

Chapter 2

What Is the “Turkish Model?”

The end of the Cold War led to opening up of the Soviet Union and of more than 60 million Turkic peoples living in eight former Soviet Republics of central Eurasia. There was talk about how the twenty-first century would become a “Turkic century.” During the 1990s, Turkish Presidents Turgut Ozal and Suleyman Demirel paid lip service to Turkey’s ethnic ties with Turkic nations. During this decade, there was also speculation that Turkey would offer a role model for nation building throughout Central Asia. Within Turkey, a “Turkic” rhetoric became evident in its foreign policy during the 1990s. Despite the rhetoric, it is generally agreed that there is no consensus about what the Turkish Model means (see Ozkaleli and Ozkaleli 2003). Perception about this varies from inside and outside, as do its connotations. Andrew Mango notes “...the Republic of Turkey is a model of a secular, democratic, Muslim country aiming to achieve Western standards in partnership with the West by applying liberal free market policies” (Andrew Mango cited in Ozkaleli and Ozkaleli 2003). Some definitions are based on Turkey’s confinement of Islam to the private domain while others focus on a constitutional system that guarantees Turkey’s secular character and an acknowledgment of the role of armed forces as guardians and protectors of the constitution (for details of the arguments, see Ozkaleli and Ozkaleli 2003). Among diverse understandings of the model, American policy makers emphasized Turkey’s secular and multiparty electoral system along with its market economy. It was also argued that Turkey posed a better alternative compared to the Iranian model. According to conventional wisdom in Europe and the USA, Turkey is a “bridge” between the Muslim world and the West and has been a reliable Western ally for half a century.

The relevance of the “Turkish Model” as a model of a secular, multicultural society appeared to increase particularly in the context of the post–September 11 era during which cross-civilizational dialogue was perceived by the European or Western elites as imperative for global peace and security. Reflecting such views, Ihsan Dagi in an article on “Islamist Identity in post Kemalist Turkey and the West” argued that many commentators have attributed US President Barack Obama’s visit to Turkey in April 2009 as demonstrating the value of Turkey’s “identity” for Obama’s foreign policy priorities and not to its geopolitical location. It lies within Turkey’s ability to reconcile its Islamic identity with democratic politics, free-market economy, and pro-Western foreign policy orientation. Thus, the “new Turkish

identity” had become a valuable “strategic asset” to prevent a clash of civilizations. With such attributes, he argues, Turkey will be capable of bridging the Islamic world and the West, and contributing to the global coexistence of different cultures and civilizations (Dagi 2009). He concludes with the comment that the potential of a post-Kemalist democratic Turkey requires critical examination. While this comment was made within a rather different context, it assumes relevance as Turkey is faced with dissention on a number of issues in its domestic front. This chapter argues that secularity and modernity have constantly been debated within Turkish society, and there have been various connotations and interpretations of the terms over the years as different groups within society have sought to put forward their own perceptions and positions.

2.1 The Turkish Model as a “Secular” Model

While perceptions and connotations have differed there is a broad consensus on the fact that the Turkish Model is essentially based on its secular character. It has been argued that Turkish secularism was not about the separation of state and religion but about the submission of religion to the reason of the state, promotion of an acceptable “state Islam,” and the judgment of nonconforming Islams as potential threats to the “secular” regime (Cinar and Duran 2008). Hence, secularism in Turkey involved not only the disestablishment of Islam, but also its different establishment in accordance with the new basis of legitimacy of separation of religion and state. Generally, the Sharia is accepted as the main source of legislation in the Muslim world, and there is stipulation that political parties should not conflict with the Sharia. In Turkey, on the other hand, Islam is legally irrelevant to political activity in the sense that considering it in law making is prohibited. The Turkish Constitution forbids the basing of fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets. Another striking peculiarity of Turkish Islamism is the tradition of Sufism that has provided an outlet for Islamic religious expression and in doing so has blocked the radicalization of religion (Yavuz 2004). The Nakshbandi order does not visualize the state as an enemy and therefore does not produce the kind of antagonism that radical Islamists have adopted in other parts of the Islamic world. Largely influenced by this Sufi tradition, Turkish political Islam chose to participate in the electoral process hoping to affect change within the existing political structure. It also kept itself away from violence and terrorism with the minor exception of the Hezbollah, which according to Menderes Cinar and Burhanettin Duran, should be analysed in the context of Kurdish nationalism and the armed separatism of the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*, PKK) rather than Islamist movement (Cinar and Duran 2008).

It is further argued that Turkish Islamism has been a local and nationalist phenomenon with little impact on and from Islamist movements elsewhere. More importantly, it has been argued, Turkish Islamism has been under the pervasive influence of Turkish nationalism with little organizational linkage to the Arab world

(Zubaida 2004). The dissociation with Arab Islam dates back to the Ottoman bureaucratic center’s condescension toward Arabs. This was continued in the Young Turk’s suspicion of Arabs as secessionist and the perceived Arab betrayal during World War I. Nationalism provided Turkish Islamists with a shield and vehicle for the expression of Islamist demands, because in the secularist republican era open Islamist movements that call for the application of the Sharia were strictly forbidden. Therefore, the call for the application of the Sharia has not been a political slogan to be rejected or to be defended in the Turkish political system. Also, although Turkey fought a War of Independence, Turkey has never been formally colonized. The War was fought by a coalition of Islamist, nationalist, and leftist groups under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who later founded the secular-nationalist Turkish Republic. Although the war was waged on the basis of a predominantly Muslim identity, Islam was not the exclusive source of mobilization in the liberation of the country. Since Turkey had never been colonized, it never joined the third bloc during the Cold War and had stronger orientation towards the West. The anchoring of Turkey into Western structures has had an impact on its international trajectories. Although Turkish Islamism had some level of anti-Western feeling due to the War of Independence and the Ottoman political experience with the West, the leading elements of Turkish Islamism abandoned their anti-European discourses in the 28 February Process and supported Turkey’s integration into Europe.¹ It has been suggested that this change of mind can be related to the Islamist conviction that the process of transition into the European Union (EU) is likely to force the Turkish political system to undertake significant democratic reforms that will make the Kemalist ideology less repressive and intrusive (Duran 2004).

Another feature that explains the specific evolution of Islamism in Turkey and its approach to the secular regime and democracy is closely bound up with the “state dominant” nature of Turkish political culture and tradition (Sunar and Toprak 1983 cited from Cinar and Duran 2008). The Turkish Islamists’ conception of the proper strategy necessary to soften the strict nature of Turkish secularism is a pragmatic and long-term one. Here, when the secular regime weakens its oppressive nature, Islamists attempt to enlarge the sphere of their activity. When conditions worsen they show little resistance. This “state dominant” character is also the reason why Islamists do not resort to violence when they are faced with repression. Turkey’s Islamism can also be differentiated in terms of its diversity. As Turkish

¹ In June 1997, the army removed the Islamist Welfare Party-led coalition government with the threat of a military takeover. Without direct military intervention, President Suleyman Demirel passed on power to Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi ANAP), who formed a minority government in coalition with Bulent Ecevit’s Democratic Left Party and with outside support of the People’s Republican Party (CHP). This is referred to as the 28 February Process after the military presented an ultimatum to the Erbakan-led coalition government at the National Security Council on February 28, 1997. On that day the NSC introduced a bill comprising 18 specific measures to curb Islamic reactionism and criticized the anti-secular atmosphere in Turkey. It asked the Refah government to take measures to stop the proliferation of Islamist cadres in the bureaucracy and gave a series of press briefings in which religious fundamentalism was declared as the most dangerous enemy facing Turkey.

modernization unfolded, the Islamist movement diversified into a variety of political, economic, cultural, and religious dimensions and manifested itself in various organizations from religious orders to human rights associations (for details, see Cinar and Duran 2008).

In republican Turkey, the Islamist movement passed through several stages. It was influenced by the unfolding of the modernization project, by the dominant ideological frameworks of the time and by the flexible nature of Kemalism. Kemalism has been defined as an antipolitical state-centered paradigm that claims that the Turkish society and public sphere is homogeneous and displays distaste for political representation of difference. In Turkey, Kemalism was an institutionalized foundational ideology that was elevated to the status of moral consensus with the protection of the military (Cinar and Duran 2008). The Turkish foundational ideology was one of controlled modernization. However, it failed to come to terms with the contradictions between Kemalism and westernism, liberalism and national unity, and democracy and secularism. Cizre-Sakallioglu argues that historically the Turkish state adopted a double discourse. On the one hand, it established a rigid segregation between Islam and the political realm, and on the other, accommodated and incorporated Islamic polities into the system in various ways (Cizre-Sakallioglu 1996). The leaders of the War of Independence that later established the secular republican nation-state had employed an Islamic vocabulary in the struggle to liberate the nation. After the establishment of the republic, a distinction was made between regressive and progressive Islam and the latter was promoted by the state as compatible with its modernization drive.

The dualism between Islam and secularism was also evident in the relations between the state and the minority in the 1920s in the course of defining Turkishness. Here, Kemalists were inspired by Ziya Gokalp in the usage of the word culture or *hars* (Cagaptay 2006). According to Gokalp, the nation was a community of individuals united by a shared culture, based on common education, morality, socialization, and aesthetics. Gokalp defined the nation through its collective values. Hence, the word culture in the documents of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) referred to the common past and mores (i.e., Islam) of the Ottoman Turkish Muslims in Anatolia as well as their education and socialization in Turkish. For Gokalp, Islam was not only a faith, in its nominal form it was also a particular set of belief systems and mores that dictated the routines of daily life and socialization for the Muslims. Accordingly, Islam could serve as a culture as well as an identity for the Muslims.

With the transition to competitive politics, a reciprocal relationship was established between Islamic groups and right-wing political parties. The instrumentalization of Islam continued till the early 1990s, and a pragmatic outlook dominated all religious formations at the level of the state and formal polities. While the practice of secularism had somewhat relaxed since the beginning of the multiparty regime its original state-centered and control-oriented definition was maintained by all Islamic groups, political actors, and the state. Within the scope of secularism, the state's attitude towards Islam has varied considerably. As a result of the dual nature of Kemalism, Islamist outlooks have been integrated into the political processes,

but their presence has been problematized as reactionist internal enemies of the secular Turkish Republic. However, by the late 1990s the fact that the political elite needed to “learn to live with Islam” was clear. Mustafa Erdogan, professor at the Hacettepe University in Ankara, argues that if Turkey wished to be democratic it could do so successfully only with Islam, not by attempting to cast it off. Indeed, its history forces Turkey to be a “Muslim Democracy” (Erdogan 1999).

The National Outlook Movement (*Milli Gorus*, MG) has been the most powerful representative of political Islam since the 1970s.² The MG and its first political party, the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*) were founded by Necmettin Erbakan with the support of some Sufi orders. After the closure of this party by the Constitutional Court during the 1971 military intervention, the movement was re-incarnated as the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*) which was closed by the 1980 coup administration. The MG mainly addressed socioeconomic problems by employing an Islamic language and offering an Islamic morality as a panacea to them (Cinar and Duran 2008). The third party of the MG, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) maintained a secular emphasis on the problems of daily life and decided to broaden its support base and focus on more pragmatic requirements like equal distribution of consumer opportunities. It was, however, during the period of the RP (1983–1996) that Islam became a major player in Turkish politics. In 1994, the RP won the municipal elections in Istanbul and Ankara. In 1995, it received the highest share of votes (21.3%) and eventually managed to form a coalition with the center-right True Path Party (*Dogru Yol Partisi*, DYP) and make its leader Necmettin Erbakan the Prime Minister of Turkey. It has been suggested that the RP–DYP coalition government represented a head on clash of Islamism and secularism and became a watershed in Turkish politics (Cizre and Cinar 2003). Since then, in an ongoing military-led secularist campaign, the military assumed a more active role in the making and ousting of governments. The RP and its successor the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP) were closed by the Constitutional Court on the grounds that they violated the principle of secularism. The RP’s failure has been attributed to the fact that it disregarded the plural patterns of ideas, beliefs, and lifestyles in society by attributing an Islamic essence to them and insisting that every Muslim should practice Islam in the way that the RP defined. It failed to come to terms with the fact that a majority of the Turks do not practice Islam in the way the party hoped. This led to polarization and an inability to counter the challenge of the military-led secular establishment by broadening its constituency and or demystifying its alleged reactionist threat.

The failure of the RP to survive in power led to a change in strategy and tactics as well as discourses and visions of the RP. This change was partly due to the strict measures of the 28 February Process. But it also had to do with the recognition that democratization allowed the practice of Islam in daily life. A new party, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) was founded in 2001. The leaders of the party stressed that they were trying to forge a new understanding

² A number of parties of the National Outlook Movement have been closed down over the years either by the Constitutional Court or the military. For details see endnote 1 in Yildiz (2008).

of politics free from the politicization of religion. The roots of this second phase of Islamism, where a new generation of Islamists changed their rigid ideological corpus can be traced to a series of changes within Turkish Islamism in the 1990s. In the early 1990s, Turkish Islamists started to redefine and reframe their religious demands and ideals in terms of a universal vocabulary on human rights and liberties. A significant factor here was the expectations and needs of the newly rising bourgeoisie and their economic interests which were directly related to the European markets. Apart from these, the AKP's new discourse was also a culmination of transformation in the various Islamic sectors in Turkey from religious orders to intellectuals. Signs of this transformation could be found in the Fethullah Gulen Movement and the *Hak-Is* Labour Union. The Gulen Movement declared that Turkish integration within the EU would not result in cultural assimilation for Turkish society. Similarly, the *Hak-Is* Labour Confederation successfully used the discourse of civil society to improve the interests of the workers. The transformation is probably best exemplified by Erdogan's statement that “my reference is Islam” (cited in Cinar and Duran 2008). However, it has been argued that Islam as a reference might take different interpretations. A reference to Islam can be at a personal level but also at the social or state level.

In the general elections of 3 November 2002, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP) which represented the MG and was regarded as having strong Islamist views made a very poor showing (2.5% of the total votes). On the other hand, the AKP, a breakaway group which was considered to be moderately Islamist, received 34.3% of the votes and got 363 of the possible 550 seats in the Parliament. Ahmet Yildiz argues that this can be explained by the fact that the Turkish voters tend to adopt religious identity as a social common denominator and tend to distance themselves from political Islam and that they prefer that Islam does not assert itself at the political level. Therefore, he argues, the success of the AKP was based on its emphasis of adherence to the ideological creed of the republic and claims to be a conservative democratic party not an Islamic one (Yildiz 2008). This was claimed as the mark of distinction that assured the “legitimacy” of its political governance. The AKP has had a history of reaching out to the broader center-right, of making room in its parliamentary group and in government for more secular conservatives and for Turkish nationalists. The strategy of coalition building is what principally distinguishes the AKP from its Islamist predecessors, and which has sustained its claims to being a centrist force. However, it is argued that in reality preference is given to electing people for posts in the bureaucracy from those with a background in the MG (Kaya 2009). It has been argued that the May 1, 2009 reshuffle of the cabinet, the first since the AKP came to power in 2002, signals that the party is intent on reasserting the party's conservative core (Yildiz 2008). This in itself is interesting since the leader of the MG, Necmettin Erbakan, has claimed that it is the SP that represents the MG and not the AKP. Based on this, Ahmet Yildiz argues that the AKP is not the heir of the Welfare-Felicity Party but rose in reaction to it, and as a breakaway party, it drew a different line for itself in the political arena.

However, it has been argued that since the AKP is the product of its members' past experience, its Islamic connection is beyond question. This is a connection that

some analysts label as “new Islamism.” This “new Islamism” is not power centered in the way that the MG was. For the MG, acquisition of political power was the key to all social transformations and Islamic aspirations, which is not the case for the AKP. For the AKP, Islamization is not to be achieved through the state. The state is important only for opening new spaces for individuals and society as a whole by assuring basic rights and liberties. The state should not impose its ideology on society. “New Islamism” aims to engage in politics on the basis of social legitimacy and socioeconomic compromise. Change is achieved by liberating societal dynamics—and allowing them to be reflected in politics. With respect to world politics, “new Islamism” reflects a reevaluation that sees civilizational dialogue between the Islamic and the Western worlds as essential. Globalization has become a constant point of reference for the AKP leadership and the EU is seen as its embodiment. Domestically, “new Islamism” has developed a culture of compromise. As a result, the leadership has refrained from political polarization and has distanced itself from insisting on solving issues that could generate strong polarization. As such, the AKP represents a compromise between democracy and Islamic identity and the management of tensions by peaceful means.

A new term “conservative democracy” has been used to define the “new Islamism” of the AKP.³ Since its foundation, the AKP leadership has argued that that politicization of religion is dangerous for democracy and religion. This is based on the awareness that the majority of the Turkish population is as strongly attached to democracy and secularism as they are attached to religious values. This “new politics” is the search for a new social contract, between different segments of Turkish society. It is founded on a synthesis between liberal desires for reform and conservative cultural sensitivities. This was based on a three-layered strategy: first, the adoption of a “language of human rights and democracy as a discursive shield”; second, mobilization of “public support as a form of democratic legitimacy”; and third the construction of a “liberal democratic coalition with modern/secular sectors that recognize the AKP as the legitimate political actor.” This enabled the AKP to bring together business, urban poor, and conservative religious electoral constituencies (Dagi 2006).

Conservative democracy has defined the expression of the AKP’s will to internalize international norms. Having accepted human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as universal values, the AKP embraced dominant Western values while remaining committed to conservative Islamic roots. The AKP has realized that an anti-Western Islamist group would not have the opportunity to continue to hold

³ The AKP developed its normative framework through its official publication, *Conservative Democracy*. The book defines the AKP’s conservatism as an ideology that stresses common sense, prudence, and gradual change. It rejects rationalist utopias, Jacobinism and social engineering. At a conference organized to elaborate on the Party’s conservative and democratic stand, Erdogan emphasized that the AKP’s understanding of conservatism did not mean the conservation of established institutions and relations but implied the protection of important values and principles while pursuing progress. The attempt was to synthesize local and universal values, tradition and modernity, and morality and religion. For details, see Kuru (2006).

political power in Turkey. Therefore, a pro-European foreign policy is seen as the instrument of legitimization for the party not only in the eyes of the Turkish state elite but also in the eyes of the international system. During its term in government, the AKP has introduced significant political and economic reforms to consolidate Turkish democracy on the Copenhagen Criteria.⁴ Despite difficulties in the process of integration, the AKP has taken steps to ensure the implementation of reforms in line with European standards. In a number of instances, these reforms address issues related to the core elements of Turkey’s political structures and dynamics. These include reducing the influence of the military in politics, eradicating the death penalty, abolishing the State Security Courts, strengthening gender equality, broadening the freedom of the press, aligning the judiciary with European standards, and establishing the supremacy of international agreements in the area of fundamental freedoms over internal legislation (Duran 2008).

Ihsan Dagi, for instance, refers to the AKP as a post-Islamist party which maintains its Islamic credentials on social issues but abandons Islam as a political program (Dagi 2005). Also because of its pro-Western, liberal democratic orientation, it is argued that the AKP cannot be called Islamist; rather it represents a new articulation of coexistence between Islam and the West which is historically unique. The Islamists view democratization as their first priority believing that it can provide legal cover and legitimacy for their political existence, guarantee basic religious rights, and promote social and political networking. Ironically, this allows the Islamists to couch their opposition to the Kemalist power apparatus in secular terms. The opportunity cost of this alliance is that Islamists can no longer think in terms of an Islamic state. What Dagi calls post-Islamism has also been defined as the shift from a “politics of identity to the politics of services.” The AKP in keeping with global developments that favor neo-liberal economic and political values has proven to be a party of service rather than a party of identity. Its emphasis on what it is not for, i.e., Islamic identity, and its appeal to secular rationale rather than religious justifications for its policies is used to indicate that it is not an Islamic party. The AKP adopted a posture of compromise, used secular political jargon, accepted religious visibility only in individual and social realms, and declared the headscarf issue of minor importance. The AKP representatives did not problematize the exclusion of their spouses from official ceremonies (because of their headscarves) have worked coherently with the IMF and despite sporadic ups and downs continued the strategic alliance with the USA and Israel. The debate within the state, however, is far from being resolved. The AKP argues that religion belongs to the personal sphere, but it can be incorporated into the public and political spheres without compromising the secular state system. Kemalists continue to argue that the secular nature of the state is not safe in the hands of individuals in whose lives religion plays an important role. The determination of the boundaries of the public and the private has therefore emerged as a major area of dispute (White 2005). Menderes Cinar on the other hand, criticizes the depiction of the AKP as a “liberal” Islamic movement.

⁴ The EU’s Copenhagen Criteria requires stability of institutions guaranteeing democratic governance, human rights, and a functioning market economy.

He emphasizes the inconsistencies within the discourse and policies of the AKP government and claims that the AKP government lacks a practical democratization agenda independent from EU membership requirements (Cinar 2008).

The AKP’s approach is indicative of the fact that there are many diverse currents within the Islamic movement in Turkey today. It has been argued that the AKP defends a distinct interpretation of secularism that differs from that of the Kemalist establishment. The debate between the Kemalists and the AKP is not simply a conflict between secularism and Islamism but rather a discussion about the true meaning and practice of secularism itself. Apart from marginal groups, there is overall consensus on secularism in Turkey. The real debate occurs between supporters of different interpretations of secularism (Kuru 2006). According to Ahmet Kuru, a difference has to be recognized between laicism (lack of religious control in legal and judicial processes) and secularism (official neutrality towards religion). Here, he argues that a useful category to analyze state–religion relations in Turkey is through the typology of passive and active secularism. The Turkish state originally tended towards assertive secularism and still pursues policies based on that. Yet, there has been debate between supporters of both. The debate will continue since it depends on the incompatibility between assertive secularist state practices and the high religiosity of the Turkish society. This typology also brings into focus the distinction between the image and practices of the Turkish state. The perceived image of the Turkish state has been of a monolithic organization isolated from the fragmentation of society. Yet, analysis shows the fragmentation of state actors in Turkey particularly on the issue of secularism. The depiction of Turkish politics, particularly in the 1990s, as divided between secular forces (the military) and Islamist politicians is no longer valid. The AKP, for instance, defends an alternative mode of secularism in its policies. There is therefore a need to understand various interpretations of secularism in order to come to a correct understanding of the “secular” in contemporary Turkish politics.

2.2 The Turkish Model as a “Modern” Model

Turkey as one of the first non-western modern Republics and a key player in the modernization of the developing world has proved to be one of the most radical, spectacular and influential cases in this direction. But a fundamentally crucial problem is that the modernization model promoted by the Kemalist project was still a top down imposition with some unsolvable contradictions and dilemmas inherent within the system: the quasi military imposition of reforms while necessary as a revolutionary tool betrayed the principle of democracy: the nationalist ideology ran counter to its embracing of the universality of humanism and the elite led economic development generated social division. Populist political and religious forces have managed to recuperate and manipulate the claims from the ‘bottom’ of the society and have used them to their advantage (Dagi 2008).

This passage from a collection of commentaries written for *Today’s Zaman* by Ihsan Dagi cites from the opening speech of Hou Hanru, curator of the Istanbul Biennial, where Kemalism is analyzed from a critical perspective. Dagi notes the

condemnation that this passage evoked is representative of the views of neo-Kemalists and their efforts at a top-down revolution. He argues that Hanru’s position was hardly condemnable as it is generally agreed that the republican project of building a “nation state” and making a “new nation” out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire was an example of top-down modernization. He goes on to argue that it is a historical fact that these were not carried out in a “democratic” regime but by a single party government through “revolutionary” means. Democracy with its elementary mechanisms and institutions began in 1950, which is described by many Kemalists as “counter revolution.” Such post-Kemalist criticisms of Turkey’s modernization process are not uncommon. Menderes Cinar, for instance, argues as follows:

Modern Turkey has not emerged as a result of an autonomous modernization process. It rather rests on the modernization ‘offensives’ of Kemalism, the official ideology named after the founder of the Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The still lingering legacy of the top down nature of Kemalist modernization can be defined as a continuous attempt on the part of the state elite to control, limit and even instruct the political sphere while ‘modernizing’ and ‘democratizing’ the polity (Cinar 2008).

Since the 1990s, postmodern critiques of Kemalist modernity have been particularly visible in Turkish politics. It has been argued that one way to explain the ideological problems confronted by the CHP created by Kemal and by the center-left as a whole can be explained in terms of a crisis of Turkish modernity or Turkey’s modernization project (Ciddi 2009). The center-left continuously reemphasized classical Kemalist modernity and took a dismissive and hostile approach to alternative conceptions of modernity. This was highlighted in their reflections on Islamism and the Kurdish question. Of course, part of the problem lay with the notion of modernity itself, and the idea that there are certain goals and values that could be considered “universal.” Societal complexities and varying definitions of “goals and values” meant that there was the emergence of a plethora of movements that came to question or provide alternatives to the Kemalist modernization project.

Kemalism aimed at creating a “modern Turkey” where attachment to “traditional” issues like religiosity and ethnicity were perceived as irrational. The aim of “Turkish” modernity was to create a Turkey that conformed to the principles of “advanced civilization” (Ciddi 2009). The notion of an Islamic state was anathema to Kemal and his supporters. They viewed such a state as the way to maintain the status quo and perpetuate the backwardness of Turkey. For their part, the Kemalists wanted to see Turkey transformed into a modern nation-state which, in the words of Kemal would “live as an advanced and civilized nation in the midst of contemporary civilization” (cited in Ahmad 1993). Such a nation would have to be secular and rational emphasizing science and modern education in order to create a modern industrial economy. Kemalism ascribed to the classical tenets of modernity which is generally conceptualized as a process where reason was the driving force of progress or in the words of Habermas, a process which sought “a rational reorganization of everyday social life” (Habermas 1981). The rationality that the Kemalist leadership sought for was to transform Turkish society from its feudal past to a bourgeois society. The attempt was to transcend the monarchical and imperial structures of the Turkish society and replace them with rational bureaucratic institutions under

Myth and Rhetoric of the Turkish Model

Exploring Developmental Alternatives

Sengupta, A.

2014, X, 165 p. 2 illus., 1 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-81-322-1764-0