

Political Leadership and Erdoğan

Political Leadership and Erdoğan

By

Yalçın Akdoğan

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Political Leadership and Erdoğan

By Yalçın Akdoğan

This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2018 by Yalçın Akdoğan

Translated from Turkish by Doğan Eşkinat

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0627-4

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0627-5

To my daughter Hatice Kübra and
my son Ömer Yusuf

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter I	12
On Leadership	
Leadership	12
Charismatic Leadership	44
The Power of Words	59
Populism	84
Consultation and Collective Reasoning	90
Death and Love for Public Office	107
Seriousness and Dignity	111
Chapter II	115
On Politics	
The Purpose of Politics	115
Justice	118
On Legitimacy	119
Obedience and Social Contract	120
Consultation and Collective Reasoning	124
The Common Good and the Public Interest	128
Realist-Idealist Politics	134
On Justice	137
Ethics	149
Chapter III	165
Erdoğan and Turkey	
Development and Urbanization	165
Compromise and Dialogue	169
Balcony Speeches and Empathy	172
Raison d'état vs. the Rule of Law	174
Nationalism and Domesticism	178
Civil-Military Relations	183
Fighting FETÖ	189

Turkey-EU Relations	191
Foreign Policy	194
Youth and Women	200
Secularism.....	204
Afterword	212
Bibliography	215
Index	221

FOREWORD

Every political struggle begins with a heartache. If you happen to be deeply troubled by images of dead children washing up on the Mediterranean coast or being dragged out of buildings destroyed by bombs, you will inevitably start looking for ways to change things rather than merely feel sorry for the victims. In the face of Gazan children recovering from painful wounds or Somalian kids suffering from hunger and extreme poverty, expressions of sympathy often prove inadequate. When you see young girls being pushed around by campus security due to a ban on headscarves or mothers who cannot communicate with their incarcerated boys because it is forbidden to speak their native language, you might want to find a solution to their problems. Upon witnessing coup plotters or terrorists murder innocent people in cold blood, it is natural to want to protect them like an army of birds safeguarding the Kaaba from elephants. To extinguish the fire burning in Aleppo, where civilians have been crushed by barrel bombs day in and day out, you feel an urge to hit the road like ants carrying water to put off the fire that burned Abraham. In short, politics starts with a genuine concern for the well-being of one's fellow human beings. It is born out of love, pain and a sense of responsibility.

If you feel sorry for infants dying in war zones, you could end up worrying for all babies around the world. If your stomach churns at the sight of children suffering from hunger, poverty and lack of opportunity, you grieve for kids everywhere. Renowned Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet once wrote that “the world is unfair, kid, the world is a bully.” In truth, it is not the world that is unfair and oppressive but the people who run it – their blind ideologies and vested interests that crush the human spirit. What sentences people to a lifetime of poverty, suffering and lack of opportunity are the policies implemented by the powerful. Faced with this reality, it is understandable for some people to want to change the world and not to take for granted victimization, impoverishment and unfairness.

Engaging in politics is the ultimate instrument of change. It allows people to create a more just, more compassionate, more virtuous order with more room for liberty. It gives them an opportunity to make others happy and serve the greater good. If you wish to combat twisted ideas, misguided

policies, oppressive regimes and deranged ideologies, politics is the way to go.

Although politics can help to safeguard human dignity and serve humanity, its name was smeared by a number of ideological movements and their flag-bearers in the twentieth century – when millions of people lost their lives as a result of wars, violent conflicts, hunger and extreme poverty. Today, the world faces an equally serious crisis: Having rung in the new millenium less than two decades ago, humanity suffers from a total eclipse of the mind. Despotism regimes perpetrate horrible massacres as double standards, lack of principles and dishonesty become the name of the game. As the self-proclaimed democrats of the Western world turn a blind eye to military coups, terrorism, violence and oppression, various forms of hatred –including Islamophobia, racism and fascism— are on the rise. Instead of welcoming refugees with open arms, the world sentences them to death at sea.

So how can we make things right? Some people believe that education is the answer. Others highlight the importance of psychological development or spiritualism. Obviously, almost everybody tries to make the world a better place in their own way. Personally, I believe that politics affects people more deeply than anything else – from cradle to grave. Politics is what got us here and it is the right tool to save the world.

Many people believe that politics is about making the lives of other people better by promoting happiness, utility, justice, virtue or the common good. In truth, the moral purpose of politics is to uphold justice, because there can be no morality without it. In turn, without a moral compass, politics causes more problems that it can possibly solve.

The problems we encounter today and the crises that humanity experiences are in fact manifestations of a crisis of management. Modern philosophers, who mistakenly thought that placing human beings at the center of the universe would glorify humanity, turned us into slaves of our passions, oppressors and an imperialist economic order. As such, we need to question the existing global order and political paradigms in order to overcome this crisis of management –or crisis of leadership— and actually glorify mankind.

It was this sense of moral obligation and urge to question the rules of the game that encouraged Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to lead the way to a better world through politics. To be clear, his moral stance, leadership style and

political persona can be analyzed in a number of ways. This book aims to present Western and eastern ideas about the purpose of politics, along with its virtues and morality, to the reader and to provide insights into Erdoğan's role as a leader from this perspective.

Over the years, mankind imagined similar things and described them in different ways. Although there appear to be major differences between societies around the world, a closer look reveals that the philosopher-kings of Stoics and Al-Farabi's virtuous city administrators have a lot in common. The exemplary man, to whom Confucius referred as junzi, has similar virtues as Rumi's man of love. Likewise, Marcus Aurelius' recommendations to Ancient Roman politicians largely overlap with the advice offered by Ibn-Rushd and Al-Ghazali to fellow Muslims.

Throughout Islamic history, books of politics (siyasetname) highlighted the importance of virtue and morality, while providing advice and guidance to Muslim leaders. Great works by Nizam al-Mulk, Keikavus, Yusuf Khass Hajib, Imam Al-Ghazali, Koçi Bey, Abu al-Najib Suhrawardi and Al-Mawardi provided insights into the relationship between human nature and politics from a moral perspective. At the same time, scholars wrote books about prominent figures ranging from Alexander the Great to Atilla the Hun, Winston Churchill to Adolf Hitler and Alija Izetbegović to Turgut Özal. Whereas most works about leaders focus on their lives or policies, others discuss political philosophy, ideological currents and ideas. In most cases, where sultans, emperors and leaders stood on certain theoretical matters isn't considered a popular subject. As such, not many authors simultaneously talk about theory and practice.

To be clear, this book does not seek to tailor a theoretical suit for a policymaker. Nor is it my intention to provide a summary of Erdoğan's political career and deeds. Instead, this study aims to describe what his political life and actions say about him as a leader.

There is no doubt that Erdoğan made history by winning every election as the chairman of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and made his mark on Turkish politics. Since the early years of his tenure as prime minister, Erdoğan has been considered a prominent leader by supporters and opponents alike. At a time when European leaders proved largely unable to remain popular for extended periods of time, the Turkish president came to run his country for 15 years and attained nationwide influence in the process. In 2005, he was ranked among the world's 100 most powerful people and featured on the cover of Time magazine. In

March 2004, Greek newspaper Imerisia argued that Erdoğan's victory was unprecedented in Turkey. "Our eastern neighbor's predictable triumph is unlike the political power enjoyed by Adnan Menderes in the 1950s or Turgut Özal in 1983," the publication observed. "Menderes had won elections by a landslide only to encounter social and political turmoil. Özal, in turn, operated in an 'artificial' political arena, from which Turkey's pre-1980 leaders had been excluded."

Erdoğan's ability to lead the Turkish people in the face of challenges, problems and attacks deserves as much attention as his accomplishments. In particular, his ability to thwart the July 15 coup attempt by mobilizing ordinary citizens not only went down in history as an act of heroism but also reaffirmed his status as a charismatic leader.

Whether specific policies are good or bad often depend on the time period, political context and their long- and short-term consequences. At the same time, certain actions and figures that come under attack one day can be praised in later periods. In the early twentieth century, the Young Turks could hardly stomach the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who is celebrated today by many Turkish citizens as a source of national pride.

Today, the hegemony of the global order launch systematic attacks against Erdoğan, whom they consider to be the source of all their problems. As a matter of fact, the Turkish president arguably survived more challenges, assaults and conspiracies than any other leader in memory. Ironically, each attack rendered Erdoğan more prominent and his service and 'silent revolutions' added to the Turkish people's love for him. In the end, he became a living legend.

To reflect on contemporary developments with an eye on the Turkish president's personality and leadership style is like taking notes in the margins of political history. In this sense, this book can be seen as a collection of descriptions and analyses as well as recommendations to budding politicians, individuals who wish to work closely with political leaders and people with leadership skills of their own.

Publishing works on active politicians often comes at a price. The author can be charged with flattery or accused of singing their subject's praises. Throughout history, books of politics have been published by individuals who worked closely with great leaders and by people who followed relevant developments very closely. In this sense, the authors of such books, which are now considered part of moral doctrine, were harshly

criticized by their contemporaries. However, it is important to keep in mind that such works, with their emphasis on principles and values, are invariably addressed to future generations.

Close advisors and authors who engage in conceptual analyses of leaders are often likened to mirrors. Successful and virtuous leaders do not hesitate to see their faces in such metaphorical mirrors. Meanwhile, the individual who holds the mirror has a responsibility to be truthful. While Rumi talked about such people as mirrors of the heart, people like Al-Kindi and Al-Mawardi were accused by their contemporaries of coming up with false theories of justice and ethics in an effort to influence rulers. In truth, such works not only had an effect on their contemporaries but also made a positive impact on numerous people over time.

To be clear, this book was written by a political scientist who remains active in politics. As such, I accept the charge of subjectivity in advance. This is not an effort to reflect on ancient beliefs to manufacture modern myths. As a politician with an academic background, I understand that the power to inspire change rests with politics and I acknowledge that political ideas are meaningful to the extent that they can influence the political process. As such, assessments about contemporary developments should be seen as a description of the present, whereas theoretical claims are intended to shed light on the future. Instead of looking for rules in practice, or theorizing the practical, this study presents both practical realities and theory to its readers.

Despite having delivered important services and implemented unprecedented reforms in Turkey's modern history, Erdoğan today is being treated unfairly and with a certain level of negative bias. To provide the right context for the Turkish president's activities and his leadership style is part of the author's obligation to serve the truth.

As Imam Al-Ghazali once said, "the most beautiful statement features a limited number of words, strong evidence, plenty of meaning and utmost care to not bore the audience to death." By the same token, it is not possible to discuss at length Erdoğan's political career and his experiences. Instead, this book makes brief and partial references to events that the author personally witnessed, dealt with or observed.

This study starts with a theoretical discussion and proceeds to make claims about Erdoğan himself. It engages in a comprehensive analysis of the idea of leadership and questions whether the Turkish president qualifies as a

charismatic leader along with his take on populism, ethics and justice. Furthermore, it makes theoretical claims about the purpose of political activity and provides insights into Erdoğan's position on politics.

While the first chapter focuses on the attributes of leaders, the following section raises questions about the purpose of politics, the idea of morality and justice. The third chapter, in turn, delves into Erdoğan's positions on certain developments.

I sincerely hope that this work will provide insights for individuals seeking to understand Erdoğan better and contribute to the development of young people with an interest in politics.

Assoc. Professor Yalçın Akdoğan
February 2017

INTRODUCTION

According to Indian philosophy, the world has been going through kali-yuga, the dark ages or the age of vice, for the past six thousand years. For Islam, the past fifteen centuries have been a prelude to the apocalypse.

When corruption and moral bankruptcy become widespread, people start looking for a messiah or a mahdi. Nonetheless, humanity has no choice but to address pressing problems itself. To be clear, politics isn't the root of all evil but one of the best tools available to mankind to solve problems.

Politics, in turn, begins with a genuine concern about certain issues. Some people passionately strive to address problems, fearlessly keep trying and bravely embrace change when the time comes. Unless you have love, passion, pain and hope in your heart, or lack courage and vision and imagination, you cannot walk too far on the path of politics.

Politics begins with desire, commitment and intentions, and evolves into fighting for an ideal. In the words of renowned Turkish thinker Cemil Meriç, it is necessary to engage in a measured and love-laden rebellion. In other words, we must revolt against injustice, oppression and other wrongs as “a wave of generosity that stands up to injustice and spreads the power of love in order to cleanse ourselves from all the violence and grudge around us and to move away from the mechanical life that bastardizes us.”¹

In this sense, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, one of the most influential Turkish leaders in memory, always had what every politician desperately needs: an ideal worth fighting for and a firm commitment to change the world.

In the 1970s, Erdoğan not only socialized but also found ways to express his suffering, love and passions through political activism. During this period, he participated in debate and poetry competitions, became active within the National Turkish Students Association (Milli Türk Talebe Birliği) and the Great East movement (Büyük Doğu) and finally started his

¹ Cemil Meriç, *Kırk Ambar* [Forty Warehouses]. (Istanbul: İletişim Publishing, 6th Edition, 2014), p.475.

political career as a member of the youth branch of the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi).

Social, political and cultural activities make it possible for an individual to discover who they are. Some people even believe that the lack of politics in one's life undermines their human side and deprives them of their natural activities. Assuming responsibility is a basic condition of being human and to have a heart and mind. Even if an individual ends up by themselves, they have an obligation to feel a responsibility toward the cosmic order, their own nature and their maker. As a social being, in turn, people need to be aware of their responsibilities toward their family members, community and all of mankind. As French thinker Jean-Paul Sartre maintained, everything begins when we remember our responsibility in the face of history.² Erdoğan, in turn, believes the divine command that "Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it"³ and tries to live every moment with a sense of responsibility and a commitment to serving humanity. As such, he sees the struggle for a just and fair order as his political cause.

Erdoğan traces back his orders to fight not to an ideology or source of power but to what's within – his obligation described in the holy scripture. According to Hilmi Ziya Ülken, who describes obligation as 'a state of giving oneself a task and feeling compelled to fulfill it', legal rules stem from the outside, whereas moral duty comes from within and therefore is a matter of conscience.⁴ In the face of social and political developments, Erdoğan always felt some level of responsibility as a member of society. But what ultimately drove him was the moral obligation that he himself had placed on his shoulders.

In his works about 'the revolutionary individual', Iranian sociologist Ali Shariati maintained that people can serve as agents of change within their own communities and time period. What ultimately matters is to replace the traditional self with a self-constructed identity.⁵

² Süleyman Seyfi Ögün, *Türk Politik Kültürü* [Turkish Political Culture]. (Istanbul: Alfa Publishing, 2000), p.34.

³ Surah Al-Zilzal, 99:7

⁴ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Ahlâk* [Ethics]. (Istanbul: Ülken Publishing, 2nd Edition, 2001), p.259.

⁵ Ali Shariati, *Kendini Devrimci Yetiştirmek* [To Raise Oneself as a Revolutionary]. (Ankara: Fecr Publishing, 2007), p.112.

As a high school student, Erdoğan sought to develop himself through theoretical discussions as part of a broader effort to construct his own identity. At the time, he dreamed of nurturing a self that would change the flow of life rather than go with it. As such, he wanted to position himself as an agent of change. His experiences at the imam-hatip vocational school, among other things, made their mark on Erdoğan's personality and shaped his social identity.

The first step in every plan to change the world must be to change and tame one's own ego. An individual who cannot correct their own behavior or keep themselves under control cannot be expected to inspire change in others or control anyone else. Since his youth, Erdoğan strived to lead a life within certain moral limits in order to keep under control the passions of his ego.

Shariati sees human beings as farmers who tend to their own seeds. The farmer, he warns, is bound to reap what he sows: "If the farmer is distracted by carelessness, ignorance, sluggishness and betrayal and occupies himself with trivial and deviant toys to the point of completely forgetting about the seed, the seed shall remain buried below the surface."⁶ In the Surah Ash-shams, the Lord describes man's struggle against his ego as follows: "He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it with corruption." Imam Ali, meanwhile, makes the case that leaders who seek to bring about change must first control their ego: "Whoever makes themselves a leader of men, let him start educating himself before educating others. The teacher and tamer of one's own ego deserves to be glorified more than teachers and tamers of men."⁷ Each and every action taken by a politician is a manifestation of their essence. If their foundation lacks morality, everything that they built on it shall be corrupted. An individual's fight against evil in the outside world begins with a struggle against bad emotions within. To understand what Kalanoz in Tarık Buğra's *Osmancık* represents –greed, impatience, pride, egoism and anger—and to keep those emotions under control⁸ or to resist the demands of The Elder, who symbolizes the human form of a dark force

⁶ Ibid, p.114.

⁷ Imam Ali, *Nahj al-Balagha* [The Peak of Eloquence]. Ed: Al-Sharif al-Radi, Trans: Adnan Demircan. (Istanbul: Beyan Publishing, 2006), p.341.

⁸ Ebru Burcu Yılmaz, "Tarık Buğra'nın Romanlarında 'Kişi Olma Süreci' ve 'Bireyleşim' Macerası" [The Process of Humanization' and the 'Individualization' Endeavor in Tarık Buğra's Novels], Tarık Buğra. Ed: Mehmet Tekin and Ebru Burcu Yılmaz. (Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011), p.298.

trying to distance man from his existential purpose in *Gençliğim Eyvah*, are part of the same struggle.⁹ “Like *Osmancık*, the characters of the path of life must show due respect to other areas of existence and consider conquering, rather than occupying, the object of desire in order to control it.”¹⁰ Erdoğan sees this struggle as an act of discovery, recognition and comprehension first and an effort to control and respectfully transform emotions second. At the heart of this effort to change things lies a value-based approach. Values and ideals must be the cornerstone of their construction. After all, ideals can only give rise to new things in the real world and on the basis of reality. As such, one’s ideal to change the world must not sour into a form of romanticism completely out of touch with reality or utopianism. Instead, every ideal must be firmly rooted in sound intellectual efforts. Erdoğan’s decision to not limit himself to strictly intellectual discussions and instead to enter politics in an effort to change things means that he indeed launched an effort on the basis of reality. Even though he aspired to reach great goals, he nonetheless believed that it was necessary to use the tools available and to acknowledge social reality. After all, “the Qur’an does not view human beings as an absolute idea removed from the material order, tangible reasons and objective and scientific factors. Nor does it treat them as unconscious entities that emerge out of history or nature alone.”¹¹ Stepping firmly on the plane of reality in an effort to reach the Truth is a necessity that politics simply cannot ignore.

In Erdoğan’s world, the need to correct things through verbal and physical action manifests itself in the form of political reform and the urge to build something better. In Turkey, the 1970s were a time period when a large number of people were upset and politically active individuals would organize protests against everything that was going on – the guardianship regime’s rigid practices, weak coalition governments, the situation in Cyprus, corruption, poverty and chaos. Erdoğan took his frustration with injustice, victimization and deprivation and used it to fuel his political activism in an effort to fix the country.

⁹ E.B. Yılmaz, p.296.

¹⁰ Ramazan Korkmaz, “Rene Girard’ın Üçgen Arzu Modeli Bağlamında *Osmancık* Romanı” [The Novel *Osmancık* in the Context of René Girard’s Triangular Desire Model], Tarık Buğra. Ed: Mehmet Tekin and Ebru Burcu Yılmaz. (Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011), p.239.

¹¹ Ibid, p.113.

The emotions he experienced closely resembled Murat Belge's words about the feelings of İdris Küçükömer: "He was completely opposed to the [social-political] order wherein he lived and the exploitation, violence, oppression, discrimination and humiliation it entailed. He was prepared to take action to end this situation without thinking about it long and hard."¹² Although his passion initially pushed Küçükömer to the would-be junta led by Talat Aydemir, he later became an intellectual who questioned the system and earned the respect of many people. Erdoğan's commitment to raising questions about the existing order's shortcomings manifested itself in the reactionary sentiments of Necip Fazıl's Great East and the activism of the National Turkish Students Association and the National Outlook movement. In later years, his eagerness to make an impact on the country and to change the system –especially starting with his mayoral term—helped him evolve into a statesman.

Already in 1976, when he became chairman of the National Salvation Party's youth branch, Erdoğan was considered a leader by his peers. At the time, he was known for his ability to mobilize young people, inspire them and guide them toward specific goals. In a TV interview, Erdoğan recalled his plans to assume the responsibility of running the country as a young man: "We would talk about public administration and about governing Istanbul and about governing Turkey. This was the kind of [social] circle it was."

Early on, Erdoğan's character traits had helped him emerge as a pioneer, a team leader and an 'older brother' who would encourage other youngsters to act. His curiosity, motivation, passion and ability to act quickly proved to be a source of strength. At the time, a young Erdoğan was motivated by the prospect of serving the cause and walking on a straight path to eternity which was described by Necip Fazıl in the following poem: "Mehmed, rejoice and keep you head high / Cheer – whether we die or get back home / Do not think that the wheel shall be stuck at the bump / Tomorrow is surely ours, surely ours / Whether the sun rises or sets / Eternity is ours."

Like the poet himself, Erdoğan was, in the words of Serdengeçti, becoming a 'man of the cause' who knew no stopping. At the same time, he aimed to keep going, keep fighting and striving to accomplish his goals – a sentiment that Necip Fazıl had described elsewhere: "Spreads seeds and, if they do not blossom, let the soil feel ashamed! / Let the spear,

¹² Murat Belge, İdris Küçükömer. (Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism Publications, 2011), p.153.

which fails to strike its target, feel ashamed! / Oh great stallion, keep galloping! / If you crack, let the mare that gave birth [to you] feel ashamed!” As if he heard Cemil Meriç’s call (“We are all aboard the same boat / In the sky, clouds of a hurricane / And the watcher screams from the crow’s nest: SOS! SOS!”), Erdoğan was determined to save humanity.

As he transitioned from social activism to political activism, Erdoğan was part of the nation’s youth – a group that he also helped mobilize. Working with young people was a long-term investment. As such, both ideological movements and the Islamic movement in Turkey considered youngsters to be their target audience. They sought to jump-start a process of revival and reconstruction with the support of the nation’s youth.

As a politician who rose through the ranks of youth organizations, Erdoğan remained close to young people and considered them a driving force behind the revival project rather than a group in need of saving. According to Küçükömer, “the pro-Western/secularist approach and the pro-Eastern/Islamist approach both consider[ed] human beings as raw materials in need of processing and objects in need of rescue.”¹³ Erdoğan, by contrast, embraced people of all sectarian and ideological backgrounds out of his love for the Creator and reached out to new social groups in a genuine effort to connect with them rather than to score political points. Having grown up in Kasımpaşa, a diverse urban community, he had learned to see people as his fellow travelers on the road to great goals as opposed to fuel for his political machine.

It is rare for a Turkish politician to have become involved in political movements as a middle- or high-school student and to serve in the provincial leadership of a political party as a young man. Having gotten married at the age of 24 and engaged in trade after the 1980 coup d’état, Erdoğan became the head of the newly-established Welfare Party’s (Refah Partisi) Beyoğlu chapter in 1984 and provincial chairman for Istanbul the following year.

As an emerging leader, his reputation exceeded the limits of his party’s base, as he started to catch the eye of the masses. His power over the crowds, however, was the result of a long struggle. Even though Erdoğan had unsuccessfully run for public office three times, he learned from his failure and showed everyone that politics was a marathon, not a sprint race. In 1986, 1989 and 1991, he enter mayoral and parliamentary races

¹³ Ibid, p.158.

and helped his party, although he could not get elected himself. At the time, Erdoğan expressed himself through the National Outlook movement and sought to accomplish his political goals as a member of the Welfare Party.

Especially during his tenure as the head of Welfare's Istanbul chapter, Erdoğan provided his party with fresh perspectives, a new style and novel methods to reach out to various social groups. Conservative women, in particular, became much more active in the political arena as a result of his efforts.

When Erdoğan became the mayor of Istanbul in 1994, he was a 40-year-old dark horse candidate who had been mocked by the mainstream media, treated as a country bumpkin by his opponents and disliked for his victory over the establishment's champions. Against the backdrop of insults and prejudice, he proved very successful as Istanbul mayor and evolved into a 'charismatic personality' in Turkish politics. Having made significant progress regarding drought, air pollution, garbage collection and traffic congestion, he filled the void left by the central government in the area of social policy by launching municipal projects. Although he faced severe ideological resistance from the establishment, Erdoğan ushered in a new era in Turkey's largest city by investing \$4 billion to public projects – even though he had taken over the municipality \$2 billion in the red. An added benefit of his strong performance was to earn the respect of resident who had not voted for him in 1994. Following the post-modern coup of 28 February 1997, Erdoğan was jailed over a poem he had recited in Siirt and subsequently banned from politics.

His removal from elected office hurt the feelings of not just his supporters but also millions of Istanbul residents. In the face of injustice, Erdoğan did not seek to defy the law by mobilizing street protests and instead remained committed to democracy and the rule of law even though he continued to criticize unfair practices. His four-month prison sentence provided him with an opportunity to meet his supporters and correspond with them in writing. In other words, the attacks against him made Erdoğan more powerful and gave him the ability to shape the national conversation. By the time he was released from prison, he had become an opinion leader. Being welcomed by locals across the country as if he were the chairman of a major political party, he made headlines even though he was still banned from politics. Simply put, he was a source of many people in the early 2000s. As discussed in greater detail below, many people considered

Erdoğan to be the country's savior. In the end, he rode the popular wave and formed a new political movement.

Having failed to reform the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) from within, Erdoğan, along with other members of the so-called Reformist Movement, established the Justice and Development Party on 14 August 2001.

Although the AK Party brought together politicians from across the spectrum, it was more than a random group of individuals. Within the newly-established movement, members were disassociated from their political past and, in turn, did not form cliques or sub-groups. In other words, the AK Party facilitated a process of political integration and, partly due to Erdoğan's management style and political goals, struck people as something new.

In 2002, Erdoğan's party won the parliamentary election by a landslide, even though he would assume the prime ministry five months later – due to his disqualification from the race. During this period, Abdullah Gül led the first single-party government since the Motherland Party of the 1980s. On 9 March 2003, Erdoğan participated in a by-election held in the southeastern province of Siirt and received 85 percent of the vote to claim his seat at the Parliament. Addressing the people of Siirt in October 2005, he therefore recalled that “this public square set the course of my entire political career.” Having married Emine Erdoğan, who hailed from Siirt, he had been banned from politics over a poem he recited on the same spot. And it was the people of Siirt that elected him to Parliament and cleared his path to national leadership.

Six days after the by-election, Erdoğan formed Turkey's 59th government and assumed the prime ministry. He proceeded to win every single election until he became president in August 2014. During his 13-year tenure as AK Party chairman, he led the movement to victory in three general elections, three municipal contests and two constitutional referendums.

One of the smartest things that Erdoğan ever did was to construct a conservative-democrat identity to leave behind traditional political division in the country. Instead of ideology, he placed people and public service at the center of his party's platform and strived to deliver services to communities regardless of their political affiliation. As a matter of fact, even his staunchest opponents could not claim that Erdoğan's government

had discriminated against any single district or refused to serve certain provinces or played favorites among them.

Rejecting the us-versus-them approach of identity politics, Erdoğan promoted unity and sought to embrace all social groups. As such, he always maintained that “together, we are Turkey.” His emphasis on putting Turkey first gradually evolved into a form of domesticism that manifested itself in his willingness to lose elections “if it means that the country will benefit from it.”

By forming the AK Party, Erdoğan accomplished several things. First and foremost, it was a major accomplishment to break from Necmettin Erbakan, a powerful and dominant figure, and launch a new movement. Erdoğan thereby reached beyond the traditional limits of the National Outlook movement, its sect-like party organization and identity politics to construct a novel political identity.

His second accomplishment was to exceed the traditional limits of center-right politics, which appealed to the same base as Islamists and nationalist-conservatists, yet remained a distinct movement. By presenting this base with a new political identity, Erdoğan helped his movement connect with the masses and transform the right-wing/Islamist/center-right scene.

It was a notable success for Erdoğan to resist the establishment’s attacks and psychological operations as well. Against the backdrop of a smear campaign –which involved plenty of references to the threat of Islamization, Erdoğan’s secret agenda, his movement’s deceptive nature, ‘neighborhood pressure’ and reactionary politics— the AK Party chairman was able to keep his movement in sync with the people and earned the trust of ordinary citizens.

Finally, one of Erdoğan’s most notable accomplishments was to be able to keep going despite the bureaucratic oligarchy’s assaults and the pressure mounted on his government by the guardianship regime including the mainstream media, big business and other organizations. He also kept Turkish democracy alive at a time when the global establishment challenged his country and sought to crush his movement.

As prime minister, Erdoğan changed the face of Turkey’s cities by launching major public projects and constructing highways, public housing complexes, water dams and bridges around the country. In a way, his tenure represented a milestone in Turkey’s modernization process, which was characterized by four distinct developments: Mustafa Kemal

Atatürk's proclamation of the Republic and implementation of reforms to institutionalize modernization; the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and the transition into a multi-party system under Adnan Menderes; economic liberalization and the adoption of the market economy by Turgut Özal and Erdoğan's 'silent revolution' and the launch of membership talks with the European Union.

Erdoğan's contribution to Turkey's modernization was to integrate his country with the world whilst maintaining its local character. In this sense, he was able to blend the 1,000-year-old political tradition of the Anatolian heartland with the Turkish, in particular Seljuk and Ottoman, legacy. As such, Erdoğan stressed the importance of local and domestic values as a leader who oversaw Turkey's integration with the outside world.

With the people on his side, Erdoğan transformed Turkey and successfully launched national campaigns in a range of areas from the education of female children to smoking. At the same time, he completed major projects – accompanied by key phrases including “we will penetrate mountains for this nation”, “the way to economic growth is a smaller government” and “water and roads are a matter of civilization”—, successfully managed the economy and reach out to the poor and disadvantaged groups by implementing social policies.

His political style was also embodied by aphorisms including “people who do not have ideals and goals can have no future”, “you cannot change the rules during a match” and “the world is bigger than five” as well as keywords such as “win-win” and “to stand tall without posing a challenge.”

Likewise, Erdoğan often recalled famous maxims such as “let people live so that the state may survive” and “we love all creators due to their Creator” to emphasize the role of people in his political thought.

Over the years, Erdoğan emerged as a democratic mind, a community organizer, a leader and a unique manager – qualities which will be discussed in greater detail below. His policies and political style as prime minister, likewise, could be analyzed at length. What needs to be stressed, however, is that Erdoğan's government implemented a series of democratic reforms, which are collectively called the 'silent revolution' in Turkey, unprecedented in the multi-party era. During this process of democratization, Turkey, with some help from the EU harmonization process, underwent a structural transformation and made significant

progress regarding fundamental rights and liberties as well as political rights.

As part of the Democratic Opening, Erdoğan strived to address the grievances of various groups including Kurds, Alevis, non-Muslims and the Roma community. He met representatives of each community, along with business people and artists, on several occasions to exchange views.

After each election, he appeared before the crowds gathered outside the AK Party headquarters in Ankara to deliver what came to be known as a ‘balcony speech’ to console his opponents and reassure their supporters – which became an institution in Turkish politics.

At the same time, Erdoğan played an important role in efforts to normalize civil-military relations and emerged as an advocate of democracy in the face of statements released by the guardianship regime and interventions staged by the establishment.

At times when he was threatened with exclusion from politics –in particular when a closure case was filed against the AK Party in the mid 2000s—, Erdoğan rejected any alternatives to elections, political legitimacy and the popular vote. Nor did he threaten to cling onto power if he were to lose the election.

His efforts to weaken the bureaucratic oligarchy alone will go down in history as a valuable contribution to the development of Turkish democracy. Erdoğan’s governments amended a series of anti-democratic laws once deemed unchangeable by the public and took bold steps in a range of areas including Turkey-Armenia relations and the Cyprus conflict. Committed to prevent illegal organizations and gangs from holding the electorate at gunpoint, he promoted civilian politics and facilitated giant leaps forward in the area of high politics as part of a broader struggle for democratization.

Where Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who made his mark on Turkish politics, fits in the frameworks developed by Western/modern and eastern/Muslim thinkers on charismatic leadership, justice, ethics and the purpose of politics is an excellent question. It is important to answer this question in order to understand Turkey’s transformation and Erdoğan himself, who developed a unique leadership style and effectively created a new prototype for future leaders. The following sections feature detailed discussions about the above-mentioned values, concepts and phenomena with references to Erdoğan’s political persona, actions and discourse.

CHAPTER I

ON LEADERSHIP

Leadership

From Ancient Greece to China, India and the Islamic world, a number of books have been written on politics to describe what kind of qualities a leader ought to have. Reflecting on the human experience of communal living, organizing and building government mechanisms through politics, they touch upon the attributes of public administrators. In addition to personal qualities, leaders are expected to have administrative skills as well as moral and political responsibilities.

For centuries, mankind has looked for a number of qualities, including perfection, in their leaders. Many people today expect people in positions of power to have an exemplary personality, to display all the good qualities found in other people, to strive toward important goals and to have the exceptional skills, experience and capacity to manage society. In this sense, not much has changed throughout history. People in pre-Christian city states saw their leaders as distinguished individuals of superior skills and exemplary personality – just as subjects of medieval empires and citizens of modern nation-states.

Depending on the political traditions of each country, leaders have been called sultans, rulers, emperors, hakans, amirs and presidents. But the way they have been described by others remained largely similar over time and space. Throughout history, people believed that clergymen, philosophers, the most popular individuals or the most powerful and richest people could become public administrators and leaders. Depending on a given country's political system, power, intelligence, experience, wealth, knowledge, royal heritage and morality factor into the popularity of leaders. At different times, leaders have been called philosopher kings, virtuous hakans, courageous amirs, wealthy sultans, almighty rulers and elected presidents.

As a leader who accomplished great things in his political career, there are a number of things one could say about Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Often praised by ordinary citizens for the way he walks and talks at campaign events, the Turkish president can be described with reference to his physical appearance, oratory skills, ability to recite poems or sing or play football and his perception as a straight-forward man who cries when he gets sad and gets angry in the face of injustice. Other aspects of his public persona include the fact that he rose through the ranks of a political movement, served in local government, maintained close contact with the people, stressed the importance of teamwork and collective reasoning, strong performance and charismatic leadership.

This section provides a summary of how leaders were described throughout history and reflects on Erdoğan's position within the greater scheme of things.

The most important quality of a leader is their ability to form a political movement that can lead the masses. Having recruited millions of members and voters to the party he established, accomplished great things over three consecutive terms in power and become Turkey's first elected president with 52 percent of the vote, it is possible to argue that Erdoğan has evolved from the chairman of a major political party to a popular leader. When a coup attempt took place on the night of July 15, it took a politician who had become a popular leader to convince millions of ordinary citizens to take to the streets and thwart the assault against Turkish democracy. Although there are a large number of similar descriptions of leadership, one of the things they have in common is that a leader ought to be able to set large crowds in motion: "The leader is an individual who guides his group toward shared goals, maintains personal and moral integrity and embodies the desires, purpose and expectations of the group."¹ Leaders exert significant influence over the group that walks with them as well as large chunks of the general population. In recent years, Erdoğan has been a trailblazer and directed millions of his movement's members in a specific political direction while developing an ability to influence voters, half of whom voted for him in the 2014 presidential race. To be able to set a political course and direct large groups of people to walk one's path is an absolutely non-negotiable pre-condition of leadership. According to Werner, who stresses the importance of the power to influence, leadership refers to "the process of exerting influence over a group in a certain

¹ Bahattin Ergezer, *Liderlik ve Özellikleri* [Leadership and its Qualities]. (Ankara: Ocak Publishin, 2nd Edition, 1995), p.20.

situation, at a certain time and under certain conditions that encourages people to voluntarily strive toward group objectives and helps them reach shared goals.”² Casse, in turn, argues that leaders distinguish themselves from traditional administrators by building mental constructs, deals with uncertainty and creates psychological models: “The leader’s first step must be to set a direction for the people he works with. His second step is to set in motion people’s abilities. The third step is to put knowledge, vision, strategy and skills to practice.”³

Drawing from Tichy and Devanna, Mustafa Özel reflects on the qualities of leaders – which apply to a range of areas from politics to the business world: “They are pro-change and courageous. They believe in people and have strong values. They attach importance to learning, can deal with chaos and uncertainty, and are visionaries.”⁴ The following are the attributes of leaders according to Cronin: “Knowledge and self-confidence, vision, intelligence, information, judgement, the ability to learn and to renew themselves, universalism, a sense of history, coalition-building, social engineering, building emotional connections, setting others in motion, tolerance, energy, steadiness, courage, passion, honesty, intellectual integrity, risk-taking, entrepreneurialism, communication skills, persuasion skills, listening skills, ability to grasp the nature of authority and power, ability to concentrate on goals.”⁵ Authors who consider leadership a question of personal development, in particular, provide similar lists to individuals seeking to become leaders in various areas. While people are born with some of the above-mentioned attributes, other qualities can be nurtured through education and experience. It might not be necessary to have all the attributes in order to become a successful leader, but it is important to note that people who do not have them at all cannot be successful leaders or administrators either. Özel notes that Sadler sees leadership as a process of following and imitating oneself and an activity of exemplary behavior and persuasion: “Even though leadership requires certain personal qualities, it is a path that people follow

² Isabel Werner, *Liderlik ve Yönetim [Leadership and Management]*. (Istanbul: Rota Publishing, 1993), p.17.

³ Pierre Casse, “Liderlik Öğrenilebilir” [*Leadership Can Be Learned*], *Stratejik Yönetim ve Liderlik [Strategic Management and Leadership]* (Edition). (Istanbul: İz Publishing, 2nd Edition, 1995), p.48.

⁴ Mustafa Özel, *Liderlik Sanatı [The Art of Leadership]*. (Istanbul: İz Publishing, 1998), p.15.

⁵ Ibid, p.62.

patiently, a deepened life activity and a process for which a price is paid. It is a time-consuming process of disclosure and representation.”⁶

Another important aspect of definitions of leadership is the relationship between the leader and the people he sets in motion. For the nature of the group’s relationship with their leader provides insights into some of the leader’s qualities. Yasin Aktay identifies the following based on the description of leadership by Fiol and his colleagues: “A high level of loyalty and devotion to the leader. Identification with the leader and his mission. Imitating the values, goals and behavior of the leader. Considering the leader a source of inspiration. Creating a sense of self-respect based on the leader’s relationship with his mission. Extraordinary confidence in the leader and the righteousness of his beliefs.”⁷ Over the years, Erdoğan has become a political phenomenon that was followed closely and imitated by members of his party and movement, inspired them, became the object of their loyalty and love, and came to be identified with. To be clear, the members of every political movement can be inclined to mythify their leaders. What distinguished Erdoğan from others has been his charismatic personality, which led large chunks of the Turkish society, not just his party’s supporters, to consider him a hero. More often than not, Turkish politicians whom their followers tried to identify as saviors failed to become heroes – whereas Erdoğan became a leader that acted like the characters that ordinary citizens idealized.

Attila the Hun, who was also known as the Scourge of God by his contemporaries, was a leader that embodied an ideal hero with the following qualities: “Loyalty, courage, passion, emotional influence, physical power, decisiveness, foresight, timing, competitiveness, self-confidence, responsibility, reliability, persistence, trustworthiness, protectionism.”⁸ Duran notes that Burns added ‘the ability to understand others’ to the triangle of leadership – which consisted of sincerity, trust and interest.⁹ Leaders cannot govern people that they do not understand. In turn, they cannot exercise power over others if they are not understood by

⁶ Ibid, p.57.

⁷ Fiol, Mariane C. Harris, Drew House, Robert, “Charismatic Leadership: Strategies for Effecting Social Change”, *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3. in Yasin Aktay, *Karizma Zamanları [The Times of Charisma]*, p.32.

⁸ Wess Roberts, *Hun İmparatoru Atilla’nın Liderlik Sırları [Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun]*. (Istanbul: İlgi Publishing, Trans: Yakut Eren, 1989), p.40.

⁹ A. Baran Dural, *Atatürk ve Liderlik [Atatürk and Leadership]*. (Istanbul: Paradigma Akademi Publishing, 4th Edition, 2014), p.15.

them. Although the emergence of trust between the leader and the masses depends on the mutual perception of sincerity on both sides, the relationship's rational side depends on mutual understanding and shared goals. The expression that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" could have some importance in the political arena but it is important to recall that voters do not always look for beauty. As such, political leadership requires communication based on reason, utility, projects and policies and an effort to understand one another in addition to voluntary support through love and other emotions. The leader can reach his goals to the extent that he can reach out to new constituencies, explain his position to them and understood and accepted by them. In other words, even leaders who express themselves capably and are understood by the audience must invest in building confidence and a sense of sincerity. Otherwise, they end up being highly appreciated and seemingly successful individuals that cannot mobilize the necessary levels of support. When a leader reaches out to new groups, he must attract their interest with a virtue that they care about.

It is possible to identify a number of personal, administrative and political skills that are common among leaders. In the case of Erdoğan, I would like to highlight the importance of devotion to the cause, sincerity, courage, hard work and love of nation.

Let us discuss in greater detail how political scientists describe leadership and what kind of leader Erdoğan is based on his skills.

Throughout history, books of politics provided lists of qualities of great leaders. Confucius saw leaders as exemplary people, or junzi, who were equipped with virtue, honesty and sincerity.¹⁰ While he likened virtuous administrators to the North Star¹¹, to which all smaller stars pledge allegiance, others described leaders as gifted and virtuous individuals capable of saving the ship, or their people, from the storm.¹² To be clear, the North Star analogy is accurate in the sense that the virtuous leader indeed guides his people. However, the Turkish tradition can be better explained by drawing parallels with the solar system. For the largest and

¹⁰ Siyaset Kitabı [The Book of Politics]. (Istanbul: Alfa Publishing, 2nd Edition, Trans: Tarık Sadak, 2015), p.22.

¹¹ Ibid, p.26.

¹² Abu al-Najib Shayzari, *Nahju'l Suluk fi al-Siyasah al-Muluk* [Political Strategies]. (Istanbul: Büyüyen Ay Publishing, Trans: Nahifi Mehmed Emin Efendi, Editor: Ensar Köse, 2013), p.39.