

Abstract:

The first decade of the 21st century witnessed dramatic changes all over the world amounting to a global political, economic and social transformation. In effect, new actors in world politics adapted to the new conditions and learnt lessons from previous experiences and the overthrow of decades of suppression. Turkey's rise is one of the most impressive cases in this century with developments at various levels, particularly economic and political, coinciding with critical global economic and political processes. Development was achieved under the rule of a newly formed political party with an Islamist background that was able to gain the Turkish voters' trust in three successive elections.

The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) is the main focus of this research, placing it in the context of history and of contemporary developments that facilitated this unique case. An analysis of the shift in the mentality and self-definition of the new party whose members are labeled Islamists is important as this was due to a long learning and adaptation process that led to a more mature understanding of the rules of the political game. The question of the collective identity of Turkey and the Turks conditioned the dramatic turn of events, notably in the field of foreign policy.

The thesis thus highlights the main milestones which Turkey went through under the AKP and tests prevailing stereotyped thinking concerning Islamists parties in the case of Turkey specifically.