

# **Women Politicians of a Masculine State: Gendered Politics in Turkey**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes the masculine futures of the politics in Turkey. It demonstrates historical process of women in political entities that are male-dominated institutions and it indicates current place of women. This thesis offers interviews with women politicians who are members of different political parties and work in different positions in politics. The thesis applies to feminist international relations theory for explaining gender-based distribution of works and men's hegemony on women politicians. According to findings, the thesis demonstrates that men dominated politics not by only using institutions which are controlled by men, they dominated politics by constructing masculine characters inside the women politicians who share same conventional ideas about genders with men.

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## Introduction

Although women's movement has a long history, today's Turkish society experiences a powerful women solidarity that is organized more than ever. While women increase their participation to the economic, social and political life, they also criticize unequal conditions of genders in everyday lives. The rise of feminist critic of gender inequalities make political institutions as subjects of gender issue. For this reason, low rate of women in decision-making process causes reactions among Turkish women more than before.

According to statistics, average of women as decision-makers never reach the equal rates with men since establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Although, Turkish constitution offers the same rights for all genders, these rights are not experienced equally by different sexual identities. This dilemma creates a question that if problems are not about laws, what is it. There are many answers for this question but one of them is domination of men in current conditions of Turkey.

In Turkey, the low average of woman in branches of the government demonstrates that men dominate all political entities as a deputy, mayor or chairperson of the party. Although women participate to politics as much as men, they work in 'secondary' positions like being head of women's branch of a party that do not directly influence the policy-making processes. According to traditional perspective, administration, governing and leadership seem as expertise of men. Therefore, conventional approaches and masculine norms of the society create social barriers for women politicians like social pressure and psychological violence. For these reasons, it's clear that politics is not an independent subject in gender issue. In this thesis, the interviews with Turkish women politicians demonstrate that if politics has a gender identity, it is male.

## **0.1: Research Question**

This thesis aims to demonstrate the masculine character of governmental bodies. From Grand National Assembly of Turkey to Pendik Municipality, men dominated all political and social institutions by taking majority in these entities. My purpose is answering that if the Turkish constitution offers the same rights for both men and women, why they cannot exercise these rights as equally. Why is the average of women low than men in all social and political institutions? What kind of obstacles exist in front of political participation of women in Turkey? I seek answers of these questions by this thesis. The thesis aims to demonstrate that how social constructions of masculinities and social oppression of women are sneaky actors of unequal conditions of genders in politics.

The thesis will focus on women's experiences in politics to determine the forms of social oppression of masculine characters over women politicians. The interviews, which I had with the women politicians, aim to show women's experience in male-dominated politics inside the tringle of family, society and politics. By this way, the thesis will be able to determine less visible obstacles of women for being subjects of decision-making processes as a woman in politics.

## **0.2: Thesis Structure**

The thesis goes through three steps to analyze the masculine character of governmental bodies. The first chapter will offer historical theoretical frame of the study. It will outline the study by using feminist international literature and will demonstrate the evolution of perspectives on gender issue in politics. This chapter aims to show how politics is gendered as much as other works in the society.

The second chapter of the thesis will include interviews with women politicians who are members of different political parties that are Justice and Development Party (AKP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and Republican People Party (CHP). These interviews demonstrate that how men dominated institutions by making women as minority in all entities regardless of how parties have different political lines from each other. It also shows that how unequal distribution of works between genders influences political participation of women.

Lastly, third chapter of the thesis will analyze the interviews under the light of feminist international literature. This part will offer findings of the thesis and interpret them by historical and theoretical frame of the research. This chapter of the thesis aims to demonstrate how political participation of women is not independent from gender issue and how social norms shape women's place in political institutions. Lastly, the chapter will show what is the contribution of this research to the literature.

### **0.3: Methodology**

The thesis includes interviews with four women politicians to determine their experiences in male-dominated politics. These women represent different political parties and different political lines. One of the women is member of governmental party of Turkey that is Justice and Development Party (AKP). She is vice chairperson of Pendik Municipality. She was chosen for the thesis because she represents the government party of Turkey and she reflects common ideas of majority of Turkish society about gender and politics. Her job also has importance for this research because she is vice chairperson of Pendik Municipality and rate of women vice chairpersons is very few. Therefore, she represents valuable place in politics.

Second interview belong to a woman deputy who is member of main opposition party of Turkey that is Republican People's Party (CHP). Her experiences are important for this research because she is part of the highest decision-making institution of Turkey which is Grand

National Assembly. She is one of 74 women deputies among 537 men in the assembly. Therefore, she knows that how it is hard to be part of policy-making process as a woman in the assembly. She is also member of *The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men* so she has wealth of knowledge on social and structural problems in political life towards gender issue.

The thesis also offers interviews with two women politicians from Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). One of them is official candidate of the party from biggest city of the country that is Istanbul. It means that the party supports her as representative of the MHP in the elections. Although average of women deputies is too low in the party, she was accepted herself as a successful woman politician in MHP. Discourse, policies and activities of the party demonstrate that hegemonic masculinities are common in MHP more than all other parties therefore, the experiences of this candidate will be useful to determine the influence of masculinities on women politicians. Second member of the MHP is Head of Women Branches of MHP. She is responsible from administration of 39 women branches of the party. As Chairperson of the Women Branches of MHP, she represents women politicians of one of the most masculine parties of the country. For this reason, her experiences are valuable for this research. Political experiences of all these women respond my questions on gendered politics in Turkey.

By the thesis, 6 questions are asked for these women politicians to determine their experience in politics. The questions and explanation of the questions are listed as below.

- 1- When we observe the average of women in national parliaments of Turkey, we see that number of women is very few. For you, what is the reason of this gap in political participation between genders in Turkey?

It was a general question to determine the observations of women politicians. These women have active political life and they always invite ordinary citizens to join their own party.

Therefore, they know that what women think about joining to a political party or a to any part of politics.

- 2- When a woman desire to be part of policy making process, does she face with structural problems as laws or social obstacles?

The second question was more specific than first one. The women politicians explained the role of structural and social obstacles in politics. By this question, the thesis aimed to show roots of the problems of women politicians. In this question, ‘structural problems’ is used to define constitutional laws and ‘social obstacles’ is used for defining social oppression. By this way, this research seeks to find the origin of gender inequalities in political life.

- 3- Did you experience any form of discrimination or obstruction on your political participation as a woman?

The third question was based on understanding the forms of discrimination of women in politics. By this question, women politicians expressed their experiences about any form of discrimination in political life. This question aimed to determine different forms of exclusion of women in politics.

- 4- Do you have a membership of a political party? If your answer is yes, do you think that your party support to enhance the average of women in politics?

This question aims to determine that how women analyzes the policies of their own parties on women issue. Do they criticize the party? Or they only criticize the ‘others’.

- 5- If you desire to be head of the party, is there any obstacle about it?

By this question, the thesis demonstrates that what is the general opinion about the women leaders. While women have places in every part of the politics, there is only one party has a woman leader in Turkey. Therefore, this question seeks the reasons of this situation by asking it.

- 6- Do you think that women's participation to policy-making process make positive changes more than men dominated politics?

The purpose of last question is that compare the two sides of the society. While one part of the society believe that men politicians can understand the women's problems and can produce solutions as much as women, other side of the society believes that women should represent themselves in the parliament in every case. Therefore, this question offers the opinions of the women politicians on this issue. By this way, it shows that what is the importance of women's participation to the politics as subjects of it.

## CHAPTER I: Historical and Theoretical Framework

### 1.1: Feminist Critic of Politics: Feminist International Relations

Conventional perspectives on politics assumes that concepts such as democracy and parliamentary systems are genderless notions of International Relations. On the other hand, feminist thinkers within Political Science and International Relations proved that almost all features of the politics are constructed by male-dominated authorities for centuries.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, all institutions and entities of the states have primarily masculine characteristics. For this reason, I believe that investigation of the unequal relations between genders in politics should start with critiques of traditional theories and notions of politics that exclude women from decision making-positions.

The writer of *Engendering Democracy*, Anne Phillips observes that the history of democracy is actually a history of rights for men. She states that male theorists constructed all concepts and theories of politics by considering experiences of men, and women are often excluded in these theories. While classic theorists claim that the concepts of politics are genderless, Phillips asserts that they were just blind to the inequality between genders.<sup>2</sup> The truth was that political theories recognized men as only subjects of the state.

According to Phillips, roots of modern liberal democracy of Europe is based on Ancient Greek which did not accept women as citizens. When Mary Wollstonecraft said, “men govern women with the arbitrary rules thus women should have their own representatives in the parliament” in 1790, male deputies just ignored her.<sup>3</sup> It was proof that modern Europe also did not recognize women as equal citizens of the century as Ancient Greek. John Lock was representative of the classic liberalism that emphasized the importance of being a property

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips A., (2015) “Demokrasinin Cinsiyeti”, Metis Press, p. 15

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.13

owner to participate decision-making processes, which often excluded women. Philipps claims that during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, states represented interests of men and its entities were governed by men who owned land. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, ‘being an owner’ was a necessary condition of the political participation but women continued to stay in outside of the equal citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

Another feminist writer, Serpil Cakir also examines the differences between rights of men and women by investigating the theoretical frame of liberal democracy. She expresses that the Social Contract is an agreement which is made by ‘fathers’ as ‘head of the family’.<sup>5</sup> According to Cakir, defenders of the liberal democracy ignored the separation between public sphere and private sphere and women always seemed as part of private sphere. In these conditions, women are not accepted as ‘independent individuals’ and a woman is viewed as a ‘wife’ who is under the ‘protection’ of her husband. For this reason, Cakir believes that women were not the part of the Social Contract because the authorities assumed that women’s husbands represent the whole family in the state’s bodies.

Like Cakir, Carole Pateman’s examinations on the contract also demonstrates the gender of this agreement. According to Pateman, defenders of the Social Contract assume that ‘human’ should give up the idea of “unlimited freedom” to create a unity for protection of all human rights. On the other hand, they cannot see the women as free individuals like men. Most of the time they believe that women do not have rationality or knowledge to be part of civil society.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, women are defined by a family identity solely as wife.

Pateman’s famous study, *Sexual Contract* is a product of these ideas. In this book, she expresses that sexual contract made women secondary class of the society by marriage and this contract was signed before the social contract.<sup>7</sup> According to Pateman, defenders of the social

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.40

<sup>5</sup> Cakir S., (2013) “Erkekler Kulubunde Siyaset”, Versus Press, p. 28

<sup>6</sup> Pateman, C. (1988), *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford University Press, Stanford. p. 55

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 44

contract assumed that women gave their rights for their husbands to represent them in the public sphere. By this assumption, they exclude the women from the equal citizenship and for this reason they could not represent themselves in the decision-making processes.

Although two main thinkers of the modern democracy, John Lock and J.J. Rousseau seem as the founding thinkers of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, an examination of their studies show that the word of ‘human’ represents only ‘men.’ When Locke emphasizes the importance of rights and freedoms of ‘human’ in *Second Treaties of Government*, he writes the following statement for women: “Wife and husband can have different demands. In this case there should be a rule and making this rule is naturally responsibility of the man as holder of the power and authority.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Rousseau, this hierarchy between men and women is normal. While he declares the natural rights of individuals, he does not include women. In *Emilie*, he says that “men should be *active* that control and determine the current situation and women should be *passive*. A man should be powerful and strong and a woman should seem as beautiful for him.”<sup>9</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft criticizes the contradictory attitudes of Rousseau about human rights. She states that the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is based on protection of only rights of men and writings of theorists of this declaration prove it. Wollstonecraft answers Rousseau’s arguments by *A Vindication of Women’s Rights* in 1792. Wollstonecraft aims to show that the first declaration does not cover women. For this purpose, she changes each of the articles of the human rights declaration to include women. She says that “according to Rousseau, women should not feel free herself. She should be an object for pleasure and a sweat wife for her husband. In other words, woman should be a slave and that she should ‘obey.’

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<sup>8</sup> Donovan, Joesphine (1997), *Feminist Teori*, by translation of Aksu Bora, M. Agduk Gevrek, F.Sayilan, Iletisim Press, p. 21

<sup>9</sup> Cakir S., (2013) “Erkekler Kulubunde Siyaset”, Versus Press, p. 31

Obedience should be taught to women again and again as a lesson”. She supports her opposing position by using arguments from Kant and believes that woman should not be as a “mean of something,” they should be an ‘end.’<sup>10</sup>

Critics of these early political theories demonstrate the origin of the state and its unequal construction of gender roles toward rights and freedoms. These analyses show that democratic and parliamentary systems are constructed by men and that women are excluded from political and public life. Discrimination between genders in politics continued in modern times and J. Ann Tickner’s studies illuminate it.

According to J. Ann Tickner most of the important theoreticians of International Relations assume that ‘head of the state’ is a man. For example, Tickner highlights that Machiavelli’s *Prince*, Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, or Kenneth Waltz’s *Man, The State and War* show how governors of states, and sovereigns of power within state affairs are always be portrayed as a man. In this picture, any existing form of femininity inside the decision-making positions is viewed as weakness. In contrast with negative descriptions of femininity, masculinity is often related with positive visions of the state, like being independent, sovereign, powerful and having self-help mechanism. Tickner states that a majority of men in powerful positions within the state causes male-dominated norms in political life and it directly affects policy and law-making processes.

In *Feminist Approach to International Relations: Roots, Development, Contributions and Limitations*, Tur and Koyuncu express that the exclusion of women from decision-making positions create an exclusion from security policies, which ignores women’s problems during times of war and peace. Therefore, it is clear that women should be part of the system to protect themselves from violence. The study of Tur and Koyuncu reveals that wars, conflicts and

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 32

violence influence women more than men. On the other hand, governors of the state believe that ‘security policies’ are part of ‘high politics’ and they should be controlled by men. According to conventional perspective, women are not rational as much as men to talk about security policies of the state. However, Tur and Koyuncu demonstrate that women should be decision-makers for security policies to stop being the subject of violence.

## 1.2: Literature Review

In Turkey, many feminist researchers have examined the violence, security and representation problems of women by academic studies. The first study which takes feminism as a subject of political science belongs to Sirin Tekeli. Her PhD thesis *Kadınlar ve Siyasal Toplumsal Hayat* (Women and Political Life) offered surveys of women deputies to demonstrate the structural problems for women. By this study, she showed that problems of women deputies in male-dominated assembly.

Yesim Arat also surveyed women members of the parliament for her study, *The Patriarchal Paradox Women Politicians in Turkey* and emphasized that although social-democrat people support the participation of women to politics, they also dictate the norms of men for shaping women’s political life. These women should be loyal children of the republic. Her second study followed to first article and examine the speeches of women deputies toward masculine politics.

While Ayse Gunes Ayata demonstrates the structural and social problems on active politics for women by her article *Women in the Legislation*, Ersin Kalaycioglu and Binnaz Toprak examine this issue from more broad perspective and they state that all decision-making positions are dominated by men, not only politics. The statistics on their study prove that rate of women as manager in business life is low as much as political life.

Serpil Sancar is another important researcher as a professor in Political Science Department of Istanbul University. Her valuable study, *“Erkeklik Imkansız İktidar”*, demonstrates that how genders are constructed by society and how women are influenced from this social construction. Sancar expresses that for a long time feminist literature examine the concept of patriarchy to explain inequalities between genders. According to Sancar, patriarchy is a useful mean to analyze that how men control public and private life by dominating women by using marriage as an institution. Patriarchy is also useful way of examination to see that how men exclude women from social and political institutions. On the other hand, Sancar believes that types of masculinities also should be examined to understand how the domination of men sustain itself as a system. Therefore, she had 49 interviews with men in Turkey and determine how society construct masculinities by using social oppression. It also demonstrates that how masculine futures of individuals and being a power holder seem as supplementary for each other in politics.

Lastly, Fatmagul Berkay who is another professor of Istanbul University, contribute to literature by her famous book, *“Tarihin Cinsiyeti”*. By this study, Berkay shows that even though the concept of history seems as an independent discipline of social sciences which is beyond of the genders, in fact the written history is based on men’s expressions. When Berkay examine both men and women’s writings, she observes that women are not seem as main subjects of the history, they always seem as in secondary positions as daughter, wife or a lover of a man. Berkay’s study proves that futures of gender identities are changed from Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey and traditional approach lost its main argument that is “men have superiority as naturally”. When women increase the struggle to reach women’s human rights, we see that men do not have superiority to on women, the society give it for men to dominate women.

### 1.3: Women's Place in Politics from Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey

When we investigate rhetoric of the formal history of the Republic of Turkey, we can easily observe that history “starts” with men. The writers of the contemporary Turkish history assume that all rights of women were given by the founders of the republic without any pressure from the public. When the formal writings of Turkish history reject the women's movement, these writings also ignore the historical process of women in last century of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, current studies demonstrate that ‘modern Turkish woman’ was not created in one night by establishment of the Republic.

### 1.4: Historical Progress of Women in Late Term of the Empire

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the radical changes in Ottoman Empire. Until 1987, Ottoman Empire was governed by absolute monarchy. The first assembly of the Empire, *Meclis-i Umumi* was established on December 23, 1876 by the Declaration of First Constitution.<sup>11</sup> According to this declaration, *Meclis-i Umumi* was constituted with two houses which are *Meclis-i Mebusan* and *Meclis-i Ayan*. While *Meclis-i Mebusan* represents the ordinary people, which are elected by people, members of the *Meclis-i Ayan* were appointed by Sultan II. Abdulhamid who is the monarch of the Republic.

*Meclis-i Mebusan* had 115 representatives in the parliament from 30 states of the Empire and there was not a woman as a part of the assembly. While 80% of the deputies was chosen from Muslim men, 30% of them was chosen from non-Muslim population.<sup>12</sup> It was the first time to share power with the monarch and it couldn't continue for a long time. *Meclis-i Umumi* was abolished by Sultan on June 28, 1877.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> GÜ, Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, Issue 26, Vol 1 (2006) p. 262

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 62-63

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 270

On July 23, 1908 Sultan II. Abdulhamid declared the Second Constitution and called members of the Meclis-i Mebusan by oppression of the *Ittihat ve Terakki* that is a party which struggle to construction of the modern democracy. <sup>14</sup>By oppressions of the *Ittihat ve Terakki*, the monarch was changed in the Empire and V. Mehmet Resat took the power as new monarch of the Empire by support of the *Ittihat ve Terakki*. By establishment of second assembly, rights and freedoms of people are guaranteed by the new constitution. Liberty and progress seemed as the necessity of the century thus liberal and democratic ideas are spread by powerful members of the assembly like Namik Kemal and Ziya Pasa. These developments influenced social, economic and political activities of people and women were main subjects of these changes. <sup>15</sup>

By positive effects of the declaration of First and Second Constitution, women's place was changed in the society. Before the declaration of the constitutions, women were already accepted as students for School of Medicine (*Tibbiye Mektebi*), in 1843 and they could take high school education by establishment of *Kız Rustiyeleri* in 1869. <sup>16</sup> After Sultan accepted the first constitution of the Empire, *Kanun-u Esasiye* in 1876, the elementary school is accepted as mandatory for both girls and women and higher education offered for women. By the declaration of Second Constitution, the first high school of girls, *Istanbul Inas Sultanisi* was founded in 1913. The biggest development in this period is that women are accepted to the universities. In 1915, women shared the same classes with men in Faculty of Literature in Istanbul University. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi Vol 3, İkinci Mesrutiyet Doneminde Kadın Olmak, No. 1, 2011 Issn: 1309-8012 (Online) p.3

<sup>15</sup> Çaha, Ömer (1996), Sivil Kadın, Vadi Press, p.93

<sup>16</sup> Gokcimen S., Yasama Dergisi, Vol 10. 2008. p. 10

<sup>17</sup> Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi Vol 3, İkinci Mesrutiyet Doneminde Kadın Olmak, No. 1, 2011 Issn: 1309-8012 (Online) p.4

First time in the history of Ottomans, women had private property by *Arazi Kanunnamesi*, which is a law to regulate rights of inheritors in 1858.<sup>18</sup> By this law, it's declared that women also have a right to share heritage of their families with men of the family. After the developments in education in second constitutional period, women also reach to rights for participating to the working life as public employees in 1913.<sup>19</sup>

These constitutional regulations changed women's place and they start to study and work in big cities as a part of public life. These women who reached to rights for education and working, established women associations and published important journals by using opportunities of First and Second Constitution. Specially, the Second Constitution seemed as declaration of liberty for women.<sup>20</sup> By using this constitution, women increased the number of the associations which are controlled by women and take responsibilities in political parties.<sup>21</sup>

The first journal of women, *Terakki-i Muhadderat*<sup>22</sup> was published in 1869 and it was criticizing the unequal places of women in society. The women writers of the journal also criticized the differences between European countries and Turkey toward the rights and freedoms of women. In second constitutional period, number of the women's journals was increased.<sup>23</sup> The names of these journals are listed as following: "*Mefharet*", "*Demet*", "*Mehasin*", "*Kadınlar Dünyası*", "*Hanımlar Alemi*", "*Kadınlar Alemi*", "*Osmanlı Kadınlar Alemi*", "*Kadın*", "*Genç Kadın*", "*Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*", "*Musavver*", "*Kadınlık Hayatı*", "*Kadınlık*", "*Kadın Duygusu*", "*Seyyale*", "*Türk Kadını*", "*Siyaset*", "*Bilgi Yurdu*

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<sup>18</sup> Gokcimen S., *Yasama Dergisi*, Vol 10. 2008. p. 10

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Çaha, Ömer (1996), *Sivil Kadın*, Vadi Press, p.92

<sup>21</sup> Tekeli, Şirin, (1982), *Kadınlar ve Siyasal Toplumsal Hayat*, Birikim Press, p.198

<sup>22</sup> Ozen, H., (1990), *Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türk Kadın Gazete ve Dergileri*, p. 14., İstanbul, TR

<sup>23</sup> Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi Vol 3, İkinci Mesrutiyet Döneminde Kadın Olmak, No. 1, 2011 Issn: 1309-8012 (Online) p.6

*Işığt*", "*Bilgi Yurdu*", "*Bilgi Mecmuası*", "*Genç Kadın*". Additionally, women also announced their demands by writing for famous newspapers of the time like *İkdam*, *Tanin* and *Servet-i Funun*. As a result, journals and newspapers were used as a mean of women's movement to reach equal rights with men in late period of the Ottoman Empire.

Among the journals of women, *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World) has a special place for women's history. This journal was published longer than all other journals that was for 9 years and it represented women's struggle for equal rights and freedoms. *Kadınlar Dünyası* was the official journal of *Osmanlı Mudafaa-i Hukuk-i Nisvan* which is a union that struggle to the rights and freedoms of women. Between 1913-1921 the union strived for empowerment of women and struggle for equal social statute with men.<sup>24</sup>

In the second constitutional period, many associations were also established by women for different purposes. Among these associations, some of them were founded for political aims. *Osmanlı Mudafaa-i Hukuk-i Nisvan* is one the women's association which known as a feminist union. This association was founded by Ulviye Mevlan in 1913 and members of the association strive to increase economic, social and political rights of women in the constitution. While these women struggle to expand the rights of women in education and working life, they also demanded universal suffrage in 1921.

In same period, women are also established some associations to defend the independency of the empire against the military occupation of the imperialist powers. One of these associations is founded by Fatma Aliye by name of *Nisvan-ı Osmaniye İmdat Cemiyeti*.<sup>25</sup> Members of this associations helped the armed forces during the war between Greeks and Ottomans. "*Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyeti*", "*Donanma Cemiyeti*", "*Müdafa-i*

<sup>24</sup>Hatice Özen, *Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türk Kadın Gazete ve Dergileri (1968-1990)*, İstanbul, 1990, s. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Gokcimen S., *Yasama Dergisi*, Vol 10. 2008. p. 16

*Milliye Hanımlar Heyeti*” were the other associations which struggled for the independency of the country.<sup>26</sup> In the War of Independency, Turkish women were also founded “*Anadolu Kadınları Müdafa- i Vatan Cemiyet-i*” on November 5, 1919 and this association protested both Istanbul Government and the European powers which occupied the country. The protests of this association increased the consciousness about the War of Independency among ordinary people. Founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other leaders of the Turkish National Movement appreciated these women for their struggle against the occupations.

On March 19, 1929, the first massive demonstration for independency was organized by *Asri Kadınlar Cemiyeti* which is another union of women.<sup>27</sup> In these demonstrations, famous women actors of the Turkish history played important roles as representatives of the Turkish National Movement. Halide Edip, Şükûfe Nihâl, Nakiye Elgün, Münevver Saime, Meliha, Sabahat ve Naciye Hanım were the most famous actors of these demonstrations. Moreover, after these demonstrations, Halide Edip and Münevver Saime went to the villages of the Anatolia to spread soul of national movement.

The active participation of women to the national movement demonstrates that social conditions of the second constitutional period politicized women in late term of the Empire. Moreover, we see that founders of the mentioned associations, journals and newspapers came from modern schools of the Empire. After women took the modern education in schools of the Second Constitution, they started to work in public sphere as public employees. It moved them from houses as private sphere to the public sphere. These developments created proper conditions for political participation of women.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 16-17-18

These developments indicate that women's participation to the political life was relative with their social statute. By the acceptance of women's social rights as education and working, women could have participated to the political life. While some of the women associations focused on only rights of the women, other side preferred to interest with both women's and the country's political problems. In both cases, these educated women saw themselves as subjects of the politics and they created the potential power of the women politicians in the new born republic, Turkey.

### **1.5: Women Politicians of the New Born Republic**

According to the popular rhetoric of the politicians, there was not a movement of women fighting for equal rights but rather the leaders of the Turkish revolution already supported women's equality in politics. Findings of the previous part of the thesis proves that this argumentation does not have a scientific base because political participation of the women is a result of women's struggle for being subjects of the public life. Conventional arguments are also invalidated by Yaprak Zihnioglu and by her famous book, *"Revolution without Women"* (Zihnioglu, 2003)

According to Zihnioglu, the women's movement did not start by the foundation of the republic. Like other women historians, she also emphasizes that second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century changed the conventional life style of the women. During World War I, majority of the Turkish men joined the army and it decreased their population in economic and social life. In this period, women started to move away from house work and began to participate in all facets of economic and social life. Zihnioglu expresses that it changed the social status of women.

After the Republic of Turkey was established on October 29, 1923, educated women of the republic that came from active political life of the late term Ottoman Empire, demanded to be part of the newborn democracy. For this purpose, the Women's Union was established by

Nezihe Muhiddin and members of the unions struggled for universal suffrage. Although they experienced political pressure and humiliating reviews of their demands, they published a journal, *Kadinin Yolu* that sought to increase their voices so that they could reach equal political rights with men.

Until 1935, the Women's Union struggled for universal suffrage but their demands were rejected by the government. The women achieved to have a right to participate to the elections by constitutional regulations on December 5, 1934. By new law, women joined to the elections in 1935 and 18 women deputies were chosen for the parliament.

Although the government accepted the women to the parliament, founder of the Women's Union, Muhiddin was in the jail because of a slander and she could not join to the elections. After Muhittin was arrested, one of the founders of the union, Latife Bekir was elected as new chairperson of the Women's Union and she is also elected as deputy of Republican People's party.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the Turkish government supported Bekir instead of Muhiddin because Muhiddin was the most powerful and symbolic name of the women's movement and she struggled for active participation of women to politics. On the other hand, Bekir had close relations with the government and she was the "modern face" of the republic. Bekir did not reject to obey the 'fathers' of the republic and she chose being politically passive in women movement. For these reasons, she was the perfect choice for fathers of the republic. (Zihnioglu, 2003). In summary, women were accepted to politics but it was under one condition, being passive.

The women's movement in the early period of the republic demonstrates that the rights of women are not a gift of founders of the republic, they are consequences of the women's struggle. Moreover, the examination of the relation between the Women's Union and the

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<sup>28</sup> Cumhuriyet, (May 30, 1929), "Adliyyede: Nezihe Muhiddin Davasi", vol. 1815, p.2

Turkish government show that the acceptance of women in politics depends on being passive faces in the assembly. It proves that representation of women is necessary condition to solve gender based problems but it's not a sufficient condition. The masculine character of the state dominates politics by less-visible means beyond representation. Therefore, when I examine the problems of women's representation in politics, I can also see clues on masculinities in the governmental bodies.

## CHAPTER II: Women's Representation in Decision-Making Processes of Politics

### 2.1: Women's Place in Today's Politics

The Women reached the equal rights with men in most of the countries as a result of women's struggle. Although the constitutions offer the same rights for all genders, current researches demonstrate that men and women do not exercise their rights as equally. According to numbers of women in local and national political institutions, the average of women is low than men in all entities which shapes the policies.

According to statistics of United Nations Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union, rate of women representatives in executive and parliamentary branches of governments is low than men's numbers worldwide and this difference between participation rates is dramatically high. The study of UN and IPU, "Women in Politics: 2017 Map"<sup>29</sup> demonstrates that only 7,2 percentage of the leaders are women as head of the state and average of women deputies in parliaments is 23,4. World and regional averages of women in parliaments are shown as below.

|                         | Single House or<br>lower house | Upper House<br>or Senate | Both<br>Houses<br>Combined |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>World Average</b>    | 23.4 %                         | 22.9 %                   | 23.3 %                     |
| <b>Regional Average</b> |                                |                          |                            |
| <b>Nordic Countries</b> | 41.7%                          | -                        | -                          |
| <b>Americas</b>         | 28.3 %                         | 27.5 %                   | 28.1 %                     |

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2017-03/new-ipu-and-un-women-map-shows-womens-representation-in-politics-stagnates>

|   |        |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Europe (Nordic countries included)</b>     | 26.4 % | 26.0 % | 26.3 % |
| <b>Europe (Nordic countries not included)</b> | 25.0 % | 26.0 % | 25.2 % |
| <b>Sub-Saharan Africa)</b>                    | 23.8 % | 22.1 % | 23.6 % |
| <b>Asia</b>                                   | 19.6 % | 16.3 % | 19.3 % |
| <b>Arab States</b>                            | 18.9 % | 12.6 % | 18.0 % |
| <b>Pacific</b>                                | 15.0 % | 37.1 % | 17.4 % |

This map indicates that highest rate of women representatives belongs to the Nordic Countries by rate of 41.7%. It's the only region that closes to the equality between men and women representatives in the parliament. The average of women in parliaments is low in all other countries.

The map of *Women in Politics* proves that rate of women representatives in parliaments is still low worldwide. According to maps of UNW and IPU average of women in national parliaments slightly increased from 22.6 % to 23.4 % from 2015 to 2017 but it proves that how slowly progress the gender equality in politics. The 2017 edition of the Map shows a slight drop in the number of countries with a woman as Head of State and/or Head of Government from 2015 figures (from 19 to 17). Results of the statistics also demonstrate that women's participation at the ministerial level now stands at 18.3 per cent.

According to the 2017 edition of the map, the rate of women deputies in Grand National Assembly of Turkey is 14,9. By this rate, Turkey has 132<sup>nd</sup> place on the list. Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) has more details about the distribution of women deputies in Turkey's parliament. TUIK lists the deputies by considering their genders at the following table.<sup>30</sup> This table also shows all governmental periods of Republic of Turkey from establishment of the assembly to today so it's a useful mean to follow women politicians' progress inside all changes for years. The table shows number of representatives and rate of representation in the assembly by the election year and sex as below.

| <b>Election year</b> | <b>Total</b>          |            |            |              |            |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|
|                      | <b>number of</b>      |            |            |              |            |
|                      | <b>representative</b> | <b>Mal</b> | <b>(%)</b> | <b>Femal</b> | <b>(%)</b> |
|                      | <b>s</b>              | <b>e</b>   |            | <b>e</b>     |            |
| <b>2015 (01.11)</b>  | <b>550</b>            | 469        | 85,3       | 81           | 14,7       |
| <b>2015 (07.06)</b>  | <b>550</b>            | 452        | 82,2       | 98           | 17,8       |
| <b>2011</b>          | <b>550</b>            | 471        | 85,6       | 79           | 14,4       |
| <b>2007</b>          | <b>550</b>            | 500        | 90,9       | 50           | 9,1        |

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt\\_id=1061](http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1061)

|             |            |     |      |    |     |
|-------------|------------|-----|------|----|-----|
| <b>2002</b> | <b>550</b> | 526 | 95,6 | 24 | 4,4 |
| <b>1999</b> | <b>550</b> | 527 | 95,8 | 23 | 4,2 |
| <b>1995</b> | <b>550</b> | 537 | 97,6 | 13 | 2,4 |
| <b>1991</b> | <b>450</b> | 442 | 98,2 | 8  | 1,8 |
| <b>1987</b> | <b>450</b> | 444 | 98,7 | 6  | 1,3 |
| <b>1983</b> | <b>399</b> | 387 | 97,0 | 12 | 3,0 |
| <b>1977</b> | <b>450</b> | 446 | 99,1 | 4  | 0,9 |
| <b>1973</b> | <b>450</b> | 444 | 98,7 | 6  | 1,3 |
| <b>1969</b> | <b>450</b> | 445 | 98,9 | 5  | 1,1 |
| <b>1965</b> | <b>450</b> | 442 | 98,2 | 8  | 1,8 |
| <b>1961</b> | <b>450</b> | 447 | 99,3 | 3  | 0,7 |
| <b>1957</b> | <b>610</b> | 602 | 98,7 | 8  | 1,3 |

|             |            |     |      |    |     |
|-------------|------------|-----|------|----|-----|
| <b>1954</b> | <b>541</b> | 537 | 99,3 | 4  | 0,7 |
| <b>1950</b> | <b>487</b> | 484 | 99,4 | 3  | 0,6 |
| <b>1946</b> | <b>465</b> | 456 | 98,1 | 9  | 1,9 |
| <b>1943</b> | <b>455</b> | 439 | 96,5 | 16 | 3,5 |
| <b>1939</b> | <b>429</b> | 413 | 96,3 | 16 | 3,7 |
| <b>1935</b> | <b>399</b> | 381 | 95,5 | 18 | 4,5 |

The table demonstrates that the rate of women representatives did not go beyond 4,5% until 2007 elections. According to the statistics, the rate of women deputies has doubled after 2007 by rate of 9.1%. After this year, the average of the women deputies slightly increased every year.

Although these statistics demonstrate that rate of women representatives increases every year in the parliament, distribution of the chairs between genders is still away from equality. Today's rate of women is 14.7% in the parliament and it's one of the lowest rates among all parliaments worldwide.

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey stated current rate of women deputies by the following table.<sup>31</sup> This table gives an opportunity to compare numbers of women representatives of different political parties.

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<sup>31</sup> [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/milletvekillerimiz\\_sd.dagilim](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/milletvekillerimiz_sd.dagilim)

| <b>Name of Party</b>                       | <b>Number of Women</b> | <b>Rate of Women</b> | <b>Number of Men</b> | <b>Rate of Men</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>Justice and Development Party (AKP)</b> | 34                     | % 10,76              | 282                  | % 89,24            | 316          |
| <b>Republican People's Party (CHP)</b>     | 19                     | % 14,5               | 112                  | % 85,5             | 131          |
| <b>People's Democratic Party (HDP)</b>     | 17                     | % 35,42              | 31                   | % 64,58            | 48           |
| <b>Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)</b>    | 3                      | % 8,57               | 32                   | % 91,43            | 35           |
| <b>Good Party (Iyi Parti)</b>              | 0                      | % 0                  | 6                    | % 100              | 6            |
| <b>Independent Deputies</b>                | 1                      | % 100                | 0                    | % 0                | 1            |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 74                     | % 13,78              | 463                  | % 86,22            | 537          |

According to this table, 86,22 percentage of the deputies are men and this rate is almost six times higher than the average of women. While the People's Democratic Party (HDP) has higher rate of the women, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has lower the lower rate. The reason of 0 percentage of women in Good Party is that the party was established just couple months ago and they did not attend an election yet. Therefore, the percentage of women deputies seems as 0%, although the Good Party is the only party that has a woman president, Meral Aksener. The table also indicates that Justice and Development Party (AKP) has low rate for women representatives than two opposition parties HDP and CHP, although the party has majority in the parliament as governmental party. Women's place in the local government is not better than national level. The rate of women in local level is shown as below.

|                                | <b>Total<br/>Number</b> | <b>Number of<br/>Women</b> | <b>Rate of Women</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>1999 Elections</b>          |                         |                            |                      |
| <b>Mayor</b>                   | 3216                    | 20                         | 0,6                  |
| <b>Council of Municipality</b> | 34084                   | 541                        | 1,6                  |
| <b>Metropolitan Council</b>    | 3122                    | 44                         | 1,4                  |
| <b>2004 Elections</b>          |                         |                            |                      |
| <b>Mayor</b>                   | 3225                    | 18                         | 0,56                 |
| <b>Council of Municipality</b> | 34447                   | 817                        | 2,37                 |
| <b>Metropolitan Council</b>    | 3208                    | 57                         | 1,78                 |
| <b>2009 Elections</b>          |                         |                            |                      |
| <b>Mayor</b>                   | 2948                    | 26                         | 0,8                  |
| <b>Council of Municipality</b> | 31790                   | 1340                       | 4,2                  |

|                                |       |      |      |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|------|
| <b>Metropolitan Council</b>    | 3379  | 110  | 3,2  |
| <b>2014 Elections</b>          |       |      |      |
| <b>Mayor</b>                   | 1396  | 40   | 2,8  |
| <b>Council of Municipality</b> | 20498 | 2198 | 10,7 |
| <b>Metropolitan Council</b>    | 1251  | 60   | 4,7  |

According to the table, the average of women is not low only in the parliament.<sup>32</sup> The statistics demonstrates that the rate of women is also low in local governments. The rate of women mayors did not go beyond 1% until the 2014 Elections. By the election of 2014, this rate rose from 0,8 to 2,8. Although, there was an increase in the numbers, it's still too low. There is also a slightly rising in the rate of women for Council of the Municipality and for Metropolitan Council. Although the average of women increases in these places, the rate of women members is under 5% in the Metropolitan Council and it stays with low rate by 10,7 in the Council of Municipality.

The average women in local and national governments demonstrates that all political institutions of the state are dominated by men politicians. Although, the rate of women increases in these institutions by years, the gap between men and women is highly deep in politics. The statistics proves that while men control the high positions of the politics, women are accepted only for secondary places of the political institutions. It indicates that the men-dominated policies exclude women from decision-making processes to sustain masculinity of the state.

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<sup>32</sup> International Journal of Science Culture and Sport, Special Issue 3, July 2015 p. 514

## **2.2: Interviews: Women's Experiences in Politics**

*Hatice Akkaya*

Akkaya is official candidate of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) from biggest city of the country, Istanbul. She is a lawyer, married and has one child.

**When we observe the average of women in national parliaments of Turkey, we see that number of women is very few. For you, what is the reason of this gap in political participation between genders in Turkey?**

I believe that women did not interest with politics as much as men. My observations say that women did not care the politics at the beginning and men filled all fields of the politics from establishment of the republic to today. Nowadays, women desire to be part of political life but now men do not want to leave their chairs. This situation creates a struggle between men and women but the problem is that most of the women do not want to fight for getting the chairs from men. Women are hard-working but they are so emotional. When they face with a problem, they are broken and easily give up. Women are also so honest and idealist so they can't ignore dirty face of the politics. For this reason, they labour in the party affairs more than men but they are not existing in decision-making process of the party.

**When a woman desire to be part of policy making process, does she face with structural problems as laws or social obstacles?**

When I compare the structural and social obstacles for women, I can say without thinking, the problems are based on social obstacles. There is not a legal obstacle against women's participation to politics. Unlike the society, laws always support us. On the other hand, Turkish political history is history of military coups. Therefore, families believe that being part of politics is kind of dangerous. For this reason, they always teach their daughters to stay away political issues.

**Did you experience any form of discrimination or obstruction on your political participation as a woman?**

Participating politics as a woman is not an easy thing. I was I lucky about my family because my father always supported me to follow my own ideas. Unfortunately, marriage is a different case. I have a busy life because of my political activities. I care about every paper work of the party so it takes my all time. There is no man who wants to share his wife with politics. My husband always shows his displeasure about my busy life and it creates a psychological oppression on me. Sometimes I'm thinking to give up and leave everything. It is not just about having a husband. All family members and friends always say that why you are doing that and all these reactions just decrease my motivation. I'm starting to lose my belief to myself but I don't want to leave my party.

**Do you have a membership of a political party? If your answer is yes, do you think that your party support to enhance the average of women in politics?**

I'm the member of Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and I believe that MHP always support women's participation to politics. We should accept that MHP was men's party. However General President of MHP, Devlet Bahceli changed it. The party's Central Executive Committee (MYK) choose women by high rates as members of the board of management. It was the gift of our general president. If he didn't accept women to manager board, it will never be happened. On the other hand, there is a struggle between men and women candidates. When I demand quota application for women, my men opponents reject it. They struggle to prevent this demand because they believe that I will not be elected for my knowledge and experiences in politics but I will be elected only because I'm a woman. They believe that positive discrimination is not fair for men but they don't see that positive discrimination tries to close inequality gap between genders.

**If you desire to be head of the party, is there any obstacle about it?**

MHP is not just a political party, the party represents an ideology as nationalism. For this reason, general president of the party is not only head of the party, he is also leader of the Turk-Muslim people. Therefore, a woman cannot be leader of MHP. In my opinion, it's the most proper.

**Do you think that women's participation to policy-making process make positive changes more than men dominated politics?**

Women's participation to policy-making processes can change everything in the parliament. Women experience social problems as oppression and discrimination in public life. They experience all forms of violence. If they make the policies, it can change social and economic conditions of women. It can empower the women and can save future of girls by eliminate barriers.

***Şenal Sarıhan***

Sarıhan is a lawyer, married and has two children. She is deputy from Republican People Party and member of *The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men*. She is winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.

**When we observe the average of women in national parliaments of Turkey, we see that number of women is very few. For you, what is the reason of this gap in political participation between genders in Turkey?**

Rate of women politicians is relative with historical and sociological process of women. When they reach to education as a right? When they could attend to economic life? How many women could have a job? These questions imply the reasons of low participation of women to politics because history shows that when men participate to economic, social and political life, these

places are closed for women. The separation between public and private life limits the life of women and they seem as part of house. In modern times, although women have a right for having a job, there are still invisible barriers. There are some categories for occupations which are driven by masculine society, people believe that some jobs are proper for women and some of them are not. For instance, a woman can be a teacher because it's a wonderful choice for her gender identity. According to this conventional understanding, women are emotional, naive, weak and they cannot order someone. Therefore, "administration" seems as men's job. From this perspective, futures of men are opposite of women thus they are so proper for administration. For this reason, common idea is that either men or women who has "men's abilities" can govern the state. As a result, women lost their belief for themselves. Most of the women internalize men's understanding and they think that they can do 'secondary works' as being a vice chairman instead of being a chairman.

**When a woman desire to be part of policy making process, does she face with structural problems as laws or social obstacles?**

Although there are some structural problems, the biggest obstacle is based on social problems for women. Current social conditions discourage women. If we can create a social environment as supportive for women, it can empower them to change oppressive social structure. If we can educate women by teaching them self-confidence, it can change their all life. I want to explain it with my own experience. I was a teacher before I start Law School. When I graduate from faculty of law, I joined to Progressive Lawyers Association. I was young and inexperienced. I cannot imagine to be head of this association but all members of the association encouraged me and I believed myself by their emotional support. I administered the association as a president for three terms. Although this success, I couldn't think to be a deputy for a long time. I applied to be a candidate as 67 years old. Today I'm 70. Before I win the elections, I was thinking that how many women work in the assembly. I was seeing that the number of women deputies is

too few and either they come from wealthy families or they are children of current deputies. Therefore, I could not imagine to be part of the parliament. Again, I owe my success to emotional support of my family and friends. My personal experiences demonstrate that success of women in politics and social life is highly relative with social support. In other words, social oppression of women can be the biggest obstacle for being decision-makers.

**Did you experience any form of discrimination or obstruction on your political participation as a woman?**

I was lucky about my family because my parents never restrain me. On the other hand, after the 1971 Turkish Military Memorandum was issued by Turkish Armed Forces, I was arrested and it changed my parents' behavior for me. They tried to be more protective but it caused kind of a pressure on me. Today, I am aware of that I decided to marry to escape from this pressure. Your husband also can oppress you but I could not think it when I was young. My luck is that my husband also shares same democratic ideas with me and he always support me to participate politics as an activist. Therefore, I struggle for social democracy with my husband. On the other hand, I experience different forms of discrimination inside the party politics. In Turkey, achievement of a political party depends on a powerful communication with people. For this reason, all members of the party strive to talk with ordinary citizens to get their support. In these activities, the party always send women to houses to talk with housewives and send men to the streets. They say that housewives open the doors for women politicians more than men. I wonder why the doors of restaurants do not open for us? Why the doors of villages do not open for women?

**Do you have a membership of a political party? If your answer is yes, do you think that your party support to enhance the average of women in politics?**

I represent Republican People Party in the assembly. I cannot say that my party is not supportive to increase women's rate in politics. They use quota application which guarantee that 33 percentage of the deputies come from women candidates. However, it's not sufficient, we need equality in the parliament. In last elections, the party declared six women's name as candidates from biggest cities of the country. By this way, the party guaranteed the victory of six women candidates in the elections. What about other women candidates? They is not a guaranty for them. Therefore, we need quota application as 50% in the party.

**If you desire to be head of the party, is there any obstacle about it?**

There is not a visible obstacle if I desire to be chairperson of the party. On the other hand, almost all members of the administration are men. For this reason, if decision-makers of the party are men, my chance as a woman is low to be head of them.

**Do you think that women's participation to policy-making process make positive changes more than men dominated politics?**

Women's participation to the policy-making process can change all futures of the branch of executive. First of all, women use both logic, instinct and emotions at the same time. On the other hand, men see instinct and emotions as symptoms of weakness. If politics is art of negotiation, you need to use all of these abilities. Therefore, women can increase reconciliation for problematic relations in politics. Secondly, it's clear that we have problem about gender equality in Turkey. Almost all of the women experience violence or discrimination or both of them in their everyday lives. Therefore, they should be part of policy-making process to make laws which prevent violence and discrimination. Forms of discriminations are too sneaky. For this reason, men don't understand how women feel 'secondary citizen' in their social, economic and political lives. Women's participation to the politics can show less visible or invisible barriers of women and it can change character of the policies. In other words, if teachers have

a problem, you should call teachers to solve problems. You cannot solve this issue by calling engineers. It's same for women. The problems can be solved by women's struggle, not by men's 'donation'.

### ***Behice Miray Maden***

Maden is chairperson of the Women and Family Branch of Nationalist Movement Party. Maden administer 39 women branches of the party. She is married and has children.

**When we observe the average of women in national parliaments of Turkey, we see that number of women is very few. For you, what is the reason of this gap in political participation between genders in Turkey?**

First of all, I believe that the biggest reason of the low rate of women in politics is absence of women' courage. I'm sure that parents and relatives also discourage women but it cannot be an excuse. Women do not believe themselves and in my opinion, it's the reason why they do not take a step forward. Secondly, I cannot offer the reasons of low participation of women to politics worldwide but I have some observations about the women supporters of my party. Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) seem as the party of men and these men seem as, extremely conservative, reactionary, rude and violence lover. Therefore, MHP has a bad reputation among people. Although, most of the women share the same ideology with the part, they do not want to be part of party politics because of the bad reputation. May be 20 years ago they could be right to hesitate about masculine character of the party but today they are not. MHP is changed for years and today they definitely support women to empower them in politics. For answering your question, I can say that masculine futures of the party scare women to join them and they don't want to feel alone in a men-dominated group in the party activities. It's one of the important reason of low rate of women.

**When a woman desire to be part of policy making process, does she face with structural problems as laws or social obstacles?**

The problem is definitely based on social obstacles. Turkish constitution accepts women as equal individuals with men. All laws support women to increase their power in economic, social and political life. On the other hand, the society is not progressive as much as our laws. Although women are changed by well education and economic independency, they still feel social pressure about their life choices. For instance, when I invite a woman for official dinner of the party, she thinks that “what my husband will say about it?” or “who will care with my baby?”. Women are emotional individuals so they do not ignore family issues as much as men. When her husband or father say a negative sentence about her political activities, she lost her all motivation and turn back to house works to make her family happy again.

**Did you experience any form of discrimination or obstruction on your political participation as a woman?**

I did not experience a discrimination as a women politician but obstruction is inevitable for women in current social conditions. You cannot be just a woman in Turkey. You should be many things at the same time. You should be a perfect mom for your children, lovely wife for your husband, faithful child for your parents and successful women for yourself. You need extremely powerful motivation and self-confidence to get over all these responsibilities. To be honest, I cannot be like that all the time. Sometimes I’m thinking to give up everything and turn back to home. Although my husband shares the same ideology with me, she does not want to share me with the party. He does not prevent my political activities but I always feel kind of a pressure on me. This psychological pressure is not visible but I’m sure that almost all women in Turkey experience it and they think to give up as me.

**Do you have a membership of a political party? If your answer is yes, do you think that your party support to enhance the average of women in politics?**

I'm the member of Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and I believe that MHP is greatly supportive to increase power of women in politics. However, administration group of the party care quality of women members instead of numbers of them. Personally, I agree with them. I don't care the rate of women members in branches of the party if they will not contribute to development of MHP. Sometimes 10 hard-working women can be more useful than 100 passive women. MHP cares knowledge and experience of women and they use these wise women as brain of the party. Therefore, I don't criticize them about the rate of women politicians. I should also say that General President of the party, Devlet Bahçeli voluntarily works to empower women inside the politics. We owe him lots of thing as being women leaders of the party.

**If you desire to be head of the party, is there any obstacle about it?**

I believe that you cannot find a woman who desire to be general president of the MHP. As members of the party, we strive to conserve old Turkish traditions and our traditions say that men command the Turk-Muslim people during the history. Therefore, I respect this situation. Women can be part of decision-making process but being a general president of party is a different issue. Moreover, MHP represents an ideology and head of the party seem as symbol of this ideology. From establishment of the MHP to today, we had only two leaders who are Alparslan Türkeş and Devlet Bahçeli. For this reason, meaning of the leader is different for us than other parties.

**Do you think that women's participation to policy-making process make positive changes more than men dominated politics?**

I definitely believe that women's participation positively influences the politics. I observe that when women attend to the party's meetings, men members stay away from the discourse of

violence. Their tendency is increasing to negotiate with other parties' members instead of squabble. It's result of women's affects. Additionally, we need role models for young girls to give them courage. Unfortunately, current society limits the lives of women by seeing women as part of the houses rather than accepting us equal individuals of the public life. Existence of women politicians in policy-making positions opens the door of public life for women and it contributes the progress of them. Therefore, women's participation to politics is vital to emancipation of women from the social barriers.

### ***Oznur Canayakin***

Canayakin is member of Justice and Development Party (AKP) which is the government party of Turkey. She is vice chairman of Pendik Municipality and head of Pendik Women Branch of AKP. She is married and has one child.

**When we observe the average of women in national parliaments of Turkey, we see that number of women is very few. For you, what is the reason of this gap in political participation between genders in Turkey?**

There are many reasons of low rate of women politicians but I believe that the biggest reason is economic conditions of women. It's clear that economy shapes all futures of people's lives and political participation needs economic independency as much as possible. For a long time, Turkish society accepted woman as a mom and wife and they thought that women's only job is caring with her family. For this reason, women couldn't attend to economic life at the same period with men. Late participation of women to economic life delayed their progress for being independent individuals. As I said, politics can be the job of independent people thus women's participation to politics and economy share parallel periods. Today, if rate of women politicians is increasing, it is result of their struggle to reach economic independency.

**When a woman desire to be part of policy making process, does she face with structural problems as laws or social obstacles?**

The biggest obstacle for women is based on social problems. We can't find any legal obstruction for women. All parties' constitutions allow women for being a candidate. On the other hand, attitudes of the party members shape the political carrier of women. Men are majority of all political parties in Turkey. For this reason, their decisions determine women's position in political matters. I observe that most of the time men exclude women from administration affairs rather than being inclusive. For instance, Pendik Municipality has local assembly as all municipalities of Turkey. All parties have members in this assembly but the parties chose their own members from men instead of women. One of the main opposition parties, CHP has 12 members in this assembly but none of them is a woman. Is it because women do not interest with the local administration of Pendik? Of course, is not. It's because the party members have a tendency to prefer men for this kind of positions. Therefore, tendencies of the party members can create barriers for women politicians in current social conditions. When someone ask us that "do you have a problem with laws as a woman", we can't show something to explain our problems. On the other hand, we struggle against behaviors, tendencies and traditional ideas of men but it's not visible as much as fighting against laws. Therefore, I'm saying that the first problem of women is based on social obstacles.

**Did you experience any form of discrimination or obstruction on your political participation as a woman?**

I can't say that I feel discrimination because of my political participation. However, I am minority of every meeting of the party as a woman and it reminds me that I'm not equal with them according to majority. Therefore, I always feel alone in these activities. It's not just about party activities, it is same in all parts of the politics. Number of women is very few in all political parties so we don't have a solidarity between us. For instance, I'm vice chairman of

Pendik Municipality but I don't have women coworkers who are in the same rank with me. Almost all chairmen and vice chairmen are men in municipalities. Therefore, I do not have a chance to call my women colleagues to discuss about women's place in politics. It creates a loneliness in the political matters. Unlike women, men are always together and they talk about policies of the party as man to man. It always makes us as 'the other' of politics. However, I should add that reactions of the people are so positive for women politicians. When I visit tradesmen or elderly people as vice chairman of Pendik Municipality, they always smile with satisfaction for seeing me. Elderly men always say, "I hope that my daughter can be a successful and helpful girl like you". Ordinary people are so happy to see women in politics. There will be some radical people who believe that women should do nothing without house works, they are just kind of exceptions. Therefore, meeting people and seeing their positive reactions always increase my motivation. I did not experience serious problems with my husband about my political activities therefore I feel so lucky. Sometimes he complains about my busy life but it's not because I don't spend enough time with him. It's because I don't spend too much time with my son who is 5 years old. I also feel guilty when I can't spend quality time with family. However, I do not have big problems with my family. If I do, I can't go on my way.

**Do you have a membership of a political party? If your answer is yes, do you think that your party support to enhance the average of women in politics?**

I'm the member of Justice and Development Party (AKP) and I believe that the AKP strives to increase average of women in politics. AKP is governmental party since 2002 and you can observe that rate of women deputies incredibly increased in the assembly from 2002 to 2017. It's result of vision of Recep Tayyip Erdogan who is President of Turkey and he is head of the AKP. He knows importance of women thus he always supports us in the party. Before the establishment of AKP, Erdogan was the member of Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), and he was chosen as Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality from this party. Everyone knows that

Welfare Party owes its success to women because there was so powerful movement of women behind the party in 1990's. Therefore, Erdogan says that "I never forget women's support to make me as a mayor". As he said, after the establishment of AKP, he did not ignore the importance of women and he warned male members of the party to increase average of women in decision-making processes. If you examine the rate of women deputies for all years of the republic, you can see that how women incredibly increased their number after the AKP takes power in the government. We do not use quota application for women but Erdogan always says that "if there are two male politicians, there should be also at least one female politician inside the decision-maker committees of the party". Everyone accepts it in the party so it opens the way of women.

**If you desire to be head of the party, is there any obstacle about it?**

It's really hard to be general president of the party. Although our current president support empowerment of women in the party, the male members do not want to see women as opponents of them in the elections. Men have a hegemony on women in politics as much as economic and social life. Today, they seem to support us to reach equality between genders but if the rate of women starts to pass rate of men in decision-making positions, they will be against us. I'm definitely sure about it. Today, we are the minority in politics thus they think that we are not 'threat' for their hegemony. Although, they're thinking that women are weak in politics, they are lobbying for keeping power their own hands. Therefore, I do not think that they will support me to take all control of the party as a woman. It's also relative with traditions. Since the Ottoman Empire, Turks are governed by men. There are some examples of women leaders but they are just exceptions. History shows that Turks love powerful and strict leaders so they believe that men are more proper for leadership. They also think that women are so sensitive people and they take decisions by emotions. For this reason, majority of the people believe that women are not proper to be a leader. Therefore, my chance is not high for being leader of the

party in current conditions. Being general president of the party is highest stage of the administration so some people can say that it's hard for both men and women to be chosen for this position. I want to answer it by showing places of men and women in municipalities. There are 81 cities in Turkey and all of them are controlled by elected mayors. Among these 81 mayors, only one of them is a woman. While 80 cities of Turkey are governed by men, only city of Gaziantep is governed by a woman who is Fatma Sahin. I guess it shows that how hard to be a leader for a woman in Turkey.

**Do you think that women's participation to policy-making process make positive changes more than men dominated politics?**

It changes everything. When people say that there is not a necessity for women's participation to the politics as much as men, they actually worry about 'the changing' in the society. Until this time, only men took the decisions in the governmental bodies. If women can be part of political institutions as decision-makers, it will change women's place in the society and they will not be 'secondary citizens' anymore. Additionally, women have serious problems in public and private life and men does not see understand them. For instance, when a woman experienced sexual harassment, the first sentence of men is that "what did she do?". They believe that the woman did something wrong to encourage the man for a sexual relation. They do not understand that women do not have consent in this kind of cases. Therefore, women should be part of decision-making processes. Women understand women's problems.

## **CHAPTER III: Analysis of the Findings**

### **3.1: Analysis of the Interviews**

Interviews with the women politicians demonstrate that it is difficult to be a woman in political institutions. Although, the women politicians have different opinions about the reasons of the low rate of women in politics, the common ideas of the women can be listed as below.

- Absence of education
- Absence of consciousness on women issue
- Gendered distribution of house works
- Gendered distribution of responsibilities on baby care
- Absence of economic independency of women
- Community pressure

While these points are emphasized by all women politicians, they also offer different reasons from each other about low rate of women's participation to politics. When members of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) emphasize the ignorance of women and its results, the member of Republican People's Party (CHP) emphasizes the men-dominated society and its social effects on women. Both members of the MHP think that absence of courage of women is the main reason of low rate of women in politics. According to the member of the governmental party, biggest reason of the low rate of women politicians is economy. She believes that other reasons are secondary in this issue.

The interviews indicate that all of the women politicians, who participated to this research, think that women face with social obstacles more than structural problems. According to the deputy of CHP, current social conditions discourage women and most of the women give up to struggle for being subject of the political institutions because of they did not see any support from their family, friends or neighbors.

The member of AKP expresses that women cannot be part of decision-making processes unless the administration offices of the parties, which are controlled by men, does not call women for important positions in the institutions. In other words, she thinks that men's majority in the political entities causes

the exclusion of women. For this reason, it creates a political loneliness for women as a form of social oppression. Statement of the official candidate of the MHP supports this approach. She expresses that men candidates create a powerful solidarity as a brotherhood and they prevent the acceptance of positive discrimination in the party. By this way, they continue to protect their own hegemony in the administration office. As a result, these attitudes of men politicians restrain women from being part of policy-making process. Second member of the MHP emphasizes another face of this issue and she expresses that responsibilities of the family life creates psychological pressure for women. She states that women try to be a 'superwoman' that have extraordinary powers to success everything in the same time. For her, women struggle against a great social oppression in the current social conditions.

The third question of the interviews aimed to determine the forms discrimination and social oppression on women politicians and the answers for this question demonstrate that family is the main source of the social pressure. In the interviews, all women politicians expressed that they feel 'lucky' for having a thoughtful husband who 'allows' to his wife for her participation to the politics. All of the women think that a woman cannot be subject of political institutions or she cannot sustain the political participation, if members of the family does not support her. Although, these women express that 'I have a supportive husband', they also say that 'I always feel a psychological pressure on me' because of they spend limited time for the family issues.

Additionally, the representative of the CHP expresses that the parties send women politicians to the houses for meeting with housewives. She states that women politicians cannot participate to the meetings in the streets. According to this experience, outside of the houses seems as proper places for men's politics. It indicates that women's politics stays in houses as much as women's bodies.

According to the interviews, there is a big difference between member the CHP and members of the MHP&AKP. The deputy of CHP expresses that a woman can be the leader of a party, if the men members of the party support her. Unlike her, the women members of MHP and AKP states that leadership is a proper job for men politicians more than women. They believe that Turkish culture and traditions accept men as a leader of the Turkish society. These women state that leaders of the Turks are powerful men in the history. Therefore, this tradition should be continued.

Women members of the MHP see the leader of the party as leader of all Turk-Muslim community. According to this approach, the leader of the party represents an ideology and he should be a powerful man to govern all Turk-Muslim people in the world. Therefore, members of the MHP does not support a woman to make her as president of the party. Although, the member of AKP does not imply an ideology, she also emphasized that a man is more proper for leadership of the Turk-Muslim population. According to this perspective, Turkish people love strict and powerful leaders thus a man can govern these people instead of a woman. It indicates that women politicians internalize the traditional ideas of people and they accept indisputable leadership of men in politics.

The interviews also demonstrate that women do not criticize their own party except the member of CHP, although they criticize general picture of the politics. In other words, they criticize gendered politics in Turkey but they hesitate to offer same critics for their own party. The explanations of these women politicians indicate that they appreciate for the support of the party to the women members in last years. For this reason, they do not want to lose this support by criticizing them. The interviews show that support of the parties for women seems as a gift from men leaders to the women politicians.

The answers of women politicians for the last question demonstrate that all women believe that women's participation to the decision-making processes will have positive effects

on policies. According to the interviews, if women can be part of the policy-making processes, they can positively influence decisions on women issue and they can solve women's current problems that violence, discrimination, sexual harassment and social oppression. According to the women politicians, they will not be secondary citizens of the country anymore, if they reach the equal statute in social and economic institutions.

### 3.2: Conclusion

Historical process of the women in political life demonstrates that women's political participation relates to the economic and social conditions of women. Unlike the common discourse, Turkish women did not be part of politics by establishment of the Republic of Turkey. After the declaration of First and Second Constitution, women acquired some constitutional rights, which getting a well education and working in public offices, and these rights moved their social position from private to the public sphere.

Women's participation to the public life created convenient conditions for women's struggle. By using opportunities of the constitutional period, women demanded equal rights and freedoms to annihilate the gender inequalities. For this purpose, these women founded lots of associations and journals to increase the voice of women's demands.

The right of education also created the 'new women' of Turkey that desire to be part of national politics. While the women were demanding equal statute with men in social and political institutions in the late term of the Empire, they were also influenced the national movement by their demonstrations. Women actively participated to the national movements, and the War of Independency politicized them more than before. Politically active women in the late term of the Empire created potential power of women for newborn republic.

While the Turkish women gain the universal suffrage in 1935 by having 18 women deputies in the assembly, the state is controlled by men for years. The women politicians are

used as ‘modern face of the republic’ from establishment of the republic to today’s Turkey. Therefore, women politicians do not affect the decisions or policies for neither local nor national government. By exclusion of the women from decision-making process, the policies of the government are shaped by men politicians in different branches of the government.

According to the interviews, women’s experiences are kind of proofs of the masculine character of the state. The interviews indicate that all social and political institutions are dominated by men and women can have a place in these institutions if leaders of the parties as ‘fathers of politics’ allow them. Women’s participation to the policy-making process seems to depend on permission the party leaders from eyes of the women politicians.

Gendered distribution of works also shapes the women’s place in politics. Interviews demonstrates that women do not be part of party politics before they see a support from their family, friends and neighbors. Although, the women politicians have a convenient social environment to participate political life, these women always feel a social pressure on themselves because the society implies that they neglect their ‘responsibilities’ in the family life.

All these findings answer my research question with a scientific base. Although, women and men have same legal rights in the constitution, they do not exercise these rights equally because of social obstacles. Men’s domination of the political institutions and social oppression of the women are fundamental reasons of that why there is a gap between rate of men and women in decision-making positions of the politics. Secondary position of women in politics is sustained by male-dominated policies and it indicates that masculine character of the state reproduces itself by using domination of men in the political entities.

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