemented during first wave were characterized as communal goals for the state. Republican women supported these reforms as a means of paying its dues to the state and by fulfilling their maternal role and responsibilities to the nation. In contrast, liberal feminists sought recognition of individual rights, including expression of sexuality and protection against sexual harassment or domestic violence.

With more radical views and ambitions for restructuring society and by refusing to work within the system, the liberal movement successfully established solidarity networks and created an autonomous space by breaking out of the republican paradigm. Unlike state feminists, liberal feminists claimed autonomy from the state, thus finding more organizational freedom and focusing more on women’s issues without being co-opted (ibid., Eslen-Ziya). By publicly

addressing a pertinent but taboo subject of violence against women, the second wave effectively raised awareness and garnered mass support for the movement.

4.3 The Emergence of the Third Wave

The third wave began as a burgeoning movement in the 1990s, and has since gained momentum in response to the AKP's increasingly conservative policies against women. Similar to the second wave reaction to state feminism, the third wave emerged as a reaction to the shortcomings of mainstream (secular) feminism. Empowered by the ideals embodied in the second wave, Kurdish and Islamist feminists spoke out against Turkish mainstream feminists for being "ethno-centric and exclusionary of other identities" (Cosar, 2003; 47). The third wave has become distinct by emphasizing the heterogeneity of feminism within the feminist movement as a whole.

Alongside secular feminism, the third wave has enabled the emergence and development of Kurdish nationalist feminists, Islamist feminists, and more recently, project feminists (Leake, 2012). The heterogeneous markers of the third wave can be seen in the feminist movement today. In concurrence, University of Pennsylvania Ph.D. candidate and feminist activist, Tugce Ellialti, described the movement as being representative of the "different kinds of women with different kinds of demands and expectations from the movement itself" (Ellialti, 2012). According to Ellialti, the nature of the movement was based on diverse ethnicities, sexuality, and varying levels of religiosity, which "[changed] relationships [women have] with feminism itself, and their own definitions of what feminism is" (ibid., Ellialti). Thus, the third wave has created a space for women who fall outside the norms of feminism to organize and participate alongside mainstream feminists.

The movement gained momentum following the 1999 Helsinki Summit, in which Turkey gained candidacy status. The third wave is characterized by two major developments: 1) feminists moved from street protests and small-scale campaigns to organized activism within

universities and creating a greater network of support; and 2) the third wave saw the emergence of minority identities stemming from the feminist paradigm, including views from Islamist women, Kurdish nationalist, and the LGBT community (ibid., Diner).¹⁰

First, activism within universities and NGOs allowed for greater networking on a domestic and international level. Local embassies and consulates of countries with developed feminist politics helped Turkish women organize by offering services and some funding for feminists to arrange conferences and invite feminist experts from abroad, as well as fund some feminist publications to “propagate their ideas” (Arat, 2008; 400). With sufficient funding, universities were able to establish women’s studies centers and academic programs, including the Istanbul University Women’s Research Center (1990), the Ankara University Women’s Studies Center (1993), and the Middle East Technical University Gender and Women’s Studies Center (1994) (ibid., Arat, 2008). With sufficient funding, universities gave women greater access to feminist research and organizations.

Women’s organizations of the third wave also saw the strategic advantage of the EU accession process and used it to create a democratic opening for gender rights. Women’s organizations used the Copenhagen Criteria to pressure the AKP to eliminate bases for gender inequality. This successfully led to the AKP to amend 34 articles of the Constitution. Among these accomplishments included amendments to the 1926 Turkish Civil Code.¹¹ In 2005, the

¹⁰ I will describe women within the third wave as “Islamist” because this denotes their role as actors within the Islamist political ideology. Though a part of the Islamist movement because these women share the same Islamic based values and traditions, these women are claiming their individual personhood by contesting the status quo established by the AKP. Çınar distinguishes Islamism as a political ideology, and Islamists refers to proponents of this ideology; and Islamic is an adjective to describe “a view, thought, style, or practice that makes a reference to Islam as a religion, but not part of Islamist ideology” (Çınar, 2005; 15).

¹¹ It should be noted that language of the 2004 amendment to the Civil Code did indeed introduce measures for gender equality by asserting “women and men have equal rights,” it did not explicitly state women and men are equal. In 2010, the problematic nature of this constitutional syntax gained media

movement successfully pressured the government to amend the Penal Code by criminalizing marital rape and harshen sentences for those convicted of honor killings (ibid., Eslen-Ziya). The EU accession process also allowed the women's movement in Turkey to expand its international network through its alliances with European Women's Lobby, an umbrella organization that brings about four thousand women's organizations from 25 different European countries (ibid., Arat, 2008; 401). Turkey joined in 2004, which helped reinforce its international ties and also worked to strengthen the women's movement at home.

More importantly, the third wave provided a space for cleavages within feminism that fell outside the liberal and state feminists. Islamists, Kurdish nationalists, and the LGBT movement reacted against mainstream feminism, claiming its ethnocentric foundations were exclusionary against other identities. As the influence of Islam became more pronounced in Turkish politics, the presence of openly religious women (e.g. covered women) in public institutions conflicted with the secular principles of the state. Consequently, universities refused to admit covered women to lectures and exams. Yet, because most covered women attending universities chose to be covered (e.g. were not forced by family members or social norms) and also chose to receive a secular education and to participate in public life revealed a convergence between liberal feminist thought and Islamist values (ibid., Arat, 2008).

This convergence between traditional, Islamic values and liberal feminist thought aided in the development of minority identities, including Islamists and Kurdish women. For example, conservative Islamist women are ironically similar to Republican women because both emphasize the traditional role of women. However, the conservative Islamist basis for this is derived from Islam, which legitimizes and upholds the "holy family" and the position of women

attention when Prime Minister Erdoğan publicly stated, "men and women are not equal from creation" (Aydin, 2010). This statement alludes to the AKP's attitudes toward women.

as fundamental to the family structure (ibid., Eslen-Ziya; 323). In contrast, liberal Islamist feminists seek power, but do not fully challenge male authority. Instead these women challenge the “secular concept of equality with their insistence on male-female complementary roles and their equivalence in Islam” (ibid., Eslen-Ziya). Similar to liberal feminists, these Islamist feminists also seek equal status and individualism, but within these complementary roles within a family structure. Finally, Kurdish women define themselves in opposition to the state and its policies on the Kurds. More specifically, Kurdish women contest the state’s view of them as “device to control the Kurdish population” (Arat, 2008; 415). The heterogeneity of the third wave attests to its diversity, as well as its inclusiveness and shared goals of improving women’s rights.

Chapter 5 Methodology and Findings

From the evidence presented above, it has become increasingly clear the political environment has heavily influenced the development of the women's movements throughout the years. Given the current political climate, the AKP has emerged as the dominant party and the party's most recent actions related to women's rights suggest it has shifted the political agenda toward pursuing a more socially conservative agenda. In an effort to examine whether the AKP's actions toward women's rights is or is not indicative of the party's shift toward a more socially conservative agenda, I conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of newspapers from *Hürriyet Daily News* that were published during the party's tenure (2002 to 2012). In addition to this, I also conducted interviews with local experts (academics) and women activists in Istanbul.

The following chapter will present my findings, which revealed the AKP has indeed shifted toward pursuing its socially conservative agenda in regards to women. From these findings, I analyzed the conditions under which these changes occurred and the impact these changes on women. This chapter will conclude with explanations behind the party's conservative shift, specifically examining the motivations behind the shift toward issues related to the physical body and labor laws.

5.1: Mixed Methods: A Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis of Recurring Issues Related to Women

Through a mixed methods approach, I conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of newspaper articles that were published during the AKP's tenure (2002 to 2012). Using a random sampling generator, a total of 202 issues from *Hürriyet Daily News (HDN)* were used in my sample. I chose to collect my data from *HDN* primarily because it was among the few Turkish newspaper with an online English-publication with articles from 2002 to 2012. In addition to this, *HDN* is one of the longest standing newspaper publications in Turkey; it has survived coups and regime changes, which attests to its objective reporting style. Although the AKP has displayed sensitivity against publications perceived as defaming the government, and has arrested and prosecuted publications perceived as terrorist threats,¹² *HDN* continues to report local and international news in a mostly objective manner. Given that the dates being analyzed spanned over a ten-year period, no one source had available information to create a comprehensive analysis. To ensure each date had an available issue, I compiled my data from *HDN* online website and the Access World News database. For consistency I checked each sample date in both resources.

First, I conducted a quantitative analysis of the articles I collected to measure the direction of change in public coverage on issues related to women over the past ten years. Within my sample

¹² The 2006 Anti-Terrorism Law (TMY) has stirred controversy for the AKP in recent years. The TMY lacks a clear definition of terrorism, and the rubric for the nature of terrorist crimes is vague. For example, Article 6 states any person that expresses an idea against the “official state ideology” is vulnerable to prosecution for “terrorism” (Gunter, 121). The Ergenekon conspiracy involved an alleged group of ultranationalists known as Ergenekon that attempted to overthrow the AKP. Members of the conspiracy were arrested and tried. Public reactions to the Ergenekon incident led the AKP to treat “criticisms of its policies regarding Ergenekon or the PKK as collusion with those organizations” (Licursi, 2012). Among those arrested under TMY are journalists, academics, and politicians. Since 2007, more than 400 potential “terrorists” have been arrested or put on trial (Washington Post). The provisions of the TMY are contradictory to rule of law, and the TMY is one of the obstacles the AKP must overcome in order to move forward to democratization.

articles that simply mentioned “women” were further examined to see first, what issues related to women were being reported, and second, the frequency under which these issues were reported. From this data I coded and grouped recurring issues into five distinct categories: *physical body, labor laws, political participation, headscarf, and women’s rights*. From my findings, my data reflected a definite shift in issues reported within the past ten years. Figure 1 displays a clear change in content coverage from 2002 to 2012, revealing as issues related to the headscarf declined in 2009, issues related to the physical body and labor laws gained greater visibility during that same year. Though issues related to the headscarf spiked in 2008, its remained low through 2011 and 2012.

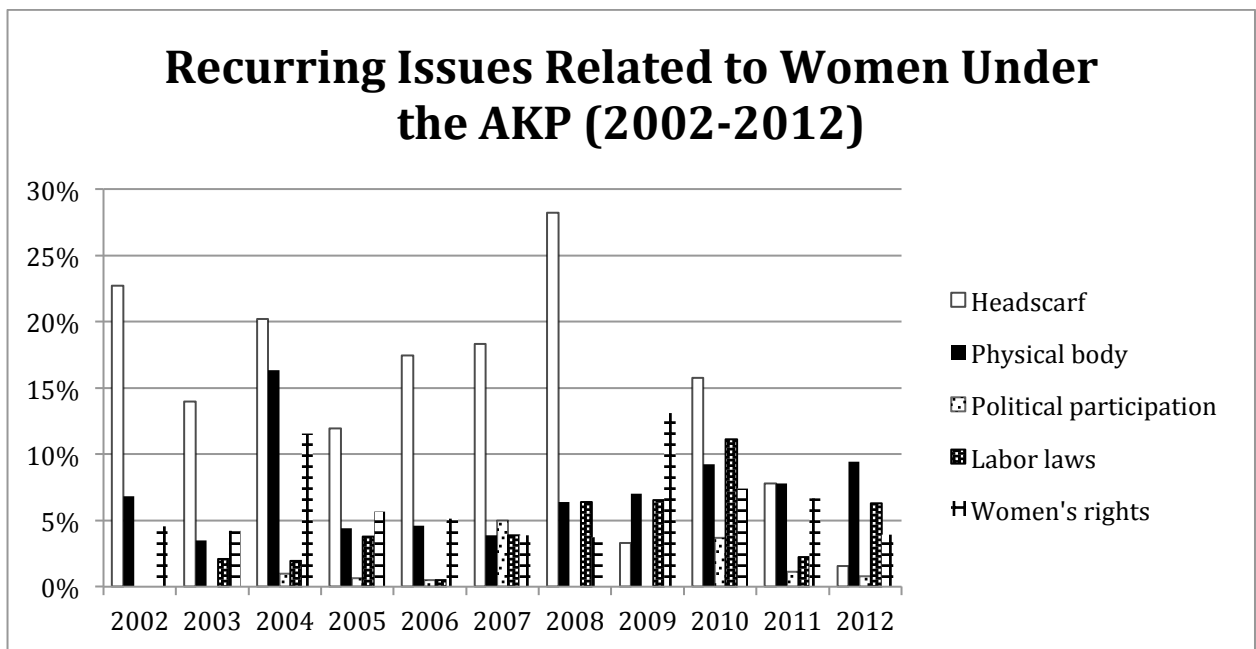


Figure 1 displays the recurring issues related to women under the AKP (2002 to 2012). Recurring issues included issues related to the headscarf, physical body, political participation, labor laws, and women’s rights.

To further understand the relationships among these categories in relation to the AKP’s stance on women, I conducted a qualitative analysis. The content of each article within each category was re-coded to understand driving forces (such as timing, local and global events, and frequency) to determine first, why certain issues gained greater visibility than others, and second,

to determine what stance the AKP had in the matter. My content analysis revealed the shift in coverage away from issues related to the headscarf and toward physical body and labor laws coincided with the decline of EU soft power and the AKP's consolidation of power and rise to dominance. Thus, this evidence suggests these factors enabled the AKP to shift the political agenda away from EU-backed social reforms and toward pursuing the party's own conservative social agenda.

The AKP's stagnant reform performance and most recent attempts to ban abortions and curb the number of caesarean sections administered simply suggest the party has stumbled more toward the right of the political spectrum. However, a more in-depth analysis of the frequency and public visibility of these contentious issues related to women, and the conditions under which these issues were reported (or stopped being reported), indicates the party has consciously revived the debate of social conservatism by returning it to the public domain.

A secondary component to my mixed-methods approach was interviews I conducted in Istanbul, Turkey with local experts (academics) and women activists on the issue of social conservatism and the AKP to gain a better understanding of my findings on a localized level. I interviewed professors Yeşim Arat from Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, İftar Gözaydın from Doğu Üniversitesi, Hale Bolak Boratav from Bilgi Universität, University of Pennsylvania Ph.D candidate and feminist activist, Tuğçe Ellialtı, and two feminist activists from Amgari Women's Organization. From these interviews I was able to gain insight into how these women living in Turkey interpret social values and conservative policies. Given the 2012 controversy over the attempt to ban abortion and Caesarean regulations, there is limited published work on the recent developments as it relates to the AKP and social conservatism. These interviews revolving

around these issues provided valuable interpretations of how women in society perceived and reacted to these events.

This chapter will first present my qualitative and quantitative findings on recurring contentious issues related to women through the categories of *physical body*, *labor laws*, *political participation*, *headscarf*, and *women's rights*. Second, this chapter will draw conclusions regarding the level of visibility of each sub-category within these main categories. Finally, this chapter will explore the relationship between *physical body* and *labor laws* to *headscarf* and its significance for the AKP and women in society.

5.2 Political Participation

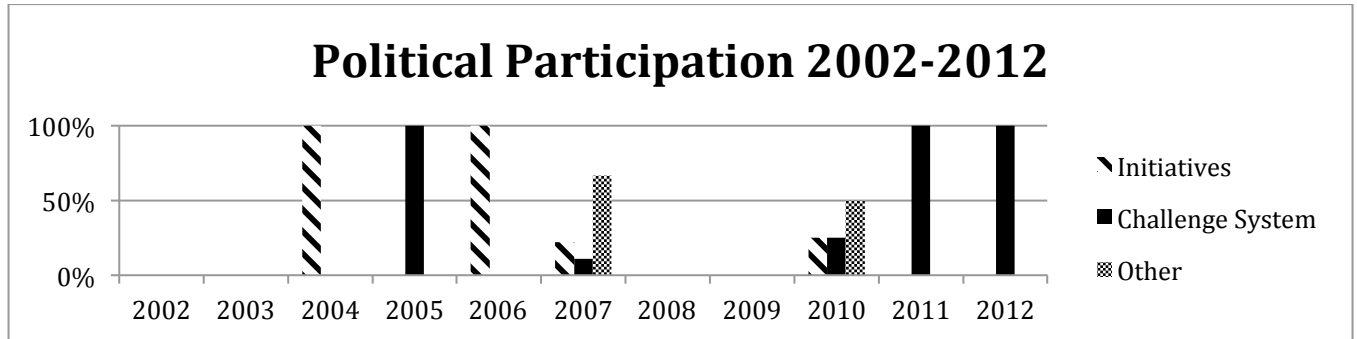


Figure 2 shows the number of articles related to issues of political participation.

The sub-categories for political participation include *state-led initiatives*; *challenges to the system*; and *other*, which consists of articles that simply mention words related to political participation, but are not necessarily relevant to this analysis.¹³ Though women in Turkey were granted the right to vote in 1934, political representation and access to decision making have remained consistently low. Of the articles related to political participation, all articles between 2004 and 2006 mentioned issues related to challenging the system or initiatives improving representation of women (see figure 4). Considering 2007 was an election year, the AKP focused its platform around garnering the woman vote.

Addressing the low number of women MPs and overall representation of women in decision-making processes, the AKP publicly announced its support to be more inclusive of women. Following the 2007 elections, the AKP announced it would launch several programs aimed toward increasing the number of female mayors (“AKP to increase female leaders,” 2007). Yet after the 2009 elections, only 27 women mayors were elected. Considering the total number of mayors in Turkey is 2,948, women mayors only accounted for 0.9% (Müftüler-Baç, 2012; 12). In 2007, there was a dip in media coverage on all sub-categories related to political

¹³ Although words such as “voting” and “representation” appeared in this sample, the context of these words was oftentimes not relevant to this analysis (e.g. “voting” for best Turkish designers). Thus, the *other* is to account for the total number of articles related to political participation.

participation, and from 2008 to 2009 there were no articles found discussing these issues. This lull can be attributed to the party shifting its focuses to more pressing issues, specifically the headscarf controversy, which was heating up at this time.

However, beginning in 2010 political participation regained visibility, specifically in the sub-category of “*challenging the system.*” Although women’s organizations in 2004 and 2010 made crucial efforts to persuade the government to amend Article 10 of the Constitution to include affirmative action for women’s access to political decision making, in 2010 claims by opposition parties (mainly the CHP) that the AKP was not doing enough to include women in the political process drew the most media attention (ibid., Müftüler-Baç). Again, given that 2011 was another important election year, the CHP publicly challenged the party for hindering the political participation of women, claiming the CHP would grant “higher political representation to women and children” (“Who’s who in the new party assembly of Turkey’s main opposition.”). A similar headline published the same day stated the CHP would help reshape party policies with its 46 new members, 21 of which were women (“Turkey’s main opposition chief makes 41 promises for the party,” 2010). Considering the 2010 timing, the CHP was clearly attempting to draw attention to the shortcomings of the AKP’s 2007 promises to be more inclusive of women on a political level.

Though the AKP once again was victorious in the 2011 elections, the party’s attempts to garner the women vote based on promises of increased political inclusion went unfulfilled. In the 2007 national elections, only 50 women were elected to Parliament of 550 seats; and in 2011, only 78 women MPs were elected (ibid., Müftüler-Baç). Despite this increase, women account for only 14% MPs. In a 2011 article, AKP deputy Fatma Şahin acknowledged the need to increase women’s involvement in the decision-making process, claiming “women can more

efficiently pursue their rights and have a voice on policies regarding family, society, and national affairs” (Şahin, 2012; 44). Currently she is the one and only women minister; she is the head of Minister of Family and Social Policies. Hale Bolak characterized Şahin as a “strong woman” with “good advisors trying to do good things” (Bolak, 2012). Although working within the constraints of a “more conservative agenda” Bolak emphasized Sahin is “more sympathetic to the demands of women’s groups,” reflecting that the “party is [not] a homogeneous whole” (ibid., Bolak). However, Bolak stated that regardless of Sahin’s sympathy or support the “ultimate decision making power rests somewhere else, usually not just where the women are” (ibid., Bolak).

Though political participation is a recurring issue throughout this sample, articles mentioning political participation have remained the lowest (see figure 1). However, the recurrence of this issue is especially important in regards to timing because it reflects shifting efforts by the AKP and opposition parties to gain support from women voters during the years leading up to election.

5.3 Women's Rights

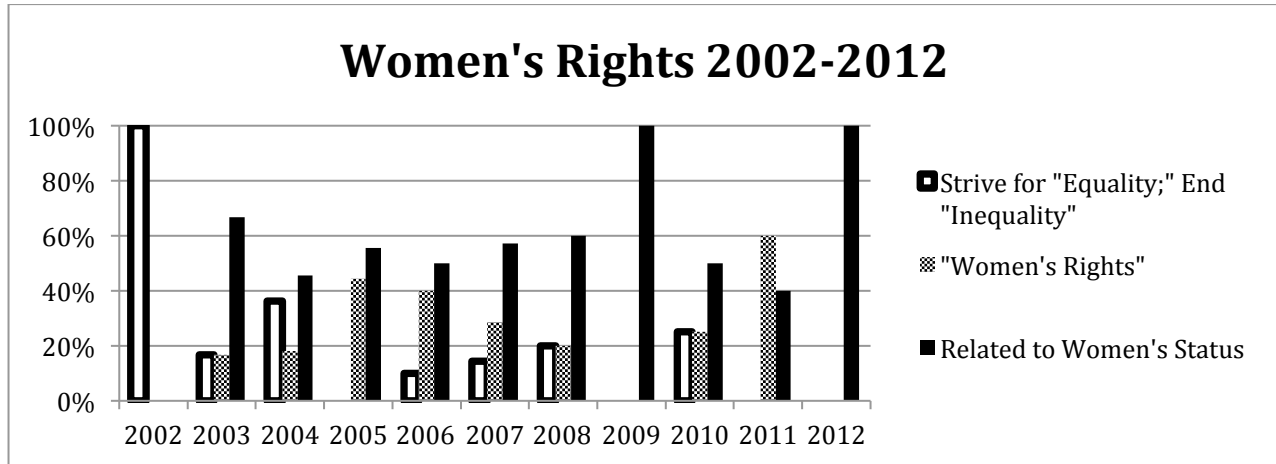


Figure 3 shows the number of articles related to women's rights.

The sub-categories for women's rights include articles that explicitly mention "equality" and "inequality;" "women's rights;" and issues *related to women's status*, which includes articles that used language to present the issue of women's status (e.g. "positive discrimination," "stereotypes," "affirmative action," "women's empowerment," etc...). In 2002, the AKP was inaugurated into office with an active commitment to the EU accession process. Using the Copenhagen Criteria, women's organizations called on the state *to improve equality and to end inequality* between men and women. This is reflected in the 2002 spike in articles related to "equality" and "inequality."

This year was also a pivotal year for the AKP and human rights reform as it allowed the party to further legitimize itself and Turkey both abroad and at home. One article described the EU accession process as "an affirmation that a predominately Muslim country with a secular democratic regime can blend in with other democracies...[and] women were given equal rights with men [since] the Republic was, above all, to become a 'European society'" ("Turkey's policies to make a profound contribution to European ideals," 2002). The decline in 2003 reflects

this approach yielded positive results during this high reform period as articles calling for greater equality and/or ending inequality remained relatively low.

However, the same cannot be said of the low number of reports related to “equality” and “inequality” from 2005 to 2008. The shifting relationship between the EU and the AKP led to a decline in reforms and overall low reform period. Despite this decline in EU-drive reforms, women continued to fight for equality by openly contesting issues related to women’s status. While the sub-category of *women’s rights* remained relatively high during this period and into 2009, the explicit usage of the phrase “women’s rights” began to decline. This move suggests women began to move away from general language, and began to use language more specific to women’s status. From 2005 to 2008, more articles began questioning the “limitations of discrimination against women” (“Turkish Press Yesterday,” 2005) and the “position of women in society” (“Turkish culture month in Helsinki,” 2008); drawing attention to women being treated as “second class citizens” (“Has the AKP unveiled its 'real face?'” 2008); and calling for the state to “strengthen the role of women in society” (“Diplomacy Newslines,” 2006) and to “break stereotypes” (“Turkish origin Danish Parliamentarian empower ethnic minorities,” 2009).

Articles mentioning issues related to the status of women from 2003 to 2012 remained consistently high, indicating the status of women is a not a new issue. Another motivating factor behind the rise in the sub-category of “*women’s rights*” and switch toward more direct language is oftentimes human rights and women’s rights become conflated with one another. This inadvertently leads the public to lose sight of rights specific to women, such as reproductive and bodily rights. Thus, the shift toward language directly related to women’s status was done to ensure the rights of women were not lost in the sea of human rights reform.

Though the EU-driven reform period began to slow down in 2005, AKP deputies continued to frame women's rights as a necessary requirement the success of state. President Gül was quoted as stating, "peace and development in societies are possibly only when women enjoy equal rights" ("Diplomacy Newslines," 2006). However, the disconnect between legislation and actual implementation became increasingly clear as women continued to openly protest against the state on this matter. When asked why the state chooses to draw up legislation but does not enforce it, Yeşim Arat stated, "I think for any political party that [passing legislation] is something that easily [gives] an impression or send a signal that they are progressive, [that] they [the state] are for human – women's rights and if they don't have to implement it then they don't have to lose anything" (Arat, 2012). Arat's observations reflect a trending disconnect between legislation and implementation in AKP policy. This will be a recurring trend throughout upcoming sections, especially with issues related to the physical body and labor laws.

5.4 An Overview of the Headscarf in Turkey

With the establishment of the Republic in 1923, women came to embody progressive reforms geared toward modernization. In an effort to breakaway from its Islamic past, Atatürk's modernization project controlled the public presence of religion and religious symbols, namely wearing of the fez for men and the headscarf for women. In the beginning of the Republic no official ban was implemented; however, districts were allowed to determine whether a woman could wear a headscarf in public (Çınar, 2005). The state remained committed to modernization even after the transition to a multi-party system in 1950. As more women were seen working in public, fewer women were seen wearing headscarves, which reflected the influential push from above to retain control over religion in the public sphere.

It was not until the period following the Iranian Revolution that the headscarf became a politically salient issue. The transnational Islamic movement abetted in the development and proliferation of political Islam throughout the Middle East and North Africa regions. Coinciding with this time, high numbers of internal and external migration from villages to urban centers further enabled the emergence of political Islam in Turkey. The transnational Islamic movement coupled with the influx of the traditional, rural "periphery" into the urban "center" brought a resurgence of religion into the public sphere. Among the rural migrants, women dressed in traditional, modest Anatolian attire, including the headscarf, made their style of dress a "visible symbol of adherence" to the Islamic movement (Elver, 2012; 18). Women came to embody the rising conflict between Islamists and secularists, the site of contention centered on the headscarf.

During the late 1980s legislation passed in parliament reflected increasing conservative sentiments in the state. In 1989, parliament passed a law allowing women to wear headscarves in universities, citing that "dress is not subject to any prohibition in higher education, provided that

is not forbidden by law” (ibid., Elver). Though a mild victory for Islamists and religious groups, the religious fervor promulgated by radical right parties (such as Welfare) and the headscarf controversy brought on by Virtue prompted secular institutions of the state to act.¹⁴ Under the direction of the military elite and university president February 28, 1997 Process lead the Higher Education Council (YÖK) to issue an official banning of the headscarves in universities.

The following section will present the development and decline of the headscarf controversy under the AKP. First, this section will introduce the development of the headscarf controversy from 2002 to 2008. During this period the headscarf became increasingly contentious as EU incentives remained high, leaving the AKP to walk a fine line between appeasing its religious constituency and staying true to its EU commitments. Second, this section will present the headscarf controversy from 2008 to 2012 and the overall decline of the controversy during this period. Specifically, this section will analyze the influential events surrounding the shift in content coverage away from the headscarf and toward issues related to the physical body and labor laws.

¹⁴ In 1999, Virtue deputy Merve Kavakçı stirred controversy during a post-election ceremony where she refused to remove her headscarf. Kavakçı made it clear during the Virtue campaign that “she would not remove her headscarf in the National Assembly in accordance with law” (Mecham, 2004; 348). Virtue leaders allowed Kavakçı to attend the ceremony, but when she entered the National Assembly with her headscarf chaos ensued as deputies of the Assembly banging on desks, shouting, ““Get out!”” (ibid., Mecham). After an hour, Kavakçı was unable to take her seat and left. Soon after Virtue was closed on the grounds of anti-secular activity. This incident shows the contentious nature of the headscarf preceding the AKP, and reflects the intense sensitivity around the issue during this time.

5.5 The Headscarf Controversy from 2002 to 2008

From 2002 to 2012, articles mentioning or related to the headscarf remained consistently high. Though from 2002 to 2008 issues related to physical body, labor laws, political participation, and women's rights began to surface, the headscarf remained a dominant issue throughout this period. Although the AKP was explicitly against the headscarf ban in universities, the support of the ban by the Constitutional Court, the European Human Rights Commission, and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) forced the party to downplay the issue in its first term (Arat, 2010; 872). During this time, the political agenda was heavily influenced by secular constraints, specifically threat of closure by the Constitutional court, and high public ambitions for EU accession. However, tensions over the headscarf ban continued to be on the rise as the division between religious and non-religious sects continued to polarize society.

The controversy gained international publicity in 2004 with the *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey* case. Şahin, who at the time was a fifth year medical student at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Istanbul, challenged the headscarf ban when she was prohibited from attending lectures and denied access to an examination because she refused to remove her headscarf. University officials justified their actions as upholding the banning of headscarves from public state institutions. Despite the pressure of institutional constraints working against the party's conservative leanings, the AKP openly gave its support to the Şahin case. However, in the end the ECHR decision stated the headscarf ban was indeed in line with Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, claiming there had been "no violation of Şahin's freedom of religion" (Elver, 2012; 76).¹⁵ Though Şahin appealed her case to the Grand Chamber of the

¹⁵ Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights states "1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion...[and] 2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject

ECHR, the outcome remained the same on the grounds that “Turkey’s political concerns about maintaining secularism legitimated interfering with [Şahin’s] freedom of religion” (ibid., Elver).

The *Leyla Şahin v. Turkey* decision served as a turning point for the headscarf controversy for several reasons. First, the AKP’s open support of Şahin against the state raised concerns among secularists over the party’s commitment to the secular nature of the state. For some secularists, the AKP’s support of Şahin was perceived as the party threatening to revert Turkey to a fully Islamic state. More importantly, the reactions to the *Şahin* decision emphasized the importance of preserving collective state secularity over the individual freedom of citizens, specifically prioritizing social order over the individual rights of women. The preservation of social order remained a recurring theme throughout the headscarf controversy as well as issues related to the physical body and labor laws, which will be discussed more in-depth in later sections. Finally, the *Şahin* decision further complicated the controversy by raising the question of public and private spaces. By 2006 this lack of distinction began to have a more direct impact on covered women in society.

In 2006, party deputies became more vocal as secular sensitivities surrounding the headscarf ban began to affect covered women in public state institutions. The unclear boundaries between private and public spaces left covered women vulnerable to legal prosecution. When the Council of State dictated schoolteachers could not wear their headscarves on their way to and from the school, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated “Soon they (the Council of State) will be getting involved with what we do in our homes,” openly suggesting the secular sect of the state was infringing upon the personal rights of women (“Press scanner,” 2006). Then House Speaker of Parliament, Bülent Arınç, took it a step further and implied the ban on wearing a

only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others” (Murdoch, 2007; 4).

headscarf in public was not “compatible with civil liberties” (“Gunduz Aktan: Once again secularism (2),” 2006). The AKP validated its stance through Anglo-Saxon secular rhetoric, justifying civil liberties and a woman’s right to choose to be covered. This effectively moved the headscarf issue within the parameters of personal freedoms, and put the secularist claims for human rights into question. Secularists perceived the AKP as being hypocritical on the issue, claiming any relaxation of the headscarf ban threatened the secular foundation of the state. Although the religious motivations of the AKP were not a secret, the secular framing of issue heightened the controversy, once again putting the personal freedoms and individual rights of women into question. The dimensions of the headscarf debate further polarized the AKP and its religious consistency from the secularists.

During the latter half of 2006, secularist fears escalated as the covered wives of AKP deputies deepened the controversy. In October, then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a staunch secularist, refused to allow politicians whose wives wore headscarves to attend a ball celebrating Turkish independence, stating it would “compromise” and undermine the secular state founded by Atatürk (“Turkey in veil controversy”). Among the women in question included Emine Erdoğan, wife to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In the past, covered deputies created controversy such as the case with the Virtue incident that sealed the party’s closure. The presence of covered women within the state made secularists uneasy.

The “problem” of covered wives in government reappeared in early November as talks of then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül’s candidacy for president began to surface. However, media attention was drawn to Hayrünnisa Gül and her headscarf, not Gül himself. The military publicly commented the Turkish state could not be represented by a leader whose “first lady has a headscarf” (ibid., Elver; 23). For secularists, the possibility of the headscarf becoming a part of a

state institution became a realized fear. In April, the Office of the Chief of General Staff issued an “e-memorandum” on the website of the General Staff reminding the public of the army’s duty and responsibility to protect the fundamental principles of the Republic (Turkish Armed Forces).

Though Emine Erdoğan, Hayrünnisa Gül, and covered women working in the public sector were not elected government officials or representatives, their presence alone as covered women was enough to distress the secular elite. As the controversy heated up, divisions between Islamists and secularists deepened. In May, the controversy turned violent when Judge Mustafa Yuçel Özbilgin, who voted against lifting the headscarf ban, was shot dead by a zealous Islamist. Before shooting the judge, the attacker yelled, “I am the soldier of God;” he later claimed he attacked the court as protest against the court’s decision on headscarves (“Arslan faces life for council of state shooting,” 2006). This incident reflected the height of contention of the headscarf controversy in both the political and social spheres.

From 2007 to 2010 divisions within society worsened. The re-election of the AKP in 2007 gave the party the necessary two-thirds majority in parliament to submit a constitutional referendum and to begin its endeavor to democratize Turkey by first lifting the headscarf ban. Following the principles of the ECHR, the AKP declared it would create a new “civilian constitution” to help democratize the state (Elver, 2012; 26). Employing democratic rhetoric, the AKP framed the headscarf ban within terms of civil liberties, further validating its cause in the eyes of the international community. Despite the waning support of the AKP for EU accession, the party was still required to maintain face. Thus, it was necessary for the party to frame the headscarf controversy within democratic terms to avoid accusations of Islamizing the state and delegitimized the party all together. Additionally, the ECHR is not a direct extension of the EU and the AKP was not reprimanded for moving against the *Şahin v. Turkey* decision.

Despite the AKP's efforts, secularists saw the 2007 constitutional referendum as an attempt by the party to "Islamize" the state with its "hidden agenda" by removing the ban on headscarves in universities (Bayramoglu, 2007). Secularists specifically criticized Article 45 of the referendum, which stated, "no one shall be deprived of the right to higher education because of his or her dress" (Elver, 2012; 5). From one side, the secularists argued the AKP was violating the *Şahin v. Turkey* decision, in which the headscarf ban was found compatible with the Convention. In its defense, the AKP argued against allegations of a "hidden agenda" and justified the lifting of the ban as a part of the democratization process. In response, secular authorities strictly began to enforce the headscarf ban in universities. In one instance, a teacher was fired for wearing a headscarf to school under the justification that "as a teacher, she is a role model for her students; therefore it is not acceptable to wear a headscarf, even in her private life" (Elver, 2012; 34).

By initiating the 2007 constitutional referendum, the AKP received major backlash not only for its attempts to lift the headscarf ban but also for its aims to increase parliamentary control over the military and judiciary. Since the conception of the Republic, both bodies have acted with semi-autonomy, and institutional constraints against the executive and parliamentary branches. The 1960 military coup d'état set a precedential role for the military and Constitutional Court as "guardian[s] of state power," and protecting the secular state from religious incursions (ibid., Bayramoglu). However, the overbearing roles of both bodies did not align with democratization requirements necessary for EU accession. Thus, the status of the 2007 constitutional referendum remained a thorn at the side of secularists. These tensions between secularists and the AKP over the headscarf controversy provoked secular elites to act, which laid

the foundation for the 2008 spike in headscarf coverage and the closure case against the AKP in 2008.

5.6 The Headscarf Controversy 2008-2012

Articles reporting the headscarf controversy in 2008 increased to 28% from 18% in 2007 (see figure 1). During this time secularists attempted to close the AKP on the grounds of promoting an anti-secular agenda after the party's attempt to lift the headscarf ban through the 2007 constitutional referendum. In addition to this, the AKP's 2007 campaign promised to lift the ban. As secularists pressured universities to enforce the ban, AKP deputies continued to push legislation to lift the ban. With the support of the conservative Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) as signatories of the headscarf protocol, the AKP gained the parliamentary support necessary to push amendments to lift the ban. In February 2008, parliament approved amendments that later paved the way for women to be allowed to wear headscarves in universities (Elver, 2012; 35).

Although this was a victorious moment for the AKP and its religious constituency, the amendments to lift the ban provoked a strong reaction from the secular side. Thousands of demonstrators supporting the ban protested in the streets against the amendments. In addition to this, the CHP asked the Constitutional Court to block the new law as its implementation signaled a move toward becoming an Islamic state. Other parties also called on the AKP to not follow through with the constitutional package lifting the ban. The Democratic Left Party (DSP) called on President Gül not to approve the amendments lifting the ban "to diffuse prevailing tensions in the country" ("DSP calls on president not to approve headscarf package," 2008). As political tensions spilled over into the social sphere, secularists seized their opportunity. By March 2008 the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation brought an official case against the AKP seeking to ban the party and 70 of its members, including Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül, on charges of violating the secular principles of the constitution.

In July 2008 the Constitutional Court rejected the prosecutor's case, but imposed a heavy fine on the party for undermining the constitution. The Court also ruled against the constitutional amendment package, and subsequently annulled the proposed amendments to lift the ban on the grounds that removing the ban went against the founding secular principles. Though narrowly escaping closure, the Constitutional Court's verdict served as a serious warning to the AKP and forced the party to rethink its political agenda. Chairman of the Turkey-EU delegation at the European parliament, Joost Lagendijk, was quoted as being "relieved by the ruling" but also expressed concern over the AKP's next steps stating, "[the party] has to show more sensitivity to the fears and worries of that part of the Turkish population that did not vote for them" (ibid., Boland).

The initial approval of the 2007 constitutional referendum was a short-lived victory for the AKP that later sparked serious backlash from secular members of society and almost led to the official closure of the party. Considering the consequences, the AKP backed off pursuing its plans to lift the ban. In 2009 articles reporting issues related to the headscarf fell from 28% in 2008 to 3% (figure 1). During this period issues related to the physical body, labor laws, and women's rights became more visible. Though the headscarf re-emerged in 2010, the 2009 shift toward other issues relevant to women's individual rights and freedoms indicates the party employed a pragmatic approach to avoid further controversy. Although the 2007 constitutional referendum nearly led to the demise of the AKP, the referendum came to a public vote in 2010 and revived the headscarf debate once more, and eventually led to an informal lifting of the ban. The head YÖK, Yusuf Ziya Özcan, publicly announced students wearing headscarves are no longer subject to being removed from class for being "in violation of discipline regulations" ("YÖK head gives personal guarantee to all Turkish students on headscarves," 2010).

The lifting of the headscarf ban, though informal, was a pivotal moment for the AKP for several reasons. First, it showcased the party's ability to overcome institutional constraints with the use of secular rhetoric. Whereas Welfare and Virtue utilized overt religious tones, the AKP was able to frame and execute its conservative agenda within the boundaries set by the secular elite. Second, the lifting of ban proved the AKP's commitment to democratization, and also symbolized a victory for the party and its conservative constituency. Finally, the success of the headscarf ban asserted the AKP's dominant political position, which paved the way for the party to pursue its conservative agenda on a social level. By 2011, articles mentioning issues related to the headscarf declined again and remained low in 2012. This evidence suggests the headscarf issue has normalized in society and the AKP has turned its efforts toward issues related to the physical body and labor laws as shown in figure 1.¹⁶

¹⁶ Normalized in this context refers to how the headscarf has become a less contentious, political issue and a more socially accepted form of personal expression. Hale Bolak used the term "normalized" to describe the increased presence of covered women in a university setting and the increased interaction between covered and non-covered women in social settings.

5.7 Physical Body: Violence Against Women and Government Initiatives

In 2012, issues related to physical body and labor laws were the two highest mentioned issues. The increased visibility of these issues suggests the AKP is indeed addressing physical body and labor laws related to women, though it is often times not in line with the interests of women. In other words, the socially conservative stance of the AKP in regards to issues related to the physical body and labor laws are limiting the ability for women to find opportunities outside the realm of the home. Left with few viable options, women are pressured to return and/or remain home, and to take on traditional roles as mothers and caretakers.

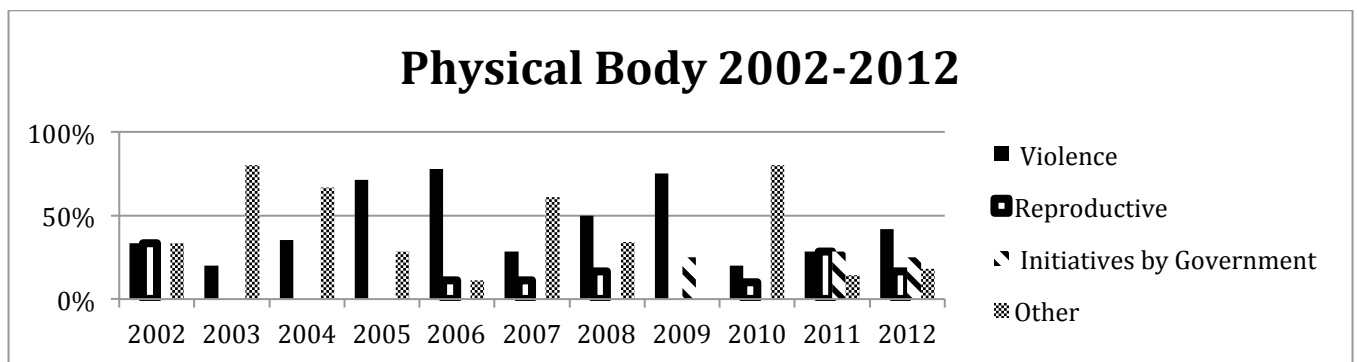


Figure 4 shows articles mentioning issues related to the physical body.

Issues related to physical body were broken down into three sub-categories: *acts of violence against women and/or domestic violence*; *initiatives by government to prevent violence against women*; and *motherhood and the reproductive regulation of women*. From 2002 to 2004, a vigorous campaign initiated and organized by the Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) under the umbrella platform The Platform for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code fought for constitutional gender equality between men and women. Given that from 2002 to 2004 the AKP still had a precarious relationship with secular state institutions and its EU candidacy was still fresh, the platform was successful in pressuring the party to implement the proposed amendments on September 26, 2004. The amendments to the Penal Code included criminalizing marital rape and sexual harassment in the office; ending the reduction or

suspension for those who committed honor killings and for rapists and abductors who married their victims; and abolishing discrimination between virgins and non-virgins, married and unmarried women in sexual crimes (Kandiyoti, 2011). According to the new code, sexual crimes were re-defined as ‘crimes against individuals,’ instead of ‘crimes against humanity’ (Arat, 2008; 408).

In this moment, it appeared the AKP was in full support of prioritizing the individual rights of women. Despite this seemingly progressive move by the AKP, in 2004 the party proposed to re-criminalize adultery. Though articles reported the party entered a “gentlemen’s agreement” with the CHP promising not to take unilateral action and that “all amendment proposals in the original draft [of the Turkish Civil Code] would be co-sponsored by the two parties” (“Confidence crisis between Erdogan and EU,” 2004). However, in a last minute effort in 2005, the AKP attempted to push for the adultery law once more. Though in the end the original amendment package was passed without the adultery clause, this incident reflected the socially conservative inklings within the party. Yet, the institutional and international constraints forced the AKP to refrain from pursuing similar “reforms” during this period.

According to figure 4, articles mentioning acts of violence (including domestic violence and honor killings) against women remained consistently high while articles mentioning government initiatives did not emerge until 2009. During 2009, increasing pressure from local women’s organizations and public reactions from women in society attracted media attention. Often times women’s organizations would prompt the government to act by using the media to voice discontent. More importantly, the 2009 *Opuz v. Turkey* decision in which the ECHR found

Turkey in violation of its obligations to protect women forced the AKP to act on its international commitments.¹⁷

Violence against women in Turkey continues to remain a major problem. Though the Law 4320 on the Protection of the Family was intended to provide protection from violence, the shortcomings of the law have had a severe impact on women at risk. In 2008, a national survey reported 39% of women were exposed to violence by husband or boyfriend in their lifetime; the rate for women who were divorced or separated increased to 73% (Çarkoğlu, et al., 2012; 49). The content of the articles I sampled repeatedly attributed such violence to the inadequate implementation of the Law 4320 and the Penal Code. One article published in June 2009 stated, “Despite [these] improvements in [legislation], administrative and judicial bodies are far from capable of protecting women” (“Brother also arrested for attack on girl in Sirrt,” 2009).

The root causes of poor implementation can be traced to a strong patriarchal mentality that permeates throughout society and consequently affects the effectiveness of the legal process. As a result, women are often pressured by local officials and sometimes family members to not press charges, and that is if they choose to report at all. One report on the Law 4320 found women were encouraged to “forgive their husbands rather than seek legal protection ‘in order to protect their children and their home’” (Rodriguez, 2009; 36). In other instances women who’ve chose to report abuse are often “turned away and advised, or pressured, by police to reconcile with their abusive spouses,” which has created mistrust in the police and overall effectiveness of the law (ibid., Rodriguez). Ellialti discussed how women collectives work to show cases of women killings and sexual assaults are not moments of “exception, and are not

¹⁷ Opuz v. Turkey is a landmark case where the ECHR found Turkey in violation of its obligations “to protect women from domestic violence, and for the first time held that gender-based violence is a discrimination under the European Convention.” The case involved the brutal abuse of Nahide Opuz and her mother by Opuz’s husband. Although both parties sought protection from local authorities, adequate protection was not provided, and Opuz’s husband murdered Opuz’s mother. (“Opuz v. Turkey,” 2011).

exceptional” (Ellialti, 2012). Rather, Ellialti described violence against women is persistent throughout society:

“I can say this patriarchal attitudes are so engrained in the minds of legal professionals including judges, prosecutors, even lawyers I think that of course including the police officers because most of the time the police is the primary station for women to go for other victims of violence to go. So, again because you can change the law but you cannot change the minds and mentalities of people over night. it’s a huge process, [and] it’s directly related to how you define womanhood, manhood, what you think about gender, [and] about our lives” (Ellialti, 2012).

Though the AKP has taken the initiative to address violence against women on a legal level, the lack of implementation motivated by patriarchal norms has rendered legal reform ineffective. The 2011 Human Rights Watch Report titled *He Loves You, He Beats You* observed such tendencies, citing law officials often “prioritize preserving [the] family unit” and “push battered women to reconcile with abuses” (Human Rights Watch, 2011;50). The preservation of the family over the individual rights of women undermines the 2004 Penal Code amendments, which explicitly classified crimes against women as ‘crimes against the individual’ rather than against the family or social order (Müftüler-Baç, Meltem, 2012; 9). Despite seemingly strong legislation committed to protecting the individual rights of women, the party’s pursuits toward a more socially conservative agenda continues to encourage a patriarchal mentality at the expense of women’s rights.

5.8 Physical Body: Motherhood and the Reproductive Regulation of Women

The steady increase of issues related to motherhood and the reproductive regulation of women from 2006 to 2012 and its peak in 2011 indicates a shift in the AKP's agenda in regards to the status of women. This recent rise in visibility is due to increasing demographic changes in Turkey. Since the 1990s the annual population growth has been declining due to decreasing fertility rates; as of 2009, the annual population growth was estimated to be 1.4% (Çarkoğlu, Asli, et al., 2012; 50). Though by European standards this rate is considered relatively high, this number is lowest rate seen in Turkish history (ibid., Çarkoğlu, Asli, et al.). The 2010 UNICEF Turkey Reports state this decrease in fertility rates is beneficial for the country's development. A critical review on explicit family policies in Turkey by Asli CarkoGület al. supported this view claiming:

“If [Turkey] can manage to implement successful education and employment policies at this time, by increasing the effort on early childhood education, for which the country never had enough resources before but now with the *declining fertility rate should be able to invest more in, [Turkey] can create a new generation of young adults* in much greater numbers, with much better prospects to be productive and competitive in the mid-twenty first century globalized world” (ibid., Çarkoğlu, Asli, et al.).

Yet, despite UNICEF's optimistic view on Turkey's declining fertility rate, Prime Minister Erdoğan continues to urge families (namely women) to have at least three children to encourage economic growth and to “combat [the] aging population ‘crisis’” (Çarkoğlu, Asli, et al., 2012; 45). The prime minister's words resonated with some members of society, including one Turkish property developer who began offering three-bedroom apartments with a 33% discount for married couples with three children (“3 babies get a 33% discount,” 2011). However, others have read Erdoğan's “population concerns” as a euphemism for women to

return to their true calling as mothers and caregivers. This view is further supported by the AKP's most recent attempts to impose reproductive regulations on women.

Beginning in 2008 articles related to the sub-category of motherhood and reproductive regulations started mentioning Cesarean sections, often times expressing government concern over its increasing rates. One such article published in 2008 announced the Ministry of Health's goal to reduce the percentage of Cesarean sections from 42% to 25% ("Scanner sabah," 2008). In 2011, a similar article was published stating the Ministry of Health would begin a campaign to reduce the number of Cesarean operations "due to the growing number of women opting for such births" ("Turkish health officials look to reduce number of Caesareans," 2011). By July 2012 Parliament passed an amendment that allowed Cesarean sections only "in case of medical emergencies" ("Turkey moves to reduce cesarean surgeries," 2012). Erdoğan's was later quoted as saying Caesarian sections "were nothing but an 'operation' to limit population growth because women who opted for the procedure could not have more than two children" ("Turkish PM says preparing anti-abortion bill," 2012). Typically, it is more difficult for women to give birth naturally after a Cesarean section is performed, which consequently limits the number of births a woman is able to have. In short, this relatively new regulation on Cesarean sections has made elective operations punishable by law and limited a woman's right to choose her preferred method of birth. The motivations behind the Cesarean sections regulation further encouraged Erdoğan's calls women to have at least three children.

The topic of abortion has also gained increased visibility in recent months. In May 2012, Erdoğan publicly compared abortion to "murder," and soon after the AKP attempted to introduce legislation that would only allow abortions to be performed during the first six weeks of pregnancy, thus reducing the current 10 week limit ("Abortion ban latest issue to polarize

Turkey,” 2012). Given that most women do not realize they are pregnant until the sixth week, this legislation would have resulted in a de facto ban on abortion. Though this legislation was abandoned shortly after public protests, a “practical ban” has since taken place. In an interview with Ozlen and Hilal, local feminists from the Amargi Organization in Istanbul, both described incidences where public hospitals refused to administer an abortion despite there being no official ban.¹⁸ Hilal explained because of this “practical ban” doctors are unwilling to perform abortions for fear of punishment by the state: “[There] is a kind of fear[,] some kind of psychological pressure on doctors by the government...so [doctors] really should dare to make abortion [under] these conditions” (Ozlen and Hilal, 2012). Hilal suggests that for a doctor to perform an abortion despite government disapproval would be perceived as a challenge to state authority and would lead to serious consequences. Though abortion is still legal in Turkey, the threat of government repercussion dissuades doctors from administering the abortion procedure.

Similarly, Ozlen described incidences where a woman trying to obtain an abortion would first have to go through a series of hurdles: “For example, the woman will have to listen to the heartbeats of the fetus...[but] you first meet with psychologists, consultants, [which is going to be an] obligation with this new regulation. You have to explain, you have to convince the psychologist you need it (laughs)” (ibid., Ozlen and Hilal). Despite the sensitive nature of abortion, Ozlen’s attitude reflects a sense of disbelief that the state would impose such stipulations over a procedure that directly impacts the woman, not the state. Since the legislation to ban abortion was abandoned, talks of regulations on abortion (similar to the regulation on Cesarean sections) begun circulating. The reluctance of public hospital doctors to perform

¹⁸ Amargi is a women’s organization in Istanbul, Turkey “fighting against all exploitation systems, militarism, racism, heterosexism,” and the organization aims to “spread feminism [as an] alternative against [these systems]” (Amargi).

abortions and rumors of abortion regulations have all already begun to act as a de facto ban on the procedure.

With Erdoğan's call for at least three children in each family and the party's pro-active push to regulate birth control, the AKP has become more open with its socially conservative agenda at the expense of women's reproductive rights. The party's brand of social conservatism promotes itself as preserving the traditional "Turkish" family, which Erdoğan has explicitly alluded to be a nuclear family consisting of at least three children. When I asked Ellialti about the structure of this "Turkish" family, she said that she didn't know but emphasized that the concept of family remains a recurring issue that should not be challenged.

"I have no idea what [the "Turkish" family] is but it's always you know talked about, the structure of Turkish family, this is not good for Turkish family, we should be very careful about not violating the limits of you know this. So of course [with] the structure of Turkish family [comes] some normative expectations about you know how a family should be, how members should behave to each other, and who has the power...[Turkey is] stuck in this wanting to be modern and issues of late modernity and trying to keep its culture and tradition" (ibid., Ellialti).

Though in its original 2002 manifesto the AKP committed itself to serve as a "bridge between traditional and modernizing Turkey" it has become increasingly apparent that the party has only upheld commitment on an economic level and to a limited extent on the social level (Mecham, 2004; 354). Through its actions related to women's bodies the AKP has positioned women at the forefront of the debate to serve as the site where traditional and modern Turkey intersect. When I asked Ellialti what was motivating the party's focus on women's bodies, Ellialti attributed it to the party's shift toward its socially conservative agenda:

"Women's bodies are the primary targets for the state – in this sense women are still seen as instrumental [with] their bodies, their reproductivity, and definitely [their] motherhood...I think that this population concern [relates] to the rise of social conservatism of course...In society we know that the AKP calls itself [and] is [a] conservative, democratic party, and they have emphasized this conservative aspect of their ideology and politics" (ibid., Ellialti)

By directly addressing the bodies of women through reproductive regulations the AKP has politicized women's bodies and the rhetoric of the party is pressuring women to take on static roles of mother and caregiver, thus promulgating the secondary status of women. Much like Atatürk's conception of the *family* is the *state*, the AKP has framed its rhetoric within a similar context by equating women's citizenry to bearing and raising the youth of the state. In adopting this conception that the "*family means nation; nation means family*" the AKP validates its socially conservative position as preserving traditional values (ibid., White, 2003).

Further supporting Ellialtı's claim and my findings, Professor Çarkođlu ran a content analysis of Turkish political party election manifestos to measure policy positions of parties during elections. According to his findings parties from 1950 to present the topic of "maintenance and stability of the family" occupied 1.4% of overall content (ibid., Çarkođlu et al., 51). During the 2003 elections, this topic was almost nonexistent in opposition parties CHP and MHP, but occupied about 3% of the AKP's manifesto (ibid., Çarkođlu et al., 5151). In bridging the gap between "population concerns" and social conservatism under the AKP, the party's approach toward regulating the reproductivity of women indicates its focused protection of traditional values. In short, the AKP's efforts to maintain the traditional role of women in the home as mothers and caregivers are being done to ensure the preservation of the "Turkish" family.

5.9 Labor Laws

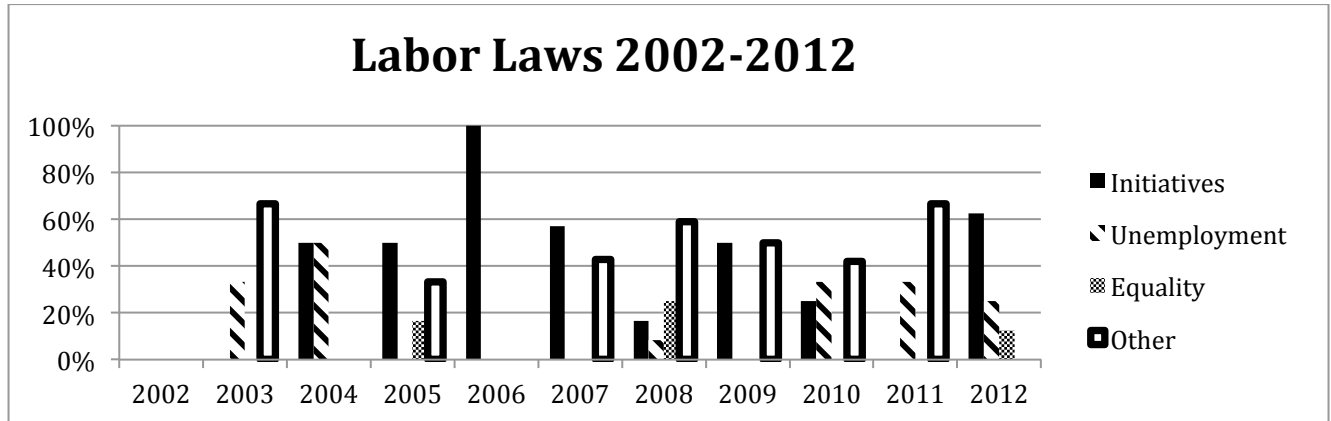


Figure 5 shows articles mentioning issues related to labor laws.

The sub-categories under labor laws include *initiatives by the government to improve participation of women in the workforce; unemployment of women; and the equality of women in the workforce*. Figure 5 reveals initiatives by the government remained consistently high throughout the AKP's tenure and peaked in 2006 with introduction of the Law on Social Security and General Health Insurance (Law 5510). Law 5510 merged different social security systems into one and adopted “harmonized legislation” for maternity leave, breastfeeding, and pension, which intended to regulate working conditions for women (Müftüler-Baç, 2012;13). However, rather than incentivizing women to enter the workforce, Law 5510 inadvertently (or perhaps intentionally) pushed women away. Among the problems related to Law 5510 include stringent conditions for women's retirement, which discouraged women from the labor market by taking away the “lure of a retirement benefit” (Arat, 2010; 873). Consequently, Law 5510 gives women little incentive to work outside the home if the possibility of a secure pension is unavailable.

Other problems associated with Law 5510 include the constraints to receive benefits based on marital status. Law 5510 also allowed women to benefit from their father's health insurance, which allowed women to be less dependent on their husbands (ibid., Arat, 2010). However, in 2008 this amendment was repealed, and forced married women to become more

reliant on a husband. The repeal left single women to choose between limited insurance or to find a husband for full insurance coverage.

Full insurance benefits included in the General Health Insurance Law are access to primary health care, dental, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and prosthetics (Family). However, full coverage is only available to married couples, and excludes single women and married women over 40 (Çarkoğlu, et al., 2012; 44). The constraints of the General Health Insurance Law allow women to receive these benefits if and when they marry, assuming all women will take on a husband and, in so many words, a family. Similarly single women are restricted from having a family without a male partner. The regulation of ovum and sperm donations, as well as artificial insemination is “deemed illegal to be carried out on single, unmarried women, of any age” regardless if she is willing to bear the costs (ibid., Çarkoğlu, et al.). Thus, the repeal and state of insurance functions to ensure the sanctity of the “Turkish” family is not challenged.

Though the intent of these recent insurance laws sought to improve working conditions for women, it has also limited the opportunities and benefits available to women in the workforce as well as deterred non-working women from entering the workforce. The constraints and limited coverage of Law 5510 reflect the party’s endeavor to preserve its normative expectations of the “Turkish” family. In a similar vein, the AKP’s position on issues related to labor laws works in tandem with the party’s policies related to the physical body. The marital constraints of Law 5510 pressures women to become more reliant on a male figure. This reliance endorses the AKP’s conception of family by promulgating traditional, patriarchal norms. Arat described how the party’s two-pronged approach on these issues is attempting to encourage women to take on more maternal roles:

“Social conservatism in relation to women, most explicitly can be seen in their promoting this maternal roles for women. Equating womanhood to motherhood. I

think that equation is how they go about you know, promoting their social conservatism. And they do really nothing about drawing women into the labor market, 24% of women are in the labor market, which is ridiculous... They [the AKP] don't push, they don't pass any laws to push business groups to recruit more women, they don't pass any laws, they don't bring any incentives they didn't make it, neither use the stick or the carrot to draw women into the labor market" (Arat, 2012).

Similar to Law 5510, the 2003 Labor Law No. 4857 intended to encourage women to enter the workforce by ensuring equal treatment of employees, however Arat asserts the low rate of women in the labor market is a reflection of gender and wage discrimination against women. According to a 2012 report from the Directorate General for Internal Policies commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Gender Equality, women's participation in the workforce in Turkey is among the lowest of the OECD countries (Müftüler-Baç, 2012;12). Although Arat estimated only 24% of women are in the labor market, the Directorate's findings reported only 22.8%, which suggests the rate of women's employment has declined in recent years (ibid., Çarkoğlu, et al).

Among the problems associated with Labor Law No. 4857, there are several major constraints limiting the opportunity for women to enter and develop careers in the labor force. First, the absence of early childhood care services forces women to choose either staying at home or continuing their careers at the costly expense of childcare. Although the Labor Law requires companies with more than 150 women to provide daycare options for children ages 0 to 6, only 21% of the top 100 employers in Turkey report onsite daycare facilities while the rest either outsource or provide part-time services (ibid., Çarkoğlu, et al.). The lack of promised childcare services is a major impediment limiting women's participation in the labor force.

Second, the social norm of women taking on stay-at-home roles has mitigated the responsibility of the father in childcare. This problem is most evident in the lack of support for

paternity leave. According to the Labor Law, the maximum amount of time allotted for paternity leave is three days; however with lack of regulation, the role of fathers in childcare is completely ignored and fathers often receive no time off (ibid., Çarkoğlu, et al.). Though the women who choose to continue their careers ask family members for help, those family members are rarely male members, and often always mothers, grandmothers, aunts, or female cousins. In addition to this, the concept of “stay-at-home dads” does not exist because childcare is considered “a women’s issue rather than a family one” (Çarkoğlu, et al, 2012; 45). As a result fathers are left to take on the role of breadwinner and the burden of childcare is pushed unto women. It has become increasingly evident the AKP is not fully committed to ensuring equality between men and women in the workforce. Rather, it appears the party is more committed to preserving traditional values and norms, which is translated as maintaining the secondary-status of women.

5.9a Shifting Toward the Physical Body and Labor Laws

From the evidence presented above it is clear the AKP has indeed shifted the political agenda toward pursuing its socially conservative position. Initially the headscarf controversy dominated the party's agenda for its first two terms. From 2002 to 2008 the headscarf controversy was the most salient issue reported within this sample. However, after 2010 there was a steep decline in articles mentioning issues related to the headscarf after the AKP informally lifted the headscarf ban, which led to the normalization of the headscarf in society. Bolak described covering as more normalized and "fashionable" among "young women and their modern ways" (Bolak, 2012). Bolak has observed more women today wearing red and purple to stand out and to be "fashionable," compared to the past when the headscarf represented a political symbol and women would choose to wear a mundane beige and long overcoats (ibid., Bolak). The meaning of the headscarf shifted from solely being a political symbol to now a form of personal expression, whether it be for religious reasons or not.

In addition to this, the AKP also began publicly stating the headscarf is no longer a pertinent issue. In November 2010, President Gül was quoted as describing the headscarf issue as "unnecessary" to talk about" and "that Turkey currently had bigger problems on its agenda" ("Turkish president says he is fed up with headscarf debate," 2010). The AKP has publicly contended that the headscarf is no longer a pressing issue and signaled it has moved on to other points on its agenda. After 2008 the number of articles mentioning the headscarf declined and articles mentioning the physical body and labor laws began to gain increased visibility. From 2009 to 2012 articles mentioning issues related to the physical body and labor laws remained consistently higher than articles mentioning issues related to the headscarf, political participation, and women's rights. In short, as the number of articles mentioning issues related to

the headscarf controversy began to lose salience and visibility, the number of articles mentioning issues related to the physical body and labor laws increased. The shifting salience from the headscarf to the physical body and labor laws can be seen as a cause of and caused by the AKP's shifting its political agenda.

Through this shift, the AKP has become increasingly open in pursuing its socially conservative agenda, primarily in terms of preserving the traditional norms and values of the family. The recent emphasis on family values has thus brought the status of women into question, specifically in regards to the AKP fulfilling its international commitments toward improving the status of women. However, the falling-out between the EU and the AKP has weakened EU leverage and domestic incentives for accession. Thus, the party has little incentive to implement and improve domestic legislation to empower women.

In addition to this, implementation of domestic reforms by local officials has been negated by an overwhelming patriarchal mentality. Consequently this has rendered legal channels stifled the efficiency of the law and protection of the individual rights of women. Further content analysis of the articles mentioning issues related to the physical body and labor laws have show a trend revealing the AKP's commitment to preserving family over women's rights. Therefore, it can be concluded the AKP is encouraging the secondary status of women through attempted legislation that limits opportunities outside the home and pressures women to take on maternal roles.

The AKP's shift toward issues related to the physical body and labor laws is directly affecting women from religious and non-religious backgrounds. While the headscarf controversy primarily affected women from religious backgrounds and symbolized a political divergence between secularists and Islamists, this shift toward issues related to the physical body and labor

laws has lifted the barrier separating religious and non-religious women. Thus this move has enabled women from both camps to come together in the defense of women's rights. These developments have further aided in the momentum of the third wave of feminism.

5.9b The Third Wave of Feminism: Islamists and Feminists

Most recently, the attempt by the AKP to ban abortion in 2012 galvanized women from religious and non-religious backgrounds to protest against the state. Arat stated she has observed more secular women “[making] noise,” as well as more religious women expressing discontent: “I know many more Islamist women and girls against this issue were [acting] against [the fact] their rights being taken from them” (Arat, 2012). However, few religious women were at the forefront of these protests. I asked Arat if she could speculate why these women were not active participants in protests, and she responded that perhaps these women felt “secular women are doing it anyways so why make life difficult for themselves, and strain their relations to the man in their groups” (ibid., Arat, 2012). Although this statement acknowledges patriarchal norms, the choice of religious women to not openly protest against the state should not be presumed as a lesser variant of feminism. Rather, it should represent the flourishing cleavages distinct to the movement. In other words, religious women are choosing to participate in the movement based on their personal ideals and experiences instead of prescribing to a generic movement.

When discussing this with Ozel and Hilal, they used the example of the “My body belongs to me” slogan. Ozel and Hilal observed that for Islamic feminists, or “Muslim feminists” as they refer to themselves, this slogan is “not valid” because their “body also belongs to God” (Ozel and Hilal, 2012). The intersection between religion and femininity has recreated a new identity for Muslim feminists to be a part of the collective feminist movement and to claim their bodily rights on their own terms. In supporting the anti-abortion ban, Islamist, and secular feminists have merged efforts against state attempts to regulate women’s bodies. Ellialti shared similar views stating, “Muslim feminists were against the ban of abortion because they were aware that if the ban happens then it will have lots of consequences and implications for women

themselves” (Ellialti, 2012). In this sense, a common goal has developed among religious and non-religious women to protect their individual rights. Ellialti’s comment illustrates the growing sense of solidarity among these women.

Although most Islamist feminists are not in the streets protesting with secular feminists, these women continue to stand alongside them. Professor Bolak observed Islamist women using online forums and email networks to stand behind the cause and the secular women in the streets. Bolak expressed similar speculations to Arat as to why most religious women choose not to actively protest:

“There’s more a limit to what Muslim feminists can feel, there’s a line they feel they can’t cross, but informally speaking I think more, [because] covering has become much more normalized, and there’s much more mixing and mingling...And so, in the long run I think as more women who use to support the AKP, if the PM goes the way he does, becoming more and more authoritarian, I think, I will hope that more women are going to bond around their demand for more democracy” (Bolak, 2012).

Bolak attributes personal limitations to explain the different channels of protest used by religious women, but also emphasizes the growing solidarity among these women. As the headscarf became more normalized in society, interaction between religious and non-religious women increased. In short, the efforts of religious and non-religious women have coalesced to create a new identity within the third wave, which has enabled women from both camps to defend their individual rights. The recent developments of the third wave in Turkey have laid a blueprint for women’s movements in the Middle East and North Africa regions.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Implications

Since the reforms of Atatürk, women's bodies have remained sites of political contestation. The emergence of the Islamist movement and increasing public support for religious right ideologies once again raised the question of a woman's status in society. From a legislative perspective, the AKP has made great strides in promoting the status of women in society. Yet local perspectives offer a more telling picture, as women continue to struggle against patriarchal attitudes exuded by the AKP. Though the Copenhagen Criteria empowered women's organizations to push for improved legislation, waning EU incentives and general public dissatisfaction with the accession process have left AKP unmotivated to draft new legislation. More importantly, the AKP's dominance has allowed the party to take control of the political agenda, enabling the party to pursue its conservative agenda on a social level.

After the party successfully initiated an informal lifting of the headscarf ban the AKP's focus shifted toward preserving family values and norms via stringent regulations over women's bodies and limited opportunities in the labor force. Though these efforts by the AKP to return women to the confines of the home have negatively impacted the status of women, it has also brought religious and non-religious women together. Through its dominance and increasing authoritarian attitudes, the AKP has provoked a reaction and collaboration of women across all identities. Regardless of religious standing or political preferences, issues related to the physical body, labor laws, political participation and representation, and above all women's rights are relevant to all women in MENA.

As states affected by the Arab Spring begin to move toward democratization, states such as Egypt have looked toward Turkey for the next steps. The "Turkish model" is often cited as a viable model for economic and political development, and appears to promise greater inclusivity

of women. However, women in states such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya worry the democratization process will once again institutionalize patriarchal norms and sideline women's rights. Given the evidence presented in this thesis, the concerns of women in MENA are valid. Pınar İlkkaracan, co-founder of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), argued against indiscriminately applying the "Turkish model" to unstable countries, and instead called on "world citizens, the EU and UN" to support burgeoning feminists movements in the MENA region because they will be the "major actors for democratization" (İlkkaracan, 2012).

Although the "Turkish model" is problematic in itself, its shortcomings have allowed for the further development of the third wave. Given the increasing momentum of the third wave in Turkey, the women have already begun to mobilize and break down religious and ideological barriers. In a collaborative effort, these women have already begun to work within the democratization process to claim their personhood and rights. Though the 2010 constitutional referendum was well received and supported by the public, problematic obstacles in writing a more democratic constitution have stalled the process.¹⁹ Given the AKP remains committed to moving forward, it will be interesting to see what role the women of the third wave will play, and if the movement will be able to carve out a more inclusive space for religious and non-religious women in society and politics.

¹⁹ Currently Turkey is still using the 1982 constitution created after the 1980 military coup d'état. While the structure of the 1982 constitution is undemocratic, several key reform packages have amended the constitution to be more aligned with EU-requirements. In order to create a more democratic constitution, the AKP must pursue radical changes to the constitution. Gunter states these changes must alter "previous conceptions" of the constitution, and view citizenship in "civic, rather than ethnic" terms; grant Kurds de facto federalism; and allow Kurdish education (ibid., Gunter; 123). Restructuring of the judiciary is also necessary, as the judiciary is the only remaining institution of the 1982 constitution that continues to uphold its tutelary role. However, because the AKP does not have the necessary two-thirds majority to create a new constitution on its own, the party needs to collaborate with other parties such as the CHP, MHP, or pro-Kurdish BDP (ibid.,Gunter). Unfortunately, conflicting aspirations among these parties will make it difficult to create one cohesive constitution that will fulfill everyone's requests.

The challenges and progress the third wave in Turkey might face will serve as a guide for other women within the region; especially those affected by the Arab Spring. With democratization still fresh in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, women in these areas can turn to the “Turkish women’s movement model” to merge together in a collaborative effort to fight for equal status in society.

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