

## WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TÜRKİYE: A CENTURY OF PROGRESS AND ONGOING CHALLENGES<sup>1</sup>

Zeynep Banu DALAMAN<sup>2</sup> 

### Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive examination of the historical evolution and contemporary challenges of women's political participation in Türkiye, spanning from the 19th century to the present day. Despite the early enfranchisement of women in 1934, their representation in political institutions has remained limited and often tokenistic. The study delves into the impact of Kemalist modernization policies, which initially sought to integrate women into the public sphere but did so through a masculinized lens that often confined women to state-sanctioned roles. By critically examining the masculinization of female identities and the persistent patriarchal ideologies that permeate governmental policies, the article evaluates both qualitative and quantitative transformations in women's political representation. It also addresses ongoing challenges, such as gender-based violence and the struggle for equal citizenship rights, which continue to impede women's full participation in the public sphere. The history of women's political advancement is meticulously categorized into four distinct periods: the Single-Party Period (1923-1950), Coalition Governments Period (1961-1980), Post-1980 Military Coup Governments Period (1983-2002), and the Justice and Development Party (JDP) Governments Period (2002-present). The study underscores the necessity for structural reforms to enhance both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of women's political representation. This includes the implementation of mechanisms such as gender quotas and zipper systems within political parties to ensure more opportunities for female candidates and pathways to leadership positions. The findings suggest that despite significant legislative advancements, including early enfranchisement and legal reforms, the anticipated level of gender equality remains elusive. The persistence of patriarchal ideologies within governmental policies continues to hinder qualitative transformations in women's political representation. The study acknowledges several limitations, including a reliance on secondary sources and a focus on major political periods that may overlook regional and local variations in women's experiences and activism. Future research should focus on the intersectionality of women's experiences and the impact of evolving political contexts on gender relations, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse on women's rights in Türkiye.

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<sup>2</sup> Assoc. Prof., İstanbul Topkapı University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Dept. of Political Science and International Relations (Eng.), İstanbul-Türkiye, banudalaman@gmail.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in the public sphere and political life in Türkiye can be scrutinized within the framework of Türkiye's extensive modernization process. Spanning over a century, from the 19th century to the contemporary era, women have endeavored to gain visibility in the public sphere, the business sector, and political life by embodying the ethos of the nation and the Republic while striving to transcend the confines of the private realm. Nevertheless, they persist in existing as daughters, wives, and mothers within the patriarchal architecture of the public domain. This modern, Republican, and patriotic female archetype has not achieved adequate representation within Turkish political parties and the Turkish National Assembly. In 1935, a mere 18 women were members of parliament. Until 2007, the representation of female parliamentarians remained minimal: in 2001, women constituted only 4% of the parliamentary body. For nearly six decades since 1935, the 2007 general elections marked the first instance of electing 50 women to parliament, representing 9% of the elected members. This upward trajectory persisted into 2023, culminating in an increase in the proportion of female parliamentarians to 21%, with a total of 121 women parliamentarians.

The women's movement in Türkiye germinated under the influence of interactions with the Western world commencing in the 19th century and continued to burgeon throughout the 20th century. Post-1980s, governmental policies could only partially acknowledge the burgeoning and diversifying women's movement (inclusive of the Kurdish women's movement and the Islamist women's movement) manifesting in the streets and civil society. While quantitative representation of women augmented, their qualitative representation within governments remained ensnared within a male-dominated paradigm. The discourse on whether women were subjects or objects in Turkish politics and political movements began to gain traction only post-1980s. During this epoch,

feminism emerged as both a social movement and a critical perspective. In this context, it capitalized on the achievements of the liberal and left-wing feminist movements that emerged at the end of the 19th century and permeated the trajectory of Türkiye's modernization. Women began to articulate their social and political demands and engaged in political activism as autonomous subjects. Through these movements, they became increasingly active and visible. Since the proclamation of the Republic in Türkiye, a series of reforms and regulations have been enacted to facilitate women's active participation in political life. Women were bestowed with the right to vote and be elected in 1934, thereby facilitating their political engagement. Although Türkiye was a pioneer among developed nations in early enfranchisement of women, the desired level of women's political participation has not been realized throughout the historical continuum (Avcil, 2021: 42).

The participation of women in the public sphere, as envisioned and propelled by Kemalist modernization policies, was ostensibly legitimized through the masculinization of their sexual identities. Deniz Kandiyoti (2011: 196) elucidates:

Masculinization functions as a mode of security and guarantee for the presence of women in the public sphere. In a society based on male honor, with sharp differentiation of gender identity and behaviors of male family members, women had to masculinize themselves—by cutting their hair short, wearing dark clothing, and not using makeup—to avoid being seen as sexual objects by men.

From the inception of the Republic of Türkiye until the 1980s, there existed a republican consensus regarding the status and socio-political positioning of women in Türkiye. Central to this consensus was the principle that all political and social rights were conferred upon women by the founders of the Republic. This pervasive discourse is predicated on the belief that the political, social, and fundamental freedoms accorded to Turkish women by Mustafa

Kemal Atatürk, the Republic's founder, preceded those of Western women. Within this narrative, women were perpetually subjected to scrutiny to ascertain their comprehension and exercise of their rights and freedoms. This infantilization of the female gender is intrinsically linked with a patriarchal state mentality. The initial female parliamentarians were denominated as "Republican girls." This "republican woman" archetype possessed a profession and ventured outside the domestic sphere, yet their integration into the public domain was sanctioned only under the aegis of culturally imbued conditions and constraints. From the mid-1960s onward, visible Islamic women in the public domain began advocating for women's legal freedoms and citizenship rights, critiquing feminism—perceived as a deleterious movement for Muslim women—and demanding the right to wear headscarves. If feminism is defined as a movement for liberty and defiance against gender roles and lifestyles that subordinate women to men by social institutions, then neither Kemalist feminism nor Islamic feminism mounted a rebellion against Turkish societal institutions. Nonetheless, it is imperative to consider that this transformation could potentially facilitate the emergence of a non-patriarchal society through the recognition of gender identity differences.

In this study, the metamorphosis of women throughout the Republic's history will be scrutinized in alignment with governmental policies and women's demands. In this context, the administrations of the Republic of Türkiye have been categorized into four distinct periods: (1) Single-Party Period (1923-1950); (2) Coalition Governments Period (1961-1980); (3) Post-1980 Military Coup Governments Period (1983-2002); (4) Justice and Development Party (JDP) Governments Period (2002-present). The principal inquiry here is whether the political advancements of women in Türkiye have undergone qualitative as well as quantitative transformations over the Republic's

century-long history. Furthermore, the study will examine the challenges encountered by women in the 21st century concerning their rights demands, the violence they face, and whether they possess equal citizenship rights with men in the public sphere. In this context, it is posited that despite the legislative provisions granting equal citizenship rights to women since the Republic's inception, the anticipated level of social transformation has not been actualized, and patriarchal ideologies continue to pervade governmental policies.

## 2. KEMALIST WOMEN'S POLICIES DURING THE SINGLE-PARTY ERA (1923-1950)

The quintessential equation that encapsulates modernization is the correlation between "national progress" and "women's emancipation." In this context, Kemalism stands out for its radicalism. The influence of Western civilization is most profoundly felt in the reconfiguration of gender relations and the delineation of private and public spheres. Perhaps the most enduring dichotomy between the Western and Islamic worlds resides in the conceptualization of the private sphere and female identity. In Islamic culture, the term "private" lacks an equivalent, signifying a confined, intimate space imbued with gender-specific restrictions, aptly encapsulated by the term "mahrem".<sup>1</sup> Islamic reform endeavors, metaphorically speaking, to dismantle this seclusion and propel women into the public domain. The visibility of women signifies their presence both corporeally (unveiling) and within urban, public, and political spheres (evidenced by the enfranchisement of Turkish women in 1934). Furthermore, the abrogation of Sharia law and the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 underpinned the principle of secularism, thereby modernizing gender relations under a contemporary legal framework. In essence, the most conspicuous impact of modernization pertains to state structures and political institutions; however, its most pervasive and profound influence manifests at the level of "civilization," particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Forbidden. Mahrem means intimacy, privacy, secrecy and silence (Göle, 1996: 94).

in shaping symbolic capital, constructing identities, and redefining ethics and aesthetics.

### 2.1. TURKISH FAMILY STRUCTURE AND WOMEN

Mustafa Kemal articulates a profound recognition of the significance of the family in the nation's life and the reconstruction of Türkiye. He posits that family life constitutes the bedrock of civilization, the cornerstone of progress, and the wellspring of strength, cautioning that a deficient family life precipitates social, economic, and political debilitation (1954: 308-309). He further emphasizes that for the family to remain robust and fulfill its expected role within the nation, both male and female elements must be endowed with their inherent rights. The Republican People's Party, in its 1927 Manifesto, also underscored the paramount importance of the family, advocating for its protection and fortification within social life (*Hürriyet*, November 10, 2013). Mustafa Kemal asserts that a woman's paramount duty is motherhood and the education of her children, contending that women should not be relegated solely to domestic duties but should be acknowledged as partners and equals to their husbands (1954: 45-46). Nevertheless, the primary obligation of a woman remains being the mother and educator of her offspring. He contends that to cultivate children capable of becoming active participants in contemporary life, women must be more enlightened, more virtuous, and more knowledgeable.

### 2.2. THE WOMEN'S PEOPLE PARTY, EQUAL CITIZENSHIP, AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

From the early years of the Republic, Türkiye undertook significant measures to enhance the political and social standing of women. Notably, Turkish women were granted suffrage rights earlier than their counterparts in many Western nations (MFA, n.d.). The initial and most concrete achievement of the women's movement was the abolition of polygamy and the provision of civil marriage, divorce rights, and equal property rights through the Turkish Civil Code of 1926, modeled on

the Swiss Civil Code of 1912. Alongside these legal advancements, the image of the Republican woman began to evolve. The Republican woman was envisioned as both the modern, educated figure of future Türkiye and the "mother of the Turkish nation." Despite these strides, the state, which controlled the reforms, suppressed the grassroots feminist movement. This dynamic is reflected in Türkiye's official historiography, which credits the "progressive vision" of the Republic's founding cadres under Atatürk with the advancement of women's rights while neglecting the contributions and demands of women themselves. Recent feminist historiography, however, challenges this narrative by uncovering the efforts of Turkish women advocating for suffrage from the Republic's inception and even earlier, during the final days of the Ottoman Empire (Sancar, 2012; Davaz, 2014; Dalaman, 2020).

During the Second Constitutional Era and the foundational period of the Republic, enlightened women from the late Ottoman period, led by Nezihe Muhiddin, sought to transform the identity of the "Ottoman Turkish Woman" into the "Turkish woman" identity in line with the prevailing political conditions. This transformation aligned with the nation-state's objective of fostering a "citizen" identity, moving away from the imperial legacy of "subjects." Nezihe Muhiddin's vision of the Turkish woman encompassed broad segments of women, including the middle class (Zihnioğlu, 1998: 48). Her focus on reaching broader masses was inspired by the Unionists' post-Balkan War shift towards the "Anatolian" populace. The concept of the "Anatolian woman" entering the public and intellectual discourse of the time was an effort to realize the "ideal" that Ottoman women had envisioned but could not implement. For Nezihe Muhiddin and the women who participated in the National Struggle, there was significant work to be done in shaping the new Turkish woman in the nascent Republic. The enlightened women of this period were fervently committed to proclaiming that women possessed equal rights with men. They

aimed to contribute to the nationalist discourse and the nation-building process by integrating women. Indeed, just before the Republic's proclamation, on June 16, 1923, the establishment of the "Women's People's Party" (WPP) symbolized this conviction and determination:

The elevation of women is one of the most crucial conditions for our country's happier existence and the robust progress of our great revolution (Muhiddin, 1931: 11).

In the same work, she expressed their desire to contribute to the Turkish revolution from a female perspective (Muhiddin, 1931: 2). In a statement to the *Vakit* newspaper regarding the attempt to establish the WPP in May, Nezihe Muhiddin argued that it had become imperative for women to gain political rights. According to her, WPP aimed to secure women's political and social rights, defend these rights from the parliamentary platform under the Republic regime, and elevate the status of women. In this context, the WPP functioned as a political society advocating women's policies (*Vakit*, June 3, 1923).

Nezihe Muhiddin's assertive stance against the yet-to-be-defined female mission of the single-party regime, coupled with her belief that women deserved equal rights, was marked by a resolute determination: "even if they do not accept it, we will take it." The article "The Right of the Turkish Woman" published in the *Vakit* newspaper on June 4, 1923, is particularly significant. It emphasized women's equal participation in the national struggle:

The involvement of Anatolian women in the resistance during the National Struggle should be decisive in gaining political rights. The noble women of Anatolia took up pickaxes and shovels to provide for their children's sustenance, and when they saw their precious land in danger, they shouldered their rifles and personally participated in the defense of the homeland. By doing so, women proved themselves to be loyal and true children of this country, playing a prominent and practical role in every aspect of our social life and earning the

right to benefit from our political rights (*Vakit*, June 4, 1923).

A prominent news article on the front page of the *Vakit* newspaper on June 16, 1923, proclaimed: "The Women's Movement in Our City is Progressing: The Women's People's Party Will Be Officially Established Today." The establishment of WPP was thwarted on the grounds that women, who had not yet gained political rights, could not legally form a political party. In her later writings, Nezihe Muhiddin evaluated this situation as follows:

We examined and received the response that women who had not yet obtained political rights could not legally form a party. Some women among us argued that the bylaws were too excessive. Because in this bylaw, there was even a clause stating that 'our women will fulfill their military duties' (Muhiddin, 1931: 101).

The founding authority that objected to WPP allowed women to organize as an association under the name Turkish Women's Union (TWU) on the condition that the provisions in the party bylaws were softened. The transition from a party regulation that advocated for all women's rights, especially political rights, to an association regulation that restricted women in certain areas, placed them in a complementary role to men, and of course, did not mention political rights:

We amended the bylaws as much as possible and presented it again to the governor's office under the name "Turkish Women's Union." ... This time, a week later, the governor's office approved our existence and accepted the bylaws (Muhiddin, 1931: 100).

The association's bylaws retained the objective of "elevating women in intellectual and social fields to a modern and advanced position," as stated in the WPP's bylaws. However, the main change was in its content. The first target proposed by the Union to achieve this goal was added to the program, which was to raise young girls as true mothers. The clause "participation in municipal elections" was completely removed and replaced with the clause



"The Union has no connection with politics" (Çakır, 1994: 340-341).

Nezihe Muhiddin and her colleagues continued their advocacy work by establishing the magazine "Turkish Women's Path." This publication informed women about the Union's activities, led discussions on feminism, and provided updates on women's rights from different countries. Additionally, it published translations of correspondence from TWU members to suffragists around the world. The magazine emphasized the importance of educating not only girls but also boys, and highlighted women's right to join the military in the service of national defense.

By 1927, discussions culminated in significant strides toward the realization of women's political rights. Despite the controversies surrounding Nezihe Muhiddin's removal from the association she founded, TWU continued its mission with different leadership. Indeed, her exclusion was a manifestation of the ruling authorities' desire to grant women's suffrage themselves, rather than allowing women to achieve it through their struggle (Dalaman, 2022: 49).

These developments clarified women's public roles, and on December 5, 1934, the Turkish Grand National Assembly granted women the right to vote in all national elections. Subsequently, the Turkish Women's Union organized a celebration in Istanbul's Beyazıt Square. While women celebrated, newspapers heralded that they had obtained "the greatest right" (Cumhuriyet, December 6, 1934). Women voted for the first time on February 8, 1935, leading to the election of 18 women members of parliament, constituting 4.6% of the elected members (See Table-1).

In a speech at a Turkish Grand National Assembly meeting, Prime Minister and Malatya Member of Parliament İsmet İnönü remarked on the granting of suffrage to women:

Turkish women had already earned such a right. It is the right of women who worked shoulder to shoulder on the front lines and in the fields to be

involved in the country's affairs (Akşam, December 4, 1934).

In another news article, it was announced that Kazım Orbay's wife and Afet İnan visited İsmet İnönü in the Turkish Grand National Assembly and decided that December 5 would be celebrated as "Women's Day" every year (Akşam, December 9, 1934). Celebrations were held in many provinces (Adana, Siirt, Edirne, Antalya, Kilis, Zonguldak, Maraş, Ordu, Samsun, Kars, and Denizli), where women were asked about their opinions on the day's significance, and they expressed their satisfaction (Akşam, December 9, 1934: 7).

The granting of suffrage to Turkish women had a considerable impact internationally. Consequently, the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), founded in 1904, held its 12th Congress in Istanbul at Yıldız Palace from April 18-24, 1935, with delegates from approximately 30 countries. The president of the Alliance, Corbett Ashby, lauded the progress of Turkish women and the leadership of Atatürk, calling for "freedom for women and peace for humanity" (Cumhuriyet, April 19, 1935).

This call for peace stood in opposition to the rising fascism and war in Europe. The political environment grew increasingly tense. Shortly after the congress advocating for women's suffrage in 1935, it was decided to dissolve the Turkish Women's Union. Although the reasons remain unclear, some hypotheses have been proposed. The unequal composition of the delegations was criticized, and IWSA officials and TWU, which hosted the congress in Türkiye, were accused of making Allied propaganda due to the dominance of representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, while Germany, Italy, and the USSR were not represented (Kaya, 2013). On the other hand, TWU President Latife Bekir explained that the association had achieved its goals, as all rights had been granted to women in Türkiye, and the delegates unanimously decided to dissolve the association (Bozkır, 2000: 111). An autonomous movement advocating for women's suffrage was no

longer deemed necessary, and henceforth, women were expected to work within the established institutions of the Republic that had granted them "all rights".

### 2.3. THE PRE-SUFFRAGE DEBATE ON WOMEN'S MILITARY ENLISTMENT

During the early Republican era, one of the significant discussions centered around the role and status of women in the nascent Turkish state. Among these debates was the contentious issue of women's military enlistment prior to the conferral of suffrage rights. Proponents argued that women's active participation in the National Struggle, including taking up arms and engaging in combat, demonstrated their loyalty and capability, thereby justifying their inclusion in national defense and the military. This participation was seen as a testament to their deserving of political and social rights, including suffrage. Opponents, however, contended that military service and political rights should remain distinct, with the former not necessarily entitling women to the latter. This debate highlighted broader societal and governmental tensions regarding women's roles, rights, and recognition within the framework of the newly established Republic of Türkiye. This subject is also addressed in the program and regulations of the Women's People's Party. The program and regulations consist of a nine-article statute encompassing all women's rights. Article 7 stipulates, "In the event of war, measures will be taken into consideration to ensure that women assist in service." (Vakit, June 16, 1923). Essentially, this article commits women to military service during times of war and mobilization.

On June 21, 1927, the issue of women's military service was deliberated in the parliament. According to the minutes of the 2nd Term, 5th Legislative Year of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM), during the discussion of the "Military Obligation Law," Giresun Deputy Hakkı Tarık Bey took the floor while the first article of the law, which states, "Every male citizen of the Republic of Türkiye is obliged to perform military

service under this law," was being voted on. He suggested that the military duty, defined as applicable to "every male," could also extend to women:

I observe that the first article of the Military Obligation Law is written exclusively for men. The defense of the country is imposed on men by this law. In fact, we see and accept that it is imposed on men by natural law. However, I believe that the duty assigned to men by natural law is also conferred upon women. Therefore, I would like to know to what extent this duty, which is given to men by natural law and fulfilled at various times in the face of national crises, has been considered by the Committee and to what extent it has been taken into account. (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, June 21, 1927)

Kütahya Deputy Recep Peker responded, stating, "Turkish women are seen among their fellow citizens, together with the men of their country. Mothers have fulfilled their national duties by raising Turkish children who will defend the country." (Zihnioğlu, 1998: 155). At this juncture, in response to the Women's Union's pursuit of political rights, Peker invited the women of the Women's Union to military service, saying, "Since you desire to be actively involved with the fate of the Turkish homeland, then I invite you to this other honorable aspect of active involvement." (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, June 21, 1927). Subsequently, Yunus Nadi took the floor, asserting that women's pursuit of political rights did not necessarily imply they should also perform military service.

The following day, newspapers reported on the debate. Nezihe Muhiddin responded to the parliamentary discussions in an interview with *Milliyet*:

Every citizen who has proven their maturity has essentially earned these rights. Strangely, as soon as Giresun Deputy Hakkı Tarık Bey raised the issue of Turkish women's right to be deputies in the Grand National Assembly, they brought up the issue of military service. They think they will intimidate us with this. (*Milliyet*, June 23, 1927).

Falih Rifki Atay also contributed to the debate without directly addressing the issue of military service. In his article "Turkish Woman" in *Cumhuriyet*, he noted that the articles on women occupying Istanbul newspapers at the time did not concern women engaged in "positive and beneficial" activities and that he perceived a lack of seriousness in this matter. Atay argued that Turkish revolutionaries had implemented significant reforms regarding women, but the failure to extend these reforms to all women constituted a major problem. In his article, which concluded with the statement, "There is no women's issue against the government in Türkiye," Falih Rifki's views were accepted and defended by Kemalist women (Zihnioglu, 1998: 157).

All the initiatives taken and steps toward women's rights remained constrained within the boundaries set by the single-party regime. The issue of women's military service also retained a symbolic nature. As Atatürk's adopted daughter, Sabiha Gökçen, documented in her memoirs, she served as a pilot and actively participated in the Dersim campaign as a combat pilot. Sabiha Gökçen, as a woman who fought actively rather than being confined to auxiliary services behind the front lines, represented a significant departure from past experiences. She was introduced to the world as "the first female combat pilot" and remained a symbol of women's progress in society. As the only female soldier, she epitomized the modernity of the Republic. During World War II, despite the enactment of some laws concerning women's military service during mobilization, the first female officers in the military began to join the army only in 1955. The acceptance of women into military schools training officers occurred only in the 1990s.

From 1937 onward, as World War II loomed, female students in secondary schools began to receive military instruction (Ünder, 2000: 51-58). Given that military service for women remained in secondary and auxiliary roles, the content of military courses was tailored differently for women. In the "Preparation for Military Service" textbooks

prepared by Tahir Tipi, female students were subjected to propaganda as if they were about to go to war the next day, and officers had them practice with weapons "under their supervision" (Kazankaya, 2000: 50).

One aspect not covered in any study to date, but revealed through oral history research, is that female university students received short-term military training during the pre-Korean War period in the 1940s. Albums from that period depict women in military uniforms. However, these women never participated in combat. Between 1945 and 1950, there were only three universities in Türkiye: Istanbul University, Istanbul Technical University, and Ankara University. Additionally, there were teacher training institutes affiliated with these universities. In 1946, the "Universities Law" was enacted. This law comprised 81 articles and 17 temporary articles. According to this law, universities were granted "general autonomy and legal personality," while faculties were endowed with "scientific and administrative autonomy and legal personality." The Interuniversity Council (IUC) was established during this period and affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. At that time, the number of students in higher education was approximately 25,000. However, no study or archival data is available regarding the number of female students and the number of women participating in national defense courses during this period (Dalaman, 2022: 65).

### **3. THE EVOLUTION OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND WOMEN'S POLICIES: FROM MULTI-PARTY TRANSITION TO THE 1980 MILITARY COUP (1950-1980)**

Subsequent to the elections held immediately after 1935, there was a discernible decline in the representation of women in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT). Particularly in the 1950 and 1961 elections, a mere three women were elected to parliament (see Table-2). This period is historically notable for recording the lowest number of female parliamentarians since the



enfranchisement of women and their eligibility to stand for office was established (Arslan, 2004: 108).

Following the transition to the multi-party-political system between 1950 and 1960, the government program formulated by the Democratic Party, which succeeded the Republican People's Party (CHP) in power, conspicuously omitted any reference to women's issues. During this era, the existence of women's issues was categorically denied, and the adequacy of the regulations introduced during the early Republican period was not subjected to scrutiny. Even in programs addressing the minutiae of daily life, such as interest rates on loans, factory tenders, and the prices of certain consumer goods, there was a conspicuous absence of any mention of women and their issues (Kaplan, 1999).

The efforts to restore democracy through the 1961 Constitution did not encompass policies aimed at addressing women's issues. It is evident that the coalition governments of this period lacked any programs specifically targeting women's concerns. An analysis of the program of the 31st Government formed by the Justice Party (JP) following the 1969 General Election reveals that women were discussed solely in the context of their familial roles (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013: 2627). The notion that the JP confined women to the family sphere and reinforced their secondary roles does not align with traditional perceptions. This approach, termed "state feminism," which underscores the state's regression in women's rights, has had a prolonged impact on the political landscape (Altan Arslan, 2017: 416).

Although Türkan Akyol was appointed as the first female minister in the reform governments established during the provisional regimes commencing in 1971, no substantive policies addressing women's issues were implemented (Kaplan, 1999: 209). In fact, only two female ministers served in the governments during the 1961-1980 period (See Table-3). Women were predominantly active in the Republican Senate (See Table-4.)

During the period between 1961 and 1980 in Türkiye, a bicameral system was in place, featuring an upper legislative body known as the Republican Senate, which constituted the upper chamber of the GNAT. A meticulous examination of the lives and senatorial activities of the women who served in the Senate during this era reveals that, primarily due to the efforts of the 1961 Constitution and its implementers, women made significant political contributions to society. This period is marked by notable political endeavors undertaken by women, reflecting their critical role in Turkish political life (Candeger & Coşkun, 2018: 260).

Specifically, figures such as Aysel Baykal, Bahriye Üçok, Adile Ayda, and Nermin Abadan Unat emerged as pivotal Senate members, spearheading societal initiatives that profoundly influenced Turkish politics. These women crafted programs that integrated the needs of the era, thereby securing a significant place in political, economic, and social spheres. It is worth noting that these female members were directly appointed by the then-President of Türkiye.

The first female minister, Türkan Akyol, assumed office in the 33rd government under Prime Minister Nihat Erim. Senator Zerrin Tüzün delivered speeches expressing gratitude to Erim for appointing a female minister and for "already implementing one of Atatürk's most important revolutionary laws" (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013b: 3434). In 1974, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit established the 37th government as a coalition between the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the National Salvation Party (MSP). Although the principle of a social state was adopted and corresponding policies were developed, no direct targets were set concerning women's issues.

For the first time, the challenges faced by working women were addressed in the 39th Nationalist Front Government under Demirel's leadership (Altan Arslan, 2017: 416). This focus persisted in the 40th Ecevit Government established in 1977. Although women's issues were omitted in the 41st government program, they were included in the

43rd government agenda under the framework of "allowing widowed and pregnant women to receive salaries" (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013b: 5674). This marks a significant milestone in addressing women's issues. The emergence of this phenomenon indicates that political parties sought to appeal to urban female voters due to the increasing number of working women and the rising rate of urbanization. The 42nd government program also included objectives such as addressing wage inequality among working women and maternity leave. Additionally, presenting the image of working women alongside their roles as mothers and wives within the family introduced both traditional and modern female archetypes (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2013b: 5411).

Government programs established between 1960-1980 exhibited greater attention to women's targets. However, a comprehensive policy toward women's issues remained absent compared to previous periods. Regardless of the political party forming the government, there was a consensus on addressing women's issues in a manner that included women within the family, perpetuating the traditional female identity. This demonstrates that there was no significant difference in how women were addressed, regardless of the ideological basis.

It is crucial to emphasize that political parties in Türkiye have been positioned on the political spectrum as right and left since the 1970s, with ideological distinctions becoming more pronounced. Right-wing parties paid more attention to women's issues and their challenges in their programs and the programs of the governments they formed. Although they emphasized the secondary role of women, it can be argued that they aimed to empower women in line with their ideological orientations. In fact, the aim was to provide women with a new identity distinct from the symbolic "mother" role that had persisted since the single-party period.

#### 4. POST-1980 MILITARY COUP WOMEN'S POLICIES: THE ÖZAL, DEMİREL, ERBAKAN, ÇİLLER, YILMAZ, AND ECEVİT GOVERNMENTS (1983-2002)

Since the 1980s, the women's movement has gained significant momentum both internationally and domestically, fostering a growing societal awareness regarding women's rights. Consequently, from the latter half of the 1990s onwards, pertinent national legislation has been meticulously reviewed, resulting in the implementation of various legal reforms and substantial advancements toward achieving gender equality.

A particularly noteworthy legal reform in this context is the enactment of Law No. 4320 on the Protection of the Family in 1998. This statute provides a critical legal mechanism for women or children subjected to domestic violence, enabling them to file complaints independently. Furthermore, it delineates the penalties for non-compliance with protective measures instituted by the Public Prosecutor to safeguard the victim.

In alignment with the harmonization efforts concerning the European Union (EU) acquis, significant legal reforms addressing women's rights have been instituted. The constitutional amendments adopted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) on October 3, 2001, which took effect on October 17, 2001, embody provisions that fortify the principle of gender equality within the familial context.

The new Civil Code, which came into force on January 1, 2002, has further reinforced the status of women both within the family unit and in broader societal interactions, complementing the earlier constitutional amendments. Notable provisions of the new Civil Code include raising the legal marriage age to 18 for both genders (previously set at 17 for men and 15 for women), mandating the equal distribution of assets acquired during marriage, and ensuring that children born out of wedlock have the same inheritance rights as those born within marriage. Additionally, the Code

introduces several measures aimed at preventing violence against women (MFA, n.d.).

In the 1980s, women's movements in Türkiye sought to challenge traditional norms and beliefs by addressing societal perceptions of women and men. They succeeded in altering many people's views on women (Çaha, 2010). During this time, the term feminism was introduced, and scholarly studies on the evolution of the women's movement began to emerge.

The feminist movement engaged in significant publishing activities alongside institutional efforts such as forming associations, foundations, and companies. Inspired by the interest in the Feminist Page in *Somut* magazine, the Women's Circle was established in 1983 to evaluate women's domestic and external products and to conduct publishing, consulting, and service activities (Çaha, 2010: 185).

The independent feminist movement, which rejected the illusion of gender equality purported by Kemalism and did not settle for mere legal rights, became a radical and fundamentalist movement. Sevgi Çubukçu (2004) described it as a complete 'rebellion' movement.

In the late 1970s, a group of academic women, influenced by the UN's declaration of the 'Decade for Women' in 1975, began discussing women's issues, sparking new activism within the feminist movement. The independent feminist movement was systematically organized by women gathering around YAZKO (Writers' Cooperative). Concurrently, women at METU began gathering systematically under the name "Thursday Group" (Dalaman, 2020: 73). Besides raising awareness, the Thursday Group was the primary organizer of the No Harassment Campaign in October 1989. The rejection of a woman's lawsuit against her husband's violence by a judge in Çankırı, who cited the proverb 'Do not spare the rod from the back of the woman, nor the foal from her belly,' brought the movement to the streets (Çubukçu, 2004). Feminists viewed the traditional organization model as oppressive, authoritarian, and hierarchical, limiting

personality and individual participation. Considering that women's representation in parliament was only 2.7% between 1988-1999, the establishment of this association was a significant milestone for the women's movement (See Table-5).

Moreover, Türkiye quickly signed CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, to participate in the Nairobi conference closing the UN Decade for Women in 1985. The reawakening women's movement wrote a petition in March 1986, calling for urgent government measures to ensure the effective implementation of the convention, unexpectedly gathering 6,000 signatures (Berber, 2017). The 'Women's Petition' campaign, initiated by feminists in Ankara and Istanbul, garnered significant attention and became the first mass action after 1980. Following this campaign, the Association Against Discrimination was established to adapt CEDAW into domestic law (Çubukçu, 2004; Timisi & Gevrek, 2002).

The most notable institutional success of the feminist movement in Türkiye is exemplified by the "Women's Library and Information Center." During this period, women fought against domestic violence from fathers and husbands behind closed doors. Local women's shelters were established to help women escape violence and oppression. The "Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation" emerged as an institution dedicated to combating violence against women. Despite rising feminist awareness, a 1988 study revealed that while male and female politicians advocated for more women in politics, families did not want their daughters to become politicians. Particularly, being a politician was not an important goal for women themselves, indicating another area of struggle (Ayata, 1995: 71). One of the unique institutions that emerged from the feminist movement is "KA.DER (Association for Supporting Women Candidates)," which was established in March 1997 under the leadership of Şirin Tekeli. A primary objective of KA.DER is to

enhance women's political representation in Parliament.

During the period from 1983 to 2002, an examination of the ministers responsible for formulating government policies reveals that, regrettably, the number of female ministers did not exceed two. Additionally, these ministers were predominantly assigned the role of "State Minister Responsible for Women and Family," which underscores the persistent patriarchal perspective towards women in parliament (See Table-6). It is crucial to highlight exceptional instances related to women during this era. Although the inclusion of women in decision-making mechanisms within politics is perceived as a significant advancement, it is evident that this did not substantially influence women's policies. Tansu Çiller, who became Türkiye's first female prime minister, and Meral Akşener, who served as the Minister of Interior, made Çiller's government a beacon of hope for women. However, as illustrated by the subsequent statements, the program of the first female prime minister lacked any new or alternative perspectives, regulations, or proposals concerning women and women's issues, aside from some customary expressions:

By enhancing the educational levels of women and increasing their access to vocational training opportunities, their employment in non-agricultural sectors will be expanded. This will be particularly achieved through the implementation of incentive policies aimed at enabling women to own their own businesses. New policies will be developed to ensure the contribution of female labor to the economy and to facilitate more effective participation of women in decision-making processes (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1993: 390).

One of the pivotal events marking the onset of polarization debates centered around women during this period (the 57th Ecevit Government) was the "headscarf" controversy. On May 2, 1999, the inaugural session of the newly opened Parliament was held under the chairmanship of the oldest member, Elazığ Deputy Ali Rıza Septioğlu,

as per procedural requirements. The entry of Virtue Party (FP) Istanbul Deputy Merve Safa Kavakçı into the General Assembly hall wearing a headscarf triggered intense reactions, particularly from the DSP benches; conversely, FP deputies applauded Kavakçı's entry into the General Assembly. DSP members argued that Kavakçı could not attend parliamentary sessions with a headscarf according to the Rules of Procedure. DSP Chairman Bülent Ecevit, taking the floor due to the prolonged procedural debates, remarked, "...This is not a place to defy the state. Please put this woman in her place." This statement escalated the tension, with DSP deputies chanting "out ... out" rhythmically, and DSP's female deputies occupying the rostrum (Tekin, 2020: 760). Subsequently, Kavakçı's immunity was lifted on the grounds of her U.S. citizenship and failure to disclose it, preventing her from taking the oath. Following this incident, the headscarf became a political symbol in Türkiye. As Nilüfer Göle (2009: 7) also pointed out, this movement:

Since the 1980s, Islamist movements, which have rapidly evolved beyond mere political movements or religious beliefs to permeate the public sphere and carve out new spaces within daily life practices, have prompted an effort to dissect their multifaceted nature at a micro level, even down to their molecular structures.

## 5. WOMEN'S POLICIES OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (JDP) GOVERNMENTS (2002-2024)

Since winning all elections and forming successive governments since 2002, the JDP's women's policy, despite containing liberal tendencies, distinctly reflects its conservative identity. The Party argues that men and women are not equal and approaches demands based on gender equality with skepticism (Yüksel, 2021: 105). Although the party's program addresses a wide range of women's issues, from education to violence, honor killings to poverty, and civil society organization to political participation, it does not include the expression "gender equality" (AK Party, 2021). In other words, while women's issues are widely covered in

fundamental documents and political discourse, including the party program, a women's perspective is not emphasized. Some researchers argue that the JDP's conservative stance on women's issues stems not from its Islamist roots but from the male-dominated structure that permeates nearly all political tendencies in Türkiye (Yeğenoğlu & Coşar, 2014a: 159).

According to senior members of the political party, women and men are not naturally equal. This understanding is reflected not only in rhetoric but also in practice. For instance, at the first International Women and Justice Summit organized by the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), a government-supported non-governmental organization (GONGO)<sup>1</sup> with the most rapidly established branches, President Erdoğan stated, "The nature of men and women is different, and women's need is not equality but equal value. The women's rights struggle in many developed countries is stuck in certain molds. The focus on equality in the women's rights struggle disrupts justice" (BBC, 2021, 08 March). Following this statement, the emphasis on "women-men equality" shifted to "women-men justice," a stance most criticized by women's organizations in Türkiye (Diner, 2018: 105). A striking example of this is the naming of the committee established in the Turkish Grand National Assembly to ensure gender equality. Despite objections from women's organizations, the commission was named the "Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" (Yeğenoğlu & Coşar, 2014b: 160).

Such statements and practices are not aligned with the principles of gender equality and women's rights recognized by international human rights law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Türkiye is a party, defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex

which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (CEDAW, Article 1).

The issue of the headscarf has consistently been a primary agenda item for the voters of the JDP. The headscarf ban, particularly in higher education institutions, has led to significant violations of fundamental citizenship rights. This ban was not limited to educational institutions but was also enforced in public service positions. Consequently, the headscarf issue, a multidimensional problem, has directly or indirectly influenced the JDP's policies.

The headscarf ban was initially lifted in 2013 through changes to the dress code regulations, removing the ban in public institutions, with the exception of the military, police, and judiciary. In the following years, the regulation was expanded to include these institutions, and by 2017, the headscarf was completely permitted for women working in public institutions.

The active participation of headscarved women in all areas of social life and their visibility in the public sphere have been encouraged. Politics and the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) are at the forefront of these areas. Following the regulatory changes in 2013, four female JDP deputies began to participate in parliamentary sessions wearing headscarves. Konya deputy Gülay Samancı, Kahramanmaraş deputy Sevde Beyazıt Kaçar, Denizli deputy Nurcan Dalbudak, and Mardin deputy Gönül Bekin Şahkulubey attended the General Assembly sessions after returning from Umrah with their heads covered (Yüksel, 2021: 108). This trend has continued to grow, and in the 2023 general elections, more than half of the female deputies elected from the JDP wore headscarves.

<sup>1</sup> The term "Government organized non-governmental organization" (GONGO) refers to organizations that, despite being named "civil society" organizations, are not independent

and do not contribute to the expansion of civil space and democratization. Instead, they work to promote the state's agenda and disseminate its views and ideologies (Doyle, 2017).



Thus, the JDP has encouraged the symbolic representation of women in Turkish politics. Female deputies, once seen as symbols of modernity during the single-party period and symbols of the system's democracy during military coup periods, have become representatives of the identity symbolized by the headscarf under the JDP.

As shown in Table-7, the number of female deputies in JDP governments has steadily increased. The proportion of female candidates, which was six percent in the 2002 elections, rose to eleven percent in 2007, eighteen percent in the June 2015 elections, and twenty-one percent in the 2023 elections (Sancar, 2018: 78-82). Today, 121 female deputies in the TBMM are from the JDP. The proportion of female deputies in the JDP, except for the 26th term, has consistently increased. It is evident that the number and proportion of female deputies in the JDP constitute a significant share of the overall female deputies in the TBMM. The Kurdish movement's party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which entered the 2023 elections under the name of the Green Left Party, has also contributed to the increase in the number of female deputies since 2002. The number of female deputies for the party stands at 30.

In JDP governments, the patriarchal structure of Turkish politics has not been disrupted. Despite occasional increases in the number of female ministers to two, women have generally been appointed as Ministers of Family and Social Policies, with few exceptions. Nimet Baş, the longest-serving minister in Türkiye, served as the Minister of State Responsible for Women and Family and later as the Minister of National Education for 8 years, 1 month, and 7 days in the 59th and 60th terms of the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan governments (See Table-8). Following the 2011 general elections, the "Ministry of State Responsible for Women and Family" was abolished and replaced by the "Ministry of Family and Social Policies." This structure emphasizes the importance of women in the private sphere within the family. Establishing a ministry with this name, instead of a

Women's Ministry, once again underscores the conservative structure of JDP governments.

During the Third Erdoğan Government (2011-2014), the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention was ratified by the TBMM. Social security premiums were reduced to encourage the employment of men aged 18-29 and women aged 18 and over. The Ministry of Family and Social Policies was established. The "Law on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women" No. 6284, an essential step for implementing the Istanbul Convention, was enacted (Kayagil, 2017: 47). However, on March 20, 2021, Türkiye withdrew from the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, via a presidential decree. The Minister of Family, Labour, and Social Services, Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, stated that the Istanbul Convention was not the only tool in combating violence against women, saying, "At this point, all the necessary tools are available in our primary and secondary legislation to protect our women and combat violence against women." Many women's organizations are demanding a reversal of the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, an international document preventing violence against women, through protests held daily in different cities (BBC, March 30, 2021).

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, traditionally known as a "male-dominated" institution, women have significantly shattered this perception and risen to high-level positions. Following the appointment of Filiz Dinçmen as the first female ambassador in 1982, the number of female ambassadors in the ministry gradually increased. This number rose from 8 in 2000 to 19 in 2005, 21 in 2010, 37 in 2015, and 60 in 2019. Currently, there are 257 ambassadors in the ministry, 193 of whom are men, and 64 are women. With this figure, women constitute 25 percent of the ambassadors in the ministry. Of the female ambassadors, 39 serve in foreign missions, while 25 are based at the

ministry's headquarters (Çetin & Yüzbaşıoğlu, 2021).

Furthermore, according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, women are expected to be more involved in peace agreements. However, according to the Council on Foreign Relations data, only 13 percent of negotiators have been women over the past 30 years (Tokyay, 2021). Türkiye has not prepared a national action plan to implement the UN's 1325 Resolution. Although a national coordination meeting was held under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2016, the plan to involve female diplomats in negotiations in conflict regions lost priority due to subsequent political events.

Another critical issue in Türkiye's foreign policy is NATO membership and military power. As a leading defense organization, NATO has adopted the UN's 1325 Resolution and developed new concepts to protect women in armed conflict zones, involve them actively in post-conflict peace negotiations, and increase the proportion of women in military units participating in NATO peacekeeping operations (Dönmez, 2023). In Türkiye, which has the second-largest army in NATO, the participation rate of women in the armed forces is very low. The proportion of women in active service is 1.2 percent (Alemdar, 2023). In conclusion, the evolving role and visibility of women in Turkish politics and public institutions, particularly under the JDP, highlight significant strides towards gender representation, although challenges and traditional patriarchal structures persist.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The initiatives aiming to augment women's political representation and the formulation of women's policies in Türkiye have yielded substantial advancements, underscoring the imperative for women to assume a more visible, active, and effective role in the public sphere. These endeavors strive to enhance women's participation in political life, elevate awareness of the gender identities sculpted by societal norms and patriarchal

structures, and achieve gender parity in these domains.

Kemalist women, while favoring their societal identity, also manifest ambivalence regarding their gender identities. Observations reveal that women often refrain from overtly expressing their gender identities, constrained by the stringent and conservative dictates of familial and societal institutions, which impede them from interrogating their identities.

A notable parallel exists between the political representation of women during the single-party regimes that governed for 27 years post-establishment of the Republic and the JDP administrations that have been in power for the past 21 years. This parallel is particularly evident in the political representation of women. During the single-party era, women were perceived as symbols of modernization and exemplars of the contemporary Turkish woman. In the present context, women are prominently recognized as emblematic figures in the struggle for the right to wear headscarves. Another similarity is the predominant identification of women within the private sphere, where they are expected to fulfill roles as "good wives and good mothers," with a pronounced emphasis on family as their primary focus.

The adequacy and efficacy of governmental policies on women's rights in Türkiye have been subjects of prolonged debate. Despite various initiatives in recent years to integrate women into social life and safeguard their rights, disparities persist in the workplace. Women in Türkiye exhibit a low labor force participation rate and are predominantly engaged in low-paying employment. Additionally, women encounter gender discrimination in the workplace, constraining their access to equitable opportunities.

The government endeavors to implement policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for women in the workforce, proffering various incentives to boost female labor force participation. However, the

sufficiency of these policies and their impact on attaining gender parity in the labor market remain contentious. Furthermore, violence against women continues to be a significant issue, with the government striving to address it through various policies. Nonetheless, violence against women remains pervasive and necessitates urgent solutions.

There is broad consensus on the necessity for increased political representation of women in Türkiye. However, this representation requires enhancement both quantitatively and qualitatively. Women should not be relegated to roles such as family and social ministers. Augmenting the qualitative aspect of women's political representation involves creating avenues for women to ascend to leadership positions. Greater political participation by women would ensure a more accurate reflection of their needs and perspectives, fostering justice and equality in all aspects of their lives.

Women's political representation in Türkiye is predominantly male-dominated, necessitating structural reforms to bolster female participation in political life. Political parties need to provide more opportunities for female candidates through mechanisms like quotas and zipper systems, and establish pathways for women to rise to leadership positions.

Enhancing women's political representation is not only crucial for women's rights but also for the overall well-being of society. An increased female presence in the political arena would ensure a more accurate representation of women's needs and views, thereby contributing to greater justice and equality in all areas of life.

In conclusion, it is essential to qualitatively advance women's political representation in Türkiye within the framework of the "equal citizen" concept. Creating opportunities for women to ascend to leadership positions will better reflect women's needs and perspectives, thereby contributing to Türkiye's overall welfare.

The trajectory of women's participation in Türkiye's public and political spheres underscores the complex interplay between modernization efforts, patriarchal structures, and feminist movements. Despite significant legislative advancements, including early enfranchisement and legal reforms, the anticipated level of gender equality remains elusive. The Kemalist policies of the early Republic, while pioneering, often perpetuated a masculinized vision of female identity, limiting women's roles to those sanctioned by the state. Post-1980s, the diversification of the women's movement, encompassing both liberal and Islamist feminisms, began to challenge these constraints, advocating for broader socio-political recognition and rights. However, the persistence of patriarchal ideologies within governmental policies continues to hinder qualitative transformations in women's political representation.

This study highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the historical and contemporary dynamics of gender politics in Türkiye, emphasizing the importance of both legislative action and societal change in achieving true gender equality. However, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. Firstly, the study predominantly relies on secondary sources, which may introduce biases or overlook grassroots perspectives. Secondly, the focus on major political periods and movements may not fully capture the regional and local variations in women's experiences and activism. Lastly, the evolving political context and recent developments may not be fully reflected in the analysis, necessitating ongoing research to keep abreast of changes.

Future research should focus on the intersectionality of women's experiences and the impact of evolving political contexts on gender relations, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse on women's rights in Türkiye.

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## TABLES &amp; FIGURES

Table 1: Parliamentary Representation during the Single-Party Period

year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
1935	18	395	4.6%
1939	15	429	3.7%
1943	16	435	3.7%
1946	9	465	1.9%
Total	58	1724	3.36%

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 2: Female Parliamentary Representation during the 1950-1980 Period

year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
1950	3	487	0.6%
1954	4	541	0.7%
1957	7	610	1.1%
1961	3	450	0.7%
1965	8	450	1.8%
1969	5	450	1.1%
1973	6	450	1.3%
1977	4	450	1.3%
Total	40	3888	1.02%

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 3: Female Ministers of Türkiye from 1950 to 1980

Minister	ministry	Party	Government	term of office	Duration
Turkan Akyol	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare	Independent	33rd Government - Nihat Erim	26.3.1971-11.12.1971	8 months, 2 weeks, 1 day
Hayriye Ayşe Nermin Neftçi	Ministry of Culture	Independent	38th Government – Sadi Irmak	17.11.1974-31.3.1975	4 months, 2 weeks

Source: (Tekin, 2020)

Table 4: Female Representatives of the Republican Senate and Their Terms of Service

Name	education	Method of Election	Party and Term
Nazire Özel Şahingiray	Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History, and Geography, Department of Sumerology	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	JP 15.10.1961–7.6.1964
Hatice Mualla Akarca	Ankara High Agricultural Institute, Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History, and Geography,	Elected (Senator of Muğla)	JP 15.10.1961–5.6.1966

	Department of German Language and Literature		
Emine Mebrure Aksoley	Ankara University, Faculty of Law	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	RPP 7.6.1964–14.10.1973
Fatma Hikmet İşmen	Ankara University, Faculty of Agriculture	Elected (Senator of Kocaeli)	Worker's Party of Turkey- 5.6.1966–12.1.1975
Solmaz Belül	Istanbul University, Faculty of Law	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	RPP 4.10.1973–14.10.1979
Aysel Baykal	Istanbul University, Faculty of Law	Elected (Senator of Istanbul)	RPP 14.10.1979–12.9.1980
Nimet Zerrin Tuzun	Ankara Girls' Technical Teacher Training School	Presidential Quota	9.6.1964–10.10.1971
Bahriye Üçok	Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History, and Geography, Department of Medieval Turkish and Islamic History, State Conservatory, Department of Opera	Presidential Quota	14.10.1971–14.10.1977
Adile Ayda	Ankara University, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Language, History, and Geography, Department of French	Presidential Quota	13.7.1976–3.7.1978
Nermin Abadan Unat	Istanbul University, Faculty of Law	Presidential Quota	25.7.1978–12.9.1980

Source: (Candeger & Coşkun, 2018: 258)

Table 5: Female Parliamentary Representation during the 1983-2002 Period

year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
1983	12	399	3%
1987	6	450	1.3%
1991	8	450	1.8%
1995	13	550	2.4%
1999	22	550	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>2399</b>	<b>2.6%</b>

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 6: Female Ministers of Türkiye from 1983 to 2002

Minister	Ministry	Party	Government	Task Date	Duration
Imren Aykut	Minister of Labor and Social Security	ANAP (Motherland Party)	46. Government – Turgut Özal	21 December 1987-9 November 1989	3 years, 6 months, 2 days

	Minister of State Responsible for Women and Family  Minister of Environment		47th Government – Yıldırım Akbulut  48. Government - Mesut Yılmaz  53. Government - Mesut Yılmaz  53. Government - Mesut Yılmaz	9 November 1989-23 June 1991  20 April 1990-21 November 1991  6 March 1996-28 June 1996  30 June 1997-11 January 1999	7 months, 1 day  3 months, 3 weeks and 1 day  1 year, 6 months, 1 week and 5 days
Işıl Saygın	Minister of Environment  Minister of Tourism  Minister of State for Women and Family	ANAP	52. Government – Tansu Çiller  53. Government – Mesut Yılmaz  51st and 52nd Government – Tansu Çiller  55th Government - Mesut Yılmaz	23 February 1996-6 March 1996  6 March 1996 - 28 June 1996  5 October 1995-23 February 1996  30 June 1997-11 January 1999	11 days  3 months, 20 days  4 months, 2 weeks and 4 days  1 year, 6 months, 1 week and 5 days
Tansu Çiller	Minister of State for Economy  Minister of Foreign Affairs	DYP (True Path Party)	49. Government – Süleyman Demirel  54. Government – Necmettin Erbakan	21 November 1991-25 June 1993  28 June 1996-30 June 1997	1 year, 7 months, 4 days  1 year, 2 days
Meral Aksener	Minister of Interior	DYP	54. Government – Necmettin Erbakan	8 November 1996-30 June 1997	7 months, 3 weeks and 1 day
Güler İleri	Minister of State for Women and Family	SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party)	49. Government – Süleyman Demirel	20 November 1991-22 February 1992	3 months, 2 days
Turkan Akyol	Minister of State for Women and Family	SHP	49. Government – Süleyman Demirel  50th Government – Tansu Çiller	4 March 1992-25 June 1993  25 June 1993-27 July 1994	2 years, 4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days

Önay Alpago	Minister of State for Women and Family	SHP	50th Government – Tansu Çiller	27 July 1994 – 27 March 1995	8 months
Aysel Baykal	Minister of State for Women and Family	CHP	50th Government – Tansu Çiller	27 March 1995-5 October 1995	6 months, 1 week and 1 day
Ayfer Yılmaz	Minister of State for EU Affairs  Minister of State for Foreign Trade	DYP	53. Government – Mesut Yılmaz  54. Government – Necmettin Erbakan	6 March 1996 - 28 June 1996  28 June 1996-30 June 1997	1 year, 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days
Aysel Çelikel	Justice Minister	Independent	57. Government – Bülent Ecevit	5 August 2002 - 18 November 2002	3 months, 1 week and 6 days
Melda Bayer	Minister of State for Women and Family	DSP (Democratic Left Party)	57. Government – Bülent Ecevit	10 July 2002-18 November 2002	4 months, 1 week and 1 day
Tayyibe Gülek	Minister of State responsible for Cyprus and for Turks living abroad	DSP	57. Government – Bülent Ecevit	12 July 2002-18 November 2002	4 months, 6 days

Source: (Tekin, 2020)

Table 7: Female Parliamentary Representation during the Period 2002-2024

Year	Number of Female Parliamentarians	Total Number of Members of Parliament	Ratio of Female Parliamentarians to General
2002	24	550	4.4%
2007	50	550	9.1%
2011	79	550	14.3%
June 2015	97	550	17.6%
November 2015	81	550	14.7%
2018	103	600	17.1%
2023	121	600	20.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>3950</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: (Şahin, 2010)

Table 8: Female Ministers of Türkiye from 2002 to 2024

Minister	Ministry	Party	Government	Task Date	Duration
Güldal Akşit	Minister of Tourism	AKP (Justice and Development Party)	58th Government – Abdullah Gül	18 November 2002 – 29 April 2003	5 months, 1 week and 4 days
	Minister of State for Women and Family			59. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	29 April 2003-2 June 2005



Nimet Baş	Minister of State for Women and Family  Minister of education	AKP	59th and 60th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  60. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	29 April 2003-1 May 2009  1 May 2009-6 June 2011	6 years, 2 days  2 years, 1 month, 5 days
Selma Aliye Kavaf	Minister of State for Women and Family	AKP	60. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	1 May 2009-6 July 2011	2 years, 2 months, 5 days
Fatma Sahin	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	61st Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	6 July 2011-25 December 2013	2 years, 5 months, 2 weeks and 5 days
Ayşenur İslam	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	61st Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 62. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	25 December 2013-28 August 2015	1 year, 8 months, 3 days
Ayşen Gürcan	Minister of Family and Social Policies	Independent (later AKP)	63. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	28 August 2015-24 November 2015	2 months, 3 weeks and 6 days
Beril Dedeoğlu	EU Minister	Independent	63. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	22 September 2015-24 November 2015	2 months, 2 days
Sema Ramazanoglu	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	64. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	24 November 2015-24 May 2016	6 months
Fatma Güldemet Sari	Minister of Environment and Urbanization	AKP	64. Government - Ahmet Davutoğlu	24 November 2015-24 May 2016	6 months
Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya	Minister of Family and Social Policies	AKP	65th Government - Binali Yıldırım	24 May 2016-10 July 2018	2 years, 1 month, 2 weeks and 2 days
Julide Sarieroğlu	Minister of Labor and Social Security	AKP	65th Government - Binali Yıldırım	19 July 2017-10 July 2018	11 months, 3 weeks
Zehra Zümürüt Selcuk	Minister of Family, Labor and Social Services	Independent (later AKP)	66th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	10 July 2018-21 April 2021	2 years, 9 months, 1 week and 4 days
Ruhsar Pekcan	Minister of Commerce	Independent (later AKP)	66th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	10 July 2018-21 April 2021	2 years, 9 months, 1 week and 4 days

Derya Yanık	Minister of Family and Social Services	AKP	66th Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	21 April 2021-4 June 2023	2 years, 1 month, 2 weeks
Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş	Minister of Family and Social Services	Independent (later AKP)	67. Government - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	June 4, 2023	on duty

Source: (Tekin, 2020)