

TANZEEM E ISLAMI



Striving for the Law of Allah, on the Land of Allah

PERSPECTIVE

The official online newsletter of Tanzeem e Islami
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Special issue on Turkey – Past, Present and Future

'PERSPECTIVE' is a trend-setting newsletter issued by Tanzeem e Islami that focuses on a candid commentary on the current national and international issues, in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.
A blend that gives Muslims an insight into the events of the past, those happenings at present and the Signs of things to come...

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From the Qur'an:

"Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes Prayer and gives Zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous."

(*Al-Baqarah: verse 177*)

Selected Hadith:

Narrated Abu Bakra (RA):
"During the battle of Al-Jamal, Allah benefited me with a Word (I heard from the Prophet SAAW). When the Prophet (SAAW) heard the news that the people of the Persia had made the daughter of Khosrau their Queen (ruler), he said, "Never will succeed such a nation as makes a woman their ruler."

(*Sahih al-Bukhari 7099*)

EDITORIAL

All praise is due to Allah (SWT), and peace & blessing on his noble Messengers (AS), in particular, on the last of them all the blessed Prophet Muhammad (SAAW).

Our current issue of Perspective exclusively focuses on the resurgence of Islamic-orientation in Turkey and its short as well as long-term impact on the Muslim World and beyond. In this edition, we would:

- Analyze the recent landslide victory of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the Turkish Presidential elections.
- Evaluate the obtrusive impact of Turkey's NATO membership and relations with Israel.
- Discuss the reaction of the "West" and its puppets towards Turkey's gradual transformation away from secular/liberal ideology. In this regard, our evaluation would include the 2009 report of Rand Corporation entitled "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey".
- Provide information regarding the "Islamic-oriented" steps that The Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey has taken under the leadership of Tayyip Erdoğan, since 2003.

In a nutshell, the articles incorporated in this edition, including the one regarding the future of the post-2023 Turkey – when the 100-year Treaty of Lausanne II (*pronounced as Lozan 2*) would expire – is an effort to propose a framework whereby Turkey could play an effective role of uniting the Muslim Ummah at large, and at some stage emerge in a leadership role.

It is the considered opinion of Tanzeem-e-Islami that the victory of Tayyip Erdoğan in the recent Presidential election, under the banner of the Justice and Development party (AKP), is a good omen for the conservative and Islamic-oriented masses of the country in general and the entire Muslim world as a whole. It has caused yet another dent in the designs of the secular world (The West in particular) along with the secular "Kemalist" elements inside Turkey.

However, in order for the rest of the Muslim world and the Muslim rulers to follow the "Erdoğan Model", AKP and its leadership has to ensure that certain ideological and practical principles are followed to the letter. These would include:

- The complete severance of Turkish ties with Israel.
- Turkey needs to get rid of NATO membership as soon as possible.
- Turkey ought to drop its "dream" of becoming a member of the European Union altogether and focus more on fostering brotherly ties with Muslim countries, plus entering into calculated alliances with anti-West non-Muslim nations.
- Genuine Islamization must be expanded to the urban areas of the country.
- A clear message to the forces inside and beyond Turkey that the country stands for the revival of the genuine System of an Islamic Welfare State.

Provided that these and other similar steps are taken, Turkey can truly emerge as a beacon of light for the entire Muslim Ummah.

Allah (SWT) Knows Best!

Signing Off...

Dr. Absar Ahmad (Chief Editor)

Can Turkey and Erdogan's AKP revive its empire by the end of The Treaty of Lausanne in 2023?

An introduction to the AKP

The Justice and Development Party (*Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), abbreviated officially AK Parti in Turkish, is a conservative political party in Turkey. Developed from the conservative tradition of Turkey's Ottoman Empire past and its Islamic identity, the party is the largest in Turkey. Founded in 2001 by members of a number of existing conservative parties, the party has won pluralities in the six most recent legislative elections, those of 2002, 2007, 2011, June 2015, November 2015, and 2018. Its electoral success has been mirrored in the three local elections held since the party's establishment, coming first in 2004, 2009 and 2014 respectively. The current party leader is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey, while former party leader, Binali Yıldırım, serves as the Prime Minister. Shortly after formation, the AKP portrayed itself as a pro-Western and pro-American party in the Turkish political spectrum that advocates a liberal market economy including Turkish membership in the European Union. The party has for a long time been supported by the Cemaat Movement of exiled Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen, whose influence in the judiciary has helped to weaken the opposition against the AKP. However, the official position of AKP regarding both the US and Fethullah Gülen have become negative after the failed coup attempt against Tayyip Erdoğan in Mid-2016. The party has now become more multi-polar centric with prospering ties with Russia and China. AKP, which was once extremely Eurocentric, with Tayyip Erdoğan trying extremely hard to get Turkey the membership of the EU, has now moved away from that position and considers Europe as one of the players behind the 2016 attempted coup.

Controversies over whether the party remains committed to secular principles enshrined in the Turkish constitution despite their Islamist origins have dominated Turkish politics since 2002 and has resulted in numerous unsuccessful closure cases. Nationwide protests broke out against the alleged authoritarianism of the AKP in 2013, with the party's heavy-handed response receiving international condemnation and stalling the party's once championed EU accession negotiations. Since then, the party has brought about tighter regulations on internet use, abortion and alcohol consumption, having temporarily blocked access to Twitter and YouTube in March 2014. The AKP favors a strong centralized leadership, having long advocated a presidential system of government and significantly reduced the number of elected local government positions in 2013. In 2018, the party stated it is considering holding rallies in the United States and many countries of Europe including Germany and Austria.

The Treaty of Lausanne II

Turks have never forgotten the Treaty of Lausanne II, which caused the reduction of the geography of the modern Turkish state, forcing it to give up large territories that belonged to it.

So it was not strange to be tackled by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during regular meetings with Turkish mayors to send historical and political message to the outside before the inside, with the interest of Turkey to get rid of the effects of the Convention and the restoration of its rights, which were usurped by the Allies, and that Turkey considers the texts of the Convention to be unfair to its rights.

The modern Turkish Republic was founded according to the Treaty of Lausanne II in 1923, which concluded with the victorious Allies in the First World War, which included Britain (and the Republic of Ireland), France, Russia, Italy and the United States. The treaty developed a number of unfair and painful conditions to the rights of the Ottoman Empire, some of which included:

1. The abolition of the caliphate,
2. The exile of caliph and his family outside of Turkey, and the confiscation of all his assets,
3. The declaration of Turkey as a secular state,
4. The decision to prevent Turkey from any form of oil exploration,
5. The decision to consider the Bosphorus Strait, which links the Black Sea via the Marmara Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, as an "international corridor", thus barring Turkey from obtaining fees from ships passing through it.

In 2023 the 100-year period of the treaty ends, and here we understand Erdoğan's comments, as Turkey will enter a new era, and will begin oil exploration and drilling a new channel linking between the two seas Black and Marmara as a preparation to start collecting fees from passing ships. Hence, one can understand some aspects of the ongoing dispute now between Turkey and the West. The "Lausanne II Conference" was held in Switzerland, and after negotiations that lasted three months, it resulted in the signing of the "Treaty of Lausanne II" an international peace agreement on July 24 in 1923 in the "Beau Rivage Plus" hotel in Lausanne, in southern Switzerland. The parties to the Treaty included the victorious powers after the First World War and the Ottoman Empire. As a consequence, the Ottoman Empire was divided, and the Turkish Republic was founded under the presidency of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk took the city of Ankara as his capital, and founded the Republic of modern Turkey, abolished the Islamic caliphate and declared modern Turkey a secular state.

Other major contents of geo-political importance in the Treaty of Lausanne II were:

- The demarcation of the borders of the empire of the Ottoman Caliphate, which the West used to call

“The sick man of Europe” as early as the 1850s.

- The abolishment the “Treaty of Sevres” and the foundation of what was known later as the secular “Turkish Republic” after the abolition of the Islamic caliphate system, and the demarcation of Greece and Bulgaria’s borders with the Turkish state , which maintained the annexation of Istanbul and Western Thrace, and included provisions for installment of the debt of Ottoman state.
- The obligation of Turkey to renounce sovereignty over Cyprus, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq and the Levant, except cities were located in Syria, such as Urfa, Adana, Gaziantep, Kells and Mrash.
- The obligation of the Ottoman Empire to relinquish its political and financial rights related to Egypt and Sudan.
- Provisions for the independence of the Republic of Turkey, and the protection of the Greek Orthodox Christian minority in Turkey and the Muslim minority in Greece, and to bind the Turkish government to preserve the lives of all citizens, their rights and their freedom within their territory, with equal rights before the law regardless of origin and nationality, language and religion.
- Turkey officially agreed to the loss of Cyprus (which was hired by the British Empire after the Berlin conference in 1878, but remained a legal Ottoman ground until World War I), as well as Egypt and Sudan, the Anglo-Egyptian (occupied by British forces under the pretext of “putting out Orabi revolution and restore order” in 1882, but they remained “legally” Ottoman territory until the first World war), which Britain annexed them unilaterally in November 5, 1914.
- Leaving the fate of Mosul province to be determined through the League of Nations, as Turkey renounced all claims in respect of the islands of the Dodecanese, which Italy was forced to bring it back to Turkey in accordance with paragraph 2 in Ochi Treaty in 1912, also known as the First Treaty of Lausanne in 1912, as it was signed at the Chateau Doshi in Lausanne, Switzerland, in the wake of the Turkish-Italian war (1911-1912).
- Lands to the south of Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula remained under Turkish control when a truce of Madrus was signed on October 30, 1918, but as the text was ambiguous, Turkey was forced to abandon the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, Asir and parts of Hijaz, including the city of Madinah, retained by Turkish troops until January 23, 1919.
- To bind Turkey not to put any restrictions on citizens in the use of any language of their choice whatsoever, whether in relationships or in public meetings or in the fields of religion, commerce, media and publishing, with affirmation of the rights of political and economic sovereignty of the Turkish state and cancel the application of the system of foreign privileges on its territory. It was under this pretext that the first wave of secular leaders in modern Turkey tried to have the Friday Sermon and Adhan delivered in Turkish instead of Arabic.
- Turkey was forced to abandon its privileges in Libya as it was designated by paragraph 10 of the Uche Treaty in 1912 (and according to paragraph 22 of the Treaty of Lausanne II in 1923).

Turks look to the Convention as a founding document of the Turkish Republic and the current Turkish president, Tayyip Erdoğan, called for a review of the Treaty of Lausanne II during his speech to mayors meeting at the presidential compound in the capital Ankara.

Erdoğan said that “opponents of Turkey” forced it to sign the “Treaty of Sevres” in 1920, and the “Treaty of Lausanne” in 1923, and because of that Turkey had abandoned the islands in the Aegean Sea to Greece. Erdoğan further called the Treaty of Sevres, as the first fork in the back of the Ottoman Empire, because it forced Turkey to concede vast areas of land, which were under its influence.

The second Treaty of Lausanne led to the international recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic of Turkey as the successor of the Ottoman Empire. However, with the end of the treaty it is believed that the “circulating of the message” caused political tension between Turkey and some EU countries, after a hundred years after the signing. The second Lausanne Treaty is on the table of discussion today, as fears began to float on the surface with the expiration of the period, and linking this with coup attempt on Erdoğan in mid-2016. The question are:

1. Will Turkey return after the expiration of the “Treaty of Lausanne II”, as a modern Ottoman Empire in the region?
2. Will the geopolitical and economic map of the region change, and will the world be entering into a new phase of renovation of the Ottoman legacy?
3. Will we see more wars before 2023, and who will lead that change?
4. How will the Western powers react to Turkish demands?
5. Most importantly, will the post-2023 Turkey, under the leadership of Tayyip Erdoğan, limit itself and be content with the vision to merely recapturing the glory of the Ottoman Empire or would it be courageous enough to emulate the pristine era of Islam, viz., the ideological and practical foundations of the *Khilafat-e-Rashida*, albeit gradually?

There is no easy answer to any of these questions and only time and Allah’s (SWT) Will can determine the future of Turkey post-2023.

Seven Ways Turkey Has Become “More” Islamic Under the Leadership of President Erdoğan

The modern Turkish state was born out of the fall of the Ottoman Empire which led to the abolition of the Islamic caliphate. Kemal Atatürk known as the founder of Turkey introduced a number of reforms which would diminish the role of Islam in the country. Madrasah's were closed, religious clothing was banned, the call to prayer was changed from Arabic to Turkish and a host of other secular laws were introduced.

Turkey has remained highly secular for a number of decades and continues to be so till this day. However, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, former Prime Minister and now President have reversed some of the laws introduced by Atatürk and have in effect, made Turkey more Islamic.

Here are 7 ways Turkey has become more Islamic:

1. Thousands of Mosques Built

According to The Atlantic, more than 19,000 new mosques have been built by the Turkish government between 2002 and 2017. Many more Mosques are currently under development around the country and significant amounts has been spent refurbishing Ottoman-era mosques.

2. Hijab Bans Lifted

The Hijab was banned in the public sector, banning teachers, lawyers, parliamentarians and others working in state run institutions from wearing it. In recent years, the Justice and Development Party have lifted bans wearing the Hijab in schools and state institutions. In November 2015, a female judge became the first woman to conduct a trial in Turkey wearing a headscarf (*Al Arabiya*). In August 2015, Aysen Gurcan became the first Hijab-wearing government minister (*Al Arabiya*).

3. One Million Students Enrolled in Imam-Hatip Schools

Imam-Hatip schools are vocational education institutions designed to provide religious education and train Imams. Mosques in Turkey are government appointed and many Imams are trained in Imam-Hatip schools. These schools were founded after Madrasahs were banned under Atatürk's reforms. In 2002, there were 65,000 students involved in Imam-Hatip schools. The number grew to 658,000 in 2013 and recently, Bilal Erdoğan who is spearheading the expansion of Imam-Hatip schools announced that the number of students has now reached one million (*The Turkey Analyst*).

4. Compulsory Religious Education Introduced

Compulsory religious education classes were introduced by the government across Turkish schools. Courses on “the Qur'an”, and “the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAAW)” have also been introduced (*The Turkey Analyst*).

President Erdoğan has been quoted as saying: “We want to raise a religious youth,” and “Do you expect the conservative democrat AK Party to raise an atheist generation? That might be your business, your mission, but not ours. We will raise a conservative and democratic generation embracing the nation's values and principles,”

5. Age-Limit on Qur'an Courses Abolished

Children had to be at least 12 years old before they could attend Qur'an classes. This was abolished by the ruling government allowing young children to attend Qur'an classes. In 2013, a project was launched for the provision of “Qur'an courses for preschoolers.” (*The Turkey Analyst*).

6. Restrictions Placed on Alcohol Sale and Advertisement

Secular Turkey has allowed the sale of alcohol in the majority Muslim country. The Justice and Development Party passed a bill in 2013 introducing a ban on advertising alcohol within 100 meters of a mosque or school.

Blurring out depictions of alcohol on television and in films was also made mandatory (*Reuters*).

Student dormitories, health institutions, sports clubs, education institutions and gas stations have been banned from selling alcohol on premises and all the sale of alcohol after 10pm is banned elsewhere (*Hurriyet Daily News*).

7. Expansion of Islamic banking

Islamic banking has vastly expanded in recent years. The state owned Ziraat Islamic bank is expected to have 170 branches by 2018 (*Daily Sabah*).

In a recent speech, the Turkish President has called the interest-based banking system ‘cruel’ and has talked about the benefits of Islamic banking: “If we are to jump forward we need to grow within a real participation system rather than this cruel one. Islamic financing is a completely different system from the current banking system in terms of its asset-backed structure, its reliance on risk share and its structure closed to speculation. I believe that this system will be the driving force behind the Turkish economy.”

Sources: *The Atlantic, Reuters, Al Arabiya, Daily Sabah, The Turkey Analyst, Hurriyet Daily News,*

Press Release issued by Tanzeem-e-Islami

Date: 29 June 2018

Lahore (PR): “Despite severe opposition from the West, the historic victory of Tayyip Erdoğan in the Turkish Presidential Election is encouraging and heartening news for the Muslim World.”

This was stated by the Ameer of Tanzeem e Islami, Hafiz Aakif Saeed, during the Khitab e Jumu'ah at Qur'an Academy, Model Town, Lahore.

The Ameer noted that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had started his political journey on the lines of Islamic orientation, contrary to the prevalent global agenda of secular and liberal political philosophy, for which Allah (SWT) had blessed him with repeated success and filled the hearts of the general public with love and affection for him. The Ameer remarked that if the rulers of other Muslim countries, too, emulated President Erdogan in focusing on the issues pertaining to the benefit of the Muslim Ummah and made efforts to get rid of the shackles of “global agenda” dictated by the West, then not only will the masses make sacrifices for them but it would also lead to the security of their own rule along with safeguarding their national interests against the malicious designs of the enemies of Islam.

While sternly criticizing the recent series of “actions” taken by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) against Pakistan, involving the inclusion of our country on the “grey list”, the Ameer remarked that all international institutions including the FATF followed a duplicitous role when it came to dealing with Muslims. He lamented that international institutions always turned a blind eye towards the likes of India, Israel and Myanmar, where some of the worst atrocities of human history were being openly perpetrated against the masses at the state level that amounted to nothing less than state-sponsored terrorism. He added that the international institutions took no action and placed no sanctions against these and other countries for blatantly sponsoring “crimes against humanity”, yet they never missed any opportunity to take action against Muslim countries, mostly under false pretexts. He remarked that this misfortunate and unjust situation prevailed solely due to the betrayal of Islam by Muslims in general and their leadership in particular. The Ameer concluded by emphasizing that provided that the Muslims became sincere towards the goal of implementing our *Deen* in practice and making it dominant as the Law of the Land, they would become eligible for the bounty and blessings of Allah (SWT), in which case no global power, including USA, would be able to harm them in any way. ***Insha Allah!***

Summary of the 2009 report of Rand Corporation titled, “The rise of Political Islam in Turkey.”

As a Muslim-majority country that is also a secular democratic state, a member of NATO, and a long-standing U.S. ally, Turkey is pivotal to U.S. strategy to shape the Middle Eastern security environment. Turkey is also a key test case for the role of Islam in politics and its influence on external policy. Until recently, Islamic parties in Turkey were largely a fringe movement. However, the success of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the past two national elections demonstrates the growing strength of a political movement with Islamic roots. That said, the AKP does not define itself as an Islamic party, and its electoral success does not translate into popular support for an Islamist agenda. Although the AKP won an overwhelming victory in the July 2007 election, it still faces serious challenges, including the possibility that it could be closed down.

While the AKP has Islamist roots, it is fundamentally different from its predecessors—the National Salvation, Welfare, and Virtue parties—in terms of its ideology, its political goals, its market-oriented economic program, and the broader range of the electorate to which it appeals. Despite its origins, the AKP government has not pursued an overt Islamist agenda (although critics accuse it of seeking to infiltrate Islamists into the civil bureaucracy and condoning Islamization at the local level). The AKP government has given priority to pursuing Turkey's European Union (EU) membership, economic stabilization, and reform of the legal system over divisive symbolic issues such as the Islamic headscarf controversy. Secularists, however, worry about “creeping Islamization.”

Alternative Political Futures

How deep-seated Turkey's (and the AKP's) transformation is and the impact it will have on Turkey's future political development and foreign policy orientation remain open questions. In the aftermath of the July 2007 elections, the AKP has substantially strengthened its hold on power. A senior party member, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, has been elected president, fundamentally altering the previous political landscape in which a secularist president counterbalanced the AKP-dominated parliament. The party's future remains uncertain, as a result of the indictment forwarded to the Constitutional Court in March 2008 calling for the closing of the party for violating the principles of secularism.

Over the next decade, Turkey could evolve in a number of different ways. Four possible "alternative futures" for Turkey are described below. Some are more likely than others, but all are plausible enough that they deserve serious consideration and analysis.

Scenario 1: The AKP Pursues a Moderate, EU-Oriented Path

In this scenario, the AKP solidifies its hold on power and maintains a moderate path, not allowing Islamist impulses in its foreign policy to derail its EU-oriented course. Some erosion of the restrictions on public expressions of religiosity occurs, and individuals are given greater latitude to express a more visible Islamic identity. However, no attempt is made to introduce Islamic legislation, such as Islamic legal codes. At the same time, efforts are made to reduce the political role of the military. The AKP government also seeks to loosen restrictions on religious minorities.

Until early 2008, this seemed to be the most likely scenario. However, the indictment of the AKP forwarded by the Public Prosecutor to the Constitutional Court has called this assumption into question. If, in the end, the AKP is not closed and remains in power, it is likely to be more cautious about pressing for measures that could be perceived as changing the secular-religious balance or provoking the secularists into another attempt to remove it from power. The presence of AKP members and religious-school graduates in the government bureaucracy is likely to continue to expand. At the local level, some AKP-run municipal councils are likely to continue efforts to infuse their conception of Islamic morality into public policy.

There are, however, structural limits on how far a reelected AKP government can go in opening space for Islam in the public sphere. The Kemalist establishment remains largely intact. Any government that crosses the lines that define the acceptable role of religion in politics risks accentuating political tensions and possibly provoking intervention by the military. In addition to the political constraints posed on the AKP's freedom of action by the military and secular elements in the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the higher educational establishment, two other factors argue for a moderate course by an AKP government.

One is the moderate and pluralistic tradition of Islam (discussed in the chapter on the Islamic landscape in Turkey). Rigid Salafi interpretations of Islam have never taken root within a broad sector of the Turkish population. Public-opinion polls show that there is little support in Turkey for an Islamic state.¹ A large majority of Turks, including religious Turks, support the secular state.

The other factor arguing for a moderate course is that Turkey is imbedded in the West, institutionally, economically, strategically, and, to a significant degree, culturally as well. Over the past two decades, Turkey has converged significantly with European norms. Important gaps remain, but the trends are clear. The implication of this is that Islamic politics in Turkey are affected more by the international context than is generally the case in the Middle East.

Although these considerations argue for a moderate trajectory for religious politics in a democratic and increasingly globalized Turkey, other, less positive outcomes are possible. Three possible alternatives are described below.

Scenario 2: Creeping Islamization

In this scenario, the reelected AKP government pursues a more aggressive Islamist agenda. With full control of the executive and legislative branches of government, the AKP is able to appoint administrators, judges, and university rectors and even to influence personnel decisions in the military. In foreign policy, the AKP intensifies ties to the Muslim world, especially to Iran and Syria. Faced with growing opposition in Europe to its bid for EU membership, the AKP turns to an effort to create a competing Islamic bloc.

“Creeping Islamization” is the scenario that worries most secularists, many of whom fear that the AKP harbors a hidden agenda to Islamize Turkish society. However, in our view, this scenario is less likely, for several reasons. First, it would lead to greater political polarization and would likely provoke intervention by the military. Second, most Turks support a secular state and oppose a state based on the *shari'a*. Third, EU membership has been a core element of the AKP’s foreign policy. While discontent with the EU has been increasing, EU membership is still supported by more than half of the Turkish population.

Scenario 3: Judicial Closing of the AKP

In this scenario, the Constitutional Court closes down the AKP. Closing down the AKP, however, would solve little and could lead to a deepening of the crisis. As its strong showing in the July 2007 elections underscores, the AKP enjoys broad political support throughout the country. If it is closed, the party is likely to simply reemerge under another name—as happened when the MSP (National Salvation Party) and the RP (Welfare Party) were banned. Closing the AKP would also increase strains with the EU and further complicate Turkey’s quest for EU membership.

¹ For instance, a poll by the highly respected Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) published in 2006 found that only 9 percent of the Turkish population favored a state based on the *shari'a* (down from 21 percent in 1999). See Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye’de Din Toplum Ve Siyaset*, Istanbul: TESEV, 2006, p. 11.

Scenario 4: Military Intervention

A fourth possibility is an escalation of social tensions that leads to intervention by the military. A confrontation could take place if the AKP takes actions seen by the military as crossing important lines. The military-intervention scenario has two possible variants: (1) a “soft coup,” where the military mobilizes social pressure against the AKP, eventually forcing it to resign, and (2) a direct military intervention leading to the forcible removal of the AKP government and the disbanding of the party. While direct intervention by the military cannot be excluded from consideration, especially if the AKP begins to push an Islamic agenda more aggressively, it is not very likely and would occur only as a last resort after the military had exhausted all other options.

Implications for U.S. Policy

The examination of Islam’s role in Turkey leads to several conclusions and implications for U.S. policy.

The first relates to the nature of Islam in Turkey and its role in Turkish political life. Turkey has a long history, dating back to the late Ottoman period, of seeking to fuse Islam and Westernization. This differentiates Turkey from other Muslim countries in the Middle East and enhances the chances that it will be able to avoid the sharp dichotomies, ruptures, and violence that have characterized the process of political modernization in the area.

This is important, because it goes to the heart of the issue of the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The ability of a party with Islamic roots to operate within the framework of a secular democratic system while respecting the boundaries between religion and state would refute the argument that Islam cannot be reconciled with modern secular democracy. On the other hand, if the experiment fails, it could lead to greater secular-Islamic polarization, further reducing the middle ground needed to build the moderate Muslim bulwark needed to contain the spread of radicalized Islam.

Beyond Turkey, the accommodation of Islam with democracy and secularism that has been achieved there is a valuable resource in the current ideological conflict between radical and mainstream interpretations of Islam. Mainstream entities in Turkey, therefore, should be encouraged to partner with groups and institutions elsewhere in the Muslim world to propagate moderate and pluralistic interpretations of Islam.

U.S. policymakers should be cautious, however, about portraying Turkey as a “model” for the Middle East. That notion makes many Turks, especially the secularists and the military, uncomfortable, because they believe that it pushes Turkey politically closer to the Middle East and weakens Turkey’s Western identity. In addition, they fear that it will strengthen political Islam in Turkey and erode the principle of secularism over the long run.

A second conclusion relates to the sources of Turkey's transformation. The growing strength of political Islam in Turkey (or rather, of politics informed by Islam) has been largely a response to internal factors, particularly the democratization and socioeconomic transformation of Turkish society over the past several decades. An important corollary to this point is that the United States may not have much leverage in this sphere. It also highlights the importance of cultivating new and diverse elites.

Third, it is an oversimplification to see the current political tensions in Turkey as a struggle between "Islamists" and "secularists." Rather, these tensions are part of a struggle for power between newly emerging social sectors and the secularized elite—a struggle between the "periphery" and the "center"—that has deep roots in Ottoman and recent Turkish history. The democratization of Turkish society since the mid-1980s has opened up political space for forces that had been largely excluded from politics (including Islamists) to organize and propagate their views.

Fourth, while the AKP has Islamic roots, it enjoys broad-based political support that transcends religious, class, and regional differences. Its widespread social networks and efficient party machine, with close ties to local constituencies, have enabled it to gain strong support among the poor and marginalized groups that make up a growing portion of Turkey's urban areas. At the same time, its liberal, free-market economic policies attract the provincial entrepreneurial classes that are socially conservative but integrated into the global economy. The AKP's support for democratic reform and its tolerant policy toward minorities have also enabled it to obtain the support of many members of minority communities.

Fifth, in the past decade, the AKP has undergone an ideological transformation, abandoning the anti-Western rhetoric that characterized its Islamist predecessors and embracing a new discourse that emphasizes values consistent with those of Western societies. This shift is most visible in the AKP's position on Turkish membership in the EU. The shift has resulted in an important realignment in Turkish politics. In the past, the Kemalists were the main proponents of close ties to the West and Western integration. In recent years, however, this role has increasingly been assumed by the AKP. Ironically, as the AKP has pressed forward with reforms designed to bring Turkey into conformity with EU norms and regulations, some sectors in the Kemalist establishment and the military have begun to worry that EU membership and further democratization could undermine Turkish security, as well as their own political role.

Turkey's prospects for attaining EU membership remain uncertain. While the EU Commission supports continuing accession negotiations, opposition in Europe to Turkish membership is growing—on cultural as well as political grounds. Although the United States is not a member of the EU, it has a stake in how the membership issue is managed. Turkey's integration into the EU would strengthen the EU, as well as Turkey's Western orientation, and would rebut the claim



that the West—especially Europe—is innately hostile to Muslims. On the other hand, rejection of Turkey’s candidacy could provoke an anti-Western backlash, strengthening those forces in Turkey that want to weaken Turkey’s ties to the West.

Sixth, Turkish policy toward the Middle East is likely to remain a sensitive issue in bilateral U.S.-Turkish relations. Turkey’s growing interests in the Middle East are likely to make Ankara wary about allowing the United States to use its military facilities for regional contingencies except where such operations are clearly perceived to be in Turkey’s interest. This argues for a diversification of U.S. access options that would provide alternatives to Incirlik Air Base in case Turkey increases restrictions on U.S. use of it or other Turkish facilities.

The Armenian genocide resolutions periodically introduced in the U.S. Congress could also cause strains in relations with Ankara in the future. In 2007, the Bush administration succeeded in getting a genocide resolution (HR-106) shelved at the last second, narrowly averting a serious crisis with Ankara. However, the resolution is likely to be re-introduced and to remain a potential source of discord. Future administrations will need to work closely with congressional leaders to ensure that the Armenian issue does not poison future relations with Turkey.

The United States also needs to deal more resolutely with the terrorist attacks against Turkish territory by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). In Turkish eyes, the PKK issue is the litmus test of the value of the U.S.-Turkish security relationship. How the United States responds to this issue will have a seminal influence on the tenor of U.S.-Turkish relations over the next decade.

The closer military and intelligence cooperation with Ankara against the PKK since Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s visit to Washington in November 2007 has helped to defuse some of the mistrust and tension in bilateral relations that has built up since—and, to a large degree, as a consequence of—the Iraq war. But it needs to be followed up by other concrete steps. In particular, the United States should put greater pressure on the Kurdistan regional government to crack down on the PKK and cease its logistical and political support of the group. At the same time, while a tough anti-terrorist program is an important component of a strategy to defeat the PKK, it must be combined with social and economic reforms that address the root causes of the Kurdish grievances.

Source



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