



Political Expression of Islam caused the Turkish Military Coup to Fail

No analysis on the current Turkish situation can be complete without understanding Turkish history. Mustafa Kamal demolished the institution of the Caliphate and established the secular republic. In doing so he used brute force, appealed to Turkish nationalism and relied upon the declined understanding of Islam in the masses. Let's not forget that Mustafa Kamal was a military man and he used his popularity as a successful military officer for his political ambitions. (Britain choreographed and staged military victories for Mustafa Kamal to set him up as a popular military leader).

The Ottoman Caliphate was a state founded on Islam and organized according to Islamic law. There could therefore be no gradual transition from a state whose institutions were steeped in Islamic law to a state whose institutions now worked according to secular principles. For Islamic law works on the principle of sovereignty of sharia while secular institutions work on the principle of sovereignty of parliament. (Much of this gradual transition to secular law was already attempted during the Ottoman era from the start of 19th century). Brute force and military power was therefore required to abolish the institutions of the Ottoman caliphate and establish the new institutions of the secular republic.

It is in this context that the history of military coups in Turkey should be understood. The secular republic in Turkey owed its founding and its sustenance to military power and not people's support. There are two value systems in Turkey as in the greater Muslim World. One held by the ruling elite which derives its values from secularism and the other held by the masses who drive their values from Islam. There is an inherent tension in Turkish as well as all Muslim societies between these two value systems. It is these tensions which opportunistic and power hungry leaders like Erodgan exploit to consolidate personal power and satisfy and achieve personal agendas and ambitions.

Military coup in Turkey failed because the Turkish Army is historically seen by the Turkish Muslims as an institution which protects secularism by force. As the Islamic revival strengthens in Turkey as well as much of the Muslim World, Muslim masses are powerfully asserting their Islamic inclinations putting pressure on secular states and secular institutions. It was the power of political Islam which thwarted the Turkish military coup. Erdogan was there at the right time and place to exploit it for personal gain. This was not about civil military balance. It was about secularism and Islam.

But perhaps the greatest flaw in analysis done by some individuals, is about Turkey's current power and prestige. Many Muslims hold Turkey in awe and some advocate it as a model to be emulated. Even if modern Turkey's subordination to US in foreign policy, her strong relationships with the Jewish entity, her criminal partnership in Western military coalition in the massacre of Syrian Muslims, her socially and economically liberal policies are ignored and not taken in to consideration, Turkey today is not even close to what the Turks have achieved in the past.

Turks were the masters of the world, the leaders of Europe and Sultans of the Muslim World. As the torch bearers of the Islamic ideology the Turks tasted glory and power with the Khilafah state not even a semblance of which is visible in today's secular Turkey. It is both a betrayal to Turkish history and Islam to compare Erdogan's so called achievements with that of failed Muslim states like Afghanistan, Syria and Libya or with failing states like Pakistan, Saudi and the Gulf monarchies. The real comparison is between Erdogan's Turkey and that of the Ottoman Caliphate and modern Turkey is surely a failure in that regard.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Engineer Moez Mobeen