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THE ROLE OF N. ERBAKAN AND THE WELFARE PARTY IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF TURKEY

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Özet

Bu makale, Necmettin Erbakan'ın ve Refah Partisi'nin modern Türkiye'nin siyasi tarihindeki rolünü incelemekte ve analiz etmektedir. Türkiye'de Milli Görüs Hareketi'nin oluşumunda ve gelişiminde ideoloji, sosyal taban ve ana itici güçler ile faaliyetleri de bu makalenin incelenme kısmıdır. Makale ayrıca hareketin önderi, önde gelen bilim adamı ve araştırmacısı, profesör Necmeddin Erbakan'ın rolü de dahil olmak üzere hareketin oluşumunu ve gelişimini etkileyen tarihsel koşulların yanı sıra siyasi arenaya girme nedenleri ve sonuçları da analiz ediyor. N. Erbakan'ın Türkiye'nin siyasi hayatındaki rolü araştırılarak değerlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Refah Partisi'nin ana ideolojisinin faizsiz bir serbest piyasa ekonomisi, üretimin güçlendirilmesi, temel insan haklarının korunduğu adil bir toplumun kurulması vb. olduğu kaydedilmiştir. Refah Partisi (RP), aynı yönü temsil eden Ahmet Tekdal liderliğinde 1983 yılında kuruldu. Siyasi yasakların kaldırılmasının ardından N. Erbakan yeniden parti başkanlığına seçildi. 1990'lar, Milli Görüş hareketinin gelişiminde yeni bir aşamaya geldi ve Refah Partisi'nin itibarı yükselmeye basladı. 1995 secimlerinde parti oyların yüzde 21'ini kazandı. 1996 yılında N. Erbakan, Tansu Çiller liderliğindeki Doğru Yol Partisi ile koalisyon hükümeti kurdu. Bu hükümet 28 Şubat süreci sonucunda istifa etti ve parti feshedildi. Parti üyeleri Fazilet Partisi'ni kurdu.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türkiye, N. Erbakan, Milli Görüş Hareketi, Milli Nizam Partisi, Refah Partisi

Abstract

This article examines and analyzes the role of Naimeddin Erbakan and the Welfare Party in the political history of modern Turkey. The ideology, social base and the main driving forces, as well as its activities in the formation and development of the National Outlook Movement in Turkey is also the part of examine of this article. The article also analyzes the historical circumstances that influenced the formation and development of the movement, including the role of the movement's leader, prominent scientist and researcher, professor Najmeddin Erbakan, as well as the reasons for his entry into the political arena and its consequences. The role of N. Erbakan in the political life of Turkey was investigated and tried to be evaluated. It was noted that, the main ideology of the Welfare Party was a free market economy without interest, the strengthening of production, the establishment of a just society in which basic human rights are protected, and so on. The Welfare Party (WP) was formed in 1983 under the leadership of Ahmet Tekdal, representing the same direction. After the lifting of political bans, N. Erbakan was re-elected party leader. The 1990s marked a new stage in the development of the National Outlook movement and the Welfare Party's reputation began to rise. In the 1995 elections, the party won 21 percent of the vote. In 1996, N. Erbakan formed a coalition government with the True Path Party, led by Tansu Chiller. This government resigned as a result of the February 28 process, and the party was dissolved. The members of the party formed the Virtue Party.

Keywords: Turkey, N. Erbakan, National Outlook Movement, National Order Party, Welfare Party

Introduction

After the transition to a multi-party system in Turkey, a number of movements, political parties and organizations began to form and operate within the country. One of them was National Outlook Movement (NOM) which was formed by professor Najmeddin Erbakan at the late of 1960s. Firstly this movemet called Movement of Independents, then changed to NOM. The NOM has been in place from the 1970s to the present. Although the parties of this movement have been banned several times, in fact, in Turkish politics, religio-political actors have begun to be incorporated into the government's bureaucracy and the NOM continued to existing. This is because it succeeded in obtaining the support of marginalized groups. Until the early 1970s, right and neutral parties basically had great appeal to marginalized groups. Among them, the most representative politician was Najmeddin Erbakan.

1. Who is Najmeddin Erbakan and How He Entered into Politics?

Najmeddin Erbakan (1926 - 2011) was Turkish politician, engineer, academician who was the Prime minister of Turkey in 1996-1997. Erbakan is not only the founder and spiritual leader of the Turkish "National Outlook Movement", but also a Turkish evergreen political movement. He had been a role in Turkish political arena for more than 40 years.

Erbakan was born in Turkey in 1926 in Sinop by the Black Sea. He attended Istanbul High School, and graduated in 1948 from the Mechanical Engineering Department of Istanbul Technical University. In July, just after completing the faculty in 1948, he was appointed as an assistant to the Motors Department of the same university, after his three-volume excellent doctoral thesis, he was sent to Germany by the university (Necmettin Erbakan Kimdir?erişim tarihi: 20/06/2020) After this last thesis between 1951 and 1953 at Aachen Technical University, he prepared 3 theses, one of which is a doctor, an associate professor and the other a research, which especially draws attention and astonishment, explaining how the fuel injected in diesel engines ignited, mathematically. Upon the special invitation and insistence of the German authorities, Leopard was appointed as chief engineer to investigate tank engines. Returning in 1953, and succeeded by an interim test enters his thesis to prepare Turkey's youngest professor the 27-year-old winner Erbakan, combined with up to 200 friends in 1956, lays the foundation of the famous Gumush Engine Plant. Due to this initiative, the late Menderes celebrates Erbakan by telephone and telegraph, and the Minister of Finance Hasan Polatkan personally attends the opening of the factory, which began operating in 1960 (Milli Kahraman Erbakan'in Hikayesi, erisim tarihi: 27.06.2020).

Erbakan, who knows the role of the Union of Chambers in industrial enterprises very well, takes over in 1966 to the "Chambers Union Industry Department", which has the authority to organize import quotas in order to "protect domestic production against imports and sell Gumush engines against the dumping of exploitation monopolies". However, when he saw that the decisions taken by the General Secretary of the Union of Chambers broke down, this time he became the Secretary General of Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği-TOBB). In order to block the path of Erbakan, which has risen to the top of this organization, and leave it desperate, this time the government is engaged and Prime Minister of the time, S. Demirel, withdraws his authority from the Chambers Union to prepare the quotas. The fact that Turkey was an importing state and the failure to take measures for the development of the middle class, especially in Anatolia, led to dissatisfaction with the policies of the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi) in the 1960s. N. Erbakan was dissatisfied with Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges sharp

opposition to this and as a result he resigned from this position. Especially, during the inspection made to Private Sector Information Committee (Özel Sektör Enformasyon Komitesi-ÖSEK) affiliated with the Union of Chambers, 600 thousand liras (today, about 1 billion dollars) distributed to the nation's purse under the 'fight against communism', Erbakan who saw how the money was squandered, made his decision: He should gain political power and government authority. For this reason, he applied to the Justice Party to be a candidate in the upcoming 1969 elections, but he was vetoed from the Justice Party's lists. There was no time to lose. Erbakan is an independent candidate from the province of Konya, despite all the tricks and frauds, he received votes of 3 deputies and entered the parliament. (Milli Kahraman Erbakan'in Hikayesi, erişim tarihi: 27.06.2020). This officially announced his political career.

2. What is National Outlook Movement (NOM)?

In order to make a general definition of the National Outlook, we must first examine the meaning of the word first. The word "national", the first word of the National Outlook, derives from the word "millet" in the Qur'an. The meaning of the word "Millet" in Arabic in terms of etymology means "religion". Considering the word 'Millet' in today's Turkish is an indication that this word can be misunderstood. The words 'nation' and 'people' have different meanings in the Qur'an, which is the holy book of the Islamic religion. It is understood that the word "nation" is not "people" but "religion" in the Quran. The word "national" is not the concept of the ummah used in Turkish but there is no reference to the nation which means people and nation! Considering this sense does not fully reflect the meaning of the National Outlook. The meaning of the National Outlook is from the nation of the Prophet Abraham, and It is the view of an Islamic community that follows the way of Prophet Hz. Muhammad to the world (Engin, 2019: 31). As we mentioned above, at the beginning this movement called Movement of Independents, then changed to NOM and has been in place from the 1970s to the present. The strength of the NOM was in the small towns and rural areas of Anatolia. Religious groups such as the Nagshbandi and other Sufi orders supported the NOM. One of the main political party of the 60s the Justice Party (JP) and its leader, Suleyman Demirel, began to defend the same interest as the bourgeoisie, which began to develop in the context of industrialization and imported substitution policies rather than landowning peasants and large self-employed masses. This posed a serious problem for the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. During this time, despite the unbalanced distribution, the phenomenon of middle classification, which emerged in cities such as Konya, Kayseri, Yozgat, Adana and Sivas, started to express its troubles against the JP power; Demirel, on the other hand, advised the middle-class business person on his own professional organization and that they could solve their own problems (Çaha ve Baykal, 2017: 790-791). These masses saw the NOM as an expression of their interests. Their efforts to integrate religion, culture, and ethnic issues with economic mission have formed the foundation of the public support for NOM.

3. Missions of the NOM

According to Cheng Y. and Changgang G. the main missions of NOM are (Chen and Changgang, 2015: 6-7):

Firstly, and most importantly, one mission of the "National Outlook Movement" is to promote Islam; secondly, the economic mission of the "National Outlook Movement" is to improve the national economy by developing heavy industry and defense industry; and, thirdly, the social mission of the "National Outlook Movement" is to establish an "order of justice". In short, the core and essence of the "National

Outlook Movement" are to criticize the West and to reconcile Islam and modernity. At the national level, this is presented as fundamental criticism against Turkey's history of Westernization; at the international level, its mission is to promote Turkey's foreign policy change, that is, from the traditional pro-Western stance to the pro-Islamic world policy.

Erbakan expresses his thoughts like this (Erbakan Hocamızın İzmit Konferansı: İslamsız Saadet Mümkün Değildir, 2010, erişim tarihi: 27.06.2020): "Felicity has only one base; it is the sublime principles of our faith. If you adhere to these, you will find happiness, if you do not, you cannot find happiness. Without knowing these, there is no happiness. It is for this reason that for centuries our ancestors have established the world of happiness. They have accomplished this through their faith, the sublime principles of their faith. Today, it is our duty to establish a world of happiness again in the face of the persecution on earth, as their grandchildren, people with the same belief, as people who are devoted to the National Outlook. This is the biggest honor. It is also the biggest responsibility".

The difference between the NOM fundamentals and the fundamentals of other parties and other views is the understanding of rights first. According to the right understanding of right, right arises from the following four reasons:

- 1- Being a person is considered a sufficient reason to have a right. Every person has basic rights.
- 2- Labor is also a right. I reduced your burden, increased your blessing, worked at your job. You owe me.
- 3- It should also adhere to agreements with mutual consent. Due to these agreements, our mutual and righteous positions are born.
- 4- "Justice" is a reason for right. I mean, I ran three guys. I gave them two to 500 liras. The third one has done the same job, and I have to give it 500 liras. Why? Justice requires it. Truth arises only from these four reasons (Erbakan Hocamızın İzmit Konferansı: İslamsız Saadet Mümkün Değildir, 2010, erişim tarihi: 27.06.2020).

Main economic mission of NOM and the Welfare Party was expressed in the program which named Fair Economic Order. It is an economic order that does not allow exploitation at every point of the economic order, gives everyone the right, treats everyone equally and gives equal opportunities to everyone, supports everyone's beneficial, constructive activities, promotes economic activities, and eliminates unnecessary and unjustified obstacles to economic development (Erbakan N. Adil Ekonomik Düzen, erişim tarihi: 26/06/2020: 17) There also written that, National Outlook represents Welfare Party "to re-establish the Great Turkey", today, unconstitutional slave scheme to eliminate, rather than the Constitution brings prosperity to everyone mentioned, which gives the right to anyone and newly to be established by the National Outlook which recognizes the equality of opportunity everyone there will be no interest in the order, unfair taxes will be removed, the value of money will be accepted as a measure of right, the money will be transferred to solid money, no money will be printed, the value of money will not be reduced, and credits will be given to everyone who will do useful work within fair measures. In this way, everyone will have the opportunity to buy three breads with the money they buy a bread in today's order and with the same working capital, they will be able to produce three times more than today, three times more people than today, the price of everything will fall to one third, everyone will have three times more purchasing power, the cheapest production. Turkey will be in exports will increase, establishing the Common Market with Muslim countries so that their needs will be met by Turkey and Turkey, will be one of the most powerful country in the world in a very short time. Our nation, which has been made ill for artificial reasons today, will stand up as a great and unique wrestler in history and will provide the best services to all humanity (Erbakan N. Adil Ekonomik Düzen, erişim tarihi: 26/06/2020: 13-14).

4. How the Welfare Party formed?

On January 26, 1970, the first party of NOM, the National Order Party was officially founded upon the establishment declaration to the Ministry of Interior (Caha ve Baykal, 2017: 793). In the founding declaration, it was stated that NOP was born out of the morality and virtue in the nation's fate, and with the help of God, the Turkish nation will establish an exemplary civilization to the world. Our Party's measure in the subject of secularism; it can be expressed as being against any kind of understanding that sheds this institution in an exercise against religion (Milli Nizam Partisi. Program ve Tüzük,1970: 7). On 20 May 1971, it was decided to close the party because of its activities "against the protection of secular state character and Ataturk revolutionary". In October 1972, the National Salvation Party (NSP) was formed as a successor to the NOP. Like the NOP, the NSP represented itself as a modern party inspired by and reflecting traditional Sunni Islamic ethical values. As recorded in the party's program, NSP's main goal is the nation's spiritual and material development to reach happiness and welfare (Milli Selamet Partisi. Program ve Tüzük, 1972:5). As the NOP key figure behind the formation of NSP was the Nagshbandi (Sufi order) leader Mehmet Zahid Kotku (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008:14). With the establishment of the MSP, the name of political Islam would be known as the National Outlook (Engin, 2019: 77). In the election of 1973, the NSP received 11.8 percent of the vote and obtained 47 seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, thus becoming its third largest party (1973 Genel Secim Sonuclari, erişim tarihi: 14/07/2020). In February 1974, the NSP joined the first coalition government formed by Bulent Ecevit of the Republican People's Party. The most significant development in that period was the crisis in Cyprus, to which the coalition government dispatched troops to protect the Turkish minority living in the northern part of the island. The military intervention resulted in both Erbakan and Ecevit acquiring reputations as heroes. Till 1980 NSP took part in three coalition government. After the September 1980 coup as all the political parties NSP also banned.

In 1983 N. Erbakan's followers created the Welfare Party. After the September 1987 referendum that reestablished the right of prominent former politicians to pursue political activities, Erbakan became chairman of the Welfare Party (Engin, 2019: 82-83). In the 1987 elections, the Welfare Party received 7.16 percent of the vote — short of the 10 percent needed for representation in parliament. As a result, the religious right was not represented as a separate party in parliament during the 1980s. Many of Welfare's adherents joined Motherland Party (ANAP), which brought together religious and bureaucratic secular conservatives under one roof, siphoning off support from the religious right that otherwise would have gone to Welfare (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008:42). Real growth of the party accrued in the 1994 local elections. The party took 20 percent of the vote and 29 larger cities' mayors were elected from the Welfare Parties' candidates including Istanbul's and Ankara's mayors (Selçuk E. K. Evolution of Political Islam: From the Welfare Party to the Virtue Party, erisim tarihi: 13/07/2020: 28) In the 1995 election, the Welfare Party won with 142 MP's 21% of the vote (1995 Genel Secim Sonucları, erişim tarihi: 14/07/2020), thereby forming a coalition government with the True Path Party. Erbakan thus became the first pro-Islamic Prime Minister of the Republic. The reason why the Welfare Party won an electoral victory was that the political mobilization carried out by religious activities expanded the party's public support. The social justice agenda it pursued also enhanced the party's social foundation. Particularly, giving social issues priority over

religious issues was supported by the urban and rural marginalized groups.

5. Why the Welfare Party rose in 1990's?

With increased discontent of the Turkish people towards the Western world, political isolation from the West, and split of values with the West, seeking a new national identity had become the background of Welfare Party's rise in 1990s. Because of the inherent separation between the right and left political parties in Turkish politics, and that the two sides were unable to implement reforms to solve social problems, the Welfare Party became a strong substitute force in Turkey. Rabasa and Larrabee lists several factors contributed to Welfare's strong showing (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008:42-43). Perhaps most important was a shift in Welfare's political agenda, which put stronger emphasis on social issues rather than religious themes. This allowed Welfare to broaden its appeal beyond the hard-core religious right. At the same time, Welfare's populist but catchy Just Order program allowed it to gain important support among the urban poor who traditionally had voted for the CHP. Welfare was the best organized of all the political parties, with a legion of devout Muslims, especially women, who did volunteer work for the party and provided a network of social-welfare help to the poor. However, although the Welfare Party won the support of the majority of the urban and rural poor people after adjusting the discourse strategies in an effort to resolve social and economic problems, it was unable to solve the country's problems when it came to power (Chen and Changgang, 2015: 17). Erbakan and other leaders still insisted on using the traditional Islamic discourse against the existing system, resulting in the interests of the secular regime being seriously damaged. As a result, the policy pursued by the Welfare Party not only failed to effectively reduce the intensity of social conflict, but also led to the development of division and opposition between secularists and Islamists in Turkish society.

6. Postmodern Coup 28 February 1997

Faced with the impact of Islam on secularism and the challenges the Welfare Party posed on the secular system, the military began to take action. The General Staff of the Army started investigation towards the Islamic community's activities in the country. Soon, the National Security Committee (NSC), composed of the military commander, chief of staff and Cabinet members, made a series of decisions on February 28, 1997 to protect the secular identity. This is the famous Turkish political "February 28 Process", also known as Soft Coup or Postmodern Coup (Chen and Changgang, 2015: 18). After the "2/28 process" in 1997, since the opposition between the Welfare Party and secularists, including the military, escalated, the Welfare Party eventually was declared illegal and was banned. Due to the closing of the Welfare Party, Virtue Party was founded on 17 December 1997 under the leadership of Ismail Alptekin. Welfare Party members gradually passed to the Virtue Party. The Welfare Party was closed on January 16, 1998 (Rakamlarla 28 Şubat Raporu, 2014:37). Erbakan and some Welfare Party members were banned with a political ban. (Engin, 2019: 91).

After the Welfare Party was banned, the Virtue Party formed by the former Welfare Party members in 1997. In 1999 elections the Virtue Party won 15 % of votes with 97 MP's (1999 Genel Seçim Sonuçları, erişim tarihi: 14/07/2020). Necmettin Erbakan was actually still in control behind the scenes, and insisted on the Islamist position of the movement. The reformists in the movement created the Justice and Development Party under the leadership of Erdoğan. They abandoned the Islamist stance, turned to Conservative Democracy position, and actively supported democracy, human rights, pluralism and other Western values (Chen and Changgang, 2015: 19).

At present, the National Outlook Movement continues under the leadership of the Felicity Party. However, the coming to power of the JDP, which broke away from the NOM and represented the reformist wing of the movement, and put forward Islamist slogans, left the Felicity Party in a kind of shadow. This situation also manifested itself in the elections. Thus, in no election since its inception, this party has not only been represented in government, but has not even been able to cross the 10 percent barrier.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the aforementioned, the Welfare Party and its leader Najmeddin Erbakan have played an important role in the political life of Turkey. The most important period of the Welfare Party's rise coincided with the 1990s. The party was successful in both the municipal and parliamentary elections in the mid-1990s, and Erbakan became the first prime minister in the history of the Republic of Turkey to represent political Islam. However, this rise ended with the February 28 postmodern coup. After that, disagreements gradually began within the NOM, and as a result, two political parties were formed after the banning of the Virtue Party. One was the JDP, the reformist wing of the movement, and the other was the Felicity Party, a supporter of the preservation of tradition. At present, NOM continues to exist under the leadership of the Felicity Party. However, the JDP's representation in power results in a low turnout in the elections, and the Felicity Party is unable to cross even the 10 percent threshold.

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