

Republic of Turkey

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INTRODUCTION

Situated between Europe and Asia, Turkey occupies a critical geostrategic position in the world. This unique geography, no doubt, has much to do with the complexities and continuities that have characterized Turkey's political development. Turkey is anchored to Europe, both through a vast network of trade linkages, its membership of NATO, and its bid for European Union membership. So too is it enmeshed in the politics of the greater Middle East by virtue of its proximity to and involvement in the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, as well as its dependence on Iranian energy resources. Striking this balance has proved challenging, and so too have the dynamics of Turkey's domestic politics, which are marked by a strong tradition of executive rule punctuated by fleeting stints of democratic deepening and political liberalization.

In the early 2000s, Turkey enjoyed rapid economic growth and became the poster child for how to successfully blend Islamist and democratic politics. In the last decade, however, much has changed. Both the outside world and many Turks themselves now question the robustness of the country's democratic institutions. The economy has also suffered immensely since 2017. The very forces that propelled Turkey's growth – foreign credit, government spending on infrastructure, and a construction boom – have now rendered its economy vulnerable to collapse. Furthermore, ongoing tensions regarding the country's Kurdish population, vicious intra-Islamist feuds, deepening political polarization and nationalism, and the influx of nearly four million Syria refugees have combined to pose very real threats to social cohesion. The coming years are likely to be difficult ones for Turkey, though historically the country has proved remarkably resilient despite frequent bouts of economic and political turmoil.

Box 14.1 provides vital data for this country.

BOX 14.1 VITAL DATA – REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

<i>Capital</i>	Ankara
<i>Regime type</i>	Democratic (presidential republic)
<i>Head of state</i>	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (since 2014)
<i>Head of government</i>	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (since 2018)
<i>Legislative institution</i>	Unicameral parliament, with 600 elected seats (<i>Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi</i> , or Grand National Assembly)
<i>Female quota</i>	No
<i>Percentage of seats held by women</i>	17.4%
<i>Major political parties</i> (share of seats in most recent general elections, 2018)	Justice and Development (49.2%), Republican People's Party (24.3%), People's Democratic Party (11.2%), National Action Party (8.2%), Iyi (7.2%)
<i>Population</i>	80,745,020
<i>Major ethnic groups</i>	Turkish (70%), Kurdish (20%), Arab (5%), other (5%)
<i>Major religious groups</i>	Muslim (99%), Christian and other (1%)
<i>GDP per capita</i>	\$9,346 (\$27,956 at Purchasing Power Parity)
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	10.9%
<i>Youth unemployment rate</i>	20.5%
<i>Major economic industries</i>	Textiles, food processing, automobiles, mining, electronics, agriculture, tobacco, steel, petroleum, construction, lumber, paper
<i>Military spending as % GDP</i>	2.2%

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origins of the Turkish people date to pre-Islamic Central Asia. Their conversion to Islam came in the ninth and tenth centuries as a result of territorial expansion by the Islamic Empire. Among the new Muslim-Turkic polities was the Seljuq dynasty, which grew from Persia. In 1071 the Seljuqs defeated the Byzantine armies in a historic battle, which opened the gates of Anatolia to the Turks. With their new capital in Konya, the Seljuqs established a great civilization. The Ottoman Empire emerged from the remains of the

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Assembly

Development (49.2%), Republican
Party (24.3%), People's Democratic
Party (19.9%), National Action Party (8.2%),

%, Kurdish (20%), Arab (5%),

%, Christian and other (1%)

(956 at Purchasing Power Parity)

l processing, automobiles,
ronics, agriculture, tobacco, steel,
onstruction, lumber, paper

Seljuqs after their demise, and continued the Turkish tradition of westward territorial expansion. After taking Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) in 1453, Ottoman armies conquered the Balkans and most of eastern Europe, and by the mid-sixteenth century, they had reached the gates of Vienna. At its height, the empire encompassed vast amounts of territory, and served as the last Islamic Caliphate – thus making its ruler, the Sultan, the Caliph of the (Sunni) Muslim world, although over time such titular authority faded. At the start of the nineteenth century, the empire included much of North Africa (except Morocco), the Balkans, Anatolia, the Mashriq, and parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

A flair for bureaucratic organization distinguished the Ottomans. Initially, the armed forces dominated the government apparatus, but once the era of conquest ended, the problems of administering the huge Ottoman territories demanded increased attention. In response, the civilian hierarchy expanded in prestige, size, and complexity. Thus, it was as much a bureaucratic as a militaristic empire in which the state sought political legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects. At the same time, the Ottoman imperial system had enshrined collective privileges for religious groups through the *millet* system. Over the centuries, this system engendered deeply ingrained patterns of local-level rule and social organization, but such localization also helped awaken nationalist movements over time.

However, the effort to keep the Ottoman Empire competitive with its European rivals triggered severe internal conflict about how to reform. Modernizers in the nineteenth century saw the adoption of European technology, laws, and concepts as the way to cope with Western intrusions into Ottoman territories in North Africa and Europe, as in the Young Ottoman and Young Turk movements. Traditionalists advocated a return to religious purity and a rejection of Westernization as the recipe for staving off European imperialism. Ultimately, Ottoman reforms were cut short by the demise of the empire itself, as financial crises, domestic revolts, and geopolitical competition with Britain, France, and Russia weakened the Ottoman state. By the 1880s, European powers recognized the “sick man of Europe” was interminably declining, as its North African holdings in Tunisia and Egypt became lost to French and British intrusions. Self-determination movements elsewhere in Ottoman lands also weakened loyalties to the Caliphate.

Turkish nationalism did not fully emerge until the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, but the seeds were planted early on. After the 1908 Young Turk revolution, in which political reformists forced the Ottoman Sultan to

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establish a new constitutional order, economic nationalism appeared in reaction to financial controls imposed by European creditors. Yet not even the Young Turks' activists and officers ever abandoned their hope of maintaining the empire, especially its Arab and Islamic elements. What sealed the Ottoman fate was World War One, which wrested control of most territories outside Anatolia towards of British, French, and Italian rulership, followed by the 1919–23 Turkish War of Independence. There, the charismatic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk led nationalist forces to victory against Allied plans to partition the remains of the Ottoman state. He served as a critical rallying point against the invading Greeks, and convinced the Western powers to end their occupation. It was in the wake of this Kemalist victory, signified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, that the Caliphate was abolished and the new Turkish Republic was born.

The Kemalist inception, 1924–1950s

Modern Turkey was built upon the political structures erected by the Young Turks' reforms. The Ottoman parliament restored in 1908 continued as the Grand National Assembly, and the Committee of Union and Progress served as the model for Atatürk's new political vehicle, the Republican People's Party (CHP). At the center of this new political order was Mustafa Kemal, who after reestablishing public order began the extensive, top-down modernization of Turkish society. He saw little need to retain any Arab dominions, but nonetheless insisted on keeping a Kurdish-inhabited segment of the Anatolian Peninsula and other minority-populated areas, which he considered essential for national coherence. He also disempowered traditional sources of religious authority, moved the capital to Ankara, and in 1924 ended the position of Caliph in a demonstration of national authority and state sovereignty. Signifying the republican intention to regulate and control Islamic discourse, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments was shuttered and replaced by a more politically subservient bureaucracy to administer religion, the *Diyanet* (Directorate of Religious Affairs).

Seeking to transform Turkey quickly and radically, Atatürk offered social and legal reforms that ran the gamut, from establishing modern dress codes to replacing the Arabic alphabet with the Latin. The Kemalist government abolished shari'a courts, forced religious schools to close their doors, and imposed a number of other decrees undermining autonomous sources of Islamic authority. Atatürk's Kemalist vision resonated with secular commitments, but it was also instrumentalist: the Turkish Republic would not prohibit religiosity, but rather harness it in extremely circumscribed ways. By the late 1920s, religious

administrators and civil servants had a clear new mission: to transform the masses of loyal Turkish citizens through state-sponsored Turkification and nationalization initiatives. The state that emerged was a parliamentary republic in form, though an autocracy in practice. Atatürk used his Republican People's Party to dominate politics. Six fundamental pillars comprised the party's ideology: republicanism, populism, nationalism, laicism, statism, and reformism. Backed by a hand-picked parliamentary majority, Mustafa Kemal shut down rival political groups, starting with supporters of the Caliph in the 1923 elections and the Progressive Republican Party in 1925.

Mustafa Kemal's death in 1938 interrupted this process of state-building, but left behind a robust foundation. The government afterwards became even more authoritarian, lashing out at domestic minorities. Atatürk's successor, İsmet İnönü, sought to align the republic with the victors of World War Two and secure their support against the Soviet Union. Partly for this reason, he decided to liberalize the regime to gain favor with the West, allowing an opposition group against the CHP, the Democrat Party, to form in 1946. The Democrats won in 1950, capitalizing on widespread discontent generated by years of atrophying CHP rule. The Democrats had the support of rural areas as well as the private sector they had championed. By contrast, Kemalists remained ensconced in the civilian and military bureaucracy, suspicious of the Democrats' willingness to relax Atatürk's reforms. Military officers perceived themselves as losers in the new order, and some began as early as the mid-1950s to secretly agitate for a coup. The absence of a political tradition of tolerance engendered a climate of oppression, as the Democrats continued winning elections in 1953 and 1957.

Praetorianism and republicanism, 1950s–1980s

Upset with the Democrats, army officers executed a coup in 1960; they proceeded by banning the Democrat Party, executing three of its leaders, and introducing a new constitution. Within a year, they had transferred power to a new parliament that chose İnönü as prime minister, and he formed a series of weak and unstable coalitions. The year 1965 brought unexpected change when a new political group led by Süleyman Demirel, the Justice Party, successfully challenged İnönü and the Republicans by winning an overwhelming electoral victory in 1965 and again in 1969. However, political unrest again challenged the institutional equilibrium, with criticism emerging this time from a newcomer – Necmettin Erbakan, a politician who appealed to Islamic activists. Erbakan founded the National Order Party in 1970, an early expression of Islamism. Mounting student and labor disorder led the

army in March 1971 to issue an extraordinary public demand for more effective rule. Otherwise, they warned, the armed forces would seize power.

This cemented a pattern of praetorian interventionism, ostensibly for the sake of safeguarding the Kemalist legacy and recalibrating state institutions: when social unrest, driven by leftist or right-wing mobilization and amplified by elite bickering, became too great, the military intervened to reset the political game. After the 1971 warning, thus, Demirel resigned, and parliament voted into power a series of technocratic cabinets under nonpartisan prime ministers. Under the military's tutelage, these governments imposed martial law, narrowed many constitutional protections, banned the Marxist party, and made widespread arrests to suppress terrorism. Intellectuals, journalists, and labor leaders filled the jails. Erbakan's National Order Party was also disbanded on the grounds that it violated Turkey's constitutional commitment to secularism. The 1973 elections exposed political shifts in the ideological spectrum, as the Justice Party's centrist-right base fragmented while the CHP, now led by Bülent Ecevit, won a plurality of seats. Erbakan's party regrouped as the National Salvation Party.

This began a series of coalition governments, with Ecevit and Demirel alternating as prime minister and each drawing upon the National Salvation Party as a critical swing vote. Ecevit's first coalition sent Turkish troops into Cyprus in July 1974, following a Greek-inspired *putsch* against President Makarios. But when Ecevit resigned, hoping to force early elections to cash in on the popularity of sending troops, he was outmaneuvered and blocked by Demirel. The 1977 elections failed to resolve the impasse, and rivalries between the CHP and Justice Party resulted in political paralysis. Worse, the economy trended downwards as foreign currency shortages, triple-digit inflation, rising unemployment, and import shortages roiled the citizenry. Violent clashes between leftist and right-wing student groups also flared. While financial support by the International Monetary Fund rescued Turkey's financial standing, a deadlocked parliament failed to elect a president. The major parties ignored repeated warnings from the military to cooperate; indeed, the National Salvation Party flouted constitutional provisions against exploiting religion, Kurdish unrest began to grow in the east, and no-confidence motions against cabinet ministers challenged the government's existence.

The military responded with a coup. It ousted the government in September 1980 and closed parliament. It ruled for several years via its National Security Council, during which period party propaganda was prohibited, old parties were abolished, and institutions such as universities and unions were fundamentally restructured. Military tribunals detained and tried

hundreds of thousands of people; among them were Ecevit, Demirel, and Erbakan. A new constitution in 1982, quickly approved via referendum, invoked clearer rules and boundaries regarding the presidency and other political structures. This heralded the presidency of General Kenan Evren until 1989; during his tenure, many civil liberties remained suspended, while youth organizations and student groups were sternly disciplined to prevent future social violence.

Curiously, though, this period also allowed elements of Islamism to percolate into politics, as some military elites believed this could temper the radicalism of leftist and right-wing ideologies. This would have profound long-term consequences. In the 1980s, analysts estimate that 1500 new mosques were constructed annually, and religious organizations found themselves with newfound latitude to shape culture and education. Long-standing institutional arrangements around religion were expanded in ways that permanently enlarged the religious field, despite the ostensibly secular nature of the Turkish state and the military's prerogatives. The 1982 constitution, for instance, strengthened the Diyanet, tasking it with the goal of protecting "national solidarity and integrity" – a clause that implied Islamic ideals to lay close to the notion of Turkishness. Among the new religious voices that mobilized was the preacher Fethullah Gülen, who led his followers around a self-proclaimed Hizmet (Service) movement.

By the mid-1980s, political pluralism returned as a two-party system created by the military did not stand the test of popularity. After the 1983 elections, the old parties re-emerged under different names, with even Ecevit, Demirel, and Erbakan resurrecting their careers. What helped their rejuvenation was a new rule – a 10 percent electoral threshold, which prevented smaller parties from entering parliament and strengthened larger ones. In the 1987 elections, the most successful party was the new Motherland Party, led by the technocratic Turgut Özal, who had served as prime minister under Evren. Özal eventually became president, serving between 1989 and 1993. His tenure saw Kurdish unrest in the southeast, the increasing salience of Islamist politics, and mounting inflationary and budgetary pressures. Özal's neoliberal reforms deregulated the economy; marking the move away from state-led developmentalism, the government reduced trade barriers, initiated privatization, attracted foreign investment, and eliminated capital controls. A new class of wealth emerged around this market-oriented opening, and public investments resulted in upgraded transportation, communication, and infrastructure. On the downside, fiscal deficits mushroomed and public debt mounted.

To soothe social tensions, the Motherland-led government eased restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language, and prohibitions on the right to espouse class or religious ideologies were dropped from the penal code. The Kurdish issue was especially troublesome. The emergence of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in the mid-1980s, and its call for an uprising against a Turkish state that refused to entertain the possibility of Kurdish autonomy, resulted in armed clashes and terrorist attacks. In the 1991 elections, the Motherland Party came in second to Demirel's True Path Party, resulting in a new coalition that faced almost immediate challenges from the Kurdish insurrection and foreign pressures. The aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War inflamed Turkey's deepening Kurdish unrest. Forceful government retaliation, including thrusts into northern Iraq against PKK bases, led Kurdish politicians active in parliamentary politics to break away.

New directions, 1990s–2010s

Against this background, the unexpected death of President Özal in April 1993 brought about significant change: Demirel was elected president; he then named a newcomer, Tansu Çiller, as Turkey's first female prime minister. Çiller disappointed many, as she alienated key constituencies and allowed rampant corruption. By the time of the December 1995 elections, her popularity flailed alongside a newcomer – Refah (Welfare), led by a grizzled Erbakan and the successor to the National Salvation Party of the 1970s. Refah's appeal as untainted by corruption overcame voters' reluctance to support a religiously oriented party. It also capitalized on the slow-moving trend towards greater Islamic expression among the Turkish public, exploiting the contributions of Islamic charitable endowments (*vakıf*) and voluntary religious associations (*dernek*). The number of *vakıfs* doubled from less than 1,000 in the early 1980s to just under 2,000 by the early 1990s, while the number of religious associations likewise grew. Another plank of support came from Gülen and his spiritual movement, which had begun funding private schools, charitable foundations, and other social services to fill widening gaps in the state's developmental capabilities. The Gülenist movement would soon become multifaceted and enormous in scope, with members and sympathizers active across the business community, civil society, the armed forces, the judiciary, and other government offices.

Refah won the 1995 elections, winning 158 out of 550 contested seats. This created shock waves among the civilian and military elite, who saw the Kemalist vision of secular republicanism under attack. After some shuffling, Çiller and her True Path Party formed a coalition government with Refah

that rewarded Erbakan with the premiership. Tension between the new government and the military quickly materialized. In February 1997, military generals issued an 18-point set of demands to preserve secularist institutions, posing a direct challenge to the policies espoused by Refah politicians. So began what some observers called Turkey's post-modern coup: the military, working in tandem with secular civilian partners, engineered the government's downfall in June 1997. Under the military's influence, the Constitutional Court banned Refah and Erbakan from politics. The party, however, reconstituted itself as the Virtue Party – a common resurrection strategy in Turkey where, in anticipation of party banning, shell parties are created to absorb members of parliament and activists.

After a brief premiership by Motherland's Mesut Yilmaz, Ecevit returned as prime minister in 1999. His fortunes received an unexpected boost that year when US officials handed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan to Turkish authorities, after having tracked down his whereabouts in an extensive intelligence effort. Ecevit's reputation for probity and the capture of Öcalan catapulted his Democratic Left Party from fourth to first place in the 1999 elections, winning a plurality of the popular vote. Close behind was the right-wing National Action Party (MHP), which had its roots in the right-wing militant movements of the 1970s. The resulting coalition government appeared more serious than its predecessors about budgetary discipline and trying to meet the criteria for inclusion in the European Union, which appeared to be a major goal.

These promising developments were set back when Ecevit and the president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, engaged in a heated public row over corruption. The February 2001 dispute occurred at a time when the banking sector was reeling from over a decade of poor management, regulatory liberalization, and risky arbitrage operations that permeated to infect other areas of economic productivity. In 2001, financial crisis hit as investors fled the country, the Turkish currency (lira) depreciated by half, inflation rose again, and credit disappeared. The World Bank and IMF lent funds once again, but this time with stricter structural adjustment policies. The resulting neoliberal economic reforms helped produce a gradual recovery, but not before unemployment increased and spending cuts exposed more Turkish communities to poverty.

The 2002 elections catalyzed the political trajectory upon which, as of 2019, Turkey still follows. In that year, the new Justice and Development Party (AKP) captured almost two-thirds of the seats in parliament, although it garnered only 34 percent of the vote. The AKP was an offshoot of

Erbakan's Virtue Party, formed by a breakaway faction led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Bülent Arınç. Erdoğan, the former mayor of Istanbul, and Gül, the party leader, maneuvered the AKP initially towards a more conciliatory approach to the republican state's secularist traditions. They distanced themselves from – and even repudiated – Erbakan and his hardcore followers. Their success was electrifying to global watchers: an Islamist party, though a comparatively moderate one, had come to power on its own, would not need to rely upon partners to form a coalition government, and seemed to be under no military threat. Gül became prime minister, followed by Erdoğan in March 2003.

The Erdoğan government's first priority was to deepen the reforms needed to advance Turkey's EU candidacy. The AKP quickly introduced a series of reforms that began to curtail some of the military's praetorian powers. It continued neoliberal economic reforms, while relaxing political restrictions on the Kurdish minority and promising to crack down upon corruption. Erdoğan also engineered an about-face in Turkey's Cyprus policy. As a result, the EU in December 2004 announced that Turkey had become a candidate for membership and in October 2005 officially initiated accession negotiations. While some feared that the AKP harbored a hidden agenda, the business community – both domestic and international – had high hopes for this new era in Turkish politics.

The normalization of Islamism proceeded with rising political controversies, as the ruling party began to exercise its political muscle. The AK Party maintained close ties with the Gülenist movement, with each Islamist entity drawing upon the other to legitimize their standing. In the 2007 elections, the AKP retained its majority, winning 46.6 percent of the vote to the CHP's 20.9 percent and MHP's 14.3 percent. It was around that time that legal investigations began in what culminated in the "Ergenekon trials." Ergenekon is the name of an alleged secret organization with ultra-Kemalist leanings that was charged with inciting violence and plotting to overthrow civilian governments. After a supposed Ergenekon plot was divulged in 2007, over 500 people were detained and nearly 300 were charged with committing some crime in connection with the organization. Among the accused were top-ranking military generals, university professors, mobsters, editors, writers, and journalists. At one point, one-tenth of all active generals and admirals were in prison or awaiting trial.

That trial divided the Turkish public. Some welcomed the weakening of the army's praetorian instincts, and argued that true democracy could not coexist with a "deep state" that could rule Turkey from behind the scenes

with support from the military. Critics of the trial believed that most of the charges were fabricated and that the AKP and its supporters were unjustly using the judiciary to silence opponents and cement party authority, not least to immunize itself from future coups. By 2010, the AKP managed to establish total civilian control over the military, in part through a popular referendum on a sweeping package of constitutional reforms. The package, which passed with 58 percent of the popular vote, included a measure to make the military answerable to civilian courts. The passage reform package was welcomed by Europe and other Western powers, who touted the reforms as the beginning of the end of military tutelage. Not long after, another round of high-level arrests shook the military establishment, with accusations that military elements had conspired to overthrow the AKP in 2002 in an operation called Sledgehammer. The chief of staff and the commanders of the army, navy, and air force all resigned in protest against the arrests; and though most officers were eventually exonerated because Erdoğan and the AKP decided to part ways with the Gülenist movement, whose judges led the investigation, the military became an emasculated force.

Erdoğan's premiership continued into the 2010s, as the AKP won the 2011 elections with nearly 50 percent of the national vote, and CHP and MHP again running a distant second and third, respectively. That sustained popularity stemmed not only from high turnout among pious voters and Islamist elements, but also from continued beliefs among many lower-income and middle-class citizens that the current government could maintain its steady economic hand while expanding social services through impressive new investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare. This success was followed in August 2014 by the first direct presidential election, in which Erdoğan ran for and won the presidency with 52 percent of the vote. This victory was all the more remarkable given the Gezi Park protests that rocked Turkey in the summer of 2013, which had a distinctly anti-AKP bent as millions of Turkish youths rallied against the government.

These protests also spelled the end to the long-standing alliance between the AKP and the Gülenist movement. Although tensions between the AKP and Gülenists had been simmering for some time, the alliance ruptured when Erdoğan signaled his intention to force the closure of Gülenist-run schools. These schools were central to the movement's financing structure, the Gülenists claimed that the closures were an act of retaliation after the movement had criticized government suppression of the Gezi protesters. Corruption scandals with the AKP by 2013 were magnified by accusations that Gülenist judges were attempting to unseat the party; as president, Erdoğan dubbed

the entire Gülenist movement as a terrorist organization, and began purging known Gülenists from state agencies while shutting down their media outlets. Indeed, Erdoğan's 2014 victory in the presidential elections cemented a troubling pattern of increasing political abuses, as critics of the AKP – Gülenist or otherwise – found themselves under intense judicial and financial scrutiny. Fines, prosecutions, and detentions became increasing threats to journalists, academics, activists, and other political voices, while at the electoral level political competition intensified as the CHP began rallying its Kemalist base.

The June 2015 elections produced a curious result made worse by overt manipulation. The CHP argued it was increasingly unable to challenge the AKP's domination of state institutions and unconstitutional behavior, in part because of its increasing grip over the media. Yet the AK Party won only 41 percent of the vote, partly because the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HDP) decided to run as a party – an earthquake of a decision, as it removed the conservative Kurdish electorate's support away from the AKP. As a result, the HDP, with 13 percent of the votes, crossed the 10 percent threshold necessary to win seats in parliament and won a total of 80 seats – a net gain of 60 compared to the previous elections. However, the resumption of hostilities with the PKK that summer and failure to form a government forced snap elections in November 2015, in which the AKP regained its majority. The previous month, the deadliest terrorist attacks in Turkish history occurred when suicide bombers with suspected ties to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) killed over 100 at a peace rally in Ankara. Given the dark climate, opposition parties remained relatively docile, but alleged electoral fraud and other anti-democratic practices at Erdoğan and the AKP afterwards.

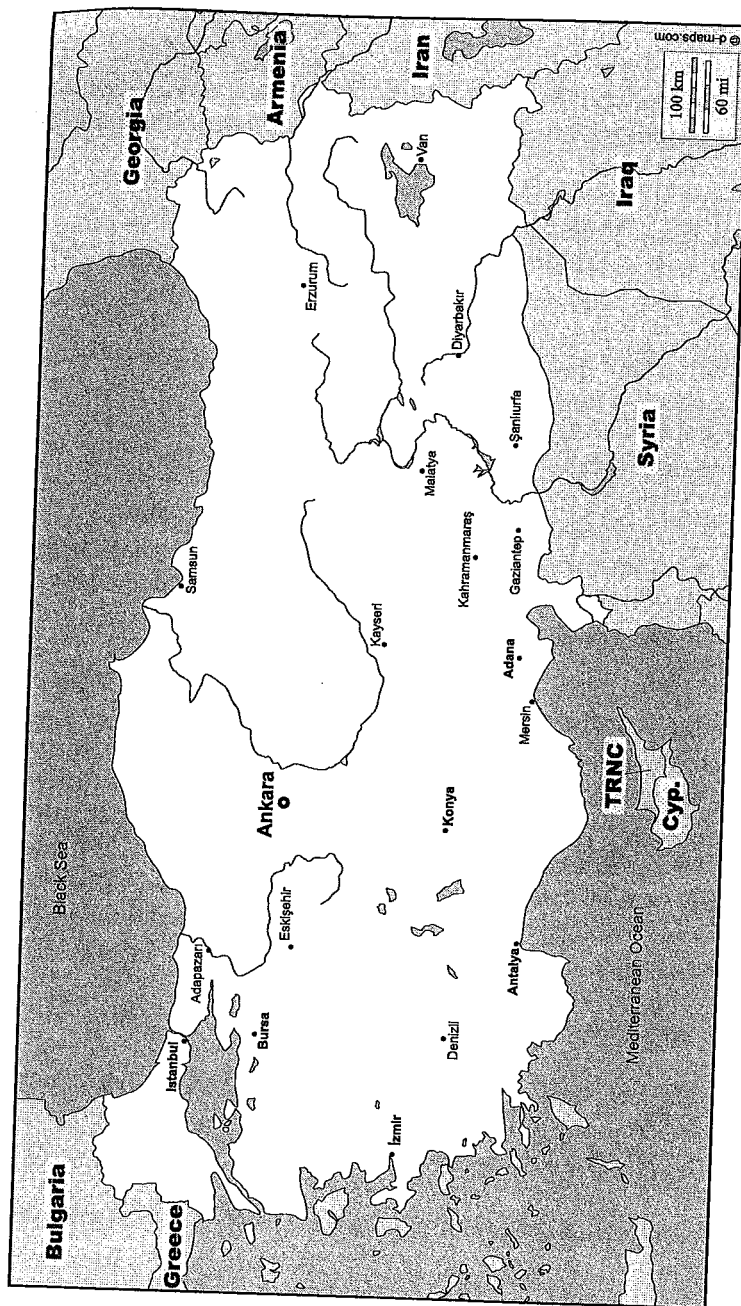
Politics has become increasingly polarized in the years since. In July 2016, Turkish domestic politics was upended when military conspirators attempted to overthrow the government in a chaotic set of events that initially saw the shutdown of state media, violent armed clashes between mutineers and loyalists, and finally street confrontations that eventually overwhelmed pro-coup soldiers. Hundreds died and thousands were injured in the clashes, which days later were pinned – by Erdoğan, at a press conference – upon the Gülenist movement and its infiltrators in the military. The government imposed emergency rule and organized a massive rally to shore up its popular base. This began a period of ratcheting illiberalism, as the Turkish government tenaciously pursued suspected Gülenist sympathizers and other oppositionists.

The 2018 round of Turkish elections consolidated the AKP's reign, making Western observers – former enthusiasts of the government – open critics of what it saw as a frail democracy backsliding into authoritarianism. Having passed constitutional amendments in 2017 turning the political system into a presidential one, Erdoğan won his presidential elections with 52.6 percent of the vote over Muharrem İnce, the CHP's candidate. Notable other candidates were Selahattin Demirtaş, the HDP's leader who had been detained in the post-coup crackdown on politicized charges, and thus ran from prison; and Meral Akşener, the female leader of the new İyi (Good) Party, which was established the year before as a right-leaning Kemalist party. For its part, the right-wing MHP struck an alliance with AKP. The parliamentary elections revealed similar results: AKP won over 295 of the 600 seats in the newly enlarged (but institutionally weakened) parliament, with CHP winning 146, the MHP 49, the İyi 43, and HDP 67.

As the 2010s closed, Turkish politics thus came to resemble – for better or for worse – a trend seen in some Western democracies. Elections had become extremely contentious, politics polarized by often poisonously divisive discourse, and the incumbent party increasingly willing to cut corners and employ all possible tactics to maintain its power of government.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Turkey is a land of pronounced physical contrasts and sharp disparities. Extending 783,562 square kilometers (302,535 square miles) – 40 percent larger than France – it ranges from sea level to the 5,165-meter (16,945-foot) peak of Mount Ararat, which is higher than any European mountain. The western part of the country, bordering on the Aegean and Marmara Seas, is a region of developed communication and easy access to the inland plateau. Eastern Turkey, abutting the Caucasian republics, Iran, and Iraq, is mountainous, cut by rivers into more or less isolated valleys. The population is over 80 million, and is increasing at a rate of around 1.5 percent a year, the recent Syrian refugee influx notwithstanding. Major cities are spread across the land (Map 14.1). Istanbul, the former Ottoman capital, remains the largest city, with a rapidly growing population of over 15 million, while Ankara, the capital, reached 5.5 million in 2019. Other major cities include coastal İzmir and Adana; Bursa, another former Ottoman capital; the former Seljuq capital, Konya; and newly industrializing Anatolian cities like Denizli, Mersin, Kayseri, and Gaziantep.



MAP 14.1
 Republic of Turkey. Major water bodies, rivers, and cities shown.
 Source: D-Maps.

With a 99 percent Muslim population, modern Turkey is far more homogeneous than the multiethnic, multireligious Ottoman Empire. Sunni Islam predominates, but the heterodox Alevi sect accounts for at least 15 to 20 percent of Muslims. Kurds constitute the most significant ethnic minority. Inspired by France, Turkey's official understanding of citizenship does not recognize ethnic minorities, which makes precise data on the size of this minority group also impossible to come by. Yet it is commonly estimated that about 20 percent of Turkey's population is of Kurdish origin. Kurds represent a clear majority in Turkey's southeast provinces and speak a distinct Indo-European language with several different dialects.

The complexities of Turkey's social and economic environment have been compounded by rapid urbanization. By 2018, some 75 percent of Turkish citizens lived in urban areas, up from just 40 percent in 1990. Over the last 30 years, the rapid influx of traditionally oriented, religiously observant rural dwellers has given many urban areas a bifurcated appearance, where the modern and traditional chaotically coexist. On the gender front, the picture is also quite mixed. Turkey has brought urban women into the mainstream of political, professional, and cultural life. The educational level of women has risen steadily, and the literacy rate of school-age girls is approaching that of boys: male literacy is around 98 percent, while female literacy is close to 94 percent. Although many social barriers still exist, females have not faced legal obstacles hindering employment opportunities since the 1930s. In the villages, however, the traditional male-dominated pattern of life persists, as it does to some extent in the urban communities where new migrants from the countryside have settled.

Salient issues of identity and minority status in Turkey are rooted in the country's difficult transition from a cosmopolitan Muslim empire to a sovereign nation-state that privileged Turkishness and Sunni Islam. The Kurdish population is a case in point. Turkey's transition to multi-party democracy during the Cold War significantly shaped the position of Kurdish identity politics in the political environment. As the nation was a NATO member with Soviet borders, left-right political divisions came to characterize Turkish politics. Generally speaking, political Islam became associated with the anti-communist right, while the Kurdish movement was part of the socialist Left. Kurdish dissent was therefore long expressed in terms of "class conflict" rather than ethnic grievances, which enabled Kurdish political assimilation within Turkey's leftist movements.

In the 1980s, however, the rise of the PKK and outright demands for Kurdish autonomy politicized the issue of national and subnational identities,

while also securitizing numerous areas in southeastern Turkey, where the military waged counterinsurgent battles against Kurdish militants. Between 1984 and 1999, the Kurdish conflict caused some 35,000 deaths among insurgents, the local population, and security forces, costing the Turkish economy an estimated \$120 billion and hindering the economic integration and development of many provinces in the southeast. The conflict abated after the 1990s, with Öcalan's capture, various ceasefires, and promises to establish more linguistic, cultural, and political rights for Kurds. Low-level violence and hostilities persist, however.

Complicating matters is that Turkey's Kurds have not remained geographically concentrated. Due to conflict-induced migration, over half of the Kurdish population came to inhabit the western and southern regions of the country. Istanbul, for instance, became home to the largest urban concentration of Kurds in the world. Further, most Kurds used to have tribal connections, but the influence of traditional leaders has been waning rapidly. These chiefs frequently also head branches of dervish orders (Nakshibandi and Kadiri) or belong to religious sects (such as the Nurcular). Especially in eastern Turkey, this social organization historically both perpetuated an identity separate from that of the rest of the Turkish population and divided the various tribes and clans into rival units.

The Alevi-Sunni cleavage remains one of the most important divisions in Turkish society. Under the Sunni supremacy of the Ottoman Empire, Alevis were a persecuted minority given their Shi'a proclivity and heterodox practice of Islam. The Ottomans' historic rivalry with the Shi'a Safavid Empire further complicated the status of Alevis and put in question their loyalty to the Sunni-led Ottoman government. Many Alevis therefore enthusiastically supported the modernizing reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that led to the weakening of the Sunni religious establishment in Turkey. Yet the peculiar nature of religion-state relations in Turkey, where the state recognizes, controls, and administers the Sunni branch as the only legitimate practice of Islam, is an ongoing source of disappointment. Equally problematic is the anti-Alevi societal and political bias in Turkey, based mainly on the grounds that Alevis do not attend mosques and have their own community centers and religious rituals. To this day intermarriage between Alevis and Sunnis remains quite exceptional.

Economic conditions

Economic development has been a major engine of political transformation. A number of prominent family business groups emerged in the early republican period with state support, when Turkey began state-led development

strategies. From the 1950s, Turkey witnessed significant growth in agricultural productivity thanks to improved mechanization and large-scale irrigation. Yet state-led industrialization drives characterized most of the 1960s and early 1970s. Public investment in heavy industry and state-owned enterprises produced a robust manufacturing base that targeted the domestic market. Furthermore, it was during the 1960s that many of the largest multi-activity family firms transformed themselves into holding companies. The holding company structure, which is characterized by high levels of diversification across unrelated sectors and the flexibility to shift between importing and exporting strategies, was advantageous given the frequent shifts in government policy.

Turkey's economy grew briskly in the 1960s, averaging nearly 6 percent GDP growth per year. Yet there were clear limits to be felt by the 1970s. Turkey, unlike successful late-developing economies, never managed to fully switch from import-substitution to export-led growth. Businesses – big and small alike – remained heavily dependent on the state. Chambers of industry and commerce had become fora for political and economic debate in the multi-party era, yet they also hindered private-sector interests from collectively organizing around particular issues. In response, big business became disenchanted with the chambers' organizational structure, as larger firms struggled to exert their prerogatives in the face of resistance from each regional chamber's multitude of smaller firms. This resulted in some internal restructuring of the economy. The first voluntary big-business association, the Turkish Industrialists and Business Association (TIBA), was established in 1971, with the objective of strengthening the political clout of its members. TIBA developed a quasi-public function through which it could influence the country's economic orientation by interfacing directly with political officials. Although TIBA developed into (and still is) a significant actor in Turkish politics and economics, the state remains the most dominant force in terms of shaping the economy.

More so than the immovable state, social unrest in the form of major labor disputes and commitments to economic populism – all escalated by fierce political battles and electoral dramas – drained Turkey's economic performance throughout the 1970s. At the end of the decade, the surge in oil prices, growing trade deficits, an overvalued currency, mass budget deficits, and high inflation shook the economy. Market dynamics, and the private sector remained secondary forces to the public sector and state-owned firms, which dictated the rhythms of trade and so were unable to adapt to changing external conditions. To cope with these challenges and hasten integration

and stability, Turkey began to entertain neoliberal reforms under IMF guidance in the early 1980s. Under Prime Minister Özal, the government dismantled subsidies on energy and other basic commodities and enacted policies to stimulate exports. Despite considerable structural reform, though, by the end of the decade Turkey was still unable to control its public debt. In the absence of strict fiscal and monetary restraint, Turkey also failed to deal with rampant inflation, which in real terms never sunk below 30 percent during the decade.

The 1990s represented a decade of difficult economic transition, as inflationary pressures and increased trade openness squeezed the traditional state-owned economy. GDP growth swung wildly; though it averaged over 4 percent during the 1980s, annual rates ranged from 10 percent in 1987 to virtually nothing two years later, when recession took hold. Tighter monetary controls and budget ceilings helped stabilize inflation, reduce capital flight, and achieve some financial liberalization, but it took much of the decade for industries and consumption habits to adapt. Much like the 1980s, the 1990s were characterized by macroeconomic volatility compounded by political uncertainties; years of economic rebound were counterbalanced by major fiscal crises in 1991, 1994, 1998, and 1999 – the latter partly reflecting the devastating earthquake that killed 17,000.

One stabilizing factor was the rise of new business actors, such as the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (IIBA), which was established in 1990. Encompassing thousands of private-sector firms that sought to break the virtual monopolies held by major family-owned, state-supported corporations in many sectors, the IIBA included pious business networks sympathetic to Islamism. Alongside other new business groups, the IIBA helped improve access to finance and investment funding as well as in building a religiously sensitive consumer base and a competent labor force, all by leveraging trust-based networks built upon shared religious and culture values and institutions. A great many of the suggestions put forward in IIBA's 2002 annual report were reflected in the first economic strategy documents of the newly established moderate Islamist party, the AKP, reflecting the fusion of a winning political formula – a tamed Islamism with neoliberal economic tendencies.

In this context, Turkey's improved relations with the European Union after the 1999 Helsinki Summit provided much-needed external incentives for further reforms. The EU's impact became particularly clear in the November 2002 elections when the AKP campaigned to further Turkey's future inclusion. Commensurate with the AKP's ascent, one particular Islamist

movement, that of the aforementioned Fethullah Gülen, gathered momentum. Gülenists made great efforts to build up their support base by guiding their members to engage and invest in civic causes, such as building schools in Turkey and elsewhere. The Gülenist-associated Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists also encompassed new firms and entrepreneurs, boasting some 49,000 members by 2012. Though Gülen later fled to the US in 1999 under threats of prosecution, these overlapping networks of Gülenism were allied with the AKP and its social and business coalitions, which helped stabilize economic policymaking by the 2000s.

Indeed, during its first decade in power, the AKP remained strongly committed to its reformist agenda. Structural changes, productivity growth, and a broadening base of economic activity all contributed to a climate of optimism. Between 2002–07 Turkey enjoyed five years of rapid economic growth, with GDP per capita increasing at almost 6 percent per annum. By 2005 the Turkish economy had stabilized, and inflation fell to levels that allowed lopping six zeros off the currency. From about 2007 onwards, however, economic growth slowed significantly. This slowdown resulted, in part, from vagaries in the global business cycle. The European economic crisis cast a pall, but the Arab Spring had less of an impact upon productivity given the westward focus of Turkish exports and investment. In 2011, economic growth leapt by 11.1 percent; and through it slowed down, as of 2018 the GDP had expanded by an average annual rate of 6.6 percent for the decade. By 2019, the Turkish economy remained among the world's top twenty as measured by GDP size.

The later years of the 2010s, however, brought new challenges in the form of currency and debt crises. The former manifest in the plunging value of the Turkish lira concomitant with rising inflation, prompting some analysts to call for another International Monetary Fund intervention. The latter was expressed in increasingly large budget deficits and current account imbalances, as Turkish imports exceeded export revenues and Turkish banks turned to heavy borrowing to cover their spending. Indeed, the country had become heavily dependent on a steady flow of foreign loans to finance massive investments in infrastructure and mega-projects, including housing, roads, bridges, and airports. Cronyism and favoritism also began to take root. Firms with government connections received a disproportionate amount of state contracts and privileged access to deals involving state-owned land.

Compounding matters has been politics, as the increasingly abusive tendencies of the AKP-led government and Erdoğan's unorthodox beliefs stripped the Central Bank of its independent authority. Erdoğan's decision

to appoint his son-in-law to lead a newly combined ministry of treasury and finance in the summer of 2018 only further alienated many foreign creditors, while international rating agencies responded by downgrading Turkish sovereign debt further into junk territory. By 2019, the country's economic outlook had become bleak once more.

POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Turkey is a unitary republic with a presidential system. The 1982 constitution, as amended, centers on a 600-seat unicameral legislature, the Grand National Assembly. That constitution made cabinet ministers "jointly responsible" for the execution of the government's general policy and personally liable for their ministries' acts. The prime minister, who traditionally served as the top executive, headed the Council of Ministers. The president of the republic, long a ceremonial position, was elected by the Grand National Assembly for a seven-year term. However, as a result of constitutional amendments passed in 2016 and implemented soon after, Turkey became a presidential republic with no prime minister. The president serves as both head of state and head of government, and is elected directly by citizens for a five-year term, with a two-term limit. Parliamentarians serve for four-year terms, but the legislature now has less power at the expense of the enlarged executive powers of the presidency. The Turkish president can now appoint cabinet ministers directly (as well as dismiss them), in addition to top judges. The presidency also now reserves considerable independent authority to legislate issues through decree, and declare states of emergency.

One of the most important objectives of the 1982 constitution was to strongly reassert the authority of the state, partly as a reaction to the 1961 constitution, which was perceived as too liberal. Drafted after the 1980 military intervention, the 1982 constitution prioritized law and order and set up state security courts, where military judges served with civil judges. These courts were abolished in 2004 under the AKP's pro-EU democratization program, and underwent further reorganization after the 2016 amendments. Although superior administrative and military courts have final jurisdiction over cases within their competencies, the Turkish judicial system provides for the Constitutional Court to rule on the constitutionality of laws and decrees. The Constitutional Court functions as the supreme court of the land and therefore decides all cases relating to political parties. The Turkish judiciary remains highly vulnerable to executive influence, however, particularly given the new powers wielded by the president.

Understanding Turkey's evolving political structure requires a basic grasp of the republic's foundational principle. Unlike most other Western democracies, Turkey has an official state ideology. This ideology, *Kemalism*, is named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of modern Turkey. Today, however, there is no consensus among Kemalists themselves on what *Kemalism* stands for in the twenty-first century. Historically the military has been the state's backbone, serving as the guardian of the republic's *Kemalist* legacy. During the Cold War, whenever the military intervened in the realm of politics, it justified all actions as necessary for maintaining stability of the republic. Yet unlike Latin American militaries, which tended to rule through *juntas* for long periods of time, the Turkish army never remained in power. To preserve its professionalism, it always returned to the barracks. None of the three major military interventions in Turkish politics (1960, 1971, and 1980) lasted more than three years.

In the post-Cold War era, the *Kemalist* military has viewed the primary threats to the republic to be Kurdish nationalism and political Islam. At the same time, the pattern of military interventions changed. Instead of directly overthrowing governments, the military used a variety of less blunt means to dislodge or pressure elected governments, sometimes through pronouncements, as in February 1997 and April 2007. The *Ergenekon* trials and consequent constitutional reforms, however, greatly eroded the power of the armed forces. Indeed, opponents of those reforms argued that those proposals to strengthen the control of the president and parliament over the appointment of judges and prosecutors reflected the AKP's desire to erode the separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary. The blowback from the subsequent controversy over the *Sledgehammer* operation further discredited the military, disrupting the chain of command and weakening the military's appetite for political intervention.

Turkey's political parties operate with relative efficiency in mobilizing voters. Participation in elections has generally been high, historically involving between 64 and 94 percent of eligible voters. As of 2019, the dominant party is the Islamist AKP, which has won a plurality in every election since 2002 under the leadership of Erdoğan (Photo 14.1). Although the AKP has suffered some defections since 2017, with both activists and elites alike becoming disgruntled with Erdoğan's domineering leadership, the party remains the largest in Turkish politics. Its primary opposition has been the leftist CHP, which strongly retains a *Kemalist* identity. Allied to the CHP is the center-right İyi Party, which entered the electoral scene in 2018 and siphoned off votes from the right-wing MHP, which allied itself with the

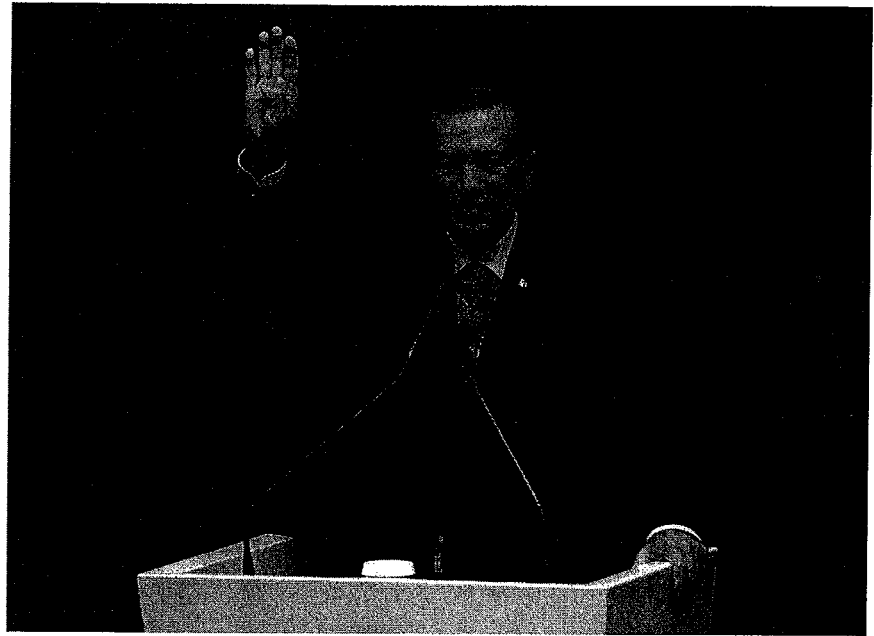


PHOTO 14.1

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey.

Source: Pixabay. Public domain.

AKP. The Kurdish HDP remains something of an enigmatic kingmaker. Though it has spent some years implicitly working with the AKP, partly due to Erdoğan's vague promises of enhancing Kurdish rights and representation, by the late 2010s the party forged a more independent path, even as its leader, Demirtaş, languished in jail on questionable charges.

POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Until recently political patterns in Turkey have shown remarkable continuity, despite frequent military interventions. On the one hand, that continuity reflects the longevity of political figures in Turkey, where tenures of 30 or even 40 years for major political leaders are not uncommon. On the other hand, voting blocs themselves have changed little in proportion over the years, which would give the right-of-center a marked edge were it not torn by

intense personal rivalries at various junctures. Another major aspect of continuity, albeit one that has been eroded since the advent of the presidential system under Erdoğan, has been the commitment to elective parliamentary rule, which most political elements, including the military, have seen as the principal legitimizing political process.

Turkish voters do not cast ballots on a class basis. Rather, the ups and downs in party performance suggest that many Turkish voters – excluding the ideologically committed, who stand squarely at the base of their respective parties – seek successful leaders who keep their promises, bolster the economy, and avoid the appearance of corruption. The AKP government, which won elections in 2002, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2018, is thus enigmatic; it confirmed this pattern early on, but through the 2010s bucked the trend given the increasing visibility of its corruption and illiberalism, with the latter especially manifest in its intolerance of criticism, stranglehold on media, and tenacious pursuit of opposition after the July 2016 coup. Both because of its mobilizational power and its political tactics, the AKP has proven exceptionally successful so far in maintaining its grasp on power. Its 2007 victory was particularly extraordinary, as it was the first time an incumbent government had increased its vote share since 1954, but its 2018 dual victories in the parliamentary vote and Erdoğan's presidential election revealed the difficulties that opposition parties have in contesting its hegemony. Critics note that those elections were the first to take place under a new presidential system of governance, approved by a slim majority in a 2017 constitutional referendum. Both the referendum and the elections took place under emergency rule and in a climate of extreme media censorship.

Three conclusions seem apparent in terms of Turkey's political dynamics as the 2010s close. First, though Turkey remains an electoral democracy – not even the AKP has ever refused to hold a national election, and its legitimacy requires victory at the ballot boxes – growing judicial, financial, and political abuses by government officials under its leadership are greatly reducing space for pluralism and civil society. During 2016–19, the government shut down some 800 companies, over 1,000 schools, and 1,400 civic associations. It jailed more than 70,000 people, terminated over 150,000 civil servants, dismissed thousands of military personnel, detained a number of opposition MPs, and further clamped down on independent media. Thus, despite what many have predicted, the Turkish democracy is not coming to an end because of a clash between Islam and secularism. Instead, the real conflict is between electoral democracy and liberalism. Erdoğan has tended to reduce democracy to elections, and his populist understanding of politics

has come at the expense of individual rights and liberties, freedom of expression and association, an independent media, and separation between the legislative, executive, and judiciary powers.

Second, politics has become dangerously polarized. Voting tendencies and left-right divisions are not comparable to the 1970s, when endemic violence between ideological militants marred social life and destabilized coalitional governments in a cycle that ended only with military interventions. Yet the battle for votes has taken on something of an existential tone, with AKP activists often accusing critics of being threats and enemies of the Turkish state, and anti-AKP oppositionists accusing Erdoğan and his party of “Arabizing” the country and violating Atatürk’s legacy by turning the country overtly Islamist. In many ways, political disputes implicate the nature of Turkish identity itself, and the battle over its interpretation.

Third and finally, despite the worryingly autocratic inclinations of the AKP, the uncertainty of every vote and vibrant opposition mobilization makes every election must-see drama – even at the local level. The AKP suffered shock municipal election defeats in March 2019, losing control of both Ankara and Istanbul, which placed its vast patronage machine at risk. Erdoğan was quick to blame the losses on electoral fraud, launching a string of legal challenges against the results. He also vowed to confront opponents within his own party. In early May 2019, the Supreme Elections Council announced that a new vote would take place for the Istanbul mayoralty due to suspected “irregularities” – a charge that international monitors decried as ludicrously false, and which AKP activists celebrated as defending democracy. The June 2019 electoral rerun, however, delivered a humiliating blow to Erdoğan. The AKP lost by an even greater margin than before to the same CHP opposition candidate who had won in May – Ekrem İmamoğlu, who swiftly began his Istanbul mayoralty immersed in rumors of a future presidential run.

Although Turkey’s backsliding from previous democratic aspirations continues, a united opposition could well challenge Erdoğan in the 2022 parliamentary elections and the 2023 presidential elections. This assumes, of course, that such elections will be held and that they will be fairly contested.

FOREIGN POLICY

Under Mustafa Kemal, Turkey distanced itself from the Arab world; in fact, in 1926, after defeating a Kurdish insurrection, Atatürk agreed to cede the mostly Kurdish-inhabited region of Mosul to Iraq. Kemal’s most famous adage about foreign relations, “peace at home, peace abroad,” also implied

a degree of isolationism. World War Two was a particularly trying time; bereft of its strong leader, who had passed away in 1938, Ankara was caught between the entreaties of the Allied and Axis powers. Its military weakness prevented it from entering the conflict, save during the last months of the war. With the Allied victory in 1945, Turkey hitched its future to an alliance with the United States and Europe. The Truman Doctrine – enunciated by the United States on March 12, 1947, to support Turkey and Greece in the face of continuing Soviet pressure – heralded the beginning of both countries' active participation in the Cold War.

The Turkish government did its utmost to convince the United States to accept it as a member of NATO, which it viewed as the ultimate shield against an aggressive Soviet Union. The ruling Democrat Party sent troops to fight in the Korean War as a means of proving its bona fides, and so in 1952 Turkey indeed entered the ranks of NATO membership. As the sole NATO member bordering the Soviet Union, Turkey became an important asset in the Western policy of containment. Military cooperation between the United States and Turkey enabled Ankara to revamp its creaky armed forces. And while discord was not entirely absent – for example, the Turks were astounded to learn at the conclusion of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis that the Kennedy administration had decided to remove nuclear-tipped Jupiter missiles from Turkey in exchange for the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba – Turkey became firmly ensconced in the Western fold, making its foreign policy framework predictable.

The 1974 Cyprus crisis was a turning point. Turkey felt obliged to respond to a coup against the government of Archbishop Makarios in Cyprus by Greek Cypriot nationalist elements. Turkey landed troops on Cyprus, but facing strong international pressure, halted its military action within two days, having secured merely a foothold in the Kyrenia region, north of Nicosia. Fighting erupted again, and Turkey soon found itself largely isolated in the international community. The US imposed an embargo on all arms deliveries to Turkey, which lasted until September 1978. In retaliation, Turkey closed all US installations (except the vital NATO base in Incirlik) and abrogated the 1969 Defense Cooperation Agreement. The embargo left a deep imprint on Turkish politicians regarding the reliability of the United States. Nonetheless, the Carter administration lifted the arms embargo in September 1978, US facilities were reopened, and a new Cooperation on Defense and Economy Agreement was signed in March 1980.

Turkey assumed a new, and quite different, role in the post-Cold War era. For the US, Turkey represented a perfect foil for Iran's ambitions in Central

Asia – an area freed from direct Soviet control. Turkey's linguistic and cultural affinity toward Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, several of which had extensive energy reserves, was an asset. Turkish concerns and US support for non-Russian transportation routes led to construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which has been transporting Caspian Sea oil to Turkey's Mediterranean coast since 2006. Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait further complicated Turkey's relations with its neighbors and the West. More than half a million Kurdish refugees streamed towards the Turkish border during the turmoil. Turkey, the United States, and Britain helped establish a no-fly zone over northern Iraq and pushed Iraqi troops back from the Kurdish regions, enabling the refugees to return. Iraqi Kurds, now protected by a US-UK air umbrella and no longer under the tutelage of Saddam Hussein, began to manage their own affairs. Because the air assets enforcing the no-fly zone were based at Incirlik, Turkey unwillingly became the midwife to an autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq.

Operation Provide Comfort, as this endeavor was called, caused tensions between Turkey and the US. The conundrum for the Turkish government was that Iraqi Kurds – divided among themselves – were incapable of exercising complete authority over their territory and controlling the PKK, which the Turkish government saw as a dangerous threat to national security. The Turkish military, sometimes with the cooperation of the two Kurdish groups and sometimes on its own, conducted cross-border operations against PKK camps near the border in its efforts to end the Kurdish insurgency at home. Nonetheless, the US lobbied the EU to give Turkey a chance at membership, and in 1999 the EU decided to reverse its earlier rejection of Turkey's candidacy for EU membership.

By the early 2000s, however, Turkish foreign policy began to turn away from the West and become more oriented towards the MENA – if nothing else, due to the geopolitical exigencies of regional insecurity and threat. In the run-up to the 2003 war against Iraq, the US wooed the new AKP-led government to use Turkish territory for the operation. The government tentatively agreed, but the Turkish military refused to cooperate, fearing collateral damages and the overall cost. The Turkish parliament sealed matters when it denied permission for American access entirely. The invasion of Iraq went ahead without this northern front, though Ankara did allow US Special Forces and agents to infiltrate Iraq from its territory.

By now, the AKP government strongly believed, not without justification, that Turkey had traditionally punched well below its weight in terms of regional influence. The new plan for Turkish foreign policy with its neighbors

was called “zero-problems.” Turkey made significant strides to improve its relations with many of its neighbors, especially in the hitherto ignored Arab world. Turkish diplomacy, aided by an expanding transportation, educational, and trade ties, improved economic fortunes. This new MENA-oriented foreign policy encroached upon Western consensus on several occasions. For example, when the EU and the United States agreed on a strategy to force Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, Turkey initiated a diplomatic campaign to reduce Syria’s isolation. When they devised a strategy to isolate the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, Turkey invited its exiled leader, Khalid Mash’al, to Ankara.

On other fronts, Turkish foreign policy has likewise run into challenges in its regional reorientation and domestic shifts. In April 2009, Turkey and Armenia agreed on a comprehensive framework for reconciliation – a long overdue move, given the latter’s traumatic memories of what befell Ottoman Armenians during World War One. The first steps were to have been taken by late 2009, with the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, the establishment of diplomatic relations, and the creation of bilateral commissions to address various issues. Yet soon after the agreement was made public, Turkey backtracked in the face of mounting nationalist reactions in both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Nonetheless, Turkey was intent on projecting its influence and by 2008 it had successfully lobbied to win a seat on the UN Security Council for the first time since the early 1960s. Under Ahmet Davutoglu, who became foreign minister in 2009, Turkey further intensified its MENA strategy of carving out a space of influence, maintaining good relations with Arab neighbors, and maximizing its economic gains from regional networks. At first, Turkish-American relations appeared to have improved with the arrival of the Obama administration and the April 2009 presidential visit. The Arab Spring, however, complicated Turkey’s security outlook. In Libya, Egypt, and Syria, Turkey’s aims were frustrated and its diplomacy suffered significant setbacks, as the AK government had invested heavily in Libya’s Muammar al-Qaddafi and Syria’s Bashar al-Asad. By 2012, with the violence in Syria escalating, and Syrian refugees beginning to pour into Turkey, the government decided to become a frontline state against Asad – and later ISIS, which more than Asad explicitly targeted Turkey as an enemy. In Egypt too, Turkey’s foreign policy stance backfired, as Erdoğan condemned the 2013 coup against another Islamist government, the Muslim Brotherhood presidency of President Mohamed Morsi. In the resulting repression, many members of the Brotherhood sought refuge in Turkey, creating ire with Gulf states like Saudi

Arabia and the UAE, which both designated the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization in 2014.

Turkish foreign policy navigated the Syrian challenge, but not without cost. Large numbers of jihadi volunteers crossed Turkey's permeable borders to fight in Syria or Iraq, while the country also absorbed several million Syrian refugees. The challenges associated with refugee integration have been difficult given the extant economic crisis and political tensions. The government has been slow to develop a long-term strategy for integrating Syrians into Turkey's economy, fearing a public backlash if it openly accepts refugees' permanent presence but is also unable to return them back to even a peaceful Syria under the renewed reign of the Asad regime. The other challenge with Syria is one of hard security and territory. Starting in August 2016, the Turkish military began occupying a strip of northern Syria as a buffer zone. Not far away, Syrian Kurdish militias with ties to the PKK waged a successful war against ISIS, helped by significant US military assistance. American support for this Kurdish campaign, and thus the potentiality of an autonomous Kurdish region there, unsettled many Turkish observers, who wished to weaken Kurdish militarization but without incurring excessive liabilities. At the same time, Turkey welcomed Russian and Iranian entry into the Syrian civil war to bolster Asad's regime against its opposition and ISIS, and participated in the Russian-led negotiations – one of two parallel tracks of peace talks – to end the conflict.

Suggesting a foreign policy that is increasingly confident and no longer US-centric, Turkish relations with Russia warmed considerably throughout the Syrian civil war, despite a brief crisis when Turkish fighter jets shot down a Russian warplane near the Syria-Turkey border in late 2015. Russia lifted most of the sanctions it had imposed on Turkey, relaunched joint energy projects, and agreed to Turkish purchases of Russian S-400 missile systems – a sensitive topic, as the advance weaponry poses a threat to the F-35 jet fighters the US wished to sell Turkey. The Obama and Trump administrations also repeatedly rebuffed President Erdoğan's requests to extradite Fethullah Gülen, while EU monitors levied intense criticism on the worsening state of human rights in Turkey, all but signaling the end of its potential accession.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The combination of a majority government, consistent economic growth, and a determined effort to join the EU has provided Turkey with a degree of outward political stability unseen since the mid-1980s. That Turkey has

held democratic elections for nearly two decades under the rule of an Islamist party that eschews violence and has always legitimated its rule in electoral majorities is also significant. However, upon a closer look, two decades of AKP governance has resulted in severe side-effects – among them new challenges in the form of currency and debt crises, increasingly widespread cronyism and corruption, extremely polarized political discourse, and multiplying abuses of power wielded by officials against opposition and critics. Erdoğan, the figure at the center of the AKP's rise, has little wish to leave the political limelight. The Kurdish crisis likewise continues without easy resolution, while the Syrian front and regional instability creates another source of territorial anxiety.

There are two pathways from here. One is the continued evolution of the “Turkish model,” in which alternation of power occurs, executive overreach is retracted, and regular policymaking resolves its economic instability and backsliding into authoritarian hybridity. This would require concerted civic mobilization, opposition reformation, and perhaps international pressure. The other pathway is the continued aggregation and hegemony of Erdoğan and the AKP, which may next manifest through cancelled elections, outright fraudulence, unremitting coercion, and other signature tactics of unapologetic autocracies. In this future, the old type of Turkish governance, where military and bureaucratic elites often overrode the wishes of elected officials, would simply be replaced by another type of elective authoritarianism.

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On economic issues, the magisterial work by the most famous Turkish academic economist is Sevkettin Pamuk, *Uneven Centuries: Economic Development of Turkey since 1820* (Princeton University Press, 2018). Elsewhere, Z.Y. Herslag's *The Contemporary Turkish Economy* (Routledge, 1988) examines the Turkish economy through the post-1980 period of export orientation. Anne O. Krueger and Okan A. Aktan provide an analysis of Özal's reforms in the 1980s in *Swimming against the Tide: Turkish Trade Reform in the 1980s* (Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1992). Ayşe Bugra and Osman Savaskan, *The New Capitalism in Turkey: The Relationship between Politics, Religion and Business* (Edward Elgar, 2014) offers a comprehensive overview of developments in the field of political-economy and state-business relations.

The role of the military in politics is well depicted by William M. Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (Routledge, 1995). For an anthropological approach to civil society relations in Turkey, see Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (Palgrave, 2004).

Turkish foreign policy is a topic of considerable scholarly interest. Amit Bein, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East: International Relations in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) provides an excellent revisionist history of Kemalist foreign policy. Linking foreign policy to state-building is Reem Abou-El-Fadl, *Foreign Policy as Nation Making: Turkey and Egypt in the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (University of Washington Press, 2003) is another comprehensive approach to Turkish foreign

policy. Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky, eds., *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey, and Iran* (ME Sharpe, 1995) covers the early stages of Turkey's relationship with the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. A constructivist take on how Turkish identity conflicts play out in foreign policy comes from Lisel Hintz, *Identity Politics Inside Out: National Identity Contestation and Foreign Policy in Turkey* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Modern US-Turkish relations are laid out in Ekavi Athanassopoulou, *Strategic Relations between the US and Turkey, 1979–2000: Sleeping with a Tiger* (Routledge, 2014). The tortuous process of EU accession is laid out in Melek Saral, *Turkey's "Self" and "Other" Definitions in the Course of the EU Accession Process* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018). Finally, on the Cyprus issue, see Michael Emerson and Nathalie Tocci, *Cyprus as Lighthouse of the East Mediterranean: Shaping Re-unification and EU Accession Together* (Center for European Research, 2002).

Religion in Turkey is a dense, multifaceted subject. Richard Tapper, ed., *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics, and Literature in a Secular State* (IB Tauris, 1991) gives the background to religious developments. A more specialized treatment can be found in Jenny White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (University of Washington Press, 2002) and *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* (Princeton University Press, 2014). Comparisons of Israel and Turkey, and their treatment of religion as part of national identity, are found in Yusuf Sarfati, *Mobilizing Religion in Middle East Politics: A Comparative Study of Israel and Turkey* (Routledge, 2014), and Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2008).

More specialized takes on how Islam and religious discourse have been harnessed

in politics include: Brian Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Iren Ozgur, *Islamic Schools in Modern Turkey: Faith, Politics and Education* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Ceren Lord, *Religious Politics in Turkey: From the Birth of the Republic to the AKP* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Kristin Fabbe, *Disciples of the State?: Religion and Statebuilding in*

the Former Ottoman World (Cambridge University Press, 2019). On the Gülenist movement, see Berna Turam, *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement* (Stanford University Press, 2007) and Joshua Hendrick, *Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World* (New York University Press, 2013).

Online sources

Despite the closure of many Turkish media outlets, online sources provide penchant takes on the latest events there. Examples include Turkey Analyst (www.turkeyanalyst.org/), the Turkey portal of *Al-Monitor* (www.al-monitor.com/pulse/turkey-pulse) and the Turkish publication *Hurriyet Daily* (www.hurriyetdailynews.com/). Other sources of politics include the Turkish daily, *Daily Sabah*, despite its pro-AKP leanings (www.dailysabah.com/politics), and the television news channel CNNTurk (www.cnntrk.com/). Turkish foreign policy is explored in the online version of the journal *Insight Turkey* (www.insightturkey.com/).

The Institute for Turkish Studies has a wealth of online resources regarding the further

study of Turkish politics and society (www.turkishstudies.org/). Economic data and studies on Turkey's financial issues are found on the World Bank's country site (www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview). The Turkey Project of the Brookings Institution likewise has a dense collection of briefings and reports (www.brookings.edu/project/the-turkey-project/). Finally, the Atlantic Council's Turkey webpage offers rolling coverage of economic, social, and energy-related affairs (www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-turkey).

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