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**Turkey since 1950**

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## **Turkey since 1950**

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### **Abstract**

This article concentrated on the political history of post 1950 period of Turkey. The western type of democratization started with the end of single state party regime. Turkish experience with democracy transformed and evolved since then. The economic substructure heavily influenced political stability during the transformation of Turkey from semi closed economy to market oriented economy. Integration to world economy after 1980's with liberalization efforts also had impact on political arena. Finally our research will provide insight for future trends of Turkey.

**Keywords:** Turkish politics, Turkish history.

## **Introduction**

Turkish emergence in Central Anatolia reaches early 11<sup>th</sup> century that Turkish colonies started to migrate from Central Asia. Following many feudal civilizations the renaissance of Turkish age succeeded during Ottoman Empire. The WWI has exterminated three empires Hapsburgs, Russians and Ottomans. That also bring the foundation of new nation states and the beginning of new era in ex territories of Ottoman empires. For example the first Jewish settlement in today's Israel started at those times. (Erhan p. 344) Establishment of democratic nation state in 1923 called Turkish Republic. The charismatic one man ruler Atatürk was very keen to give enlightenment to new country with western ideas in every aspects of daily life. In couple of years new alphabet, dress code, education system have introduced. The religious based education system has been replaced by western type universities. New economic investments flourished and directed by state for contemporary economic standards in order to develop war torn country for years. His legacy is still fresh even in today's teenagers so many of them admires him and admit as an moral value against fundamentalist version of political Islam. (Morris p. 31) Democratic path of Turkey for those years was quite weak since state party regime with national idol as was filled without any problems. After Atatürk period country shaken by poor economic performance due to the catastrophic conditions of WWII. Lack of different political organizations and state controlled political single party regime did not match the democratic needs of citizens. In 1950 finally legal system changed to enable to establish new political parties. That was the turning point of Turkey after the foundation of Republic. In this paper we will summarize the post 1950 period of Turkish Republic in socio economic aspects. The democratization period of Turkish society has several interruptions by armed forces. So in chronological order we will focus on changes and challenges in countries socio economic structure in this study. The study can be divided into three subtitles in historical order.

## **1950 to 1980 Crippled Democracy**

After single party regime has ended the new founded Democrat Party has managed to get overwhelming majority in general elections. The ideological background of this political movement was right wing but it managed to get a lot support from working classes and farmers. The lack of democracy under revolutionist left wing single party regime made the image of new political party very popular for masses in Turkey. The word democracy and republic as in most parts of world understand by masses as freedom of expression, human rights and self governance. Even those two are confused in definition and republic most times thought as democratic. The former communist countries blurred that concept. That word republic called *democratica* in contemporary Greek language. The WWII conditions and authorized governments created poor economic conditions and low growth rates before 1950's which increased

opposition against ruling regime. The ex CHP MP Adnan Menderes has achieved to follow more liberal economic policies. The first term of DP government was achieved high growth rates, improved democratic standards and increased infrastructure investments. Post war period of financial aid from USA under Marshall Plan ensured to maintain economic stability in country. Turkey acted in western pact by NATO membership. Since then for years Turkish role in NATO was very important due to the borders with Soviet bloc. There was a enormous improvement in agricultural production owing to fact that increase in mechanization in farming. New roads improved the interconnection between cities in country. Menderes government has also improved mobilization in country. Social mobility among classes improved and new business bourgeoisie created. Ultra secular policies of previous governments has replaced by conservative policies in religious affairs. That is quite interesting since Turkish interpretation of secularism is almost considered as laicism. Meantime the generous foreign aid package from US government under Marshall Plan in post war period provided government safe financial support for infrastructure investments. Thus first 5 years of DP government remembered with high economic growth, freedom of expression and increase in the volume of infrastructure investments such as length of roads improving transportation. All that provided a change in the nature of Turkish socio-economic structure.

In foreign affairs after second world war global order polarized in two main power blocs. Turkish Republic won its independence after 1923 and for a period of time governments keeps balance between two blocs. The geographical location of Turkey is just at the edge of two blocs. Just after WWII USSR's leader Stalin clearly revised his intention on the control of Bosphorus for military purposes.(Sander, p. 252) The military pressure from USSR forced ruling government to have closer foreign relations with western bloc mainly by US. Thus improvement in democracy is highly related with Turkish government's intention to eliminate the isolation of Turkey in world. Lewis argues that the is new intention of Turkish government cannot just explained by national defense and US allies policy but it is also can explained by countries intention to move towards western type democratic regime. (Lewis p. 11)

In order to eliminate the treats from USSR Turkish government decided to be under defense umbrella of western community. That intention approved by the acceptance of NATO member country. That is the historical focal point and challenge in Turkish foreign policy by becoming a NATO member and involvement in western bloc. In couple of years the US Turkish relations was in high profile and country treated as ally country of US. In late 1950's Turkey also applied to European Economic Union membership. That clearly indicates that Turkey involved in western bloc in global world order.

Second term of Menderes government did not manage to sustain strong economic performance. The resistance between different power groups and social classes ended with the first military coup in 1960 which was the beginning point of following military interventions in couple of decades. In

following 1971, 1980 and 1997 military interventions have different approaches. That in 1960 and 1980 there was direct impact on democratic regime by closing Parliament and in others army head officials forced to governments to resign from their posts. The post coup period of 1960 also have some military interventions. In economic policies import promotion model has followed in order to have sustainable balance of payment deficits. Main element of this period is democratic governance with exceptional high internal war as political clash in different parts of society. The political atmosphere in 1970's was very similar to 1950's of Greece in case there were heavy terrorist activities like civil war. In economic life macroeconomic indicators till 1980 was hampered with import promotion model that lowered productivity of private enterprises due to lack of competition. Poor economic performance accompanied by lack of economic growth and insufficient foreign reserves diminished Turkish economic integration to global world order. Semi autarchic economy with low production levels lead to political instability in country which is shaken by different left and right wing political groups. Besides all these times country was successfully following membership procedures with EU.

### **1980 to 2002 Period**

The political awareness of Turkish society was interrupted by harsh military coup in 1980. The main result of coup was cancellation of EU membership process since EU criticized the undemocratic nature of ruling governments. Most of the democratic forces are thrown by harsh military intervention. Post 1980 period created radical shift in economic policies that more liberal policies followed such as deregulation in financial markets, export promotion, mass privatization and decline in state intervention to economic life. In order to liberalize country import promotion model is replaced by export promotion model.

After the first general elections in 1983 former political actors established prior political parties. Thus ex political leaders of 1980 came to govern country as same actors. Ruling right wing political parties ANAP (Motherland Party), DYP (True Path Party) and MHP (Nationalistic Movement Party) followed same economic remedies and polices for economic crisis after 1994. The liberal economic policies are not accompanied by structural reforms for Turkish economy which is highly under the severe impact of inflationary spiral, high interest rates, overvalued national currency and high public sector borrowing rate, huge budget deficits and again high inflation. This vicious spiral in late 1990's created a crowding out effect for Turkish private enterprises.

After 1980's Turkey faced a post modern change in stratification of society. New forms of cultural codes were reinvented by reference to 1923 period in literature and in other forms. The role of religion in daily life and culture gain momentum that political reference of parties has increased.

(Kahraman, p. 50) In foreign relation the reflection of new Islamic movements revealed itself with increasing relations with Gulf region and Arab countries.

The failure of common ordinary center parties providing welfare to lower income households increased the power of Islamist parties gradually. Thus that political movements act as left wing socialist parties in mobilizing working class families in western political science literature. Political upside down in center politics imposed impact on the share of some ultra conservative parties which ended by a post modern military intervention in 1997. The results of that post modern coup has little effects on Islamic movement as we will see in next part of study.

The relations with European Union were quite weak till 1996. Turkey accepted to part of Customs Union agreement with European region which is also unique example in EU enlargement process that most of the former Eastern European countries and Greece become EU member countries after short negotiation process. During the time European approach to internal conflict in southeastern Turkey questioned by most segments of Turkish society and considered as intervention to internal affairs of country. Also poor financial benefits of Customs Union agreement perished positive expectations for EU membership.

In the beginning of 1990's world polarized power system has drastically changed after the collapse of USSR. That was the result of long term containment policy of USA during Cold war period. The end of cold war became a beginning era of Eastern Europe and Turkey. Eastern European countries started closer relations with European Union.(Sander, p. 498) Meantime Turkey tried to improve relations with Turkic Republics in a sense of historical ties which will come to an unsuccessful attempt in coming years.

Turkish coalition barely manages to cure severe economic crisis that in 2001 unstable economic performance with weak financial sector ended with the collapse of banking sector. More than half of banking sector bankrupt and country faced traumatic economic problems. The reflections of this economic crisis on politics gave the opportunity new founded political party to won the early general elections of 2002.

### **Turkey Today and Future**

Since 2002 AK (Justice and Development) Party movement gradually taking important part of Turkish political life and long standing political party in ruling. That is highly related with leadership of party since from the very beginning it is one man status quo in decision making process of policy settings of party.

Some authors find the roots of the success of that political party with the strong ties some Islamic sects and movements that the traditional folk Islamic belief supported the party. (Yıldırım, p. 193) Also the interpretation of secularism for a long time in Turkey and in most Arab countries models of dictatorial, anti Islamic regimes that have been imported from west. That

created very fertile environment for fundamental Islamic movements. The Erdogan movement and Arab spring revealed that according to Olivier Roy "post Islamist phase that we are not finished with Islam." (Ramadan, p. 84) Most of the western analysts and decision makers elaborates recent developments in Arab world with the successful dynamics of Turkish government about Islam wishing that transformation of Arab world would inspired by Turkey.(Taspınar, p.268)The close relations with western world also brought the dialog between religions with Christian world in cultural sense in Turkey. The aim was to diminish European prejudice for Turkish citizens. It seems Turkish government has to improve further relations with Christian world via Vatican in order to fulfill this aim. (Ortaylı p. 187)

The Current government is ruling the country for 12 years, the longest period that same political party governance since 1950. The reason behind this success is devoted to different factors besides political forces. So international climate and US led diplomacy wishes stable Turkey in Middle East for peace and security. Thus past 2002 period is for some authors almost designed by Greater Middle East Project.(Kaynak, P 107) That would relate the roots of Arab spring and clear explanation for region.

The main success in 2004 that Erdogan's government got clear signal from European Union for starting member country negotiations. After a decade the government lost its intention and energy in fulfilling those requirements. It is also important that EU is discussing the borders of Europe and the definition of European identity. (Aydın, p. 175) Even though Turkey has close relations with EU its membership application is still on the table after decades. That treatment is called as geopolitical laboratory animal of EU by some western authors.(Morris p. 198)

In first five years of government after 2002 has flamboyant achievement in economic policies. They easily consolidated fiscal sector from the problems of bankrupt banking system, sharply decreased two digit inflation and increased per capita income. Privatization of main public companies and cutting the financial support to agricultural sector also reduced budget deficits sharply. Sustainable high growth rates are achieved accordingly. Following 2009 global economic crises Turkey managed to sustain economic performance. The global order led by USA also help country to drive low exchange rate high interest policy which ensures capital inflow to country. Economic recovery in USA effectively curbed FED monetary expansion policies which creates decline in capital inflow to countries such as Turkey. That situation accompanied by low economic growth hampered employment ratio and current account deficit in Turkey. Thus country would face some economic problems unless it creates new paradigms in industrial sector.

The main argument of ruling government was creation of new Turkey in a sense that country will be global actor in Middle East and whole world. That argument strongly backed by western media till 2012. But decline in the tolerance to opposition groups, increase in the control of media by state and consolidation of leadership to one man perceptions are highly anticipated by same global sources nowadays. Although there are severe critiques from



abroad recent election results clearly indicates how AKp still hold its power in future's Turkey.

## Conclusion

In this article Turkish experience of multiparty regime since 1950 discussed in changing political nature of country. Turkey is the unique example in Islamic world that have working and functioning democratic regime compared to other countries. Transformation from conventional society to modern and postmodern society accelerated after 1980's. During the process Turkish economy highly integrated to global economic order by liberal economic policies. The share of agricultural sector declined and industrial and service sectors increased in GDP like all western countries. Even if political life shadowed by some military interventions country proved the existence of democratic regime after years. The future expectations of Turkey strongly related with the degree of close relations with USA and European Union.

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