

**Review Paper****The Political Crisis in Modern Turkey (The Events of 2015): A Review****Emazar Makaradze**

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**Abstract**

The events, occurring in neighboring Turkey in 2015, attracted the attention of the whole world. Naturally, these events have become, first of all, the focus of interest for Georgia. As the situation in Turkey has always had a great influence on our country, consequently, it is necessary to have an idea of the processes, develop in the neighboring state. For the last fifteen years together with the rest of the world we have been observing with an interest and some anxiety the current political events, the activities of its charismatic leader – the president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and an Islamic party “The Justice and Development”. Although the founder of the Turkish Republic -Kemal Ataturk has established the new Turkey on the principles of secularism and europeism, a political life of the modern Turkey has become the symbol of the fight with these principles and so called Turkish religious “Traditionalism”. Thus, we can conclude that the events taking place in Turkey will not pass without leaving a trace. First and foremost, it should be noted that the European past of the Turkish society is quite numerous; it is much activated politically at the moment and will not give away secularism. At the same time, it is noticeable that the part of the Turkish society with western mentality and, especially the youth, has already risen up to Ataturk-style secularism with their demands and outlook and taken the human rights positions of high European standards. As for the President Rejep Taif Erdoghan, though he remains as a strong political figure, it is not excluded that the last time crisis developed in Turkey will put a full stop to his political career after a certain period.

**Keywords:** Modern Turkey; Rejep Taif Erdoghan

**Introduction**

The beginning of XXI century represents an issue of specific interest for the home policy of Modern Turkey inasmuch as it is the period when the confrontation between the circles of secular and Islamic directions took place in the life of the country. The success of the “Justice and Development Party” of the Islamic direction in the beginning of XXI century Turkey was not unexpected. The way was paved by the 1990s when the Islamic “Felicity Party” took a leading position next to the secular ones and for the first time in the history of Turkey gained the majority of votes in the Parliament. Such development of the events in the beginning of XXI century made a shocking effect on the secular government of the republican Turkey as well as western politicians. As a NATO member country and the candidate country for European Union, Turkey was facing a historical choice either to become a theocratic state again or remain as a secular state.

In 2000-2015 the secular government (military as well as civic) evades the real reasons of social and political situation created in the country and does not reveal the reality. However, most of the problems have been created by the government. There arises a question about the impact of the policy of the “Justice and Development Party” and his leader Rejep Taif Erdoghan on the internal political life of the country.

**The Political Crisis in Modern Turkey (the events of 2015)**

The events, occurring in neighboring Turkey in 2015, attracted the attention of the whole world. Naturally, these events have become, first of all, the focus of interest for Georgia. As the situation in Turkey has always had a great influence on our country, consequently, it is necessary to have an idea of the processes, develop in the neighboring state. For the last fifteen years together with the rest of the world we have been observing with an interest and some anxiety the current political events, the activities of its charismatic leader – the president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and an Islamic party “The Justice and Development”. Although the founder of the Turkish Republic - Kemal Ataturk has established the new Turkey on the principles of secularism and europeism, a political life of the modern Turkey has become the symbol of the fight with these principles and so called Turkish religious “Traditionalism”.

Obviously, the Ataturk secularist tradition called the *laicism*” (Laiklik – from French „laicite - “national charater”; it means the separation of religion from the state) has seriously consolidated itself in the Turkish society. However, the most part of the Turkish population, especially, the provincial one, still keeps to the side of the “Traditionalism” [2. c.56]. That is why the provision of the laicism course in the Turkish Respublic has always needed a powerful guarantee, which role was performed by the Turkish armed forces, based on the strict principles of laicism. The Turkish soldiers were traditionally deeply involved in the

political life of the country and at the important moments of the history they played a crucial role in the fate of Turkey [3. c.6]. They have committed a military coup three times - in 1960, 1971 and 1980, and in 1997 after a strong pressure they overthrew the government of the Islamist-Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and shut off the Islamic "Welfare Party". The Islamist-Prime Minister's banner was caught by one of his most talented and energetic disciple - Recep Tayyip Erdogan. On the basis of the broken up "Welfare Party" he established a new "Justice and Development Party", overcame all the political obstacles and came to power after a convincing victory in the Parliamentary elections in 2002 [1. c.28].

In our opinion, the main factors of the internal situation in the country that may have negative influence on the policy of the "Justice and Development Party" and his leader Rejep Taif Erdoghan are as follows:

The confrontation between the authoritarian Rejep Taif Erdoghan's government and one of the most influential political unities – "Hizmet" and its leader Fethullah Gülen grows day by day. President Erdoghan overtly accused Fethullah Gülen and his followers in the attempt of a coup d'état, which was followed by massive wave of arrests in different state and media structures. The police arrested thousands of workers of police and Ministry of Religious Affairs for espionage, attempt of a coup d'état and other similar accusations; over dozens of journalists working for the TV Samanyolu and the famous newspaper Zaman offices – that were regarded as the main mass media for the Gülen movement – were arrested and closed. The government took the power illegally.

On the takeover of the newspaper "Zaman" governance, the UNO Secretary-General Pan Gi Mun made a statement and appealed to Turkey towards acting in accordance the document it signed in terms of human rights protection (4.Zaman Gazetesi).

In his statement the Secretary-General stated: "I appeal to the officials of Turkey towards respect to the Meeting participants and freedom of expression in accordance with the Turkish human rights obligations". The appeal made by Pan Gi Mun, in which he directly addresses the Turkish government, says that "democratic, economic and social development depends on how well it is possible to express opinions and ideas, even critical ones, in the tranquil environment". In 2015 police ransacked 26 media organizations in Turkey. The government also closed two televisions and two newspapers of "Koza-Ipek" media group, 11 TV channels of Samanyolu group, IMC television and BengiTÜRK television. In 2015 approximately 26 851 web-pages were blocked.

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA, president – Thomas Brunegard), comprising 18 thousand newspapers and televisions of 120 countries, 15 thousand information sites and 3 thousand media companies, addressed the president Rejep Taif Erdoghan in a letter saying that by storming the newspaper "Zaman" the Turkish government violated the international convention. At present over 30 journalists are still in jails in Turkey; The fail of the foreign policy concerning the Syria issue;

### **Tense relations with Russia that causes a lot discomfort to the Erdoghan government;**

Sharp polarization of the society: between, on the one hand, religious and secular, and on the other hand, the Muslim Sunni and Alevi societies that is in all aspects promoted by the rhetoric and inadequate decisions of the existing government and often by the president Erdoghan personally, for example, introduction of Ottoman language as compulsory subject at Imam Hatipi (religious) and Anatolian (or standard) lyceums, blocking all the legal initiatives connected with granting corresponding status to Alevi religious institutions, necessity of religious education accomplished from Sunni position for Alevi and other non-Sunni pupils; spreading various theories of plotting by the government-supporting mass media, the main protagonists of which are the representatives of opposition or minorities who are leading disruptive activities against the government and preparing coup d'état. Increasing corruption and wastefulness in all the spheres, the traces of which reach even the President Erdoghan and his family. Clear evidence was the scandal caused by the fact that the business Reza Zarrab, a close person to the Erdoghan family, the children of the three acting ministers and a number of high officials of the state sector were arrested for bribery and financial machinations. Reza Zarrab was a business partner and co-owner of several firms with the First Lady Emine Erdoghan and the President's youngest son – Bilal. The answer of the government was firing part of the police and security members involved in the anti-corruption operation and arresting some of them. The corruption scandal was named as the attempt to political coup and the media was prohibited to cover the story. The most striking example of the state extravagance was the new presidential residence "Aksaray" that cost about a billion dollars and where at least such minor details as palm trees and lawn plants had been brought from abroad in most cases in swollen prices that caused doubt among mass media [2. c.83].

Thus, we can conclude that the events taking place in Turkey will not pass without leaving a trace. First and foremost, it should be noted that the European part of the Turkish society is quite numerous; it is much activated politically at the moment and will not give away secularism. At the same time, it is noticeable that the part of the Turkish society with western mentality and, especially the youth, has already risen up to Ataturk-style secularism with their demands and outlook and taken the human rights positions of high European standards. As for the President Rejep Taif Erdoghan, though he remains as a strong political figure, it is not excluded that the last time crisis developed in Turkey will put a full stop to his political career after a certain period.

### **Conclusion**

The unrest started in Turkey will not pass without leaving a trace. It is rather difficult to make exact prognosis but it is still possible to express suppositions and conclusions. First and foremost, it should be noted that, as it becomes clear, the Europeanized part of the Turkish population is quite numerous and would not concede the Laïcité Principle easily. At the same time, it has been observed that the part of the Turkish society with western mentality, especially the youth, with their requirements and outlook hold the platform of high European standard of democracy and human rights. The future of Turkey is only further deepening of

democratic culture and the principles of the government's accountability to the people. Neither the coup nor the authoritarian political governance is the line to be followed by republican Turkey.

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