

Answer according to the knowledge gained from Hist. 300 readings, lectures and documentaries.

## Essay Question Sec.2:

“Political Islam has gained a greater momentum since 1980 in Turkey, but we have seen the political and social reflections of Political Islam more clearly and specifically from 1994 onwards.”

Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not? Discuss and explain your argument by providing two factual examples (Make sure to explain your examples in detail and provide an in-depth analysis based on the question. In your answer make sure to explain the reasons that led to these results after 1994).

To answer this question, I'd like to start by examining the period after the 1980 coup. I believe the coup must be examined closely to better understand the rise of political Islam in Turkey, as it provides invaluable context knowledge. During this period, the military suspended the constitution, dissolved the parliament, banned political parties, and initiated a widespread crackdown on political activists, with thousands being arrested, many tortured, and some executed. [Hist300: 1980 Military Coup slides] The military's reasoning for the coup was the rising divide between the country, the clashes between left-wing groups and the right-wing groups were thought to push Turkey into a civil war, and therefore, the military decided to intervene to stop the anarchy and chaos in the streets of Turkey.

One of the most significant ideological shifts during this period was the promotion of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. This was a big shift from the secularism that had been a cornerstone of the Kemalist ideology and the military since the founding of the Republic. The military perceived Islamic values as a unifying and stabilizing force in a society torn by ideological conflicts. This synthesis aimed to blend nationalist and Islamic elements, developing a model of Turkish identity that was both modern and rooted in Islamic traditions.

The promotion of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis following the 1980 military coup significantly influenced the trajectory of political Islam in Turkey. This ideological shift was reflected in various policy changes and institutional reforms that had a lasting impact on Turkish society and politics. The fact that Kenan Evren often cited the Quran in his talks further reinforces this point (I remember hearing this from Eda Daloğlu). Another notable example is the changes made in the Turkish education system, notably, the increase in İmam Hatip's marked a great shift in the acceptance of political Islam not only in the political world but also in the daily lives of people.

## Post-1980: Islamic Movements

The Welfare Party's electoral success in the 1990s, and its victory in major cities in the 1994 local elections, marked a pivot point. The party's appeal to Islamic values, along with Necmettin Erbakan's successful rallies, resonated with a significant portion of the electorate. This success was not merely a political victory but a clear indication of the growing influence and acceptance of political Islam in Turkey. During his tenure, Necmettin Erbakan, did not shy away from implementing and discussing

policies which could be deemed as Islamically motivated, a few examples are: Necmettin Erbakan's visits to Libya and Gaddafi (being scolded on secularism and not saying anything), his talks about an Islamic monetary value called "dinar", and various other policies/scandals. His policies and governance style, which eventually led to a military intervention in 1997, illustrated the changing dynamics in Turkish politics, and the rising appeal and acceptance of political Islam, especially by the electorate.

Yet another very shocking event, the Madimak Katliami and the other Islamic protests and riots also illustrated the rising Islamism (İrtica) in the Turkey.

### **Transition to AKP:**

The closure of the Welfare Party after the beforementioned intervention, and the subsequent political climate led to the creation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001. The AKP, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, positioned itself as a moderate and pro-Western party compared to WP. However, it continued to draw upon the religious and nationalistic ideologies that had been growing since the 1980s coup. The AKP's significant electoral victories and its enduring hold on power since 2002 signify the widening of political Islam in the Turkish politics and society.