

The Role of Refah Party in Turkish Politics -I

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The emergence of the pro-Islamic Refah Party in 1995 Turkish parliamentary election as the largest party and ultimately formation of a coalition government[1] under its leader Necmettin Erbakan is an important landmark in modern Turkish history. Indeed, with the formation of the 1st Islamist-led coalition government in June 1996 was a departure in the history of created in modern Turkey since it was founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in the early 1920s as a secular state based on the principle of separation between religion and the state. The RP-led coalition government assumed the reins of Turkish governance after weeks of political stalemate and protracted negotiations following the collapse of short-lived coalition government led by Misut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* or abbreviated as ANAP). The RP-led Coalition Government was formed with the help of Tansu Ciller's True Parth Party (*Dogru Yol Partisi*-DYP) as the RP despite securing the largest number of seats was short of required strength to form government on its own.

Ever since its emergence as the largest party in the December 1995 parliamentary election the RP had generated mixed reactions. Islamic radicals inside as well as outside of Turkey were jubilant and excited over the prospect of a Refah-led government in Turkey but serious concerns were expressed in the Western capitals [2]. The strongest reaction of course came from the Turkish secularists led by the powerful military.

In the post election period, there was even speculation of military intervention[3] due to long period of stalemate. The military establishment tried its best to prevent a RP-led coalition government but subsequently allowed the formation of an Islamist led coalition government to end the political uncertainty. It remained alert against any violation of secular values by RP-led government nonetheless. Therefore, the Erbakan government was not allowed smooth sailing. Erbakan had to make a tight rope walk between his supporters who wanted more role for Islam in Turkish public life on the one hand and a staunchly secular army, which was too sensitive to allow any slight deviation from the secular ideals envisaged by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk on the other. Thus not surprisingly the RP-led government was forced to resign by the military even before it could complete one year in its office when it showed reluctance to implement measures dictated by the military to curb the growing profile of Islam in Turkish public life. Subsequently, the Constitutional Court banned the RP and its five prominent leaders including Erbakan from politics allegedly on the charge of undermining the country's secular heritage.[4] However, in anticipation of closure ruling, a new Islamic party, the Virtue (Fazelet Partisi -FP) was already formed by persons associated with the RP.

The spectacular rise of the Islamic oriented Rafah party in the last decade of the 20th century is of profound interest for many reasons. Its emergence on the political horizon posed a serious challenge to Turkey as a secular nation as it is the most notable aspect of political expression of Islamic resurgence in Turkey. This raised many questions as Turkey was being presented in the post-cold war era as a secular and democratic model for the Islamic world in general and the

emerging central Asian republics in particular. In this study, an endeavour is made to study the rise of the Refah party in the Turkish politics which would help us to understand the dynamics of the growth of Islam in Turkish Public life. It would also examine whether this growth of Islamic party is deeply rooted or it is merely a passing phase in Turkish politics.

1995 Election and formation of the Government

On the eve of December 24, 1995 parliamentary election there was great euphoria as well as anxiety in Turkey over the prospect of the RP forming a government as opinion polls had predicted that the RP would emerge as the largest party. Despite severe winter and low key campaign it witnessed the biggest turnout in republics, history as 85% of 34 million eligible voters exercised their franchise. However, the most significant aspect of this election was the outstanding performance of the Refah Party, which by winning 158 seats in 550-member house emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly.[5] The two centre-right parties - the DYP and the ANAP—won 135 and 133 seats respectively. Two more parties which were able to cross 10% threshold of total votes to gain seats in parliament were the Democratic Left Party. (The *Demokratik Sol Partisi* - DSP) of Bulent Ecevit with 75 seats and the Republican people's Party (RPP) of Deniz Baykal with 49 seats. The break-up of the percentage of votes of the respective parties was as follows: The RP - 21.4, the ANAP-19.7, the DYP-19.2, the DSP-14.6, RPP - 10.7.

The performance of the political parties in 1991 election was - the RP 62 seats with 16.9% of the vote; the ANAP - 112 seats with 24% of the vote; the DYP 178 seats with 27%, the DSP 67 seats with 10.8% and the RPP 91 seats with 20.9% of the votes[6]. The comparison of the result of the 1995 parliamentary elections with 1991 shows that the RP had significantly improved its position. The RP had emerged as the representative of its traditional constituency - nationalist, central Anatolian merchant class, and a new constituency of urban migrants. The party had also secured the highest percentage of votes in the eastern and Kurdish south - east region. The poor performance of the *Hadep*, a pro-Kurdish party, which could not cross 10% limit in the Kurdish region was a serious setback for the Kurdish movement. The strong performance of the Islamist Refah Party in the same region shows that part of the Kurdish vote went to it which showed that Islamic ideology had emerged, to some extent, as a unifying element because of its willingness to accommodate cultural aspirations of the Kurds.

The fact that an Islamic oriented party performed better than most of the other mainstream parties in a country where secularism has been dominant trend for decades generated fears as well as expectations. The declining strength of the major mainstream parties had demonstrated serious challenge before the Turkish polity. However, the RP's success should not be over-played. Most of other parties had campaigned on a secular, anti-welfare plank. Thus it is quite obvious that three fourth of Turks had cast votes against Islamic Welfare party thus its strength was more on account of fragmentation in the mainstream secular parties.

Role of the Refah Party in Turkish Politics

In the post-election period, formation of the government became very complicated as no party was in position to form government on its own. Following constitutional provisions, President Suleyman Demirel invited Erbakan the leader of the Refah party, to form a coalition government. Though Erbakan had considerably toned down his policy posture and showed moderation, [7] he failed to convince any political party for a partnership in the governance of the country. In the mean time, there were many rounds of talks between the leaders of two centre-right parties— the ANAP and the DYP to break the political stalemate. But Ciller and Yilmaz, leaders of these two

parties respectively, failed to arrive at any deal mainly because of sharp personal rivalry between them. Otherwise ideologically they had a common agenda on most of the issues[8]. Subsequently Yilmaz even made an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate with Erbakan. This alarmed the military, which put pressure upon the secular parties to form a government to block the Islamic party from the power. Consequently, Ciller and Yilmaz ultimately agreed in early March 1996 to form a coalition government.[9] However, this Yilmaz-led coalition government did not last long. Ciller withdrew her party's support when it became clear that allegation of corruption brought against her by Erbakan enjoyed support of her alliance partner as well. In the face of his imminent fall, Prime Minister Yilmaz on June 6 announced the resignation of his government after remaining in power for about three months.[10] The resignations of Yilmaz's government once again put the ball in the court of Turkish President Suleman Demiral. He asked Erbakan to make another attempt to form the government. In order to win the support of other parties, he showed, like on an earlier occasion, conciliatory gesture. In an effort to allay fear regarding his party the Islamist leader further assured he would respect democracy fully if given the chance to rule[11]. Ciller proposed the creation of a four party block to keep the Islamist away from power. But this could not make much headway. There were deep rifts in the proposed alliance for it would comprise of diametrically opposite parties led by herself and Yilmaz as well as two rival left parties [12].

As the political crisis prolonged, the establishment's fear of the Refah party slowly declined. Military leadership perhaps thought it imprudent to ignore the mandate of over 20% people who voted for the Refah party. In this backdrop, Erbakan and Ciller agreed to form a coalition government[13] with a rotating prime ministership. Erbakan was given the first opportunity to lead the coalition for two years. Thereafter Ciller was supposed to take over the premiership. It should be noted, however that the agreement was concluded only when Erbakan gave clear and firm commitment to secularism, continue the economic policy of his predecessor and continuance of ties with the west.[14] In this connection, Erbakan said: "Turkish republic's democratic, secular system and Ataturk's principles form the indispensable base of the mutual understanding (between the collation partners)"[15]. Thus coalition became possible only after significant climb down on the part of RP leader Erbakan.

The RP-led coalition government which assumed the reins of governance in June 1996 after a long period of stalemate had to face the test of survivability. Though the military allowed its formation after some vacillation, it kept it on tenterhooks by continuously warning that it would not tolerate any violation of secular system of the country. Thus Erbakan's hands were tied. He was in great dilemma. If he were to take any measures even symbolic in nature to fulfill the expectations of his supporters then the secular military would be antagonized. Thus he made cautious beginning. In such a charged atmosphere the Islamist-led coalition government could not take any significant step to implement its Islamic agenda.

In spite of such a cautious approach, the confrontation between the military and the government began to build up when the ministers from the Rafah Party demanded that woman civil servants should be allowed to wear scarf in office. Though apparently it was merely a symbolic reform, it prompted the military to react sharply. Similarly the government's plan to build grand mosques in the secular stronghold of Ankara and Istanbul greatly alarmed the military.[16] Military was also unhappy with Erbakan's efforts to strengthen relationship with the Islamic world in general but Iran and Libya in particular. However, it was the issue of Islamic academics (Madrassas) which became the main bone of confrontation between the secular military and the first Islamist-led government. The military viewed them as the breeders of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and wanted to slash their enrolments. The military demanded a law that would raise the mandatory period of secular education from five years to eight, thus abolishing the academics'

junior high section.[17] But Erbakan resisted the military demand in this respect that led to serious confrontation between the two.[18] The confrontation was however averted for some time when Erbakan reluctantly agreed to implement 20 - point measures[19] dictated by the military dominated National Security Council (NSC).

But subsequently Erbakan was forced to resign when he backed out on his promise to enforce measures demanded by the military. Following the downfall of Erbakan's government in June 1997, Yilmaz was designated the Prime Minister. He made an attempt to forge an anti-Islamic coalition government but Ciller did not lend her support. Then he formed a government with the support of left parties in which Bulent Ecevit became deputy Prime Minister. Yilmaz won the confidence vote after securing defections from Ciller's party. Yilmaz pledged to curb religious education and promote the country's secular traditions. But the Yilmaz's government fell in Nov.98 when it lost a vote of confidence in parliament following charges of corruption. Then Bulent Ecevit, leader of the Democratic Left Party, formed another coalition government with the support of the ANAP and DYP. Thus he became the sixth Prime Minister in three years.[21]

Turkey went for a general parliamentary election in May 1999. The result of the election surprised everyone. The DSP led by Bulent Ecevit emerged as the largest party with 139 seats. Even more surprising than this was the performance of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) which had come from the wilderness to claim the second highest share of vote and just a few seats less than the DSP. However, another important aspect of this election was the setback suffered by the Islamist Virtue (*Fazelet*) Party which had appeared to be the rising force in Turkish politics in the 1990s. It was pushed to the third with 111 seats. The two main centrist parties - the ANAP and the DYP - each got 86 seats. The outstanding performance the DSP and MHP was attributed to the emergence of Turkish nationalism as a strong force espoused by the two parties.[22] But we will not go into the detail analysis of the 1999 election as it is beyond purview of the present study.

However, one school of thought believed that in spite of the set back suffered by it, the Virtue Party is still a major force in Turkish politics and that the military overreacted to the government's suggestion of minor symbolic reforms and exaggerated the fear that the RP - led coalition government would subvert the democratic and secular tradition and eventually a state based on *sharia* would be established. It is important to note here that the Refah Party was not a monolithic organization. It rather carried within it many pragmatist persons. Once in the government that too in a coalition it was forced to take the ground realities into account. "When theory comes to application, many things have to change", aptly remarked Erol Yazar, a member of the RP and the head of the pro-Islamic Business Association representing 6,000 Turkish companies. He further added "Structural change can be evolutionary rather than revolutionary"[23]. Moreover, Erbakan had given commitment to follow secularism and democracy. The party was very cautious and would have tried hard not to antagonize the military and other sections. The party, therefore put a democratic cloak on its most radical notion, i.e. enforcement of Sharia[24]. However, it is naïve to say that its participation in the government had not undermined secularism. Though in the immediate context there was no threat to secularism as it has to operate with in constraints (lack of majority and military fear), but it is clear that the formation of the 1st Islamist government in Turkey emboldened the Islamists and in some way it helped to raise the profile of Islam in public life. In other words, in the long run, it certainly undermined the concept of secularism and modernizations (westernization) as envisaged by Ataturk. Indeed, with the emergence of the pro-Islamic Refah party as the largest party, Turkish dilemma regarding its identity had become more complex. This was further accentuated with the upsurge of ethnic and religious sentiments following the end of the cold war.

The emergence of Islam, politically symbolizing in the form of the RP, has prompted a debate among the Turkish intellectuals to review the legacy of the Turkish revolution, particularly its most important component secularism. Now we shall examine the causes of the emergence of the Refah Party in Turkish politics.

Causes for the Rise of the Refah Party in the 1990s.

Politically speaking, the growth of the RP[25], a pro-Islamic Party, under the leadership of Erbakan is the most notable aspect of Islamic resurgence in Turkey. It is therefore interesting to analyze the reason for the emergence of the RP as a significant force in the last decade of the 20th century. However before examining the causes of the RP's success, it is necessary to have an analysis of the history of its growth and development. In fact, its history is rather very recent and can be traced back to January 1970 when Erbakan, an engineer by profession, founded the first pro-Islamic party named as National Order Party (NOP). The life of the NOP was very short as it was banned and closed down towards the end of 1971 for violating secularism. But it subsequently re-emerged as the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*) and participated in the 1973 general election. Though it secured only 11.8 per cent of the votes, in terms of seats, it was the third largest party. It also joined the three coalition governments formed during the period of 1974-80. The NSP ministers took various controversial steps aimed at to undermine secular values[26]. The party organised a series of rallies to demonstrate solidarity with the Muslim causes throughout the world. These alarming developments, besides other factors, prompted the military in 1980 to intervene to safeguard secularism—one of the important pillars of the Kemalist ideology. Erbakan and others were arrested and their party was disbanded.

However Erbakan's pro-Islamic party resumed its activity in a new incarnation of Refah (prosperity or welfare) Party by participating in 1984 local elections[27]. It received only 4 per cent of the total votes polled. In spite of increase in its percentage of vote in 1987 general election, it failed to get even a single seat in the parliament since it could not cross a threshold of 10 per cent of the total vote. In fact, the emergence of Turgut Ozal as a popular leader in the 1980s, partly, overshadowed the growth of the Refah Welfare Party. Many members of the Welfare Party joined Ozal's Motherland Party[28]. But its fortune began to improve in the 1990s[29]. In the 1991 general election RP participated in an electoral alliance with the ultra-right Nationalist Work Party and the Reformist Democratic Party (DKP). RP's share alone was 13 per cent out of 16.9 per cent votes they were able to secure together. RP's performance in 1992 by-elections of municipalities clearly demonstrated the rising trend. It won four of the six municipality seats in Istanbul. RP polled 26.9 per cent of the total votes, while the Motherland Party got 23.4, the Social Democratic Populist Party-17.3, the DYP 14.4 and the Democratic Left Party 14.2.[30] This rising trend was further reinforced in March 1994 provincial assemblies elections held throughout the country. The break up of the share of votes of the respective parties in terms of the percentage was: the DYP 22.4, the MP 21.1, the RP 17.98, Social Democrats 13.04, the Democratic Left Party 8.84. But it was the performance of RP in subsequent mayoral elections, which sent shock waves. RP swept 28 out of 76 provincial capitals including the most cosmopolitan Istanbul and capital-city of Ankara. The ANAP (MP) had to content with 13, DYP 12, the Social Democrats 11, the RPP 5.[31] It is important to note that the capture of Ankara and Istanbul including smaller municipality of Beyoglu, the heart of the nightclub, which was dubbed by the Welfare leaders as symbol of the Western culture, caused the greatest consternation among the Turkish secularists. But for the RP this electoral successes provided the opportunity to prove their claim of providing clean and efficient administration. In a way, it set the stage of trial for the RP to prove its credential to rule at the national level. The party leadership took this challenge in

right earnest and won the support of the sceptic public by improving the delivery of services and checking corruption.

It is important to note that the rising trend of the Refah party coincided with the declining popularity of the Motherland Party of Ozal who later became president of Turkey and died in 1993. The RP benefited in a great deal from, inter alia, economic privatization initiated by Ozal. Free-market policies pursued in the 1980s brought about many hardships. Inflation was very high[32]. Unemployment became one of the major problems. Devaluation of Turkish *lira* severely affected the purchasing power of the people. Consequently real wages fell significantly even below subsistence level. Large-scale migration from the rural to big urban centres particularly to the metropolis further created the fertile ground for the Welfare Party. The new arrivals doubled the size of Turkey's biggest cities over the past decade. Istanbul, for example, a city of 5.5 million people a decade ago now has a population of at least twelve million[33]. The newcomers came from towns and villages in search of work and economic opportunities but they were further marginalised[34]. The RP with its well-knit organisation successfully used this opportunity to strengthen its base. RP cadres helped these newcomers in many ways. Government effort to fight Kurdish separatist war further aggravated the economic problems. According to one estimate about 8 to 10 billion is spent annually to tackle this problem, which is about 35 percent of the government revenues[35]. Besides, it also blackens Ankara's reputation abroad regarding human rights.

Corruption has become a rampant phenomenon in Turkey. It is felt by the people of Turkey that the situation is entirely different from that of the early period of republic when things were relatively simple and the public life clean. The era of economic liberalisation inaugurated in early 1980s, and further boosted by the late Turkish leader Ozal is turning out to have had a seamy side[36]. Get-quick-rich mentality have increasingly encouraged the people to discard moral compunction and acquire wealth by hook or crook. This is amply reflected from the statements of Zuhre Parsadan, wife of Selcuk Parsadan who has been charged with cheating Ciller of 50,000 pounds during her premiership[37]. Former Prime Minister Ciller who was facing various corruption charges, admitted of withdrawing \$ 6.5 million from a government slush funds shortly before stepping down from prime ministership but refused to reveal full details on the pretext of national interest[38]. Thus RP's support perhaps had been boosted by disillusionment of many voters with the functioning of mainstream parties.

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The Role of Refah Party in Turkish Politics -II

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Role of Islamic Consciousness

However, it would be very simplistic and perhaps misleading too to explain the phenomenal growth of the RP merely in terms of declining economy, rising curve of inequalities and disillusionment of people with mainstream secular parties. But the roots of growing Islamic consciousness and its consequent assertion on the political landscape in Turkey are much complex and lie deeper as well.

The revival of dormant Islamic consciousness goes back to the late 1940s. With the transition of Turkish polity from single party to multiparty system in 1946, politicians began playing on religious sentiments to win voters' support[39]. Towards the end of the decade the Republican Peoples Party allowed the option of religious instruction by the students of primary schools. Further the assumption of power by the Democratic Party (DP) after its victory in 1950 election was a watershed in the Turkish politics. Besides ending the rule of the RPP, which was ruling since its formation under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. It also unleashed long suppressed democratic forces[40]. Consequently, religious issues regarded as taboo began to receive significant place in political discourse. The DP government led by Adnan Mendres was quite sensitive about the religious sentiments of the Turks. It allowed the *azzan* (call to prayer) to be recited in Arabic. As a part of its larger concern to give emphasis on Islamic values, the government made it obligatory on parents to make a written request to the school principals if they did not want their children to take the optional religious subjects at the primary and secondary level[41]. In fact the DP era contributed in direct and indirect manner to raise Islamic profile in public life which is reflected, among other things, in the significant increase of the numbers of religious publications and growing role of the *wakfs* (pious foundations)[42]. This encouraged some individuals and movements to attack secularism directly. The *Ticaniya tarikat* (religious order) demonstrated its opposition in a more violent manner by smashing symbols of the secular order, statues and bust of Atatürk⁴³. Though the government firmly dealt with the militant threat to secularism, these development revealed the steadily growing challenge to secular polity of Turkey.

Military intervention in 1960 could not tackle this problem. The military junta did not take any significant step to undo the innovations of the recent years. In any case controversy over Cyprus soon overshadowed other concerns in the immediate context but in the long run it helped to deepen the Islamic sentiments since many Turks regarded American stand as bully and viewed this in religious context[44]. On the domestic front, political polarization provided the right ambience to flourishing of Islamic sentiments. After the elections in 1963 civilian government assumed the reins of the government but Turkish polity increasingly became fragmented[45]. There emerged a rift between the 'capitalist-secularists' faction of Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel and a minority 'nationalist-sacredist' faction foreshadowing the 'nationalist-Islamic' synthesis with in the Motherland Party government of Ozal about two decades later[46]. Smaller parties increasingly assumed importance in the formation of coalition governments which were formed from the mid 1960s until late 1970s. Demirel once again formed a centre-right coalition government comprising many parties including Erbakan's NSP. Erbakan effectively used this opportunity to promote his party on the centre stage of politics[47]. He organized a series of rallies concerning Muslim causes. In the meanwhile, popular concern over the increasing trend of violence from both Right and Left. Against this backdrop, it was the NSP rally at Konya in September 1980, which prompted the military to intervene for the third time in the Turkish politics.

The 1980 military intervention is regarded an important landmark in Turkish republic. Its consequences were far-reaching and it affected every walk of life. It gave great impetus to the growth of Muslim sentiment. The top military leadership itself regarded that the nurturing of

Islamic values as an antidote to the extremism of the 1970s. This was amply reflected in the 1982 constitution, which made religious education compulsory in the schools. Leader of the military government General Kenan Evren who later became president of Turkey, regarded religion as an important component of the Turkish nationalism[48]. The decade of 1980s really proved very favourable for the growth of the Islamic sentiments in every sphere of life. The formation of the civilian government under the dynamic leadership of Ozal in 1983 is another important turning point, in many respects, but more so as far as role of religion in Turkish politics is concerned. It radically changed the socio-economic and political direction of Turkey. The most important change it effected was to end '*etatism*' (state-led industrial development) in favour of free-market policies. Though official statistics provide a very rosy picture pointing out annual GDP growth rate of about 7 per cent during the period of 1984 onward but in the process it brought about many hardships: high inflation, fall in real wages, deterioration in standard of living. In fact, sharp economic inequalities created fertile ground for social mobilization by Islamic organisations. In this backdrop the gains already made through the liberalisation of the system since the 1940s made the task of the Islamists much easier. Ozal's contribution in respect of Islam as a factor in Turkish politics and society, though yet to be fully assessed, is undoubtedly immense. Coming from a conservative religious background, his attitude regarding the role of religion in Politics was clear from the beginning. He was against restriction on religious activities and practices. He strongly favoured religious instruction in educational system in order to raise a 'steady, virtuous generation'. He lifted ban on various *wakf* and other religious trusts. On foreign policy front, Ozal consciously tried to closely identify Turkey with Islamic world through various policy statement and rhetorics. He stated that since the election of his government in 1983 many countries now look upon Turkey as the leader of the Islamic world. Ozal declared that a special effort will be made to cultivate good relation on the basis of reciprocity with all Arab and Islamic states and to strengthen further the existing fruitful cooperation. Consequently, it manifested in Turkey's more visible role in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) deliberations. Evren in his capacity as president of Turkey, attended the OIC summit meeting at Casablanca in 1994. While addressing the gathering of the Islamic leaders, he dwelt upon Turkey's deeply rooted historical ties with the Islamic people of the region and underlined the need for unity of all Muslim countries. He emphasised Turkish support for Palestinian self-determination and identified Israel as a source of tension in the West Asian region[49]. Ozal used these growing ties with the Muslim countries, especially with the rich Gulf states, for economic gains as well. Islamic Development Bank and the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development began to provide generous aid and grants to Turkey. Arab and Islamic investments significantly increased. Turkish export to the region also showed the rising trend[50]. It is important to note that this effort to cultivate good ties was influenced not only by common religious bonds, but some other developments also greatly contributed in this respect. Turkey found itself isolated over the Cyprus issue. Besides hostile American attitude, Arab countries also sided with Greece[51]. Oil embargo following the Arab-Israel war and subsequent increase in oil prices had severely affected Turkey's economy. Growing economic problems forced Turkey in the early 1980s to follow the austerity package dictated by the IMF and the World Bank. Closer relationship with rich Arab countries helped to finance development projects. Thus we can say that causes for the growth of the Refah party are complex and many factors contributed toward it and ground was prepared over a long period of time.

Coming back to the way it was forced out of power, it is clear that the military over reacted and exaggerated the fear that the RP-led government would subvert the democratic and secular tradition and eventually a state based on Sharia would be established. However, at the same time it would be naive to suggest that the Islamist-led government was not in position to undermine the secular system. Though it is a fact that in the immediate context there was no threat to secularism

as the government had to operate within the constraints (lack of majority and the military fear) but it is clear that formation of the 1st Islamist government in itself was a great step forward for the Islamic movement and emboldened them to raise the profile of Islam in public life in many ways. Though the Islamist virtue party which was formed following the ban on the RP, suffered a great set back in 1999 elections, it is still a force in Turkish politics to reckon with and there is every possibility that it would remain a significant factor in the Turkish politics in the days to come unless sincere and serious measures in the socio-economic and political spheres are taken up by the secular establishment. Otherwise, merely ban on the Islamist oriented party will not help to resolve the tension arising from the Islamist effort to occupy space on the Turkish political landscape.

NOTES

1. Experiment of coalition government is not new in Turkey. It has a series of coalition governments: twelve coalition governments from 1965 to 1980 and seven coalition governments from 1991-1999. The National Salvation Party (NSP), the precursor of the Welfare Party, participated in three coalition governments as junior partner in the 1970s. The Republican Party and the NSP coalition government was formed in January 1974 which lasted until September 1974. The first National Front government of Suleyman Demirel was formed in March 1975. This government included the Justice Party (JP), the NSP, the National Action Party (NAP) and the Republican Reliance Party. This government ended in June 1977. The second National Front government of Demirel was formed in August 1977 with the participation of the JP, the NSP and the NAP. This government ended in 1978.

2. The philosophy and agenda of the RP has caused concern among the US and its allies for it opposes Turkey's Western-oriented policies. Erbakan in his election campaign has promised to set up an Islamic alternative to the EU, NATO and United Nations with a common Islamic currency. See for details Atila Eralp, Muharrem Tunay and Birol Yesilada *The Political and Socioeconomic Transformation of Turkey* (Praeger, Westport, 1993) pp 170-81.

3. The Turkish military had intervened three times in politics before 1996 (1960, 1971 & 1980). In order to legitimize their intervention Ataturk's speech at the Army club in Konya in 1931 has been cited where he underlined the role of young officers as the vanguard of the Turkish Revolution. While emphasizing that armies, in world history, had generally opposed progress, Ataturk remarked "In our history, in Turkish history, an outstanding exception appears. You know that whenever the Turkish nation has wanted to stride towards the heights it has always seen its army, which is composed of its own heroic sons, as the permanent leader in the forefront of this march, as the permanent vanguard in campaigns to bring lofty national ideals to reality... In times to come, also, its heroic soldier sons will march in vanguard for the attainment of the sublime ideals of the Turkish nation." Quoted in William Hale, *Turkish Politics, and the Military* (Routledge) p. 240. In fact Turkish army has been one of the most important agents for the spread of the ideas of secularism, nationalism and modernisation, especially among the conscripts. Kemal Ataturk, however, was in favour of apolitical army as he regarded its closer involvement in the politics would affect its professional performance. But George S. Harris contends that the exclusion of the armed forces from politics was mainly prompted by the opposition of some of the generals against the leadership of Kemal Ataturk in the early period of the republic. See George S. Harris. 'The role of the Military in Turkish politics' Part 1, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 19 (1965), P.56.

4. The Judiciary has closed 21 political parties since the 1960s Refah is the third pro-Islamic party founded by Erbakan to be banned. See *The Hindu*, New Delhi, February 19, 1998.
5. See Wolfgang Koydl and Evangelos Antonaros "Radicals can no longer be ignored in Turkey" *the Khaleej Times* (Dubai) December 28, 1995.
6. For 1995 election results see Foreign Broadcasting Information Service West Europe, number 96-003 January 4, 1996, p.25 (hereafter cited as FBIS/WEU with number and date), see for the
7. See John Barham, "Turkey's Refah Party seeks to allay fears" *The Financial Times*, London, December 30, 1995.
8. Both the parties share the same pro-Western, free market policies. For more details about the TPP and Mp see Feride Acar, 'The True Path party, 1983-1989', and Ustun Ergudur, 'The Motherland Party, 1983-1989' in Metin Heper and Jacob M. Landau (eds.) *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey* (I.B. Tauris, London, 1991)
9. For details regarding coalition negotiations, see John Barham, "Yilmaz and Ciller to hold new talks" *The Financial Times* February 28, 1996, the AFP report "Turkey would-be coalition partners put off crucial talks" in *The Khaleej Times*, Dubai, February 19, 1996.
10. See FBIS-WEU, number 96-088 May 6, 1996 P 42, 96-099, May 21, 1996, P.29 and 96-097, May 17, 1996, P.30 and also see *The Asian Age*, delhi, May 28, 1996.
11. *The Asian age*, May 28, 1996.
12. For details regarding efforts to forge anti-Islamist Coalition see *International Herald Tribune* June 8-9, 1996 p.1. See Yalman Onaran, "Rift in Ciller's Party" *The Times of India* June 22, 1996.
13. Regarding the RP's changing stand vis-à-vis the DYP and the ANAP for making a coalition government, see FBIS-WEU-06-088 May 6, 1996, P.42 and FBIS-WEU-96-105 May 30, PP.29-30.
14. See John Barham, "Turkey's new Islamist PM pledges moderation" *Financial Times*, July 1, 1996.
15. The pact also reiterated the coalition government's adherence to Turkey's alliance with Western countries. Regarding the economic policies, the pact maintained that privatization of state enterprises would be expedited despite the fact that Welfare has strong reservation over the same. See Yalman Onaran, "New Turkey PM set aside past rhetoric" *The Times of India*, June 30, 1996.
16. *The Financial Times*, February 28, 1997.
17. *The Pioneer*, May 27, 1997.
18. Though Erbakan tried to avoid the confrontation with the military but in a newspaper interview he hit out at the "fascist" secular system. He said, "If you

do not let people live according to their beliefs, that is secularist fascism.” The Financial Times, February 28, 1997. Similarly Abdullah Gul, one of Erbakan’s close aides and minister of state remarked “The secularism they preach here is like atheism. I want my son to know something about his religion. If you demand this fundamental right, you are branded a fundamentalist” The Pioneer, May 27, 1997.

19. The Turkish military demanded enforcement of 20-point measures to contain spread of religious fundamentalism. The ban included, among other things, ban on religious dress for man and women, closure of religious schools controlled by fundamentalists, a ban on propaganda on Islamist TV and radio stations and crackdown on Islamic militant organisations, see the Hindu, March 5, 1997 and The Financial Times, March 10, 1997.

20. For details regarding government formation and the vote of confidence on Yilmaz government, see Gulf News (Dubai), June 24, 1997, Gulf Today, (Sharjah), July 8, 1997 and the Hindu, November 11, 1998.

21. The Hindu, January 12, 1999.

22. For Election result see the Hindu, May 21, 1999, May 22, 1999 and May 25, 1999.

23. The Refah-led government also failed to effect any significant change in its foreign policy. Despite Erbakan’s ‘anti-west’ campaign rhetoric, Turkey remained firmly aligned to NATO. He had to break his promise to scrap a recent military agreement with Israel held by the US to be crucial for peace in the region and reviled by the Arabs as a 90’s version of the cold war era Baghdad Pact. While in the election campaign party leaders talked about Islamic Union in place of the EU but party spokesman remained vague about Turkish’s strategic and security relationship with the West. As in this context, Abdullah Gul, the party’s foreign relations expert, told press in October 1995: “We can’t comment in NATO membership at this point. Under our rule, Turkey will continue to take part in organizations which are in line with its interests, otherwise.... Not.” Turkey has been receiving many benefits including free equipment from the US and other NATO countries. Turkey’s military readiness is directly subsidised by the NATO’s co-called infrastructure budget. See Umit Enginsoy, “Turkish, Western analysts cast wary eye on Welfare party rise” Defense News, December 18-24, 1995. Jonathan Rugm, “Turkey’s elections pinpoint east-west dilemma” Khaleej Times, December 24, 1995.

24. The RP envisaged a future in which different legal systems- Muslim, Christian and the Jew- would coexist in one state. According to Bahri Zengin, who is a RP’s parliamentarian and close to Erbakan, “An individual could choose his legal system like he chooses his car”, see The Khaleej Times, Dec. 24, 1995.

25. The RP or WP like its predecessor NSP calls its ideology “Milli Suu’r” (National Consciousness). It defines the development as a combination of material and spiritual - welfare. By “spiritual development” it means a return to the indigenous source of culture. Moreover, it regards the modernisation efforts of the last two hundred years as a failure. According to this view, Turkey has remained behind the industrial world because of a misplaced emphasis on “foreign ideas and resources”, which also led to spiritual crisis as witnessed by the unprecedented increase in amoral behaviour. Although the WP is cautious enough not to specify Islam as a source of such values, it is clear that this new “National Consciousness” will mean a partial return to Islam as a way of life. While reiterating the establishment of heavy industry in Turkey to be one of its major goal, it says that industrial development will be carried out with a view to correct the

regional imbalances and disparities between income groups. It affirms the need to develop an independent foreign policy which will enable Turkey to utilise its own manpower and resources to the optimum extent. In this context, it also calls for closer ties with the countries that have a common “spiritual” (religious) and historical background and maintain a degree of independence from the West. See for details Binnaz Toprak, “the State, Politics and Religion in Turkey” in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1988) Pp 128-29.

26. For details about the NSP see Binnaz Toprak, “Politicization of Islam in a secular state: The National Salvation Party in Turkey” in Said Amir Arjomand (ed) *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam* (Macmillan Press, London, 1984) pp 119-33.

27. The National Security Council (the military regime, 1980-83) effected many radical changes by enacting a new constitution in 1982. Provisional Article 4 of the constitution banned all pre-1980 politicians from taking part in politics for ten years as generals wanted to purge the political parties from them. Political Parties Law which came into force on 24 April 1983 made the formation of the political parties very difficult. Thus in spite of the revival of the democratic process in 1983, the WP was precluded from participating in the 1983 elections. Fifteen parties were founded but twelve were deemed unacceptable by the NSC. Thus, only three new parties: Millivenci Demokrasi Partisi (National Democracy Party - NDP), the party which was closely identified with the Generals; the Halkei Partisi (Populist Party) which came closest to the traditional Kemalist wing of the RPP, and the Motherland Party led by Turgut Ozal were allowed to participate in the 1983 election. Another law issued in June 1983 which stipulated that political parties should win at least 10 per cent of the national vote to qualify for any parliamentary seats was aimed to reduce the role of smaller parties. See Erik J zurcher *Turkey: A Modern History* (IB Tauris & Co, London, 1994) PP 292-297 and William Hale, *Turkish politics and the Military* (Routledge, London, 1994), PP. 246-280.

28. It is said that by incorporating elements of both the former NSP and NAP in a broad alliance of the right, the MP helped to moderate and coopt the previously anti-systemic groups on the right wing of the Turkish politics. See for details, Ustun Erguder and Richard I. Hofferbert, “Restoration of democracy in Turkey? Political Reforms and elections of 1983” in Linda Lane (ed) *Elections in the Middle East: Implications of recent trends* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1987) p 38. The personality of Ozal was important for the success of his party in the 1980s. He was the kind of politician with whom average Turk could identify. He was a self-made man, whose own political career embodied the hope and aspiration of countless peasants, squatters, small traders etc., whom he could address in their own language. His election slogan, which depicted these sections of the society as the Orta direk (Centre Pole of a tent - meaning a pillar of society), was devised to flatter them. See for details, Zurcher, n 27, pp 297-98.

29. By the late 1980s, the popularity of the MP began to decline. Apart from other factors, internal rivalry between the liberal and conservative faction within the MP which intensified after Ozal became the President of Turkey in 1989 was one of the important factors for this. For this see Zurcher, n 27, PP 301-302, and Hale, n 27, PP.283-84.

30. Andrew Mango, “The Social Democratic Populist Party”, 1983-89” in Metin Heper and Jacob M. Landau (eds.) *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*. (I.B. Tauris, London, 1991).

31. Jeremy Salt, "Nationalism and the Rise of Muslim Sentiment in Turkey" Middle Eastern Studies Vol 31 No.1 January 1995 pp 22-23.
32. Scott Sullivan, "Shock treatment", the Newsweek, January 8, 1996 p.23.
33. "Survey of Turkey", The Economist, June 8, 1996 p.3.
34. There seems to be a strong causal relationship between economic marginalisation and growth of Islamic sentiment throughout the west Asia. Since in most of the countries governments are increasingly adopting 'market-oriented policies' in place of welfare state policies resulting in sharp inequalities and thus making the ground for the social protest fertile. In addition to this, secular national governments are being viewed by many of their citizens as dependency of the West (due to foreign policies) thus adding a cultural and religious dimension to the economic problem. Islam which has historically served as a rallying point against threats to the territorial integrity and cultural influence from the West is now filling the void in the wake of the failure of bathism, Nasserism. This has been the case with Egypt and Tunisia. See Habib Boulres, Islam: The fear and the Hope (Zed Books, London, 1990), PP.12-24. This can be related in the context of Turkey as well due to many similarities: increasing economic inequalities, problem regarding integration of Turkey with the EU. Though in a bit different context, Griffin elucidates this point of temptation toward religion by saying that there is a natural tendency among human beings to look for a sense of identity, particularly during the distress. Roger Griffin, The Nature of Fascism, (Pinter Publishers, London, 1991) P. 95. In case of Turkey, the RP, a pro-Islamic party, is fulfilling the vacuum created by secular parties.
35. See Edward Mortimer, "Between Allah and the Ataturk" The Financial Times, January 26, 1995.
36. On the corruption during Ozal's regime, see Zurcher, n 27, P. 301.
37. "My husband is an honest man. I am proud of him. Our society needs such honest, straight-talking people." Zuhre told a mob of Turkish reporters after her husband's arrest. "But he was a swindler", retorted one reporter. Utterly unfazed she said "yes, I know. But all he did was change his name", See The Hindustan Times, May30,1996.
38. The Times of India, May 15, 1996. Also see FBIS-WEU-96-105 May 30, 1996 PP.28-29. There were many allegation of corruption charges in the wake of privatization of public economic enterprises, see for details, FBIS-WEU-96-088, May 6, 1996, pp.42-43.
39. With the introduction of multiparty politics in 1945-46 eight political parties were formed with explicit religious programmes up till 1950. All except the Nation Party (NP-Millet Partisi) were obscure organizations which disappeared from the political scene by 1950. See, for details, Toprak, n 25, pp 119-136. In the wake of democratization process, the debate over the issue of Westernization vs Islam as a model for progress, which earlier divided ottoman thinkers, was revived. The Republication government under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal launched a comprehensive secular reforms in order to eradicate the role of Islam in Turkish society, mainly through the force of law. However the Kemalist reforms were interlised mostly by the elite, but for the masse at large it remained incomprehensible and alien. Consequently the secularisation programme of Ataturk gave way to a lasting controversy Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Secularism in Turkey (Mc Gill Univ. press, Montreal, 1964); on the ideology of Turkish elite

during the early years of the Republic, see Bernard Lewis, *The emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd. Ed. (Oxford Univ. press, New York, 1968).

40. For the democratic party era, see Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (Hurst, for Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1977).

41. See Jeremy Salt, "Nationalism and the rise of Muslim sentiment in Turkey" *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol 31 No. 1 January 1995 pp 14-15.

42. See for details Mehmet Yasar Geykdagi, *Political Parties in Turkey: The Role of Islam* (Praeger, New York, 1984) p 66.

43. See Salt, n 23, p 15.

44. The US administration warned against intervention in Cyprus. Subsequently, the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey until August 1, 1978 following Turkey's intervention in Cyprus in 1974, which led to the growth of anti-American feelings among the Turks and the reevaluation of the Turkey's relationship with the erst-while USSR. See Eralp n 2, p 170.

45. Karpat argues that the 1960 military intervention rather expedited the "dichotomous evolution" of the Turkish nationalism. See his chapter "Ideology in Turkey after the revolution in 1960 : Nationalism and Socialism" in Kemal H.Karpet, *Politics in Turkey : Structural and Historical Analysis* (Brill, Leiden, 1973).

46. See Zurcher, n 27, p 303

47. See Toprak, n 25, pp 125-26; n 26, PP 124-25.

48. See Salt, n 31, p 16.

49. Ibid. PP 16-17.

50. The role of Islamic finances from Saudi and Kuwaiti financial institutions requires a separate study. However, the decision of the MP government to allow Islamic banks to establish themselves in Turkey had cultural and political ramifications as Islamic banks do not regard themselves being merely financial institutions but as serving the broader goals of the Islamic societies. See Eralp, n 2, pp. 184-89.

51. It is argued that such a response by the Arabs was in reaction to Turkey's support of the US foreign policy in the Middle East during the 1949-63 period. See Duygu Sezer, "Turkey's security politics" in Jonathan Alford (ed.) *Greece and Turkey: Adversity in Alliance* (St. Martin's press, New York, 1984). However, the role of Islamic ideology also played a crucial role in the Turkish/Arab rapprochement. It began following the International Sharia in Pakistan in 1976. This congress, funded by Saudi Arabia's Rabitat al-Alam-al-Islam (the World Muslim League), passed crucial decisions that called for increased cooperation among the Muslim countries. The oil crisis of the 1970s provided further ground for closer relationship with Arab/gulf states. Consequently, Turkey reduced the diplomatic relations with Israel. Relations with all Arab countries except Syria improved during the 1980s. This led to the influx of substantial amounts of

capital from the oil-rich Gulf states into Turkey. The World Muslim League actively involved in spreading anti-secular ideas in Turkey by financing various religious projects and maintaining contact with politicians in Turkey. See for details, Eralp, n 2, PP. 170-89.