



Erdoğan win reflects Turkey's conservative revolution

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan didn't win last Sunday's election because the vote was rigged from the start, but because Turkey's conservatives wanted him to push on with a revolution against the country's once dominant secular elite, Mustafa Akyol said in the New York Times.

"Most people who voted for Mr. Erdoğan will vote for him no matter what," said Akyol, an author and senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "They didn't see this election as a competition between politicians promising better governance. They viewed it as an act of defiance against a century-old existential enemy."

The reasons for Erdoğan's win go back to 1923 and the founding of the modern Turkish republic; a top-down secular revolution that left behind a traumatised conservative class. Since 1950, and the introduction of multi-party elections, the conservatives were repeatedly usurped and punished by the "regime's guardians", as the secular elite proudly called themselves, Akyol said.

Only when Erdoğan was elected and solidified his power in the early 2000s did the secular hegemony break.

"This is what Turkey's religious conservatives are thinking about when they vote for Mr. Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party, not his flaws, which they may silently admit he has," Akyol wrote. "They aren't thinking about newspapers that have been taken over or professors who have been put in jail, but about how the Arabic call to prayer was outlawed in the 1930s and the head scarf was banned in the 1990s.

"Against this "Old Turkey" that the religious conservatives despise, Mr. Erdoğan proved to be their savior. The more sensible among them may sense that their "New Turkey" is hardly any better than the old — but still it is their Turkey."