

Turkey

Last update:	24 november 2021
Population:	84,339,067 (World Bank 2020 est.)
President:	Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Governemental type:	Republican parliamentary democracy
Ruling coalition:	One ruling party - AKP
Last election:	24 June 2018 (General)
Next election:	2023 (General)
Sister parties:	Republican People's Party (CHP), Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)

In August 2014, the first direct presidential elections took place in Turkey. With 51,8 percent of the votes the then Prime Minister Erdoğan won and became the current President of Turkey. On 1 November 2015, the ruling AKP won the snap parliamentary elections in a landslide victory, establishing a majority in parliament and a single-party rule. Since then, Erdoğan has held onto the presidency, and the AKP has almost continually been the largest party in parliament. The failed coup d'état on the 15th of July 2016 by a part of the Turkish military left at least 290 dead and 1.400 wounded. In response, the Turkish government launched a massive backlash operation seriously undermining its human rights commitments as well as the perspective of joining the EU.

On 16 April 2017, a referendum was held with regards to replacing the parliamentary system by a presidential system. 51.4 percent of the citizens voted for and 48.6 percent voted against the constitutional changes. The changes enable the president to appoint and fire ministers and top state officials, control the budget, issue decrees, and declare emergency rule. Parliamentary elections are now held every five years, instead of four, at the same time as the presidential elections. Furthermore, the office of prime minister disappeared and parliament lost its right of interpellation. Since then, opposition parties have faced increased pressure, human rights and civil liberties are put under pressure, and critics fear Turkey will become an authoritarian state under Erdoğan's one-man rule. All the signs are already pointing that way: the judiciary is politicized, media outlets are increasingly maintained by pro-Erdoğan individuals and groups, and the elections planned for 2019 were held early in 2018, a move that critics view as a political strategy of survival, to keep absolute power secure. Though the elections are still decisive, and they are generally reasonably fair, critics have no doubt that Erdoğan will do everything in his power to stay in charge, leaving Turkey a de facto autocracy. Onderkant formulier

Political Situation

Straddling the continents of Europe and Asia, Turkey's strategically important location has given it major influence in the region - and control over the entrance to the Black Sea. Turkey's progress towards democracy and a market economy was halted in the decades following the death of President Atatürk in 1938. The army saw itself as the guarantor of the constitution and ousted governments on a number of occasions when it thought they were challenging secular values.

Concerns over the potential for conflict between a secular establishment backed by the military and a traditional society deeply rooted in Islam resurfaced with the landslide election victory of the Islamist-based Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002. The secularist opposition has, on several occasions since then, challenged the constitutional right of the AKP to be part of the government. In March 2008 the Constitutional Court narrowly rejected a petition by the chief prosecutor to ban the AKP and 71 of its officials, including the then President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for allegedly seeking to establish an Islamic state. Since then, the AKP has gained control over the government, and is now the largest party in Turkey with President Erdoğan at the front. Together with the MHP, their allied far-right party, it enjoys a parliamentary majority and can therefore consolidate authoritarian rule, passing rushed legislation, and sidelining opposition parties. The government has reshaped public and state institutions and is effectively removing checks and balances of power. Nevertheless, the opposition parties, though they

are strictly opposed by Erdogan, maintain a limited amount of power, particularly in Istanbul and Ankara.

Relations with the EU

Turkey has been closely associated with the European community since the start of the European project. The Ankara agreement of 1959 stated that the ultimate goal was Turkish accession into the community. The country became an EU candidate in 1999. Several substantial reforms were introduced such as the abolishment of the death penalty which contributed to opening the EU accession talks in October 2005. Major hurdles remained, however: issues around Cyprus, the implementation of reforms and a lack of commitment regarding the Kurdish issue and human rights. The negotiations stalled, and between 2005 and 2016 only 16 of the 35 negotiations chapters were opened, while only one was closed.

The migration crisis in 2016 made cooperation between Turkey and the EU harder but unavoidable. In March 2016 Turkey and the EU signed an agreement, according to which Greece could return all new irregular migrants to Turkey. The EU-Turkey deal has been widely criticised for violating EU's human rights commitments and contradicting its policy of high asylum standards for its neighbouring countries. Turkey used the agreement to bargain over the visa liberalisation process and opening of new accession chapters.

The accession process came to a complete standstill in the aftermath of the 2016 failed coup attempt. The EU-top, including High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn, condemned repressive measures taken by the Turkish government. Dozens of media outlets have been closed down and thousands of civil servants, journalist and academics put behind bars without a fair trial. In November 2016 the European Parliament voted to freeze long-term plans for Turkey to join the EU. In March 2017 the Turkish President Erdogan lashed out at EU member states Germany and the Netherlands over decisions to cancel Turkish campaigns rallies addressing the April referendum in their territory. In the annual enlargement report of 2018, the European Commission was highly critical of the Turkish perspective. Johannes Hahn stated that Turkey was taking "huge strides away" from the Union.

Political rights and civil liberties

In the Turkey of today, political rights and civil liberties are limited, and it has the status of 'not free' according to the NGO Freedom House. The media landscape is limited to a few companies, most close to the Erdogan presidency, sometimes as a necessity, to avoid further limitations by the president. Critical online news providers do still exist, but they are being actively targeted. Dozens of media workers and journalists are held in pretrial detention or are serving sentences for terrorism offenses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government attempted to manipulate the statistics, and critics, independent medical personnel, and even civilians sharing independent information related to the pandemic were arrested.

Though there remains a certain element of political pluralism, it is being increasingly limited. The government has cracked down on opposition parties and seriously harmed political rights and electoral opportunities for minority groups, most notably Kurds. Since the summer of 2021, the Kurdish party HDP is faced with a closure case, and the question remains whether the party will continue to exist. It has been accused of "terrorism" through ties with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), though the HDP denies this.

The judiciary in Turkey is also being limited in its independence. In July 2021, Parliament passed a law changing the structure of bar associations, weakening the associations' authority and independence. Though this move was met with protest by 78 out of 80 bar associations, it was enforced, limiting the independence of the judiciary.

Human rights and gender equality

The past four years have seen a deepening human rights crisis with an erosion of Turkey's rule of law and democracy framework. Regarding gender equality, Turkey had long been ahead of its time, giving women the right to vote in the early twentieth century. However, women are still exposed to large amounts of violence and human rights violations, with domestic violence instances increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, President Erdogan withdrew from the 2014 Istanbul Convention on violence against women. This was met with large-scale protests by women in the streets of multiple cities, and the United Nations Human Rights Commission urged Erdogan to reconsider the withdrawal, but this has not happened.

Not only women are at risk, but the LGBT+ community has also long had to face discrimination and violence, exacerbated by homophobic rhetoric from politicians. This has strengthened both discriminatory practices and violence against members of the LGBT+ community. Other minority groups such as Kurds also suffer discrimination, with Kurdish and pro-Kurdish civil society

organizations and political parties continuing to suffer problems in exercising their rights.

Kurdish issue

Kurds are the largest ethnic minority of Turkey. Since the dawn of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the relationship between the government and the Kurds has been tense. During several rebellions in the early twentieth century, the conflict deepened. Restrictions were placed on Kurdish nationalism, leading to economic disadvantages and human rights violations. The PKK, the best known and most radical of the Kurdish movements, launched a guerrilla campaign in 1984 for a homeland in the Kurdish heartland in the southeast. Thousands died and hundreds of thousands became refugees in the ensuing conflict with the PKK, which Turkey, the US and the European Union deem a terrorist organisation. In the early 21st century several attempts were undertaken to end the hostilities. Multiple times, peace talks were shattered by renewed violence. Especially the conflict in Syria became troubling.

The Kurdish coalition in Syria became increasingly a target of Ankara. In 2018 Turkey launched a full military invasion against the Kurds in Syria. Erdoğan defended the move by claiming that it was intended to expel the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - viewed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, due to the PKK being part of the SDF - from the border and create a 30 km-deep safe zone. This safe zone would house around 3.5 million Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey. Soon after the invasion started, the underpowered Kurdish militias made a deal with the Syrian government, allowing the Syrian army to move into the area of the Kurds - an area over which they lost control over a few years ago. This opened up the way for Turkey and the SDF to agree to a ceasefire. On 22 October 2019 a deal was made, which entailed the use of joint Russian-Turkish patrols to ensure the 30 km-deep safe zones. The invasion can be seen as a Turkish victory, since they regained more control over their border and could now start housing the millions of refugees in the safe zone.

The People's Democratic Party (HDP) is a legal Kurdish political party. This party, too, has faced increasing difficulties as Erdogan is extending his hate towards the Kurds. In the summer of 2021, an indictment was leveled against the HDP, calling for a closure of the party and the banning of hundreds of individuals associated with it. Critics see the closure case as a political move to clamp down on opposition, particularly as the government has been increasingly vocal on their distrust of the HDP.

Rising authoritarianism

On 15 July 2016, forces loyal to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan quashed a coup attempt by members of the military that began in the evening and devolved into turmoil and violence. At least 290 died and over 1.400 were wounded. Hours after the attempted coup against him began, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addressed the nation via FaceTime on CNN Türk. He urged people to take to the streets and stand up to the military faction behind the uprising. Late at night, the Turkish National Intelligence unit said the coup is over and Erdogan declared it was treason. He blamed the coup attempt on rival Fethullah Gulen (leader of Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETÖ)), a cleric and former ally who lives in exile in the US. Erdogan repeatedly demanded the US to arrest or extradite Gulen. More than 40.000 people have been detained and nearly 20.000 have been arrested in response to the failed July 15 coup attempt, 79.900 civil servants were suspended and 5.014 were dismissed 4.262 institutions.

After the coup, on April 16 2016, under emergency law, the government held a referendum on replacing the current parliamentary system by a presidential system. The 'yes'-vote won with 51.4%. Turnout was reportedly 85 per cent. In the three biggest cities - Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir - and in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast the majority voted 'no'. However, in many regions in the Anatolian heartland the 'yes' vote won.

The constitutional changes enable the president to appoint and fire ministers and top state officials, control the budget, issue decrees, and declare emergency rule. Parliamentary elections are now held every five years, instead of four, together with the presidential elections. Furthermore, the office of prime minister disappeared and parliament lost its right of interpellation.

According to the Turkish government, the presidential system brings strong leadership and frees the country of unstable coalition governments. Critics, however, claim that by allowing the president to retain ties to his political party the separation of powers is jeopardised and checks and balances have become limited or disappeared. Commonly, in presidential systems, the president and leader of a political party are two different individuals to avoid overlap between the legislative and executive branches. In the Turkish system, however, the president is both leader of a political party and president. In addition, critics are concerned that Erdogan is trying to establish a one-man rule.

Rifts within AK party

On 12 December 2019, Ahmet Davutoglu, prime minister of Turkey from 2014 to 2016, registered a new political party called “the Future Party” at the interior ministry. Davutoglu has criticised Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the past, accusing them of economic mismanagement and limiting basic liberties and free speech. The former prime minister was a close ally of Erdogan but fell out of favour over multiple issues. Disagreements about the proposed changes in the constitution, increasing the power of the president, caused Erdogan to remove Davutoglu from office. Davutoglu remained quiet for a while but in anticipation of establishing a new party, he resigned from the AKP in September 2019, arguing that it could no longer provide solutions for the problems at hand and was preventing internal debate about the party policy. Davutoglu was not the only former Erdogan ally to break ranks. Former economy minister Ali Babacan also set up a new party, the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA).

Allegedly due to these rifts, the COVID-19 pandemic and the failing economy, President Erdogan’s popularity has been falling recently. Polls from March 2021 show combined support for the AKP and the MHP falling below 45%. In order to ensure the MHP remains in parliament regardless of the failing popularity, the threshold for entering parliament was lowered from 10% of votes, to 7%. Through this, Erdogan could ensure that MHP remains in parliament to strengthen the voice of the AKP. Nevertheless, popularity of the parties is falling, and the question remains what this will mean for the future.

Parliamentary Elections

In June 2018, early parliamentary elections were held, enforcing the constitutional changes from the 2016 referendum. Thereby, these elections marked the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential system of government.

In the run-up to the elections, Turkey’s opposition formed an alliance not to win the elections as a coalition, but to challenge Erdoğan’s ability to rule without needing the authority of the parliament. Nonetheless, supporters of the AKP’s main opposition, the Republican People’s Party (CHP), were disappointed in the results, as the CHP managed to secure a mere 22.6% of votes. A new opposition party, the Good Party (İYİ), achieved 9.96% of the votes, giving it 43 seats, while the HDP Kurdish opposition party achieved 67 seats. The Felicity Party, also an opposition party, got 1.34% of the votes, not enough to earn a place in parliament. The AKP, together with its allied party MHP, won 344 seats, giving them a majority in parliament. Through this, the AKP and MHP, together the People’s Alliance, can completely sideline opposition.

The campaign format has been accused of being biased towards the AKP, and political analysts have described Turkey’s electoral system as one of façade and authoritarianism. The opposition suffered from a lack of public attention. Kurdish HDP candidate Selahattin Demirtaş was imprisoned at the time of the elections and throughout the course of the campaign, on charges of terrorism for allegedly supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Demirtaş was thus denied to hold speeches and rally properly, and he later accused the media of acting as if he was not running for the elections at all. Apart from the HDP, which in the end managed to secure 11.7% of the votes and thus pass the 10% threshold to get into parliament, small oppositional parties received little attention. Additionally, the ongoing state of emergency since the coup seriously impacted other oppositional party’s options for campaigning, and barred certain groups from entering polling places.

Party	% of votes	Seats in parliament
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	42.56%	295
Republican People’s Party (CHP)	22.64%	146
People’s Democratic Party (HDP)	11.70%	67
Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	11.0%	49
Good Party (İYİ)	9.96%	43

Total	100%	600
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Presidential Elections

In June 2018, the presidential elections were held along with the parliamentary elections. These elections were the second presidential elections held in Turkey. Several candidates ran for president: Erdogan (Justice and Development Party, AKP), Muharrem Ince (Republican People's Party, CHP), Selahattin Demirtaş (People's Democracy Party, HDP), Temel Karamollaoglu (Felicity Party), Dogu Perincek (The Patriotic Party), and Meral AKsener (The Good Party, IYI). Erdogan came out as the winner with 52.59% of the votes, followed by Muharrem Ince with 30.64% and Selahattin Demirtas with 8.40%. Turnout for these elections was 82.57%.

Critics say that both the elections and the campaigns leading up to them were marred by an uneven playing field. The incumbent party received excessive coverage in the national media, and had extended access to public and private resources. There were no large-scale allegations of fraud, but they were held in what Amnesty described as a "climate of fear" due to the uneven playing field and unfair and unfree media landscape.

Official election results:

Candidate	Parties	%
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Justice and Development Party (AKP)	52.59%
Muharrem Ince	Republican People's Party (CHP)	30.64%
Selahattin Demirtaş	Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)	8.40%
Meral Aksener	Good Party (IYI)	7.29%
Temel Karamollaoglu	Felicity Party (SP)	0.89%
Dogu Perincek	Patriotic Party (VP)	0.20%

(Social) Democratic Parties

Republican People's Party (CHP)

Party Leader: Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu

Number of seats: 133

<http://www.chp.org.tr/>

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.

In May 2010 Baykal resigned as party leader over a video scandal. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was elected new leader in September 2010 by the party congress.

Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)

Party Leader: Selahattin Demirtaş et Gültan Kışanak
Number of seats: 0

BDP is the Kurdish political party in the Republic of Turkey. BDP succeeded the Democratic Society Party (DTP) in 2008, following the closure of the latter party for its alleged connections with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The BDP is co-chaired by Selahattin Demirtaş and Gültan Kışanak. One-third of its representatives are Alevi. 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, its leader at the time, Ahmed Türk, became the only party leader.

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.

BDP is part of the Socialist International.

Social Democratic People's Party (SHP)

Party Leader: Murat Karayacın
Number of seats:
<http://www.shp.org.tr>

The Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı 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 (Halkın 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.

Other Parties

Justice and Development Party (AKP)

Party Leader: Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Number of seats: 315

<http://www.akparti.org.tr/english>

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.

Nationalist Action Party (MHP)

Party Leader: Devlet Bahçeli

Number of seats: 53

http://www.mhp.org.tr/mhp_dil.php?dil=en

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 leader's 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. Its 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 2011, the MHP became (together with the AKP) the big winner and won 13% of the votes (53 seats). In the discussion of the results we already have discussed possible explanations for their great win.

Felicity Party (SP)

Party Leader: Necmettin Erbakan
Number of seats: 0
<http://www.saadet.org.tr/>

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.

Motherland Party (ANAP)

Party Leader: Erkan Mumcu
Number of seats: 0
<http://www.anavatanpartisi.org.tr/>

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 Yılmaz 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.

True Path Party (DYP)

Party Leader: Mehmet Agar
Number of seats: 0
<http://www.dyp.com.tr/>

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 ?zals 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.

Young Party (GP)

Party Leader: Cem Uzan
Number of seats: 0

The Young 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.

The Democratic Left Party (DSP)

Party Leader: Zeki Sezer
Number of seats: 0
<http://www.dsp.org.tr/>

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 adhesion 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.

Future Party (GP)

Party Leader: Ahmet Davutoğlu
Number of seats: 0

The Future Party was launched on 13 December 2019 by Ahmet Davutoğlu, a former foreign minister and prime minister on behalf of the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP). Having been elected prime minister on 28 August 2014 with the support of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Davutoğlu later opposed the latter's moves to transform Turkey's form of government from a parliamentary to a presidential system. His conflict with Erdoğan culminated in Davutoğlu's resignation from the premiership, effective from 22 May 2016. Following his resignation, he became increasingly critical of the party, which caused the party to launch

disciplinary actions against him. Eventually Davutoğlu left the party in September 2019 after which he launched the Future Party.

İyi Party (Good Party)

Party Leader: Meral Akşener

Number of seats: 39

The İyi Party was established on 25 October 2017 by Meral Akşener, and the party adheres to the principles of Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The party follows a centrist ideology and prioritizes the restoration of the parliamentary system and the integrity of the judiciary institutions. The party has been regarded as an anti-Erdogan alternative on the right side of the political landscape. The party was formed by prominent former members of the MHP and CHP, most of these MHP defectors came up with the idea to form a new party after the controversial referendum of 2017, in which the MHP voted yes. The party quickly gained strength when five members of the Turkish parliament joined the party, and on 22 April 2018 a further 15 MPs from the CHP moved to the party. Which allowed the party to establish a parliamentary group, that would be eligible to field a candidate for the presidential election without the need to collect signatures.

Biographies

Recep Tayyip Erdogan

President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan was born on 26 February 1954 in Rize, a small city on the Black Sea coast. When Erdogan was 13, his family moved to Istanbul. He went to an Islamic school and studied business management at the Marmara University of Istanbul. After having finished his studies, Erdogan worked for Istanbul's transportation authority, until he was sacked for refusing to shave his moustache, on religious grounds.

Subsequently, Erdogan entered politics. In 1994 he was elected mayor of Istanbul. At that time he was the leader of the Islamic oriented Welfare Party, which was banned from politics in January 1998 by the highest court of Turkey. This was on the grounds that the party sought to undermine Turkey's secular basis. Erdogan got indicted on subversion charges and was sentenced to ten months in jail from March 1999. Upon his release from prison, Erdogan was one of the founders of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in August 2001, and became its leader in 2002. That same year, the AKP won the parliamentary elections and came to power. Because of his previous conviction, Erdogan was banned from serving in any government position. Nonetheless, his party's parliamentary majority revoked the ban by passing a constitutional amendment. Erdogan became Prime Minister in March 2003, replacing Abdullah Gul. In 2014, Erdogan won the presidential elections and, therefore, became the first directly elected President of Turkey.

Since then, Erdogan has moderated his position. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, his position as Prime Minister was consolidated. He experienced an important victory in 2008 when parliament voted to repeal a ban on wearing the headscarf on private or public university campuses.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan is married and has two children.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu

Chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP)

Kemal Kilicdaroglu was born on 17 December 1948 in Nazimiye, in the province of Tunceli. He is from Kurdish origin and also has Armenian ancestry. Kilicdaroglu was educated in economics at the Gazi University in Ankara. After having finished university in

1971, Kilicdaroglu served in the Ministry of Finance as a Deputy Accountant and later on as an Accountant. In 1983 he became Deputy Director General of the Revenues Department in the same ministry. Eight years later, in 1991, Kilicdaroglu was appointed Director-General of respectively two social security administrations.

He entered politics in 1994, but did not manage to get on the candidate list of the Democratic Left Party (DSP). However, he was invited by the leader of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, to join his party. In 2002 he was elected into parliament as a deputy from Istanbul, to be re-elected in 2007. Kilicdaroglu's efforts to uncover corruption among the AKP carried him to headlines in the Turkish media.

Kilicdaroglu was nominated as candidate for the Mayor of Istanbul for the CHP in the 2009 local elections, gaining 37 percent of the votes. When Deniz Baykal resigned in May 2010, Kilicdaroglu was elected as the leader and breath new life into the party.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu is married and has a son and two daughters.

Ekrem İmamoğlu

Mayor of Istanbul

Ekrem İmamoğlu is the current Mayor of Istanbul since 2019. He was elected in the March 2019 mayoral elections, running for the Nation Alliance, consisting from CHP and the İYİ Party. The results were cancelled by the Supreme Electoral Council due to concerns about the credentials of several members of the polling staff. Many regarded the ruling as politically motivated since the AK party claimed the elections results were invalid from the moment they became public. A new election was held on 23 June 2019, in which İmamoğlu was re-elected as mayor. This time his main challenger and AK party member Binali Yıldırım, congratulated İmamoğlu with his victory and soon after that President Erdoğan congratulated him as well. As mayor of Istanbul, İmamoğlu has cut funding for groups related to Erdoğan's government which are estimated to be worth around 350 million Turkish Liras. The election of İmamoğlu and his subsequent actions against organisations related to Erdoğan are seen as one of the biggest achievements for the opposition in Turkey. Especially since they struggle to keep their influence in the Turkish society, following the attempted coup in 2016 and subsequent arrests of prominent opposition members.

Selahattin Demirtaş

Leader of the HDP

Demirtaş has been the leader of the HDP from 2014 till 2018 alongside Figen Yüksekdağ. In November 2016, Demirtaş was detained by the Turkish on charges of spreading propaganda for militants fighting the Turkish state. The HDP is considered to be a pro-Kurdish party. He was fielded as the presidential candidate for the HDP in 2018, and got 8,4% of the votes, which is quite an achievement considering he ran his campaign from prison. On 7 September 2018, Demirtaş got sentenced to 4 years and 8 months for a speech he made on 20 March 2013. Meanwhile Turkish prosecutors said they were seeking for 142-year prison term for Demirtaş.

Source

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