



Rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkish Politics and Democratization in Turkey

DURGESH KUMAR*

Introduction

The Justice and Development Party known by its Turkish acronym as AKP is in power in Turkey since end of 2002. Founded in August 2001 by a breakaway faction of the banned Islamic Welfare (Refah) Party, the AKP won successive general elections in 2007, 2011 and 2015 and 2014 Presidential election as well. Despite the AKP's Islamic background, its founder Recep Tayyip Erdogan has successfully projected it as a 'Conservative Democratic Party'. The AKP's rise to power marked the end of coalition politics of the previous decade and beginning of a new era in Turkey. A series of political and social reforms undertaken by the ruling AKP have brought about a qualitative transformation of Turkish polity and national identity. Notwithstanding its reformist agenda and policy of progressive democratization, the AKP's ascendancy has deepened ideological polarization undermining the prospects of forging national consensus on the future political trajectory of the modern secular republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923.¹

The 1990s was very trouble decade for Turkish politics. During this period, successive coalition government rendered the Turkish political chronically unstable, which in turn led to the economic slowdown culminating eventually into a major financial crisis in 2001. It was in this backdrop of political uncertainty and crisis that the AKP, a newly formed political party rose to power, promising the electorate to end instability and place Turkey on the path of prosperity.² While,

1Aswini K. Mohapatra (2011), "Turkey's Transition to Liberal Democracy and the Issue of its EU Membership", *India Quarterly*, 67(2), p. 154.

2 Melike Bildirici and Cosar Nevin (2005), "Budget Deficit and Indirect Taxes during the Political Instability Periods in Turkey: Cointegration Analysis and Model Estimation,

*Doctoral Candidate, Centre for West Asian Studies, JNU, New Delhi

