

Local Democracy as an Instrument for Socio-Political Change: The Case of Turkey

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Abstract

The study focuses the rise of Erdoğan and his strategy towards restoring the traditional Islamic face of Turkish society without antagonizing its European neighbors and avoiding direct confrontation with the dominant Secular Nationalist Troika. The four consecutive landslide victories for Justice and Development Party (AKP) in national as well as in local government elections have legitimized Erdoğan's initiatives. The study argues that it was only local democracy that first enabled Erdoğan to take initiatives like banning public nudity, restricting consumption of alcohol in public places and allowing women to wear head scarf according to Islamic criteria even in the Europeanized city like Istanbul and later on, raised Erdoğan to the rank of President of Turkey where he amended the national constitution and narrowed the role of military and state Judiciary in political and administrative affairs of Turkey. The study draws a conclusion that when the national political environment of a highly centralized state is dominated by specific political elites in such a way that new forces don't have any space to emerge and challenge the status quo than the political institutions at local levels can be used, beyond their normative assignments, for influencing the socio-political behavior of society in desired way.

Keywords: Erdoğan Doctrine, Turkish Society, Local Democracy, Instrument of Socio-Behavioral Changes.

Introduction

During the last two decades, the internationalisation of socio-economic and political activities has challenged the well-established monopolistic authority of national governments to execute state policies and dispersed most of its assignments to local government on the idea that it can manage the impacts of globalization better than the national government. Hence, more the world is globalized, the more it is going to be localized (Loughlin, 2007, pp.4-5). In simple the administrative requirements, managerial demands, cultural variation and socio-ethnic diversity provide reasonable justifications for states to have some form of decentralized local government at lowest local level (Smith, 1985, p.48). Local government literally means the government by the people of locality, constituted by law and possesses reasonable authority to decide and administer a range of public policies within a relatively small territory (Singh, 2009, p.2). In societies where the national political environment is dominated by specific political elites in such a way that new forces do not have any space to emerge and take part in national policy making process, than the only way to engage the deprived segments of society to national politics is the representative local democracy (Rondinelli,1981, PP-133-145).

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Turkey presents an interesting example in this regards. After the proclamation of Republic in 1923, Turkey sustained the highly centralized features of Ottoman administration. Mustafa Kemal, the father of nation, presented six point nationalist agenda and established one party rule which fortified centralization for the subsequent several decades (Bayraktar and Massicard, 2012, P.13). The Kemalists viewed the multi-ethnic and multi-religious socio-political composition of society as the basic reason for the downfall of magnificent Ottoman Empire therefore they promoted the morals based on Turkic ethnicity. Consequently a new rural and urban elite club emerged and replaced the multi-cultural and multi-religious elite club of Ottoman era. The Turkish military as a true protector of Atatürk's philosophy was at the top of this hierarchal elite club. The secular, ethno-nationalist state judiciary and civil bureaucracy provided their moral and administrative support to Turkish Generals and created a dominant ruling troika having both the formal and informal constitutional privileges to watch over the working of all socio-political and administrative institutions (Aydin, 2012, p.101). The democratic forces, time and again, made several attempts to break its exclusive dominance but could not succeed until the year 2001 appeared with the severe financial meltdown for Turkey. The coalition government under the Republican People's Party (CHP) held the highly centralized and hierarchal public administration responsible for the disaster and started the restructuring of entire Turkish Public Administration. This financial crisis had not only broken down the monopolistic hegemony of ruling troika but also paved the ways for four consecutive landslide victories for Justice and Development Party (AKP) in national as well as the local government elections (Müftüler-Baç & Keyman, 2012, p.89).

This study looks at the significant role played by local democracy in influencing the socio-cultural and political behavior of Turkish society and raising a Metropolitan Mayor to the rank of President of a State. Normally the case study approach structured around the historical analysis of events is followed by the academics to sort out the complexities involved in solving the specific research questions therefore this study has also followed the similar patterns of academic research and in order to avoid any possibility of lock-in more or less in theoretical issues, the study has maintained the straightforwardness while exploring the impacts of local government upon the societal change. The selection of Turkey as the case for analysis is not accidental but based on analogy that the Turkey, despite the well-established traditions of highly centralized governance, has not only achieved the international standards in local democracy but also succeeded in restoring the Islamic but more liberal face of society. During the last two decades a variety of analytical literature evaluating various aspects of Turkish society and its governance has occupied a reasonable space in books, newspapers, online and published Journals. Moreover, various International Organizations such as the World Bank (WB), United Nation Development Program (UNDP) and European Union (EU) have also shown great interests in Turkish affairs and presented several policy papers to explore the conceptual linkage between theory and practice of local

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governance in Turkey. The review of this literature helps in understanding the socio-cultural composition of Turkish society and the dynamics of Erdoğan strategies. For example, Karakas (2007) has critically examined the factors that first led Turkey towards secularization and since last two decades have been guiding Turkish state and society towards Islamization. Karakas identifies that when Erdoğan apprehended that his efforts to restore the Islamic face of Turkish society from above would antagonize national and international opposition, he changed the traditional strategy of direct confrontation with the forces of status quo and used legal status of metropolitan government as an alternate tool for camouflaging policy initiatives. Parlak (2008) sorts out a linkage between globalization and the process of restructuring of governance and transformation of socio-cultural norms in Turkey. According to Parlak, the globalization has put both the developed and developing states under stress to reconsider the existing patterns of their public administration. Parlak calls this development as a transformation from globalization to localization because when the process of restructuring of overall governance in accordance was started in Turkey, the European Charter of Local Self Governments greatly influenced the process and finally brought the restructuring of local governance at the top of Turkey's reform program. The similar phenomenon of fast and rapid transformation from globalization to localization is explained in another way by Daniş (2009). In order to conceptualize that how and why the process of such transformation has expanded the role of local government in Turkey, Daniş conducted a survey and gathered data from 25 major municipalities in Ankara. The findings are quite interesting. Daniş concludes that the real force behind the expansion in local government assignment is the incapability of national governments to timely respond the challenges of internationalization of socio-economic, political and human activities. Instead of reviewing its role, the national government passed on its most of the responsibilities to local government on the realization that local or municipal government because of its shorter tenure as compared to central government can best manage the challenges of rapidly changing world through short term periodical planning. This realization was further augmented by the international donor agencies that also preferred short term periodical planning for social services and hence the role of local or municipal government in Turkey was expanded.

The Rational Choice Theory provides an appropriate theoretical and conceptual linkage between the theory and practice of using local democracy beyond its normative assignments. If seen in the context of rationality than local democracy, irrespective of different forms or variant political philosophies, always helps governments to manage the socio-economic and political challenges better than any other administrative organization due to its closeness to people living in a small locality. The smaller size of the local government always ensures greater public participation which in turn increases the satisfaction of citizens and promotes sense of loyalty among citizens (Singh, 2009, p.2; Goldsmith & Caroline, 1998, pp. 101-117). The government most commonly exploits this sense of loyalty towards legitimizing its

authority and channelizes community activism towards influencing the socio-political behavior of society to resolve socio-ethnic differences (Smith, 1985, pp.77-78). De Tocqueville urges that the town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science therefore, local democracy serves as a training institute. It raises local leaderships to national fame enabling them to influence the behavior of local masses better than other administrative agencies within society (De Tocqueville, 1835, p.35, cited in Smith, 1985, p.20). The simplest explanation of these arguments is that if the elected representatives of local governments are in a better position to figure out local needs than they must also be in a better position to implement specific socio-political agenda of national or provincial governments. In this whole equation the level of general satisfaction of community would define the actual costs and benefits of policies.

The Socio-political Composition of Turkish Society

Turkey exemplifies that when Erdoğan could not break the counter cycling dominance of nationalist-secular troika, he decided to use the institutions of local democracy as an instrument to implement his socio-political agendas. In order to estimate the significance of Erdoğan's achievements, the socio-political composition of Turkish society should be kept in mind. Generally, the egotistical Ottoman legacy, the Kemalism and the desire to live within the sphere of Western civilization are held responsible for shaping the socio-cultural dynamics of Turkish society.

The Ottoman Legacy

After its creation in the 14th century, the Ottoman Empire had expanded rapidly towards South East Europe and by the 17th century, it had succeeded in integrating several states like Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia into a magnificent multi-ethnic and multi-religious entity (Goodwin, 2006, p.1; Shaw and Gökhan, 2016). Similar to the complex social order or caste system of medieval Indian society, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of Turkish society had also great impacts upon the socio-political and administrative institutions of Ottoman Empire and in order to understand the nature of functions of these institutions, the socio-political composition of society and relationship between the Sultan and masses should be kept in mind (Faroqhi (Eds.) 2006, p. 28; Ortayli, 1982, p.18).

In the magnificent multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman Empire, the inflexible hierarchal socio-political division was maintained. The small Turkomans were at the top as the ruling class while the large multi-ethnic and multi religious population was the Reaya or subject class integrated under the banner of Millet system. The leader of each ethno-religious group was also the in charge of his faction and was intermediary between the central authority and his group (Ortayli, 1982, p.19). The ruling class was further divided into three categories on the basis of their affiliations and socio-political assignments. At the top, there was an upper ruling class mainly consisted

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upon the family members of the Sultan. The middle ruling class was consisted upon the loyalists to the Sultan who accepted Islam and faithfully adopted the socio-cultural practices of Ottomans. The last category of ruling class was the Askers (the military) personals. The Ottoman civil and military bureaucracy was consisted upon the members from this dominant ruling class. Any move aiming at minimizing the role of dominant elites had always been opposed and resisted by the elite ruling class. Therefore, the masses or subject class had never been granted any concession to take part in the process of decision making with regards to their localities (Shaw, 1976, pp.22-23-; Ortayli, 1982, p.19).

During this age of expansion, the concept of organized municipal government institution did not exist across the Ottoman Empire. Instead the service delivery functions at lowest level in the urban and rural localities were carried out through a specific arrangement of neighborhood called 'Mahalle'. Commonly each Mahalle or section was consisted upon the members of one socio-ethnic community. The mosques being the gathering places for five times a day for the people living around were made the administrative centers of Mahalle. The nominated Caddis (Imams) of the mosques were the spiritual leaders as well as they exercised the administrative and judicial powers in their localities on behalf of central authority. The basic service delivery functions in the neighborhood were also discharged under the supervision of Caddis. Whereas, in the areas consisted upon non-Muslim millet, the above mentioned responsibilities were assigned to their respective Rabbis or Bishops (Kavruk, 2004, p.182; Shaw and Gökhan, 2016).

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, the persistent confrontations with its neighbor, especially the wars with Russia, had not only interrupted the process of expansion but also exposed the institutional weaknesses of Ottoman Empire (Faroghi, (Eds.) 2006, p.18). In the mid-1800s, Sultan Murad II started the process of Tanzeemat (the reforms) to fix the administrative weaknesses and modernize the administrative institutions on the Napoleonic tradition of dual suppression and unbroken chain of command. By integrating Mahalles or neighborhoods into western style counties, the Caddies or spiritual heads were replaced by the county Governors (Goodwin, 2006, p.2; Kavruk, 2004, p.183). During the early 19th century the modernization process was further intensified due to some geo-strategic development in the region. The emergence of Russia as a great power intensified a new power struggle in the region between the European Powers and Russia, Every state wanted to establish its supremacy and influence in the Ottoman territory. That struggle is commonly known as the Eastern Question. It introduced and promoted the politics of alliances in the region. After the war of Crimean war (1853-1856) between Russia and allied forces consisted upon the Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, the France and the Kingdom of Sardinia (Modern Italy). Ottoman capital Istanbul turned into a logistics centre for allied forces. The presence of such a large number of European people and their interactions with local population further advanced the westernization or Europeanization of the Ottoman Capital (Bayraktar and Massicard, 2012, p.11).

Meanwhile, the attempts were made to reform the Ottoman administrative institutions on the patterns introduced by the Napoleon across the Napoleonic states. It was based on dual supervision and unbroken chain of command at various levels of governments. The masses or subject class could not find any concession to take part in the process of decision making with regards to their localities. Such social-political division had continued to serve across the Ottoman Empire without much alteration till its defeat at the hands of Allied Powers in the First World War (1914-1919) and establishment of the Republic in 1923.

The Kemalism

After its defeat at the hands of Allied Powers in the First World War (1914-1919), the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) was imposed upon Turkey, which led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and paved the way for distribution of its territories among the occupied victorious powers. The humiliation unified nationalist forces under the revolutionary leadership of Mustafa Kemal and instigated a resistance movement which resulted into the signing of Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The occupied forces were expelled from Turkish soil and on October 29, 1923 Turkey was proclaimed a Republic. The unitary form of government with single party system was introduced which established Kemalists dominance for the next two decades. Mustafa Kemal presented his six point national agenda based on the principles of (1) Republicanism (2) Nationalism (3) Populism (4) Statism or Ettetism (5) Secularism and (6) Revolutionizm. During the national liberation war, the Kemalist agenda served greatly towards unifying various sections of alienated population into a grand coalition and following the establishment of republic provided the ideological foundation for the modernization of socio-political, economic, religious and judicial institutions in the Republic (Bindebir, 2004, p.6 ; Bayraktar and Massicard, 2012, p.13).

The Kemalists viewed the multi-ethnic and multi-religious socio-political composition of society as the basic reason for the downfall of magnificent Ottoman Empire therefore, they promoted the morals based on Turkic ethnicity. Atatürk's Reforms declared that religion was not to be used as a tool in politics. The Ulemas who were dominated as religious scholars in Turkish society were declared by the Parliament. The strategic goal was to change their large influence over politics by removing them from the social arena. The ban on the social existence of Ulema came in the form of dress code. Actually the bitterness of past had led Kemalists to an extent where they even renounced the fundamental values and traditions of Islam on the pretext of their Arabic origin. Official measures were gradually introduced to eliminate the wearing of religious clothing and other overt signs of religious affiliation. Mustafa Kemal first made the hat compulsory to the civil servants and banned religion-based clothing, such as the veil and turban, outside of places of worship. The most amazing aspect of this policy was that the government was given the power to assign only one person per religion or sect to wear religious clothes outside of places of worship. Turkish education became a state-supervised system wherein coeducation was established as

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the norm throughout the educational system. Turkish had been written using a Turkish form of the Persio-Arabic script for a thousand years. The Persio-Arabic script and expressions were replaced with the pure Latin script and inscriptions. The curriculum based on secular-nationalists ideology was introduced in education institutions and strict restrictions were imposed upon the traditional Islamic education institutions, especially the Madrassas or spiritual schools, known as Imam Hatip Schools, were outlawed and their curriculum was banned.

In order to demonstrate soft image of Turkish society, the beaches and public parks were westernized and public nudity on beaches were given the legal protection. In order to attract more and more western tourists, consuming Alcohol at public places was also allowed. In order to bring the Imams and other spiritual heads under control the Mosques were brought under the direct supervision of state. Initially the Adhāān (Call for the prayer five times a day from the mosques) was also banned but after sometimes the ban was conditionally lifted. All these measures were taken in the name of secularism but the hidden agenda was to restrain all those who were still hoping for the revival of sacred Khilafat and frustrate them to such an extent that they could never think about the revival of glorious Khilafat, referred to a typical form of Islamic government under Ottoman (Inalcik, 1973, p. 171).

As a result a new purely Turkic but an ultra-modern highly westernized rural and urban elite club replaced the multi-cultural and multi-religious elite club of Ottoman era. The beliefs like secularism, Turkic nationalism and modernization or Europeanization were its ideological roots. Turkish military, as a true protector of Atatürk's philosophy, was at the top of this hierarchal elite club. The secular, ethno-nationalist state judiciary and civil bureaucracy provided their absolute moral and administrative support to Turkish Generals and gradually had succeeded in creating a dominant ruling troika with both the formal and informal constitutional privileges to watch over the working of all socio-political and administrative institutions (Aydin, 2012, p.101).

Interestingly, the dominant secular nationalist troika who has followed the strict centralization in order to implement Atatürk's ideology and who has never allowed normative values of liberal democracy to flourish at national levels in order to accommodate the emerging new rural urban elites to new state of affairs are accredited for promoting and strengthening democracy at grass roots level. Their resilience for local democracy was based on some rational choices: - Firstly, they considered that the public participation in decision making process at lowest level always increases the satisfaction of general public therefore by upholding a level of local democracy in a highly centralized national administration would promote sense of loyalty among the masses. Secondly by using the institutions of local democracy as an instrument this loyalty could be used for bringing the desired socio-cultural and political changes in the society which in turn will legitimize the authority of non-democratic governments. Thirdly, the Civil-military establishment was convinced that

a sort of democratic activities at local levels and a signs of public participations in decision making process would definitely satisfy the international watch dogs that were persistently demanding for the restoration of democratic values in Turkey in accordance with the standards set by the European or international coercions.

Moreover, the principles like Republicanism and Populism needed public participations in decision making process and the presence of democracy at lowest level in a highly centralized state could best serve that's end. Aforesaid needs were reflected in the priority attributed to local government in the first constitution framework of the post Ottoman period where in more than half of the articles (13 out of 23) were on the local organizations (Bayraktar, 2007). In the meantime, overlapping of prerogatives or unclear distribution of administrative assignments between the provincial and municipal governments generated mistrusts and paved the ways for socio-political controversies. The mistrust resulted into socio-political instability across the Republic, especially in the South-Eastern provinces and gradually turned into a bloody insurgency. The Liberal opposition also joined the insurgents. The Kemalists misconceived it as the estrangement of provinces and in order to lessen the influence of provinces, held back the constitutional prerogatives of provinces and imposed strict centralization again (Bayraktar and Massicard, 2012, p.15).

Desire to live within the sphere of Western civilization

During the age of Ottoman expansion, the political and military rivalries between the Islamists and their Christian contenders had developed an atmosphere of extreme dislike and jealousy for each another therefore any question of inter faith harmony or the synthesis of socio-cultural values could not arise. However, to some extent, the presence of a large number of European people on Turkish land and their extraordinary enrolments in the Ottoman administrative bureaucracy had greatly influenced the socio-cultural composition of Ottoman elite club. The proclamation of Republic in 1923 not only ended the phase of political rivalries between Turkey and its European counterparts but also brought together the two contending civilizations by replacing the emotional jealousy and extreme dislike with the general realization of friendship and peaceful coexistence.

Turkey, being situated at the crossroads of the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, and eastern Mediterranean, is regarded as a gateway to Europe from Asia. Its Geo-strategic location has not only enabled Turkey to straddle the continents of Europe and Asia but also established its control over the entrance to the Black Sea. The Turkish land has now turned to be the most important centre for the Euro-Asian trade and commerce activities. The wide-ranging socio-cultural and political interactions with its neighboring European civilization influenced the socio-cultural composition of Turkish society. It is already mentioned that the Kemalist secularism not only extended over-whelming encouragement for the Euro-Turkic interactions but also facilitated the western socio-cultural values to flourish across the Turkish society on

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the idea that adoption of European or modern socio-cultural values would definitely dilute the influence of those forces that were still active underneath the surface and committed to restore the Islamic or Arabic features of Turkish society. Amazingly, the process of Europeanization or modernization was exclusively so fast that in a very short time it influenced the socio-cultural characteristics of Turkish society in such a way that now the attainment of European standards in public administration became a source of inspiration for Turkish society and especially for the dominant Elites.

This inspiration to become the member of European Union led Turkey to sign the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG) in 1988. In view of the fact that achieving the European standards in public administrations was one of the most important pre requisite conditions for EU membership, therefore after signing the European Charter Turkish Government has to make tremendous efforts to harmonize its overall governance, especially the mechanism managing the service providing activities at lowest level, with European standards. These efforts brought unprecedented changes to the nature and scope of socio-cultural, political and administrative institutions of Turkey (Bindebir, 2004, pp. 1-33).

The signing of European Charter also led Turkey to enter into other supranational Agreements ‘the Global Agenda 21’ in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the United Nations Earth Summit. Consequently, not only the government institutions in Turkey came under the direct interest of United Nations and European Union but the process of westernization of socio-cultural norms was further intensified. These all International acknowledgements were a sort of relief for the dominant secular nationalist elite club, boosted its confidence and fortified its dominance in Turkey for various decades (Daniş, & Albayraktaroğlu, 2009, p.106).

The Rise of Erdoğan and the Socio-Cultural Transformation

In the year 2001 the coalition government under the Republican People’s Party (CHP) faced the severe financial meltdown and the highly centralized and hierarchal bureaucratic public administration was held responsible for the disaster. Therefore, the restructuring of entire Turkish Public Administration in accordance with international norms and standards turned to be the most important national reform agendas. This financial crisis had not only broken down the traditional monopolistic hegemony of secular nationalist troika but also paved the ways for four consecutive landslide victories for Justice and Development Party (AKP) under Erdoğan in national as well as in the local government elections (Müftüler-Baç, & Keyman, 2012, p.89).

Erdoğan, first as an identical Mayor of Istanbul and then after winning the four consecutive national elections, has fastened the pace of institutional and administrative reforms. Like his neo-liberalist counterparts in Britain and Europe, Erdoğan too tried to use the institutions of local democracy as an instrument to implement his political agendas as well as to influence the socio-cultural and political behavior of Turkish society with the intention to restore the traditional Islamic face of

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Turkish society without confronting the dominant secular nationalist troika (Turam, 2012, p.114; Aydin, 2012, p.103). However, almost immediately Erdoğan apprehended that his efforts to restore the traditional Islamic face of Turkish society from above would antagonize national and international opposition, therefore in order to avoid direct confrontation with the forces of status quo, he decided to use the institutions of local governments as an instrument for camouflaging his policy initiatives and influencing the socio-cultural and political behavior of Turkish society.

Erdoğan as an identical Mayor of Istanbul, the gateway from Asia to Europe, decided to exploit the constitutional clauses which give power to a Mayor to take necessary actions if he or she realizes that certain acts or socio-cultural activities are hazardous for the existence of socio-cultural harmony. Consequently he succeeded in restricting the consumption of alcohol in public places and banned public nudity on the ground that these activities were spiritually and emotionally effecting the Muslims population of Istanbul. Erdoğan also divided public parks and beaches into men's and women's areas according to Islamic criteria and allowed women to wear head scarf even in the city of Istanbul and the capital Ankara which are considered to be the centers of European civilization due to the presence of a large number of European population (Karakas, 2007).

Erdoğan increased the budget of the Ministry of Education from 7.5 billion lira in 2002 to 34 billion lira in 2011, the highest share of the national budget given to any ministry. Local government Institutions was also used for the revision of National Education Curriculum and in order to replace the Secularist Curriculum of basic and elementary education system Erdoğan wanted to expand the network of Imam Hatip Schools, the identical Islamic education system. So the network of Imam Hatip schools was placed under the patronage of Municipal governments which promoted and expanded the scope of religious education in traditionally a secular society. By formulating a comprehensive constitutional framework for local governance with regards to its nationwide service providing mechanism, the Erdoğan government has brought clarity in the constitutional assignments of central, provincial and local governments in accordance with the European and international standards in governance. These reform initiatives have thus brought Turkey to formal compliance of EU accession requirements and paved the way for successful conclusion of its non-member accession partnership with EU (Müftüler-Baç & Keyman, 2012, p.85).

All these successes raised Erdoğan from the Mayor ship of Istanbul to the fame of national leadership. The nationwide support for Erdoğan's socio-economic and political policies is reflected in his four consecutive electoral victories at national as well as local elections which also exemplifies that how the democratic local government can raise a class of local leadership to national fame in a highly centralized society by minimizing the monopolistic dominance of particular socio-political elites? These achievements encouraged Erdoğan to hold the nationwide Referendum on constitutional reforms aiming at bringing structural changes to the Turkish government system in order to minimize the role of traditional powerful

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secular forces still working beneath the surface. The Referendum was held on 12 Sep, 2010 and 58 % peoples supported Erdoğan scheme for constitutional reforms. The Turkish referendum by establishing a significant political dominance of AKP in Turkey enabled Erdoğan to accomplish the task of extensive National Socio-economic and Political Reforms. Consequently, the intensive constitutional reforms expanded the scope of autonomous local government consisted upon the idea of greater public participation in policy making process and devolution of political and fiscal autonomy in proportion to local needs and requirements. The most important aspect of these reforms was that all these developments at local levels also influenced the entire national political environment of turkey. The Central government of AKP due to its initiatives towards local government empowerment succeeded in legitimizing its political dominance.

First as a Premier and then as an identical President of Turkey Erdoğan not only succeeded in making Turkish local governance comparatively more autonomous, democratic and accountable in order to harmonize it with the standards set by the European Charter on Local Self-Government but also accomplished some remarkable achievements at the national level, he restructured the civil-military relationships, enhanced the powers of elected GNA and brought the over powerful and dominant state judiciary to its genuine limits.

Conclusion

The case of Erdoğan best exemplify that it was local democracy that raised the Mayor of a Metropolitan to the rank of most popular president of Turkey and the most vibrant and fearless voice of Muslim world. Recently when a group of deviating Military officers tried to knock over Erdoğan's government the Turkish people, especially the Turkish youth, came out of their houses even without waiting for any call from the government and blocked the advancement of rebel forces by lying in front of their tanks and armored vehicles. The Turkish youth also gathered around the presidential palace and created a human shield till the revolt was successfully curtailed. Again it was the local democracy that not only enabled Erdoğan to attain European standards in service providing mechanism at lowest level of government in Istanbul and brought Turkey closer to the compliance of one of most important perquisite condition for EU membership but also encouraged him to influence the socio-cultural behavior of Turkish society towards restoring the socio-cultural values of Islam without antagonizing its European neighbors or avoiding direct confrontation with dominant Secular Nationalist Troika. Erdoğan's achievements and successes best exemplifies that when the national political environment of a highly centralized society is dominated by specific political elites in such a way that new forces do not have any space to emerge and take part in national policy making process, than local democracy and public participation at grass roots level can be used as an instrument for breaking this cyclic dominance and influencing the socio-cultural behavior of society in desired way.

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