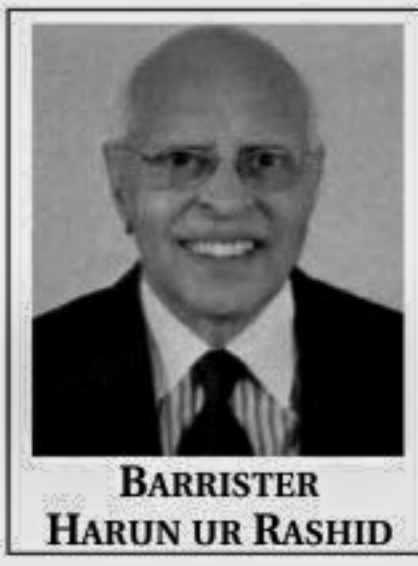


BOTTOM LINE

Turkish PM's third term



BIGGER than France, Turkey is a part of Europe and Asia, adjoins oil-rich Iran and sits astride the Dardanelles, through which Black Sea is connected. Its strategic significance is immense to big powers.

It did not take long for the count to show what everyone had expected -- another decisive victory for the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by charismatic Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (57) at the parliamentary election in Turkey held on June 12.

For all of Turkey's challenges, the June 12 vote was an indicator of stability in an increasingly confident country. Most voting was peaceful and orderly, with large crowds gathering early to cast ballots. More than 50 million people, about two-thirds of Turkey's population of 73 million, were eligible to vote in the election. NTV television said the turnout was 87%.

AKP supporters were celebrating on the streets of the capital on June 12 night.

"I am truly happy. I hope the outcome will be in favour of our country and nation. I cannot find words to express my happiness," said one supporter.

The result is a powerful endorsement of the blend of economic liberalism and Islamic roots offered by the prime minister. With this win, he is now the most powerful political figure in Turkey since the days of the country's founding father, Kemal Ataturk. Results show Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) won about 326 seats in the 550-seat parliament, although the party failed to secure the two-thirds majority (367 seats) needed to make unilateral changes to the constitution. There will

be a record 78 female MPs -- up from 50 in the last parliament.

The main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), under its new leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, did offer a more appealing alternative for secular Turks than in previous elections.

Results indicated that the secular CHP had 26% of the votes with 135 seats -- 23 more than last time -- and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) with 13% has 54 seats, down 17.

Independent candidates fielded by the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) also did well in the south-east, winning 5.8% of the votes and 35 seats. "This is a huge success for us," prospective Kurdish MP Serafettin Elci told Reuters.

"We expect the PM to signal a strong hope for the solution of the Kurdish problem for Turkey's future."

Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has promised to build consensus with opposition parties, after securing a third term in office. "The people gave us a message to build the new constitution through consensus and negotiation," said the prime minister.

"We will be seeking consensus with the main opposition, the opposition, parties outside of parliament, the media, NGOs, with academics, with anyone who has something to say."

Erdogan said the AKP and others would write a "civilian, free constitution which



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embraces all parties of the society together." He also alluded to Turkey's aspiration to be a voice in the West for the Middle Eastern region and Muslims, saying Bosnians, Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians also benefited from his victory. "Believe me, Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul, Beirut won as much as Izmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir," he said.

Prime Minister Erdogan has been in power since 2003. He is a leader bigger than his

party. During his eight years of rule, the country has decisively shifted power from the secular elite to the merchant class, the migrants and the downtrodden rural people.

Turkey is a far different place than the one he inherited. He has presided over strong economic growth and a more assertive foreign policy since taking power. Under his rule, the country's economy has more than tripled, and exports have expanded to \$132 billion a year from \$36 billion. There are 250 industrial zones in Anatolia. It registered economic growth of 8.1% in 2010.

Turkey, a Nato ally with a mostly Muslim population, stands out in a region buffeted by popular uprisings as a power with traditional Western alliances and growing ties in the east and elsewhere.

Turkey, under the prime minister, has carved out an independent geopolitical role in foreign policy. It has focused on minimising tensions in its neighbourhood through increased economic cooperation.

The Turkish prime minister visited Athens in 2010, and it constituted a "revolution" because Greece and Turkey have long-standing animosity toward each other -- like India and Pakistan.

The soft-power approach has raised Turkey as an important regional player and a mediator in regional disputes. Turkey was mediating between Israel and Syria just weeks before the conflict in Gaza broke out

on January 3, 2009. The diplomatic initiative in 2010, supported by Brazil, in swapping Iran's nuclear enriched uranium with Turkey, are instances of its role as interlocutor in the region.

Turkey has also played a positive role in trying to remove misunderstandings between Pakistan and the Karzai government in Kabul. It will hold a conference of regional donors for Afghanistan in November this year. The country's UN vote against sanctioning Iran and the proposal of a safe exit strategy to Gaddafi are examples of its independent policy.

Its outspoken criticism of Israel's Gaza policy earned admiration from Arab countries. From its new standing, Turkey is benefiting from investment-flows from Gulf countries (\$6 billion) and has diversified its exports, in which Asian share has increased from 14% to 25% during the last seven years.

A more confident and more independent Turkey is stretching its wings, politically and economically. Its strategic approach is merely expanding its reach, and as its Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu said: "Our axis is an Ankara axis and our horizon is 360 degrees."

Turkey's election has demonstrated that democracy and Islam can co-exist together and the Turkish model could act as a beacon to the Arab countries which are going through violent political upheavals for democracy and freedom.

The Turkish prime minister visited Bangladesh in November 2010, through which relations between Bangladesh and Turkey were further consolidated. Both Bangladesh and Turkey agreed to increase bilateral trade volume to at least \$3 billion by 2015. Turkish Airlines operates between Dhaka and Istanbul.

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Adivasis' unheard voices

SK. ZAKIR HOSSAIN

ADIVASIS of plain land districts in north western Bangladesh are surviving far below the so-called poverty line. With an average family size of 3.12 people, though lower than our national 4.7 average, most of them earn less than half a dollar (let alone the one dollar standard!) on which to make all ends meet.

According to Bangladesh Adivasi Forum (BAF) the total number of adivasis is 3 million, half of whom live in the Barind tract areas of Naogaon, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Dinazpur districts where agricultural activities are comparatively minimal and harder due to scarcity of water in dry season. The seasonal trends coupled with their ethnic identity have made the plain land adivasis' reality one of challenge and hardship.

Over the years, various initiatives have been tried by GOs and NGOs to enhance agricultural activities in this region. Despite perennial efforts, 98% of extreme poor adivasis continue to survive on only one meal a day, based on a study of 9,380 households.

Considering the deplorable livelihood conditions of plain land adivasis, an NGO has launched a project for the advancement of marginalised adivasis. Under this project, the extreme poor who live on khas land and do not have any access to formal microcredit were selected as beneficiaries and provided with skill training and productive assets like cows, sheep, pigs, ducks etc. Unlike conventional microcredit programmes, this project also supported beneficiaries to link with the respective government and non-government service sectors in the area to claim and obtain necessary support for the sustenance of their gainful activities.

However, the success and sustainability of the economic activities run by these extreme poor adivasis depend largely on active cooperation of state offices such as vaccine supply and capacity build up of local para-vets by Upazila Livestock Offices and technical support providence by Agriculture Extension Offices. Then, the question arises about who has the authority to support the adivasis. I would say, the responsibility is ours, the ethnic majority, the privileged non-adivasi people, to create an enabling environment for the minority adivasis. If we fail to do so we jeopardise the attainment of MGD goal 1 -- halving the number of extreme poor by 2015.

Let us have a look at a few indispensable issues to expedite the escalation of adivasis out of extreme poverty.

First, we find that beneficiaries work hard to take care of their assets. With little space in their homesteads most of them keep their cattle in their living room as they have only one room. Despite their relentless efforts to change their fate, outbreak of epidemic diseases like anthrax might cause sudden loss of their assets. We need to assure the adivasis that vaccines and other essential drugs would be made available in time.

Beneficiaries' efforts need to be supported by the government, for example through cooperation of Upazila Livestock Offices.

Second, safety net supports allocation should be dealt with more judiciously. The local government is entrusted with the selection of social safety nets recipients. The fact is that the selection authorities tend to exclude adivasi project beneficiaries on the general justification that they once received some material support from the project. The selection process is based merely on exclusion criterion, which should be the reverse in practice through cautious consideration of inclusion criteria. The withdrawal of social safety net supports based on such single exclusion criterion will have a negative effect in creating an enabling environment for the extreme poor adivasis.

It has been quite evident that local government representatives want to capture more new recipients each year to make a broader support base for future elections. This approach needs to be changed. It has to be decided whether or not we should emphasise sustainable changes in the livelihood of smaller groups rather than covering a bigger number with transient limited support.

Third, a study on adivasi beneficiary households reveals that 63% of them live on khas land, 12% on own land and the remaining on others' land. Lack of ownership creates a sense of insecurity in them, which prevents them from using the homestead land for meeting their subsistence need. Besides, there remains the unseen threat of eviction. Providing the poor adivasis with the right of land ownership will not only ensure their mental serenity but also pave the way for using their land productively. The government has to take the lead role to make sure that all extreme poor adivasis get back their rights in the occupied land as well as be able to resist dispossession.

Fourth, for the sustainability of economic activities of the poorest adivasis a sympathetic approach by the society can be effective in bringing long term changes. I am not discarding the continuation of provision of emergency help to tackle famine-like situations. The real instrument to fight poverty would be the revival of dignity and self esteem of the extreme poor.

Nothing can be reaped from the poverty alleviation programmes unless the income-poor are provided an enabling environment. It is the responsibility of economically advanced quarters to act as a catalyst in turning the concept of enabling environment into action. In case we fail to create an enabling atmosphere with the synchronised responses of all actors we will be pouring billions of dollars in poverty reduction projects without getting long-lasting benefits. Hence, we should rethink how we are working to reach goal 1 of MDG.

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Political unification to counter imperialism

SHARIQUE NAEEM

IN the last three decades, we have witnessed a consistent trend in US foreign policy towards the Muslim world, which involves interference, pressurising, intimidating, and outright wars. Sometimes there is a tendency to belittle this trend by linking it to only a few America presidents. However, the reality is that this trend has continued in the tenure of both the Democrats as well as the Republicans. The question is, why does the US subjugate the Muslim world?

The answer lies in the fact that America has built itself firmly by embracing the secular doctrine, which separates "Church from State." Laws governing public affairs are legislated based on the whims and desires of human beings. Consequently, the secular doctrine will motivate the individuals who adhere to this way of life (i.e. capitalism) to seek material benefits at any cost.

Capitalists do not limit themselves to spreading secularism, but work to dominate other nations as it is to their benefit to do so. For example, between the 16th and 19th centuries, Italy, England, France, and other European nations embarked on campaigns to colonise the Muslim world to force the Ummah to adopt their way of life and to steal our resources.

Since America upholds the same secular doctrine as these other nations, it also seeks to subjugate the Muslim world -- as is clear from its actions in Iraq, its support for Israel and, most importantly, its support and imposition of ruthless tyrants like Karimov, Zardari, and Karzai, across the Muslim world.

The objective for dominating the Muslim world was expressed in the "Carter Doctrine" in 1980 when then US President Jimmy Carter stated in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." Carter established the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and gave it the responsibility for combat operations in the Gulf.

Three years later, Ronald Reagan elevated the RDJTF, naming it Central Command (CENTCOM). CENTCOM has been the main American presence in many military operations, including the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. With this understanding, it is clear that the objectives of American foreign policy run counter to those of the Muslim Ummah.

The reason for US imperialism, in particular against the Muslim world, is more than just natural

resources. Islam poses a potential ideological challenge to the secular doctrine. As Samuel P. Huntington said in his book Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order, "Islam is the only civilisation which has put the survival of the West in doubt." The states which have embodied the secular doctrine fear a possible revival of a Khilafah state, which embodies the Islamic doctrine.

This is a major concern for the capitalists because the Islamic doctrine has laws, visions and strategic objectives coming from a distinct source, i.e Islam. In a Khilafah state all public affairs,

including economics, politics, the social system, the educational system and the judiciary, are governed by the commands and prohibitions of Islam. The manifestation of these systems in one entity -- the Khilafah state -- has the potential to outpace the Capitalist system by leaps and bounds.

As has happened before, the Khilafah state will compete as a superpower. This is something that does not please the capitalists and as a result they are trying to prevent the Muslim Ummah from working towards political unification. Consequently, the capitalists will work day and night to ensure that the Muslim Ummah remains subjugated

Political experts in the West have already begun pointing to the possible emergence of this Khilafah state. Niall Ferguson, Professor of History at Harvard University, in an interview to The Telegraph (March 14), warned that there is "a tiny possibility we get western-style democracies in the Middle East," and that it is "more alarming to think about a restored caliphate."

Today, the uprisings in the Muslim world, referred to as Arab Spring, are resulting in the fall of one dictator after another. Interestingly, a political expert, Patrick J. Buchanan, who has been a senior advisor to three American presidents, wrote: "If Islamic rule is an idea taking hold among the Islamic masses, how does even the best army on earth stop it?"

The West, in particular the US, seeks to answer this by further aggressive use of force in the Muslim world, and by bribing new faces that replace toppled dictators. The paradox here is, the intelligence, in particular the generals in the armies of the Muslim world, having to decide between repressing their own people or resisting US imperialism, are only naturally predisposed to the idea of a Khilafah state.

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