



## Turkey



Last update:	3 April 2009
Author:	
Population:	77,804,122 (July 2010 est.)
Prime minister:	Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AKP)
President:	Abdullah Gül (AKP)
Governemental type:	Republican parliamentary democracy
Ruling coalition:	One ruling party – AKP
Last election:	Local elections April 2009
Next election:	Referendum 12 September, 2010
Sister parties:	–

Year 2007 brought many political fireworks to Turkey. The failure in April to approve a Justice and Development (AKP) presidential candidate in Parliament caused a political deadlock, which could only be broken by holding early parliamentary elections. The elections brought a landslide victory to the AKP, winning a majority of the seats in parliament. However, probably the most striking result of the early 2007 elections was the great victory of the extreme nationalistic Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). This party re-entered parliament with 71 seats.

Despite the entrance of a third party in parliament, the results of the elections can be interpreted as a strengthening of the powebase of prime-minister Erdogan's party AKP. Even though the number of parliamentary seats is lower, the percentage of voters for the AKP is higher in 2002. It was the first time in 52 years that a ruling party increased its percentage of votes in the following election.

However, the AKP could not relax for long. In 2008 the party faced closure and a ban for its high-ranking officials by the Constitutional Court as a result of amendments proposed by the AKP concerning a reversal on the ban of head scarves in universities. Although the court decided against the above-mentioned measure, it did, nevertheless find that the party had become a focal point of anti-secular activities; something that's been used by the opposition ever since. This was, however, not the end to Turkey's political turmoil.

2008 was also marked by the major Ergenkon trials that claimed to have uncovered an extensive terrorist network – but were seen by oppositionists as tools for dissent oppression. Finally, in November, it was the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's (DTP) turn for legal trouble as its chairman, Ahmet Turk, was accused of PKK propaganda. All in all, the long-expected political calmness does not seem imminent in Turkey.

### ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

#### March 2009 local elections

On 29 March local elections were being held in Turkey. The Turkish ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, won the elections, yet not with an overwhelming majority. Despite Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's hope for a large majority, public support for the party has gone to the lowest level since it was established. According to results AKP gained 38.79% of votes for provincial councils –seen as a substitute for the national elections– down from 46.6% in the 2007 national elections, and from 41.7% in the 2007 local elections. The republican People's Party (CHP) came in on the second place with 23.13 % of the votes, followed by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) with 16.05% on the third place and the Democratic Society Party (DTP) on the fourth place with 5.67%.

<u>Results of the elections:</u> 1.	AKP– Justice and Development Party	38.79%
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2.	CHP– Republican People's Party	23.13%
3.	MHP– Nationalist Movement Party	16.05%
4.	DTP– Democratic Society Party	5.67%
5.	SP– Felicity Party	5.16%
6.	DP– Democratic Party	3.72%
7.	DSP– Democratic Left Party	2.78%
8.	BBP– The Great Union Party	2.24%
9.	DGR– Other Parties	2.46%

Although AKP held its mayoral seats in the capital Ankara and the largest city of Istanbul, it was a close call between the ruling party and candidates of the main opposition party CHP. In Istanbul the CHP created a real challenge to AKP, by increasing its votes in the city with 10% and ending with 36.88% against 44.27% of the AKP. Despite its mediocre victory AKP lost some major cities in Turkey that Prime Minister Erdogan had campaigned hard to take, including, Antalya, Adana and Diyarbakir – the largest city in the country's Kurdish-dominated south-east, where the pro-Kurdish DTP had a strong lead. The AKP also lost in Izmir, where it did not manage to win a single mayoral post, as 29 of the 30 district mayoral posts went to the CHP, while one was gained by the DTP.

AKP also lost ground against the DTP in both the northern provinces as well as in the south-eastern regions. The DTP won in eight provinces and increased its number of municipal mayoral posts from 32 to 51. The lost came after several citizens died in regional violence. PM Erdogan had campaigned heavily in the region, hoping AKP success win would temper separatist feeling. In this light, prior to the elections the AKP established a Kurdish language channel TRT6, put efforts in the creation of better relations with the administration of the Kurds in northern Iraq and promised several economic initiatives that were linked to the “Southeast Anatolia Project”. Nevertheless, at least 13 people were reportedly killed in mainly Kurdish eastern areas and almost 112 were injured in violence related to the elections prior to the vote, during clashes between supporters of rival candidates.

After the initial results were made public, Mr. Erdogan expressed his dissatisfaction as well as his disappointment to lose 16 mayoral seats –something that came as a true surprise given the fact that since 2002 the AKP continuously managed to increase its votes in each election. “This is a message from the people and we will take the necessary lessons”, he affirmed. According to international sources, Erdogan’s disappointment came from the fact that the government hoped for success to allow it to re-focus attention on democratic reforms. He added that there is “a possibility for a cabinet reshuffle, yet not necessarily given the election results”. The fact that the party fell below 40% in some loyal constituencies, made the party eventually to start reconsidering its structure as was announced by the party several days after the elections.

Veteran officials and academics gave several reasons for AKP’s declining popularity. Among them being the fact that since 2002 merely two major political parties, i.e. the AKP and the CHP, were combating on the political arena. The AKP was continuously leading the polls and increasing its share in the last three consecutive elections. In the fourth election, however, the CHP was able to change this situation, mainly thanks to some good reputations of its individual mayoral candidates in several cities. Eventually the CHP could be called the great “winner” in the local elections. Finally, the MHP increased its votes in several Anatolian cities and is becoming a more visible contestant that appeals to centre-right voters.

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#### Political turmoil in 2008

In February 2008 the AKP proposed constitutional amendments that would reverse the ban on head scarves in universities. The amendments were passed in parliament by voters from AKP, the opposition Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP). However, the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and Democratic Left Party (DSP) took the amendments to the Constitutional Court, where they were



found invalid on 6 June.

However, the troubles for the AKP were not over. Previously, on the 14th of March, Turkey's chief prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya, filed a lawsuit against the ruling AKP demanding its closure and the banning of 71 party officials, including Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and President Abdullah Gül, from politics. The party was accused of being a focal point for anti-secular activity. After the initial enraged reaction from the AKP, it chose for a different, more restrained approach, and announced that it would not try to pass legislation limiting the court's power – as was speculated at the time – and will adhere to the court's eventual ruling. The party submitted its defense on 16th June, 13 days prior to the deadline. On July 30th the court ruled that the party had, indeed, become a focal point for anti-secular activities, but stopped short of closing it down and banning its high-ranking members. The AK Party's restrained attitude towards the lawsuit that was said to test Turkey's democratic potential was hailed by some Turkish and international observers.

The political turmoil did not end with the AKP trial. The controversial Ergenekon trials, featuring over 80 charged with accusations ranging from founding a terror organization to overthrow the government, to inciting people to hatred and enmity, were held throughout the summer. The trial, that was claimed to have uncovered an extensive terrorist network, was described by oppositionists as a tool to suppress dissent. With the trials still ongoing as of November 2008 the extent of their influence is yet undefined.

Another major development is that of another party, this time the DTP, facing legal problems. On 12 November the Diyarbakır Chief Prosecutor's Office sent an investigation report about the DTP chairman Ahmet Türk to the Ministry of Justice to be submitted to the parliament for removal of his political immunity, on the grounds that Mr Türk engaged in PKK propaganda during a speech he delivered on 21 October. The move comes amidst an escalation of tensions between the DTP and the ruling AKP, after DTP organised protests in the largely Kurdish populated South East of the country against the visit of Prime Minister Erdoğan (AKP). Harsh words were exchanged between Erdoğan and Türk, and it is yet to be seen what consequences it will have.

In all, the country has been in turmoil for a couple of years now, and it does not look like the long-expected calming is likely to start any time soon.

#### Presidential elections August 2007

After the political deadlock of April and the parliamentary elections of 20 July, the Turkish parliament was finally ready to elect a new president. The outcomes of the parliamentary elections, a landslide victory for the ruling AKP of prime-minister Erdoğan, encouraged the party to let foreign-minister Abdullah Gül run again as their presidential candidate. The constitution prescribes that the presidential candidate needs a two-third majority (367 seats) to get elected in the first voting-round. If a second round is needed, again a two-third majority is needed. In case of a third round, the candidate only needs a simple majority (276 seats) to be elected.

In the run-off to the decisive voting-rounds, the top of the military involved in the debate on possible threat to the Turkish secular state when minister Gül would be elected. Just like in April, the military warned the Turkish electorate against the former-Islamic Gül, who would endanger the secular state of Turkey. However, their call did not affect the electorate to a great extent. In fact, Abdullah Gül could count on a stable majority in parliament during the three voting-rounds. A two-third majority was, however, not possible in the first two rounds.

Candidate	Party	1st round (20/8)	2nd round (24/8)	3rd round (28/8)
Abdullah Gül	AKP	341	337	339
Sabahattin Çakır	MHP	70	71	70
Hüseyin Tayfun Çiğdem	DSP	13	14	13
Spoiled votes		1	0	2
Blank votes		23	24	23
Total MP turnout		448	446	448



After a total of five rounds (two in April/May and three in August) and a period of four months, Abdullah Gül finally was elected as the 11th president of Turkey. His election was welcomed by the international community, especially by the European Union. Gül declared that he was dedicated to negotiate with the EU about possible future-membership of Turkey. Internally, Gül declared immediately after his inauguration that would respect the secular state of Turkey:

"In a democracy which is a system of rights and liberties, secularism, one of the core principles of our Republic, is as much a model that underpins freedom for different lifestyles as it is a rule of social harmony," he said. "Not only that; commitment to the principle of secularism is also the most expedient way of eliminating from the outset conflicts and elements of altercation that from time to time manifest themselves in every society."

To avoid difficulties with the election of the president, the ruling AKP has the intention to ask the electorate through a referendum directly how the next president of Turkey should be elected. Prime minister Erdogan called for a change of the system after the boycott of the opposition parties during the parliamentary vote on the president-candidacy in April and May. Erdogan suggests to elect the Turkish president directly via popular vote and not through a vote in parliament. The opposition parties and the president are, obviously, against this reform. The opposition parties would, for instance, lose a great amount of their power when they lose the possibility to vote against a president-candidacy. On 19 June 2007, President Sezer vetoed an initiative by the AKP to hold a referendum on whether the Turkish citizens should elect the president directly. The AKP took this initiative after they failed to appoint a candidate on their own. Prime minister Erdogan asked the Constitutional Court to judge the president's veto on the constitutional reform. The Constitutional Court rejected their request. This verdict has cleared the path for president Erdogan to hold the referendum in October 2007.

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#### Political crisis 2007

The year 2007 was about to become the year of two regular elections: parliamentary elections and the election of the new Turkey's president, which is a mainly ceremonial function. However, the approval of a AKP candidate for the presidency failed and, in accordance with the constitution, early parliamentary elections were necessary.

In April 2007, the AK Party (AKP) announced current foreign minister Abdullah Gül as candidate to become the successor of current president Ahmet Necdet Sezer. In the parliamentary vote, Gül needed two-third of the parliamentary votes to officially become presidential candidate. He fell just 10 votes short to reach this two-third majority. This was due to a boycott by the main secular opposition party, the CHP. The Turkish Constitutional Court declared the ballot invalid.

The parliamentary boycott by the CHP was initiated to protest against the Islamic origin of the AKP in general, and candidate Gül in particular. Backed by the top of the military, the secular opposition stated that the candidacy of Gül could jeopardise the secularity of the Turkish state. This secularity is one of the most important elements of the Kemalist-ideology, the official state-ideology of Turkey. The Kemalist-ideology was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), the founder of the modern Turkish state. He originally based his ideology on six principles: republicanism, nationalism and populism, the superiority of state, secularism and revolution.

The secular opposition feared that through the AKP-candidate Gül (who's wife wears a headscarf in public, something that was one of points of criticism of the secular opposition) the Islam would have a big impact on the Turkish state and that the secularism in Turkey would be in danger. The CHP organised big rallies in Istanbul to protest against Gül's candidacy. Also the normally very influential top of the military called the AKP to withdraw the candidacy of Gül. However, the AKP refused to withdraw Gül. The failure of approving Gül in parliament caused the necessity to hold new election. In early May 2007, the Turkish parliament approved to hold early election on 22 July 2007.

In the run-up to the elections, the military called the voters to not vote for the AKP, but to give their votes to one of



the secular parties. However, the landslide victory of the AKP shows that the military has failed to influence the electorate decisively.

Parliamentary elections: July 2007

The unicameral Grand National Assembly consists of 550 deputies and is elected every five years. Every Turkish citizen over the age of 25 is eligible to be a deputy, provided that he or she has completed primary education and has not been convicted of serious crime or been involved in "ideological and anarchistic activities". The legislative elections took place on 22 July 2007. To get elected in parliament, a party needs to obtain 10% of the votes on the national level, as well as a percentage of the votes in the contested district. The allocation of seats is then determined by a complicated formula. Independents, however, are not bound by any electoral threshold. For this reason, the Democratic Society Party decided to have their candidates run as Independents. The increase of seats for Independents (+18 with respect to 2002) could be explained by this tactical trick.

The current political landscape in Turkey is largely shaped by its immediate history. The parliamentary elections in 2002 saw the expulsion of an entire generation of political leaders whom the population blamed for the decades of mismanagement that had thrown the country into the worst economic crisis since the end of World War II. The government of 1999–2002 existed of a coalition of the social democratic Democratic Left Party (DSP), the ultra nationalistic National Action Party (MHP) and the liberal Motherland Party (ANAP). The coalition suffered from loss of credibility. According to Human Rights Watch even more so after the reform programmes of the IMF were installed, which, according to Human Rights Watch, only served to worsen the widespread poverty and to heighten the already high levels of unemployment. The election result of 2002 was illustrative for this loss of faith of the Turks.

The most important issues during the campaign were foreign policy (Iraq, Cyprus and EU-accession) and the position of the presidency (including the secular state).

The elections of 2007 haven't brought radical changes as the 2002 elections. The most important outcomes were the strengthening of the powerbase of the AKP and the resurrection of the ultra-nationalist MHP party. The table below gives an overview of the results of the Turkish parliamentary elections of 22 July 2007:

Parliamentary Elections: July 2007
Justice and Development Party
Republicans People's Party
Nationalist Movement Party
Democratic Party
Independents



Youth Party
Felicity Party
Independent Turkey Party
People's Ascent Party
Bright Turkey
Communist Party of Turkey
Freedom and Solidarity Party
Liberal Democratic Party
Labour Party
Total

Surprisingly the percentage of votes of the AKP has increased with 12,38%, while the party's share of parliamentary seats has decreased with 23 seats. This paradoxical situation is caused by the difficult electoral formula that is used for the allocation of seats in the regional districts.

As already concluded above, the win of the ultra-nationalistic MHP was one of the most important results of the elections. Analysts state that two events have contributed to the increase of nationalistic feelings in Turkey.

First of all, the development of the accession talks with the EU have caused hostile feelings towards the EU. So far,



the EU has not made a clear statement on if, and if yes, when the accession talks with Turkey lead to full membership of the EU. The hesitant attitude of some EU-members (for instance: France) has led to the feeling among Turks that EU-membership isn't so important after all.

Secondly, the developments in South-East Turkey (and to less extent Northern Iraq) have caused an increased level of nationalistic feelings in the country. The continuing fights between Kurds and the Turkish army, together with the great attention for this issue by the MHP, have contributed to the increased nationalist vote in the 2007 elections. Besides the events in Turkey itself, the situation in the Northern part of Iraq has played a minor role in the nationalistic vote. This region is now ruled by Kurds and is, in comparison with the other parts of Iraq, relatively stable and safe. This situation is good for Northern Iraq, but has a different influence on the Turks. They feel that the Kurds are gaining strength (also military) and that a strong Kurdish army could be a threat to Turkey in the future.

The strengthening of the AKP powerbase is a unique event in Turkish political history. For the first time in 52 years, the incumbent party has increased its percentage of votes in two consecutive elections. The growing economy has also contributed to the popularity of the AKP. The outcomes of the elections mean a green light for prime minister Erdogan to continue his reform agenda. However, a two-third majority in parliament is needed for all changes to the constitution. The AKP lacks this majority in parliament. In order to change the constitution, Erdogan and his party need to seek support from the opposition parties. The constitutional reforms will be therefore a product of consensus seeking procedure. This could contribute to the popular support for the changes. However, this remains to be seen.

Analysts state that the victory of the AKP can also be explained as an expression of the Turkish people against the involvement of the military in Turkish politics. During the election campaign and during the political crisis, the top of the Turkish military has tried to "warn" the Turkish people against the danger of the involvement of the Islam in Turkish politics, which could harm the secular character of the Turkish state. In other words: the warned against the AKP. In the end, the Turkish voters have chosen for the AKP and prime minister Erdogan, instead of for the top of the military.

The great loss for the CHP can be explained by the popularity of the incumbent government on the one side, but also by the fact that voters were unhappy with the way the CHP has played its opposition role in the last years. The loss of the CHP is even more severe when it is kept in mind that the CHP had an alliance with the SDP, a smaller social-democratic party. Through this alliance, a substantial part of the CHP-seats in parliament will be occupied by SDP-candidates. Shortly after the elections, the CHP installed a commission that has the task to investigate how the great election-defeat has come about. One of the suggestions that was made shortly after the elections was the fact that the CHP had addressed rightist and nationalist issues during the election campaign. Analysts suggest that the party should have addressed more classical social-democratic issues during this period.

Finally some remarks on the high number of independent parliamentarians in the Turkish parliament. This number has increased with 18, compared to 2002, and the parliament now contains of 27 independent candidates. This tremendous increase could be explained by the fact that the only legal Kurdish party, the DTP, had an alliance with the independents on the candidate list. This gave the electorate the possibility to vote for a Kurdish candidate, while not formally voting for the DTP. Voters that were afraid of hesitant to vote for the Kurdish party DTP now had a opportunity to vote more in anonymity.

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#### Election speaker of parliament

On 9 August 2007 the Turkish parliamentarians voted AKP's Koksal Toptan as their new speaker in parliament. The AKP candidate gained 450 out of 550 votes, beating his only opponent (Tunca Toskay from the MHP) with a landslide. The 64-year old Toptan served as a culture-, state- and education minister before joining the AKP. His election is widely seen as an attempt of the AKP to compromise with the secularist forces in the country. The Speaker of Parliament is constitutionally the number two in Turkey, after the president.

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#### Women and other minority representation

A low level of women participation in decision-making earmarks Turkish Politics. In the parliamentary election of 2002, 4.2% of people elected in the legislative body were women. Only 1.25 percent of the candidates that the AKP put forward were women. The opposition parties DSP and DYP tried to gain popularity on the female front in the March 28 elections. DSP had 2297 women candidates, and the DYP 1095. The general rate of women represented in local government did not improve in comparison to last local elections in 1999, when only 20 out of the elected 3216 mayors, 44 out of 3122 members of the City General Assemblies and 541 of 34840 members of Municipality Assemblies were women.

As soon as the data on female parliamentarians of 2007 is available, this section will be updated.

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#### Presidential Election 2000

The president of Turkey has limited powers and is elected for a seven-year period by the single-chamber parliament, the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

On 16 May 2000, Mr. Ahmet Necdet Sezer was named as the 10th President of the Republic of Turkey. He was the first president in recent years neither to have been a military leader or a politician. Before he was elected, he had been the president of the Constitutional Court of Turkey after a long career as a lawyer and judge. Sezer pledged to protect Turkey's secular institutions, social peace and territorial integrity at all cost. As a staunch supporter of the supremacy of the law and of democratisation, he said, "Unless we abandon elements which resemble a police state, we can't meet the demands of being a modern society." He also promised to fight against corruption, stressing that no one could be above the law, and urged for stronger efforts to speed up the country's accession to the EU.

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## POLITICAL ISSUES

Kemal Atatürk proclaimed the republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923. This happened when the Turkish heartlands that had been lost to the allies after World War I, were regained at the Lausanne Peace agreements in July 1923. Atatürk and his Republican People's Party (CHP) installed Kemalism as the republic's political ideology. This ideology was originally based on 6 principles; republicanism, nationalism and populism, the superiority of state, secularism and revolution.

Historically the army in Turkey regarded itself as the defender of the heritage of Atatürk. It supported a western way of thinking and would act against religious fanaticism, but also exercised a disproportionately large influence on politics. Whenever the secular fundamentals of the Turkish state were threatened, the army interfered. In 1960 and 1980 the army staged a coup to take power in order to restore Kemalism and hand power back to the people afterwards. With the instalment of a pro-Islamic government, an era of more liberal, less-state oriented governance dawned on Turkey.

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#### Political situation

The coming to power of the AKP in 2002 offered some reason for worry, but none of the worries were answered. The AKP kept a fixed eye on the EU and did not enter the war in Iraq. The fierce Turkish secularism remains



unthreatened with the AKP in power, and has merely become more tolerant towards religious expression. Worrisome was also the danger of the military grabbing control of the state leadership when difficult decisions need to be taken. However, the outcomes of the 2007 elections have proven that the AKP has a strong mandate and that political involvement of the Turkish military is less likely than before. After all, the call of the military to not vote for the AKP has not led to any action in that direction by the electorate. This possibility of military involvement has, however, not disappeared completely. But the AKP has proven to have a strong fist by keeping the army from invading North Iraq to quiet down the Kurds. The dislike of the European Union of military intervention is priority.

In this country, which has not achieved the status of a stable plural democracy yet, the position of parties is not always very clear. Roughly speaking: the AKP can be regarded as the liberal reformist party while the CHP is not a very social democratic but actually a conservative party. More left of the centre there are mainly marginal groups, lacking capacity. MHP can be regarded as ultra-nationalist.

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#### European accession

After the military coup of the early 1980's, the relationship between the EU and Turkey gradually improved. In 1985 European observers were again permitted to enter the country and take the human rights situation into account. The normalisation of the relationship resulted in the EU membership application of Turkey on 14 April 1987. At the time the European Commission (EC) felt that the situation in Turkey was still complicated, especially because of the country's weak social-economical position, the tensions between Turkey and EU member state Greece over the issue of Cyprus, and the dubious account of Turkey on the topic of human rights. The application was declined, but ties were tightened and on 31 December 1995, a customs union between Europe and Turkey came into effect.

The membership-criteria formulated at the 1993 Copenhagen Summit in retrospect ruled out the possibility of Turkish EU membership in 1987. But since the 1999 Helsinki-summit important legal packages were adopted within the framework of harmonisation with the EU to meet the criteria. The reform proposal of the country's 78-year-old penal code, which was widely seen as a decisive legal reform aligning Turkish legislation with basic EU political norms was adopted in June 2003, after which European Union membership talks with Turkey were given the green light. The EC drafted a progress report on which the European Council based its decision of 17 December 2004 that the EU would open accession negotiations on 3 October 2005. This decision is not irreversible, however. The EC will continue to monitor the process of political reform to ensure its irreversibility and its full implementation, notably with regards to fundamental freedoms and the observance of human rights.

In March 2005 the EU issued a strong call to Turkey that it should keep up its reform momentum ahead of the planned opening of EU membership talks in October. These words followed fears that the Turkish government's drive for reform had slackened now that Turkey had received official dates for accession talks.

After the opening of the accession talks it was feared that the Turkish government would ease down on reformations. In December 2006 the EU threatened Turkey to stop the accession period, if Turkey didn't open its ports to ships and airplanes from Southern Cyprus. Eventually Turkey opened one harbour and one airport to ships and airplanes, but the European Commission wasn't satisfied with that offer. Now Turkey will go on with the accession process, but 8 chapters out of the 35 will be shelved. The EU will be reviewing the situation with the opening of ports for the next three years in the EU Commission's Progress Reports.

On 26 June 2007, two additional chapters, on statistics and financial control, were opened. The negotiations are so called "open-ended". Analysts expect therefore that negotiations will at least last another 10-15 years.

The EU-accession talks have been one of the most important issues in the 2007 parliamentary elections. With the landslide win of the AKP, it seems that the path of Turkey towards the EU has been secured. At least, negotiations will continue during the coming period.

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### Cyprus

The EU membership talks almost halted when the Greek Cypriot administration demanded Turkey to recognize them as the legitimate government of Cyprus. For 30 years now the Island has consisted of two political entities, one Greek and one Turkish. Turkish Cypriots make up approximately 25% of the population on Cyprus and the Greek Cypriots the remaining 75 percent.

At the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the opinions of Turkey and Greece on the definite settlement of the border between their respective spheres of influence in the Aegean Sea with its large oil and gas resources, conflicted. The relationship between the countries stayed difficult ever since. When Greek Cypriot nationalists sought to annex the island to Greece, Turkey intervened in 1974 to partition the island and expel the Greek Cypriots from the North (with a predominantly Turkish community) in order to install a 'safe' area for Turkish Cypriots. Since then, the two island-communities have been governed by separate governments. The UN regulates the border separating the two parts. During the years the conflict has become less of a burning issue for Turkey or Greece, especially after Turkey came closer to the EU. The conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots however, remains unsettled.

On 1 May 2004, Cyprus entered the EU. During the five years leading up to the date the International Community had developed a UN sponsored agreement that was to satisfy all parties in order to unify the island. The Annan-plan came a long way; Turkey, Greece, and the Turkish Cypriots all accepted it. But on 24 April 2004 the Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan-plan by 76%, apparently under strong recommendation to do so by the current Greek-Cypriot administration. After all, the Greek Cypriots have no pressing reason to budge. Their economy is more vibrant than the Turkish Cypriot one, and on top of this, they are now EU members and by 1 January 2008 member of the Eurozone, when Cyprus will introduce the Euro as its currency.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus stays an unrecognised state for now. Despite promises of increased aid and cooperation for the Turkish Cypriots from the US and Europe, there seems to be limited room for manoeuvre. In December 2006 the EU countries promised to ease the restrictions against Northern Cyprus, but it will be further discussed in 2007.

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### Islam

The hesitant recognition of the Islam as a political factor could only be received through confrontation in the Kemalist climate. Incidents occurred until recently. The positive outcome of these clashes would be the widening of the political debate and the fact that the superiority of the state is becoming less of a given in the Republic. With the coming to power of the AKP, an Islamic party received the supreme power of Turkey and more importantly, was able to keep this power. The military did not intervene. This could be a sign of liberalisation and democratisation.

Paradoxically, the opponents of the Turkish EU accession mention exactly this topic of Islam as the reason why Turkey would be incompatible to other EU countries. They fear that religiously motivated nationalism and extremism will enter the EU and cause turmoil in states inhabited by a large Muslim population. The fact that Turkey has known a secular state apparatus for ages would be a problematic argument to them, because the military has historically forced Turkey into this secular character. In the name of democracy the military is now forbidden to strain democracy this way. But this ban now leads the Islam into politics, which is by many conceived to be a great threat to secularism and thus to democracy.

Thankfully research has some reassertion to offer; only marginal groups in society can be found in favour of a religiously oriented regime. Most Turks are committed to the idea of secularism but, like the AKP, plead for a non-Kemalist secularism in which real freedom of religion exists. The outcomes of the 2007 elections show that the support for this type of secularism has increased.

Now that the accession talks are in progress, the general view of Europe seems to focus on the similarities of Turkey and Europe, rather than the differences. Turkey is in many respects a modern country, from which ideas on democracy and human rights sprang, not because of Islam, but not despite it either. The discussion does not deal with the compatibility of different religions but with the compatibility of different secular state systems.



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### Human Rights

The danger of repression can easily entail the danger of violation of human rights. Torture has long been common in Turkey. In the twenty years following the 1980 military coup, successive governments maintained a system of detention and interrogation that encouraged torture and protected perpetrators. In the past years after Helsinki, changes to laws and procedures have significantly diminished the frequency and severity of torture.

The most important changes were improvement to medical checks, shortening of pre-trial detention periods and recognition of the right of immediate access to legal counsel for all detainees in 2003. The right of access to a lawyer and judge had before been frequently violated in Turkey, especially when people were detained on suspicion of crimes against the state. Before the amendment of the Constitution, police detention for these criminals could be increased to seven days before they would be offered the possibility of seeing a judge – or to 10 days under state of emergency. During this pre-trial period of detention most torture occurred.

Another way in which Ankara sought to assuage many of the international criticism on its human rights account was by putting the Turkish powerful military under civilian control and by reducing its power in the National Security Council. The death penalty was abolished in 2004. A number of bodies to ensure the enforcement of human rights were installed such as the Human Rights Board, the Human Rights Presidency and the Human Rights Office within the Ministry of Interior. The Turkish protection against torture and ill treatment is now formally among the strongest in Europe.

Still areas of concern remain. Torture and ill treatment persist where the new safeguards are ignored. The Turkish Government publicly stated in 2004 that they had “adopted a policy of zero tolerance to torture and ill-treatment”, but the strategy suffers lack of supervision. The international community has tried to open up the inner workings of the police stations. They consider internal supervision of detention facilities to be the most crucial safeguard to combat torture and other forms of abuse in custody. In order to ensure that these visits contribute to improvements in police stations management, it would also be vital for the results to be fed back to the relevant ministries and made public. The long delay between the actual abuse and the eventual punishment should also be put under regulation.

Another area of concern is the freedom of speech in Turkey. In 2005, later Nobel-prize winner Orhan Pamuk was prosecuted for “insulting the Turkish Republic”, as written in a new penal code: Article 301. He was prosecuted for speaking publicly about the mass-killing of Armenians by Turks in 1915. In February 2006, the charges against Pamuk were dropped because at the time he spoke about the mass-killings, article 301 was not yet a formal law. As reported by Human Rights Watch in 2006, several more persons accused of violating Article 301 in 2006.

Human Rights Watch states in their 2006 report that the EU-accession talks between the EU and Turkey are the best guarantee for improvements in the human rights situation. However, the European Court of Human Rights still issued approximately 200 judgements against Turkey. These concerned judgements of torture, unfair trial, violations of free expression, etc. Especially the counter-terrorism measures, taken by the government, have consequences that are incompatible with human rights, according to the UN Human Rights monitor. Finally the UN Human Rights monitor expressed their concerns about the fact that new legislative safeguards against torture and arbitrary detention (introduced in the 2005, see above) do not apply on individuals held on suspicion of terrorism related crimes. This leads, according to the UN Human Rights monitor, to two criminal justice systems in Turkey.

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### Kurdish minority

The heritage of Atatürk teaches that the Turkish people should form a unity. Historically, minorities in Turkey – especially Kurds and Armenians– encountered hard times in their search for recognition as a separate cultural group. The Kurdish minority is the biggest minority in Turkey. It consists of nearly 26 percent of the total population. In the early 1990s, at least 390.000 Kurdish villagers were forcibly displaced by security forces following an intense conflict in the mountains of south eastern Turkey. Most internally displaced persons still live in



conditions of poverty in the cities, with no state compensation.

In other aspects the Kurdish minority situation has improved. Kurdish rights are being addressed. The use of the language in certain areas of public life, including the media has now been allowed, and money has been made available for Kurdish language teaching. The Turkish government has developed two important initiatives – a governmental agency to develop a policy on the return of internally displaced persons, and a fairly small-scale joint United Nations Development Program / Turkish government project to encourage the return of IDPs. It will take a while before these judicial changes will have any effect on society however. Human Rights Watch stated in December 2003 that the government initiatives for the return of internally displaced Kurds had thus far been mainly cosmetic.

Former chairman of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, is imprisoned on the Island Imrali. He was taken captive and had received the death sentence in 1999. Turkey then abolished the death penalty in 2003 as part of a reform package preparing the country for European Union membership. The recommendation to ease the restrictions on the Kurdish rights and language was also included in the package, just as the command to tighten the laws against people smuggling. The death penalty had not been used in Turkey since 1984 but dozens of prisoners were still on death row.

In the 2007 elections, an increased number of independent candidates, predominantly Kurds, entered parliament. The strong position of Kurds in North Iraq could be have been the motor of the increased political involvement and popularity of the Kurds in Turkey.

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#### Armenia–conflict

The horrendous killings inflicted by Turks on their Armenian minority took place in the period leading up to 1915 when nationalism rose under the minorities of the weakening Ottoman Kingdom. The victims under the Armenian minority are estimated to have amounted up to a million and a half. Despite the Armenian call for recognition that this blood-bath had in fact been a genocide, Ankara still insists that thousands of Turks were killed as well during these struggles and that the conflicts were a side effect of World War I. Turkey refuses to categorize the killings as genocide.

During the later conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over influence in the Nagorno–Karabakh region, an Armenian-populated enclave in Azerbaijan, Turkey closed its borders with Armenia in 1993 to show solidarity with Azerbaijan. Turkey still refuses to lift the blockade, demanding that Armenia stops its international effort to get the Ottoman Turkish genocide affirmed. The dispute over whether the killing was either a genocide or a mass-killing has thus far remained unresolved.

A diplomatic step was taken in March 2005 when Erdogan called for an independent investigation of the Armenian mass killing, with teams of both Armenian and Turkish historians. This happened after France had angered Turkey by calling for recognition of the genocide. In October 2006 the situation between Turkey and France worsened again when France proposed legislation that would make it punishable not to recognise the Armenian genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire. But this legislation did not pass.

The murder of Hrant Dink in early 2007 has caused for an increased level of tension between Armenia and Turkey.

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#### Military

One important demand of the EU placed on Turkey is that the National Security Council, a powerful military body advising the cabinet, will be brought under civilian control. With the acceptance of the seventh package of reform regarding the duties and composition of the National Security Council a new Regulation was adopted in January 2004. The office of the Secretariat General of the National Security Council is now no longer able to conduct national security investigations on its own accord. The body has become a solely consultative institution instead of an executive one.



Up until now, another cause for concern had been the military State Security Courts (SSCs) created "to deal with security offences against the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, the free democratic order, or against the Republic whose characteristics are defined in the Constitution, and offences directly involving the internal and external security of the State". In the same way in which the constitution established a channel for military supervision of the government through the National Security Council, the influence of the armed forces was built into the structure of the State Security Courts. This was done by placing one military judge together with two civilian judges on each court panel. The prosecutor could actually be a serving army officer.

The SSCs have been replaced by Regional or Serious Felony Courts (or Heavy Penal Courts) in May 2004. These courts deal with the same kind of crime as the SSCs– namely organised crime, drug trafficking and terrorist offences– but differ importantly from the SSCs because they are civilian courts without military judges or influence. Prisoners have access to a lawyer immediately after being taken into custody. On top of this any court in Turkey now officially recognises the primacy of international and European Law.

Despite these developments, there are still provisions on the basis of which the military continues to enjoy a degree of autonomy. Civilians can be tried for military courts for certain crimes. Also, the armed forces in Turkey exercise influence on the judiciary through informal mechanisms like the media. Even more worrying is the fact that the definition of terror in the Anti-Terror Law is broadly drawn, so that respected politicians, journalists and human rights campaigners might be accused of breaking it.

In the run-up to the 2007 elections, the military has tried to use their influence to keep the electorate to vote for the AKP. In the eyes of the military, the AKP was a threat to the secular state. For that reason, the military advised to vote for one of the opposition parties. However, the electorate did not answer the call and the AKP became the winner of the 2007 elections (see "Parliamentary elections: July 2007")

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#### Western alliances

In 1945 Turkey joined the UN and in 1952 it became a member of NATO. The country provided the second biggest army connected to the Treaty Organisation. On the 1st of January 1996 the Turkey-EU Customs Union came into force, whereby Turkey adapted its trade regime and other relevant legislation to that of the EU. Turkey thus became the only non-EU member country with the exception of Malta, San Marino and Andorra, which had signed a customs union agreement with the European Union.

While Turkey is drawing closer to the EU, its relationship with the other large western power, the USA, has chilled somewhat over the issue of the Iraq war. With the outbreak of the war in 2003, Turkey found itself caught between the ally they had helped during the first Gulf War of 1991 to expel Iraq from Kuwait, and its neighbour and trading partner Iraq. Adding up to the dilemma, Turkey knew the EU heavily doubted the justifiability of intervention in Iraq.

Turkey decided not to allow US troops to use its territory for starting the invasion of Iraq from the North. The Republic government also expressed itself publicly against an attack on Iraq. However, now that the war in Iraq is officially over, the strive for independence of the Kurds in Northern Iraq is growing stronger. The fear Turkey had about the war precipitating a break-up of Iraq with the possible creation of a Kurdish state, is growing stronger with it. According to analysts, there is not much Turkey can do against the Kurdish call for independence in Iraq. Military intervention of the Turks in the Kurdish regions would be unacceptable to the EU, and the USA is less willing to help Turkey solve its problems since the Turks kept themselves from Iraq. Now the Kurds in Northern Iraq are doing relatively well in their region and the fighting in South-East Turkey continues, the fear of an independent Kurdish state in Iraq could become bigger among Turks. The increased nationalistic vote in the 2007 elections could be explained by this increased level of fear.

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#### Gender issues

The new Civil Code, passed through government on 22 November 2001, drastically changed the legal status of



women. It abolished the supremacy of men in marriage and thus established the full equality of men and women in the family. Amongst other things, the Civil Code granted women the right to an equal say in the decision making regarding home and children, a right to have property and assets equally divided in a divorce, and the right to take jobs without obtaining their husband's consent. But obviously nothing is going to change overnight – and there remain many mentalities to change in Turkey's patriarchal society. It is clear that the reforms and accomplishments in the legal domain are insufficient to prevent gender discrimination and to eliminate violations of women's human rights in the private sphere. In this realm, violence is a key problem in Turkey. A recent report by Amnesty International estimates that at least one third of the Turkish women are victims of domestic violence in which they are "hit, raped and, in some cases, killed or forced to commit suicide".

In 2002 research in the south eastern region of Turkey turned out that 16.3% of all women were married under the legal minimum age of 15, one out of ten were living in prohibited polygamous marriages and more than half of the women asked were married without their consent although the consent of both the husband and wife to be is needed for a marriage to be legitimate.

Honour killing – the murdering of women accused of bringing shame on the family by conducting illicit affairs – is probably the most widespread violation of human rights in the country. Women's lives continue to be governed by these kinds of customary and religious practices and traditions and the new Civil Code is not firm enough to fully set women free from them. For example, the code sees that rape in marriage and sexual harassment are treated as crimes, but while it will limit rights to carry out virginity tests on women, it will not explicitly ban them.

In September 2004, another reform of the Turkish Penal Code was accepted by parliament. Following the successful reform of the Civil Code in 2001, the Penal Code reform strengthens women's equal protection under the law, replacing definitions that turn on patriarchal concepts such as chastity, honour, shame, and indecent behaviour with definitions based on global human rights norms. Prime Minister Erdogan (AKP) wanted to add a clause punishing adultery to the new Code, but Brussels objected. The exact reform is still being debated, but at least provocation can no longer be an excuse in "honour" killings.

Then again, legislation takes a long time to compete with custom, and the figures still reflect a deeply unequal society. Women organisations find it hard to make a strong fist. Even though the Turkish parliament passed laws in 2004 to strengthen rights to peaceful assembly, women's organisations (as all other non-governmental organisations in Turkey) are still unable to retort to the government. This became painfully clear in March 2005, when the police used truncheons and tear gas to break up a peaceful demonstration of women and young people ahead of International Women's Day and arrested 64 people as they attempted to march to Beyazit Square in the city. In response the EU expressed fear that the Turkish spirit for reform on the road to the EU was slacking.

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#### Economic weakness

In February 2001 Turkey suffered a major economic setback, on top of the economic crisis that had followed heavy earthquakes in 1999. Turkey is therefore following many of the policies of the IMF in an attempt to curb inflation and regulate corruption. Contrary to its election promises when it spoke of standing up to the IMF, since taking over power in government the AKP has in fact pursued and implemented the IMF programme. They barely sought to change the plans for privatisation, regulation, price and tax increases for consumers and cuts in grants for small farmers.

During the last 25 years the level of economic prosperity in the country has risen. During the year 2006 it has done so with 5,3 (est.) percent. For this, much is owed to a dynamic private sector, for example in tourism and the textile industry. Probably more so than to the government, which often failed to conduct successful financial guidance, in the sense of corruption or sloppy tax collection. However, the economic situation is not yet as stable as one would like it to be. According to the British Helsinki Human Rights Group the relative economic recovery during the period of AKP rule is far from stable because of its basis in IMF and World Bank credit. However, in the 2007, the AKP received the credits for the economic recovery of the last years by increasing the percentage of votes in the parliamentary elections.



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## SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Republican People's Party (CHP)  
Leader - Deniz Baykal

Social Democratic Party, Member of the Socialist International and the largest Social Democratic Party in Turkey. The party could be called the heir of Kemalism, loyal to the principles of Atatürk. It grew directly from the first political party in Turkey that bore the same name and was created by Atatürk in 1923. Despite their social democratic name the party has a rather conservative, rightist outlook on political issues.

In the last decade leading up to the 21st century, the CHP only became a strong centre-left party after its fusion with the then main left-wing party SHP in February 1995. However, following the general elections of April 1999, CHP - which obtained only 8.7% of the votes, disappeared entirely from parliament for the first time in its history. Many blamed the CHP for not being left wing enough. Baykal was seen as responsible for this defeat and he resigned. During the last elections in 2002, Baykal re-gained his seat and was able to get 19.39% of the votes for the CHP. The party became the second biggest party in Turkey and the main opposition party in the Assembly. In the 2002 elections, the party gained 177 representatives in parliament.

During the CHP party congress in January 2005 it became clear that within the party large disunity exists. Baykal and his supporters got into a physical fight with their opponents inside the party, and verbally attacked one another during discussions. Baykal got eventually re-elected as party leader, but he achieved this status at a large cost for the CHP. Since the party congress had been shown on national television the popularity of the CHP had sunk dramatically.

In the 2007 elections, the party lost tremendously. In an attempt to attract more rightwing and nationalistic voters, the party changed its focus to more rightwing issues in stead of focusing on the classic leftist issues. Shortly after the elections, analysts stated that this shift could have caused the decline in electoral support for the party, just like this was argued after the devastating elections of 1999. Analysts also pointed at the way the electorate have perceived the opposition role of the CHP. The decline in support could be explained by dissatisfaction about their role in opposition. The CHP now holds 112 seats in parliament, but a part of these seats will be occupied by candidates of the other social-democratic party in their alliance: the DSP.

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Democratic Society Party (DTP)  
Leader - Ahmed Türk

DTP is the only legal Kurdish Party in Turkey. It is a social-democratic party and an observer member of the Socialist International. The party was found in on 17 August 2005 as merger of the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) and the new Democratic Society Movement (DTH), founded by the end of 2004. Initially, the DTP tried to be the first Turkish party to have collective leadership. After finding out that this form of party leadership was illegal, Ahmed Türk became the only party leader. During the 2004 elections, DTP had not yet been erected, so DEHAP competed for the last time as independent party.

DEHAP was established as HADEP in 1994 to replace the Party for Democracy (DeP), which was dissolved. HADEP took part in the 1995 elections and won 4.2 % of the vote. Prevented by the 10% threshold system to enter the parliament, it gave most of its votes to the RP (see below) so as not to waste them. HADEP was the only legal party allowed to represent Kurdish interests (unlike the outlawed PKK). The party took part in the April 1999 municipal and general elections. Once again, HADEP failed to reach at the national level the 10% threshold for seats in the Assembly but won massively in some cities in the southeastern region of Turkey. After these elections the party was banned by the Constitutional Court and renamed as DEHAP.



At last parliamentary elections in 2002, DEHAP combined forces with four minor leftist parties, namely the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP), the Party for Freedom and Solidarity (ÖDP), the Free Party (ÖP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The alliance entered the race under the name SHP. At last parliamentary elections in 1999, these five parties received 8 percent of the votes together. In 2002, when they had officially formed a coalition together they received only five percent of the votes. The generally accepted explanation for this is that the electorate of DEHAP punished their party for collaborating with the SHP, a party notorious for their anti-Kurdish standpoints. DEHAP on the other hand views the coalition as a big step forward in becoming a legitimate party on the Turkish political stage.

During the elections they received only 6.22% of the votes and couldn't get into parliament. In 2004 they teamed up with the SHP as to show Turkish Kurdish unity. "We, with the declaration of our unity with SHP, one more time proved that DEHAP is not making ethnic politics", the party stated. Together the SHP and DEHAP got 6.2 % of the votes.

For the 2007 elections, the DTP had an alliance with the independent candidates for parliament. This increased the number of independent candidates in parliament, of which there are also DTP-candidates. At the time of writing it is unclear how much DTP-candidates are among the "independent" candidates.

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#### Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) Leader - Murat Karayacin

The Sosyal Demokrat Halkçi Parti (SHP) was created in 1985, and was one of the several parties formed since 1983 that had presented itself as an heir to the CHP.

The decision to join the DYP (see below) in a coalition government brought the internal divisions within the SHP to the forefront. Civil rights activists, both Turkish and Kurdish, opposed the SHP's participation in the government because they associated Demirel with government abuses of human rights during the late 1970s and doubted his willingness to terminate martial law in the Kurdish provinces. Consequently eighteen SHP deputies resigned from the party in 1990 and, led by Ahmet Türk, established the People's Labor Party (Halkin Emek Partisi - HEP) as a separate group in the National Assembly, which would later grow out to become DEHAP. Because the HEP emphasized civil rights issues its primary appeal was among Kurds. A majority of the party's executives were Kurdish.

Many Turkish leaders, both civilian and military, tended not to distinguish between the HEP, which was committed to working for civil rights within the political process, and the PKK, which aimed to overthrow the political system through armed struggle. When the military initiated proceedings against HEP founders in 1992 for allegedly promoting "separatist propaganda," the HEP deputies accused the SHP of not actively protecting them from official persecution. This affected the public opinion of the SHP negatively, since their cooperation with HEP had supplied them with a progressive, popular image. Consequently the SHP did very poorly in the 1994 municipal council elections--virtually all SHP incumbents in the cities and towns of south-eastern Turkey lost. Gradually the SHP lost its status of third biggest party in Turkey, to become a marginal un-influential leftist party, which needed the support of DEHAP in the local elections of 2004.

In the 2007 elections, the SHP has an alliance with the CHP, the biggest social-democratic party in the country. Together both parties gained 112 in parliament, a great loss compared to the elections of 2002. It could be stated that the leftist vote was the great loser of the 2007 elections.

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## OTHER PARTIES



Justice and Development Party (AKP)  
Leader – Recep Tayyip Erdogan

The AKP is the governing party in Turkey, which is mostly characterized as Islamic and neo-liberal reformist. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) claimed victory in the November 3 elections, paving the way for Turkey's first single-party government to assume power in more than a decade. The party is very popular among a large part of the population in Turkey, which consists mainly of "urbanised" peasants. This group contains about 35 million people, which are no longer poor but not rich yet, an in-between group looking for power, money and identity. These people are keen on the rhetoric of AKP, because it oscillates between conservatism, fundamentalism and progress.

The AKP was founded in 2001 by Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Gül as a splinter party from the Islamic Felicity Party. The AKP surprised all other political parties in Turkey by gradually gaining more votes in each local and general election. They shed their staunchest Islamic viewpoints from their Milli Görüş (see below) period and focussed on cooperation with the EU. In 2002 they became the largest party in parliament, with Abdullah Gül as premier, quickly followed up by Tayyip Erdogan after his political ban was lifted. The AKP claims to be a pro-Western mainstream party with a "conservative" social agenda but also a firm commitment to liberal market economy and European Union membership.

In the 2007 elections, the AKP was the big winner, gaining 340 seats in parliament. The AKP was rewarded for the economic prosperity of Turkey and the overall performance of the Turkish government. It is clear that the AKP has received a great mandate from the Turkish electorate to continue their policies, including the accession-talks with the European Union.

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Felicity Party (SP)  
Leader – Necmettin Erbakan

Conservative and Islamic, this party has changed names several times, because it repeatedly got banned from the political sphere by secular courts for being too religiously motivated. The party was eradicated in 1970 as the National Order Party (MNP) and was reincarnated in 1973 it as the National Salvation Party (MSP), which expressed its ideas in the Milli Görüş (National Vision). In 1983 the party was re-eradicated as the Welfare Party (RP). This party lasted a relatively long time until the government coalition headed by Mr. Erbakan fell apart in 1997 under pressure of the military. The Constitutional Court banned the party in January 1998. Again the party was immediately recreated, this time as the Virtue Party (FP). When the FP was also banned in 2001, Erbakan formed yet another reincarnation, the Felicity Party (SP), but this time the aging politician faced a revolt against his leadership within his own party by a modernist faction of younger Islamic activists, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül.

This "new guard" in the SP had long pushed for a more democratic, decentralized, and transparent party structure. They also objected to Erbakan's anti-Western policies, but encountered stiff opposition on all fronts from Erbakan and his cohorts. While the old guard talked about international Muslim solidarity, Erdogan and his allies were enthusiastic about accelerating Turkey's economic integration with the West. Following Erbakan's political humiliation in the 1999 parliamentary elections when the RP placed itself third behind the Democratic Left Party (DSP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), the reformers broke away and formed the AKP.

The SP is now a marginal party in Turkish politics. In the 2007 elections the party won only 2,34 percent of the votes. The party did not enter parliament.

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Motherland Party (ANAP)  
Leader – Erkan Mumcu



Founded in 1983 by Turgut Ozal, ANAP is positioned at the centre right of the political spectrum. The party governed Turkey from 1983 to 1991, formed a brief governmental coalition with the DYP in 1995 and then came back to power on its own in July 1997. It stayed on to November 1998 with Mesut Yilmaz as party leader. As a government party the ANAP transformed the Turkish economy in the eighties, introducing free-market reforms and downsizing the public sector. The governments of the ANAP also applied formally to join the EEC (European Economic Community, today's EU) in 1987. After they had been voted into opposition, the ANAP became a strong criticizer of the Customs Union with the EU.

In the April 1999 elections, ANAP was one of the big losers. The party became the fourth largest Turkish party with 14% of the votes. During the elections in 2002, they did not reach the parliament threshold. In 2007, the party tried to merge with the Democratic Party, but both parties failed to reach an agreement. ANAP then decided not to compete in the 2007 parliamentary elections.

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True Path Party (DYP)  
Leader – Mehmet Agar

Founded in 1983 by Suleyman Demirel (although banned from the elections after the coup of 1980 until 1987), the DYP is conservative and draws strong support from the countryside. Despite the fact that its political and economic program is almost identical to ANAP's, the two parties prefer competition for power to cooperation to form strong coalitions. As a result, this division of the right facilitated the RP's rise to power in 1995.

In the 1991 general elections, the DYP obtained a narrow majority of votes and formed a coalition government with the centre left party SHP. In 1993, Demirel succeeded as President of Turkey and was replaced as head of the party and by Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, the first woman in Turkey to reach prime minister ship.

Economic reforms became the cornerstone of the DYP's policy under her leadership. Membership of NATO and other strategic alliances as well as the application to join the EU were enthusiastically maintained and the Customs Union with the EU agreed on. After the April 1999 elections, DYP became the fifth party in Turkey, with 12% of the votes. During the last elections in 2002, they got only 9.55% of the votes. Thanks to some politicians who at the last instant resigned from their political parties and joined DYP, today the party is represented in the Turkish Assembly with 4 members.

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Youth Party (GP)  
Leader – Cem Uzan

The Youth Party is a populist party, founded by a young businessman Cem Uzan in 2002. Uzan is a member of a family of bankers and media patrons who ran into trouble internationally for unusual economic deals. He started an extremely expensive election campaign, with free concerts and banquets all over the country that were followed by nationalist-populist speeches. The election polls showed him as the 'likeliest third' to cross over the threshold and his speeches were all over his TV and radio stations. During the last elections in November 2002, they miraculously got 7.24% of the votes in only 3 months of political life, but still couldn't go to the parliament because of 10% threshold for seats in the Assembly. In the 2007 elections, the Youth Party gained 3,03 percent of the votes, losing more than half of their share of votes. Again, the party did not make it into parliament.

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The Democratic Left Party (DSP)  
Leader – Zeki Sezer



The DSP was founded in 1985 by Rahsan Ecevit, wife of Bülent Ecevit (he had been banned from political life after the military coup of 1980). In 1987 the party leadership was taken over by Bülent Ecevit. This centre-left party was a minority party until it won 76 parliamentary seats in the December 1995 general elections. The DSP approves of Turkish membership in NATO and adherence to the European Union although it criticized the content of the Customs Union. The DSP got a popularity boost when Abdullah Öcalan was captured during a period in which Ecevit was prime minister. The party won 22% of the votes in the general elections of April 1999 and took 136, in the 550-member Turkish Parliament. Bülent Ecevit became prime minister for the fifth time in a row. During the last elections in 2002, they received only 1.21% of the votes and couldn't get into the parliament. Ecevit resigned from politics and the new party leader became Zeki Sezer. In 2007 the party formed an alliance with the CHP, winning 20,85 percent of the votes. Out of the total of 112 seats, the DSP won 13 seats.

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#### Nationalist Action Party (MHP)

Leader – Devlet Bahçeli

Part of this party is on the far right of the political spectrum and call themselves ultra-nationalist. They are known as the Grey Wolves, the name of the MHP youth movement.

The MHP was founded in 1969 by Alparslan Türkeş. Structured as a typically paramilitary organization, MHP was largely responsible for the escalation of violence in the late seventies. The party was dissolved after the 1980 military coup while Türkeş and others were accused in the early 80's of the murder of several public figures. In 1995, Türkeş was again allowed to reconstitute the MHP and to take part in the elections, which earned the party 8.5% of the vote. The party leaders funeral in April 1997 drew 300.000 people including politicians of all parties. Türkeş was succeeded by Dr. Devlet Bahçeli, in spite by strong opposition inside the party led by Tugrul Türkeş, son of the party's founder.

MHP became the second Turkish political party after the April 1999 general elections and got 129 seats in the Assembly. It's new leader Bahçeli is drawing a different profile than earlier leaders in the sense that he is willing to cooperate with the EU, and with other political parties. He claims there are only a couple of issues (like the Kurdish status and the death-penalty which he was in favour of) on which the party will not be able to negotiate. During the last elections in 2007, the MHP became (together with the AKP) the big winner and won 14.29% of the votes (71 seats). In the discussion of the results we already have discussed possible explanations for their great win.

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#### Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) – People's Congress of Kurdistan (KONGRA-GEL)

Leader – Zubeyir Aydar

The PKK was founded in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist insurgent group primarily composed of Turkish Kurds. The group's goal was to establish an independent, democratic Kurdish state in the Middle East. In the early 1990s, the PKK moved beyond rural-based insurgent activities to include urban terrorism. Turkish authorities captured Chairman Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya in early 1999; the Turkish State Security Court subsequently sentenced him to death. In August 1999, Öcalan announced a "peace initiative," ordering members to refrain from violence and requesting dialogue with Ankara on Kurdish issues.

At a PKK Congress in January 2000, members supported Öcalan's initiative and claimed the group now would use only political means to achieve its public goal of improved rights for Kurds in Turkey. In April 2002 at its 8th Party Congress, the PKK changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) and proclaimed a commitment to nonviolent activities in support of Kurdish rights. Despite this pledge, a PKK/KADEK spokesman stated that its armed wing, the People's Defence Force, would not disband or surrender its weapons for reasons of self-defence.

In late 2003 KADEK renamed itself Kongra-Gel (KGK), trying to rise over its guerrilla past to become a proper



political party. The aims and objectives of the party include the establishment of peace, democracy, freedom, equality and justice in Kurdistan, based on a durable solution to the Kurdish Question. For this they want to resolve the Kurdish question in Turkey, Iran and Syria on the basis of dialogue and democratic principles, thereby promoting the democracy in the Middle East. In short they want to establish a free society embracing all Kurds, as well as other ethnic groups living in Kurdistan, through the empowerment of civil society and within the framework and institutions of a democratic state. The Kongra-Gel criticizes the EU for not taking the Kurdish questions into account over the Kurdish Question, only the Turkish sensitivity.

Skeptics claim this metamorphosis to a real party structure is only superficial. They believe the Kongra-Gel is continuing to commit attacks, since some fractions of the party refuse disarmament. In 2004 the European Union has declared Kongra-Gel (KGK) as a terrorist organization.