

# **TURKEY**

## *Yesterday & Today*

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*A brief  
Political  
History of Turkey*

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to publish revolutionary books in Turkey.

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## Abbreviations

CUP	Committee of Union and Progress [ <i>İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti</i> ]
CPT	Communist Party of Turkey [ <i>Türkiye Komünist Partisi</i> ]
CRWU	Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Union [ <i>Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Federasyonu</i> ]
DP	Democratic Party [ <i>Demokrat Parti</i> ]
FIC	Federation of Idea Clubs [ <i>Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu</i> ]
FRP	Free Republican Party [ <i>Serbest Cumhuriyetçi Fikrası</i> ]
JP	Justice Party [ <i>Adalet Partisi</i> ]
NSP	National Salvation Party [ <i>Millî Selamet Partisi</i> ]
NDR	National Democratic Revolutionary [ <i>Millî Demokratik Devrim</i> ]
NMP	Nationalist Movement Party [ <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> ]
MP	Motherland Party [ <i>Anavatan Partisi</i> ]
PLAT	People's Liberation Army of Turkey [ <i>Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu</i> ]
PLP-FT	People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey [ <i>Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi</i> ]
PRP	Progressive Republican Party [ <i>Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fikrası</i> ]
RCSE	Revolutionary Culture Societies of the East [ <i>Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları</i> ]
RY	Revolutionary Youth [ <i>Dev-Genç</i> ]
RPP	Republican People's Party [ <i>Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi</i> ]
SDPP	Social Democratic Populist Party [ <i>Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti</i> ]
TPP	True Path Party [ <i>Doğru Yol Partisi</i> ]
WPK	Workers Party of Kurdistan [ <i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i> ]
WPT	Workers Party of Turkey [ <i>Türkiye İşçi Partisi</i> ]

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las. They have pressurised the Kurdish population to immigrate to the western part of Turkey. Many Kurdish people were immigrated to the metropolitan cities to live in extreme conditions of poverty in the shanty towns.

The reactionary forces do not only attack Kurds. They subjected their attacks against Alevite-Kurds as well. In 1993, the radical Islamist supporters attacked to a traditional Alevite Festive in Sivas. They burned down the hotel which hosted artists, dancers, speakers and politicians who went there to contribute to the Festival. 37 people were killed. The government forces (the army and the police) only watched this incident and did nothing.

In the 1994's local government elections, the rising of the radical Islam movement was sealed. A radical Islamist party known as the Welfare Party gained the control of major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara and many other small ones. Although, the votes they took were slightly increased in comparison to the 1970's, they seem to enjoy a popularisation in Turkey. Their achievement mostly result of the bankruptcy of the political parties in both the left and the right. In a stagnated economical situation and in a undeclared war [the war in Kurdistan] the atmosphere the people live in is hopeless. They believe that they have tried all the political alternatives. In this climate the radical Islamist -as an untried alternative, promises equality in welfare, a tolerant nationalism. On the other hand, the state apparatus is in panic. They can not improve the economy (because they can not find enough money to borrow from the west ) and they are not able to stop the Kurdish rising with a bloody war. They know that they are losing the ideological credibility in the minds of people.

### *Pre-Republic Period: The Fall of the Ottomans (1870-1923)*

Today's Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Its inability to modernise and upgrade its social and economical structure led the Ottomans into a steady decline from the 17th century onwards, in contrast to European expansion and prosperity as a result of economic, social and cultural changes. Decline accelerated in the 18th century, which saw the decay of rural administration into small feudal-like states and increased unrest in the cities, disrupting food supplies and leading to widespread famine. Few of the innovations in technology that underlay European prosperity made their way into the empire. Early modernisation efforts mainly consisted of creating a European style army at the end of 18th century, yet this attempt was dismantled by the powerful janissaries with an insurrection in 1807. The important point to note is that, because the Ottoman empire rested on the principle of indivisibility of power that was adopted by the 15th century, this meant that the ruling elite of the Ottoman political structure solely relied on a powerful army to govern. That is why modernisation efforts had started firstly with the army. This entanglement of state apparatus and army always appears as one of the main features of the ruling structure of the state of Turkey till now. By a strange irony when the modernisation and westernisation of the army was achieved, the army became the sole protector of the modernisation and westernisation that was imposed on to (sometimes it used force to implement these) people from the top downwards during the Ottoman period and during the Turkish republican period.

The modernisation of the army became successful around 1830 by Mahmud II and later it was followed by governmental reorganisation. Yet by that time, the Ottoman Empire had become dependant on European powers in its internal and foreign politics. The movement of Tanzimat (which means regulations-reorganisation) was born from this weakness. Mahmud's sons Abdulmecid I and Abdulaziz put Tanzimat into practice in the form of a series of liberal and modernising reforms which were widely viewed in the West as an effort to encourage friendly relations with European powers. Among the reforms were the first comprehensive education system and the westernisation of commercial, maritime, and penal codes.

The centralisation of power removed all checks on the power of the emperor. This centralised absolute power of the emperor brought demands of a constitutional monarchy among newly formed western style intelligentsia that were called the Young Ottomans. The Young Ottomans were the product of newly set up western style colleges and universities (most important of these the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Government and the Military Academy. The graduates of these schools have played an important part in the political life of the Ottomans and one could say they still play an important role today in Turkey's political landscape). The

