

Authoritarianism in Turkey: From “Kemalism to Erdoganism” via Democratic Reforms and Economic Development

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Abstract: *During the 1990s, Turkish society experienced political instability and freedom deficiencies that were followed by a financial crisis in 2001. The socio-political and economic conditions were quite similar to those that sparked the Arab uprisings in late 2010 and, thus, they could have well led Turkey to disarray. The reforms introduced by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) during the 2000s are considered the main reasons why the Turkish state was “rescued”. Since then, however, a series of governmental policies have reversed this process and given rise to a situation where Turkish politics are reminiscent of “old Turkey”, albeit under a different ideological veil.*

Keywords: Turkey, reforms, democratization, authoritarianism, dead-end

Introduction

From today’s point of view, one could suggest that the Turkish state would have been in jeopardy during the first years of the 2000s if it were not for the injection of more democratic elements into its political culture by the AKP. During the 1990s, social, economic and political conditions in Turkey were very similar to those of other states in the Middle East which eventually collapsed as a result of the social uprisings that broke out at the

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end of 2010 and have been dubbed the “Arab Spring”. However, recent developments in Turkey and its vicinity have raised serious concerns about the country’s political stability and economic development while threatening the achievements of the AKP’s 13 years of administration.

During its third term in office, the AKP enacted a series of conservative laws and demonstrated authoritarian rule on a number of occasions that were perceived negatively by a large part of the Turkish society and the international community. As a result, the national parliamentary elections that were held on June 7, 2015 denied the AKP the necessary majority to rule alone for a fourth term. Two more points are worth mentioning regarding the results of these elections. The first is that the pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP) won 13% of the vote. The second is that, for the first time since the AKP’s rise to power in 2002, an election failed to lead to the formation of a government by the constitutional deadline. This implied that elections had to be re-run in November 2015. This time though, the AKP would regain its previously lost majority in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey – i.e. the parliament.

Moreover, a cause for concern is the fact that, in late July 2015, Turkey put an end to peace negotiations with the Kurds, responding to terrorist attacks by the militant Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) with air-strikes and arrests. Simultaneously, Turkish warplanes targeted the so-called Islamic State of the Levant and al-Sham (ISIS) in Syria. Furthermore, on 15th July 2016, a failed military coup against President Erdogan claimed at least 267 lives and came close to killing Erdogan himself. Therefore, the

question that remains to be answered is twofold. Firstly, will this toxic and polarized political climate within Turkey lead to further instability and economic collapse and hinder the social, political and economic benefits that Turkish citizens enjoyed during the last decade? And, secondly, can this political polarization bring the Turkish State back into jeopardy?

In what follows, this article points out the similarities between the socio-political and economic conditions that sparked the Arab uprisings in late 2010 with the equivalent situation in Turkey during the 1990s. Then an effort is made towards demonstrating that the reforms that have been introduced by the AKP during the 2000s resulted in the rescue of the Turkish state. In its last section, this study argues that, over the last years, Turkish politics have been similar to those of the 1990s, albeit under a different ideological veil. Before concluding, this study also tries to examine whether this situation can be reversed or could lead the Turkish state once again in jeopardy.

Social Uprisings in the Middle East and Turkey

In February 2011, a social uprising in Tunisia overthrew the dictatorship that was ruling the country for decades. This historical event was clearly a people's revolt and inspired millions of Egyptians, Yemenis, Bahrainis, Libyans and Syrians to do the same. Despite the claims put forward by many scholars and commentators, those uprisings did not start as religious rebellions. They were simply reflecting the severe desire of

most of the Arab world for democratic reforms and for social, economic and political modernization.¹

At the same time, the Arab revolts sent a clear political message not only to the Arab world and its political system and tradition, but also to foreign policy-makers in the developed world. The message was that nobody with political authority can formulate and exercise policy without the consent of the people, the body politic.²

Against this background, the break-out of the revolts has been attributed to the following main causes: a) high unemployment, especially among the educated and globalized youth; b) authoritarian governments characterized by corruption, abuse of power, lack of political transparency and incapability of understanding the changing nature of their societies; and c) economic hardship and high rates of poverty.

According to 2011 estimates, approximately 140 million Arabs – 40 per cent of their total population – live below the poverty line.³ On top of that, 2010 saw a 40 per cent rise in food prices.⁴ Furthermore, the spread of the revolts was attributed to two additional factors: a) the availability of

¹ Mariz Tadros, "Arab Uprisings: Why No One Saw Them Coming," *The Guardian*, 5 February 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/05/arab-uprisings-egypt-tunisia-yemen>; Mardo Soghom, "What's Inspiring the Arab Revolt?", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 28 January 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/whats_inspiring_the_arab_revolt_commentary/2290533.html [accessed on 20 June 2016].

² Marina Ottaway, "The Middle East in Transition-to What?," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2011, p. 2.

³ Chandra Muzaffar, "The Arab Uprisings: 12 Questions and 12 Answers," *CounterCurrents*, 7 February 2011, <http://www.countercurrents.org/muzaffar070211.htm>. [accessed on 20 June 2016].

⁴ Robert Danin, "The Arab Uprisings: Initial Observations", *Council on Foreign Relations* 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/eni-enrico-mattei-chair-middle-east-africa-studies-arab-uprisings-initial-observations/p35047> [accessed on 15 July 2016].

modern means of communication and b) the well-educated young masses.⁵ In addition, it is worth mentioning that almost 50 per cent of the Arab world's population is under 25 years of age. From this perspective, "while underlying socio-economic indicators... differ considerably throughout the region, it seems to have been the shared demographic realities," in conjunction with the revolution in information technologies and communication means, "that made the revolt so contagious."⁶ Generally, Timo Behr and Mika Aaltola argue that the social uprisings in the Arab world can be best described, at least in their beginning, as uprisings for democracy and dignity or as the result of three key deficits of the Arab world: "an economic deficit," "a freedom deficit" and "a dignity deficit." These three deficits, as opposed to a more ideologically-charged and divisive political agenda, allowed for more cohesive and massive social movements.⁷

This three-dimensional deficit that caused the social uprisings in the Middle East was also evident in Turkey throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s. As a result, the Turkish state came very close to collapse when the severe financial crisis of 2001 broke out. Thus, in what follows, 1990s Turkey is explored through the lens of these three deficits and then the study turns to the changes that came about in the 2000s.

⁵ Alper Y. Dede, "The Arab Uprisings: Debating the 'Turkish Model'", *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2011, p. 24.

⁶ Timo Behr, Mika Aaltola, "The Arab Uprising: Causes, Prospects and Implications," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, FIIA Briefing Paper 76, 2011, pp. 6-7.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

Turkey in the 1990s

The 1990s were a rather tumultuous period for Turkey. The end of the Cold War brought about drastic transformations in Turkey's surrounding environment. The ethnically driven civil war in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, the first Gulf war as a result of the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait, the drastic transformation of the European Economic Community with the Maastricht Treaty (1992), and the emergence of a new security environment with emphasis on low politics were the basic characteristics of this new order. Domestically, political instability was the main feature of Turkish politics. During the 1990s, eight coalition governments and two five-month single-party governments were formed. The coalition governments resulted, among other things, in frequent replacements of ministers. There were, for example, nine different foreign ministers between July 1994 and June 1997 alone.⁸

This is indicative of the political instability and uncertainty in Turkey, not least at a time of external geopolitical shifts and emerging zones of conflict. This context made for a very challenging decade on multiple levels. In applying the previously-mentioned framework of the three deficits at the domestic level, this study first looks at Turkey's economic, freedom and dignity deficits during this decade.

⁸ Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the End of the Cold War*, London, Hurst & Company, 2003, p. 64.

The Economic Deficit in the 1990s

Throughout the 1990s, Turkish society was facing the consequences of the lack of homogenous economic development. Income disparities within Turkey were great, “with the population in the southeast having less than half the average national income and the large rural population generally being much poorer than the urban population.”⁹ Furthermore, absolute poverty was eight per cent (8%), the rate of the population under risk of poverty by basic consumption needs was 25.4% for rural areas and 21.7% for urban areas.¹⁰

Life expectancy in 2000 was 69.8 years, the illiteracy rate among the Turkish population was 16.8% in 1997¹¹ and spending for education was only 2.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹² Furthermore, per capita GDP was at around 3,400 United States Dollars (USD)¹³ throughout the 1990s and military expenditure increased by 74%.¹⁴ Indicative of all these

⁹ Pantelis Sklias, "The Political Economy of Turkey's Accession to the Eu: A Comparative Analysis", in Constantine Arvanitopoulos (ed), *Turkey's Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy*, Berlin, Spring, 2009, p. 198.

¹⁰ UN, "Country Profiles - Turkey", *United Nation's Commission on Sustainable Development*, Johannesburg Summit, 2002, p. 11

¹¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 150.

¹² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Economic Surveys: Turkey*, Paris, 2001.

¹³ İbrahim Öztürk, "Political Economy of Erdogan's Success Story in Turkey", *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 2011, p. 3

¹⁴ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance. 1999/2000*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 300.

figures is that Turkey ranked 85th in the UN's Human Development Index for the year 2000.¹⁵

At the same time, Turkey demonstrated population dynamism. Turkey doubled her population every 32 years. The annual growth of the Turkish population during the 1990s was 1.7%. In 1990, the median age of the Turkish population was 22.2 years and, in 1995, 66.8% of the Turkish population was below 29 years old.¹⁶ This demographic characteristic is very similar to the countries that were involved in the Arab Spring.

In addition, the earthquakes that struck the industrial city of Izmir on 17th August and 12 November and the wider region of Marmara in 1999 made the situation worse. According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), "the wider earthquake region accounts for 35% of national GDP and half of the nation's industrial output."¹⁷ The death toll from the earthquakes was huge, with an estimate of 18.000 deaths, more than 50.000 injured of which around 20.000 were left permanently disabled. In addition, 113.000 "housing units and business premises were completely destroyed", while another 264.000 were damaged. In total, 600.000 people were dislocated and around half of them ended up homeless or living in tents. Furthermore, great parts of social infrastructure like schools, hospitals, roads, electricity and telecommunication lines, water pipes and gas pipelines had suffered serious

¹⁵ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2000*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 158.

¹⁶ Gıgdem Balım, *Turkey: Political, Economic and Social Challenges for the 1990s*, Leiden, Brill, 1995, p. 7.

¹⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *op.cit.* p. 144.

damages.¹⁸ According to estimates from the Turkish government, the economic consequences in fiscal terms of the two earthquakes that struck the Marmara region in 1999 amounted to 1% of Gross National Product (GNP) in 1999 and 2% in 2000, a total of 5.9 billion USD.¹⁹

The devastating earthquakes of 1999 also had a political and social impact. Most of those affected by the earthquakes were middle class citizens, the majority of which used to vote for the Republican People's Party (CHP), founder of which was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself (the founder of the Turkish Republic). At the same time, the inefficient response of the Turkish state to the disaster caused acute public disappointment and prompted the Turkish press to exercise severe criticism on their leaders. For many it seemed that the Turkish state system had collapsed. The public discontent had increased greatly when "expert evaluations of the post-earthquake devastation confirm[ed] that much of it could have been avoided with proper sitting and construction practices."²⁰

It is worth noting, however, that contrary to the state's inability to respond efficiently to the devastation, Turkish civil society proved to be very proactive. Volunteers from all sectors of Turkish society, various organizations and students organized the delivery of goods needed in the region. Alongside this, helpers arrived immediately from all over the world and neighbouring countries like Greece with which Turkey had problematic relations.²¹

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 153.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

²¹ Kerem Öktem, *Angry Nation: Turkey since 1989*, London & New York, Zed Books, 2011, p. 114.

Two years after the earthquakes, a homemade severe financial crisis destroyed the positive political atmosphere that was created as a result of the acceptance of Turkey as a candidate country for European Union membership. İbrahim Öztürk describes the bad economic environment of the 1990s that actually led Turkey to its biggest economic crisis in 2001, as having the following characteristics: 1) low and unstable growth; 2) low per capita GDP, at around 3,400 USD and very low productivity in all economic sectors; 3) an unsustainable fiscal and financial instability in public and private sectors; 4) absence of price stability that led to two decades-long inflation of almost 70%; 5) and “wide-spread corruption, lack of competitiveness, and massive unemployment” at around 10%.²² The constantly deteriorating condition of the Turkish national economy throughout the decade justifies to a large extent the characterization of the 1990s as a “lost decade” for Turkey. The root causes for the 2001 financial crisis manifested in 2000. In November 2000, a liquidity crunch arose in the country that first discredited Turkey in the eyes of foreign investors and the domestic ones, leading to a series liquidity crisis in the financial sector.²³

Behind these reasons, however, lay some deeper causes. On the one hand, the coalition governments that dominated Turkish political life throughout the 1990s were not strong enough to pursue the necessary reforms. Political instability was the main feature of Turkish politics. On the other hand, there were the military’s interventions against the required

²² İbrahim Öztürk, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

²³ Serkan Sahin et.al, “Turkey’s economy from 2001 to 2011: stronger, steadier and safer”, http://www.turkishreview.org/tr/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=223078 [accessed on 1 March 2011].

reforms, as it deemed such measures dangerous for Turkey's national security.

The consequences of this financial crisis for Turkey were great. More than a million of people lost their jobs, thousands of small and medium sized enterprises declared bankruptcy, large quantities of capital left the country in an instant, people who still had their savings in the Turkish lira lost half of the value of their money and real wages were reduced by more than 20 per cent.²⁴ Within a day, the Turkish people became poorer by a third as the Turkish lira was devaluated by 30%. At the same time, the number of people who committed suicide in the first quarter of 2001 increased disproportionally in comparison to previous years.²⁵ All in all, the economic deficit of the Turkish state was evident among Turkish society, not only as a result of the 2001 financial crisis but also due to the bad economic performance during the 1990s.

The Freedom Deficit in the 1990s²⁶

However, on top of that, for a long period which dates back to the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Turkish society has been facing a freedom deficit. Kemal Ataturk had envisioned a westernized and democratized Turkish state as the end product of the implementation of his ideology. In other words, “the Ataturkian thought was an outlook, it did not

²⁴ Kerem Oktem, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.17.

²⁶ The section on “The Freedom Deficit” draws on a paper by George Koukoudakis and Moritz Pieper, “Turkish Political Culture From Kemal Ataturk to Tayyip Erdogan”, *Hellenic Center for European Studies*, Research Paper, 2014, pp. 12-17.

intend to impose a close system of thought on polity and society in the long run.”²⁷ His successors, however, did not manage to turn his ideology into a democratization mechanism. On the contrary, “the bureaucratic elites converted Atatürkian-thought as an ideology in the shilsian sense that is a closed system of thought.”²⁸ In other words, the military, the bureaucratic and the judiciary elites of the Turkish State endorsed Kemalism as their own political culture,²⁹ depriving it from its dynamism and the ability of direct contact with the needs of Turkish society. This wrongly conceived political culture and ideology, as the political behaviour of these elites has demonstrated, was the main cause of the freedom deficit that Turkish society faced at least until the end of the 1990s.

The Role of the Turkish Army

In the 1990s, the military, having already overthrown elected Turkish governments three times (1960, 1971, 1981), continued its undemocratic role as the self-proclaimed ‘guardian’ of the Kemalist state.³⁰ To put it differently, until that time, the army in Turkey had developed a

²⁷ Heper Metin, “Towards a New Pattern: Transition to Democracy in Turkey”, in Heper Metin and Ahmet Evin (eds), *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1994, p. 19.

²⁸ *Ibidem.* p. 19

²⁹ Arend Lijphart, "Cultural Diversity and Theories of Political Integration," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1971, p. 6.

³⁰ See William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, London, Routledge, 1994.

political culture according to which it had the indisputable right to intervene in politics when its leaders deemed that national security was endangered.³¹

The army could exercise great influence even after it was withdrawing to its barracks. The mechanism that enabled it to do so was the unelected National Security Council (NSC), which was established in 1961 after its first coup. The NSC's decisions, where the army had the majority, had to be considered with priority by the government. "Hence the NSC, although not responsible to the Grand National Assembly (the Turkish Parliament), had almost become the 'highest, non-elected decision making body of the Turkish State'".³²

At the same time, the NSC had the right, accorded by provisional Article 4 of the 1982 constitution, to review the formation of all political parties. This right has been invoked many times since the founding of the Third Turkish Republic. Free formation of political parties is considered to be a prime feature of a functioning liberal democracy because they provide a channel of communication between the state and civil society. They enable the different sections of a society to pursue their interests in a meaningful way and their existence is an indication of a pluralistic society. Indeed,

Political parties are the effective intermediary structures in liberal democracies, as political and organisational linkages between state and society. They provide the most important test of exactly how far these systems

³¹ Heper Metin, "Introduction", in Heper Metin and Landeau Jacobs (eds), *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, London, Tauris, 1991, p. 5.

³² Gerassimos Karabelias, "The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey, 1980-95", in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1999 p. 135.

*are pluralist. And, furthermore, they are central to the acquisition of legitimacy by new democracies.*³³

The acute freedom deficit of Turkey in the 1990s can also be seen after looking at the political parties that have been banished following military suggestions through the NSC. These parties were in opposition to Kemalist ideology or legacy. The People's Labour Party, for example, founded in 1990, was closed down in 1993 because it tried to promote the political and cultural rights of the Kurds. Its successor, the Democratic Party, was also closed down in 1994 and eight of its deputies have received jail terms of three to fifteen years. Moreover, Turkish electoral law requires a 10% threshold for a party to get in parliament. Consequently, the political representation of small ethnic minorities which live in Turkey is almost impossible. It should be mentioned, though, that the European Court of Human Rights has judged in 2007 that the 10% threshold does not violate political rights.

It can be argued, therefore, that the Kemalist ideology-legacy, aiming at the creation of a homogenous state under the arrow of nationalism, was still in evidence throughout the 1990s:

*Preventing the development of an ethnic Kurdish cultural and political movement has been a priority of the Turkish state since the Kurdish-laid Shaykh Said Rebellion of 1925.*³⁴

³³ Pridham Geoffrey, "Political Parties and their Strategies in the Transition from Authoritarian Rule: The Comparative Perspective", in Gordon Wightman (ed.), *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, Vermont, Edwards Elgar, 1995, p. 1.

³⁴ Nicole F. Watts, "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-94", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1999, p. 639.

The influence of Kemal's legacy became also evident with the banishment of the Welfare Party in June 1997. The Welfare Party was leading a coalition government under its leader Necmedin Erbakan as its Prime Minister. During its time in power, the Welfare Party attempted to enable Turkish citizens to express their religious feelings (mostly through clothing) within the state's institutions and also tried to follow a pro-Muslim foreign policy.³⁵ These policies were perceived by the army as a threat to the secular character of the Turkish Republic. Consequently, within a year, in June 1997, in what is called a 'soft coup' the Turkish military pushed the (Refah) Welfare out of office. In 1998, the Refah Party was eventually dissolved by a ruling of the Constitutional Court on the ground that its activities were contrary to the principle of secularism which is enshrined in the constitution of Turkey.

The Press in Turkey in the 1990s

The army's negative contribution to Turkey's freedom deficit of the 1990s is also apparent when looking at the press. The army, through its control of the NSC, at least until 2001, by evoking security reasons was able to close down TV radio stations as well as newspapers. In November 1997, for example, "the NSC called on the supreme Radio and Television Board to crack down on the burgeoning number of private Islamist radio

³⁵ Philip Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan," in *Survival*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1997, pp. 129-149.

and television stations.”³⁶ At the same time, journalists who have tried to report on the Southeast Kurdish conflict in Turkey have been persecuted or murdered. Human Rights Watch states that:

*from 1992-95, twenty-nine reporters were murdered in Turkey, the overwhelming majority in the Southeast or for reasons connected with the conflict there. Many (18) of those ‘actor unknown murders’ worked for Kurdish-nationalist papers.*³⁷

In addition, two main holdings, the Dogan and Sabah groups, were controlling 75% of Turkish Media throughout the 1990s. This monopolization was enabling the Turkish State to control its press more easily. Nazmi Bilgin the head of the Ankara Journalists Association stated that,

*there is a certain kind of censorship connected with the monopolisation. Two groups control 75% of readership. Monopolisation is the twin sister of censorship... There is a certain level of self-censorship because of the relationship of owners and the state.*³⁸

Bearing that in mind, it can be argued, that the press in Turkey at least during the 1990s was not performing the role that is usually expected in a liberal democracy. In other words, the Turkish press was not able to defend the autonomy of civil society and hold the government to account.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Turkey: Violations of Free Expression in Turkey*, USA, 1999, p. 34.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

The Kurdish Issue

Kemal's main goal, as part of his modernization program, was to create a homogenous state. This can explain the oppression of Kurdish rebellions that took place throughout the previous century (1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1984). This goal was also manifested in the Turkish constitutions. In the face of homogenization measures, Kurdish nationalism has only strengthened. The broadening of languages restrictions imposed on the Kurds by the military regime in 1980, the violence against the Kurds in the Iran – Iraq war combined with the PKK strength resulted in the upsurge of the Kurdish national feeling. Thus the Turkish military adhered to Kemalist legacy, attempted to eliminate PKK, which constitutes a terrorist organization. As a result thousands of people died, including innocent civilians, villages have been destroyed and many Turkish citizens became refugees in their own country.

The determination of the Turkish military to oppress the Kurdish uprising also became evident in the 1990s. Systematic murders called 'actors unknown murders' that were targeting Kurdish nationalists, intellectuals and journalists have been carried out or encouraged by Turkish security forces. The number of these murders, between 1992 and 1995, is estimated at over 1200.³⁹

In March 1992 in particular, when the Kurdish people were celebrating their New Year (Nevruz) security forces killed more than 90 Kurdish civilians. "State-sponsored violence culminated in the Nevruz

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

(Kurdish and Shi'ite New Year) celebrations of March 1992, when more than 90 civilians were shot dead all over the Southeast.”⁴⁰

This incident was another indication of the determination of the autonomous and powerful Turkish Military “to deny Kurdish or any other ethnic minorities within the territorial boundaries of the Turkish Republic claims for recognition.”⁴¹ At the same time it can be observed that during this period, as was mentioned above, the banishment of the pro-Kurdish parties took place. Consequently, a straightforward violation of civil and political rights took place, as outlined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations enacted in 1948 and which Turkey has signed.

In addition, the banning of the use of Kurdish language by the generals in 1980 was another form of oppression against the Kurds. Up until 1991, the Kurds were not allowed to use their mother tongue in public to each other. Since 1991, though, Kurdish was allowed to be used publicly; it was not permitted, however, to be used in broadcasting, in teaching and in political campaigns.⁴² It was Law No 2923 that authorized the NSC to determine the languages allowed to be taught as foreign languages in schools and universities. The influence and power of the military was again highlighted. The Kurds were unable to express their identity as they were forced to use a different language than their mother tongue. This was

⁴⁰ H. Barkey, G. Fuller, “Turkey’s Kurdish Question: Critical Turning Points and Missed Opportunities”, in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1, winter 1997, p. 69.

⁴¹ Gerard Chaliand, *A People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, New York, Olive Branch Press, 1993, p. 245.

⁴² Human Rights Watch, *op.cit.*, p. 289.

straightforward “cultural oppression.”⁴³ In summary, during the 1990s, a minority, which constitutes more than 20% of the Turkish population, was not only politically and culturally oppressed but also physically threatened. Similar problems were faced by other minorities that live in Turkey like the Greek, Bosnian and Laz.

It worth to be mentioned, however, that PKK fighters throughout these years have committed series of murderous terrorist attacks against innocent Turkish citizens and civil servants; this has caused public outcry and has resulted in the forceful reaction by Turkish security forces that has been mentioned above.

The Dignity Deficit in the 1990s

Without any doubt, Turkey’s economic and freedom deficit was creating a dignity deficit in Turkish civil society. Turkish citizens were denied basic democratic rights and the state apparatus, as proved by the murderous earthquakes and the financial crisis, was unable to cover their basic needs. All in all, throughout the 1990s, Turkey faced a three-dimensional deficit similar to that of the “Arab Spring” countries. In other words, Turkey came very close to a similar social uprising. As the Turkish Prime Minister at the time, Bulent Ecevit, stated, the financial crisis was actually “the crisis of the Turkish state.”⁴⁴ Eventually, as the following section will try to demonstrate, the Turkish (Kemalist) state was rescued by

⁴³ Gerard Chaliand, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

⁴⁴ İbrahim Öztürk, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

efficient economic and democratization policies that have been implemented by the AKP at the beginning of the 2000s.

AKP's Rescue of the Kemalist State

The AKP was established on 14th August 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The AKP was a product of the split of the National Outlook Movement, led by Necmettin Erbakan, and appeared more moderate and reformist than its Islamist predecessors.⁴⁵ The rise of the AKP to power in 2002 by forming a solid majority government and the subsequent elections that it won (2007, 2011) gave new impetus to Turkey thanks to its charismatic leadership, its successful management of the economy and the injection of more democratic elements to the political culture of the Turkish state. This liberalization process, despite the fact that it was also encouraged and motivated by the European Union within the context of Turkish application for EU membership, gradually enabled the AKP to curtail the role of the military and thus implemented long pending reforms.

At the same time, the political Islamic roots of the AKP, along with its adoption of a pro-western and pro-democratic rhetoric, had great appeal to the majority of the electoral body that wanted to punish the traditional political parties and their personnel that were deemed responsible for the crisis. This fact enabled the AKP to form a majority government strong

⁴⁵ Hatem Ete, Eda Bektaş, "The Political Agenda of the June 2011 Elections," *SETA Policy Brief* 53, 2011, p. 8.

enough to progressively eliminate the three-dimensional deficit that was mentioned above. The hybrid political ideology of the AKP - a mixture of democratic and conservative values (or rhetoric) - enabled it not only to avoid social upheaval within Turkey, but at the same time to turn Turkey into a healthy and fast developing economy.

The Curtailment of the Freedom Deficit

As was stated above, the characterization of Turkey as a candidate for EU accession at the Helsinki European Summit in 1999 had a great impact on the Turkish democratization process. The advocates of liberalization of the Turkish political system were reinforced. As a result, a series of reform packages, initiated by Bulent Ecevit's coalition government and implemented by the AKP, were introduced. These reforms were revolutionary for the Turkish political system and political culture. They included the abolition of the death penalty, the extension of rights over the religious property of non-Muslim minorities (Greeks, Armenians and Jews) and legislation of broadcasting in languages other than Turkish. All in all,

this reform package brought up crucial challenges to the Turkish political system through securing the individual liberties, freedom of expression and the recognition of identities other than Turkish.⁴⁶

As far as the freedom of the press was concerned, the abolition of the military representative of the NSC from the Supreme Radio and

⁴⁶ Kivanç Ulusoy, "The Europeanization of Turkey and Its Impact on the Cyprus Problem", in *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2008, p. 322.

Television Board paved the way for the strengthening of pluralism in Turkish media. The positive climate cultivated among the Turkish society was also reflected in opinion polls published by the Euro-barometer in 2002. According to those polls, 65% of Turkish public opinion held EU membership for Turkey as something positive and 73% held that Turkey will gain from accession.⁴⁷

Especially as far as the Kurdish issue was concerned, these reforms “were enthusiastically welcomed in the Kurdish provinces.”⁴⁸ Turkish national TV channel TRT-6 was broadcasting in Kurdish on a twenty four hours basis. The Kurdish language could also be taught in state educational institutions. At the same time, the banishment of political parties had become much harder than before. It is also worth mentioning that in his victory speech on 11th June 2011, Prime Minister Erdogan addressed the Kurdish minority with the following words: ‘We will work harder to end mothers' crying and end the bloodshed,’ he said. “We did away with assimilation policies... we say peace, freedom and democracy in the region.”⁴⁹

At the same time civil-military relations were improved according to EU standards. This implied the reorganization and reconstruction of the NSC, which had been turned into an advisory body with its Secretary

⁴⁷ Dimitris Triantaphyllou, Eleni Photiou, *Τουρκική Εξωτερική Πολιτική Την Εποχή Του Ακρ: Προς Μια Pax Ottomana; [Turkish Foreign Policy in the Akp Era: Towards a Pax Ottomana?]*, Athens, Papazisi, 2010, p. 104.

⁴⁸ Kerem Oktem, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁴⁹ Ivan Watson, Yesim Comert, "Turkey's Ruling Party Decisively Wins 3rd Term in Office," *CNN*, 13 June 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/06/12/turkey.elections/> [accessed on 25 May 2016].

General being a civilian, and not a General and where the army did not hold a majority any more. Overall, at least until 2012, it was widely held that Turkey's candidacy for EU membership brought about a liberalization process of Turkish society and its political culture.⁵⁰ In other words, the freedom deficit of Turkish society had in many respects been curtailed or even eliminated. Erdogan's election as President of the Turkish Republic, indeed from the first round, demonstrated its wide appeal to Turkish society and their consent for his policies and leadership style.

The Curtailment of the Economic Deficit

Along with politico-ideological changes within Turkey came economic changes as well. One of the central notions among scholars is that Turkey, under the AKP, has proceeded to economic reforms such as fiscal and banking restructuring that proved to be of vital importance for economic recovery and rapid development. "Particularly, a floating exchange regime, fiscal discipline and transparency, the strengthening of the independence of the Central Bank, and restructuring of the Turkish banking system were key success factors."⁵¹ However, despite the fact that credit for the economy's success in Turkey is totally attributed to the AKP management, credit should also been given to Economic Affairs Minister Kemal Dervis, who pushed through a host of reforms during the last months of Bulent Ecevit's coalition government.

⁵⁰ Ioannis Grigoriadis, *Trials of Europeanization: Turkish Political Culture and the European Union*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

⁵¹ Rahmi M. Koç, "An Evaluation of Turkey's 2023 Targets from the Private Sector Perspective", in *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2013, p. 17.

A summary of the major results of the AKP's implementation of economic reforms is as follows:

- 1) Turkey experienced its highest and longest uninterrupted real growth of almost 6.7% between 2002 and 2007.⁵²
- 2) Despite fast population growth, GDP per capita tripled from \$3.400 in 2002 to \$10.500 in 2010.⁵³
- 3) Despite rapid structural change and rising competition, statistics show robust improvement in income distribution. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) income inequality was reduced considerably.⁵⁴ Turkey's Gini coefficient (where 0 and 1 corresponds to complete income equality and inequality respectively) decreased from 0.403 in 2006 to 0.38 in 2010. Simultaneously, Turkey is categorized as an 'upper-middle-income' country by the World Bank (defined as having per capita income between \$3.976 and \$12.275).⁵⁵
- 4) The inflation rate had decreased from 70% to 3.9% by April 2011. At the same time, the budget deficit narrowed below 2% and public debt receded below 40% of GDP soon before the

⁵² İbrahim Öztürk, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Economic Surveys: Turkey*, Paris, 2011.

⁵⁵ See Fadi Hakura, *After the Boom: Risks to the Turkish Economy*, Briefing Paper, Chatham House, August 2013.

global crisis of 2008-2009. Furthermore 1.4 million new jobs were created since 2009.⁵⁶

- 5) As a result, Turkey was ranked as the world's 16th largest economy. In other words, Turkish economy over the last decade grew by \$383 billion and its exports rose from \$63 billion to \$135 billion.⁵⁷ Furthermore, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute, in 2005 the income of the richest 10% was about 18 times that of the poorest 10%; this ratio has narrowed to 14 times by 2009. Simultaneously, according to statistical data provided by the World Bank, the proportion of Turks below the poverty line fell during this period from 20.25% in 2005 to 18.1% in 2009.⁵⁸ Similarly, child poverty declined from one-third of children in 2006 to one-quarter in 2010.⁵⁹

It can easily be argued that one of the main reasons of the AKP's electorate victories both in general, local and presidential elections of 2014, alongside its democratization policies, was its success in the economy. This achievement maintained in large degree social cohesion in Turkey and prevented the Turkish state established by Kemal from collapsing.

The Curtailment of the Dignity Deficit

By largely curtailing freedom and economic deficiencies of Turkey, the AKP simultaneously contributed greatly to the curtailment of the

⁵⁶ Ibrahim Öztürk, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Fadi Hakura, *op. cit.*, p.2

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p.4

dignity deficit of Turkish society. At the end of the day, deficiencies in dignity are what lead to social uprisings and landslide political changes. The AKP administration, by promoting and implementing democratic changes and economic policies that contributed to political and economic stability, as well as the improvement of the living standards and the quality of life of Turkish citizens, eliminated this dignity deficit. This explains why AKP has won three general elections in a row and the first presidential election in the history of the Turkish Republic.

Omer Taspinar, a Turkish political analyst with the Brooking Institution in Washington, while commenting on the third electorate victory of AKP in 2011, said that:

People voted overall for stability. It's the same rule in most democracies, 'It's the economy, stupid.' People vote on bread and butter issues. They vote based on their living standards. The fact that Turkey's economy is growing at 9 per cent. The fact that interest rates are low. People can borrow, people can spend. Consumption is very high.⁶⁰

In other words, the AKP's electorate success until 2011 is attributed to the fact that its policies and reforms had a direct positive effect on citizen's daily life. This implies that, as long as the economic success of the AKP was continuing and Erdogan's authoritarian leadership style was limited, Turkey was enjoying years of political and social stability that enabled it to plan its future on a more solid basis.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Watson, Ivan, Yesim Comert. "Turkey's Ruling Party Decisively Wins 3rd Term in Office", CNN, 13 June 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/06/12/turkey.elections/> [accessed on 25 May 2016].

Back to the 1990s?

The AKP government, however, especially during its third term in office, resorted to a series of conservative measures and policies that raised serious concerns among Turkish civil society and abroad. For many, the AKP used the reforms within the context of Turkish candidacy for EU membership in order to curtail the influence of Kemalist elites and the military and thus control state institutions.⁶¹ Furthermore, over the last five years, interest for EU membership was lost not only from Brussels, but also from Ankara; as a result, liberal reforms have lost momentum within Turkey.

On the contrary, this situation enabled Tayyip Erdogan and his party to put forward the implementation of an Islamic conservative agenda. As a result, for many Turkey watchers in the west it became clear that the AKP was ‘employing its dominance of state institutions to ensconce itself in power, further its ideological agenda and ensure that its momentum becomes irreversible’.⁶² As a consequence, Turkey made steps backwards as far as its Europeanization is concerned. The European Commission (EC) in its 2015 report on Turkey’s progress towards accession warns against ‘the adoption of key legislation in the area of the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly that ran against European standards’.⁶³

⁶¹ See, for example, Svante Cornel et. al, *Dealing with a Rising Power: Turkey’s Transformation and its Implications for the EU*, Centre for European Studies, Belgium, 2012.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁶³ European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document, Turkey 2015 Report*, p. 4.

This tendency brought about the reaction of a large segment of Turkish society. The excuse was given by governmental plans to modernize the Gezi Park near Taksim Square in Istanbul. As an act of protest, demonstrators occupied Gezi Park on 28 May 2013. When, however, the police intervened by using excessive force, the protest spread throughout the country. By the end of July, according to official government estimates 3.545.000 “people across 80 of Turkey’s 81 provinces had taken to the streets in solidarity with the Gezi Park protesters.”⁶⁴

Those massive and violent protests cost the lives of eight people (civilians and policemen) and the injury of 8.163.⁶⁵ Worth mentioning is the result of a survey that indicated that 58.1 per cent of protesters participated in the ‘Gezi Movement’ in order to defend individual liberties and only 4.6% for the protection of the trees at Gezi Park.⁶⁶ In another survey, 92.4% of the protesters replied that the main reason for their participation in the protests was the authoritarian leadership style of Tayip Erdogan.⁶⁷

Worth mentioning is that 63.6% of the protesters were between 19-30 years old⁶⁸ and that 69% of the participants were informed by social media about the events at Gezi Park.⁶⁹ The similarities with the ‘Arab Spring’ movement, at least to this point, are obvious.

⁶⁴ Alev Yaman, *The Gezi Park Protests: The Impact on Freedom of Expression in Turkey*, London, PEN International, 2014, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p.2.

⁶⁶ See <http://www.KONDA.com.tr> [accessed on 12 August 2015].

⁶⁷ Quoted in George Koukoudakis, *Η Ενεργειακή Ασφάλεια της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και ο Ρόλος της Τουρκίας* (European Energy Security and the Role of Turkey), Athens, Tourikis, 2015 p. 70.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

⁶⁹ KONDA, *op. cit.*

The excessive use of police force in combination with the 5.300 arrests of participants and the persecutions of journalists, TV media owners and social media users, raised serious questions about the protection of basic freedoms in Turkey. According to the Journalists Union of Turkey, 845 journalists lost their jobs during the protests.⁷⁰ In other words, ‘The Gezi Park protests represented a major test for Turkey’s democratic maturity and its commitment to upholding fundamental human rights.’⁷¹

For many observers and academics, the ‘Gezi Park’ demonstrations can also be explained as a reaction against a tendency towards the Islamization of Turkish daily life.⁷² This means that the ‘Gezi Park’ protests were also a reaction to the AKP’s pro-Islamic agenda and policies. Liberal segments of Turkish society perceived this tendency as a threat to their freedom. In other words, ‘what happened during the weeks of the Gezi Park demonstrations was actually a reaction of these people to the “official” trend of intensification toward religious morality in daily life and the public space’.⁷³

The trend of Islamisation of the daily life of Turkish society was also confirmed by a survey conducted by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) in which 44.6% of responders considered being Muslim as a primary identity and only 29.9% defined themselves

⁷⁰ Quoted in Alev Yaman, *op. cit.*, p.3.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

⁷² See George Koukoudakis, Pieper Moritz, *Turkish Political Culture. From Kemal Ataturk to Tayyip Erdogan: From forced Secularism to subtle Islamisation to European Alienation*, Research Paper, Athens, Hellenic Center for European Studies, 2014.

⁷³ Tayfun Atay, “The Clash of Nations in Turkey: Reflections on the Gezi Park Incident”, in *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2013, p. 39.

mainly as citizens of the Turkish Republic.⁷⁴ This finding denotes a polarization of Turkish society between supporters and non-supporters of the secular character of political and social life.

This tendency within Turkey makes Serif Mardin's argument of the late 1980s look relevant today. As he noted: "One cannot flatly deny the probability that there will arise two nations in Turkey, one secular, the other Islamic."⁷⁵

The Kurdish Issue

Additionally, of great concern is the fact that hostilities have reignited between Turkish security forces and AKP fighters. As was mentioned above, this put an end to two years of ceasefire and peace negotiations with the Kurds. This development makes the prospect of further political instability within Turkey more likely. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) won 13% of the vote on 7 June 2015 elections and 10% in November 2015. This new round of hostilities may imply that it will not be willing to participate in any coalition government. Furthermore, the three bombing attacks that took place during HDP pro-elections rallies in June and October 2015 indicate a dangerous division of Turkey also along ethnic lines.

⁷⁴ Angel Rabassa and Stephan Larrabbe, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, Rand, National Defence Institute, 2008, p. 23

⁷⁵ Serif Mardin, "Culture and Religion: Towards the Year 2000", in Turkish Political Science Association, *Turkey in the Year 2000*, Ankara, 1989, p. 185.

In more details, the terrorist attack in HDP's Diyarbakir rally in June 2015 and the Suruc attack of July 2015 against pro-Kurdish activists, combined with the deadliest terror attack on Turkish soil in October 10 of the same year, which left more than a hundred people dead and several hundred wounded, reminded many of the Nevruz New Year Demonstration attacks of 1992. The arrest of the HDP leaders and Members of Parliament in November 2016 under the allegation of supporting terrorist acts was also another worrying development.

It should also be mentioned that the success of HDP in the elections of June 2015 is not only due to the fact that many Turkish nationals, mainly activists that support human rights and individual liberties, voted for it, but to the new demographic realities of Turkey. According to a survey, "the Kurdish community will be a majority in Turkey in 2038 since the average birth rate for Kurdish women is more than double the national rate for Turkish mothers".⁷⁶

Worth mentioning is also the fact that the Kurdish Issue – much like in the '90s – is directly related to the country's democratization process, but is also seen as a national security matter intertwined with regional geopolitical dynamics. In other words, it is a complex and multileveled matter. It is exactly for this reason that the issue of the rights of the Kurdish minority and the secessionist guerrilla war of the PKK against the government has been influencing Turkish foreign policy-making.

Turkey's relations with Syria, Iraq, Iran, Israel and Russia are currently heavily influenced by the Kurdish issue. Turkish bombing of PKK

⁷⁶ Fadi Hakura, *op. cit.*, p.11.

and Isil targets in Syria is such an example. Turkey seems to concentrate more on PKK units in Syria than on Isil. This implies the creation of problems for the western alliance against Isil. “Turkey’s military engagement with the Kurds is that it distracts attention away from the main (Western) coalition effort in Syria and Iraq: namely defeating Isil,” given that the “Syrian-based Kurdish groups... have been proved the most effective fighters on the ground against Isil”.⁷⁷ It also means that Russian-Turkish relations may deteriorate given that Turkey has been accusing Russia of violating its airspace during its warplanes’ missions in Syria.

On another occasion, President Erdogan took advantage of the privileged geographic position of Turkey for the transit of Russian gas to Europe and warned that this transit should not be taken for granted. On 24 November 2015, a Russian bomber was shot down by Turkish jets in Syria on the allegation that it was violating Turkish airspace. In retaliation, Moscow has tightened control on the import of Turkish goods and is threatening the rising of import tariffs and the suspension of major joint projects on energy. Furthermore, Russia has forbidden charter tourist flights to Turkey. In particular, as far as energy is concerned, Russia was also examining the possibility of suspending the construction of the Turkish Stream Pipeline that is going to transfer Russian gas to Europe via Turkey.

It is also of great political significance that Arab uprisings have greatly influenced Turkey’s external relations with other countries. Over the

⁷⁷ Con Cougling, “Turkey’s War Against the Kurds Only Helps Isil,” Daily Telegraph, August, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11796876/Turkeys-war-against-the-Kurds-only-helps-Isil.html> [accessed on 20 October 2016].

last decade, Ankara has been developing very good trade relations with its Arab neighbours. For example, in 2008, its exports to Arab countries reached 25,000 million USD and its imports around 12,000 million USD.⁷⁸ Arab revolts have put many of these achievements into jeopardy, as the cases of Egypt, Syria and Libya point out. This implies losses for the Turkish economy, given that bilateral trade volume with those countries was mostly referring to Turkish exports and investments to the aforementioned countries. In other words, the possibility of a stagnating Turkish economy as a result of its internal situation and of the geopolitical developments in its vicinity should not be precluded. The economic consequences of the failed coup against President Erdogan in July 2016 were great, especially in the tourist sector.⁷⁹

It can be argued, therefore, that Turkey is in the brink of social, cultural and national polarization which might put all of its achievements over the last 15 years in jeopardy and bring it back to a situation similar to that of the 1990s. The AKP, despite its new impressive electoral victory of November 2015, is witnessing circumstances where some of its crucial supporters for the maintenance of its parliamentary majority, like the liberals, the leftists, ultra-nationalists, other political Islamists like the

⁷⁸ Nader Habibi, Joshua Walker, “What Is Driving Turkey’s Reengagement with the Arab World?”, in Crown Center for Middle East Studies, *Middle East Brief*, no. 49, April 2011, pp. 2-3, <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB49.pdf> [accessed on 25 February 2016].

⁷⁹ ***, “Turkey’s Economy after the Coup: Will the Turkish Economy remain resilient in the face of political upheaval?”, *Aljazeera*, 23 July 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2016/07/turkey-economy-coup-160723082548100.html> [accessed on 20 October 2016].

Gulen fraternity and even secularists and Kurds, have turned against it. As Fuat Keyman notes:

Yet the New Turkey appears to be a highly polarized and fragmented society along secular, religious and ethnic lines, with a strong leader and weak opposition. This leaves us with a picture that points to risks and uncertainties in the areas of democracy, living together in diversity, and active foreign policy.⁸⁰

Conclusions

All in all, from the above analysis it can be argued that the Turkish state founded by Kemal Ataturk in 1923 and developed alongside his ideology and political legacy, went through a severe social and economic crisis in 2001 that put its foundations and existence in jeopardy.

The political stability that Turkey enjoyed from 2002 to 2015 enabled the AKP not only to successfully face and handle that particular crisis and its generating causes, but also to plan and implement reforms that allowed Turkey to emerge as a regional power and a well-functioning and export-oriented economy. This fact allows one to claim that the Kemalist state of that time was eventually rescued by the policies of a moderate Islamic party, the AKP.

This rescue, however, might prove to be temporary due to the policies of forced Islamisation that the AKP has been putting forward over the last years. AKP policies over the last years seem to be leading Turkish political life in instability and Turkish society in a religious, social and

⁸⁰ Fuat Keyman, "The AKP Dominant Party, New Turkey and Polarization", in *Insight Turkey*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2014, p. 21.

ethnic polarization. In that way, Turkey's achievements during the 2000s in political, economic, societal and even in foreign policy terms seem to be in jeopardy. This would imply Turkey's return to the 'lost decade of the 1990s', characterized by political instability, problematic relations with its neighbours and social unrest along ethnic and religious lines.

Political realism at this stage demands that all parties involved demonstrate political will for mutually acceptable compromises that will balance the situation. This is in the interest not only of Turkey and its people, but in the interest of regional stability and prosperity as well.

The mission, therefore, of the new AKP government that emerged from the elections of November 2015 should be the aversion of this tendency. The policies that enabled Turkey to achieve so much over the last fifteen years should be the guiding principles for the achievement of this goal. Implementation and continuation of democratic reforms in combination with a renewed interest for EU accession should be the right path to follow. Turkey can play a crucial role towards the handling of the immigration crisis that the EU is currently facing. This fact is bound to convince EU leaders that they should work closely with Turkey in that particular field.

A ceasefire with the Kurds should also be pursued and peace talks should restart as soon as possible. As far as foreign policy is concerned, multilateral and co-operative action is required, truly based on the 'zero problems with neighbours' principle.

Turkey should set a target to celebrate its 100th birthday in 2023 having achieved a lot of what is founder envisioned. Whether the actors of

this success will be Kemal's ideological successors or his ideological opponents does not really matter. What matters is included in what Kemal Attaturk once said: 'Peace at home, peace in the world'.

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