



Social Sciences Spectrum

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized [Y-category](#) Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-0427](#) P-ISSN: [3006-0419](#)

Volume 04, Issue 04, 2025

Web link: <https://sss.org.pk/index.php/sss>



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Redefining State and Society in Turkey: Erdogan's illiberal Turkey

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Article Information [YY-MM-DD]

Received

2025-10-01

Revised

2025-10-31

Accepted

2025-12-01

Citation (APA):

Ali, A., Farooq, U & Sattar, H, A. (2025). Redefining state and society in Turkey: Erdogan's illiberal turkey. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 4(4), 441-454. <https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.04.04.426>

Abstract

This piece of writing incorporates how Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (The founder and saviour of modern-day Turkey) inculcated the staunch liberal ideas in the Turkish Society after becoming the first President of modern Turkey. He modified the constitution of Turkey on the extreme anti-Ottoman-cum-Islamic lines. He declared Turkey a secular state and extended his ideology, termed as "Kemalism". In 1994, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was elected as the mayor of Istanbul, he achieved fame in a very short time because of his outstanding social and economic policies. He won the trust and hearts of the people and resultantly established his political party under the name of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in August 2001. He served as the Prime Minister of Turkey from 2003 to 2014, and then he assumed the office of the President. The weirdest and interesting part of his political career started after 2016, when he introduced illiberal ideas, contrary to Kemalism, in the State. He altered the introverted behavior of the state and played an active role the regional politics. In a nutshell, this research will tell us that how Erdogan is redefining the state and society within Turkey.

Keywords:

Circular Economy, Circular Design, Sustainability, Furniture Design Industry, Pakistan.



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Introduction

The Republic of Turkey, in the contemporary scenario, is considered an agitator in the region and a threat to the regional order. It is famously known as the transcontinental State present in the western Asia with an extended portion into the South Eastern Europe. It experiences both Asian and Western values at the same time. The present-day Turkey was the part of great Ottoman Empire, the Empire was demolished after the First World War, and a politically enthusiast Ottoman military commander Mustafa Kemal, got prominence after the victory at the Battle of Gallipoli. He launched the nationalist movement in the empire, defeated the armies sent by allies, and finally established his government in Ankara, the capital of present-day Turkey. He served as the first president of the State from 1923 to 1938 till his death. He introduced sundry new reforms at the societal as well as at the state level. He stepped aside the Islamic values, which were the foundations of the Ottoman Empire, and declared the state as modern and secular. He was known as the saviour of modern-day Turkey and in this honor he earned the title of “Ataturk”, Father of Turks. He inculcated staunch liberal values in the society and kept foreign policy objectives less diversifying. His ideology was termed “Kemalism” and this ideology created a middle class or more precisely we can say that a “Kemalist Class”. Kemalism preached that religion was not only extricated from politics but also people were strictly restricted from practicing religious or Islamic values in public places. He not only altered the Arabic script of the Turkish language with the English script but also banned the admission of students in the educational institutes who used to practice the veil (Hijab). His secular state was not according to the true sense of secularism. He used the state apparatus to maneuver the people towards liberalism.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk crushed the first Islamic movement brutally which took place after one year of his rule. When he died in 1938 the right wing of the society thought that now it would be an easy task to revive Turkish society back on Islamic lines, but they got severe challenges from the military which was, till that time, the custodian of “Kemalist secularism” in the modern Turkey. Turkey faced a number of coups from 1938 to 2000 and during this time several political leaders challenged Kemalism but they failed due to the presence of a strong military and organically developed Kemalist middle class. Turkey experienced different Islamic waves in its modern history but the most unique and forceful Islamic wave is the most recent wave under the current President of the State Recep Tayyip Erdogan¹. He was elected as the mayor of Istanbul in 1994, he was greatly inspired by the anti-secular and illiberal ideology of Necmettin Erbakan (Former Prime Minister of Turkey). Erbakan was dismissed from the Prime Minister's ship because he violated the secular constitution of the State. President Erdogan considered Erbakan as his spiritual and political guide. His outstanding performance as a mayor of Istanbul made him adorable to the people of the metropolitan city. He was imprisoned for four months as he recited an Islamic poem at a public forum. Erdogan launched his political party in 2001 and became the Prime Minister of Turkey in 2003. He initially won the trust of all the communities of the society then gradually unveiled all the conservative-cum-religious policies which were the real face of his ideology. He created room for religious values by fulfilling the social and economic demands of the people, when he took charge of the state Turkey was passing through the most deteriorating economic condition of its history. He inculcated illiberal values and ideas in the society as well

¹ (Butler 2018)

as in the behavior of the State toward the external world.

The failed coup of July 2016 proved to be a blessing in disguise for Erdogan, he took staunch illiberal, and harsh actions against his rivals. He stood clearly against the liberal elements of the State. He took measures to change the constitution in his favor and a referendum took place in 2017, to enhance the powers of the President. He violated and finally ruptured the democratic idea of separation of powers in the State and confiscated a larger share of power from the respective institutions. He seems eager to get an exit from Western influence and is enthusiastic about diversifying foreign relations. In the contemporary scenario, his actions are more extroverted rather than introverted. He wants to replace the existing Kemalist middle class with Erdogan's middle class to pave the way to build the foundations of the State based on illiberal ideas. Economy was a leading factor in the meteoric rise of Erdogan and now the illiberal policies of his regime is no more paying. He changed the life standard of the millions through economic reforms but now overindulgence and conservative behavior within and outside of the state is ruining him and the State as well.

Erdoganism vs Kemalism

In the contemporary scenario, Turkish society has sharply divided into two halves, one half, which was previously deprived, has found its "New Ataturk" in the form of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the other half prefers to keep themselves intact with the secular and liberal ideology of the founder and Saviour of the modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. People who are pro-Erdogan are considered conservative, Islamists, and more concisely tagged as the threat to the "Kemalist's Turkey". Currently, Turkey is facing a strong anti-Kemalist wave, under the rule of a Strongman, who is inculcating religious elements, with the support of the glorified history of Ottomans, in the domestic laws, foreign affairs, and politics of the state to drive the society on the lines of his own style of governance about which he claimed as "Democratic Conservatism" and altered the secular nature of external relations. Prior to this ongoing wave of Islamisation, Turkish society was under the strict and staunch governance of secular rulers, which was imposed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who ruled as the first President in modern Turkey. He earned the title of the Saviour of Turkey and claimed that he not only fought with the allied powers of World War 1 but also succeeded in restoring the dignity of the Turks. He was greatly inspired by the secularist system of Europe but on the other hand, he was well aware of the fact that Turkish society would not be ready to accept the Western style of secularism. To deal with this puzzle, he extended his six arrows², regarding the governance in modern Turkey, deeply embedded with his own style of secularism which was far more different from the secularism practiced in Europe.

Six arrows were considered the hallmark of Ataturk's reforms. Kemal's reforms were paid for a lot in the first decade, but for a longer period of time, those reforms were not extensively compatible with Turkish society and proved themselves as worse than ever expected. Ataturk died in 1938 and from then till 2001 Turkey faced numerous military coups. Ataturk always admired the European style of governance in which the Europeans alienated the church from the politics and religion became a personal matter of the citizens, but adversely, there in Turkey, Ataturk didn't allow people to practice religion as their personal affair. That was very much against the true spirit of Europe's nature of Secularism. The secularism propagated by Kemal was different from that which was experienced by Europe in multiple contexts, the emergence of secularism in

² (Los Angeles Times 1991)

Europe was an indigenous phenomenon.³

European secularism was free from any sort of despotic ideas while on contrary of that the Kemalist secularism was the amalgamation of the authoritarianism and also contradicted with the Anatolian mind set. He developed and maintained dictatorial governance in the cover of secularism. He used the state apparatus to reduce the role of the religion in the political and social affairs of the modern Turkey.⁴ Erdogan, referred to Kemal's policies as illiberal and his main argument was that freedom of religion and life are the core elements of western liberal thought but in "Kemalist Turkey" the people are unable to enjoy this type of freedom.

After few years of his rule, Erdogan set aside all the moralities and the slogans of liberalization, which he previously used to get political privileges, and started taking coercive and illiberal measures to exercise the political power in the State. He introduced the reverse model of all the Kemalist's Policies, but the interesting aspect was that Erdogan adopted the same methods and ways which were once adopted by Ataturk to alter the Ottoman-Islamic order into the liberal order. Erdogan inculcated the self-designed conservatism in the State and society.

Rise of illiberal Erdogan

The last decade of the 20th century was not in the favour of Kemalists and the country was facing severe economic depressions of its history. These severe economic backlashes not only ruptured the political setup of the state but also paved the way for new governing strategies and ideas. It is obvious that leadership comes out during times of crisis, in this regard we have to appreciate the services of the Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The former mayor (Tayyep Recep Erdogan) of Istanbul at that crucial time proved himself as a leader of the millions with his devotion and performance; we can say that the critical situation of the 1990's turned out to be a blessing in disguise for him. His enthusiasm and belief in his people led him towards the making of a conservative political party, although several other politicians have done so, this time Turkey was destined to have a Pro-religious figure to represent it to the world. Erdogan launched his political party, Justice and Development Party (AKP), on 14th August 2001 which became the platform of right-wing populism. The meteoric rise of Erdogan was deeply linked with economically crippled Turkey, on the other hand, he also criticized that the state under Kemalist policies could not efficiently be governed and compete with their immediate neighbors and region as well. His meteoric rise was also assisted by his political mentors who introduced him to common voters and then he earned the support of these people who raised their vocals in support of illiberal Erdogan.⁵

Erdogan's rapid rise successfully created room for an anti-Kemalism ideology. It is important to note that this is not the first attempt to revive the Turkish society on the paradigms of religion. First wave was brutally crushed by Ataturk himself in 1925.⁶ Second wave of religion in Turkish politics arose in 1960's and third in 1980's with soft governance of Turgut Ozal (A former prime minister of the state). Fourth and the recent wave started with Erbakan in 1990's and then inherited by Erdogan with the slight modifications in the projection of the policies at national and international level, this wave considered as the freshest and unique in nature and came with the rise of Justice and development party (AKP) led by Tayyep Recep Erdogan.

³ (Öztürk 2019)

⁴ (Akyol 2012)

⁵ (Bayat 2013)

⁶ (Akyol 2012)

Erdogan showed his strong critique over the staunch secularism of Ataturk by attacking his anti-religion campaign.⁷ He is inserting the religious elements, illiberal thoughts, in the society by using same method that was previously used by Kemal Ataturk to regularize liberalism in Turkish Society. Erdogan drew public support with his extraordinary performance from 1994 to 1998. He created the room for a pro-religious party in the Turkish Society this space was always there but Erdogan hit at the ripest moment. Erdogan used religious forces to consolidate political powers and vice versa; he knew that he could maneuver a large segment of the society only on religious lines. In his speeches and public addresses, he used to use Islamic symbols, values and emphasized Muslim unity. President Erdogan's best move was; when he saw that there was not only a gap in Islamic values in Turkish society but also a large segment of society wanted to get rid of Kemalism. He mixed religious values and ideas with outstanding performance on the economic side; more precisely we can say that he materialized his ambitions through an economic boom. In the initial years of the rule, AKP followed the ideas and principles that were accommodative for all communities of the state and successfully created soft corners in their hearts. When he clung to the society and institutions (State) sufficiently then claimed that his party based on socially conservative but economically based on liberal ideas. This was the basic difference between Erdogan and the rest of the former Islamic enthusiasts of the country. In the previous Islamic attempts, leaders were not as active in social and economic sides as they were in political side. In the era in which Erdogan came into the good books of the public, economy of the Turkey was badly crippling and it was the time when Erdogan's slogans of liberalization of the economy became the source of his unbelievable acceptance in the society and then ultimate success at the political grounds.

Emergence of New Middle Class

Erdogan took the benefit of opportunity and changed the traditional trends of the "Kemalist deep State", and accredited it with a new middle class in Turkey which is parallel to the previous and existing Kemalist middle class. The middle class of every society is considered as the change agent of that particular society, Erdogan's middle class led him to crush the military coup, to change the Parliamentary system into a Presidential one, and urged him to take constitutional bold steps. Coup of July 2016 became a critical point in Erdogan's story, that unfrocked the covert planning against the AKP, and as a result, it made Erdogan able to exercise or practice his ambitions sternly.

In Turkey religious factions identified and then highlighted authoritarianism in the Kemalist system to grab social attention and acceptance. After taking power AKP paved the way for the success for the conservative and previously marginalized community (religious segment) of the society. In his initial years, Erdogan stood for the rights of Kurds, extended real values of the secularism, for instance, coexistence, freedom, Pluralism⁸ and targeted the staunch social and political policies (Secularism) of Kemalism. This Western style of mandate and policies attracted the western block and they started supporting Erdogan and his political ideas. Soon after a few years of rule, the Western block realized that AKP had always a hidden Islamist, illiberal, and despotic agenda. The significant developments occurred after 2013 and more appropriately we can say that AKP started redefining of the Turkish state and society to have their firm access to the state institutions. Erdogan won the large support of the state's middle class, whose lives were

⁷ (Cagaptay, The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey 2020)

⁸ (Cagaptay, The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey 2020)

greatly changed during the economic boom brought by Erdogan, they consider Erdogan as their “Real Leader”.⁹ In this way, he created a new middle class to strengthen his rule further.

Currently all the affairs; from political to social, from executive to judicial, from domestic to foreign, from science to arts, from religion to non-religious are controlled and ruling by only one strong man, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the concept of power distribution in a democratic state badly dumbed.

Turkish Society

In the initial phase of his rule, Erdogan delivered unexpectedly in economic terms and the circumstances supported his societal and political transformations. The rise of AKP was strongly backed by the better economic opportunities provided by the government to the people of a financially collapsed state. Erdogan lifted a large amount of poor people from poverty and dragged them into the middle class from the very lower lower-class.

Erdogan became Turkey’s 12th president in 2014. If for a time being coup of 2016 paid him a lot on the other hand it affected his rule vehemently for different reasons, rapid economic growth slowed down, peace became a challenge a sense of terror spread among the civilians and economic uncertainties circumvented the “New Ataturk” of modern Turkey. The failed coup proved that Turkey made it possible to get rid of the omnipotent secular military. Constitutional Referendum took place in April 2017, in which the powers of the president increased; this was previously a ceremonial post in the state. Economic development is the major factor among others, responsible for the success of Erdogan. President Erdogan said in his victory speech that Turks had voted for “not just an ordinary or simple change”. This is the first time in Turkish history that the Turkish people have casted their votes on such an important constitutional change. “In the past it was the parliament who actually decided whether to make any constitutional changes but today, for the first time, the will of the people has shown through this referendum and this is the first time in our history and very important”, he stated. He also mentioned that voters from abroad were a big part of this success. “We would like other countries and institutions to show respect to the decision of the nation,” he added.¹⁰

Till 2018 the Erdogan’s government became the most autocratic government in the history of modern Turkey. He packed all his political and social agendas in Islamic frame and then inculcated his self-proposed, conservative and dictatorial ideas in the society which partially ruptured the very basis of the modern Turkey and alarmed European nations that Erdogan’s populist agenda can become poisonous for the cordial relations among the European nations and Turkey. He inculcated religious aspects in everything that is related to the state for instance, education, police, judiciary, even the promotion of the bureaucrats, and several other institutions also dealt with the religious paradigm. Turkey is becoming a “New deep state” once again, and people of the Turkey are losing their hopes regarding the modernization and betterment of the national economy. Currently, Erdogan is pushing Turkey towards kleptocracy, corrupt leadership, and ill-versioned policies are witnessed over.

Erdogan and his illiberal regime strived hard to sideline the secular elite of the state, in Turkey military was the main secular elite and this institution was the promoter and custodian of the

⁹ (Dewan, CNN 2017)

¹⁰ (BBC NEWS 2017)

secular foundations of the state. The failed coup of July 2016 was the stamp that Erdogan had partially succeeded in his mission. People of the Turkey humbly yet, enthusiastically crushed the brutal coup and supported their leader. But Erdogan adopted a harsher and revengeful approach against the imposers of the Coup and their facilitators. More than 160,000 people have been detained, in response to the coup, dismissed or suspended - from police officers to pilots and teachers to businessmen. Erdogan's government has imposed a ban on the pride marches of gays and transgender since 2005. Esra Ozyurek, the chair for Contemporary Turkish Studies at the London School of Economics. "People are afraid to talk. You can get in a taxi and complain about Erdogan, and the driver might record you and take you to the police."¹¹

AKP is dealing iron-handedly with the media and reacted very passively against the spirit of freedom of speech and freedom of writing. Journalists are not free at all and face severe restrictions imposed by the state. "Erdogan directly or indirectly controls 80% of the media in Turkey," says Onderoglu, one of the situation facing journalists. "Any criticism of him is seen as criticism of the state. The definition of the job we do has been systematically eliminated from the Turkish dictionary"¹², stated by Erol Onderoglu who is among the 150 journalists now in prison or facing trial.

In June 2018, Mr Erdogan won a new five-year term after securing outright victory in the first round of a presidential poll. It granted him sweeping new presidential powers, won in a controversial referendum in 2017. That constitutional change was firm in its spirit, however-the "Yes" vote was 51%. This referendum enhanced the power capabilities of the President of the state and now he is able to intervene directly into the legal system of the state, appoint high public officials without obtaining the consent of anyone, he is now able to impose emergencies in the state at any time.¹³ Now President can appoint Judges, Ministers can make budgets, and can dissolve Parliament. He can appoint one or more vice presidents in the State. Erdogan is stereotyping the concept of self-government and trying to convince his people that this Presidential system of government, which he considers far more suitable than any other governmental setup. But he preaches that due to this system people are able to choose their representative directly and grant him or her authority and the nation's confidence.¹⁴ He restructured the principal institutions for instance he is leading National Intelligence, Defense industry directories, the high command of the military, and the National Security Council and after becoming President he took full control over all of these institutions.

About the worst rule of Erdogan, Oget Oktem Tanor is eighty-two years old, Turkey's first neuropsychologist, and an emeritus professor at Istanbul University. After the coup of 1971, she was forced to flee the country with her husband, facing imprisonment and possible torture for being a leftist. "That time was still better than now," she says, "because there was a judiciary you could trust and civil courts you could rely on. Now they are all under pressure and there's no separation of powers as there should be in a democracy. I really fear for the future of my country."¹⁵ APK launched the religious-nationalist program in the state, mixed with religious fundamental values.

¹¹ (Dewan, CNN 2017)

¹² (Lowen 2017)

¹³ (MILLER 2020)

¹⁴ (Aliriza 2018)

¹⁵ (BBC NEWS 2017)

Erdogan successfully grabbed more than fifty percent of votes of his nation and then he succeeded in the conversion of his popular mandate into power centric to redefine the society of the Turkey. A reporter asked Erdogan that how he succeeded, he said” I am Istanbul’s Imam”.¹⁶ But now the situation has totally altered and AKP is unable to continue with that previous pace of economic opportunities, and people are again suffering from bad economic conditions which are haunting the ruling elite.¹⁷ The Gezi Park event of 2013 was the first and most effective attempt on the reputation of Erdogan and it paved the ways for further loopholes.

Turkish State

AKP’s approach towards foreign relations is quite different because they are organizing their relations in such a way that Turkey would get maximum room to act openly in the region to maintain the security challenges in the region. Security is the main concern for Erdogan’s regime because Turkey’s rivals are present everywhere and the illiberal rise of Turkey is not in the favour of the existing powers of the region that can challenge the status quo in the future.

Erdogan took many unilateral steps regarding foreign policy, for instance, he sent Troops into north-eastern Syria without consulting with NATO and this act was not admired by its NATO allies. In this regard, “Erdogan told, Turkey can launch an operation to protect its national security without seeking permission from anyone” Erdogan wanted an independent and diversifying nature of foreign policy, formerly the Turkish foreign policy was under the severe influence of the West.¹⁸ Ilke Toyur, an analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute, a Madrid-based think tank, stated that “Turkey is diversifying its partners in security and defense but not in the economy” Turkey realized that there is a power vacuum in the region and now Turkey has a potential to take over the challenges and can get lion’s share in this power competition. Erdogan is trying to become a new genius of the region because he is well aware of this reality that America, Russia, France, Germany, Iran, and several others cannot get success in their desired interests without having active cooperation with Turkey.¹⁹ This diversification in foreign policy will lead towards the new partners in the region as well as beyond the region.

Strategic position of the turkey made it important for all other regional and extra regional players and the most surprising thing, for other regional actors, is that the current ruler of the turkey knows the importance and inevitability of the Turkey towards the world because Europe and middle east cannot afford the anger of the Turkey that’s why both actors always behave hesitantly when it comes to Turkey. “Turkey has the strategic advantage,” Timothy Ash, Senior Emerging Markets Sovereign Strategist at Blue bay Asset Management, said. “The reality is that the EU is a lion with no teeth when it comes to Turkey. And Erdogan has long figured this out.”²⁰

It is no doubt that Turkey has seldom felt alone in the international or regional arena. The reopening of Hagia Sophia as a mosque is clear evidence that Erdogan’s ambitions are regional not national or domestic and he is expecting a share of the “Muslim Turkey” in global politics. Kemalist Turkey never experienced such an active regional and extra-regional involvement during their entire rule and some experts believe that Erdogan is ambitious to regain the lost glory

¹⁶ (Genc 2019)

¹⁷ (HAMDI 2020)

¹⁸ (Ahval 2020)

¹⁹ (DURAN 2020)

²⁰ (Hacaoglu 2020)

of Turkey which was lost with the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Erdogan is recreating or redrawing the Ottoman legacy. Mr Erdogan is presenting Turkey, to the world stage, as a regional power, this behavior has been demonstrated by Turkey since 1923.

The influence of Turkey now covers a large realm. It is observed that Turkey enthusiastically participated in the conflicts that took place in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Syria. Recently, Erdogan jumped into the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, he supported Azerbaijan not only militarily but also in political battlefields. The areas in which Turkey is demonstrating its power, are considered as the backyard for Russia but both Moscow and Ankara found some grounds to act as allies. In the case of the provocative and overactive behaviour of Turkey, Russia is following its renowned regional doctrine, Primakov Doctrine, according to which Moscow has to maintain its cordial political and military relations in the region to get maximum allies to curtail the hegemony of the USA.²¹

This is the basic reason behind the appeasing behavior of Russia towards Turkey. This approach of Russia can also be translated in these words that in International politics there are no permanent friendships and no eternal enmity only interests are permanent, and in this regard, alliances always shift according to the interests. In contemporary scenario Turkey is leaving western block, now quitted the hope of EU membership and also seeking alienation from the influence of America. Erdogan established good political and strategic ties with Russia, Iran and China. Turkey and Russia have common enemy and it is very much clear that, enemy of your enemy is your friend. Moscow and Erdogan's Ankara have same regional goals that both are in the favour of exclusion of western powers from the backyards.

The Arab Spring of 2011 paved the way for Turkish activism in the Middle East. "Saudi Arabia and the UAE have the view of Turkey that it is becoming an enemy of sorts, a destabilizing force," said Abdul Khaliq Abdullah, an Emirati commentator.²² Every crisis is an opportunity for someone, when in 2011 Middle East was burning into the flames of revolutionary attempts, at the same time Erdogan was seeking a new ground to expand his own version of Islamic order in the region as well beyond the region.²³

The regional ambitions of Erdogan led him towards the over involvement in the Mediterranean Sea and side-lined Greece and Cyprus because of the naval influence of Turkey in the Sea. Macron on 10th September 2020 had said that Europeans must be "clear and firm with, not Turkey as a nation and people, but with the government of President Erdoğan, which has taken unacceptable actions". The relations between Turkey and France collapsed over the East Mediterranean issue because France is supporting the stance of Greece and Cyprus on the other hand Turkey is claiming that these newly discovered natural resources (of hydrocarbons) belong to Turkey.²⁴

Today's Turkey is playing in its near abroad beyond its capacities and capabilities and also trying to promote Turkey's brand of Islam. Previously, many rulers expected that Turkey must behave as a regional power but their expectations were never fulfilled due to strong bases of Kemalism in the state. The major reason was that their policies lacked strong appeal at the public level. On the other hand, Erdogan used religion as an appealing force to fulfill his agenda to make Turkey

²¹ (Kotchikian 2020)

²² (Pitel 2020)

²³ (Suleyman Ozeren 2020)

²⁴ (France-Presse 2020)

a strong and key regional actor. As the Financial Times mentioned that, "Turkey's desire to gain greater influence in its neighborhood is not new. But the increasingly bold pursuit of its goals has riled European and Arab leaders alike."²⁵

Erdogan is exporting a Turkish version of Islam, his version of Islam led towards pan-Islamism, and this pan-Islamism is behaving as an instigator for Turkey's revisionist approach towards the region.²⁶ Interventionist nature of his foreign policy; Erdogan is intervening in Libya, UAE, Syria, and Iraq which will compromise the national security of his own country. "There is no purpose to Erdogan's foreign policy except power-grabbing, and the entry for his success is territorial aggrandizement."²⁷

Erdogan is using every possible option to make Turkey a regional hegemon, orchestrating the situations according to his own will he is extending both soft and hard power tools. Soft power is nothing without an active back-support of hard power. Power demonstration is the best way to warn the competitors and to make them subjugate without having any serious conflict. Turkish involvement in different states in the region is witnessing that it has a regional and illiberal agenda and it is using its hard power to achieve the goal. Recently, Turkish news agency, TRT, listed 12 countries where the Turkish military is operating. These states are Northern Cyprus, Syria, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Somalia, Qatar, Afghanistan, Albania, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Sudan. Other than these states Turkey is playing a key role in Libya, and supporting the United Nations made government of Tripoli, by sending Turkish trained Syrian fighters.²⁸ On Turkish involvement in Syria and Libya, Fadi Hakura, who manages the Turkey program at London's Chatham House think tank, said "Erdogan has won a series of tactical victories but he has been either unwilling or unable to turn them into strategic gains as this requires muscular diplomacy not just military interventions."²⁹

Erdogan wanted to enhance the sphere of influence of Turkey that's why he targeted the areas which were previously under the rule of the Ottoman Empire before World War 1. To accomplish this type of expansionist ambitions in the era of strict nation state system, Erdogan has to pay heavy repercussions. "Erdogan's slogan was that Turkey was going to rise by and through leadership over Muslim-majority states in the Middle East," stated Soner Cagaptay, Beyer Family Fellow and Director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "But now with the exception of Qatar, Somalia, and half of the government of Libya, it has good ties with no Muslim majority country nearby", he said.³⁰

The major hindrance in the course of Erdogan is the deteriorating economy of Turkey which can't afford such adventures for a longer period. In August 2020 Erdogan met with two Hamas leaders Ismail Haniyeh and Saleh al-Arouri, these both are in the terrorist list of the USA.³¹ He has a soft corner for these Islamist fundamentalist organizations. On the other hand, turkey is actually disturbing the regional balance and international powers are continuously appeasing the behaviour of the Erdogan which is not in the favour of the regional peace and stability at all. The ongoing

²⁵ (Ahval 2020)

²⁶ (Marwa Maziad 2020)

²⁷ (MAALOUF 2020)

²⁸ (Ignatius 2020)

²⁹ (Hacaoglu 2020)

³⁰ (Qiblawi 2020)

³¹ (Ignatius 2020)

foreign policy of Turkey is sharply based upon expansionist and aggressive lines. It is also labeled as “Neo-Ottomanism” because of several reactionary movements taken by government of Turkey. The behaviour of the Turkey is not as much reliable as it must be at regional and extra-regional level because in various conflicts like in Syria and Libya Turkey could play its crucial role to settle these issues through negotiations but Turkey dealt the issues through military means.³²

Turkey is not only redefining its state and society but also trying to rephrase the regional order. Turkey is supporting democratic governments in the region mainly in Middle East rather than despotic authoritarian leaders, because these authoritarian rulers in the neighbouring states are not in the favour of Turkish vested interests in the region.³³ AKP is following an activist (outward or provocative) model of foreign policy instead of inward-looking model. Whole Muslim world is currently become the field of action for Erdogan and he is trying to become leader of the Muslim world.³⁴

On the other hand, Turkey is facing severe backlashes within the region and almost all regional states are against the rule of Erdogan due to his aggressive policies, except Qatar. Discussing illiberal attempts of Erdogan, a Greek Official stated that, “I explained the obvious, which is the common denominator in all problematic situations in the area: Nagorno-Karabakh, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Cyprus, and the southeastern Mediterranean. The common denominator is Turkey,” Greek’s Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said, when he was highlighting the regional high temperature zones in which Ankara has a military presence or active diplomatic involvement. “Turkey is undermining peace and stability in the region.”³⁵

Erdogan argues strong central leadership will give him the power to face down Turkey’s terror threats. But when we look towards the actual situation, then we can analyze that his government exposed the State to the IS and other Jihadi nurseries because of neglectful control over the Syrian border, now terrorists are seeking new safe harbors in Turkey

Conclusion

Erdogan’s regime shook the foundations of Kemalist Turkey, the staunch liberal ideas, that were inculcated in the constitution and foreign policy of the state, stepped aside by AKP. They introduced a couple of new social policies which are contrary to the secular ideology of Ataturk. Erdogan wants to redefine the state and society of the Turkey over the lines of religion and values which were previously practiced by Ottoman Turks to get to a central position among all the Muslim States. This is threatening the Arab States Israel and its allies. His policies paid a lot during the financial tough times and became a great support to the deteriorating economy of the state, but later on, after 2016 we can say that after surviving a military coup he started taking harsh measures at the societal level as well as at foreign policy level. He started over involvement in the near abroad to enhance the realm of Turkish influence in the region. Contrary to the previous regimes instead of going towards west, Erdogan took moves towards the East. He experienced multiple new behaviors and approaches after the Arab Spring and concluded that democracy in the Arab world would be beneficial for Turkey.

Erdogan ruined all the progress that his party attained in the last fifteen years of their rule, he did

³² (HAMDI 2020)

³³ (HAMDI 2020)

³⁴ (Cagaptay, The Cairo Review of Global Affairs 2019)

³⁵ (FRASER 2020)

the same with Turkey as Napoleon Bonaparte did with France after acquiring the Revolution. The economic situation of the state is again vulnerable because of his aggressive and provocative nature of foreign policy. For instance, tourism is considered an important pillar of the Turkish economy. Tourism, which makes up around 10% of the Turkish economy, is declining rapidly. In 2014, Turkey was the world's sixth most-visited country - with 42 million tourists, and it dropped to a drastic level of 25 million in 2016. The major decline was seen in the number of Western tourists and experts designated it to the security concerns of the Western tourists. Hotels have slashed rates in an effort to bring them back. But the situation is getting worse because there is a sense of fear and lack of safety prevailing in the state as well as outside of the state. Turkey is - among other things - the world's largest host of refugees. A large share of economy is also spending over the maintenance of these refugees. Turkey is the absorber of all the Arab refugees by keeping Europe safe from the bulge of refugees. But in the Western block, anger at Turkey's unpredictable leader is growing. The European Parliament called for a suspension of EU membership negotiations. Erdogan himself does not want EU's membership and he knows that the West cannot afford to lose this country.

Erdogan's government has his self-crafted ideas regarding democracy, in this regard Erdogan once famously said. "Democracy is like a train; you get off once you have reached your destination." His self-styled, Socio-political policies, deeply embedded in illiberalism ruptured the true sense of democracy in the State. But he partially succeeded in the redefining of Turkish State and Society.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

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