

# **WOMEN'S POLITICAL ROLES IN JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY**

Thesis submitted to  
the Institute of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree

Master of Arts

in

Public Administration

by

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September 2007

“If our nation now needs sciences and knowledge, men and women must share them equally. Obviously society creates a division of labor, and in this division women should carry out their own duties as well as contribute to the general effort to improve the happiness and well-being of our society.”

**M.KEMAL ATATÜRK**  
**1923**

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## **AUTHOR DECLARATIONS**

The topic of the thesis is “The Women’s Political Roles in Justice and Development Party”. Turkey has lots of political parties but after 2002, AKP has become the most powerful party alongside with the other parties since it has collected %34 of the general votes.

Women Organizations are paths that reach to the aim since they are one of the greatest mechanisms to collect votes. AK Party pays much attention to these women organizations, too.

This research studies women’s organizations and their representation in AKP. I interested in women organization in Kocaeli since this city is one of the developed cities in Turkey and I live in Kocaeli for several years.

Consequently, in Kocaeli, female members of AKP organization, work very hard to collect votes for AKP.They visit the other women’s houses for propaganda. They attend to the social organizations such as wedding parties, ceremony days and similar social events.

**Hanife Karaaslan**

**September 2007**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
DSP	Demokratik Sol Parti (Democratic Left Party)
FP	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)
KBB	Kocaeli Büyükşehir Belediyesi (Great Kocaeli Municipality)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
RP	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)
SP	Saadet Partisi (Happiness Party)
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
WB	Woman Branches

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First of all, I'm very grateful to my thesis adviser Michelangelo GUIDA who helped me in preparing the general plan of my dissertation. He always showed patience and never escaped from helping me.

Moreover, I thank to the other faculty members, Ömer ÇAHA, Kemal ÖZDEN, Macit KENANOĞLU, Şammas SALUR, and Ertuğrul GÜNDÖĞAN who were always ready to contribute my studies.

Lastly, I express my thanks and appreciation to Bayram ÇOLAKOĞLU who is Director of Strategy Development Department of Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality.

## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the globalization process, numerous social developments are observed in many countries. Societies continue their development by following each other and struggle to keep up with the modern age. Today, the indications of globalization are observed even in the most underdeveloped countries. Some issues are more emphasized in this integrated world. The increasing importance attached to human rights is one of them. The human being is considered as a value, and his rights and responsibilities are increased. Of all these changes, the identity of woman is an issue which is frequently brought forward. It can be said that the woman's role in the past (i.e. that of motherhood and spouse) have eroded in today's world, and women have started a search for a new identity. Today, the phenomenon of woman is generally interpreted as an area where social and political changes can be observed, and this development is perceived as a requirement of globalization. Women's cries for rights are heard everywhere today.

In Turkey, the search of women, for their rights, who wanted to become more socialized and who wanted to proclaim their existence, gained momentum in the academic field after 1980's. The increase in women studies in the academic arena also causes a movement in political and social areas. Based on the importance of the issue, feminist studies have gained momentum through the establishment of various women's associations. The emphasis given by the political parties to women issue in their party programs proves the importance of the issue once more. This thesis address a political party and the identity of women in this party, and also study the functions of women who have assumed political roles in this party. The main objective will be to discuss how much importance the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, AKP)*, usually defined as a conservative political party, gave to women. This thesis aims to explain the adventure of woman which is being discussed following after 1980's both in Turkey and in other countries from a political standpoint, particularly taking AKP's Kocaeli women section into consideration.

Till now, many works have been produced, conferences have been held, and articles have been written about woman in Turkish politics and in other countries.



In this way, the awareness of the society is being increased, and women who form the half of the society are encouraged to participate in social, political and economical production. The thesis address the question of how much the AKP women, whose vote potential erupted like a volcano in the 2004 local elections, internalize these changes? I will argue that the women of AKP limitedly support the other women: the party strategy is to increase the number of chairs for women in the Parliament as an indicator of the value given to women in this party which is known as a conservative political party. However, the grassroots' and the leaders' ideology appears to be more conservative and less open to women issue. In this context, I will try to clarify the above questions by starting from the activities of woman of AKP in Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality. Their activities, seminars they attend will be observed and the identities of the women who work in women's branches will be analyzed. Their methods for convincing others to vote for AKP and their unofficial activities will be researched. Questionnaires will be conducted with the women in women's branches of AKP, questions about their careers will be asked and their life stories will be explained.

Before addressing this issue directly, women's role in Turkish politics will be explained briefly starting from 1930's, and their political background will be analyzed in general, statistical data will be utilized in the process. The part titled "*How Society Sees Women*" will also be handled in this section.

Mass communication climaxed in 2000s with the development of technology. One of the most effective technological means that influence the society is television, which is a visual tool. The spread of communication means has revealed the feminist movements that continued their development silently. However, both the women magazines and newspapers which are published by women to demand more rights, and the companies who are planning to gain more profits by operating in this area, have started giving more space to women, and carried the women issue into the agenda.

Today whichever television channel you tune in, you can find many subjects on woman being discussed on the screen. It is possible to see a wide range of women, from housewives to women in public life, on television. Despite all the attention given to them, currently women are not represented adequately in Turkish politics.

The failure of women, who assume different roles in the society and who face different problems, to produce solutions for their own problems in the political decision making process, brings to mind the questioning of the legitimacy of democracy in Turkey.

Although it is being theoretically stated that men in Turkey will address the problems of women and will seek solution for them, overwhelming nature of the patriarchal politics in Turkey is confirmed by our research. When the thesis considers Turkey in particular, it can be classified the reasons of inadequate representation of women in politics as the negative case of the political structure of Turkey.

The division of labor based on gender, limits the social life of women with family and environment in Turkey. This division of labor forms the basis of social institutions and ways of thinking and makes exemption of women from the political decision making process. Some of the Turkish women who want to participate in the political decision making process, those who wish to express themselves in this way need to erase the stereotypical opinions in the society, firstly. Social ideas related with the family, limit the social life of women. This life is shaped by social structures which belong to men especially in rural areas of Turkey. Social pressures and the prejudices, concerning gender, force women to function in the background, behind men.

In Turkey, women cannot enjoy social rights and opportunities as much as men. There is a huge inequality between men and women with respect to distribution of income and rates of literacy, to politics and social life. There are many factors (from education to economy) underlying women's nonexistence in the politics.

Turkish women did not have an effective role in NGOs (*Non Governmental Organization*) until 1980's. It can be said that women have adapted a more positive approach to these organizations after 1980's. This can be attributed to the spread of education, the increase in the immigration from villages to cities, and many other reasons. It can be said that in 2000's, Turkish women are more active in NGOs, and are performing their duties here voluntarily, but they can still not represent themselves in politics adequately. The obstacles rooted in the society and family prevent women from entering into political and social life.

Generally a man dominant understanding exists in the world. Men are directed to competition and struggle at early stages of life. Boys brought up under these circumstances; observe life as struggle and competition and their political understanding develops in this direction. Girls are brought up with their mothers looking after their sisters and brothers and look at life from this point of view. Under such conditions the worlds of men and women are separated when they are very young.

The philosophies, ideologies, organizational styles of political parties are structured according to men's mentality. The whole of political parties can not accept there is huge inequality between men and women in political sphere. The party administrations' failure to produce solutions regarding this issue is one of the most important factors preventing women from politics. Women branches in all parties are not active in the election period to the same extent. Party administrators, who allow women to assume active roles in certain periods, do not attempt to change the party program for the continuance of this practice. The number of women in the parliament reflects the existing political situation of women in Turkey vividly.

According to the results of a research made in 2004, 73% of the people participating in the questionnaire found the number of women in the parliament inadequate; the percentage reaches to 80.8% in women. While 33.8% of the women mentioned that they can consider becoming the member of a party and be active in politics, the percentage of the women who said that they would be a candidate in the elections, upon the proposal of the party they have supported, was 43.4%.<sup>1</sup> The ratio of those who thought that the political parties did not make enough effort to attract women into politics was 73.6%. In the research, the ratio of those who said they would vote for a party that was not against their political view and that would have more women candidates in the last elections was 43.5%. It can be said that serious developments were achieved in the last 10-15 years in social and cultural structure in the name of women rights.

In conclusion, it's clear that AKP does not provide a place for the women within its own body, but seems to exploit their work. AKP definitely does share all

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<sup>1</sup> Rana Çetin, "Kadınların Siyasete Katılımının 2002 Seçimleri Ekseninde Değerlendirilmesi", <http://www.skip.org.tr/km.aspx?kid=1&id=58> (Accessed 11/01/2007).

the struggle of women which started in 1930s in Turkey, even if much of the Kemalist reforms on this matter are undisputable in contemporary Turkish society.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1. POLITICAL WOMAN IN TURKEY

#### ***1.1.1. Political Background of Turkish Woman***

The gender issue continues to attract attentions today as it did in the past. The field of women studies is an area where the changes can be observed clearly within the modernization process of Turkey and where further work can be done. The situation of women intellectuals which focused on the issue of “woman” with the political reforms of 1839, continued in the Republic era around the problems in legal, political, and social areas and as the process progresses, the areas of interest are becoming more diverse.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, it is observed that a real progress is made in Turkey in feminist studies, especially with the development of technology, mass communication excelled in 2000s. Women, who constitute a party with regards to political representation, need to get organized in order to voice their basic demands. When it is observed from this point of view, it is possible to say that the women movement and women organizations in Turkey are influenced by the political fluctuations in the world and from the general political situation in our country. Contrary to the widespread belief, women movement that existed since the reforms of 1839 in the Ottoman period continued also in the Republican era. Women by means of publications and organizations they have raised their political voices. In the globalized world, developed and developing countries have manipulated the women and the family structure of the society in order to gain a more relevant position within the society. Widespread of the means of communication provoked the emergence of women’s movements which had been continuing their development silently. However, both the women magazines and newspapers issued for demanding more rights, and the companies thinking of gaining more profit in this area, started to give more space to women, and brought the issue of women into the agenda passionately.

The concept of woman in politics that started and developed alongside women issues forms an inseparable whole with other women’s issues. The mere sparse

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<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Tekin, *Kutsal, Kadın ve Kamu* (İstanbul: Açılım Yayıncılık, 2004), p.18.

existence of women in political parties is not considered to be a problem by many women and men. Such institutions are considered appropriate for men, and politics is thought to be “man’s business”. Therefore, in social life, politics and women are two distinct concepts. In order to understand the position of woman in today’s politics, it is necessary to understand her political evolution. Men, who do not directly impose limits on individual participation of women in politics, establish a strict control upon their social participation.<sup>3</sup> This arises both from the male dominance on the family level and the male dominance in politics separately. Both of these facts are related with each other. Patriarchal values both affect the way a woman participates in work life and her participation in political life. Sexist culture in social life and male dominant political style are in a relationship that nurture each other and reproduce each other continuously. The social culture’s definition of women’s role and sexist approach also nurture this vicious cycle. During the reforms of early 1800’s many social activities were observed and feminist movement, emerged. These social changes influenced the position of women who were restricted to the roles of mother and spouse at home until then. Alongside with these changes, women started to demand a different statues in the society. Women, firstly, expressed these demand by means of printed media such as magazines, and later the individual demands turned into organized ones by forming organizations. Women were active in many associations, started benefiting more from educational opportunities, and then they were even active in political parties. The relationship established between women and politics during the Westernization process prepares a different foundation for the formation of a different identity than the earlier one, when strategies and politics concerning women became so prominent. The exclusion of women from political public sphere not only meant that men regarded this sphere as a place reserved for them. This also showed the structure of the political public sphere and its relationship with private realm. The sexist distribution of labor determined the public sphere as a place where men can be active, identified women with private areas. The norms of the public field are determined according to men and by men. The women who form

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<sup>3</sup> Kadın Kurultayı, “KESK Kadın Kurultayı, Kadın ve Siyaset, Atölye Çalışma Raporu”, KESK. [http://www.kesk.org.tr/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=58&Itemid=40](http://www.kesk.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=58&Itemid=40) (Accessed 10/01/2007).

a half of the society is not able to participate in politics in a level one would wish, which can be evaluated as one of the inadequacies of democracy in Turkey. The freedom which is expressed as a result of modernization, constitutes the main component of the issues related with public and political domain and of women's problems. Turkey, who desires to rise up to the level of developed nations, is trying to strengthen its existence under the hegemony of a male centered culture. Even though the inequality in political life was protested and women-men equality in politics was emphasized after 1930s, the society could not adopt this fact. There are many reasons for this:

a) Through the modernization process, the belief that being a female politician would restrict women's traditional family role has lost its significance but not totally disappeared. Recent research stated that 68% of women claimed that political involvement would not create problems with their spouses, and that some problems might arise with children but these problems could be solved.

b) Women often prefer other occupations and can view politics as interfering with their career plans.

c) Politics requires huge expenditures and Turkish women do not have much capital.

d) Women do not benefit completely from educational opportunities, a factor hindering their participation in an elitist democracy.

e) A prevailing Islamic view explains that women's nature is appropriate to carry out familial roles while men deal with other issues. This belief still was popular in the 1990s among a significant portion of society which, to some extent, does not identify a secular state and its policies.

The male dominant nature of politics, the nonexistence of party support for the women candidates, the low level of cooperation between the women's organizations, inadequate education to create an awareness of equality between the sexes, and the injustice of the system decelerates the progress of the representation of women. Additionally, women's not supporting each other and not adopting their own objectives and policies are some of the main factors that prevent the strengthening of

women. Women who constitute half of the population in Turkey (49%)<sup>4</sup> are unable to voice their secondary position in the society sufficiently. The continuance of the patriarchal cultural values during the modernization period causes women to experience a paradox between public norms and the norms in the private domain.<sup>5</sup> The existence of views stating that family and politics are irreconcilable reinforces this phenomenon. On one hand, there are women who lead a traditional life and on the other hand, there are women who try to keep up with the modern life. Their deprivation from support of other fellow women increases the political pressure on them.

The established values, the society and the structure of family hamper enlightenment and struggle. Women who constitute half of the Turkish population and who struggle by sticking to the traditions cast their votes according to their husbands. Deniz Kandiyoti states that women in Turkey are not free:

The modernization process in Turkey failed to transform the traditional values and habits in Turkish society. The subconscious beliefs of women and their traditional habits remained. Therefore, women could not liberate themselves with modern values.<sup>6</sup>

Educated women naturally want to be supported by other women who lead a traditional life. The weak position of women in political organizations make them mere practitioners of others' decisions. The increase of women's visibility in the political arena is tightly connected to their attainment of decision-making positions in the parties. Turkish women, who could not spread their gains in the social and political life to other areas, has been struggling since the 1930s. Following this period, women were able to act more freely in social life and they help questioning of the patriarchal nature of the Turkish culture. The change in the male dominant structure of politics will become possible with the increase of enlightened women in politics. I believe that education is one of the fundamental factors determining women's political statuses; however, the existence of hierarchy preventing women to participate in the decision making process in the party directs women to participate in

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<sup>4</sup> TÜİK (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu) (2000). [http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab\\_id=203](http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab_id=203) (Accessed 17.08.2007).

<sup>5</sup> Ömer Çaha, *Sivil Kadın, Türkiye'de Sivil Toplum ve Kadın* (İstanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 1996), p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, Ayşe Saktanber (eds.), *Fragments of Cultur* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Pres, 2002), P.56-60.



politics outside the National Assembly. Nimet Çubukçu<sup>7</sup> expresses this as follows: “If you stay in politics for a long time, women start to think like men because the rules are made by and for men.”<sup>8</sup> Today, there is a small but growing number of women in the Parliament of Turkey. The reality of women is the reality of all women who live in Turkey. We can say that the work of women in the civil society organizations in our society remains shallow. The evaluation of women’s division activities as auxiliary establishment by the party causes the women not to unite with the work they do. Turkish, Kurdish, Alawi, Sunni women are forced to struggle for their identities. The fact that they do not have a society centered mentality, even world centered mentality are one of the most effective reasons they fail to show themselves in political life.

### **1.1.2. Legal Equality at Source**

In today’s Turkey, women face innumerable problems in all parts of their life, but mainly in politics. There is a large wound from the point of representation that is considered as one of the basic factors of democracy. Civil society organizations set up by women after 1980’s continue their struggle to make innovations in areas such as health, art, education, and politics and try to make society more conscious in these areas.

Can women be really represented by men in political institutions in Turkey or would men want to share their dominancy with women? The mutual comprehension of sexes can only be realized by solidarity and sharing. The traces of the blow given by legal equality to social equality are healing in a certain period of time. Although granting women rights in political field seems to support women rights, the main problem is that adult women do not accepting the power of the other women. The women rights secured by law, remain only in theory and they are not adequate to solve this problem.

The existence of male dominancy in politics still protects itself even tough many laws are made to eliminate inequality. It is possible to associate this secret

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<sup>7</sup> AKP Minister responsible from women and family affairs.

<sup>8</sup> Kresten Stevens, “*Turkey’s Untapped fortune: Gender at Davos Dances Across Politics and Islam*”, *Turkish Daily News* (26/11/2006). <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=60179> (Accessed 04/11/2006).

strength with the historical process that the society went through. One of the main reasons of the restriction of women in political arena is related to the family institution. The Women's Public Party and after its closing in the first years of the Republic, Turkish Women's Alliance have struggled to gain women rights politically. Political demands of women were not taken into consideration by the men in power, and these organizations were either closed or they were taken away from their political axis and withdrawn to a line reinforcing the traditional women roles. Women were regarded as a mother and a spouse. Woman is legally equal to man but at the same time she is a mother and a wife (the real freedom is at her being a mother and a wife.) The new Turkish woman is defined as below in Aytunç Altındal's work:

She will have a certain education, she will be able to work both at home and at the offices; she will lose her income in the consumption market; she will be a good mother, a sacrificing wife to her husband, and a good Muslim. That is, she is taken off the cage (because now she has to work and produce a value), is educated (because their brain's conditioning lies in reading what is written about them), her apparel changed (because it is that way in the West and consumption is necessary) and at the end of all this unexpected change the Turkish woman looking at the world with stupidly and her brain ready for manipulation of the elite's calculated wishes.<sup>9</sup>

In the first years of the Republic, one of the messages printed in magazines is that the place of women is at first at home, next to her husband and children and that this is her main social duty.<sup>10</sup> The problems is reduced to the problems of divorced, widowed, poor women, women subject to violence, women who can not educate her children well, who don't have the ability to provide a good harmony in the family. This point of view is insensitive to the problems of participation of women in areas of life outside the social relationships related to family.<sup>11</sup> In most of the parts of the world today, the equality is only within the principle, but unfortunately not in social areas. *Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP)* Istanbul parliamentarian Zeynep Damla Gürel mentions these in one of her articles:

There are many reasons why Turkish women are in a political position in Turkey. The fact that

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<sup>9</sup> Aytunç Altındal, *Türkiye'de Kadın (Marksist Bir Yaklaşım)* (İstanbul: Birlik Yayıncılık, 1975), p.10.

<sup>10</sup> Hülya Balcı, *First Woman in Magazine Sector: Hayat* (İstanbul: Social History, 1998), Issue 51, p.39.

<sup>11</sup> Meryem Koray, *Kadın ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: TÜSES, 1999), p.16.

Turkish society regards women with prejudice is at the bottom of the list, contrary to widespread belief. The political system in Turkey, structures of political parties, lack of self-confidence that arises due to woman's social, cultural and economical position, are the factors that are on top of the list. A few women who have this self-confidence and who are very active and decisive about participation hit the male dominant wall of political system.<sup>12</sup>

Gürel emphasizes the reasons of women's inadequate representation by dwelling on the political party structures. By expressing that the political parties do not give woman the necessary positions in their party programs, she is trying to clarify the issue. Even though women are mentioned in party programs, the main target is to attract their votes. This fact only makes the women rights stay "on paper" in the party programs. Arat says:

Although it is known that woman's participation to political life in equal terms will remove the barriers in front of her in socialization, when her economical and social status develops, it is a worrying factor that she will gain power and become independent and will become a competitor to the male dominancy. Therefore, the balance between the sexes can not be accomplished.<sup>13</sup>

Although there are not many problems regarding the rights of woman to elect and to be elected legally, it is obvious that the present situation is in favor of men, and puts women in the background. Even though the participation of women in social and political life is proposed, it is desired that this happens in a way that would not change her traditional roles and that is appropriate to the roles in the family. We can not argue that the society does not see the skills and adequacies of women. But within the patriarchal system, the success of women stays within the boundaries of the traditions. Even the woman set up her life within these borders. Patriarchal structure of Turkish society prevents the developments in the sphere of woman rights. Since the woman identifies her being with this system, she is not even aware that she can be different, think differently and defend her ideas. But the woman has only one window and everything she sees stays limited in the frame of that window. These theoretical rights must be internalized and they must be accustomed by the whole society for the legal regulations to reach their target and for the adoption of

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<sup>12</sup> Zeynep Damla Gürel (CHP), "*Türk Siyasi Hayatında Kadının Rolü ve Kadına Yönelik Düzenlemeler*", *Turkıs* (10/10/2005). <http://www.turkis.org.tr/icerik/zdgmak.doc> (Accessed 15/11/2006).

<sup>13</sup> Necla Arat, *Siyaset, Kadın, İrtica* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 1996), p.237.

procedural women rights by all of the society. Only the legal regulations which finds the support of the society, reach their targets as long as they change and develop. It is obvious that the equality laws issued since 1934 are not adequate to change the mentality of society. If the social and cultural conditions do not change, all laws are bound to stay on paper. The political woman in Turkey is an indicator of the modernization and development. Today, in many of the party regulations there are statements about the importance of man and woman equality. Especially this type of explanations reach its peak during the election campaigns. In all meetings, increasing woman's weight in politics is emphasized. Altındal reiterates that all Turkish women is exploited by capitalist channels and politicians use women as a stock of votes. When the party reaches its goal, the fact that woman is not mentioned until the next election period indicates that women who are equal basically are pushed to the background. At the same time, the existing political parties in Turkey and the election system with its undemocratic content are important barriers for the socialization of the politics. To what extend the progress can be effective without any support of the society? The isolation of woman from social and political areas, are the proofs of segregation of sexes in Turkey.

### **1.1.3. Historical Process in Gaining of Political Rights**

Women gained voting rights, firstly, in New Zealand in 1893. In other parts of the world, for example in France they gained it in 1944, in Italy in 1948, in Japan in 1950 and in Switzerland in 1971. In Liechtenstein, the last country to do so, gave women the voting rights in 1984. In Turkey, who is considered a part of the Islamic civilization, the woman gained political rights approximately at the same time as the women in other parts of the world. The first step in Turkey was taken with the attempt of Nezihe Muhiddin, who was a teacher. By establishing the "*People's Party of Women*", with Nezihe Muhiddin as the president women tried to form the first political establishment. Although the party had a political appearance, its main target was the elimination of ignorance by removing the inadequacies of women in educational and social areas. However, the general secretary of the party Şükufe Nihal expressed that their final objective was to obtain political rights:

“The program of Women Public Party, as we have tried to explain whenever we could, is to provide the women’s social, economic and political development of their rights.”<sup>14</sup>

Legal regulations that started with the leadership of Mustafa Kemal in the Republican era in which the “secular education” campaign, the establishment, spread, and protection of women’s rights were prioritized. As a part of the Westernization project of the young Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stated that women should have equal rights with men in every area of the social life. With the adoption of Swiss Civil Law in 1926, women were given rights mainly in three areas: the civil rights, the encouragement of education of girls and boys together, and the right to elect and to be elected was given in 1934.

For the first time in Turkey, the Municipality Law was enacted in 1930 that gave women the right to elect and to be elected. Later in 1933, women gained the right to be village headmen and the right to be elected in council. Approximately one year after this amendment in the law, Atatürk and some of his closest friends, (Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Celal Bayar, Refet Bele, Fethi Ali Okyar) provided on December 5, 1934 that the Articles 10 and 11 be amended as below:

Article 10: “All Turkish men and women who have reached the age of twenty two have the right to elect parliamentarians”.

Article 11: “All Turkish men and women who have reached the age of thirty can be elected as parliamentarian”.<sup>15</sup>

With the changes made in the constitution in 1934, and by granting women the right to elect and to be elected, the doors to politics were opened to the women. Firstly, 17 female parliamentarians entered in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in the 5<sup>th</sup> term of the Assembly on February 8, 1935 general elections. Thereby,

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<sup>14</sup> For detailed information about this party see; Toprak, Zafer, “*Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkasından Önce Kurulan Parti, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası*”, Tarih ve Toplum, Number: 51, Mart 1988, Volume: 9, p.30-31; by the same author; “Türkiye’de Siyaset ve Kadın: Kadınlar Halk Fırkası’ndan’Arsiulusal Kadınlar Birliği’Kongresine (1923-1935)”, İ.Ü.Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi, Number 2, Year 1994, p.6-7; Nimet Ardıç, “Cumhuriyetten Sonra Kurulan Kadın Dernekler”, Atatürk ve Kadın Hakları, Ankara 1983, p.194-195; Çaha, Ömer, Sivil Kadın, *Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Kadın*, trans: Ertan Özensel (Konya 1996); p.116. l.

<sup>15</sup> Emel Doğramacı, “*Atatürk ve Kadın*”, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi (1988). <http://www.atam.gov.tr/index.php?Page=Print&DergiIcerikNo=914&Yer=DergiIcerik> (Accessed 08/11/2006).

women formed 4.5% of all the parliamentarians in the Assembly. Tezer Taşkıran was elected as the MP of Kars province of CHP in 1943 and she set up the Turkish Women Association.

This example gave a direction to the positive progress of civil society organizations established by women. With the analysis of the speeches made by women in the assembly, it is understood that education and health issues were emphasized mostly. The issues discussed by women in Parliament during this period, are directed to increasing the level of education for girls, solutions for the health problems, and especially the development of health, education and work conditions of young children.

“*Kadın Gazetesi*” (Woman Newspaper) which was first issued by İffet Halim Oruz on March 1947, turned into a fashion magazine in 1965 and changed its name as “Kadın” (Woman). Its first pages were mostly about the political interests of the women. The articles in this magazine were generally about the daily issues. Whenever there is a political article in the magazine, it was about the solutions of the problems brought by nonexistence of women in the assembly.<sup>16</sup> This magazine is the periodical with the longest life (32 years). It was an important source which provided information about women, and during its lifetime the publishing committee was always formed by women.

Another magazine that both its owner and the chief editor was a woman was published on March 15, 1947: “Güngör Newspaper”, which introduced itself as a “social family newspaper.” Its owner and chief editor was Nezihe Saim Güngör. There is an interesting point that when the first Turkish Press Conference was held in 1935, there were 116 newspapers and 127 magazines published. Among them, 38 were daily publications. And subjects of most of these magazines and newspapers were about “the practices of the new regime.”<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the 72 years that passed, that there are only 24 women parliamentarians in the assembly in the 22<sup>nd</sup> term (2002) and that the ratio was 4.4%

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<sup>16</sup> Tekin (2004), p.25.

<sup>17</sup> Ayşegül Engin, “*Türkiye Basın Tarihi*”, *İzdebiyat* (22/06/2006).  
<http://www.izdebiyat.com/yazi.asp?id=47451> (Accessed 03/12/ 2006).

of all of the seats. This figure displays how women failed in their struggle.<sup>18</sup> A fast decline is observed in the rate of women entering the parliament after the elections of 1946. It is necessary to state that; the role of “symbol of the democratization” played by women earlier lost its importance. Moreover, “semiautomatic” election of women, in the single-party period, was hampered in the multi-party system. And, competition among the parties eroded the importance of women in the political life.

#### 1.1.4. Equal Political Rights in Turkey

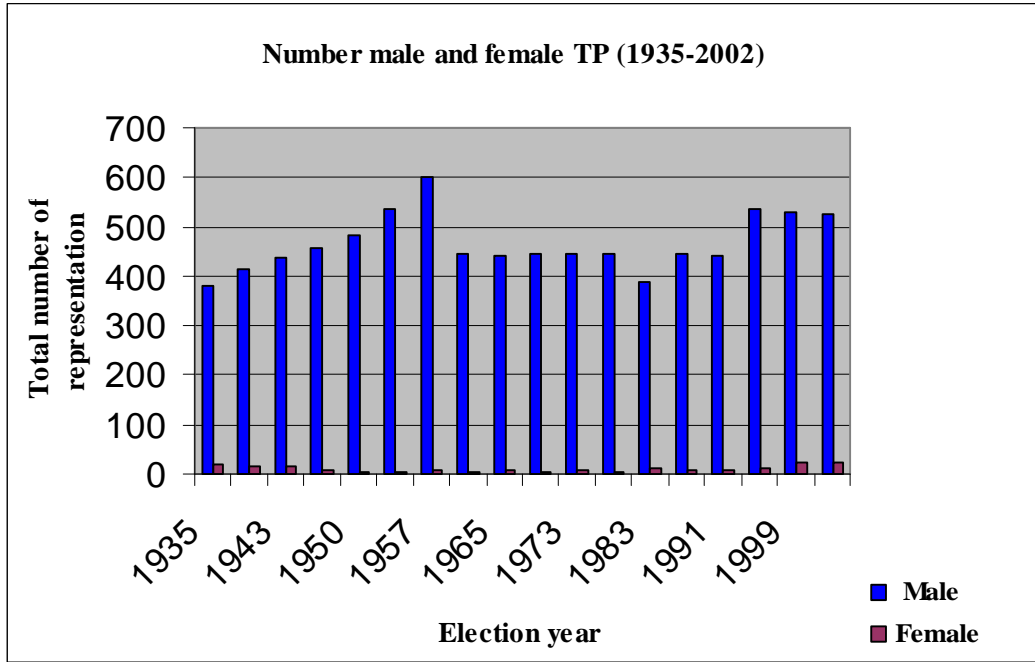
**Table 1.1<sup>19</sup>**  
**Number of representatives and the rate of representation in the Assembly**  
**by the election years 1935-2002**

Election Year	Total number of Representatives	Male	Rate of Male Representation(%)	Female	Rate of Female Representation(%)
1935	399	381	95,49	18	4,51
1939	429	413	96,27	16	3,73
1943	455	439	96,48	16	3,52
1946	465	456	98,06	9	1,94
1950	487	484	99,38	3	0,62
1954	541	537	99,26	4	0,74
1957	610	602	98,69	8	1,31
1961	450	447	99,33	3	0,67
1965	450	442	98,22	8	1,78
1969	450	445	98,89	5	1,11
1973	450	444	98,67	6	1,33
1977	450	446	99,11	4	0,89
1983	399	387	96,99	12	3,01
1987	450	444	98,67	6	1,33
1991	450	442	98,22	8	1,78
1995	550	537	97,64	13	2,36
1999	550	527	95,82	23	4,18
2002	550	526	95,64	24	4,36

<sup>18</sup> Bülent Arınç, “kadınlarımız kıyafetinden, inancından ve düşüncelerinden dolayı da bazen ayrımcılığa tabi tutuluyor.”TBMM (05/12/2005).

[http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tbmm\\_basin\\_aciklamalari\\_sd.aciklama?pl1=30924](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tbmm_basin_aciklamalari_sd.aciklama?pl1=30924) (Accessed 20/11/ 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Yasemin Arpa, “Kadın vekil oranı 1935’ı geçemedi”, NTV-MSNBC (07/12/2006) <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/393006.asp> (Accessed 02/02/2007).



**Diagram 1.1**

Diagram 1 displays the results of the elections held between the years 1935-2002 by comparing the ratios of woman-men deputies. When we analyze the diagram, in 1935 elections, there are 399 parliamentarians in total. Among these 18 are women parliamentarians with the ratio of 4.51 and 381 men parliamentarians with 95.49. For 18 years, Turkey could not reach the figures of 1935. We can explain the reason for this in this way: During this period, we see the existence of a single party (1923-1943). During this period many times the impression of passing into multi-party life was given but some events prevented this. (Şeyh Sait rebellion<sup>20</sup>, events in Menemen)<sup>21</sup> As the result of these, single party system was strengthened more. In the single party system the orders are given from above. No word of right is given to the public. Ayten Sezer has emphasized that during that time “women and men candidates were determined by the higher administration of the party.”<sup>22</sup> They have become parliamentarians by means of appointment. Today, even we couldn’t reach the figures of 1935, with the beginning of the multi-party system, women

<sup>20</sup> Kurdish rebellion in 1925.

<sup>21</sup> A religiously motivated revolt in 1930.

<sup>22</sup> Ayten Sezer, “Türkiye’deki İlk Kadın Milletvekilleri ve Meclisteki Çalışmaları”. <http://www.ait.hacettepe.edu.tr/akademik/arsiv/kadin.htm> (Accessed 08/12/ 2006).



parliamentarians were chosen by the votes of the public. Therefore it is not meaningful to compare the ratio of female deputies of the past and present.

The number of women parliamentarians is so few in the assembly that they can be considered as zero. That's why they can not execute their own politics. The diagram above shows us at the same time that women are not represented in our country and the women in the parliament are not efficient in defining and solving the problems of women. According to the results of last local elections held on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2004, only 18 of the 3225 Mayors, 834 of the 34477 municipal assembly members, and only 58 of the 3208 members of Provincial General Assembly are women. Even in their most powerful area, i.e. municipal assembly, the rate of women did not go above 2.42%. Women are at a disadvantaged situation both in representation in the national parliament and in local assemblies in terms of active participation into politics.

**Table 1.2**<sup>23</sup>

**2004 The percentage of women in local administrations  
according to the results of local elections.**

<b>2004</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Women %</b>	<b>Women (in 1000)</b>
Mayor	18	3225	0,56	5,58
Municipal Assembly Members	834	34477	2,42	24,19
Provincial General Assembly Members	58	3208	1,81	18,08
<b>1999</b>				
Mayor	18	3215	0,56	5,6
Municipal Assembly Members	541	34084	1,59	15,87
Provincial General Assembly members	44	3122	1,41	14,09

<sup>23</sup> T.C. Başbakanlık Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, "Kadının Siyaset ve Karar Mekanizmalarına Katılımı" <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/karar.html> (Accessed 28/11/ 2006).

Although, women have gained the rights to elect and be elected in the parliamentary elections in 1934 and in local elections in 1930 before many women in the world, women could not reach an adequate level of political participation and political representation. On the local management basis, according to the results of March 2004 local elections, the rate of women mayors was 5.58%, the municipal assembly members was 24.19%, and the provincial general assembly was 18.08%.<sup>24</sup>

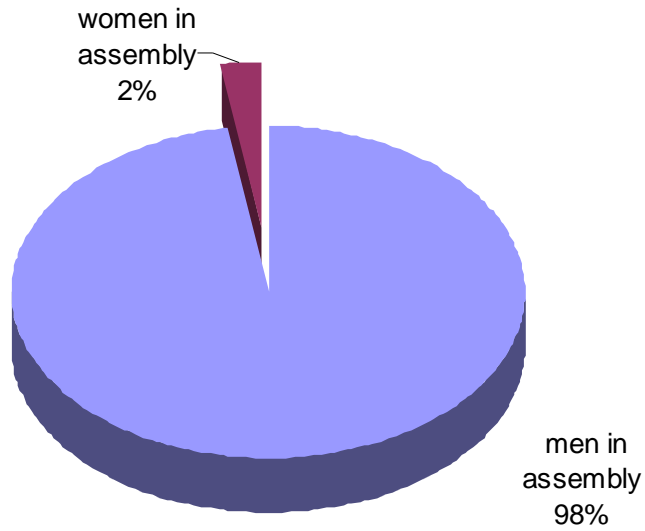


**Diagram 1.2**  
**Results of local elections of 2004**

In 2004, female mayors constitute only 1% of the all mayors which is a negative and visible picture shows that Turkish women could not go ahead since 1930.

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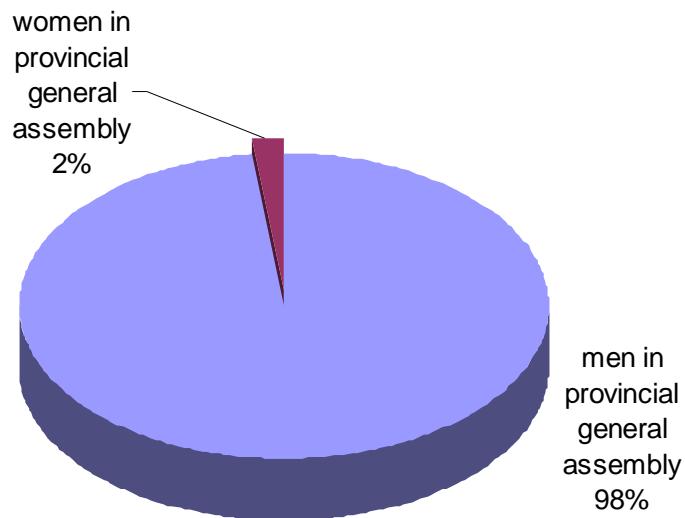
<sup>24</sup>T.C Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, Türkiye İstatistik Yılığ. [http://www.die.gov.tr/yillik/yillik\\_2004\\_eng.pdf](http://www.die.gov.tr/yillik/yillik_2004_eng.pdf) (Accessed 28/11/2006).



**Diagram 1.3**

**Number of women in assembly**

We can consider it as a positive indicator that the number of women in municipality assembly has increased in 2004 compared with 1999 figures. Moreover, the number of women in assembly has increased to 293 in 2004 and the intensity of women activities was felt.



**Diagram 1.4**

**Number of women in city district general assembly**

In 2004 the women were active in provincial general assembly membership. Although the increase of women in this area does not mean much, it can be said easily say that there was a small development. This reality can not be rejected: Turkish women have a long way to go and the steps taken are very small.

Turkey ranks 103<sup>rd</sup> among 119 countries in relation to the percentage of women's representation. In the council of ministers, there is only one female minister. The woman's place in higher decision-making position is of low percentage. According to the data presented in June 2003, collected by the State Personnel Directorate, it is observed that in the distribution of middle and high level administrators, women have a ratio of 11.4%; and in duties of Office Head, this ratio is 18.6%.<sup>25</sup> As in national elections, the process of candidanship in local elections is a very complex process. Therefore, the election of the candidates doesn't display a perfect "representation". Especially in the political structure existing in the urban areas that are getting larger, with the exception of very special conditions, to be an independent candidate and elected is almost impossible. The methods and measures of political parties in determining their candidate lists, under the present conditions in Turkey, has lots of problems in terms of democratic practices. Candidates generally are determined by the highest staff of the party organizations. For this reason, both in local and in national level, those who own necessary resources and opportunities such as money, time, strong public relationship network, education, and experience are shown as candidates and might be elected. In conclusion, it can be stated that women are ignored and disadvantaged in general.

Turkish woman who were given the right to vote in 1934, did not acquire this opportunity by means of a struggle of equal voting rights with full meaning as in the West. Intellectual elite gave women certain rights to achieve their westernization objectives. Tekeli, interprets this in this way: "In 1930's, granting women equal voting rights that came into agenda and its timing, was a very important attempt of Atatürk to separate his single party regime from the European dictatorships."<sup>26</sup> Ömer Çaha explains this as follows: "The granting of right to vote to women and the

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<sup>25</sup>Nükhet Hotar Göksel, "*Kadına Yönelik Ayrımcılık: Türkiye Deneyimi*", *AKP Sosyal İşler Başkanlığı* (10/07/2006). <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/> (Accessed 25/11/2006).

<sup>26</sup> Şirin Tekeli, *Türkiyedeki Kadının Siyasal Hayattaki Yeri* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1982), p.55.

excitement it evoked is really interesting that it was never observed anywhere else.” Çaha also explains that the granting of the right to vote basically served for the regime, but not for the women:

In 1930, Republican People’s Party was in the government as a single party in the parliament. With the 1929 world economical crisis, the regime’s needed to direct itself toward the West was even more important. At this time, as expressed by Şirin Tekeli, in the West, Mustafa Kemal was accused of dictatorship. Moreover, in Europe fascist parties were getting closer to government. In this environment, to give Turkey a democratic appearance, Free Republican Party was formed in 1930. But as a result of higher favour shown by public, it was abolished. The government didn’t let an opposition to get stronger in anyway. Because the Islamic, socialist and liberal groups which were restrained by the Republican regime were waiting as a strong potential thread. Therefore, in order to be seen as a democratic country, a different policy was embraced. For this reason, the right to vote and to be elected was granted to the women during this period. With the right to vote, 18 women entered into the parliament with the personal order of Atatürk, and Turkish Republic was presented as a democratic regime.<sup>27</sup>

Çaha, here, explains that the women’s rights were given by Atatürk. By stating that: “Until the 1980’s there was an agreement that the Kemalist reforms saved women. This fact was not open to discussion,” Arat also handles the issue in the same way. Arat goes on:

Turkey might be the only society in the world where women’s participation in politics is not the result of women’s activism or organization, but rather of Westernization and Modernization policies, pursued by Kemal Atatürk in the wake of the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. Women were granted their universal suffrage in 1934 without a suffragette movement. They were hand-picked by men to fill political offices without having competed or risen naturally in the political sphere. Turkish women politicians are basically “superwomen”, they still fill the role of housewife with no help from the male partner while coping with their public duties. They are different from the male politicians in that they say they come from families where authority in the household was shared between their mothers and fathers, and they, in their own households, share power with their husbands.<sup>28</sup>

However, feminist studies that were carried lately, have tried to clarify the

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<sup>27</sup> Ömer Çaha, *Sivil Kadın: Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Kadın* (İstanbul: Vadi Yayıncılık, 1996), p.114-115.

<sup>28</sup> Yeşim Arat, “*The Patriarchal Paradox: Women Politicians in Turkey*”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 23, No. 4, P.18.  
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0020-7438%28199111%2923%3A4%3C678%3ATPPWPI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X&size=LARGE> (Accessed 04/11/2006).

issue by evaluating the work and struggles of women. Şirin Tekeli clearly explains this: “The thesis that the women rights were given from above (bolt from the blue) by Atatürk is unfair and not right. “ But using the words “given from above” Çaha and Arat, tried to explain that women in Turkey gained right to vote and election quite differently than women in West. Because Turkish women did not struggle in a hard way like her European partners. The reasons of this case can be explained with the traditional values. In Turkish society, due to Islamic civilization, husband is very important. Man have the main post of the household. Woman can never rebel against her man. On the other hand, when we observe Europe, we witness the women struggling to gain rights. For example in European history, there are a lot of women struggling for this purpose. The first woman who demanded voting right in US was Margaret Brent (1647). When her demand was rejected, she protested to the administration. In Britain, in 1866, Elizabeth Garret collected 1.500 signatures for women to gain right to vote and to be elected. Again in Britain, in 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, have established the *Women’s Social and Political Union* (WSPU). In 1907, WSPU members had to fight in the streets.<sup>29</sup> Emily Davison, one of the defenders of voting rights for women, has thrown herself under the feet of the horses in Derby races in 1913.<sup>30</sup> What I try to emphasize here is, Turkish women also struggled for her rights within her own conditions sometimes by establishing associations, sometimes by publishing newspapers and magazines. For example if we consider education area, during the period of Atatürk, there were enormous developments. For example, number of women teachers increased by 352% and number of girl students by 323%. While there were no woman faculty members when Republic was founded, in 1938 this number went up to 99. Generally, while the number of boys in higher education increased by 20%, the number of girls increased by 525%.<sup>31</sup> Until the Republic was

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<sup>29</sup> Gamze, “Dünyada Kadınların Oy Hakkı”, *Bianet* (26/08/2002). [http://www.bianet.org/2003/04/09\\_k/12753.htm](http://www.bianet.org/2003/04/09_k/12753.htm) (Accessed 2 /11/2006).

<sup>30</sup> Kaan Arslanoğlu, “Kişi Kadın Doğmaz, Kadın Olur”, *Radikal* (10/06/2005). [http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek\\_haber.php?ek=ktp&haberno=4044](http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=ktp&haberno=4044) (Accessed 2 /10/2006).

<sup>31</sup> Taciser Onuk, “*Cumhuriyetin 80.yılında Atatürk ve Ulusallıktan Evrenselliğe Türk Kadını*”, *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Başkanlığı* (01/07/2003). [http://www.forumuz.biz/ataturk\\_ve\\_kadınlarımıza\\_sagladigi\\_haklar-191614t.html](http://www.forumuz.biz/ataturk_ve_kadınlarımıza_sagladigi_haklar-191614t.html) (Accessed 6/12/2006).

founded, women did not demand any rights in political area but only struggled in areas where they can develop themselves. Alongside with developments in educational opportunities, women's participation in business life, politics and decision mechanisms also increased. But European woman acted more aggressive and therefore could form the foundations of her own rights better than others. Even the women in Turkey gained her voting and election rights earlier than her kind in Europe, we can express that she is still very behind in the parliament. For example Norway is one of the most successful countries in the political representation of women, but this success is related with family policies, employment, health, and educational facilities presented to the women. At the point reached today, Turkey can not attain the level of representation of 1935s in spite the development of humans' rights, and the progress in technology. The attempt to isolate women from politics which constitute half of the population is one of the biggest barriers in front of a healthy social order. After the 1980's, women's movement started to gain power. But still in the center, man continues his existence. The existence of a policy directed to the provision of man and woman equality, only appears in the programs of the political parties. Nobody wishes to change the statute of woman divisions that are under the same roof with party administrations and they are not included in the decision making processes. The understanding of the society related to sex and traditional roles, assesses the functions of woman civil foundations as voluntary activities. The women divisions founded in the party are in a position implementing the work presented by the center. Political parties have started to give more place to women in politics starting with the 1980's to gain women voters, to benefit from high number of the women voters. Arat, clarifies this issues by saying that: "beginning with 1980's, the political parties turned their attention toward women with the aim of gaining their votes and keep the women issues in their agendas".<sup>32</sup> Within the framework of these aims, parties have started to establish organized events. The Foundation to Support and Promote Turkish Woman was established by ANAP and *Doğru Yol Gönüllüleri Vakfı* was established by DYP. Therefore they have tried to prove their opinions. Today in parliament's, world average is 1 woman

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<sup>32</sup> Necla Arat and Oya Tokgöz, *Türkiye'de Kadın Olmak* (İstanbul: Say Yayıncılık, 1996), p.57.

to 10 men parliamentarians. The situation in our country is, 2 women for 100 men parliamentarians. The women in politics are generally observed as assistant, adaptable and dependent.<sup>33</sup> 1990's are years when the woman's movement started to institutionalize. Again during these years, the women centers began to open, The opening of woman research centers in universities, the establishment of General Directorate of Woman Statute and Problems, and the function of Ministry of State Responsible from Woman and Family as a separate ministry in the government are examples of institutionalization. On March 4, 1997, The Association to Support and Educate Women candidates (*Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği, KADER*) was established. One of the active parties of this period, SHP, mentioned about the women's quota. In countries where women are active in politics, their representation rate is 30% or higher, (Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Netherlands) or around 25-29% (New Zealand, Austria, Germany, Iceland, Argentina). In these countries, "proportional election system" is implemented. In countries where women are represented less, for example where the rate of representation is 10% or lower, (Greece, France and England) the elections are held based on "majority election system". Even if Turkey has proportional election system, her position is at the end of the list in the world from the point of representation. Turkey has a middle age population and 49% of Turkish people are women. Quotas implementation for women mentioned in current party programs, does neither exist in Law of Political Parties nor in Electoral Law. What is the quota implementation and what does it aim? The word "Quota" derived from *quota* in Latin and means "share", "amount". In implementations foreseeing the elimination of social inequality, quota shows the minimum number or percentage where the representation of the groups affected by inequality will not fall even lower. It is evaluated as an implementation serving the equal representation of the sexes. Even tough quota is mentioned, until today this dream could not be realized. Some of political party leaders mention the implementation of quota to provide equal opportunity in their speeches. However, during elections, women are not allowed to appear in the first lines of the elections lists and they are prevented from their parties.

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<sup>33</sup>Azime Telli, "AKP'de Kadın ve Politika", *Kocaeli Demokrat*, p.5, ( 02/11/ 2006), p.6.



When Turkey looks at the results of the last elections, it sees that parties producing populist policies with the aim of obtaining more votes include women in their candidate lists but place them in the lowest places in the list in a way they can't be elected. The sayings about women and their imaginary popularity are not enough to change their secondary position. The election of women in this sense, is left to the discretion of the party administration. Under these conditions, Turkish politics is considered as power, and holding this power is realized with the existence of money. Joan McFarland expresses this as:

Most of the problems of women arise from the fact that they are a part of the economical system. In this economical system, women have a large place. Because we work in lower positions and to hold them there, to employ them without pay, to prevent them from getting promotions and gaining power are to the advantage of capitalist system. Capitalist system benefits from this.<sup>34</sup>

Joan considers the prevention of women from gaining promotions and power from political point of view. One of the most important reasons of this is to prevent the questioning of the male dominancy in politics. In the extraordinary committee meeting held on January 27-28, 1990, Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Party-SHP*) made a change in its regulation and decided to give a 25% place to the women in the party. In SHP Woman Assembly Regulation, this is stated as; "For realization of women representation in proportion to their population, a 33% quota will be implemented and projects will be begun to increase this figure up to 50%." The political participation of woman is mentioned in all of the parties' regulations but no serious attempt is made in this issue. In Sweden where the female quota is the highest with 43%, this quota system is called as the zipper system. Moreover, in Sweden, the ratio of women members in provincial assembly is 48% and 41% in local administrations. Belgium, in 1999, has increased the ratio of women in the parliament by means of the quota system. There are those who see the quota system as the only solution.

But the truth is the solution to the inadequate representation of women is not only quota method. The women coming with the quota system should be able to make politics with their own words. Even if the quota system is brought, women will

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<sup>34</sup> Kadın Çalışmaları Dergisi, *Kadınların Birçok Problemi Kapitalist Sistemin Bir Parçası Olmalarından Kaynaklanıyor*, Vol.1, No2, (Summer 2006), p.128.

support the man dominancy, will complete the existing system, and if they will be satisfied with doing men's jobs the way they do, then it can be said that this type of representation will do more harm than good.

#### ***1.1.5. Turkey's First Female Prime Minister: Tansu Çiller***

There are limits to the social political participation of women in the formation of political parties, unions, associations etc. Women exist in these organizations with a very small numbers to be considered as almost nil. The division of duties based on sexes, are determined according to the areas where men exist in public, squeeze women in a place that is considered to be special. Definitely, no one can ignore the benefits of women, in the civil organizations, provided to the society and women themselves. But women need to understand their own reality. They should struggle more to be able to participate in the decision making processes. Turkish women want to get out of the secondary position and play an active role in political area. Before 1980, the fact that women handled only the women's issues and did not get involved in political, economical and social subjects is an indicator that they have faced the restrictions of a male dominant culture. From this point of view Turkish woman is affected by the ideas of the West but can not have enough information and adopt the results. Women's appearance in public intensively after 1980's, formed a discussion base in Turkey. Beginning with that date, the political parties started a heavy struggle to collect women's votes. Tekeli explains this as below:

“Women can address housewives with womanly talk, they can enter households and what's more important that they can form relationship networks. Use of women is the best way to reach to women in rural areas, in local politics, and in small settlements.”

The real objective here is to gain votes for the party by assigning positions to the women in the party. Because women who can communicate more easily, to set up empathy, and are more creative compared to men, are seen as if a hunting material during the election period. Women who have hours long programs on television, are clapped by gossiping women in the rural areas. They believe that they are represented and their problems will be solved. When the election period approaches, modern women, walking with high heels in rural streets, promise that many problems

will be solved if the people vote for their party, the same problems they could not find a solution until now. But in the center there are still the men. The government that holds power in its hand also attempts to control the opinion of the society. Today all political parties increase their number of women organizations during the election campaigns. In many places even in the most remote corners of the city, local woman divisions are opened and women are invited to tea meetings and they are informed about the objectives related with the approaching elections. Sometimes different gifts are given and the votes are guaranteed. The woman receiving the gift is indebted, and thinks that she has to pay back by voting. This situation shows us that in Turkey political parties woman organizations can not reach an agreement, even, with their own parties.

Turkey's first and the only women Prime Minister was elected on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1993. When we look at the countries with woman Prime Ministers, the first one came to office in 1960 in Sri Lanka, in 1979 in Portugal, in 1990 in Lithuania, in 1980 in Dominican Republic, and in 1966 in India. Tansu Çiller's election as the Prime Minister is the sharpest evidence to the fact that a woman can be involved in politics and can be elected as the prime Minister. And it has opened the way to women to enter politics and it has proven that a woman can be a prime minister. Tansu Çiller who graduated from Department of Economics Robert College, Çiller gained her PhD in the University of Connecticut, has continued her post-doctorate study in the University of Yale. She became an assistant professor in 1978 and a professor in 1983. Çiller worked in many universities, and mainly in the Boğaziçi University, has entered into politics in the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Party*) in November 1990. Çiller was elected as the deputy of Istanbul in the elections of 1991, has then served as the State Minister responsible from economy under the coalition government formed with the *Social Democratic Party*, with Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel. After Süleyman Demirel's election as the ninth President of Turkish Republic and leaving office, Tansu Çiller declared her candidacy for the presidency of the *True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi, DYP)* and she won the competition in June 13, 1993. Hence, she became the Turkey's first woman Prime Minister. She was the Prime Minister between on June 25, 1993 and March 6, 1996, in the 50<sup>th</sup> (1993), 51<sup>st</sup> (1995)

and 52<sup>nd</sup> (1996) governments of the Republic. She has served as foreign minister in the government formed between RP-DYP in the 54<sup>th</sup> (1997) government. In the elections held on November 3, 2002 upon DYP's failed to overcome the 10% election threshold, she resigned and left her office.

Yavuz Gökmen defines Tansu Çiller as “Blond Beautiful Woman” (*Sarışın Güzel Kadın*) and continues in his book with these words: “Çiller is quite aware that she is feminine and knows how to use it quite well.”<sup>35</sup>

Is this correct? Gökmen is talking about a “female” continuously wearing white, mannish and very simple outfits, prefers to wear short hair and with no accessory. The fact that there are no traces of Çiller's femininity during her Prime Ministry, is one of the proofs of her manly politics. Faruk Bildirici in his book defines her as “Lady with the Mask.”<sup>36</sup> Bildirici assesses lady with the mask first of all as the “attempt to tell the truth.” Based on all the things written and told about her, think Tansu Çiller was not allowed to be a president like a woman. She assumed politics based on male dominancy, where she can not implement her decisions, and acted according to the rules of hierarchy. The person who carried her to the political arena was a man. She found strength with the support of Süleyman Demirel. I believe that she was brought to politics not because she deserved it but because she was a woman. If Tansu Çiller really adopted woman's politics, with the women by her side, she would continue her position as a prime minister. Her mannish politics is an indicator of Tansu Çiller's failure in 2002 General Elections. The participation of women with mannish political styles, in the politics affect women's participation to the decision making process in the parliament negatively. Tansu Çiller as a right wing leader might have easily gained the veiled women's confidence and their votes. The “veil” issue is seen as a fundamental issue by the Muslim women in the country. However, Çiller brought forward a mannish politics even in the field of women's rights.

Additionally, when we consider the duties of women representative in the parliaments, we see that they are usually assigned with the duties related with family. The most obvious example of this is, the today minister responsible from woman and

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<sup>35</sup> Yavuz Gökmen, *Sarışın Güzel Kadın*, (İstanbul: Doğan Yayıncılık, 1999), p.24.

<sup>36</sup> Faruk Bildirici, *Maskeli Laydi* (İstanbul: Ümit Yayıncılık, 1998), p.30.

family is affairs who a woman. Nimet Çubukçu is the only State Minister to be a woman. Çubukçu who graduated from Istanbul University, Faculty of Law was elected as the parliamentarian in the general elections on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002. To see only one woman minister among 22 ministers in 59<sup>th</sup> government is an indicator that a period over 72 years was unproductive. Additionally, this indicator shows the dimensions of the political value given to woman in Turkey.

Why a Minister of Tourism of Turkey is not woman, or why the duties assumed by minister of health or minister of national education, are more important and risky than the duties assumed by the minister responsible from woman and family affairs?

Indeed many writers, “when they mention the representation of women, do not mean the high numbers and rightfully mean other things with this expression. The real meaning of representation is the ability of women to reflect their own politics to the people and have them adopt these. The question of “what is the rate of representation of woman in the party politics?” is answered by the United Nations as; “there is a critical threshold. If the minority social group with different problems is not represented 1/3 that group can not succeed in talking about its own problems, in its own language and on its own behalf.” The representation of woman in politics should be an expression of their political wishes and political programs. Representation leaded by symbolism, at this stage, forms the shadow of reality. The legal equality in Turkey does not reflect the reality. The women in our country accepted to the extent that they act to the criteria of a game with rules determined by men. The women trying to go over the limits and these criteria are considered as strange. When we consider a woman politician within the system and existing relationships, today we see that she doesn’t appear with her own woman identity neither with her thoughts or with her behavior, and she is alienated by her own kind. Equal political participation of women is the precondition for the development of women’s political status. Turkey with a potential of educated and trained women, is accepted as one of the rare countries that could not reflect the women in the parliament. The women in Turkey need to struggle very seriously to be able to form their political identities.

### **1.1.6. The Foundation Of AKP– Its Vision – Mission and Islamic Parties in Turkey**

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Islam was observed as a barrier for modernization by some sections of the society (especially by the socialist parties). At the same time, parties that we can define as Islamic (*Milli Nizam, Milli Selamet, Refah, Fazilet* and *AKP*) are seen as against Kemalist modernization. Many movements in Turkey are shaped by Islam. The reason for this can be searched in the fact that 97%<sup>37</sup> of the population is Muslim. However, on the other hand, both *Refah* Party and other Islamic Parties explain at every opportunity that they are not against democracy and laicism.

Especially according to the opinion that is felt after 1970's and became stronger after 1980's, religious movements are modern and secular movements. Individual alienation of the individual, by the modern society, is tried to be eliminated by socialization of the individual by the religious movements. These movements not only provided security to the individual with the community, but also brought a more modern and secular character. Today parties with Islamic character that are increasing in number and increasing their religious formations are attempting to make the public understand that modernization is not at the opposite end of religion.<sup>38</sup>

During the 1970's, a result of the multi-party system, there emerged political parties which adopt identities such as right, left, nationalist, Islam, and conservative. In reality, after 1970's many political parties lived within the framework of Islamic movement. In 1973, Necmettin Erbakan became a member of MSP (National Salvation Party), which was an Islamic party both in terms of its founders and its ideology. This party, known for its moral values, spirituality and heavy industry in economy, established a seven month coalition with CHP. It participated to the coalition governments three times until September 12, 1980.<sup>39</sup>

Islamic movements, merging with nationalism, reached to a wide support of

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<sup>37</sup> For detailed information see; Özgür Ansiklopedi, [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrkiye'de\\_ya%C5%9Fayan\\_etik\\_gruplar](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrkiye'de_ya%C5%9Fayan_etik_gruplar) V.T.C.Başbakanlık Basın-Yayın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü, “*Dış Basında Türkiye-AB İlişkileri*”, (11/03/2002). <http://www.byege.gov.tr/yayinlarimiz/avrupabirligi/2002/03/11x03x02.htm> (Accessed 08/06/2007).

<sup>38</sup> Levent Baştürk, “*Laiklik, Refah Partisi ve Türkiye'nin Geleceği*”, anadolu quarterly news, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter 1994). [http://www.wakeup.org/anadolu/04/4/laiklik\\_rp.html](http://www.wakeup.org/anadolu/04/4/laiklik_rp.html) (Accessed 11/01/2007).

<sup>39</sup> MSP and CHP government was established on 26/01/1974. Later on 11/08/ 1977 AP and MHP formed the government. On 28/07/1996 Refah Party formed a coalition government with DYP.

Muslim groups. The policy of CHP, to put religion under pressure since the beginning the Republic, did not provide any results with the beginning of the multi-party system. Later this party replaced its government with the right wing parties. The public support the right wing parties should be evaluated as the need to express the wishes of Islam.<sup>40</sup>

One of the most important developments and changes witnessed by Turkish political life is the foundation of Justice and Development Party and its becoming a government within a short period. AKP was established in a period when Turkey had serious economical problems. One of the disadvantages of AKP is that it is a offspring of *Milli Görüş* (National Vision) accused of being a threat to secularism after the 28 February process.

Justice and Development Party, is one of the two parties founded after the closure of the *Fazilet* Party (in June 22, 2002) and the other one is *Saadet* Party). AKP was established in August 14, 2001 and the founders are Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Bülent Arınç.

AKP formed the 58<sup>th</sup> government of the Turkish Republic with the prime minister of Abdullah Gül thanks to the highest number of votes in November 3, 2002 elections. Due to a legal prohibition<sup>41</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan could not be a member of Turkish Grand National Assembly-TGNA (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*). But, he entered into the assembly after a change in the Constitution and the removal of his prohibition, and later he was elected as a parliamentarian of Siirt province. Renzo Imbeni<sup>42</sup> interprets Erdoğan's gaining so many votes in the 2002 elections in this way: "AKP has gained many votes over its natural base. Some of the people voted for him since he was the ex-mayor of Istanbul, and the rest since he was imprisoned due to of a poem. If there was such a law in Europe, who know how many people would be imprisoned here as well. Moreover, AKP also gained votes with the "band wagon effect". It can also be expressed with jumping to the winning train. No matter

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<sup>40</sup> Hasan Hüseyin Özkancıgil "1960'lı Yıllarda Türkiye'de İslami Uyanış" (*Soruşturma*)", *Hakan magazine*, Issue 14.  
<http://ww.hakoz.net/okul/mod.php?mod=publisher&op=viewarticle&cid=543&artid=156> (Accessed 27.04.2007).

<sup>41</sup> He was penalized due to a poem he read in a speech he gave in Siirt in 06/12/1997. Diyarbakır State Security Court, filed suit against Erdoğan with the basis of violating the article 312 of Turkish Penal Code. From this, the penalty will be 1 year imprisonment.

<sup>42</sup> Vice president of the European Parliament.

what ideas the starting nucleus of the party had, many voters voted for this party. After the resigning of the 58<sup>th</sup> government on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was assigned the duty of forming the government by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, and he founded the 59<sup>th</sup> government of the Republic on March 15, 2003. AKP's plan is to bringing cultural, economical and political peace in every area. AKP aims to bring synergy to political, economical and cultural areas by acting from this point of view. In fact, Turkey is a unique Muslim country where real laicism and democracy exists even to a certain extend, i.e. a modern country. In Turkey, most of the muslims are Sunni, and the others are Sii, Caferi, Alevi and Kurd. Because a population census cannot be done according to the cults, the rates of Sunni, Sii, Kurd and Alevi to the general popullation is not exactly known. It is naturally thoght that especially minitory groups of Muslims in Turkey (Alevi, Arap, Kurd) did not support the AKP. For example, in most cities of the East (in Turkey), the parties of Kurd leaders are popular. So, racial ideology of people acts a much more important role on the election strategy.

AKP expresses its own mission as the removal of distance between state and the society. It mentions that this distance that is claimed to exist between state and the society arises not from the system itself but from the administrators. During the past eight years, together with the administrators not associated with the public, society engineering projects gained intensity gradually. And the enforcements made under the name of the official ideology, continuously keep the society and the state apart from each other. Therefore, AKP embraces the mission of reconciling the state and the citizens. The most serious problem for a state is the distance between the citizens. Moreover, AKP also undertakes to improve the basic rights and freedom up to international standards, and to provide the participation of civil society organizations in the decision making process. To change the state's awkward and closed structure, to form a secure environment for the investors, and to make Turkey more active in foreign policy are among the missions of AKP.



### **1.1.7. Is AKP a Conservative Party?**

Ever since its foundation in 2000, the leaders of the Justice and Development Party, have stoutly maintained that their party is not based on religion, and is strictly a conservative democratic party. In an interview given shortly after the AKP government came into office in November 2002. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the party chairman, admitted. “Some people may think differently. They may look towards such bodies as the Christian democratic parties in Europe. That is their view and their reality. We do not share it. Shortly before the establishment of the AKP he declared that Islam would not even be a point of reference for the party, although he had used is this phrase earlier to explain his political beliefs. In January 2004 he elaborated on this by saying that his party supported a conservative democracy, which incorporated pluralism and tolerance.<sup>43</sup>

By removing the polarization and the stress seen in Turkish political life until today, it is crucial that people and parties define their political identities in universal area in order to be able to form a structure appropriate for democracy. Conservatism, as in other countries is a political view and way of thinking that existed in Turkey until today. If a political movement or a party does not have an ideology of its own, it is not possible for that party to execute a stable politics. When it can be looked at the world generally, the political parties express themselves as democratic, liberal, conservative etc. when introducing to the world. As expressed by Geertz, “ideologies are maps that try to give direction to people.”<sup>44</sup>

The term conservatism became evident more with its political context. It can be defined as a protection of existing legal situation and established order (status quo). This understanding that wish to protect the existing social order, ideas, and institutions is called conservative politics. Conservatism can also be interpreted as the sensitivity to protect national and moral values. It is a political ideology and philosophical trend that focuses on the sensitivity of protection of social institutions such as family and religion.

This trend was fed by criticism related to the dissolution of social structures, and isolation of the individual, removal of the traditional social values by the new emerging social structures with the industrial revolution; and from philosophical

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<sup>43</sup> William Hale, “*Christian Democracy and the AKP: Parallels and Contrasts*”, Turkish Studies, Vol. 36, No.2, June, p.292-310.

<sup>44</sup> Yalçın Akdoğan, *AKP ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, (İstanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 2004), p.3.

point of view, with the criticism of Enlightenment ideas that put its signatures in the eighteenth century, and with the reactions towards the effects of the French Revolution.

In today's Turkey, the political parties are divided into two as the conservative and those that are not. Theoretically conservative parties are those that care about the religious values and traditions in the first step, and that are not open to the newness, not supporting radical changes. The parties that are not conservative are called as innovative and modern. Abdullah Gül, in an article tried to explain his party with these words:

We are not an Islamic party. Religion is an issue of the individuals and not politics. Turkish constitution talks about a secular state and we accept that. I do not like religious parties. However, as Muslim societies become more democratic, you will see that in every part of the society religion will be more expressed. This is a result of the democracy.<sup>45</sup>

What is new conservatism? It follows the conservative ideas but on the other hand it also embraces certain new ideas that are not contrary to the conservatism. The association of conservatism only with religion is not true. Is AKP a conservative democratic party? Can conservatism and democracy exist together? Modern conservatism, new conservatism and conservative democracy emphasize the same meaning. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, when interpreting the conservatism at the International Conservatism and Democracy Symposium, made the following expression:

“Turkey, with its secular and democratic structure, contains the traditions arising from Islamic culture is observed both by the West and the East with great attention. The existence of such a model means that the channels between two civilizations are open and there is cooperation.”<sup>46</sup>

The “conservative democracy” concept brought to the agenda by Justice and Development Party, is subject to discussions on the grounds that this concept does not exist in political literature or this concept has no scientific basis. Some scientists

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<sup>45</sup> Abdullah Gül, “*İslami Partileri Sevmiyorum*”, *Hürriyet* (07/05/2007). <http://www.haberler.com/gul-islami-partileri-sevmiyorum> (Accessed 07/05/2007).

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.haberx.com/n/112357/basbakan-erdogan-uluslararasi-muhafazakarlik-ve.htm>, (Accessed 01/11/2006).

emphasize that democracy and conservatism cannot exist together.<sup>47</sup> But the truth is, political literature gains importance with large political movements and changes. I believe that AKP's attempt to produce identity and it is useful for the Turkish political literature. According to Çaha, the expression of democracy in a liberal, social and conservative way is a definition of a cover for democracy:

In other words, democracy has according to different ideas that do not change by different ideologies. By bringing an expression such as conservative, liberal or social in front of the word of democracy, we do not make any changes in the basic values of democracy. We only express our sensitivity towards some of the democratic values and institutions. Constitutional, representative, temporary and limited government and basic rights and freedoms are the basic values of democracy that never change. However, the institutions providing the execution of democracy can change in each country. While there is a multi-party system based on the proportional representative system, in some a two party presidential system based on majority systems has developed. Differences in different countries is nor harmful for the concept of democracy. However, without the existence of the basic values of democracy, it is impossible to talk of democracy.<sup>48</sup>

For example, new conservative democrats gathered around John Askcroft who is a radical religious Christian and a racists who defends the superiority of the white race and America. They have gathered around Evangelist church. Their common ideas focus in neo-liberalist economy and America's the only leadership in the world' politics. AKP who introduces itself as conservative Democratic Party, even if it does have a racist opinion, it is clear that a conflict does not exist in its defense of the superiority of Turkey and its development. AKP's election Program explains its identity as conservative democrat with these words:

AKP, which believes that our nation has a historical experience and accumulation as a strong basis for our future, is conservative party. Turkish society is a large family in this geography, sharing a common destiny where sweet and bitter memories come together. Opportunity will be provided to reproduce the values forming the identity of this family, and continue under the light of contemporary developments.<sup>49</sup>

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan making a speech at the Davos World Economic Forum has emphasized both the democratic and conservative identity with

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<sup>47</sup> Yalçın (2004), p.50.

<sup>48</sup> Ömer Çaha, "*Muhafazakar demokrasi liberal demokrasinin kardeşidir*", *Zaman*(31/08/2003). <http://arsiv.zaman.com.tr/2003/08/31/yorumlar/default.htm> (Accessed 12/01/2007).

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.akparti.org.tr/> (2 November 2006).

these words:

To accept that values belonging to Islamic culture cannot live together with modernism and democracy is the biggest mistake to be made. It makes the meeting of civilizations not a theory anymore. Especially Turkey is the most concrete example which shows that clash of the civilizations is not a destiny and our common future lies in the meeting of the civilizations. Today, from our democratic system to our liberal economic structure, to the effect forming stability we spread around a tolerant Islamic understanding of our people: We have considered ourselves as both member of the Islamic world and the West. We have targeted to integrate completely with the West. We have contributed to the achievement of common goals of the West as European Council, OSCE's founding member and a member of NATO. Our cultural and religious identity did not conflict with the wide scoped interactivity we have entered with the West.<sup>50</sup>

Politics should be so an area of reconciliation where the differences in the society are accepted by the society. Political authority not based on legality, constitution and legitimacy cannot make itself accepted by the society. In AKP's "*Muhafazakar Demokrat*" book, "conservatism" is defined like this:

"Conservatism defends evolutionary change and change in stages against revolutionary change. Instead of radicalism, it takes the moderation as the principle and believes that the gains coming from the past should be protected."<sup>51</sup>

AKP especially emphasizes the constitutional state, laicism, human rights and freedoms. Civil society organizations and voluntary organizations are brought to the foreground, and social politics are focused on. AKP is a conservative and democratic party. General acceptance owned by the majority of Turkish people has brought it to the government. This reality can not be rejected: Turkey is the only Muslim country that adopted the national and moral values together with contemporary values. It never sacrificed its moral values, and benefited from the fruits of the contemporary civilization.

When it is considered all of these, it becomes clear that AKP is right about introducing itself as conservative democratic party. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan always had a conservative side, because he came from Refah Party and his formation was set

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<sup>50</sup> Davos World Economic Forum, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "*Kıbrıs'ta tarafsız arabulucu faydalı olacaktır / İki taraflılık için iki devlet şart değil / Irak'ta federatif yapı istemek yanlıştır*", Dünya Online(25/01/2004). [http://www.dunyagazetesi.com.tr/news\\_display.asp?upsale\\_id=160525](http://www.dunyagazetesi.com.tr/news_display.asp?upsale_id=160525) (Accessed 21/12/2006).

<sup>51</sup> Yalçın (2004), p.128.

up within this party. However, we see that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's both domestic and foreign policies for five years was futuristic and secular. AKP shows its Islamic side wherever it goes. AKP members' wives almost all wear conservative clothes. Ex-mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reflected his conservative and democratic side at that time. Erdoğan who appeared in a television program in 1995, said that "a person can not be secular and Muslim at the same time."<sup>52</sup> We can say that Erdoğan was a conservative even then. Because he gained the sympathy of Istanbul, millions of people, by means of the municipal services he has given and the tolerances he has shown to the opposition. Erdoğan, seen as problematic by some foreign countries due to one of his previous explanation but this is a great false perception. Today, Erdoğan makes Turkish people feel that the world has changed and he has changed as well, with the activities of AKP. Foreign Vice President Dan Fried responsible from USA's relationships with Europe and Eurasia, said that "the fact that AKP's development as a democratic party in central right, reflects and supports that as a whole Turkish political society developed towards liberal and democratic directions."<sup>53</sup>

It shows one more time that Erdoğan is open to change but will not compromise from his beliefs. In a editorial on *Zaman* newspaper, İhsan D. Dağı explains AKP's identity as below:

It is impossible to claim that the 34% which votes for AKP have gained corresponds to Islamist part in Turkey. According to the research of Tarhan Erdem who has foreseen the November 3<sup>rd</sup> elections, AKP gained votes almost from all of the parties' voters. When compared to the 1999 elections, 69 % *Fazilet Party* (FP) voters, 38% of *Milliyetçi Halk Party* (MHP) voters, 28% of the *Anavatan Party* (Motherland Party ANAP) voters, 21% of the *Doğru Yol Party* voters (DYP) and 14% of the *Demokratik Sol Party* (Democratic Left Party, DSP) voters voted for AKP in November 3<sup>rd</sup> elections. This shows that AKP especially collected the votes of conservative right. Moreover, if the cities where AKP is the first party are considered, it will be seen that these are cities where ANAP was the party first in 1983 and 1987. With the new voters, AKP has collected the votes of ANAP from the years 1983-1987. Therefore it will be false to say that AKP has gained only the votes of the poor and the put down. It can be seen that AKP has gained support from the far sides of Anatolia, poor

<sup>52</sup> RECEP Tayyip Erdoğan, "Ben Değiştim Mi Değişmedim Mi, Ben Kimim Siz Kendiniz Karar Verin". <http://www.ruki.org/degistim.htm> (Accessed 08/06/2007).

<sup>53</sup> ABD Dışişleri Bakan Yardımcısı Fried, AKP'yi övdü. Hürriyet USA. [http://www.hurriyetusa.com/haber/haber\\_detay.asp?id=6711](http://www.hurriyetusa.com/haber/haber_detay.asp?id=6711) (Accessed 11.10.2005).

suburbs, and certain Anatolian entrepreneurs. Therefore, it can be seen that AKP do not reflect an Islamic regime change with its social base, but reflects the ‘peripheral demands.’ This is a center-right sociological mass who is traditionally not ideological but developmental, not against to government but against to red tape applications of bureaucracy.<sup>54</sup>

AKP is particularly embracing the center right and trying not to conflict with the left later on, and not making concession from its moral values that helped the party to gain the Turkish public trust. Yalçın Akdoğan (a writer of *Yeni Şafak*) in an interview in the newspaper about AK Party emphasizes these:

This can be achieved if we cannot say that AKP is the party of Alawis, Sunnis, Kurds or Turks, or the Easterners and Westerners. AKP does not make politics by promoting and focusing on only one ethnic group, a single sect or a single religious, or a single regional opinion. And it never makes separation by separating ‘us and others and implementing politics in compliance with this.’<sup>55</sup>

It is observed that AKP, with its conservative and democratic identity, try o solve certain problematic concepts such as the discussions of religion-state, religion-politics, state-society-individual relationships. This party try to consolidate these issues in a peaceful way.

### **1.1.8. National Vision (Milli Görüş)**

The parties of *Milli Görüş* have an important place in Turkish political life, their key role gained an importance more than ever, and they have started to occupy a greater space in the political arena. The period that began with Necmettin Erbakan’s election in Konya in 1969 as a independent parliamentarian, continued with the foundation of *Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party, MNP)*, *Milli Selamet Partisi (Nationali Salvation Party, MSP)*, *Refah Partisi (Welfare Party, RP)*, and *Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party, FP)*. After FP, the foundation of *Saadet Partisi (Happiness Party, SP)* and a second party, Justice and Development Party which defined itself as conservative confused everybody even more.

In 1975 Necmettin Erbakan published a manifesto that he called as *Milli Görüş*, ‘The National Vision. It spoke only in the most general terms of moral and

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<sup>54</sup> İhsan D. Dağı, “AKP İslami bir Parti mi?” *Zaman* (21/11/2002). <http://www.arsiv.zaman.com.tr/2002/11/21/yorumlar/default.ht> (Accessed 11/10/2006).

<sup>55</sup> Yalçın Akdoğan, “*Biz ve Diğerleri Yok*”, *Yeni Şafak* (05/01/2007). <http://www.yenisafak.com./yazdir/?t=05.01.2007&q=1&c=16&I=14655> ( Accessed 12/04/2007).

religious education but devoted much attention to industrialization, development and economic independence. It warned against further rapprochement towards Europe, considering the Common Market to be a Zionist and Catholic project for the assimilation and de-Islamization. The name of *Milli Görüş* associated with a religio-political movement and a series of Islamist parties inspired by Erbakan, one succeeding the other as they were banned for violating Turkey's *laik* legislation.

Among the Turkish immigrants in Western Europe, *Milli Görüş* became one of the major, if not the major, religious movement, controlling numerous mosques. Like the movement in Turkey, it went through some remarkable changes, not least because the first generation, which was strongly oriented towards what happened in Turkey, is gradually surrendering leadership to a younger generation that grew up in Europe and is concerned with entirely different matters. *Milli Görüş* public profile shows considerable differences from one country to the next, suggesting that nature of the interaction with the 'host' societies may have as much of an impact on its character as a religious movement as the relationship with the 'mother' movement in Turkey. This is a strong argument for studying this and similar movements in comparative perspective and taking the context of the 'host' societies explicitly into account.<sup>56</sup>

*Milli Görüş*, which is a political trend, started in 1968 with the leading of Necmettin Erbakan's Independents' Movement and become a party with Milli Nizam Party. This political view, defends that Turkey can develop with its own human and economical power, by protecting its own values and the strength of the history can walk with faster steps. After the closing of *Milli Nizam Party* (MNP), *Milli Selamet Party* (MSP), *Refah Party* (RP) and *Fazilet Party* (FP), attempts to continue its principles with the formation of Saadet Party. The departure of names such as Bülent Arınç, Abdullah Gül and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called as the innovational, and the fact that they have in appearance isolated themselves from *Milli Görüş* entirely and call themselves as conservative democrat is nothing but a confusion of the meanings. With Necmeddin Erbakan's expression, "National Vision" is a view that respects to our nations traditional, moral and all other values". Main views forming AKP are liberalism, conservatism, nationalism and national vision.

By declaring that his party has the ideology of Conservative Democracy, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan tries to show that the community AKP represents is entirely

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<sup>56</sup> Martin van Bruinessen "*Milli Görüş in Western Europe*", (09/01/2004). [http://www.let.uu.nl/Martin.vanBruinessen/personal/conferences/Milli\\_Gorsu\\_workshop\\_report.htm](http://www.let.uu.nl/Martin.vanBruinessen/personal/conferences/Milli_Gorsu_workshop_report.htm) (Accessed 14/02/2007).

broken the ties with National Vision, and AKP is a more moderate party. We can think that AKP's this attempt is the attempt to have itself accepted to its competing political parties, and those thinking that AKP is a party threatening laicism and who worry under this situation.

With the expression of "Conservative Democracy", Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is probably trying to widen the base he represents. Erdoğan both attaches importance to religious values and tries to express that he is open to innovation and development. He knows well that, in Turkey, the political parties which focus on only conservative views and religion can not have a long political life.

Even though AKP is defined as conservative by some groups, AKP's foundation objective is to develop a political line away from the political understanding based on religion, and have all the segments of the society adopt the image of "we changed" and "we are different." This situation anyhow is one of the biggest factors providing the victory to AKP in November 3<sup>rd</sup> election. With the term "Conservative Democrat", Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is probably trying to enlarge the base it represents. Erdoğan, who wants to show that he respects religious values and is open to novelty and developments, knows very well by looking at his predecessors that a party which is predominantly conservative or religious cannot survive in the long run.

Although AKP is defined by some people as a conservative party, the reason lying behind its establishment is to develop a political discourse which is far from a religion-based policy that leads to conflicts between the society and the state. It also aimed at persuading all layers of the society that they had "changed" and that they are "different". This is one of the most important factors that aided AKP to win a victory in November, 3 elections.



## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1. WOMEN IN AKP

We see that, the ideological strategy that equates the family with women can result in different political participation experiences which empower women in social/political life. One of the most interesting experiences in this respect belongs to Fazilet Partisi (Refah Party) women. It is a fact that the women working in FP created an original political field without criticizing their traditional roles and by basing it upon traditional ceremonies like circumcision, birth, death, and marriage ceremonies. FP women's endeavors to politicize social and religious solidarity patterns in order to provide support to their parties resulted in attainment of political experiences which would open new fields for political empowerment and helped them to claim the ownership of their party's success. Although this experience, which is based upon the politicizing of the traditional women's roles, is interesting, it has yet to turn the problems which are based on their sexual identity -except for the problem of headscarf- turn into political demands and to help them enter into the parliament with these demands.<sup>1</sup>

Modernization dynamics such as urbanization, professionalism, education, market economy, which socialize women, are among the important reasons why political parties focus on the issue of women. In an article, Taha Akyol states that “It is these some dynamics (urbanization, education) that socialize women”.<sup>2</sup> In this sentence, Akyol wants to explain; in Turkey many girls wear headscarf so they are forbidden by the government. A lot of students left the *İmam Hatip* School (high school where religious lectures are given intensively) and these schools were closed but many girl students carried on their education. According to Akyol, Turkish women must be set free because it is necessary for the development of a country. All developed countries have given political, economical, and cultural rights to their women. If a government tries to obstruct this case, it is not a democratic and modern country. We cannot say that there are clear-cut differences between the perspectives that different political parties adopt regarding women. It would not be correct to assert that they hold very different views regarding women in a country where Turkish traditions still predominate and where 97% of the population is Muslim.

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<sup>1</sup> Meryem Koray, *Kadın ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: TÜSES, 1991), p.211.

<sup>2</sup> Taha Akyol, “*Türkiye Laik Kalacak*”, *Milliyet* (13/11/2006). <http://makale.turkcebilgi.com/kose-yazisi-102044-taha-akyol-turkiye-laik-kalacak.html> (Accessed 06/01/2007).

Although they look different, they are very similar to each other in practice. But from this point of view, we can say that the greatest dissimilarities are between right-wing and left-wing parties. In practice, however, there are not big gaps between them. Erdoğan repeated his views about women's participation in politics in Eskişehir. Inviting women to participate, Erdoğan said:

You are going to visit every single house [and do this] continuously. Women must work harder. Now and then, men grow jealous. But with this election, this will be overcome. Therefore [I advocate] competition. Why? I believe that women's problems should not be voiced by men in the parliament. Women should come and voice them by themselves, because they are living them in person. Those are the one who really suffer. But [now], it is the men who express them. We hereby invite our lady friends who are qualified to become a member of the parliament.<sup>3</sup>

However, AKP administrators state that "81 MPs from 81 provinces project" is not realistic, and that number of women candidates might be higher in big cities and smaller in small cities. They say that rationally speaking, this figure might be around 50. Even this is a revolution. There are 24 women MP's in the parliament where three political parties exist. AKP will double this figure by itself. It is estimated that, with other parties, this figure might reach 100.

Zeliha Akbaş, who is a lawyer and who is the Chairperson of AKP Adıyaman Women Branches, states that AKP's views on women are very different from those of other parties. The reason for this, she says, is that there are many activities which encourage women to be more participatory in social, official, and political lives.<sup>4</sup> As I stated above, numerous ideas are generated about political women by many parties; however, I would like to emphasize the fact that in practice, there are no outstanding improvements.

The amendments in the Laws on Political Parties and Elections which were prepared with a joint effort of 8 women organizations and which were submitted to the government with the support of 25 women organizations and which are null and

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<sup>3</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, *AKP'den En Az 50 Kadın Vekil*, Haberler.com. <http://www.haberler.com/akp-den-en-az-50-kadin-vekil-haberi/> (Accessed 03/04/2007).

<sup>4</sup> Zeliha Akbaş, "AKP'nin Kadınlara Bakış Açısı Farklı", Adıyaman Haber (27/07/2006). <http://www.adiyamanhaber.com/b/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1689> (Accessed 04/02/ 2007).

void at the moment provided for measures that are parallel to those observed in other countries. Furthermore, with the amendment which will be made in the first paragraph of Article 127 of the Constitution, it has been suggested that the local administrations be formed in accordance with the principles of “equality among genders and participation”. In the amendment proposal<sup>5</sup> in the Law on Political Parties and Elections, it has been suggested that that it should be compulsory that every gender be represented at least 30%. However, with regards to these proposals, no practical results have been obtained by AKP or other parties.

It cannot be stated that political parties have policies intending to secure political equality. Despite the fact that the familiar roles which are found appropriate for women are changing day by day, they are maintained by the women branches of the parties.

By declaring itself as a conservative democratic party, the subjects of family and particularly women have a unique place in AKP’s relations with its electorate and election campaigns. As a result, what AKP thinks about women, and whether any changes took place in its views in time, will be explained by studying the AKP’s program and the relevant views of various AKP officials.

First of all, it is believed that resorting to AKP’s program will be very beneficial in understanding the issue better.

### ***2.1.1. Women’s Silhouette in AKP’s Program***

In the “Social Policies” section of AKP, the subject matter of women is explained as follows: “The solution of women’s problems, which had build up because of years of neglect, is the prior objective of the party. This is not only because women form a half of the society, but also because they are individuals first and foremost, and because they are very important in the bringing up healthy generations.

As can be understood from the program, the reasons why the party attaches

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<sup>5</sup> Number 2820, Law of political parties.

importance to women are that they form the half of the Turkish society and that they are very important in the bringing up healthy generations. The emphasis on the quality of being a mother in the program clearly reveals their views about the position of women should have in the politics. The role the party sees appropriate for women is one of a mother and a good spouse. In facts, this viewpoint does not solely belong to AKP. When it is analyzed the programs of other right-wing parties (DYP, NAP), Islamic Parties (*Saadet Party, Büyük Birlik Party*), and nationalist parties (Milliyetçi Halk Party), we see that they, too, emphasize the role of motherhood and being a good spouse for women. It can be understood that women are generally seen inside the domestic walls.<sup>6</sup> The party program also states that “we are going to encourage women to become members of our party and to participate actively in politics.”<sup>7</sup> We can understand that, in order for women to participate actively in politics, women must become members of the party. In fact, membership to a party in Turkey has not changed the fate of women until now. However, having a lot of women members means “having a lot of votes”. We cannot say that the situation that emerged on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002 election is any different from that of previous years. Here is the number of women who were in the first three ranks of candidate lists who had a high probability of being elected in the 2002 elections: of 27 women candidates, AKP put only 1 woman in the first three ranks; of 22 women candidates, ANAP placed 14; of 46 women candidates, CHP put 7; of 18 women candidates, MHP put 2; of 41 women candidates, DYP put 11; of 30 women candidates, DSP put 12; of 52 women candidates, *YTP (Yeni Türkiye Party)* put 22; of 6 women candidates, SP put 3; of 26 women candidates, BBP put 7 in the first three ranks in the candidate lists.<sup>8</sup>

Women who participated in political activities in the RP period have not been stressed in the AKP’s Party Program enough. Despite this fact, we can say that AKP women took the women branches in the RP period as an example. When we consider the fact that RP entered into the parliament through the women votes in 1991 and

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<sup>6</sup> Serdar Şen, *AKP Milli Görüşçü mü?*, (İstanbul: Nokta Kitap, 2004), p.346.

<sup>7</sup> AKP Party Program, program 5-7 kadın. <http://www.akparti.org.tr/program.asp?dizin=0&hangisi=0> (Accessed 11/02/2007).

<sup>8</sup> Nesibe İbrahim, “*Kadınlar Meclise Ama...*“, *İşçimücadelesi* (11/09/2002). <http://www.iscimucadelesi.net/dergi/dort/kadin4.htm> ( Accessed 03/01/2007).

1995, and analyze the results of the elections, it is a surprise to see that the ratio of women members in the parliament of 450 in 1991 was 1.8%. This ratio was 2.36% in 1995, when the number of members was 550. We can say that, although RP emphasized the women organizations in those days, this was not reflected in the results of the elections, but they still received support from RP women. RP constitutes an example to subsequent parties in this manner.

When some of politicians' explanations are examined, the following statements give certain ideas regarding AKP's policies in this matter. AKP's MP of Istanbul Hüseyin Besli says that: "Women should first and foremost accept the fact that they are offered beings. Then, they can be anything what they want."<sup>9</sup> These words caused negative reactions among certain parts of the society. In his book, Nevzat Bölügiray states that Hüseyin Besli has a primitive world view which sees women as beings offered solely to satisfy the sexual desires of men. Later, Besli remarks: "Views of Islamists have always been determined according to gender and sex."<sup>10</sup> This totally irrational generalization by Besli underlines the fact that he does not have an objective viewpoint.

Doğan Soyaslan, the undersecretary of the Minister of Justice, says that; "Since educated and working women go out more frequently, they are less religious"<sup>11</sup> With this explanations, he explains religiousness in connection with going out in the street or not. This striking example also helps us understand AKP's policy on women. Almost all of the decisions about women are taken by men in the AKP government. Moreover, Hikmet Özdemir, AKP's MP of Çankırı, distributed a booklet titled "Forty Hadiths", which stated that women would certainly go to hell unless they prayed five times a day rigorously, and obeyed their husbands.<sup>12</sup> The existence of people with such extreme ideas in the AKP constitutes a drawback for the party. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on the other hand, states that the obstacle before

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<sup>9</sup> Nevzat Bölügiray, *AKP değişiyor mu?* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayıncılık, 2004), p.126.

<sup>10</sup> Nevzat (2004), p.124.

<sup>11</sup> Ozan Ceyhun, "Adalet Bakanı Cemil Çiçek'e Açık Mektup", *Radikal* (18/06/2007). <http://www.ses.org.tr/kadinlar/k38.htm> (Accessed 18/06/ 2007).

<sup>12</sup> İpek Arıoğul, "TBMM'de Kadın Cehennemlik Broşürü", *Hürriyet* (12/05/2006). <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/4401015.asp?gid=0> (05 01 2007).

women's participation in politics, is the patriarchal understanding. These examples show us that, in AKP, there are people with diverse opinions on women participation in politics.

In contradiction with these, Selma Kavaf, Chairperson of AKP Women Branches stated that their target was to elect one woman from every province. Their slogan was "81 women members from 81 provinces". If this is realized, it will help a lot to clear away the negative comments about AKP.

Will AKP government, who brought the eligibility age to 25, consider women? As the discussions about the early election raged, the women's organizations agenda concerning "the situation of women" did not attract much attention. Women candidates were placed in the lowest places in the candidate lists, a fact which is expected to recur in the 2007 election as well. And this causes women to organize different campaigns. When we think about the results of the previous elections with regards to women's political rights, it is apparent that, along with other parties, AKP will show only a slight interest in women candidates again. If AKP manages to elect 81 women in 81 provinces, this will be an unequalled success in the history of the Republic of Turkey. However, at the present AKP government, the women are almost nonexistent in the parliament. With a percentage of 4.4, Turkey ranks 163<sup>rd</sup> among 167 countries, and almost holds the record for the lowest number of women MPs.<sup>13</sup> As long as women are not represented in the Parliament equally, it will not be possible to eradicate the inequality between men and women. Will AKP and other parties, who are very busy with the intermediary elections at the moment, take women into consideration, among other issues? Will AKP government make an attempt to compensate for the shame of 4.4%? Now that the amendment regarding changing the age of eligibility to 25 was adopted on May 1, 2007, can AKP not give a quota to women?

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<sup>13</sup> Gila Benmayor, "Erken seçimde 25 yaşı düşünün kadını düşünecek mi", *Hürriyet* (04/05/2007). <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/6455536.asp?yazarid=20&gid=61> (Accessed 01/06/2007).

### **2.1.2 AKP's Female MPs**

In order to develop, to improve socially, and to raise conscious generations, women must have a role in the decision-making mechanisms. When we examine election manifestos of AKP and CHP, which passed the threshold, we see that they did not make any positive statements regarding the improvement of women's participation in politics. One of these parties advocates that women have the responsibility to bring up healthy generations and secure the family happiness. The other promotes that the issue of women must be resolved because of its negative impact on the modern Turkey image. Both of these manifestos do not mention the encouragement of women's political representation and address the women issue within the scope of family and modernity.

In order to meet the Copenhagen Criteria in relation to harmonization with the European Union, a bill was submitted suggesting the amendment of 10 Articles<sup>14</sup> and it was accepted at the voting held on 4 and 7 May 2004 at the plenary session of TGNA. However, the positive discrimination motion concerning women was rejected by AKP. That the first MP to reject this motion was a woman (Nimet Çubukçu) and that she acquired the male MPs support, and that the motion was rejected with majority of votes, demonstrate that women MPs are not able stand on their feet. The concept of positive discrimination emerged as a means of reducing the marginalization of minorities because of their natural qualities and eliminating it in the long run. It aims at resolving the inequality resulting from discrimination by providing various rights to marginalized groups according to the source of the problem. However, Nimet Çubukçu stated that the women's problems were above the politics, and that contrary situations might hurt women, and rejected positive discrimination, reinforcing the obstacles before her fellow-beings. The fact that other women MPs from AKP rejected the motion demonstrates that they acted as the members of the patriarchal AKP.

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<sup>14</sup> Constitution article 10: All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations. Men and women have equal rights. The State shall have the obligation to ensure that this equality exist in practice. No privilege shall be granted to any individual, family, group or class. State organs and administrative authorities shall act in compliance with the principle of equality before the law in all their proceedings.

The attitudes and potential of AKP women in the parliament is in proportion to the attempts they make there. We can say that their insufficient number is a disadvantage; however, their inability to express themselves in proportion to their existing number is a greater disadvantage.

According to the report of Turkish Committee for the Observation of Parliamentarians and Elected People, 2005, (*TÜMİKOM; Milletvekillerini ve Seçilmişleri İzleme Komiteleri*), the participation of the 24 women MPs in the legislative works is almost nothing. The report, which states that the women MPs did not speak on behalf of their party or the government, and they did not announce any commission reports that is very similar to the TGNA Activity Report submitted in 2007.<sup>15</sup>

AKP's women<sup>16</sup> MPs come from very different educational backgrounds. Some of them are engineers, others lawyers, and still others are businesswomen. They do not have a political background in general, but it is a fact that they are recognized by their constituencies, they are highly esteemed, and they are well qualified economically. As a result, it is inevitable that these well-equipped people influence their environment. Such women usually lead other uneducated women who are financially dependent. For example in Turkey, 92% of the immovable goods belong to men, whereas only 8% belongs to women. This proves that the economically independent and highly educated women are very scarce. Such women are usually appointed to women branches of the party by the administration, which facilitates the monitoring of uneducated and economically dependent women through them.

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<sup>15</sup> *Tümikom 22. Dönem Meclis Raporunu Açıkladı*, haberler.com (12/07/2007). <http://www.haberler.com/tumikom-22-donem-meclis-raporunu-acikladi-haberi/> (Accessed 15/07/2007).

<sup>16</sup> The women members of the Grand National Assembly from AKP: Zeynep Karahan Uslu, Nukhet Hotar Göksel (İzmir), Ayhan Zeynep Tekin Börü (Adana), Remziye Öztoprak, Semiha Öyüş Fatma Şahin Kimdir (Gaziantep), Güldal Akşit (Malatya), Nimet Çubukçu, Halide İncekara, İnci Özdemir (İstanbul), Gülseren Topuz (İstanbul), Serpil Yıldız (İzmir). municipality mayors in AKP; Fatma Görgeç, Yeşilköy Dörtüol (Hatay), Nazmiye Kabadayı (Giresun, Doğan kent).



### **2.1.3. General Assessment of AKP's Women Mayors**

When it is examined the political backgrounds of AKP's women MPs and mayors, we do not come across many people who have been active in politics for a long time. Of the AKP mayors, 9 graduated from Economics, Public Relations, and Law Departments. Other four were educated in different engineering faculties before they entered politics. The existence of such women in AKP, inevitably implies that these people were pushed into the parliament as a showroom. How much can a woman, who is not politically experienced, engage in politics when they are in the parliament and how much can they pursue the interests of women there? On the other hand, two or three of them are graduates of engineering faculties. The separation of women politicians as engineers and lawyers is very practical for the purposes of our study. In her book "Engineers and Ideology", Nilüfer Göle gave examples of effects of an engineering mentality upon administration and planning. In general, engineers think that thinking with numbers is their defining characteristic and that as a result only they can find the most reasonable and exact solution. The reason why engineers make good political leaders is connected to their superiority in mathematics and logic. It has been found that, unlike lawyer politicians, engineer politicians tend to focus on solutions instead of ideological arguments.<sup>17</sup> The vast number of people who believe that engineers are capable of making decisions more promptly and that they dislike bureaucracy and the fact that the leading political figures in the post-1980 era were mainly engineers led us to examine the political identities of women in the parliament in the 22nd term for the purposes of this study. It is clear that the AKP government did not focus on their professional backgrounds while selecting women politicians.

The TGNA activity assessment below shows the amount of activities of women MPs that involved in the parliament. The women's activities are only around 5% which proves that there still exists a long way women has to cover in the political arena.

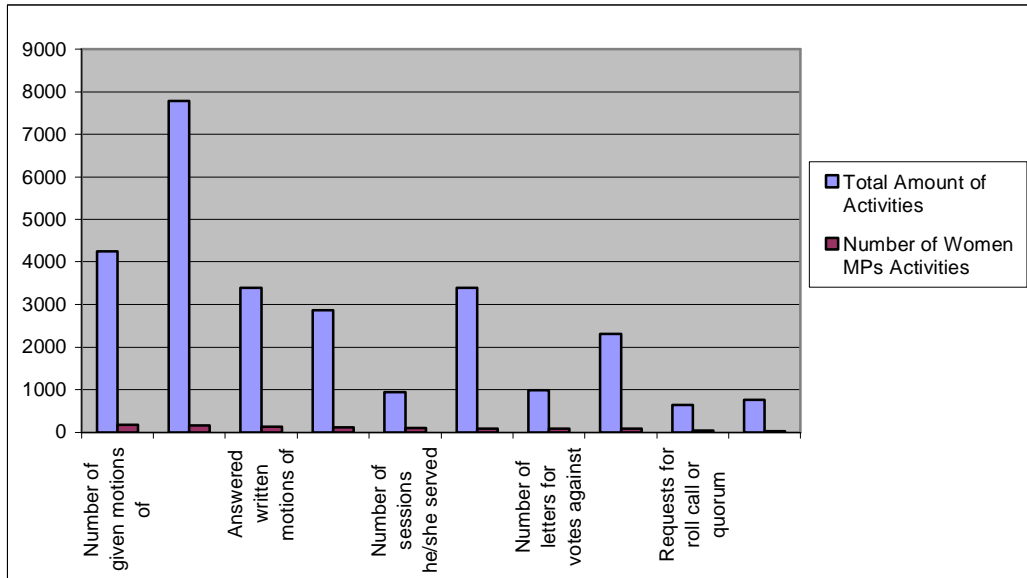
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<sup>17</sup> Nilüfer Göle, *Mühendisler ve İdeoloji Öncü Devrimcilerden Yenilikçi Seçkinlere* (İstanbul: Metis Yayıncılık, 1986), p.50.

**Table 2.1 Top 10 Activities of Women MPs in the TGNA Activity  
Assessment (2006)<sup>18</sup>**

Explanation	Total Amount of Activities	Number of Women MPs Activities	Percentage in the Total
Number of given motions of interrogation	4249	166	3,91
Reciprocal talks and/or allusions	7784	158	2,03
Answered written motions of interrogation	3399	129	3,8
Motions for parliamentary inquiry	2858	112	3,8
Number of sessions he/she served as secretary of council	947	104	10,98
Number of written motions of interrogations he/she replied	3399	92	2,71
Number of letters for votes against	991	87	8,78
Motions for amendments in an article of law	2309	75	3,25
Requests for roll call or quorum	639	32	5,01
Request for comment about an article	760	31	4,08

<sup>18</sup> Representatives and elected committees among TGNA activities (01/10/2004-30/09/2005). TBMM 22.Dönem 3.Yasama Yılı Milletvekillerini İzleme Raporu (1 Ekim 2004-30 Eylül 2005). <http://www.haberler.com/tumikom-22-donem-meclis-raporunu-acikladi-haberi/> (Accessed 15/04/2007).



**Figure 2.1 Top Ten Activities of Women MPs in the TGNA Activity Assessment**

Table 2.1 shows us that in terms of written motions of interrogation which they gave and answered, women MPs were not actively involved during the decision-making process, that they were unable to reflect their decisions in the parliament, and that they could not express the problems of their fellow women enough. They gave 166 written motions of interrogation, compared to the total number of 4249. This proves the male dominant structure of the parliament once more. Of the 991 opposing votes, only 87 of them belong to women, with a ration of 8.78, which shows that women were able to raise their voices when they feel necessary. Women MPs were not active with regards to proposing amendments in articles of law. Among 2309 AKP's activities, only 75 of them were performed by women, a situation which seems to prove that women shun their male counterparts who are in majority. This table clearly demonstrates the power or influence of women in directing politics in the parliament. The percentage of women MPs' attendance to parliamentary activities has been 44%. On the other hand, bills of law, written and verbal motions submitted by women MPs of CHP is in direct contrast with those of AKP's women MPs. For example, Nevin Gaye Erbatur, a CHP MP, submitted 394

written and verbal motions for interrogation. She submitted 73 bills of law in the same period. There were propositions and motions regarding women among these motions of interrogation.

In AKP's women policy, it is not the woman but the family that occupies the center. What distinguishes AKP from other parties with regards to the women issue is their great emphasis on honour. From one aspect, AKP seems to represent the changing and modernizing Islamist movement. However, we cannot say that women are politically supported during this modernization. In general, AKP sees women as mothers or housewives rather than equal individuals. Declarations by party representatives verify our thesis. Does AKP generate policies concerning women? Of course, it does. However, in these policies, women are left behind somewhat. In his meeting with provincial chairpersons and MPs, Tayyip Erdoğan stated that it was necessary to rejuvenate the party organs, that the number of women was few, and that his number was going to be brought to 30%. However, the number of women in Central Execution Committee (*Merkez Karar Yürütme Kurulu- MKYK*) is still 12, which constitutes the 25% of the total number.<sup>19</sup> When we compare the number of women MPs and the number of women members in the MKYK, we see that AKP is more tolerant about women in the MKYK. In an issue of the *Le Vif/L'Express* magazine, on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2003, which sells 125 thousand copies every week, Nükte V. Ortaç comments on the political situation of Turkish women in the AKP era in this way:

The fact that of the 550 MPs, only 24 are women proves that political life in Turkey is in men's hands. However, a change may come from a very unexpected place. For example AKP, who is in power for a year and who has Islamic roots and defines itself as "conservative and democrat", became the first Turkish party to start a quota system which gave more room to women. In the last general assembly held on 12 October, it was decided their at least 20% of the members of the central board to be women. Furthermore, 10 female delegates entered the party administration. This is a small revolution. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan must have remembered that, if it were not for the ambitious efforts of AKP's women militants in 1994, he would have not be elected the mayor of İstanbul. However, in those days, he did not allow any women to enter the city council, disappointing

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<sup>19</sup> MKYK kadın üyeleri; Ayşe Böhürler, Lale Ersoy, Necla Hatipoğlu, Serap Yaşar, Çiğdem Özkal, Edibe Sözen, Güldal Akşit, Fatma Şahin, Öznur Çelik, Sema Özdemir, Lale Ersoy, Semiha Öyüş.

his female supporters. Many reforms concerning laws that highlight gender. Among its presumptuous targets, AKP decided to restructure the Turkish Criminal Code which was adopted in 1926, three years after the foundation of the Republic. However, everything does not happen as they want them to. When the bill was submitted to the Justice Commission of the Parliament, woman's rights associations reacted harshly. As the bill was examined in the sub-commission, the reactions grew. When Dođan Soyaslan, one of advisors for the Minister of Justice, proposed that the law which stipulated that if the rapist gets married to his victim and stays married for five years, the case be dropped (a law which is still in force) be kept as it is, caused a scandal. His rationale for his proposal was "It's a fact of Turkey that the victim of a rape gets married to her rapist" and "No one wants to get married to a woman who is not a virgin." Feminist associations blamed the Ministry of Justice for legalizing the violence against women in the façade of respecting cultural and traditional differences. This view was supported by AKP's women MPs and militants openly. Although they have a similar take on this subject, these parties do not have a connection. Various female MPs from AKP, like Nükhet Hotar, request that associations that defend women's rights defend the women who are excluded because of their headscarves. For example, when the President Ahmet Necdet Sezer did not invite the wives of the MPs who wore headscarves, or when Civil Court of First Instance judge did not want to listen to a defendant because she was wearing a headscarf, they were not condemned by any association. The cause of AKP women is not supported by AKP men either.<sup>20</sup>

In her article, Ortaq voices a very striking point. She says that if it were not for the women representatives or members of AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would not win the municipal elections in 1994. Ortaq also states that the reason for AKP women not to enter into the parliament is the headscarf. All the inquiries we carried out above demonstrate that their dresses or headscarves did not constitute an obstacle that stopped women from AKP or other parties from entering the parliament. Otherwise, AKP would have put more than one woman candidate out of 27 who did not wear headscarves into the first three places in the election lists. However, "according to the results of a research, 42% of women who wore headscarves voted for AKP. In none of the other parties the percentage of the support from women wearing headscarves exceed 10 %."<sup>21</sup> However, AKP needs to obey the rules of the

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<sup>20</sup>Nükte V. Ortaq, "Türk Kadınlarına Yer Ayrılıyor", LE VİF/L'EXPRESS (22/12/2003).  
<http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/DISBASIN/2003/12/22x12x03.HTM#%204>  
(Accessed 02/01/2007).

<sup>21</sup>Güneri Civaolu, "Türbanın MR'ı", Milliyet (12/11/2006).  
<http://www.sakaryadayanismanplatformu.org/basortusu/milliyet/gunericiva.htm>  
(Accessed 05/01/ 2007).

game at this point. Although 42% of women with headscarves voted for AKP, this does not suffice to make AKP change their policies about women. Another important point is that Erdoğan gives answers without being dragged into a polemic about headscarf. Reminding that they did not promise to solve this problem once they won the elections, Erdoğan says,

I did not make such a promise. For me, the headscarf issue is not about winning votes, but about freedom. We practice this in our family. This is a struggle for freedom. We said that we would not take a side in a social tension about this issue. There is a social agreement on this. But there are problems with regards to institutional agreement. If we can achieve an agreement among institutions, this issue will be resolved by itself. There is no need to make a discussion out of this. You cannot resolve this issue unless there is an institutional agreement. I believe that time will sort this out.<sup>22</sup>

But the headscarf is a political symbol,” explains Nilüfer Narlı, head of Sociology Department at Bahçeşehir University, who was among the protesters. “People think if the first lady wears a headscarf then many things will change, threatening our whole secular system and forcing all women to wear headscarves.”<sup>23</sup>

The reason why AKP, who obtained the 42% of the votes from women with headscarves, does not focus on this issue is that Erdoğan wants to take the middle path. He tried not to guarantee anything to these people for five years, but made them feel that he stood by them whenever he could. However, in order to increase the number of women in AKP, it is necessary to improve the conditions which the women wearing headscarves are in who supported him. We know that there are many active and successful women who are willing to enter politics but who cannot go into parliament because of their headscarves. Although the headscarf is one of the obstacles keeping women away from politics, AKP seems that it is insensitive about this subject, a situation which had or will have negative repercussions on women.

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<sup>22</sup> Taha Akyol, “*Değişimin Dayanılmaz Hafifliği, Erdoğan: AKP başörtü vaadiyle gelmedi*”, (01/03/2007). <http://www.saadetfatih.org/detail.asp?categoryId=73&contentId=1172767496354> (Accessed 01.03.2007).

<sup>23</sup> Nilüfer Narlı, “İslamcılar Demokrasiyi İdare Edebilir mi?”, *Dış Basında* 58.Hükümet (21-26/11/2002). <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/bultenler/58hukumet/58hukumet.htm> (Accessed 05/04/2007).

The türban(headscarf) issue is a valance issue, which has deeply been influenced by religiosity in Turkey. In fact, the preceding analysis indicates that unless immersed in the context of Sunni versus Alevi and pious Sunnism versus secularism in Turkey, the türban(headscarf) loses most of its meaning and political relevance. It has managed to make such a big impact on the political arena, as the Turkish university system and less soon the secondary and elementary schools of the country, because of its Islamic credentials. The issue has touched upon a variety of socio-cultural practices, obligations and rights of women. It is also highly sectarian in nature, for it is the pious Sunni men and women who seem to be pressing the issue, as opposed to the Alevis. It would be more precise to refer to türban as a sectarian, religious valance issue in Turkish politics.<sup>24</sup>

When it is looked look at the way this is reflected upon AKP's political identity, we can draw the following conclusion: When it is examined AKP's Islamist except, it can be saw that the founding members of the party define themselves as being deeply religious in their individual identities or their private lives.

According to AKP, another section with a great vote potential is the women electorate. Erdoğan once said, "It is our women who determine the future of our country. We must earn them to our party."<sup>25</sup> These words set the direction for the party and made it focus on the women who constituted a huge store of votes.

Although the percentage of women who are in the executive body of AKP is almost nothing, a great part of organizational efforts are carried out by them. It is clear that this structure was modeled after the Welfare Party, which attained a great success through their women branches. In her project published by the NGO TESEV, Yeşim Arat explains the success of the women branches:

In women branches, the political activism consists of "a-politic politicization" (a politicization which is not political). Both the people who take part in organizations held by the party and other members have become politicized in the social environment of their individual relationships which are also maintained in the political arena. The activist women of the Welfare Party have touched the

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<sup>24</sup> Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *The Mystery of the Türban: Participation or Revolt?*, Turkish Studies, Vol.6, No. 2, (June 2005), p.233-251.

<sup>25</sup>"MHP'nin oylarına talipler", Kaçkar Medya Grup (06/02/2007). [http://www.kackartv.com.tr/Default.asp?I=Haber\\_Oku&ID=1184](http://www.kackartv.com.tr/Default.asp?I=Haber_Oku&ID=1184) (Accessed 08/06/2007).

traditional framework of socialization successfully and politicized it.<sup>26</sup>

AKP's women branches came together with more than 224 thousand women in more than five thousand meetings in 6 months and articulated the accomplishments of the government and its views about women and family. AKP administration mobilized the women branches in the pre-election period, who in turn held house meetings or hall meeting in provinces and districts through their organizations. Research shows that women branches held such meetings in 59 provinces and 445 districts.

In the 4th Women Council organized by AKP Istanbul Women Branches Presidency, the Minister of Interior Abdulkadir Aksu congratulated all women's "Women's Day" on March 8<sup>th</sup>, and made a pompous speech. In this speech, he also stated that women will get stronger in NGOs. It is a fact that both in Turkey and all around the world, women constitute the majority in NGOs. It can be understood why Aksu directs women to NGOs. However, just like in political parties, women are also pushed back in NGOs. In fact, it is the women who strengthen the NGOs in Turkey. Aksu states that the number of women in both national and local decision-making bodies is insufficient. However, he does not mention about AKP's efforts in this issue. As a result of our research and survey, we can say that the AKP women are not as active as their counterparts in the parliament.

#### ***2.1.4. The Model of Emine Erdoğan***

Since fashion is influential in all layers of the society, the individual adopts the uniform worn by the group in order to be accepted by them. Fashion is a uniform. What separates it from other uniforms is that it also advocates a certain style, without restricting itself in a certain mould. The person who suddenly adopts the look which is found appropriate for him by others tend not to maintain his or her independence from the group for a long time. In order to resist to the uniform of the mass, the individual must have a unique style and a world view. However, these also can be expressed in a small group. While objecting to the taste of masses, the individual needs to rely upon

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<sup>26</sup> Yeşim Arat, *Politik İslam ve Kadın Organizasyonları*, TESEV (28/02/2004). [http://www.tesev.org.tr/etkinlik/islam\\_demokrasi.php](http://www.tesev.org.tr/etkinlik/islam_demokrasi.php) (Accessed 28.04.2007).



another groups.<sup>27</sup>

A lot of things have been written and said about Emine Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's spouse and thus the First Lady. Her dresses or even her jewelers become news now and then. None of the wives of prime ministers of Republic of Turkey have become the news for such a long time. What is the secret that keeps her in the news so long? Is Emine Erdoğan a political model for Turkey?

It is a long held tradition both in Turkey and in other countries of the world that people at the top of the state attend to various meetings and conferences with their spouses. We often see these leaders with their wives who are dressed fashionably, generally in Western style, and who speak very well. In the last 5 years AKP, which was supported by Islamist groups, was at the head of the government, and we witnessed a First Lady whom our eyes could not get used to. Emine Erdoğan was under the spotlights wherever she went with or without her husband because of her dresses, her headscarf, and her attitudes. This was one of the reasons why she made the news for so long.

In 2006, Canan Arıtman, an MP of CHP, wrote a letter to Emine Erdoğan in which she said, "Your dressing style offends Turkish women. Your personal choices invoke a wrong image abroad about Turkish women. If you cannot change, stay at home." She continued:

Your dressing style, and dressing style of most of the minister wives, which you adopt in your trips abroad offend Turkish women. Modern Turkish women do not wear headscarves, they have adopted a modern, Western style. As a result, your personal choices create a erroneous image about the Turkish women and Turkey abroad.<sup>28</sup>

Can we say that Emine Erdoğan's dressing style constitutes the "shadow of AKP's political identity"? Is Emine Erdoğan a model who can influence Turkish women's dressing style? Emine Erdoğan has a style that combines Islamic fashion

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<sup>27</sup>Ufuk Özdemir, "Türkiye'de Kadın Kıyafetinde Modernleşme Süreci ve Medyanın Etkisi". <http://www.enfal.de/tes17.htm> ( Accessed 20/04/2007).

<sup>28</sup> Canan Arıtman, "Canan Arıtmanda Emine Erdoğan a açık mektup", *Uçan Süpürge* (22/05/2006). [http://www.ucansupurge.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3062&Itemid=71](http://www.ucansupurge.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3062&Itemid=71) (Accessed 26/04/2007).

and the Western influences, which affects the women supporters of AKP. In the 51<sup>st</sup> issue of *Tempo* (a weekly magazine), Emine Şenlikliođlu says about Emine Erdođan “She went through a development process, but she did not change”.<sup>29</sup> According to Şenlikliođlu, Emine Erdođan developed by “becoming more active, more farsighted.” But she adds that Erdođan did not change her thoughts and her world view at all. In the same issue of *Tempo*, we see different photos of Emine Erdođan which were taken in a period spanning between 1993 and 2004. Here we see the formal change in her clothing.

Emine Erdođan experienced the greatest change in her clothes. When we look at the pre-2000 period, it is inevitable to see the radical change in her clothes and her style. Until early 2000s, she opted to wear top coat and put her headscarf on the top coat. But after that, she changed her way of wearing her headscarf radically. She started to tie her headscarf around her neck and put its ends in her turtleneck or her shirt. Meanwhile, she dared to wear shoes which exposed her toes bravely. Mrs. Erdođan abandoned top coat totally; she now prefers skirts.<sup>30</sup>

The paragraph quoted above demonstrates the fact that the clothes chosen by a person forms a style and defends certain views. The dressing style expresses the world view of people in a way and other people’s ideas regarding that person is interpreted according to the clothes she wears.

It is a fact that wherever she goes with her spouse, Emine Erdođan communicates her own vision and the vision of women who support AKP. It can be said that she is a role model with her clothing, her make-up, her speeches, and her behaviors in public. And the changes in her clothes can be explained as an endeavor to look more modern, to show that Islam is modern and that it is open to different ideas. We see that she goes everywhere with determined clothes, when we look at the other leaders wives’ clothes, they are representing modern Turkey and also the western culture. Because of this reason the messages which coming from Emine Erdođan is different form the others.

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<sup>29</sup> Emine Şenlikliođlu, “*Gelişim olmuştur ama hiç deđişim olmadı*”, *Tempo*, 21/12/ 2006, issue .51/994, p.15.

<sup>30</sup> *Günlük Yerel Gazete*, “*Rüyasında Gördü ve Evlendi*”, *Memleket* (15/02/2007). <http://www.memleket.com.tr/index.php?islem=detay&id=12573> (Accessed 20/01/2007).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3.1-THE METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH MODEL, DATA COLLECTION TOOL, SAMPLING, AND LIMITATIONS**

In this section, the research model, universe, sampling, data collection tool, data collection procedure, and the method for data analysis used in my research will be explained. In this research, scanning model, which aims at defining an existing situation, and exposing a phenomenon or a fact as it is, will be used. Furthermore, interpretations are concluded in accordance with the comparative research model. The tool for collecting data in this research will be a survey form that will be designed. The survey consists of three sections. The universe of this research consists of the members of the AKP Women Branches in the Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality. Since it is anticipated that the entirety of the universe will be reached, it is expected that the universe and the sampling be identical. The universe of the research is limited with Kocaeli province. The study area is limited with AKP Women Branches in Kocaeli. Since the researcher and the researched are human beings, the limitations concerning the methodology in social sciences are valid for this research too.

Categorizing of the subject will be strengthen getting clear information. The political opinion of people who comes from different cultures is important for the objectivity of research.

### **3.2. THE CASE OF KOCAELİ**

Kocaeli is considered as one of the most developed cities in Turkey with respect to its industry and dense population. It has seven districts and İzmit is the most developed one which become a Metropolitan Municipality in 1994. In 2004, Kocaeli Municipality obtained the same title, placing it among the 13 Metropolitan Municipalities. One of the most prominent political figures of İzmit is Sefa Sirmen from CHP. Republican People's Party is a left party. He served as the mayor of İzmit for 12 years. He first became the mayor in 1989. He stood as a candidate for mayor in İzmit from Social Democrat People's Party (SHP) and won the local elections. In

the last general elections, Sirmen resigned from this post and was elected as the MP of Kocaeli from the same party. Until 2002, Izmit had a left party (CHP) management but in the 2002 elections, AKP gained a strong majority. If we look to Kocaeli's districts many of them supported right parties. Before 2002, the SP had many strongholds in the province and because AKP has been seen as a continuation of SP, FP and RP, its victory should not be seen as a surprise.

In 2004 local elections, AKP won 40.13%. Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality has 135 city council members. Of the 135 members, 96 are from AKP, and the number of women members from AKP are only 5. Only 13% of women in Kocaeli are illiterate, and 58% of them are primary school graduates.<sup>31</sup>

### **3.2.1. Women Branches**

It is a fact that in recent years, political parties focused on women's activities. It became clear that women's endeavors to win more members to their parties were critical in the parties' victories. When we analyze the political panorama of the last 20 years of Turkey, we see that the parties' desiring to win more voters at elections require women to be more active during election campaigns. The survey that I conducted on 12 April 2007 covered 41 women in the AKP Organizations of Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality and Saray Bahçe Municipality.

The purpose of this survey is to determine how the women in AKP endeavor for the party they supported, and what kind of activities they perform. Therefore, Hülya Nergis, the Chairperson of AKP Women Branches in Kocaeli was contacted and her permission was obtained for the abovementioned survey. Every Thursday, 40-50 people from the staff meet in the building where AKP women branches gather. People who are not in the administration are not allowed in these meetings, which was a striking situation. I compared my findings with my observations on women's behaviors and activities in women branches with whom I have been for 12 months, and evaluated my survey results by taking these observations into consideration. We believe that it will make our subject more understandable to present some of the

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<sup>31</sup> Semiha Lavas, *Banu Yılmaz*, "Kadın Konseyi'ni Eleştirdi", *Kocaeli Demokrat*, (05/01/2007).

critical questions in the form of graphics. Critical questions in the survey will be presented below and answers from AKP women about their party will be compared and blended with direct observations of an academician. However, we find it necessary, first, to study the results of a nationwide survey held right after the 2002 election. This will help us test the reliability of the survey held in İzmit. Studies may reveal certain characteristics of people who vote for certain parties. In this way, fundamental data can be obtained as to the bases of the parties and which section of the society they rely on. Results of a survey which was conducted following the 2002 election all around Turkey are as follows.

**Table 3.1**<sup>32</sup>

<b>Sex of Voters</b>			
	<b>Woman</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>Total</b>
AKP	33.8	35.7	34.8
CHP	21.2	21.3	21.2
DYP	10.6	8.2	9.3
GP	10.6	7.7	7.2
MHP	5.8	8.5	9.1
DEHAP	7.5	6.5	7.0
Other	10.6	12.1	11.4

There are slight differences among the electorate of parties. AKP, MHP, SP and YTP electorate are mostly men, whereas DYP and Young Party (GP) electorate are women. 56% of GP's electorate is women. 58% of the electorate who did not vote or gave blank vote is women.<sup>33</sup> As elections drew closer, it is apparent that spouses

<sup>32</sup> Tarhan Erdem, "Gençler AKP ve CHP'ye soğuk", Radikal (07/11/2002). [http://www.radikal.com.tr/veriler/2002/11/07/haber\\_55728.php](http://www.radikal.com.tr/veriler/2002/11/07/haber_55728.php) (Accessed 14/02/2007).

“convinced” each other. Since politics is considered as men’s business, turn out rate of women is less than that of men in Turkey.

**Table 3.2<sup>34</sup>**

<b>Age of Voters</b>				
	<b>18-27</b>	<b>28-43</b>	<b>44+</b>	<b>Total</b>
AKP	33.9	35.2	35.0	34.8
CHP	19.9	21.6	22.4	21.2
DYP	6.7	8.2	13.2	9.3
MHP	8.0	8.2	5.2	7.2
GP	12.9	8.3	6.0	9.1
DEHAP	8.3	7.2	5.2	7.0
Other	10.3	11.3	13.0	11.4

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> general elections, GP and MHP received mainly youngsters’ votes where as DYP, SP, DSP and YTP received the votes of the middle aged. 47% of GP’s votes, 40% of DEHAP’s votes, 37% of MHP’s votes came from the young electors (those between 18-27). At the beginning of the election period, MHP received 49% of its votes from the young people. In the following 3 months, MHP lost the votes of the young and went below the electoral threshold. In early July, MHP seemed to have the 20% of the young votes, and its total percentage was 14.2. A week before the election, however, MHP seemed to garner only 8% of the young votes. The youngsters look for party which will be an meet of their needs and wants. We can say that some parties do something for young to take their votes.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

AKP, DYP, DEHAP, and SP received votes from people with a lower socio-economic status, whereas New Turkey Party (YTP), CHP, and DSP received the votes of people from the higher socio-economic layer. Coalition parties received votes from the working class more than average. AKP receives votes from workers, housewives, and tradesmen more than its average (38% of the total). This section constitutes the 64% of the subjects. CHP can receive 27% of their votes. CHP receives the votes of self-employed persons, professionals, civil servants and pensioners more than its average (34% of the total), who constitute 22% of the subjects. In this section, AKP's percentage is 17 percent.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 3.3<sup>36</sup>**

<b>Education of Voters</b>				
	<b>Elementary School</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>	<b>Total</b>
AKP	39.9	29.4	22.4	34.8
CHP	17.1	28.1	42.9	21.2
DYP	11.1	5.5	4.1	9.3
MHP	6.9	9.3	7.2	7.2
GP	9.5	10.6	4.1	9.1
DEHAP	5.9	4.2	4.3	7.0
Other	9.6	12.8	15.1	11.4

AKP and GP received more than average votes from people with lower education. CHP was the number one choice of the higher-educated people. 42% of university graduates voted for CHP. In late July, this percentage was 30%. In the election period, CHP managed to attract this section's votes.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

**Table 3.4<sup>37</sup>**

<b>Settlements of Voters</b>				
	<b>Metropolitan Area</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Total</b>
AKP	36.2	34.2	34.2	34.8
CHP	26.0	19.9	19.0	21.2
DYP	3.7	9.8	12.8	9.3
MHP	4.9	8.6	7.7	7.2
GP	11.4	7.5	8.7	9.1
DEHAP	4.9	8.8	7.1	7.0
Other	12.9	11.2	10.5	11.4

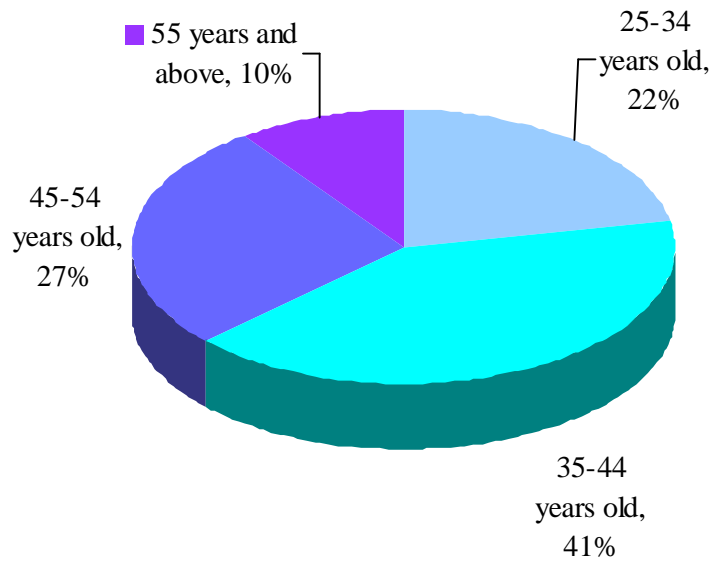
DYP has an immense support in rural areas, above its average. In metropolitan areas, people did not vote above the average or returned blank votes. AKP won above the average votes in Central Anatolia and Black Sea Region, CHP and DYP in Aegean and Mediterranean Region, DEHAP in Eastern and South Eastern regions.

The results of the survey which was conducted in the AKP Women Branches of Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality, and their interpretations are as follows:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.





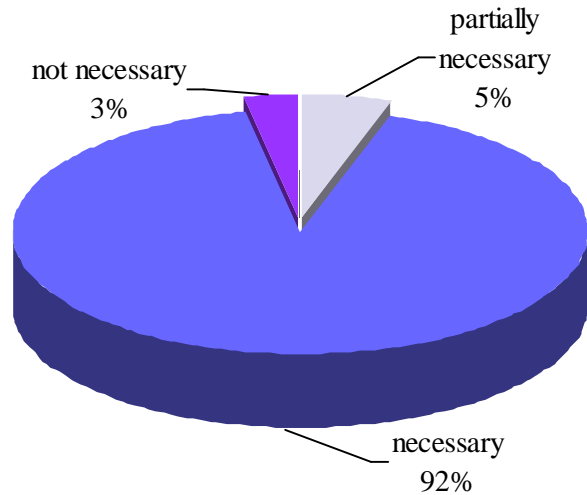
**Graphic 3. 1. Age Pattern Graphic of AKP Women Who Participated in the Survey**

Firstly, women's ages, educational status, occupations, and incomes were determined in the demographics section. Most of AKP women, 41% of whom are middle-aged, are high school or occupational high schools. Since the eligibility age was dropped to 25, the political parties started to attach more importance to young people and youth organizations. However, the scarcity of young women members in AKP is noticeable. We can interpret AKP's attitude here as an intention to gain the support of the young people in the election period. That this law was passed right before election gives away AKP's policies towards young people. It is not unusual that 70% or women are housewives. Their level of education is low as well. Participating in such activities is a means of socializing for them. Women who gather in weekly tea parties or the party's political meetings believe that this change frees them from the boredom of their household. They want to do something for the party of which they are a member.

The fact that 62% of women participating in the survey is from Kocaeli is an important factor that determines their level of income. Kocaeli is one of the leading

industrial cities in Turkey. As a result the income level of people living in a metropolitan city is high enough to keep up with its economy.

People follow AKP's activities through television and their relatives and friends. As we mentioned before, women who gather on different occasions influence each other politically. The number of women who change their views just because their friends, relatives, father, etc. wanted is significant. Many people who live in the city maintain their relationships with their villages. Their migration from the village to the rural areas did not lead them to end their connections. That these women's level of education is low is an important factor in the impressionability of their political views. As the saying goes, "A single cup of coffee is remembered even forty years later". These women who are given various gifts in election periods think that it is their obligation now to support the party. The most striking example is observed in "women's gatherings". The roses and scarves given by party leaders can alter the women's world view and thoughts totally in an instant. The percentage of AKP women with low educational levels and who read newspapers is 8, which prevents them from learning the realities about their parties. And their parties present themselves as flawless. The AKP women's membership to associations and foundations is next to none; however, their participation to Women's Council titled (Yerel Gündem<sup>21</sup>, YG<sup>21</sup>) is enormous. Most of AKP women can tell their party's activities in these meetings unreservedly. These meeting, in which women from other parties attend, usually end with them abandoning the meeting.

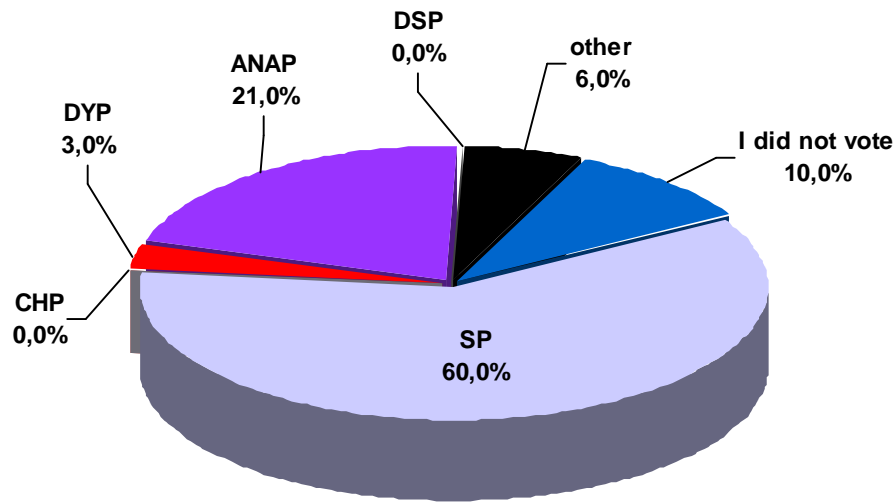


**Graphic 3.2 Thoughts of AKP Women Who Participated in the Survey as to the Necessity of Democracy within the Party**

92% of women believe that there should be democracy within the party. In fact it is not a surprising finding concerning women who cannot defend themselves in Turkey or in the world.

The reason why women convey their demands to women branches is that they cannot find any other authority to heed them. In a meeting held by a male MPs of AKP in which women were present, it was observed that they did not voice any requests concerning their rights.

Concerning the number of parties in the country, AKP women believe that “the number of the political parties is sufficient” and that “parties with similar views should unite.” We can explain this as follows: These women who voted for AKP in the 2002 election with a ratio of 97%, voted for SP in 1999. As a result, women believe that AKP originated from the Virtue Party or the Welfare Party, just like SP did.



**Graphic 3.3 The Parties which the AKP Women Voted for in 1999.**

None of the AKP women had voted a leftist party in the previous years. We see that the votes cast for SP in 1999 were transferred to AKP. 21% was given to ANAP and 3% to DYP, which can be explained by the fact that both of these parties followed a midway. The closure of RP and Virtue Party caused a disappointment in this group, who thought that SP could be closed any time. Thus, they headed for milder right-wing parties.

The percentage of people who voted for other parties is very small (6%). Among these, MHP is in the first place but still its percentage is very low, because the political stance of MHP is very different from other parties. MHP is a fanatical nationalistic party. In this party, everyone must be Turk or feel themselves as one. In other words, this party does not embrace the whole of the society.

The reason why CHP was not supported by the subjects of our survey in the previous elections can be explained by the fact that CHP is at a left party. CHP defends Republicanism and says that it is following the footsteps of Atatürk; however, it rejects the idea that the President should be elected by the public, thus hampering the democracy which can be considered the brother of democracy. With this attitude, they proved once more that they are against change and democracy, and by the status quo's side. Therefore Turkey, a country which lives democracy, secularism, and religion side by side, acts rationally at the ballot box. Emre Akgöz, a

columnist in the Sabah newspaper, addresses this situation. He defines Deniz Baykal as the political spokesman of the bureaucratic elite and voices an observation by Baskin: “AKP is both the victory and the defeat of Kemalism. The election of the president by the public is Mustafa Kemal’s victory, but Kemalism’s defeat.”<sup>38</sup>

CHP has been defined as the defender of women’s rights in the political arena. However, CHP could not catch up with the change the social democrat parties in the world went through with respect to woman-man equality. Thus CHP lost its position as the political owner of the issue. It put a 25% women’s quota by emulating the European social democrat parties. However, it failed to use this quota as a means of democratizing its organization and to explain this quota to its own members. DSP, on the other hand, is far from acknowledging the need to apply special policies to secure equality between sexes. It believes that inequality is an issue which will be eliminated in the process of social development, and denies the need for a separate women’s organization.<sup>39</sup>

AKP’s women supporters were asked what they thought about the quota for women. 51% stated that they supported such a quota. 49%, on the other hand, stated that there should not be a quota, basing their views on Tayyip Erdoğan’s anti-quota stance. Erdoğan regards quota as a “derogatory” application for women. He says that the greatest obstacle before women’s active participation in politics is the “patriarchal nature of politics in Turkey”. With this regard, it is not surprising that AKP women think like their leaders. The women think that their party leaders are believers and the other party leaders could not be successful.

It would not be a mistake to tie the reluctance of AKP’s women to involve in politics with the issue to the “Merve Kavakçı event”<sup>40</sup>. As it is known, one of the greatest factors that led to the closing of RP was the Merve Kavakçı event. Most of the AKP’s male ministers’ wives wear headscarves. Most of the women who want to take part in politics also wear headscarves. And they are worried that AKP shares the same fate as RP. In order to avoid the tension the headscarf may create, AKP opts to choose women who do not wear one. In this way, they are keeping women with headscarves out of politics, and direct them to women branches. Hidayet Tuksal, a

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<sup>38</sup> Emre Aköz, “Zaten Seçtirmeyizler,” *Sabah Gazetesi*, (04/05/ 2007).

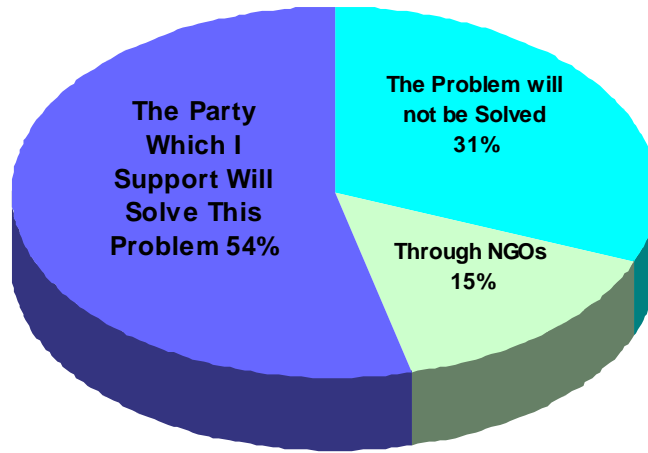
<sup>39</sup> Meryem Koray, *Kadın ve Siyaset*, (İstanbul: TÜSES, 1991), p.211.

<sup>40</sup> Merve Kavakçı was a Turkish politician, who was elected as a Virtue Party deputy for Istanbul on April 18, 1999. On May 2, she was prevented from making her parliamentary oath because of her hijab, which is forbidden for public servants because of the rules of secularism in Turkey.

theologian in the Başkent Women's Platform, says:

They believe that there are very powerful women in AKP who can successfully compete with men; therefore, men are very happy that women do not go into politics. 'Women exist in AKP, not at the representation level, but in the activities performed. Those who represent do not wear headscarves. Those who do the hard work are the ones who wear headscarves.<sup>41</sup>

In relation to the question which asked whether there was a woman leader in the party capable of leading it, 58% of the AKP women said that there was not, showing their tendency to not see the AKP's women MPs as leaders and to not trust them. According to the survey, 60% of the women who voted for AKP in 2002 in previous elections voted for SP, the heir of the RP. We can argue that this presence among the activists is crucial because even if there is a strong ideological turnaround, AKP inherited the RP's mobilization strategies of women's votes



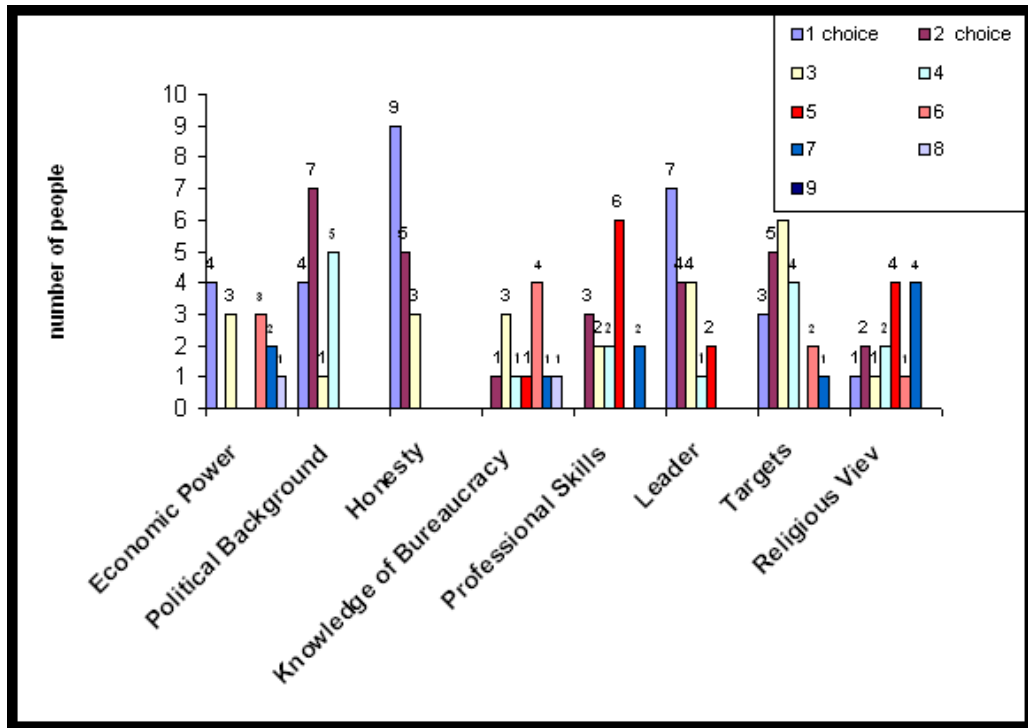
**Graphic 3.4 How can the Headscarf Problem be Solved?**

We can summarize the AKP's women members' ideas concerning the headscarf issue as follows: They have a complete trust in AKP with regards to this

<sup>41</sup> Hakkı Taş, "İlk kadın sığınma evini Müslümanlar kurdu", Zaman(07/08/2005). <http://www.zaman.com.tr/webapp-tr/haber.do?haberno=199405> (Accessed 02/02/2007).

issue. In fact, the number of people who are hopeless is far from small, however all women support the view that this issue should be solved immediately. However, as we stated above, headscarf is not among the AKP's primary targets.

At the moment, AKP aims at following the midway. Since the day it came to power, AKP has never addressed the headscarf issue directly. The issue which attracted attention when it entered the state protocol a few times was withdrawn as a result of strong reactions. We see that AKP chooses to solve this issue by familiarizing the public in time, without making a source of tension and political material out of it. This familiarization process can be observed in the foreign visits where AKP politicians take their wives with them, or the presentation of both “closed” and “open” clothes in fashion shows.



**Graphic 3.5 The Priority of the Characteristics of the Party you Voted for**

The results of the survey conducted are:

Women branches work very hard in election periods; woman branch members work

very hard to make the young people and other women attending with them.

- a) Their main objective is to find more women members and create a greater voter potential and they are going to have to work very hard to cause their party to win the election. They are working hard for the Party and have done struggle so for a long time.

For them, R. Tayyip Erdoğan is an indispensable leader.

The activities of women, most of whom are housewives, are limited to the election period. Because AKP and other parties do not give chance to worked women members after the election.

The eligibility of AKP women who have a background in politics is still in the hands of the party administration. In social, cultural and economic place, Turkish woman has many barriers.

With regards to this question, women stated that the most important characteristic they wanted to see in a political leader was honesty. Turkish people have stopped trusting politicians as a result of political turmoil, and consider politics to be a dirty job. Their second choice was the leader's political background. Women did not take the parties who were unsuccessful in the past into consideration, and loved this newly-founded party. Their third choice was the objectives. Women regarded AKP's objectives concerning economy, EU, social and cultural areas as important.

### ***3.2.2. AKP's Women Policies in Kocaeli's Political Arena***

The most prominent characteristic of the İzmit AKP Women Branches is that they gather under different names, organize meetings and seminars in order to praise AKP's activities extravagantly because of holy mission. The women who are members of AKP want to believe sincerely. Because their party promises them for everything. For example; good work for their sons and husbands, developed economy, equal education for their daughters. On the other hand, Azime Telli, who is a columnist in the Kocaeli Newspaper, says that in Kocaeli, women aren't taken into consideration : "In general elections we will see one more time that although it is the



women who work hardest to bring their parties to the government, the election lists will be determined by men. There is no single female provincial chairperson or a female member of provincial council.”<sup>42</sup> Kocaeli Metropolitan Vice-Mayor İlyas Şeker, who says that they receive their greatest support from women, told in a *kermes* (a charity bazaar generally organized by women) he attended that “AKP gets its greatest strength from women”, and binds this to the increase in the number of female members in AKP Party Council.<sup>43</sup> Gölcük<sup>44</sup> women’s council chairperson Nurten Turnalı says that women should be more participatory and know what they want to change.

Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality Vice Secretary General Gülser Ustaoglu who attended a meeting to promote the Women’s Council which will be formed within the Kocaeli City Council said that they had performed very important services concerning women, and added that of these, the most important was the establishment of the Women’s Council. Süleyman Durak (*the Secretary General of YG21, Yerel Gündem 21 Kadın Meclisi*), Sedat Yücel (Secretary General of Gölcük YG21), Nurten Turnalı (Chairperson of Gölcük YG21 Women’s Council), female members of City Council who were elected in local administrations, NGOs, and representatives for women’s associations attended the Meeting for the Promotion of Women’s Council. Oya Tuncel, a member of Gebze City Council, said that in the new term, Kocaeli Women’s Council had to be more active and that they were ready to do their part. Nurten Turnal, Gölcük Women’s Council Chairperson, stated that the services that they initiated were continuing in an increasing manner and thanked those who supported them. Abdullah Köktürk, the Bekirpaşa Mayor, also made a speech in the meeting and said that they convened with women to obtain their opinions frequently, that women from Bekirpaşa would also participate in the establishment of Women’s Council, and added that they would support this formation. Köktürk’s words implies that AKP’s women supporters’ efforts should be concentrated on this council. We can conclude that according to him, the more AKP’s women exist in this Women’s Council, the longer AKP’s activities will be

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<sup>42</sup> Azime Telli, “Kocaeli Siyasetinde Kadın,” *Bizim Kocaeli*, ( 26/03/ 2007).

<sup>43</sup> İlyas Şeker , “En Büyük Desteği Kadınlar Veriyor”, *Kocaeli Gazetesi*, (01/12/2006).

<sup>44</sup> Gölcük is a district of Kocaeli.

spread.

Derince<sup>45</sup> Municipality goes on its efforts with regards to the Women's Council which was established in itself. The Council which accomplished many activities under the leadership of Fatma Akarsu held a conference titled "Children In Puberty". Women's Council Chairperson Fatma Akarsu said that they expected all women from Derince to participate in this conference which concerns every mother. Undoubtedly, the aim is to achieve votes of women.

Nurten Turnalı, the chairperson of the Gölcük Women's Council provided information about the activities they accomplished in Gölcük, while Yasemin Uyar, the Coordinator for Women's Councils stated that two issues surfaced in Women's Councils: "First of all, women must be participatory; second, they must clearly define what they want to change. Furthermore, solutions must be generated concerning employment, economic freedom, prevention of violence, education and health." Uyar also said that women should work both on local and national levels. What is striking in this meeting, where all participants were supporters of AKP, is this: this meeting aimed at securing the participation of women from all parties. However, the result was far from what was intended. Because women with different ideological views cannot work together for a common cause. Most of the administrators in Kocaeli Municipality being from AKP results in biased general meetings. This is not true only for AKP, though. When we analyze the Women's Committee of the City Council, we see that most of the members wear a headscarf. The insincerity and lack of communication among the women from different parties in the Kocaeli Women's Council have a negative repercussions for women's politics.

İbrahim Karaosmanoğlu, Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality Mayor, attended a Women's Council meeting held under the supervision of Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality on July 20<sup>th</sup> 2007. He invited all women to participate in the Women's Committee of the City Council which was established to express themselves, to take part in the city's social life, and to make a difference in the political life. But when

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<sup>45</sup> Derince is a district of Kocaeli. Because many of the electorate voted for AKP in 2002 election, it has an important strategy relevance.

doing so, Karaosmanoğlu has political motivations since all women there were from AKP, which shows that women have a lot of responsibilities in the coming elections. The activities of the Kocaeli Women's Committee continues. They hold meetings and seminars every week, thus getting ready for the election. For example, a seminar on menopause was held on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2006 and all women were invited. Similarly, a seminar titled "Violence on Women" was held on November 3<sup>th</sup> 2006. Participants were mostly women from different levels of administration in AKP's provincial and district organizations. Here, the MP of Kocaeli stated that they attached great importance to this issue. But he talked about the accomplishments of AKP. In his speech İlyas Şeker, the Vice Mayor, stated that they attached great importance to social municipal services.<sup>46</sup> Charity organizations which are held by AKP Women Branches demonstrates the fact that they are very well organized in all districts of Kocaeli. Azime Telli, who is a journalist in Kocaeli newspaper, expresses the situation in the following words: "In this country, politics is done by exploiting women. Women are a rich mine for politics. Women branches knock on every door, visit every house during election time. All chores of the parties are done by women branches." Telli talks about the women who held a protest march on December 5<sup>th</sup>: "I watched the press announcement made in front of the Governor's Office from my newspaper's window. There was a group of 50 or 60, most of them wearing headscarves. They started the ceremony by singing the Turkish National Anthem. When the chairperson of the council Oya Tuncer was about to speak, the call for prayer (ezan) started. They halted the ceremony for some time. When it ended, Tuncer made an excited speech. Oya Tuncer explains the situation of women (in other words, her own situation) as such: "We do not want certain women to be brought to important posts in order to improve the image of the party although they lack the necessary qualifications. We do not want women with high qualifications to be hampered because of their sex".<sup>11</sup> Oya Tuncer is a woman who had an active political life in the past. She has financial freedom, is known and loved by many people. She used to be a member of DYP, but following Tansu Çiller's resignation, she transferred to AKP. Recently she has been working both in Kocaeli Women's

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<sup>46</sup> Eyüp Ayar, "Kadına Şiddet Ülke Geleceğini Etkiler", *Kocaeli Gazetesi* (30/11/ 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Azime Telli, "yürüyen kadınlarımız", *Kocaeli Demokrat* ( 06/06/2006).

Committee and in other organizations of AKP. Her political background, her economic independence, and her wide circle of friends is very important for AKP in Kocaeli.

Hülya Nergis, the chairperson for the AKP Women Branches, held a press conference with regards to 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the bestowment of the right to vote and eligibility of women. Nergis said that Atatürk gave this right to Turkish women a lot earlier than many countries in the world. She said, “It is disappointing to see that women are regarded as a minor part of social policies. All of the party programs regard women in this manner.”<sup>12</sup>

The second meeting organized by AKP Kocaeli Women Branches was held on 3 February 2007 in Sabancı Culture Center in Izmit. AKP Women Branches chairperson Hülya Nergis stated that they had invited ministers and MPs to this meeting but none of them attended the event. She said that they would be highly motivated if they could make it. Nergis reacted strongly to the absence of the ministers and the MPs despite the fact that they were invited.

Women Branches of AKP Darıca District Organization organized a meeting which was attended by the members of the party. There, they started their electoral campaign. Metropolitan Mayor İbrahim Karaosmanoğlu made a speech at this meeting, stating that the race for the election had begun, and that the responsibilities of women branches were greater than ever. He said that he wanted women to carry out one-to-one efforts and maximize AKP’s votes. AKP Kocaeli Provincial Chairperson Fikri Işık stated that the success AKP enjoys at the moment could not be realized if it were not for women’s endeavors: “In July, we will vote for two things. In one ballot box, we will bring AKP to the government again. In the other one, we will elect the President. We will continue to perform our responsibilities as we have done in the past. Our lady sisters will organize house meetings, build one-to-one relationships, and carry AKP to the top.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hülya Nerkiz, “İşin yüzde 70’i refahın yüzde 1’i”, *Kocaeli Demokrat*, (7/12/2006).

<sup>47</sup>Gebzehaber, “Darıca’da Seçim Startı”,

There is no single woman, except Gürsel Ustaoglu, among the staff of Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality. (The other women, a middle level manager, Selvi Tellioglu was dismissed from her office on the last periods of part of 2006.) She resigned from the position of vice general secretary in Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality to put her candidacy for the parliamentary elections. She is a member of AKP. She has got a political carrier. She is a successful, energetic and active woman. More over, she is a hard working lady who is aware of her responsibilities. But her mannish image –short hair, single coloured and dark clothes- remind Tansu Ciller. (Ciller’s that kind of attitude was reinforced by her man-style politics.)

The other woman members of AKP is an advocate, Hülya Nergis. Nergis is the director of Kocaeli Woman Organisation of AK Party. She organised the election campaigns effectively during the last election (2004), (As pointed before, the survey was implemented on this organisation). She was so active on her duty; especially directing women’s political opinions. Now she has an important sympathizer. This situation is considerable for AK Party. (I hope our women get positive results of their valuable efforts in political life. Furthermore, I hope they will be elected and they will represent the women as required and successfully)

İlyas Şeker, Vice-Mayor of Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality celebrated mothers day with the municipality women workers. He gave red flower to them. His behavior was enjoyed by women workers. That kind of gentle implementations shall be turn back as a vote to AKP.

We can say that in Kocaeli, women have not gone a long way regarding the place of women in politics. They worked like bees for their parties, but they could not get anything for themselves. Neither AKP women, nor women from other parties could reap the fruits of their efforts. I sincerely say that women who work hard for their party will not achieve women’s aims.

### **3.2.3. Informal Woman Actions and Votes Mobilization Methods**

As it is known,<sup>48</sup> one of the parties that attached the greatest importance to women branches in the past was the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*). In those days, RP women used to work feverishly. They would arrange house meetings every week, and even every day as the election drew closer. They also organized “Golden Days”, various meetings, charitable functions. These activities were considered to be the election strategies of women in women branches. Subsequently, women branches were taken more seriously by all other parties. Such unofficial activities by women branches increased the number of Welfare Party’s women supporters.

In its five years in the office, AKP, who wanted to adopt the same strategy, emphasized the youth branches and women branches, which is our subject matter, very much. The results of the survey that we conducted showed that women who do not work (they are mainly housewives) enrolled other women in AKP by using methods that are used by various cosmetics salespeople. It is beyond question that these unofficial activities to win new voters work. The “direct sales method” which is adopted by big cosmetic brands such as Avon and Oriflame worked very effectively for AKP women. These products which are demanded by AKP women demonstrate their and AKP’s reactions to French goods as well. For example; I saw many women from AKP selling such cosmetic things, when I was searching on my study. Most recent years, selling some cosmetic products are the most important work to collect vote for women of AKP.

The members of Women’s Committee of the City Council are mostly from AKP. In fact, the main objective of this council is to increase women’s success and participation in politics and economy. However, most of the women activities organized by Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality, where administrators from AKP constitute the majority, are exploited for political reasons.

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<sup>48</sup> Levent Baştürk, “*Tarihe Şahitlik: Statüko, Seçimler ve Refah Partisi*”, TESEV. [http://www.wakeup.org/anadolu/04/2/tarihe\\_sahitlik.html](http://www.wakeup.org/anadolu/04/2/tarihe_sahitlik.html) (Accessed 05/02/2007).

## CONCLUSION

It is very well known that bringing the political instabilities in Turkey to an end and improving the women's status in the society to the level of developed countries cannot be achieved solely by passing new laws. The present situation of women, which can only be solved by developing social awareness in the long term, contradicts with the democracy. When we analyze the regulations and bylaws of political parties, we see that every one of them promise to create a country where man and woman are equal. When the number of women in politics increases, when they are freed from the oppression of male majority in the parliament, and when they can protect their own rights and represent themselves, they will have a say in the issues which affect their lives directly.

In the Republican period, women's political, legal, and economic rights developed greatly, and their social status rose to a great extent. They were also granted the right to vote and to be elected. Turkey, who was a model for many countries with respect to political representation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has lost this quality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To be able to be represented in politics more, political parties in the TGNA must pass new laws aiming at securing the equality between sexes.

In Turkey voters believe that:

The party which he/she will vote for should give place to women candidates (83%). If the education of girls are given precedence as much as boys', the number of successful women will increase (93%). Women can become very successful in business life or in art, can be successful in politics as mayors, MPs, or ministers (85.4%). If the number of women in the parliament increases, the quarrels among parties will decrease, the political relationships will become flexible, (75%). If the number of women MPs increases, issues like expensiveness and education, which concern women more, will be solved more quickly (62.9%) In the world, of the women who managed to enter parliaments 33% said that they were supported by NGOs and women movements. 18% had backgrounds in unions. 78% had experience

in political parties. 67% attract attention to the difficulty of finding a balance between private life and political life. 37% attract attention to the discriminatory cultural values and attitudes which are prohibitive for women. 36% believe that it was harder for women to reach financial sources. 31% believe that it is difficult to obtain a political status while preserving their female identity. 30% believe that they had problems because of not having a support network.<sup>49</sup>

The idea of women's suffrage and eligibility was adopted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, almost every country in the world acknowledged the fact that women had the right to elect and become representatives. Even in the Middle East, where administrations are very traditional in nature, it is accepted that women have political rights and that they should participate in the electoral process.

It is unjust and unequal that women who constitute 50% of the society constitute only 5% of the parliament. Even if it may not be possible to represent men and women equally, women should constitute one fourth or one third of parliaments.

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<sup>49</sup>TÜSIAD,  
“Siyasal Katılımda Kadın-Erkek Eşitliği”. <http://www.tusiad.org/turkish/rapor/kadin2/bolum3.pdf>  
(Accessed 10/01/2007).



**Table 3.5 Candidates of MP According to Their sex (2002 Elections)**<sup>50</sup>

	Number of provinces and candidates	Female Candidate		Male Candidate		Women in first three ranks	
		number	%	number	%	number	%
AKP	81 / 550	Sayısı	5.6	Sayısı	(%)	Sayısı	(%)
CHP	81 / 550	31	7.6	519	94.4	1	0.2
DYP	81 / 550	42	7.5	508	92.4	7	1.3
MHP	81 / 550	41	4.2	509	92.5	11	2.0
GP	81 / 550	23	17.8	527	95.8	2	0.4
DEHAP	81 / 550	98	18.7	452	82.2	28	5.1
ANAP	81 / 550	103	14.9	447	81.3	48	8.7
SP	81 / 550	82	1.1	468	85.1	16	2.9
DSP	81 / 550	6	8.2	544	98.9	2	0.4
YTP	81 / 550	45	14.2	505	91.8	12	2.2
BBP	81 / 550	78	5.6	472	85.8	25	4.5
YP	81 / 550	31	11.8	519	94.4	8	1.5
İP	81 / 550	65	10.5	485	88.2	18	3.3
BTP	81 / 550	58	2.2	492	89.5	17	3.1
ÖDP	81 / 550	12	27.4	538	97.8	1	0.2
LDP	81 / 550	149	11.1	394	72.6	62	11.4
MP	81 / 550	61	12.0	489	88.9	15	2.7
TKP	81 / 550	66	31.3	484	88.0	16	2.9
Independent	81 / 550	172	7.9	378	68.7	74	13.5
Total	10.083	15		175	92.1	-	-
		1.178		8.905	88.3		

Except for the few female politicians who are interested/talk about women's issues on behalf of existing political parties, the status of women who are in politics is a very symbolic.

When it is analyzed the 1999 and 2002 general elections, we see that only 22

<sup>50</sup> Siyasette Kadın, "Milletveki Adaylarının Cinsiyet Durumu". <http://www.sdd.org.tr/siyasettekadin.htm> (Accessed 08/06/2007).

women entered into the parliament on 18 April 1999. When we consider that the total number of MPs is 550, the ratio of women to the total number is 4.4%. In 3 November 2002 elections, the number of female MPs was only 24, which means that the women constituted 4.4 % of the parliament again. Of the council of ministers which has 24 members, only 1 member is female. In the local elections held in March 2004, only 25 female mayors were elected among a total of 3209. As of 2004, no woman governor was appointed, and there were only 20 vice-governors. When it is considered the fact that women obtained the right to be elected in 1934 and that 17 women entered the parliament in 1935, we see that not much was achieved during the decades that followed.<sup>51</sup>

Thinking that politics is men's business is one of the greatest handicaps of Turkish women. Tansu Çiller is seen as a positive example concerning the women in politics. But, can we say that Tansu Çiller could act as a woman in politics? Could she represent Turkish women enough? Or did she learn to think like a man among her male counterparts in the Parliament?

From a legal point of view, there are not many problems regarding women since they have the right to elect and to be elected. However, the present situation indicates that there is a great imbalance between the sexes. Today, the equality between sexes is considered as a criterion which shows the level of development of a country. Today, all around the world, women can benefit from political, educational, and economic opportunities at a very limited level, which proves that there is a systemic discrimination against them. One of the underlying reasons for this discrimination is the policies of the male-controlled system. I believe that this systemic adversity in the political arena can be overcome through the practice of a quota system. An increase in the number of women MPs should not be interpreted as a full participation in politics. According to a research conducted in 187 countries, Turkey ranks 165<sup>th</sup> with regards to the representation of women. Rwanda is at the top of the list, with 50% of women deputies in their parliament. Countries behind Turkey are in

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<sup>51</sup> Başbakanlık Kadının Statüsü ve Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü (2004). <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/belgeler/uaicevap.html> (Accessed 10/04/2007).

a tragic state: Turkey (4.4%), Iran (4.1%), Vanuatu (3.8), Haiti (3.6), Tongo (3.4)<sup>52</sup> When women's voice is heard, when they get rid of their secondary position in education and employment, and when they get what they deserve from the use of all resources, it will help the revival of all oppressed women in Turkey and in the world.

Furthermore, I believe that the efforts which will be made to create an environment where women and politics will reconcile will revive and develop the political culture in our country which has degenerated.

The quota system in politics is a must. The countries which managed to put women in the political area achieved this through the quota system. There is no reasonable explanation for the allegation that the quota system creates inequality. The political arena which is patriarchal in nature excludes women, and women grow scared and stay away from politics. We know that there are a lot of women who are deeply interested in politics. However, there does not exist a political party that can accommodate or support them in Turkey. When we study how the individual parties (especially AKP, since it is our subject matter) emerged, we see that women are attached importance only in periods of elections and they are treated as vote hunters, a situation which does not help to improve the political development of women at all. On the contrary, it leads to many misunderstandings. Politics is not a struggle for obtaining votes.

I think, it would be unfair to say that this is true only for AKP, who is a conservative democrat party. There are many similarities between AKP and other parties regarding with this issue. AKP's consideration of women as mere mothers and spouses should not be interpreted as their prohibition from politics. As I said before, this is an issue which is related to the system and the traditions which are very difficult to change. Blaming only AKP would mean looking at politics from a very small window, which would be a mistake.

I believe that when women are allowed to make politics in a womanlike

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<sup>52</sup> Türk Hukuk Sitesi, "*Türkiye Kadın Temsilinde 165.sırada*" (04/02/2007). <http://www.turkhukuksitesi.com/showthread.php?t=11486> (Accessed 11/04/2007).

manner, and when they insist on this attitude, this will be the beginning of a new and bright period of AKP. In fact, it does not matter how many women exist in political arena or in AKP. What is important is a change of perspective.

Understanding a country's politics helps us to understand the administration of that country. The proliferation of political parties in a country is usually regarded as the indicator of the advance of that country on the path of democratization. A political life with a multiparty system and the development of democracy is thought to be associated. However, one should bear in mind that the existence of a lot of parties is not sufficient for democracy. A multiparty system is necessary for democracy, but it is not enough.

The first multiparty election was held in 1946 in Turkey. Turkish political life involved more than 100 political parties in the last 83 years. However, some of these parties were shut down after military coups (coups of 1960 and 1980). Others were closed by authorities (Welfare Party, Virtue Party). Some of the closed parties changed their identities and emerged in the political arena under different names.

There are many uneducated housewives in Turkey who are not financially independent. During election periods, they are given hopes by job promises for their children or by small gifts given to them. As a result, they cast their votes without having an idea about the philosophy of the party they support. And women's branches of political parties come into play here. As we stated above, the women leaders who are in the administration of women branches are invaluable actresses of this job.

We must reflect the vision of our women in the globalization process of our country very strongly. This is how the women's image that has become permanent can be eliminated. Gaining a place in the political arena requires some economic power and independence, that is why women are not there and they lack support.

Women who come together to defend women's rights and to solve their problems in the political arena become organized in the form of associations,

foundations, groups, initiatives, companies, cooperatives, and platforms; however, their number is really small. We can say that, just like men's associations, women's associations are also biased. There are very few women's organizations that come together and continue their struggle. In a Turkey where people are not discriminated according to their color, race, religion, etc., where they are not evaluated according to their appearance, the women's place in politics will be a lot stronger.

There is a paradox in this area, and Tansu Çiller constitutes an example of this paradox. The rising feminist waves help women to achieve symbolic successes in arenas like politics, however these successes do not help women to be represented better in politics. These successes become possible only when these women stick to the existing rules very firmly. The existence of women in politics does not necessarily mean that female values are transferred to politics or the problems of women who are not represented are voiced in the parliament. Women think that in order to be active in politics, they have to adopt men's roles, even exaggeratedly, because the existing political mechanism is a product of men's experiences and organizations. Women's existence in politics through quotas, supports, artificial activities does not have a true meaning. The reason for women's insufficient existence in politics lie deeper in the culture and power relationships. In culture and power relationships, women sometimes seem to possess the primary position, when in fact, they are in a secondary position with regards to living space and right to speak. In this case, the ratio of the women's existence in politics cannot be expected to match their ratio in the population. It is imperative that some changes made in the political arena which would acknowledge their existence and which would make it attractive for women.<sup>53</sup>

In Turkey, women are underdeveloped, in fact left behind, in every area. Politics is maybe the most fundamental one of these areas. Maybe I should better say "commerce". When we consider the fact that politics and commerce go hand in hand, we see that it is not a coincidence that women are very passive in both of these areas.

Acknowledging women's human rights is considered one of the indicators that women are valued. In order to acknowledge women's human rights and political rights, they must be given a place among people. Women must have a place in the society and in the parliament. In order to put women in the parliament,

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<sup>53</sup> Aktaş, Cihan, *Türkiye'de Kadın Olmak* (1) "*İnsan Hayata Simgelerle Tutunur*". <http://www.siviltoplum.com.tr/?ynt=icerikdetay&id=344> (Accessed 25/04/2006).

first they must become delegates in the party, members of central executive boards, and provincial chairpersons. In Turkey, however, women's participation in politics is considered as using their votes. And the motivation that lies behind this is to help male candidates to enter the parliament. In our society, politics is still regarded a man's job. Therefore, the patriarchal family structure is accustomed to seeing men in politics, and thus the women's participation in politics is hampered early in the family.

AKP's women MPs cannot represent and express themselves and the women who constitute 52% of the population. The reasons can be summarized as follows:

- A) The small number of women MPs in the parliament
- B) Lack of support from their parties
- C) Inflexible party structure in Turkey
- D) Patriarchal nature of Turkish culture; seeing politics as a "man's job", and the internalization of the by both sexes.

Women constitute the half of the population in Turkey. The ratio of women enrolled in higher education is 15%, where as men's percentage is 18. Women's participation in the working life is around 28%. The ratio of female academicians is 36%. Women's ratio of representation in political parties varies between 4% and 24%. While the age of eligibility was reduced to 25, thus paving the way for the young, women's requests for quota are left to another election. Women, who have been hampered despite their longwinded struggles, they are still in search of a party that would allow them to express themselves and support them. Party administrators, who get most of their support from women, use it to reinforce their empire. According to UN humanistic development report, Turkey is not among the most developed 50 countries of the world with regards to benefiting from economic opportunities, participation in politics, access to education, health, welfare, and equality between sexes. Women, who constitute the greatest dynamic for the resolution of social, political, economic chaos, must make their stand and participate in these areas. Otherwise, it will not be possible to talk about a true democratization. With the rise of political and ideological struggles, the concepts pertaining to

women become widely accepted. Every dominant ideology considers women as their reserve power, and do politics in this way. The dominant politics is the conflict of interests. In parallel with the disintegration of the traditional lifestyle, women are in search of new positions. They want to feel safe, preserve their dignity, take part in production, and have a say in their fate. It is inevitable that only a small part of the new MPs to be elected in 2007 is women. The reason for this is that women are either in very low ranks on candidate lists, or they are in very weak lists. Women who are already in the parliament do not actively attend to meetings, and lose their enthusiasm in no time. However, women should change this situation, and demonstrate that they can actively participate in politics and have very different approaches. I hope that AKP, who got most of the votes in the 2002 elections, will give the value to women who work for their party in the pre-election period in 2007.

**APPENDIX:**

***RESEARCH ON "THE POLITICAL ROLES OF WOMEN IN AKP  
ADMINISTRATION"***

Dear colleague;

This questionnaire is prepared for the research on “The Political Roles of Women in AKP Administration” for an MA dissertation in Fatih University, the Institute of Social Sciences, Program of Public Administration.

The information collected in this questionnaire will be used only for this scientific research and will not be submitted to any another person or institution. The diligence you will be showing when filling the questionnaire is important for the objectivity and success of our research.

Thank you in advance for your contribution.

Hanife KARAASLAN

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## QUESTIONNAIRE FORM:

Date Filled: ...../...../ 2007 (Day, Month, Year)

### DEMOGRAPHICAL DATA

1-Your age

18-24     25-34     35-44 (41)     45-54 (27)     55 over

2-Education

Primary School     High School-Vocational School     Associate Degree  
 Bachelor's Degree     Master's Degree/PH.D

3-Career

Housewife     Student     Worker     Retired civil servant     Other

4-Place of birth (city):

5-Currently residing in:

Metropolitan     Town     Borough     Village

6-Monthly income of your family

300-500     500-750     750-1000     1000-1250     More

### OPINIONS RELATED WITH POLITICAL SYSTEM

7- Which media do you use to follow the activities of the party you support?

Magazine     National Paper     Local Paper     Television     Internet   

Friends or relatives

8- Are you a member of any association or foundation?

Association     Foundation     Professional Organization     Local Agenda

Women's Branches     None

Other

8.If your answer is "other", please explain.

## **OPINIONS RELATED TO PARTIES AND PARTY ELECTION**

9-Please list the factors you consider when determining the party you are going to vote for:

- Economical power     Political Past     Honesty     Bureaucratic Information  
 Work Skills     Leader     Objectives     Religious View

10-Means of Transferring Your Requests to Party Administration

- Acquaintances-Intermediaries     Ministers     Female MPs     Male MPs     Party Meetings     Women's Branches of the Party

11- Your opinions on who should be administering the party you support

- Leader and His Team     Business World     Leader and the Organization     Central Execution Committee of the Party     All

12- Your opinion on the need of democracy in the party. Is democracy in the within the party essential?

- Yes, it is essential     No it is not essential     Essential in part

If your answer to question 12 is "no" then please answer question 13.

13-Why do you think democracy in the party is not required?

- Party leader will solve everything     Leader and Higher Administration is adequate.     Discipline will be destroyed and the Leader's authority will be shaken     Other

14-Your opinion on the number of parties in the country

- There should be a limit to the number of parties     Number of parties is not adequate     Number of parties is adequate     Parties of the same view should join

15- Who did you vote for in 2002?

- AKP     Saadet Party     MHP     CHP     DYP     ANAP     DSP  
 HADEP     Other     I did not vote

16- Who did you vote for in 1999?

- Saadet Party     CHP     DYP     MHP     ANAP     DSP     DEHAP  
 Other     I did not vote

For question 17 the meaning of the word quota is this:

- Quota; Is allocating a proportional place to women by adding special provisions

to the election methods implemented in determining the people to be elected to political decision organs. It targets to eliminate the inadequate representation of women and to ensure equalizing women with men.

17-Should the political parties implement a women's quota?

Yes  No

Please answer question 18 if your answer to question 17 is "Yes".

18- What should be the woman's quota be?

10%  15%  20%  more

### **OPINIONS RELATED WITH AKP**

19-How were you, first, informed about AK Party?

Family  Friend  Media  Business Friend  Relative

20- What do you think about the activities of AKP in the last four (5) years?

Very Successful  Successful  Partly successful  Not successful

21- Please list the most popular leader in the party.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan  Abdullah Gul  Nimet Çubukcu

Bülent Arınç  A.Latif Şener

22- Recep Tayyip Erdogan is a charismatic leader.

Yes  No

23- The most remarkable three characteristics of Recep Tayyip

Honesty  Nationalism  Religiousness  Decisiveness

Being a hard worker  Young age

His intelligence

24- If Recep Tayyip Erdogan becomes President, are there any women leaders in the party who can take his place?

There are women leaders in the party who can lead the nation.

There are no women leaders in the party with the necessary skills to lead the nation.

If a woman is leader is elected as the party leader, AKP can not be in the National

Assembly.

If a woman leader is elected as a leader in the party, AKP will get more support from people.

For question 25 (1-none; 2-little; 3-intermediate; 4-very much; 5-a lot)

25- To what extent AK Party is

a) Conservative (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

b) Democrat (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

c) With Nationalistic View (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

d) Democrat-Liberal (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

e) Nationalist (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

f) Rightist (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

g) Religious (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

### **OPINIONS RELATED WITH THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN AKP**

26- AKP supports “The Place of Woman in Politics” more in comparison to other right-wing parties.

Yes  No  Yes but not enough

27- What kind of regulations should AK Party make “to make the place of women in politics more effective?”

Number of women MPs in the parliament should be increased.

Number of women Ministers should be increased.

Various local, national and international events should be organized to increase the political roles of women.

More positions should be given to women in the party administration.

28- Do you think the AKP women MPs in the parliament are successful?

They are completely successful  They are partially successful  They are entirely unsuccessful  I am not sure

29- In which Ministries AKP parliamentarians should be present?

- Ministry of Justice  Ministry of Foreign Affairs  Ministry of Internal Affairs  
 Ministry of Finance  Other

If your answer is “Other”, please explain.

30- Do you think of leaving AK Party, of which you are a member?

- No I never thought about it  I didn't think about it  I am undecided  I am thinking about it  I am definitely thinking about it.

31 – If you think of leaving AKP, in which you are an active member, what are your reasons?

- Sexual segregation  The party intolerance to developments

32- Are you able to participate in the decision making process in the women's branch of your party, in relation to your field of work?

- I never participate  I don't participate  I participate in part  I participate  
 I definitely participate

33- In women's branch, does your superior (party president) ensure your participation in the decision making process by asking your opinion?

- He never does  He doesn't  He partly does  He does  He completely does

34- If the AKP leader were a woman, would you still support this party?

- I definitely would  I partly would  I am undecided  I would never support her

35- Should headscarf be assessed as a political symbol?

- Yes, it should be  
 No it shouldn't be.  
 I am undecided

36- Is the fact that the President's wife wears a headscarf is against secularism?

- Yes  
 No  
 I am undecided

37 - How do you think the problem of headscarf can be solved?

- By political power (the party I support can solve this problem)
- By NGO's.
- With the decision of HEC.
- This problem can not be solved.

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