

**OPEN ACCESS**

Name  
pISSN: 2617-3336  
eISSN: 2617-3700  
www.iqan.com.pk

IQĀN -Vol: 04, Issue: 02, Jun-2022  
DOI.10.36755/iqan142.2022,PP: 26-36



*Impact of revival theories of Islamic civilization on  
contemporary political thoughts of the Turkey*

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**Version of Record**

**Received:** 30-April-22; **Accepted :**13-May-22; **Online/Print:** 30-Jun-22

**ABSTRACT**

*The idea of revival of Islamic civilization is a fundamental concern of Muslim theology. Ideas of Muslim scholars, especially their critique on western civilization and secularism have been playing a pivotal role in deriving the psyche of Islamists' Politics throughout the Muslim World. These ideas were very vital in the formation of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and from there, they were exported and flourished in Turkey. Although at that time, Turkey was under the rule of secular dictators but politicians like Adnan Menderes, Turgat Özal and Necmettin Erbakan were fighting against the secular regime of their country. They saw the Turkish political uprising through the lens of Islamic identity. The current President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan is famously known to be a protégé of Erbakan and some may even at lengths to call the warrior of revivalist tribe. From the time he became the mayor of Istanbul to the point he abolished the parliamentary system to replace it with presidential "monarchy", we can find the footprints of Islamism throughout his political journey and the rise of his party. Events such as his unwavering support of Egypt's Muslims Brotherhood to his unapologetic stance on Palestine and removal from the ban on hijab to the resurrection of Hagia Sophia as a Mosque, show enough evidence of the Islamist ideology that he tends to follow. This article will be discussing how the ideas of Muslim revival have inspired his political journey and how they continue to impact his political and foreign policy decisions.*

**Keywords:** Muslim Revival Theories, Islamic Civilization, Political Islam, Turkey



## **Introduction**

Constantinople was captured from byzantine empire by Muslims in 1453, it was sultan Muhammad Faith, who led the army, after a long existing struggle, he conquered the city. Constantinople was the city of culture and civilization, as well as it considered the holy city of Christianity because of Hagia Sophia. It was the most sacred place of that time. Turkey is a country with distinct nature. It has deep roots in Islamic traditions. It was the central point of the Ottomans empire. In 1924, Ottoman's caliphate was abolished by Mustafa Kemal, he was the army officer of Ottomans Turkey. As freedom warrior of the Turkey, people of Turkey considered him a hero, gave him the title of Ataturk (Father of the Nation). He considered the caliphate as the reason of conflicts. So, he took over the charge of the country and removed every sign of late Caliphate. Though Ataturk and Erdogan are ideologically poles apart but there are some staunching similarities in the ways both tried to govern the country in their respective time-periods. Many academics and researchers have noticed that the failed coup that took place on 16<sup>th</sup> July provided the opportunity to Erdogan that he was eagerly waiting for since the late 2000's. After the failed coup-attempt, he was able to change the constitution by removing the Parliamentary form of government with that of Presidential system having all the power and authority himself just like Ataturk, the only difference was that he used the slogan of Islamism and Turkish Nationalism as opposed to Ataturk's enforced secularism and modernization. And this authoritarian rule of Erdogan will eventually lead to more media censorship, curbing of the opposition voices and so on and so forth. To be more precise, Erdogan may end doing what Ataturk did and which led to the leadership vacuum in the country that was primarily the reason behind Erdogan's rise to the power.

### **1. Ottoman's Turkey to Republican Turkey**

We should distinguish the ottomans Turkey from Republican Turkey. The republican Turkey was initiated by Mustafa Kemal in 1924, Republican Turkey identified by a different kind of its nature. It was Secular in its political system. Islamic traditions and other reflection of Islam were totally banned in republican Turkey. Ban on scarf, Arabic alphabets, Mosques, and Azan (call for prayer) was the focus of his time. Mustafa Kemal put the religion out from the frame of state affairs. He prosecuted and imprisoned many religious scholars. Govt institutions were totally banned for those people who practiced religion in any way.

At that time the Sufi practices were performed underground. Although Sufism doesn't emphasize much on political activism as it deals mainly with personal development through different religious practices, we can trace some influential Sufi orders behind some of the most impactful Muslim Revivalist Movements from Central Asia to the Sub-Continent. Turkey is no exception in this regard, as it is also considered to be the land from where the Sufi thought originated.

### **2. Role of Sufism and Nursi Movement on Turkish Politics**

Sufism is deeply rooted in Turkish society since the period of the Ottoman Empire. The Naqshbandi order is among the largest Sufi orders and has impacted society in various ways. Erbakan was also allied with the Naqshbandi order and even though his approach was quite

modern. He also drew his inspiration from Sufism.<sup>1</sup> In 1925, the modern-secular regime of Turkey tried to dissolve the Sufi sects and banned their practices because it was deemed as one of the threats that the regime was facing<sup>2</sup>, but it survived through underground networks and it is very much alive in today's Turkey as well. It is worth mentioning here that the main face of reaction to the Turkish Secular project was also the Sufis.

The political culture of Turkey and its interaction with Islamism becomes an interesting case study especially in recent times when the role of religion in politics is being debated again and again by western thinkers and Philosophers. As Bernard Lewis writes that the project of secularization in Turkey was never really completed as most of the times people seem to think so. Despite the efforts of Ataturk, he wasn't quite successful in separating the Muslim identity from the Turkish one because for centuries both went together and being a Turkish was equivalent to being a Muslim.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Ataturk did hire non-Muslims in his army, but they were not allowed to carry arms and were never commissioned. After the death of Ataturk, Turkey became a little bit more democratic and that gave some breathing space to the dissent voices which were mostly the voices of Islamists. Hence, during the 1940s the secular regime faced opposition from religious circles when a group of religious scholars decided to launch an agitation against the project of the Turkish Government to reform Islam by launching an Encyclopedia of Islam.<sup>4</sup> The opposition called this whole project to be anti-Islamic. In reaction, they released their own version which was named "Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam". Hence the movement for the revival of Islam in Turkey started as soon as the dictatorship of Ataturk vanished from the scene. The number of mosque-going people increased tremendously, and many of the Muslims started going to Mecca for pilgrimage.

### 3. Islamic Revivalist Parties of Turkey

In the recent era, one of the main architects of the project of Muslim revival in Turkey was none other than ex-Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan who was an engineer and an academic turned Politician. His political philosophy openly called for the strengthening of Islamic values and principles in Turkey. In his lifetime, he launched several political and welfare parties and many of his political outfits got banned by the judiciary and military establishment because they were considered anti-secular and anti-state.

In 1970, Erbakan launched his first political party, National Order Party<sup>5</sup> inspired by the Milli Görüş ideology.<sup>6</sup> This ideology was primarily put forward by Erbakan himself in opposition to Ataturk's enforced modernism and secularism. This movement of Erbakan was, on one hand,

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<sup>1</sup> Angel Rabasa F. Stephen Larrabee, *The rise of political Islam in Turkey*, (National Defense Research Institute, RAND Corporation, 2008), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Yukleyen A., *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, (Cambridge University Press. 2008), 384.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Islamic Revival in Turkey*, (International Affairs, Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944, No. 1 (1952): 38-48. URL: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2604969>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, (St. Martin's Griffin, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, 2016), 150.

<sup>6</sup> Ihsan Yilmaz, "Islamist Third Worldism in Turkey: Erbakan's National Outlook (Milli Görüş) Movement." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. 10.2139/ssrn.3208220.

driving its aspirations from the Ottoman Empire and on the other hand, was trying to cope up with modern ideas by keeping intact its Turkish identity of Sufism. And the demands of Islamists in Turkey were also hidden under the guise of Turkish nationalism. The party of Erbakan was banned merely after a year in 1971 by the authorities on the grounds that it violated the Turkish Constitution, especially the articles dealing with Secularism. But that didn't stop Erbakan from launching another political platform with a different name. National Salvation Party had most of its cadres from the banned NOP. In the 1973 elections, the party got, surprisingly, more than one-tenth of the votes given the fact that religious parties were banned. The winning party (CHP) lacked the majority and hence it was obliged to form a coalition with NSP.<sup>1</sup> NSP also got dissolved after the coup of 1980 and was succeeded by another Islamist Party, Welfare Party.<sup>2</sup> This newly found party by Erbakan kept Islamism very much alive in the political atmosphere of the country. After doing well in local elections in the early 1990s the Welfare Party again won nearly one-third of the seats in the 1995 national elections and became the first religious party in Turkey to win a general election. Welfare Party came in first with more than 21 per cent of the vote and formed a coalition government with True Path Party with Erbakan as prime minister. Erbakan's stunning victory sent shock waves throughout the secular establishment, especially the military. For the first time since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey was run by an Islamist party, with an Islamist prime minister.<sup>3</sup> The party's pro-Islamist policies brought it into conflict with the army and other secular elements in the country, and it was subsequently banned and left power in 1997. Erdogan was once associated with Welfare Party but later he formed AKP and from this platform, he became the Prime Minister of Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4. The Amalgamation of Milli Görüş with Naqshbandis and Muslim Brotherhood**

As defined earlier that *Milli Görüş* is a movement that was initiated by Erbakan with the idea that Turkey can only make progress by staying true to its own moral values and principles which are stemmed in Islamic tradition. Apart from this ideology, the revival of Islam in Turkey is also deeply connected with the ideology of political Islam, many notable scholars in the Muslim world have propagated this ideology like Hassan-ul-Banna, Syed Qutab and even Syed Maududi (founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan).<sup>5</sup> In Egypt Hasan-Al-Banna and Syed Qutab have publicized the ideology of political Islam and have established quite an influential impact on society. Some may find this a contradiction given that the Muslims Brotherhood gets its inspiration from modern Salafi ideology and their opposition to Sufism but that's clearly not the case when it comes to the relationship between Muslim Brotherhood and the Naqshbandi Sufi

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Turkey/Political-developments-1970s-to-90s>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Recep-Tayyip-Erdogan>.

<sup>3</sup> Angel Rabasa F. Stephen Larrabee, *The rise of political Islam in Turkey*, National Defense Research Institute, RAND Corporation, 2008, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*, St. Martin's Griffin, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, 2016, 157.

<sup>5</sup> Cornell, S. E., *The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order and Political Islam in Turkey*. Retrieved January 3, 2022, URL: <https://www.hudson.org/research/11601-the-naqshbandi-khalidi-order-and-political-islam-in-turkey>

order of Turkey, especially the highly political nature of Turkey's Sufism makes it highly compatible with not only Muslim Brotherhood but with also the other Islamic Revivalist Movements across the globe.<sup>1</sup> Erdogan seems to carry forward this vision of Erbakan by developing these linkages with the Brotherhood all over the Middle East and North Africa, hence the leadership of Hamas and Muslims Brotherhood kept on appearing in the conventions of AKP which kind of sends the message that AKP is trying to attract the vote bank of Islamists.<sup>2</sup> Although Muslim Brotherhood doesn't associate itself with the ideology of *Milli Görüş* 9 it definitely considers it to be a Turkish version of the Muslim Brotherhood. These connections between Erbakan and Muslim Brotherhood were much deeper in Germany where the leadership of both *Milli Görüş* and the Muslim Brotherhood went into exile and there were inter-marriages between the family of Erbakan and the Brotherhood leader Ibrahim al-Zayat.

Apart from that, Muslim Brotherhood always had a strong network in Turkey working under the guise of some Human Rights NGOs etc., for example in 1991, The Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed, known as MAZLUMDER was founded as an alternative to the current working group for Human Rights and it showed sensitivity towards the issues that were related to Islam and Muslims, for example banning of headscarf. It had links with Hamas, the Muslims Brotherhood, and Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

### 5. The Gulen Movement and its conflict with AKP

Most people heard the name Fethullah Gulen for the first time after the failed coup attempt in July 2016. This was the man who orchestrated the whole thing and who has been living in a self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999.<sup>4</sup> Just like Islamist Parties of Turkey, Gulen has his own history of Political Activism in Turkey and was a close ally of Erdogan's AKP before both went on their separate ways.

From the very beginning in the 1970s, the movement of Gulen was broken from the Nur Movement of Said Nursi in Izmir. Gulen himself preferred to work behind the shadows and even when his name got famous due to his audio lectures, he himself was not seen. The working of his movement was quite different from other Islamist parties due to the secrecy because the prime focus of Gulen was the infiltrate in the institutions of Government like army, police, and bureaucracy and for that purpose the organization was divided into two sections, the Civilian wing and non-civilian wing.<sup>5</sup> The civilian wing consisted of a chain of missionary schools and NGOs and the non-civilian wing primarily dealt with the army and other state's institutions. In

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<sup>1</sup> Scientific council for government policy, The development of Islamic political thought." in Dynamism in Islamic Activism: Reference Points for Democratization and Human Rights, Amsterdam University Press, 2006. 56. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46mth1.6>.

<sup>2</sup> Merley S., Turkey, the Global Muslim Brotherhood, and the Gaza Flotilla. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, (2011). 31.

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Al-Jazeera, (July 15, 2017), Turkey's failed coup attempt: All you need to know

URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/15/turkeys-failed-coup-attempt-all-you-need-to-know>

<sup>5</sup> Çakır, R. (2016). The Gülen Organization's Long Journey. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/gorus/gulen-organizations-long-journey>

the words of a renowned Turkish Journalist *Ruşen Çakır*, “His organization is one that resembles more an intelligence agency than an Islamic Movement - A global network with serious political ambitions.”<sup>1</sup>

Before the rivalry began between the both Gulen Movement and AKP, they were considered as natural allies as both were the proponents of Islamic Gradualism (the theory of Islamic Revival that believes in the gradual change of society through the diversion of Public Opinion towards an Islamic Democracy, the bottom-up approach to Islamize the Society)<sup>2</sup> and as a result of these similarities Gulen was considered as one of the ally of Erdogan in 2000's when AKP as struggling to lessen the influence of Turkish establishment on the politics and the Gulen movement benefited hugely as a result of that alliance but in 2010, the rift between the two parties started to widen when the Gulenist Police officers brought in Hakan Fidan, a close confidant of Erdogan for questioning. This was the first time that Erdogan referred to the Gulen movement as “State within the State”. From this point on, the AKP was quite clear about its ambition to completely eradicate the influence of Gulen from the Turkish bureaucracy and army and he also pressured the US to extradite Gulen.

On July 15, 2016, Erdogan took the opportunity to launch a full-scale operation against Fethullah Gulen, one of his biggest critics and conspirators, in response to a coup against him by a Gulen-inspired military group. He expelled those who in any form believed in the ideology of Fethullah Gulen from every institution and at every level. Even the magnified International Educational institutions established by the Gulen movement were taken over by Turkish embassies. Gulen has been influential in the country and his followers have long challenged Erdogan's decisions and have been the strongest voices against him. The coup manipulated against him was, in fact, a revolt of Gulen's admirers and Erdogan took it as an opportunity and crushed them then and there. Now, Fethullah Gulen and his movement are banned from appearing in the media and they are not allowed to hold protests and rallies. These policies of Tayyip Erdogan can be perceived as ‘hypocrisy’, but it can also be the search for opportunity. Waiting for the right time and making the right decision at right time is his best strategy.

## **6. Political History and Up-Bringing of Erdogan**

As discussed earlier that Erdogan was closely associated with the Welfare Party of Turkey and he was politically mentored by Erbakan himself. In 1994, he was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul for the very first time on the ticket of Erbakan's Party. This was the first step in his political career that paved a way for him in years to come. But he was unable to complete the tenure of the mayorship as he was convicted of inciting the religious hatred when he recited the poem that compared mosques to barracks, minarets to bayonets, and the faithful to an army, and he was

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<sup>1</sup> ibid

<sup>2</sup> Ayan, A., *An Ontological Reading of Turkey's AK Party – Gülen Movement Conflict*. Retrieved January 3, 2022, <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/07/21/an-ontological-reading-of-turkeys-ak-party-gulen-movement-conflict/>

sentenced to ten months in prison.<sup>1</sup> He got out of prison in 1999 and re-entered the political arena. After the Welfare Party got banned in 2001, Erdogan separated his ways from Erbakan and helped in the formation of the Justice and Development Party and in 2002, his party ended up winning parliamentary elections successfully.<sup>2</sup> As a result, AKP was able to form a government without any help from any Secular Party. But AKP itself was a different experiment altogether<sup>3</sup> that was different from the previous steps and policies of Erbakan. Erdogan understood from his experience that any attempt to bring a radical shift in the country's socio-political culture will be the invitation to the secular establishment to intervene and to overthrow the sitting government. So, in the early years, he along with Abdullah Gull emphasized religious freedom that was under the framework of the current secular constitution of Turkey. The leadership of AKP knew for a fact that if they opted openly for Islamism, it will be the political suicide of their party and hence they even went on to say openly that their party was safeguarding the secular constitution of the country and that it has nothing to do with Islam. In the pursuit to become more moderate, they took the step of allowing women to participate in politics from their platform and openly vowed to carry forward the legacy of Ataturk.

## 7. The Rivalry between AKP and Secular Parties

Although on paper, AKP is just another political party whose leadership works under the secular framework devised by the constitution of the state, in some cases, its policies are religiously inspired and hence become a reason for the rift with secular groups for having its roots in the ideology of Political Islam<sup>4</sup>. A series of clashes between AKP and its secular opponents took place. In 2007, Seculars raised the issue on the electing of President Gull. The secular Republican Party staged a big protest against the nomination of Abdullah Gull for the presidency. In May 2013 another episode occurred when many secular groups raised the issue of Ghazi Park, they tried to unstable Erdogan's government. They raised their voice for environmental protection and for saving trees. In 2020, the rift between Erdogan and his secular rivals was on the issue of the resurrection of Hagia Sophia as a Mosque. The secular parties of Turkey along with some international Organizations of Human Rights criticized this act of Erdogan deeming it a step backwards and against the secular essence of Turkey, which Erdogan strongly rejected saying that the International Community should respect the sovereignty of Turkey.<sup>5</sup>

Tayyip Erdogan started working with Necmettin Erbakan, but he soon realized that the way

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah Sontag "The Erdogan Experiment," *New York Times Magazine*, May 11, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/magazine/the-erdogan-experiment.html>

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopaedia., Editors of. 2021. Britannica. November 21. Accessed December 24, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Recep-Tayyip-Erdogan>

<sup>3</sup> AVDAR, G. C., Islamist New Thinking in Turkey: A Model for Political Learning. *Political Science Quarterly*. (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Soner Cagaptay, *Erdogan's Empire: Turkey and the Politics of Middle East*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) p 52

<sup>5</sup> Jones D., *Turkey Battles Criticism Over Decision to Turn Hagia Sophia Into Mosque*. Retrieved January 3, 2022, Voice of Amercia: [https://www.voanews.com/a/europe\\_turkey-battles-criticism-over-decision-turn-hagia-sophia-mosque/6193254.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/europe_turkey-battles-criticism-over-decision-turn-hagia-sophia-mosque/6193254.html)

Erbakan is working, will only increase the difficulties and the system will not change. The slogan of political Islam is very strong, it is difficult to pave the way for it, it was even more problematic in the circumstances of Turkey. The only way to achieve success is to do the job with patience and determination. Erbakan came to power in 1996 by the Rifah Party. Turkey's military council could not tolerate him for 14 months and removed him from power. Erbakan formed a new organization Virtü Party and started working under a new name, they were stopped from working again.<sup>1</sup>

The decision of 28 February 1997 has historic significance in the history of Turkey, in which Erbakan was barred from participating in politics for five years. And Islamic parties were banned from participating in politics. It is true that the decision of February 28, later provoked Erdogan, and his friends to form a separate party and he entered politics with the new vision, which was apparently supporting secularism, at the same time they were looking for an opportunity to decide when, where and how to pave the way for Islamists. We can say that Erdogan showed something else while taking other steps.

This is an amazing reality, Erdogan and his allies initially relied on the EU to achieve their goals. It was difficult to talk about Islam in a specific norm of Turkish society because the military and judiciary was the biggest obstacle as they were the custodians of the secular constitution. Military had already sent back Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal and Necmettin Erbakan. The military was backing the judiciary there because there was no provision for an Islamic system in the Turkish constitution, so to declare an Islamic system was tantamount to putting oneself in trouble or thwarting one's efforts. Erdogan took the support of the EU by raising the slogan of Turkey's accession to the EU at the grassroots level. Speaking of economic reforms, promotion of democracy, liberal reforms, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, etc., the people became enthusiastic about this slogan.

Tayyip Erdogan was elected mayor of Istanbul in 1994 by the Welfare Party. He worked in the municipality of Istanbul from March 1994 to November 1998 without any interruption. Later he was removed from his office also sentenced to 10 months in prison for reciting a poem of Mehmet Ziya Gökalp in a public gathering, which was later commuted to 4 months in prison.

Then came the government of Necmettin Erbakan in 1996, which was overthrown within 14 months. The decision of February 28 is of historic significance. Erbakan was banned from politics for five years. Erdogan took a different stance on that occasion. The Islamists were fed up with the day-to-day setbacks. They need to change the slogan of the implementation of the Islamic system. They were doing a disservice by hitting the wall, it was against reason. they acted prudently and had to deal with the secular army carefully. Erbakan was very clear in his intentions, he flatly refused to listen to Erdogan and his allies. On which Erdogan along with his colleagues decided to form a separate political party AKP.

Although Erdogan has the historical baggage of his own (his relationship with Necmettin

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<sup>1</sup> Angel Rabasa F. Stephen Larrabee, *The rise of political Islam in Turkey*, National Defense Research Institute, RAND Corporation, 2008, p95.



Erbakan) he also considers Mustafa Kamal as one of his political mentors. Unlike his mentor, he doesn't shy away from providing Islam the space in the political culture of Turkey. Erdogan seems to be a supporter of the Islamic way of life, but he cannot speak openly about the Islamic system because of his social constraints. He has repeatedly called secularism the future of the country in his speeches.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, he is trying to undo the actions of Ataturk. One of the recent examples was his decision to resurrect Hagia Sophia as a mosque where Muslims are once again allowed to pray. The mosque has a unique historical background that concerns both Christians and Muslims. It was a cathedral turned into a mosque by Sultan Fatih when he conquered Constantinople overthrowing the Byzantine Empire.<sup>2</sup> Later, Kamal Ataturk turned it into a museum as a part of his efforts to remove Islam from the public sphere. In July 2020, Erdogan overturned this step of Ataturk and turned it again into a mosque. This step was criticized by seculars who considered this a betrayal of the legacy of Ataturk. The West has tried to cover up Erdogan's achievements through economic conspiracies, it seems that the West has set its sights on finding Erdogan's flaws.

While proceeding with the legacy of Erbakan, Erdogan is playing a leadership role in the Islamic world. He has shown a keen interest to unite the Muslim world and intends to make a new block to establish an economic zone for the mutual support of Muslim countries. In 2018 Erdogan with Malaysian President Mahatir Muhammad tried to form a new Muslim bloc along with Pakistan, they planned to launch a television channel and a bank, during a joint press conference with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in Ankara on July 25, 2021, President Recep Erdogan said that harmony between Turkey, Malaysia and Pakistan is essential for the unity of the entire Islamic world.<sup>3</sup> With all the authoritative tendencies that he has processed over time, there is no denying in the fact that the Experiment of Erdogan was in its core an "Islamist Experiment" just like Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and Jamaat e Islami of Pakistan though Erdogan said his goodbyes to Saadat Party before coming into mainstream politics but he never shied away from claiming his Islamist roots. But like any populist leader, he was haunted by the dilemma of pragmatism and for quite some-time, especially in the beginning of his career, he owned his Muslimness on one hand and sowed to protect the secular identity of the constitution on the other, he famously said while speaking to New York times circa 2003 "Before anything else, I'm a Muslim, and as a Muslim, I try to comply with the requirements of my religion. I have a responsibility to God, who created me, and I try to fulfill that responsibility. But I try now very much to keep this away from my political life, to keep it private". This statement defines the political insight of Erdogan, as he is taking a step back from Maududi's absolute idealism but also

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmed El Amraoui and Faisal Edroos, "Is Turkish secularism under threat?", Published On 3 Jun 2018 3 Jun 2018, URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/6/3/is-turkish-secularism-under-threat>

<sup>2</sup> Gavin D. Brockett, "When Ottomans Become Turks: Commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople and Its Contribution to World History", *The American Historical Review*, Volume 119, Issue 2, April 2014, Pages 399-433,

<sup>3</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2022127/erdogan-stresses-turkey-malaysia-pakistan-solidarity-ummahs-unity>

paving a way forward for Islamists in Turkey by negotiating with the fault-lines of Atatürk's model of modernity and secularism.

In the world political scenario, Erdogan has emerged as a strong voice in the Muslim world. Recently, he spoke on the Kashmir issue in his speech at the UN General assembly on September 22, 2021.<sup>1</sup> In the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Erdogan appears to be open with Azerbaijan b. After the evacuation of the US Army from Afghanistan in August 2021, Erdogan, at first, spoke out against the establishment of the Taliban government, but soon after, he announced an aid package for Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> In the context of the Middle East, already established Saudi-Turkish rivalry has created polarization in the Muslim world. The Saudi rulers have been concerned about his popularity in the Muslim world. They banned the books of Turkish scholars, blocked Turkish channels, and banned Turkish products in their country.<sup>3</sup> When the glory of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of the Muslims was insulted in a French newspaper and Emmanuel Macron declared the Muslims to be insane, no other Muslim ruler dared to answer him, then Erdogan described Macron as "insane" in a press conference<sup>4</sup>.

Erdogan's presidential palace in Ankara has been a major point of contention for secularists over the past 3 or 4 years, portraying the palace as an attempt at a renaissance of the Seljuks and Ottomans. The eyes of the West are on Erdogan. They count his every step. Even in recent years, there was a study on Erdogan at Yale University in which they have significantly detailed analysis of Erdogan's actions.<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion

- Naqshbandi Order have deep roots and have produced renowned Muslim scholars and politicians including Sulieman Hilmi Tunahan, Adnan Menderes, Turgat Ozal, and Necmettin Erbakan.
- Said Nursi movement has its unique style of preaching, they have the agenda to integrate into the people of different walks of life through making the hostels and focusing on the youth.
- Gulen Movement initiated with different agenda, they established great educational institutions, and focused on creating their influence in bureaucracy on govt officials.
- It was the Milli Gurus under the leadership of Erbakan that were the torch bearer of Pan-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/j-k/turkish-president-erdogan-again-makes-reference-to-kashmir-in-un-general-assembly-address-314667>

<sup>2</sup> Turkey delivers 33 tons of aid to Afghanistan, Daily Sabah, Istanbul, Oct 4, 2021, URL: <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/turkey-delivers-33-tons-of-aid-to-afghanistan/news>

<sup>3</sup> Saudi imports from Turkey hit fresh record low amid informal boycott, March 25, 2021, Reuters URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/value-saudi-imports-turkey-drops-further-january-2021-03-25/#:~:text=In%20November%2C%20Saudi%20Arabia%20formally,any%20restrictions%20on%20Turkish%20goods>.

<sup>4</sup> Ishann Tharoor, Macron vs Erdogan is a fight both Leader want, *The Washington Post*, Oct 27, 2022, URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/10/27/macron-erdogan-clash-islam/>

<sup>5</sup> Dimitar Bechev, *Turkey Under Erdogan*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2022, 212

Islamism in Turkey. Remaining on the legacy of Erbakan, but with a different political approach, Erdogan with his fellows could be successful in gaining power in Turkey.

- Erdogan, who was slow and steady, and tactical in his approach, brought change by struggling for quite a long period of time. We don't have to assess the intention of people, in the Erdogan's case, his intention is totally unpredictable. On one side he is trying for accession of EU, on the other side he lifts the ban on scarf and convert the Hagia Sofia into the mosque again.
- This is the age of collective wisdom. It can be learn many aspects of human development from Turkey with respect to their religious stability and rule of law, and also from its 'refined secularization' of society. Not all that has happened in Turkey is worthy of emulation and there are lessons in that as well. What is worth noticing is that in a period between 2002 and 2011. Turkey turned around from being a struggling country to a case study of development in the Muslim world.
- To conclude, one can say that though the politic of modern-day Turkey carries a blend of both Turkish Nationalism and Islamism, but the politics of Erdogan is more pragmatic than Islamist. His recent visit to Iran with the Russian President and ongoing relations between Turkey and Israel shows that after all, Erdogan is just a pragmatic popular leader who'd pull just about anything to maximize its control and power even if that means going against the very Islamist principles that he once held very dear but that should not allow us to ignore his past-roots and his upbringing.



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