

Politics in turkey



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In the contemporary global politics, Turkey is the only Moslem dominated country that is a member of NATO as well as intrinsic part of European Union. The demographic representation of an Islamic nation in the midst of Europe gives it a highly prominent stature that is politically significant. In 2002, AKP won the majority in the 2002 Parliamentary elections and secular democratic government, headed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that ‘secularism is the protector of all beliefs and religions’ (NYT, 2002). The political stability and economic reforms became the major facilitating factors for improving and improvising the socio-economic development of the state. Turkey is a parliamentary democracy with 551 seats from 81 provinces. The secular democratic process of the nation was evolved from the war of independence, led by Mustafa Kemal. After the disintegration of Ottoman Empire, the modern nation of Turkey was born in 1924 (kwintessential). Mustafa was popularly known as Ataturk or ‘the father of the nation’. He has been the most popular and influential leader of Turkey who had brought the country on the world map and had laid the foundation of secular democracy of the modern Turkey. He was also the founder member of Republic People’s Party, the first political party of independent Turkey.

Democratic process is renowned for its freedom of expression and the power of the people. Turkey too has undergone tremendous upheavals and seen frequent leadership changes since its inception in 1924 but the basic democratic foundation has remained intact against the so called rigid Islamic religiosity. Democratic Party, Republic People’s Party and Justice Party were three major parties that have been in the forefront of Turkish politics. The two military coups of 1960 and 1980 have had short span with elections that had reinstated democratic rule. The ‘harsh restrictions imposed on political

rights by military interventions' are still visible (countryside) but the subsequent democratic governments have diluted their effects.

The election of 1983 saw the emergence of new political party by the name of Motherland party under the dynamic leadership of Turgut Ozal who was an economist in the World Bank. Turgut Ozal brought in economic reforms through radically liberal economic policies. Under his reign, turkey was transformed from the small relatively conservative state to modern republic with investment coming from across the globe and making it one of the most attractive venues for investment. The party lost power in 1992. The intervening years till 2002 have seen political instability with widespread corruption and sharp downtrend in the economy. Under the leadership of Erdogan, Turkey's economy has significantly improved and it has been able to expand its political influence by gaining entry into the European Union and becoming a member of the NATO. Rubin asserts that ' Erdogan has continued Turkey's drive to join the European Union' (Rubin, 2005). Indeed, it can be said that Turkey has hardly been impacted by hardcore Islamic religiosity. Greenway (2007) says that for westernized Turks ' secularism is like religion. The conservative Islamic parties have been modern in their outlook and have encouraged secular democracy to protect the rights and freedom of its people. While Tursan (2004) has argued that the political parties have not been able to strengthen the democratic processes but it cannot be denied that barring short span of military interventions, the secular democracy was maintained through the popularly elected leaders and still remains the hallmark of Turkish politics.

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