



## **DPI Turkey 'On the Ground' Assessment**

January - September 2014

Democratic  
Progress  
Institute



# **DPI Turkey 'On the Ground' Assessment**

January - September 2014



Published by  
Democratic Progress Institute  
11 Guilford Street  
London WC1N 1DH  
United Kingdom

**[www.democraticprogress.org](http://www.democraticprogress.org)**  
**[info@democraticprogress.org](mailto:info@democraticprogress.org)**  
+44 (0)203 206 9939

First published, 2014

**ISBN: 978-1-905592-ISBN**

© DPI – Democratic Progress Institute, 2014

DPI – Democratic Progress Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales. Registered Charity No. 1037236. Registered Company No. 2922108.

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee or prior permission for teaching purposes, but not for resale. For copying in any other circumstances, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable. be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable

# Contents

Foreword.....	8
Executive Summary.....	11
PART ONE: January – June 2014.....	15
Introduction.....	15
I: The Current State of Play: Normalisation, Progress and Challenges.....	16
II: Perceptions of the Process – Home and Abroad .....	22
III: Regional Ramifications: Events in Syria and Iraq and their Impact on the Process.....	30
IV: Future Prospects: The Presidential Elections and Beyond....	34
Conclusion: Section One .....	42
PART TWO: June – September 2014 .....	44
Introduction.....	44
Presidential Elections: An Overview .....	43
Background .....	43
Presidential candidates.....	46
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Justice and Development (AK Party) Candidate.....	46
Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu Republican People’s Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Candidate .....	49
Selhattin Demirtaş People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Candidate.....	51

Breakdown of Results .....	53
Polls in the lead up to the election .....	53
Surface level election results .....	54
Results by Region .....	56
Overview of Media Reporting Surrounding the Election .....	60
In Turkey before the election .....	60
In Turkey after the election .....	62
International media both before and after the election.....	65
What does Erdoğan's presidential victory mean for Turkey and the current 'process'?.....	67
New Reform Package .....	71
Background to the Reform Package .....	71
Content of the Reform Package .....	73
Potential Impact of the Reform Package .....	74
Criticism of the New Reform Package .....	77
Scandal: A Challenge to Peace? .....	79
Background .....	79
Past scandals .....	80
Ongoing scandals .....	80
Impact of Corruption Allegations.....	83
Regional developments and their effect on Turkey's 'process' .....	83
Conclusion: What next for Turkey? .....	87
New Cabinet .....	87

“New Turkey” .....90

1)The continuity of the struggle against the “parallel state” ...90

2)The continuity of the Kurdish peace process.....91

3)Transition to the Presidential System.....91

## Foreword

This assessment forms part of the Democratic Progress Institute's (DPI) Turkey programme. It aims to evaluate the process underway in Turkey, regarding the resolution of the Kurdish Conflict, and focuses on key developments on the ground this year. The assessment focuses on the period from January to the end of August 2014, and aims to provide a comprehensive summary of developments during this time frame.

Issues addressed in this assessment include the challenges faced in mobilising political support for the current process; internal and external factors providing momentum to peace efforts in the country; analysis of the key drivers and agents of change behind current developments; and the likely effects of parliamentary and presidential elections and proposed legislative reform.

As outlined in this assessment, the last eight months in Turkey have seen significant change including a number of positive developments regarding the Kurdish resolution. Yet despite forward steps, what is now being publicly referred to, and accepted by many, as a 'process', remains fragile. Polarisation among society continues, and harsh rhetoric on all sides has increased over recent months, in particular surrounding the presidential elections. Reactions to the recent Framework Law have been mixed, with calls for greater recognition of the conflict and of the Kurds as an equal partner within it, by many segments of civil society. In order for momentum

to be maintained, and for any kind of sustainable, lasting peace to be achieved in Turkey, it is clear that issues of process must be addressed, in addition to those of substance, including questions of timing, choreography, and structure. While the Framework Law represents a positive step forward, it will need to be swiftly followed by further legislative reform to ensure its implementation, and to avoid a stalling of the process.

It is also of vital importance that the solution process is felt to be an inclusive one, which includes all elements of Turkey's society. Unless society as a whole, including opposition groups, feel ownership for the process, and are supportive of it, difficulties will be faced in advancing the process.

In addition to issues within Turkey itself, recent regional developments have also contributed to the fragility of the process, and will continue to have a significant impact. The recent advances of the Islamic State (IS) are affecting the region as a whole, and bring the question of Rojava (the Kurdish region of Syria) in particular, into even greater consideration. These issues will continue to be crucially interconnected to Turkey's process, and must not be ignored if developments are to be kept on track, and for opportunities for dialogue to continue.

This evaluation of events is based on intimate communications with key political actors from Turkey and internationally. It seeks to provide a 'snapshot' of key events in 2014 to date, and to review

the status of the Kurdish resolution process in the country by providing a structured overview of related events. It forms part of a series of assessments on this topic, undertaken by various experts, both nationally and internationally. Further assessments of this kind will be published by the Institute by the end of the year on the resolution of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey.



Kerim Yildiz  
**Director**  
**Democratic Progress Institute**  
**September 2014**

## Executive Summary

2014 in Turkey has thus far been dominated at a political level by electioneering, with the local elections held in March and the presidential elections held in August. Both during the campaigning period and in the aftermath of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's transition from Prime Minister to President and the subsequent promotion of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to Prime Minister by the new President, the AK Party's goals of a new constitution in Turkey and a resulting presidential system (which may be realised if a constitutional majority is achieved in the June 2015 general elections, allowing the AK Party to submit a new constitution for referendum), have remained at the top of the political agenda. It can be presumed that the ongoing 'pre-election climate' which is likely to continue until June of next year, has facilitated the increasing polarisation within Turkey's society in recent months, something which is concerning, in particular with regards to the solution process.

While elections have dominated the political landscape, amidst the political machinations at play, the ceasefire between the Turkish State and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has largely held. Despite some serious incidents such as the killing of two protestors in the Lice area of Diyarbakır province on 7 June, the first Kurdish deaths at the hands of the security forces since the current ceasefire took effect. Tensions in the Kurdish region surrounding the construction of new military outposts, the protest against which

led to the deaths in Lice, continued to be high earlier this year, and in January a leaked audio recording purporting that the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MİT) were involved in the killing of three Kurdish women in Paris a year earlier, threatened to derail the process. Given these events, along with reports that PKK recruitment of new members was continuing, and accusations earlier in the year that only 20 per cent of its members had withdrawn to Iraq, it is perhaps somewhat against the odds that the ceasefire continued to hold.

Despite these concerns however, there have been positive developments during this period (June – September 2014), which have brought with them renewed hope in relation to the ongoing process. Perhaps most significant in terms of developments relating to Turkey's 'process' is the legislative reform which has begun, namely the passing of the Law on the Termination of Terror and Strengthening of Social Integration, drafted on 18 June 2014, and heralded by then Prime Minister Erdoğan to denote a significant change, which would mean that 'the Kurdish Question will be resolved...'.<sup>1</sup> This framework law has been largely welcomed, and has been described by commentators as signifying a new era in the solution process; a potential 'game changer'. It marks an unprecedented formalisation of the solution process and acknowledgment and approval by Parliament, thus providing for the first time in Turkey's history, a legal framework for negotiations

---

1 Tarihi, Erişim, Zaman Gazetesi, "Öcalan ve Hükümet Anlaşığı", [http://www.zaman.com.tr/medya\\_ocalan-ile-hukumet-anlasti\\_2215968.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/medya_ocalan-ile-hukumet-anlasti_2215968.html), Last accessed 28.07.2014

with the PKK. One of the main effects of the law will be to immunise from prosecution those involved in the discussions, the necessity of which is outlined in more detail in this report. Furthermore, the law provides for the rehabilitation of PKK militants and their reintegration into society, although the law is vague as to how this would be achieved in practice, and it is expected that further elaboration on this aspect will be provided in the government's promised 'roadmap' on the process, which is expected to be announced in October 2014. The content of the framework law sets out the main components of the 'process' as being legislative steps; the disarmament process; and the reintegration process. The eventual backing of the law by all of Turkey's main opposition parties (besides nationalist MHP) and the acceptance of it by the general public without significant debate or challenge, can be viewed positively as a measure of society's changed stance on the solution process underway in Turkey.

The last eight months both in Turkey and in the region as a whole, have been synonymous with change and transition. While numerous internal threats to the stability of the solution process remain, namely increased polarisation among society, it is developments within the wider region, namely in Syria and Iraq, which pose the greatest risk to the continuation of the process and threaten to derail it. The multiple crises unfolding in the broader geopolitical region are hugely significant from the standpoint of Turkey's relationship with the main actors in Syria that is in disarray, a seemingly disintegrating Iraq and a region that is faced

with the new (or if not new, evolved) threat of ISIS/ISIL/IS/ Islamic State; and even more significantly from the point of view of the peace process, Turkey's relationship with the Kurds in these regions, as discussed in the first section of this report. Events in the wider region over recent months have been, and will continue to be inextricably connected to Turkey's process, and will continue to dictate, in many ways, the pace at which progress is made or is hindered.

DPI reported in its assessment of the peace process in November 2013 that the main parties view a return to violence as inconceivable and it would appear that the same holds true some nine months later, despite what may be viewed as threats to the process, such as the killings in Lice in early June. The renewed impetus provided to the process by the introduction of the Framework Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration and crucially, the election of former Prime Minister Erdoğan to the office of President in August, should provide the basis for a defined roadmap by which the process will be directed, conceivably ensuring that the next phase of the process will see real progress.

## **PART ONE: January - June 2014**

### **Introduction**

Both the local and presidential elections in Turkey in 2014 have brought the importance of the current peace process sharply into focus, with the 'settlement' or 'process' emerging as a major discussion point in the run up to both elections, and arguably influencing the outcome of these elections in no small part.

In terms of the progress achieved since the process became public knowledge, a number of major developments have occurred. The most significant of which is the cessation of violence in the Kurdish region. The ceasefire, which has been in place since it was announced by Abdullah Öcalan in March 2013, has remained in place despite what many view as agonisingly slow progress on the path to a negotiated solution. Some significant developments have occurred however, not least the implementation this year of the most recent 'democratisation package' which advances the right to be educated in the Kurdish language, for example, albeit in a limited context. This paper aims to assess the current situation in Turkey in relation to the continuing process against the backdrop of tumultuous times in the broader Middle East region. The focus will be on the sixth month period of January-June 2014, dominated at a political level in Turkey by the local elections in March and the build-up to the first presidential election in Turkey to be held on 10 August 2014, with an attempt to assess the likely outcome of the presidential election and the impact, if any, on the prospects for finding a solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey.

## I: The Current State of Play: Normalisation, Progress and Challenges

It is perhaps axiomatic to suggest that there are competing narratives regarding the contemporary phase (post 1984) of the Turkey-Kurdish conflict. From the point of view of the Kurdish population the war fought by the PKK since 1984 was a direct result of the policies of the State, a relationship as Watts notes, of “state *versus* society” and one that is “readily substantiated by a myriad historical and contemporary examples: multiple Kurdish rebellions against the central state, cultural and political dissent articulated from poetry to political parties, emergency rule law in Kurdish-majority provinces, extrajudicial killings condoned and organised by state security forces, a series of constitutional court decisions to close parties supported by at least a third of the region’s electorate, street clashes between protestors and police in Diyarbakır – the list is long.”<sup>2</sup> From the point of view of the State however, the Kurdish issue has historically been viewed as a security one and PKK violence treated as ‘terrorism’, with the PKK classed as a ‘terrorist’ organisation by Turkey, the European Union, and the US. This “classic” approach of the State therefore has been one of “military intervention, resulting in serious human rights abuses, violent conduct and killings, and leading to an ongoing conflict between the State and the PKK.”<sup>3</sup> In the contemporary phase of the conflict however there has been an evolution of how both sides

---

2 Nicole F. Watts ‘Re-Considering State-Society Dynamics in Turkey’s Kurdish Southeast’ (2009) 10 *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (unpaginated document).

3 Kerim Yildiz ‘Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict: Pathways to Progress’ (2012) 14.4 *Insight Turkey* 151-174, at p.152.

view and assert their nationalisms; the PKK's demands are now manifested in claims for cultural and citizenship rights within the Turkish borders, not an independent State that would secede from Turkey. Over the past twelve years there has been a slow retreat from an official discourse that sees Turkish identity as a monolithic entity. As has observed “[t]he state elites are now at pains to emphasise that nobody is discriminated against, because of ethnic identity and that all ethnic identities deserve equal treatment.”<sup>4</sup>

The AK Party government that assumed power in 2002 can certainly be credited with a change in how the Turkish State has approached the conflict. Since the recognition by Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2005 that Turkey had a Kurdish ‘problem’, one that would be “solved through democracy”<sup>5</sup> there has been a gradual shift in attitude towards the Kurdish issue, arguably not just by the State, but by the majority of people in Turkey also. This change in approach by the State, along with the cessation (for the most part) of violence in the southeast of the country has led to a steady normalisation of the Kurdish question in Turkey, resulting in a series of reforms and the prospect of a lasting settlement that would have been virtually unthinkable only twenty years ago. The AK Party government can therefore be seen as having presided over the ‘de-securitisation’ of the Kurdish question. Galip Dalay offers the following interesting insight: “[c]oming from an

---

4 Güneş Murat Tezcür ‘Kurdish Nationalism and Identity in Turkey: A Conceptual Reinterpretation’ (2009) 10 *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (unpaginated document).

5 See ‘Peace be unto you: The Turkish prime minister paves the way for a deal with the Kurds’ *The Economist* 18 August 2005.

---

Islamic background, the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) elites have had a partial revisionist policy: they do not see Turkishness, secularism, and Western-orientation as the primary foundations of Turkey's identity nor do they see the Middle East, Islamism, and arguably Kurdishness as a threat. As such, they gradually desecuritized them...The term such as "Kurdistan," as uttered by Erdoğan, has been desecuritized. Moreover, both the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, are in the process of normalization in the eyes of the general public as a result of dialogue and negotiations."<sup>6</sup>

The process in large part has arguably continued to date due to the strength of leadership on both sides, with Prime Minister Erdoğan driving it from the Turkish side and maintaining support for the process amongst the AK Party core constituency and the figurehead of Abdullah Öcalan on the Kurdish side counselling patience with a process that has at times been stalled or made painfully slow progress.<sup>7</sup> The local elections of 30 March 2014 resulted in the AK Party winning 44 per cent of the national vote and 41 metropolitan municipalities, representing, as Ülgen has suggested, a firm endorsement of the prime minister's leadership.<sup>8</sup> The result came as a surprise to many who had predicted that the reaction to the Gezi protests during the summer of 2013, as well as

---

6 Galip Dalay 'The Kurdish Peace Process: Ideology, Interest, and the Regional Dynamics' *The German Marshall Fund of the United States: Turkey Series* 29 April 2014, available at [http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files\\_mf/1398800911Dalay\\_KurdishPeaceProcess\\_Apr14.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/1398800911Dalay_KurdishPeaceProcess_Apr14.pdf)

7 See *infra* Section II for detail on the progress achieved on the process during 2013.

8 Sinan Ülgen 'What next after Turkey's local elections?' *Strategic Europe* 4 April 2014, available at <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=55242>

the corruption scandal that engulfed the party in December 2013 would result in a major decrease in the AK Party vote in the local elections.<sup>9</sup> These crises did have the effect, however, of magnifying the importance of the local elections and, as some commentators have suggested, “[m]ajor events in 2013, such as the peace process, Gezi protests, and December 17<sup>th</sup> corruption probe, increased the political tension and turned the atmosphere of the local elections into a general election.”<sup>10</sup> BDP/HDP also increased its share of the vote, gaining **6.2** per cent overall, with CHP winning 25 per cent and MHP 18 per cent.

Of the four main political parties MHP is unique in failing to support the peace process. Whilst initially CHP was critical of the process, describing it as a capitulation to terrorism, and continually critical of the way in which the process was being conducted, it has more recently moved to supporting the process, evident in its acceptance of the *Draft Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration* as well as the overtures made towards the Kurds in the presidential election campaign, discussed below, as well as in its demand that a parliamentary oversight committee be established to monitor the process. As one commentator observes, “[u]ntil very recently, CHP officials have been criticizing the lack of transparency of the peace negotiations. They have decided to become a part of the legalized process and leverage their position by demanding

---

9 See Halil Gurhanli ‘Turkey’s local elections, Erdoğan and the spectre of Gezi’ *Open Democracy* 26 March 2014, asserting that a loss of power for Erdoğan “seems ever more probable”.

10 Hatem Ete, Yunus Akbaba, Galip Dalay, Sami Orçun Ersay, Kiliç Buğra Kanat, and Kadir Üstün *Turkey’s 2014 Local Elections* (SETA, March 2014), p. 20.

---

the establishment of a parliamentary oversight committee. CHP argues that the parliamentary oversight committee would allow for the representation of all political parties in the peace process, even if they disagree with its content. This is a very wise move for the CHP as they want to end the monopoly of the Erdogan government over the peace process and engage directly with the parties.”<sup>11</sup> The MHP continues in its virulent opposition to the process, most recently manifested in its opposition to the *Draft Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration*. Whether or not a party’s views on the peace process radically affect its election results is difficult to assess; certainly the majority of BDP/HDP voters support the process and it can be assumed that a majority of MHP voters do not; yet both parties increased their share of the vote in the local elections of 2014. The MHP is now isolated in terms of the main political parties in not making a negotiated political solution to the Kurdish question part of its manifesto. Therefore the results of the general election scheduled for 2015 will arguably be more telling if we can assume the process continues apace after the presidential elections in August.

One of the greatest challenges for the three parties who support the process is to ensure that the support is replicated amongst their core constituencies. A survey conducted by the AK Party in March 2013 suggested that overall support for the process was at 58 per cent. A strong regional variation was also evident in the

---

11 Ulas Doga Eralp ‘Turkey’s Kurdish peace process – framework law – part 2’ *Transconflict* 8 July 2014, available at <http://www.transconflict.com/2014/07/turkeys-kurdish-peace-process-framework-law-part-ii-087/>

---

results, with the highest support for the process unsurprisingly in the Southeast, at 81 per cent. The Southeast was followed by the East, with 77 per cent with considerably lower support in the other regions. In Marmara and Central Anatolia, approximately 59 per cent of participants in the survey said they supported the process, while 49 per cent of respondents in the Mediterranean indicated support. In the Aegean region, 44 per cent of respondents expressed support for the peace talks, and 43 per cent expressing support in the Black Sea region.<sup>12</sup> In early May 2013 a KONDA survey put support for the process at 81.3 per cent.<sup>13</sup> Given the results of the local elections in March 2014 it can be arguably be deduced that electoral support for the process remains; the results of the presidential elections in August will arguably clarify this further.

---

12 See '58 percent support gov't efforts for settlement, survey shows' *Today's Zaman* 28 March 2013.

13 See 'Konda 's latest survey :Solution to support the process reached 81.3 percent' *T24* 6 May 2013, available at <http://t24.com.tr/haber/kondanin-son-anketi-cozum-surecine-destek-yuzde-813e-ulasti,229284> (in Turkish).

---

## II: Perceptions of the Process - Home and Abroad

The greatly anticipated democratisation package announced at the end of September 2013 was adopted by the Turkish parliament on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014, allowing for some of the provisions regarding political parties to be in place before the local elections. Although opinions varied as to extent the content of the package would aid in moving the process forward, it did contain a number of important provisions, including the abolition of the requirement that school students take an oath of allegiance to the Turkish State; allowing provision of education in 'languages other than Turkish' in private schools; permitting the use of the letters x, q, and w in official documents and the changing of place names back to the original names preceding the 1981 coup; permitting public servants not required to wear an official uniform to wear the headscarf; permitting the use of 'languages other than Turkish' in election campaigns; as well as reforms relating to the number of co-chairs political parties can have and the provision of State funding for parties receiving 3 per cent or more of the national vote.

The announcement of the content of the reform package met with a mixed reaction, with some criticism suggesting that its main aim was to retain maximum power for the AK party, and in particular the relaxation on the wearing of the headscarf by public servants was "aimed at shoring up his own conservative Muslim constituency."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Ian Traynor 'Erdogan's split personality: the reformer v the tyrant' *The Guardian*, 30 September 2013.

Or as another commentator asserted, the reform package shows the government continuing its “balancing act based on a ‘little bit of everything and not too much of anything’ approach to reforms – as evident in the inclusion in the same package of the easing of restrictions on the headscarf ban, new language rights for the Kurds, and the return of confiscated properties to an Assyrian monastery.”<sup>15</sup> The reaction from Kurdish representatives was also broadly negative, with BDP co-chair Gülten Kisanak, noting that the package failed to meet their expectations: “Was this really a package worth waiting for? Kurds wished for the Kurdish problem to be solved, Alevis wished for freedom of religion, and other discriminated groups in Turkey wished for more participatory governance. They’ve fought for that for years. We say very clearly that this package does not meet any of these expectations. It is not a package that responds to Turkey’s need for democratisation.”<sup>16</sup>

More positive commentary suggested, however, that the reforms, read as part of a broader change in State ideology, may prove significant: “[t]he democratization package includes minor yet revolutionary steps towards democratization since it aims to go beyond the “taboos” set forth by the official republican ideology, inscribed in the foundational mission statement of the Turkish nation-state.”<sup>17</sup> The European Commission also welcomed the

---

15 Dilek Kurban ‘Not a Roadmap for Peace: Erdoğan’s Democratisation Package Defies Kurdish Expectations’ *SWP Comments* 35, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, November 2013.

16 Cited in C Letsch ‘Turkish PM unveils reforms after summer of protests’ *The Guardian*, 30 September 2013.

17 Alparslan Nas ‘Democratization in Turkey: the end of the First Republic?’ *Open Democracy*, 14 October 2013.

reforms announced in the democratisation package, noting its annual Progress Report on Turkey's accession that the measures "hold out the prospect to address concerns" and also welcomed the fourth judicial reform package adopted in April of 2013, which "strengthens the protection of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and the fight against impunity for cases of torture and ill-treatment".<sup>18</sup>

More recent legal developments in Turkey are likely, however, to elicit a mixed reaction from the European Commission in the 2014 annual report. In particular, the law relating to the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu*, HSYK) approved by Parliament on 15 February 2014 saw heated exchanges in the Assembly, resulting in one incidence of a physical fight when a representative of a judicial association attempted to submit a petition arguing the bill was anti-constitutional during a debate which preceded its passing.<sup>19</sup> The new legislation, Law No. 6524, amends four laws, Law No. 6087 on the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors; Law No. 2802 on Judges and Public Prosecutors; Law No. 2992 on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Justice; and Law No. 4954 on the Turkish Justice Academy. The effect is to give the Justice Ministry greater control over the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, the independent body responsible for appointing judges in Turkey. In addition, the legislation will allow the Minister of Justice to investigate Board

---

18 Turkey 2013 Progress Report: Communication from the Commission to the Parliament and the Council' Brussels, 16 October 2013, p. 6.

19 See Gulsen Solaker 'Punches fly as Turkish MPs debate judicial reform' *Reuters* 11 January 2014.

members and by raising the size of the quorum makes it more difficult for the Board to meet, as well as giving the Justice Minister the power to issue circulars and regulations.<sup>20</sup>

The cumulative effect of these changes to the Board and exertion of Executive control over the judiciary clearly calls both the separation of power and rule of law principles into question and has been harshly criticised. As Human Rights Watch's Emma Sinclair-Webb has noted: Rather than committing itself to overhauling the justice system to make it effective, independent and impartial, the government has chosen to increase political control over the judiciary. After a rotation of suspected Gülen supporters from the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, the ruling party swiftly proceeded to change the law to tie the body more closely to the executive. In a move that violates the principle of the separation of powers, designed to safeguard judicial independence, the justice minister was granted much greater power to intervene in the council and to initiate disciplinary investigations.<sup>21</sup> The law was also the subject of criticism by Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe commissioner for human rights, who stated that the changes to the operation of the Board “represent a regression of judicial independence.”<sup>22</sup>

---

20 See Taha Akyol 'Again, the HSYK' *Hürriyet Daily News*, 10 January 2014

21 E Sinclair-Webb 'In Turkey's political contest, rule of the law is the real loser' *Open Democracy* 6 April 2014.

22 Cited in 'Turkey: President Should Veto Judiciary Law' *Human Rights Watch*, 21 February 2014, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/21/turkey-president-should-veto-judiciary-law>

During the heated debates on the Bill in Parliament, CHP deputies indicated their intention to appeal the constitutional validity of the law before the Constitutional Court, although CHP deputy Akif Hamzaçebi, noted that even if the Constitutional Court annuls the law after it is approved by the president and published in the Official Gazette, the government will have removed dozen of jurists from the HSYK and the Justice Academy .<sup>23</sup> The law was in fact partially annulled by the Constitutional Court partly in its ruling of 11 April 2014. The Constitutional Court ruling overturned several aspects of the law and removed the power of the Minister for Justice to select the presidents that would preside over each of HSYK's three chambers; to appoint members to HSYK's inspection board; as well as to initiate investigations into professional misconduct by judges and prosecutors and administer disciplinary actions against those deemed guilty.<sup>24</sup> The decision of the Constitutional Court came less than two weeks after its ruling ordering the lifting of the ban on social media site Twitter, which, under the amended Internet Law, had allowed Turkey's Telecommunications Authority (TİB) to block websites without first obtaining a court order.

The response of the AK Party to both decisions has been to harshly criticise the Constitutional Court on the basis that it is overstepping its role and becoming involved in political decision-making, with Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ voicing his disapproval:

---

23 See 'Judiciary Even Weaker Than In Coup Times With New HSYK Law' *Today's Zaman* 16 February 2014.

24 See Blaise Misztal and Jessica Michek 'The Separation of Powers in Turkey: Erdoğan vs. the Judiciary' *Bipartisan Policy Center* 21 April 2014, available at <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/foreignpolicy/2014/04/21/separation-powers-turkey>

---

“I don’t approve of the fact that the Court is found at the center of political debates. I hope we can keep the Court far from the country’s agenda.”<sup>25</sup> In his reaction to the Court’s ruling that the ban on Twitter violated the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech the Prime Minister upbraided the Court for undermining “national interests” and for supporting the business interests of an American company (Twitter) over the national interest. The president of the Constitutional Court, Haşim Kılıç, responded by defending the Court’s position and stating that it does not act on behalf of national interests but seeks to uphold universal values, all of which, Müller suggests, “has set a tense tone in the relationship between the Court and the AKP.”<sup>26</sup>

The reforms of the first half of 2014 thus provoke mixed reactions; the adoption in March of the democratisation package announced on 30 September 2013 is undoubtedly to be welcomed, as is the *Draft Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration*<sup>27</sup> which, when adopted, will set legal parameters to the peace process for the first time. Developments such as the amendments to the Internet Law, however, and the law relating to the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors are concerning for Kurdish and other ethnic and religious minorities and Turks alike. These measures, along with issues such as the reaction to the Gezi protests in 2013 and the protests surrounding the Soma mining disaster in May 2014 also

---

25 Cited in ‘Turkey’s Constitutional Court overturns controversial judicial bill’ *Hürriyet Daily News* 11 April 2014.

26 Hendrik Müller ‘Turkey’s Constitutional Court: The Last Resort of Hope for the Rule of Law?’ Vol. 7.8 *Turkey Analyst* 30 April 2014.

27 See *infra* Section IV.

contribute to the narrative that suggests that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is becoming more authoritarian<sup>28</sup> and, with a strong parliamentary majority the AK Party “has demonstrated a growing intolerance of political opposition, public protest, and critical media.”<sup>29</sup> This, it is suggested is not all that unusual in the Turkish context “with Turkish political parties having always suffered from authoritarian leadership and lack of intra-party democracy. That, combined with a culture that reveres authority, has generated a political system that revolves around a few key individuals rather than ideologies.”<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, these arguably authoritarian tendencies notwithstanding, many still believe that either as Prime Minister or President, Erdoğan is the person with the capacity to resolve the Kurdish question. As Dombey observes “[w]hile Mr Erdogan has become renowned internationally for his alleged authoritarian tendencies, many Kurds express either satisfaction with the prime minister or a belief that he is their only hope for peace.”<sup>31</sup>

---

28 Gareth H. Jenkins suggests, for example, that “one of the most striking characteristics of Erdoğan’s decade in office has been the increasing concentration of power in his own hands.” See ‘The Democratization Package and Erdoğan’s Hall of Mirrors’ Vo.6.18 *Turkey Analyst* 9 October 2013.

29 See Human Rights Watch *World Report 2013*, p. 500.

30 Aylin Ş. Görener and Meltem Ş. Ucal ‘The Personality and Leadership Style of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy’ (2011) Vol. 12.3 *Turkish Studies* 357-381, at p. 358.

31 Daniel Dombey ‘Turkey’s Kurds see Erdogan as best hope for peace’ *Financial Times* 4 July 2014.

---

Research conducted by DPI during late 2013 on the views of the Kurdish and Turkish Diaspora in Europe in relation to the current process suggested that whilst the level of optimism for a successful resolution to the Kurdish question was low, there was overwhelming support for the process and a desire to see the process move forward. Notable also was the observation that one of the main positives to emerge from the process thus far was the “change in atmosphere” and a change in perception amongst the Turkish population regarding the Kurdish people and the conflict.<sup>32</sup> As many members of the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe fled Turkey as a result of the conflict, they undoubtedly have a vested interest in seeing a peaceful resolution, one that could potentially facilitate their return. Thus, it would appear that both domestic support for the process and support amongst Diaspora communities very much align.

---

<sup>32</sup> ‘Turkey’s Current ‘Process’: Views from the Diaspora’ Process’ *Democratic Progress Institute* November 2013, at p. 24.

### III: Regional Ramifications: Events in Syria and Iraq and their Impact on the Process

To say that the first half of 2014 has been a turbulent time in the broader Middle East region is something of an understatement. Civil war continues to rage in Syria, sectarianism and violence are rife in an increasingly unstable Iraq and the rise of the violent extremist group ISIS (latterly 'Islamic State' or IS) threatens the entire region. In June ISIS seized the city of Mosul including the Turkish consulate, kidnapping the head of the mission and 24 other members of staff. This came just a day after the Turkish consulate had announced that ISIS fighters had kidnapped 28 Turkish truck drivers.<sup>33</sup>

The recent events in Iraq and Syria undoubtedly affect not only the situation of Kurds within Turkey's own borders, but also the Turkish State's perceptions of 'Turkish Kurds' aspirations and consequently the current peace process. Historically, "Turkey feared the spread of the neighbouring conflicts in Iraq and Iran from their onset"<sup>34</sup> and more recently has perhaps feared that the *de facto* autonomous Kurdish State in Iraq and latterly Syria could prompt demands for a similar arrangement within its own borders. In terms of Turkey's involvement in both Northern Iraq and Syria and implications for the peace process it may be argued that the perception of how Turkey deals with regional actors will have implications for its perceived

---

33 Fazel Hawramy 'Isis militants kidnap Turkish diplomats after seizing consulate in Mosul' *The Guardian* 11 June 2014.

34 Kirstin J. H. Brathwaite 'Repression and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict in Kurdistan' (2014) Vol. 37.6 *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 473-491, at p. 483.

bona fides in dealing with the process at home. In the early days of the Syrian crisis the Turkish government pursued a policy of “back-door diplomacy” aimed, as Ilgit and Davis note, “at persuading the Syrian regime to implement “shock therapy” reforms, including lifting emergency laws, releasing political prisoners, and allowing political parties to form and operate freely.”<sup>35</sup> And whilst initially it looked as though diplomatic efforts may bear some fruit it became apparent relatively quickly that it was not the case and by September 2011 “Ankara had decided to terminate all contact with the Syrian regime and impose an arms embargo on its neighbour to the south.”<sup>36</sup>

The way in which Turkey has dealt with the Syrian war in the intervening period, apart from dealing with the immediate impact of the conflict such as its response to Syrian shelling of border towns<sup>37</sup> and the influx of Syrian refugees, can perhaps be described as shadowy. There has, for example, been speculation and suggestions from numerous sources that at certain times during the war in Syria the Turkish government has used the embryonic peace process with the Kurds to support jihadist groups fighting against the PYD in Syria. In an interview given in December 2013 Cemil Bayık, the co-president of the Kurdistan Communities’ Union (KCK), stated: “We didn’t start the peace process so that Turkey could move the war to Rojava by supporting the al-Nusra Front,

---

35 Aslı Ilgit and Rochelle Davis ‘The Many Roles of Turkey in the Syrian Crisis’ *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 28 January 2013.

36 Aslı Ilgit and Rochelle Davis ‘The Many Roles of Turkey in the Syrian Crisis’ *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 28 January 2013.

37 See ‘Turkey hits targets inside Syria after border deaths’ *BBC News* 4 October 2012.

Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, and al Qaeda affiliated groups.”<sup>38</sup> Even more serious allegations have been levelled at the Turkish government, including by Pulitzer prize winning journalist Seymour Hersh, who claimed involvement of the Turkish government with al-Nusra in the August 2013 sarin gas attack in Damascus in which more than 1,000 people are estimated to have died.<sup>39</sup> The reasoning behind the alleged involvement, it was asserted, was that a chemical gas attack attributed to the Assad regime would force military intervention by the United States, the Syrian regime having crossed the U.S.’s stated ‘red line’ in its use of chemical weapons. Hersh’s claims, it should be noted, have been refuted by both the US and Turkish governments, as well as by other journalists, with deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç stating “[i]t is completely lie and slander,”<sup>40</sup> The Turkish government has denied any suggestion that it has helped create a situation in which a group such as ISIS has been enabled to thrive, instead asserting that the West is to be blamed for not having intervened in Syria. However, “Ankara has indicated a shift in Turkish policy by condemning extremism in Syria and pledging to tighten its border control efforts.”<sup>41</sup>

---

38 Chase Winter ‘Turkey’s Strained Kurdish Peace Process’ *Foreign Policy* 11 December 2013.

39 Seymour M. Hersh ‘Between the Red Line and the Rat Line’ Vol. 36.8 *London Review of Books* 17 April 2012. 21-24.

40 ‘Turkey, US dismiss Seymour Hersh report’ *Hürriyet Daily News* 7 April 2014. See also ‘US, Turkey reject Hersh article on sarin gas attack in Syria’ *Today’s Zaman*, 7 April 2014 and Eliot Higgins and Dan Kaszeta ‘It’s clear that Turkey was not involved in the chemical attack on Syria’ *The Guardian* 22 April 2014.

41 Merve Tahiro lu ‘ISIS and the threat to Turkey’ *The Long War Journal* 21 June 2014, available at [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/turkeys\\_new\\_neighbor.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/turkeys_new_neighbor.php)

Recent years have witnessed a fundamental change in the relations between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The improvement in the relationship is arguably precipitated by Turkey's desire for energy security, but is also a recognition of the evolving status of the KRG and with more than 70 per cent of the trade between Turkey and Iraq conducted with the KRG, there is also the suggestion that for the alliance to continue successfully Turkey must solve its own Kurdish 'problem': "The burgeoning trade between Turkey and Iraq, over 70 per cent of which is conducted with the KRG, was another factor for improved relations. The sides later leveraged these energy and trade relations with political-security goals, which later evolved into a strategic alliance. In the meantime, the democratic opening almost ran aground as a result of the reignition of the conflict with the PKK and the mass arrest of Kurdish politicians and civilians within the framework of the Union of Kurdistan Communities Trials in 2010-11 by Turkish authorities. This has cast doubt about the future direction of relations. Unless Turkey settled its own Kurdish issue, the Turkey-KRG alliance would remain tenuous."<sup>42</sup> Another factor in the continuing development of good relations between Turkey and the KRG, it has been suggested, is prompted by the U.S: "[t]here is little doubt that Washington's preference is for reduced tension and increased cooperation between Ankara and Erbil."<sup>43</sup>

---

42 Galip Dalay 'The Kurdish Peace Process: Ideology, Interest, and the Regional Dynamics' *The German Marshall Fund of the United States: Turkey Series* 29 April 2014, available at [http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files\\_mf/1398800911Dalay\\_KurdishPeaceProcess\\_Apr14.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/1398800911Dalay_KurdishPeaceProcess_Apr14.pdf)

43 Bill Park 'Turkey, the US, and the KRG: Moving Parts and the Geopolitical Realities' (2012) Vol. 14.3 *Insight Turkey* 109-125, at p. 112.

The situation in both Iraq and Syria is currently so precarious that it is difficult to predict with any certainty how events will evolve, the reaction of the Turkish government, or how the domestic peace process is likely to be affected.

## **IV: Future Prospects: The Presidential Elections and Beyond**

A peace process viewed by many as stalled was given fresh impetus in June 2014 with the AK Party's presentation of a draft law before Parliament setting out a legal framework for talks with Kurdish militants. Entitled *Draft Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration* the law when passed will ensure that negotiators in the process will be protected from prosecution, should the process disintegrate and the political climate change. The law also facilitates the rehabilitation of those PKK militants who lay down their arms and return to Turkey, placing the responsibility for that rehabilitation with the government. It contains the following six key articles:<sup>44</sup>

- (i) The government determines the measures to be taken in the fields of security, disarmament, and human rights, as well as political, legal, socio-economic, psychological, cultural steps;
- (ii) If necessary, it enables individuals, institutions and organizations to make contact, establish dialogue and meet with individuals, institutions and organizations both inside

---

<sup>44</sup> See 'Turkish government submits bill to boost Kurdish peace bid, provide legal framework for PKK talks' *Hürriyet Daily News* 26 June 2014.

---

- and outside the country;
- (iii) The government will take the necessary measures for those who lay down their weapons and return home, accommodating their participation in social life;
  - (iv) The government will monitor the work conducted within the framework of this law and provide necessary coordination among relevant institutions and organizations;
  - (v) The government will provide information to the public about works conducted within the framework of this law;
  - (vi) The bill states that no administrative or criminal liability can be attributed to those who are tasked to fulfil their duties within the framework of this law.
- (vii)

Prima facie the bill presents a historic opportunity for direct negotiation between the PKK and the Turkish State, a scenario that previous resolution attempts failed to envisage. Indeed, the initial soundings from the major parties involved have been positive. Hasip Kaplan, a deputy from People's Democratic Party (HDP), reportedly described the move as a "late but very positive step towards greater recognition of Kurds" and noted that "a legal guarantee to the peace talks has always been our top priority. It (the bill) meets our expectations,"<sup>45</sup> whereas the deputy Prime Minister, Besir Atalay, claimed that the law would "lay the ground for all state institutions to make contributions to the process."<sup>46</sup>

---

45 See 'Turkey presents bill to revive Kurdish peace talks' *Middle East Institute* 26 June 2014, available at <http://www.mei.edu/content/news/turkey-presents-bill-revive-kurdish-peace-talks>

46 See Fehim Taştekin 'AKP seeks to 'legalize' PKK peace talks' *Al Monitor* 27 June 2014, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/06/tastekin-legal-turkey-peace-process-kurds-pkk-akp-erdogan.html#>

Abdullah Öcalan too welcomed the bill, hailing it as a “historical development” whilst HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş noted that legislative arrangements made as a result of the bill “will facilitate steps on the ground. We can say that, with the bill, negotiations will start [in earnest] for the first time.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite backing for the draft law, support, however, has not been uniform. **Criticism**, it has been suggested, comes mainly from three quarters: those who suggest a law of this kind would be fundamentally wrong and divisive, tantamount to treason (such as the MHP); those who argue that the law is necessary but that the timing is opportunistic and presented as another overture to the Kurds in advance of the presidential elections in order to gain support for the AK Party candidate (such as the CHP); and those who argue that the law does not go far enough and is vague in terms of the content of the process and how it will proceed (such as the HDP).<sup>48</sup> The first of these criticisms is easily explained by MHP’s fundamental opposition to engaging in any sort of dialogue with the PKK and indeed its stance, from the outset of the process, that participation in peace talks that include the PKK represents weakness on the part of the government and ‘treachery’ against the Turkish State.<sup>49</sup> This analysis also claims that Prime Minister Erdoğan “needs” the support of Abdullah Öcalan to

---

47 See Fehim Taştekin ‘AKP seeks to ‘legalize’ PKK peace talks’ *Al Monitor* 27 June 2014, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/06/tastekin-legal-turkey-peace-process-kurds-pkk-akp-erdogan.html#>

48 See Murat Yetkin ‘PM Erdoğan’s Kurdish move before the presidential polls’ *Hürriyet Daily News* 27 June 2014.

49 ‘Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict: An Assessment of the Current Process’ *Democratic Progress Institute* November 2013, at p. 54.

be elected president, as suggested by MHP spokesman Özcan Yeniçeri, asserting that “Erdoğan definitely needs Öcalan’s support to be elected president. That is why he doesn’t feel strong enough to respond to Ocalan and separatists who are challenging him.”<sup>50</sup> The second criticism, articulated by CHP parliamentary whip Engin Altay, who described the bill as a “manoeuvre to grab the Kurdish vote at the presidential elections,”<sup>51</sup> is perhaps not without merit – the timing likely was premeditated, coinciding as it did with the announcement of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the AK Party candidate in the presidential elections – but that nonetheless does not detract from the significance of the bill and even Engin Altay conceded that the CHP would have “no negative stance”<sup>52</sup> towards the bill. The third criticism is that the bill does not in fact go far enough and is deliberately vague on the detail of how the peace process will proceed and what measures will be taken to rehabilitate former militants is the more worrying one. That said however, that such a law is necessary was underscored in February 2012 when Hakan Fidan, head of the Turkish Intelligence Agency MİT, along with two colleagues were summoned by a court in Ankara to give evidence on government contact with Kurdish militants in a case involving the KCK.<sup>53</sup>

---

50 See Cengiz Çandar ‘Does Erdogan need Ocalan to be elected president?’ *Al Monitor* 14 May 2014, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/05/erdogan-kurds-diyarbakir-pkk-ocalan-islamic-krq-barzani.html#>

51 See Fehim Taştekin ‘AKP seeks to ‘legalize’ PKK peace talks’ *Al Monitor* 27 June 2014, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/06/tastekin-legal-turkey-peace-process-kurds-pkk-akp-erdogan.html#>

52 See Fehim Taştekin ‘AKP seeks to ‘legalize’ PKK peace talks’ *Al Monitor* 27 June 2014, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/06/tastekin-legal-turkey-peace-process-kurds-pkk-akp-erdogan.html#>

53 Daniel Dombey ‘Turkish spy chief summoned over PKK talks’ *Financial Times* 9 February 2012.

The summons was widely perceived to be politically motivated and led to the hasty passing of a law the following week, which explicitly provided that prosecutors are required to receive authorisation from the Prime Minister in order to investigate “MIT officials or other public officials assigned by the Prime minister to carry out specific duties.”<sup>54</sup>

The methods of implementation of this law and the practical arrangements for issues the bill details, such as the rehabilitation of Kurdish militants, perhaps remain as yet ambiguous but the law will have the very important effect of legitimising the peace efforts and ensuring that negotiations can occur in as frank and open a manner as possible. One of the key criticisms of how the process as unfolded thus far has been a lack of transparency<sup>55</sup> and concomitant lack of knowledge as to the content of the process on the part of the broader public. The “exclusive secrecy of the negotiations” has also been blamed, in part, for the failure to achieve more significant progress to date.<sup>56</sup>

---

54 Saban Kardas ‘Erdogan Supports Intelligence Chief Fidan’ *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Vol. 9 Issue 37, 22 February 2014.

55 See ‘Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict: An Assessment of the Current Process’ *Democratic Progress Institute* November 2013, at p. 42.

56 Ulas Doga Eralp ‘Turkey’s Kurdish peace process: dead end’ *TransConflict* 25 June 2014, available at <http://www.transconflict.com/2014/06/turkeys-kurdish-peace-process-dead-end-part-1-256/>

---

The provision of a legal framework underpinning future negotiations will potentially address this gap and ensure continued support for the process, which it is claimed, remains high. The process is, according to deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay, backed by the people in every region of Turkey, supported by more than 50 per cent of the people.<sup>57</sup>

The peace process has emerged as a central theme in the presidential election was underscored in June with the appeal from CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu for Kurdish voters to support their candidate. In asserting that the CHP was ready to try to find a political solution to the Kurdish question, Kılıçdaroğlu noted that “[t]he resolution process should rely on mutual trust. But there is currently a picture in which both sides don’t trust each other. The only party who will refresh mutual trust and solve the issue with determination is us.”<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the presumption remains that Prime Minister Erdoğan will be elected as President in the election of 10 August, which has led to understandable speculation over the next Prime Minister and the future of the peace process. It is widely expected that the influential foreign minister and close ally of the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu will assume the role of Prime Minister, in which case the trajectory of the process is likely to be unaffected.

---

57 ‘There is popular support for reconciliation, says deputy PM’ *Daily Sabah* 4 July 2014.

58 See Onur Konuralp ‘CHP leader asks for Kurdish parties’ support in presidential elections’ *Hürriyet Daily News* 8 June 2014.

---

As foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's much lauded 'zero problems with neighbours policy' sought both to reposition Turkey's relations with many of its neighbouring countries and consolidate Turkey's position as an influential regional actor in the eyes of global actors. Although the policy may be said to have resulted in varying degrees of success, Davutoğlu as foreign minister has been the subject of praise, with some commentators even suggesting that "Turkey has never before had a foreign minister with the drive, vigour, and vision of Ahmet Davutoglu."<sup>59</sup> His credentials in terms of an ability to deal with the peace process would therefore appear to be solid and his perceived close relationship with Prime Minister Erdoğan will likely ensure the process continues on its current path.

Prime Minister Erdoğan's anticipated victory, if the margin of victory is substantial, may even be read as a tacit approval of his approach to the process thus far and, along with the passing of the *Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration*, reenergise the process. Expectations that Erdoğan will not be any "ordinary" president but "will have a commanding political role due to the fact that he was elected through popular vote and will thus be able to dominate the government and how the AK Party is run"<sup>60</sup> will also undoubtedly reassure those who see him as the driver of the process from the Turkish side. The hope and expectation would be that following the presidential election and the passage of the *Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration*, that a more

---

59 Morton Abramowitz and Henri J. Barkey 'Turkey's Transformers: The AKP Sees Big' (2009) Vol. 88.6 *Foreign Affairs* 118-128, at p. 122.

60 İlnur Çevik 'Scene is set for 'President Erdoğan Era' *Daily Sabah* 2 July 2014.

concrete and comprehensive roadmap for the peace process will be formulated.

Observers of the presidential election also predict an increase in the share of the vote won by HDP in the local elections in March. Should Selahattin Demirtaş achieve this, it will not only signal continued support for the process but also the possibility that HDP is considered an alternative voice in the broader political spectrum and not just a party that is voted for by Kurds. The share of the vote received by joint candidate of CHP and MHP, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, will also be hugely important in light of the overtures made to Kurdish voters by CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and in advance of the parliamentary elections currently scheduled for 2015.

## Conclusion: Section One

While the pace of democratic reforms that would move the peace process forward is viewed as unacceptably slow by many, the reality is that “real reform will require a long drawn-out process.”<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, the process has been given a degree of momentum with the introduction of the new law to provide a legal framework for the process and ensure that negotiations can take place without fear of prosecution at a later date, should the talks break down. This ‘legalisation’ of the process is vital not just for the direct participants in the negotiations but arguably may also serve as a legitimising factor in the public perception of the peace process. Its importance, as noted above, has been highlighted in the run-up to the presidential election with all parties, with an exception of MHP, using the process as a leverage point with voters. The predicted victory of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in August’s presidential election should also result in the formulation of a clearer blueprint for how the process will progress to the next stage.

The overall assessment of the trajectory of the process during the first half of 2013 can arguably be considered as positive. The ceasefire has held, despite little in the way of concrete steps from the point view of the Kurdish population and the killing of two Kurdish protestors in Lice in June, the first casualties of military force since the ceasefire began. The importance of the peace process has been underscored in the electioneering for both the local and

---

61 Morton Abramowitz and Henri J. Barkey ‘Turkey’s Transformers: The AKP Sees Big’ (2009) Vol. 88.6 *Foreign Affairs* 118-128, at p. 122.

presidential elections; a legal basis has been proposed for the negotiations between the PKK and government, and maybe most importantly, the process of 'normalisation' of the Kurdish question in Turkey has continued with the violence of the past consigned to the past and a return to violence viewed by most as inconceivable.

## **PART TWO: June - September 2014**

### **Introduction**

The following assessment aims to provide an analysis of the present situation in Turkey; the likely scenarios for political systems and leadership constellations that will emerge following the recent presidential elections, and what recent developments mean for the prospects of and mechanisms for finding a solution to the Kurdish Question in Turkey.

Key events examined in this section of this report will include the recent presidential elections held on 10 August 2014; recent legislative reforms including, most significantly, the recent *Law on the Termination of Terror and Strengthening of Social Integration*; corruption scandals which have been ever present in the headlines in Turkey and internationally during this period; and significant developments in the region, namely in Syria and Iraq, which have proven over recent months to be inextricably connected to Turkey's own process.

## Presidential Elections: An Overview Background

A 2007 referendum concluded that in 2014 Turkey's president would no longer be elected by parliament. On 10 August 2014 the Turkish president was popularly elected for the first time in history. In Turkey, the prime minister is the head of government and wields the most power in the political system. The president, on the other hand, has a legislative veto, submits amendments of the constitution, appoints judges and prosecutors and has the power to institute martial law. Though the president has an important role in government, it is the prime minister who is in charge of most of the day-to-day functioning of the state.

The outcome was conclusive and seemingly straightforward, with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan winning 51.79 per cent of the vote in the first round. This removed the need for a second round of voting.

Erdoğan has led the AK party since its founding in 2001, and the party has remained as the ruling party since 2002. On July 1 2014 the AK Party announced that they would nominate Erdoğan as their candidate for the Presidency. In the lead up to the election various media outlets speculated that the role of president, which is currently largely symbolic, will undergo a series of changes under Erdoğan.<sup>62</sup>

---

62 Barkey, Henri , 'If Erdoğan wins presidency, what next?', *Al Jazeera*, (27/07/2014), accessed 28/07/15 at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/>

This line of thought only amplified in the days and weeks after Erdoğan's victory.

This section will assess the 2014 presidential elections in Turkey, aiming to: (1) summarise Turkey's presidential candidates; (2) provide a breakdown of the election results, highlighting key areas of interest; (3) explore the main news coming out of the coverage (both in Turkey and Internationally); and (4) outline the likely effects that Erdoğan's victory will have on Turkey.

## **Presidential candidates**

In early July 2014, the candidates competing for the presidency were announced. The ballot included: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan representing the Justice and Development Party (AK Party); Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu the joint candidate of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP); and Salahaddin Demirtaş representing the People's Democratic Party (HDP).

## **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Justice and Development (AK Party) Candidate**

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's former prime minister has consistently led public opinion polls throughout his eleven years in power. Observers have called him "the most popular premier Turkey

---

[originals/2014/07/turkey-erdogan-presidential-elections.html](https://www.dpi.org.uk/originals/2014/07/turkey-erdogan-presidential-elections.html)

---

has seen in the past half-century.”<sup>63</sup> The perception of Erdoğan as providing a voice for an underclass of Islamic conservatives; his driving of the current peace initiative; and the growth in the Turkish economy on his watch have provided the AK Party with a large and diverse base of support. However, since 2008 Erdoğan has been critiqued by many of his supporters for his crackdown on government opposition, his so called Islamic policies, corruption scandals and his movement towards granting certain rights to Kurds.<sup>64</sup>

Despite criticisms both at home and internationally, the municipal elections held on March 30 2014 shed light on the continued popularity of the ruling AK Party. Although close to 80 per cent of Turks polled believed that the corruption charges brought against the then president were true, the AK Party still received approximately 45 per cent of the vote,<sup>65</sup> a number is up six points from the 2009 elections and down by only 5 per cent from the last general election.<sup>66</sup> According to Hurriyet columnist Murat Yetkin, “half of those corruption claims in any democratic country would be enough for the collapse of government.

---

63 Akyol, Mustafa. “How to not win friends and influence the Turkish people”. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/03/how\\_not\\_to\\_win\\_friends\\_influence\\_turkish\\_people\\_erdogan\\_majoritarian\\_democracy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/03/how_not_to_win_friends_influence_turkish_people_erdogan_majoritarian_democracy) (accessed July 1, 2014).

64 Akyol, Mustafa. “How to not win friends and influence the Turkish people”. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/03/how\\_not\\_to\\_win\\_friends\\_influence\\_turkish\\_people\\_erdogan\\_majoritarian\\_democracy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/03/how_not_to_win_friends_influence_turkish_people_erdogan_majoritarian_democracy) (accessed July 1, 2014).

65 Sezgin, Yuksel. “Turkish local elections: One victor, many losers.” - Opinion. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/turkish-local-elections-one-vict-20144211532875833.html> (accessed July 7, 2014).

66 Tisdall, Simon. “Turkey’s election may ironically have dealt a blow to democracy.” [theguardian.com. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/31/turkey-election-blow-democracy-ironic-erdogan](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/31/turkey-election-blow-democracy-ironic-erdogan) (accessed July 1, 2014).

In Turkey, it cost only 5 points in loss of support... Erdoğan's political recipe simply based on antagonism won again."<sup>67</sup> Turkey's political history has seen its fair share of corruption scandals, many of which have been blamed for significant economic crises in the past (namely during the 1990s and more recently during the 2001 banking crisis). It can be said that what some might label a corrupted political culture has caused widespread distrust of politicians by Turkey's public, and an almost normalisation of scandal. In the case of the AK Party, there remains the popular belief that the ruling party have used a considerable amount of its wealth to benefit the public. Where there may be low expectation among Turkey's electorate regarding the ethical soundness of its politicians, there is also a pragmatism which sees continued support for those in power who are seen to use acquired funds for the public good. The AK Party has been credited with using significant funds to improve numerous public services throughout Turkey's society, including the reconstruction of the national health service; the building of roads between Turkey's largest cities and under the sea and the creation of new transportation systems such as 'Metrobus'; the building of airports, among other developments, all of which have changed the public perception of the AK Party dramatically. Allegations of corruption and scandal have been consistently met by Erdoğan with assertions of the government's investments in the country and an attitude of working for the public good and for the continued creation of opportunities. AK Party's supporters have

---

67 Tisdall, Simon. "Turkey's election may ironically have dealt a blow to democracy." *theguardian.com*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/31/turkey-election-blow-democracy-ironic-erdogan> (accessed July 1, 2014).

---

also consistently claimed that the corruption claims made against the ruling party were exaggerated, and made by the government's enemies. The recent presidential election results have emphasised the resilience of the AK Party and of Erdoğan as a leader.

## **Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Candidate**

İhsanoğlu represented AK Party's two main opposition parties: the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in August's presidential elections. Both parties have failed to defeat Erdoğan in the last eight elections and therefore chose to nominate a joint candidate hoping that their collaboration on the elections would prevent Erdoğan from winning the presidency. İhsanoğlu is a Turkish academic, diplomat and former Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Born to a Turkish family in Cairo, İhsanoğlu resided in Egypt until his 20s. His father was a prominent public figure from a Muslim background; he emigrated to Egypt during the 1920s as a result of his political opposition to Atatürk's regime. İhsanoğlu's family history is significant in understanding his selection as a candidate by republican parties CHP and MHP.

İhsanoğlu was nominated for the role of Secretary General of the OIC by the AK Party and in 2005 became the first Turkish citizen elected to serve as Secretary General of the organisation (which was established in 1969). He completed two terms in this role,

during which he was publicly appreciated by Erdoğan. He fell out of favour with the then prime minister, however, as a result of criticising Muhmamed Morsi, the first Muslim Brotherhood member elected as president of Egypt. At the time, Erdoğan expressed his disappointment about İhsanoğlu's criticism of Morsi, who the AK Party government openly supported.

Some sectors within Turkey's opposition predicted that Ihsanoğlu's conservative credentials and status as an accomplished scholar of Islam would make him a viable alternative to Erdoğan for the conservative electorate. He also became viewed as a reasonable choice for many liberals, who have remained critical of recent practices of the AK Party government in relation to the Gezi Park protests and other events. Ihsanoğlu's commitment to secularism and pluralist democracy, while at the same time maintaining a strong Muslim identity seemed to embody the ancient formula of the Turkish establishment regime which is based on apoliticism. Ultimately, Ihsanoğlu did not pose a threat to Erdoğan's widespread support; his political discourse is largely seen to be devoid of reference to the social political needs of the last decade in Turkey, and most significantly, he has lacked in appeal to the Kurdish electorate in Turkey, symbolising for many what is known as the old "*monsieur regime*" (defined as an elitist, Kemalist, Sunni, authoritarian regime).

Since İhsanoğlu's defeat, CHP's leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has been criticised, with many of his opponents, mainly the ultra-

nationalist wing of the party, challenging his leadership. Another reason for the opposition within the CHP against Kılıçdaroğlu is his 'peace-friendly' speeches regarding the Kurdish Question. The ultra-nationalist members of the CHP see this discourse, which is supportive of the solution process, as being against the founding principles of the party.

Muharrem İnce emerged as the new candidate for leadership among the ultranationalist group within the CHP. The party held its 'extraordinary congress' on September 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. It is likely that ultra-nationalist elements of the CHP will be eliminated from the party as the solution process has succeeded in marginalising oppositional groups against peace.

## **Selhattin Demirtaş People's Democratic Party (HDP) Candidate**

Selhattin Demirtaş represented the People's Democratic Party (HDP) in August's presidential elections. Described as a young, charismatic and a popular politician from the Kurdish region of Turkey, this nomination was highly significant in that it was the first time a Kurdish candidate was recognised as Kurdish, and identified himself primarily as such; something which highlights clear societal progression toward the recognition of Kurds as a distinct identity within Turkey. Demirtaş was the candidate of the Kurdish, Liberal and Leftist movements in Turkey. His political discourse, peaceful style and transparent profile created an unexpected interest in his

election campaign. As expected, this election did not bring victory for him but the politics that he represents are likely to continue to garner attention, in particular as some secular nationalist members of the society, in their opposition to Erdoğan, have begun to listen to Kurdish politics more openly.

While never seen as posing a serious threat to Erdoğan's presidential victory, Demirtaş' bid for presidency can be said to have served as a challenge to Erdoğan's "invincible constituency."<sup>68</sup> Observers speculated that Demirtaş' nomination would divert Kurdish votes away from Erdoğan. Erdoğan, as the first prime minister to engage in peaceful discussions with Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), has secured significant Kurdish support and popularity from this previously ignored constituency. Commentators emphasised the importance of the Kurdish vote, in winning the first round of elections, with some seeing Demirtaş as posing a challenge to Erdoğan's Kurdish support base, and though not a real contender himself, possibly preventing Erdoğan from gaining 50 per cent of the vote in the first round of elections. Fears were voiced, that if Erdoğan did go on to win the first round of elections without the Kurdish vote, it could allow Erdoğan to exclude the Kurdish movement from his electorate and could potentially destabilise the dialogue between him and Kurdish armed groups.

---

68 Çandar, Cengiz. "Erdoğan's Kurdish predicament - Al-Monitor: the Pulse of the Middle East." Al-Monitor. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/candar-erdogan-kurds-presidential-elections-turkey-akp.html#ixzz36IbGCtHs> (accessed July 1, 2014).

---

## Breakdown of Results

### Polls in the lead up to the election

Erdoğan consistently led the polls throughout the run up to the election; the highest percentage he achieved was in a DESAV opinion poll on July 7, in which he gained 58.4 per cent. The lowest he polled was with an opinion poll posted by CNN, thought to be organised by the CHP, which put him just over one point above İhsanoğlu with 39.8 per cent.<sup>69</sup> Despite this wide gap, the majority of polls suggested Erdoğan would achieve between 53 and 55 per cent of the vote.

İhsanoğlu maintained a steady second place in the polls, ranging from 40.3 per cent to 30.3 per cent but remaining largely around 38 per cent. Demirtaş on the other hand ranged from 6.6 per cent in an ORC poll (taken in mid-June) to 11.6 per cent (in a poll taken early August by Konda).

---

<sup>69</sup> 'Gap between Erdoğan and İhsanoğlu less than 2 pct', *Today's Zaman*, (14/07/14), accessed 22/08/14 at: [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_gap-between-erdogan-and-ihsanoglu-less-than-2-pct\\_353026.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_gap-between-erdogan-and-ihsanoglu-less-than-2-pct_353026.html)

---

Interestingly while support for Erdoğan and İhsanoğlu remained fairly stagnant, support for Demirtaş grew throughout the period.<sup>70</sup> Sinan Ogan, a prominent lawmaker from the far-right MHP praised his inclusive campaign, saying: ‘in this election, Demirtaş has single-handedly transformed HDP from what it was initially, from a party of rigidly ethnic to being a party for the whole of Turkey’.<sup>71</sup>

## Surface level election results

Over 55 million citizens were eligible to vote, both within Turkey and abroad. Of this figure 55,692,851 voters registered to vote, and a total of 41,283,627 votes were cast.<sup>72</sup> This translated to a total turnout of 74.13 per cent, which although comparatively high to some European nations such as the UK (where average turnout for elections over the last ten years has only been 61 per cent), is the lowest turnout in a Turkish election since 1973.<sup>73</sup>

---

70 ‘Turkish Presidential Election 2014’, *Wikipedia*, accessed 21/08/14 at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish\\_presidential\\_election,\\_2014#Opinion\\_polls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_presidential_election,_2014#Opinion_polls)

71 Kaytazogulu, Osman, ‘Turkey’s Kurds back unlikely contender’, *Al Jazeera*, (09/08/2014), accessed 26/08/14 at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/turkey-kurds-election-president-demirtas-erdogan-akp-hdp-2014887523165636.html>

72 Kizilkaya, Emre, ‘Explained: Turkey’s Presidential Election Results in a Nutshell’, *Hurriyet Daily News*, (18/08/2014), accessed 22/09/2014 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/explained-turkeys-presidential-election-results-in-a-nutshell.aspx?PageID=238&NID=70588&NewsCatID=338>

73 Kizilkaya, Emre, ‘Explained: Turkey’s Presidential Election Results in a Nutshell’, *Hurriyet Daily News*, (18/08/2014), accessed 22/09/2014 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/explained-turkeys-presidential-election-results-in-a-nutshell.aspx?PageID=238&NID=70588&NewsCatID=338>

This low turnout is particularly poignant given the fact that Erdoğan has consistently argued that votes provide him with power. Some go as far as to argue that he 'has adopted a majoritarian attitude: so long as voters back him, he is entitled to do whatever he wants, heedless of opponents, protestors, judges, prosecutors or Europe'.<sup>74</sup> In the recent election it was reported that many people were disillusioned by Turkish politics: 'a lot of people don't vote today because they simply gave up. Everybody thinks that Erdoğan will win, so they don't vote at all'.<sup>75</sup>

Erdoğan secured 21,000,143 votes leaving him with a percentage of 51.79 per cent. İhsanoğlu received 15,587,720, or 38.44 per cent and Demirtaş ended the election with 3,958,048 votes, which translated to 9.76 per cent. There were 737,716 invalid and/or blank votes.<sup>76</sup> For a more in depth figure break down see Annex 1. The post election survey by Ipsos raises further interesting information in regard to the outcome of the election. According to this survey, the presidential election not only had the lowest turnout among MHP voters (72 per cent) but also just 71 per cent of MHP voters picked İhsanoğlu, while 27 per cent opted

---

74 'The battle for Turkey's future', *The Economist*, (29/03/2014), accessed 01/07/14 at: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21599819-increasingly-autocratic-prime-minister-losing-touch-voters-and-damaging-his-country>

75 Letsch, Constanze, 'Erdogan emerges victorious in Turkish presidential elections amid low turnout', *The Guardian*, (10/08/14), accessed 12/08/14 at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/10/turkey-presidential-election-erdogan>

76 Kizilkaya, Emre, 'Explained: Turkey's Presidential Election Results in a Nutshell', *Hurriyet Daily News*, (18/08/2014), accessed 22/09/2014 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/explained-turkeys-presidential-election-results-in-a-nutshell.aspx?PageID=238&NID=70588&NewsCatID=338>

---

instead for Erdoğan. Meanwhile, 86 per cent of CHP voters picked İhsanoğlu and only 11 per cent shifted to Erdoğan.<sup>77</sup> The impact of this on the outcome of the election cannot be exaggerated and also raises questions about the positives of picking a joint candidate. This will potentially impact any future decisions for parties in Turkey to propose a joint candidate, as later analysis will demonstrate.

## Results by Region

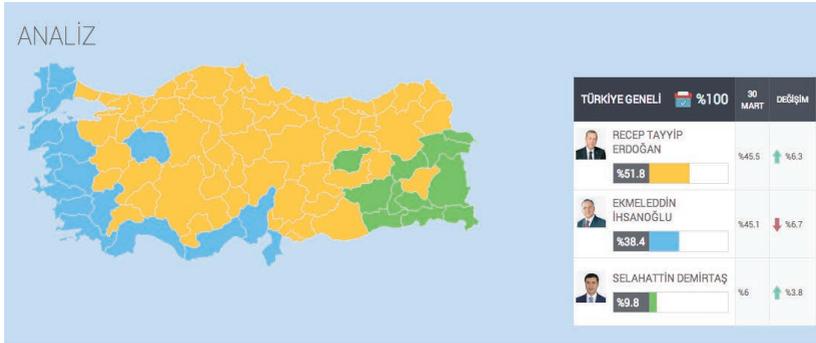
In Turkey there are 81 provinces. To “win” a province a candidate must achieve over 50 percent of the vote or win through plurality.<sup>78</sup> Erdoğan gained 54 of these provinces, 51 with a majority and 3 with pluralities. He thus “won” 66.67 per cent of all provinces. İhsanoğlu “won” 16 provinces, 12 with a majority and 4 with pluralities thus attaining 19.75 per cent of the provinces. Demirtaş achieved 11 provinces in total, all with a majority, which translates to 13.58 per cent of all provinces. A full breakdown of all provinces by percentage is attached as Annex 2.

---

77 Ipsos, ‘Post Election Survey’, *CNN Turk*, (11/08/14), accessed 25/08/14 at: <http://www.cnnturk.com/fotogaleri/turkiye/ipsos-cumhurbaskanligi-secimi-sandik-sonrasi-arastirmasi?page=01>

78 It is important to note that “winning” a region is arguably of little importance on the outcome of the election, the outcome is not based on a party or person winning constituencies like First Past the Post in the UK. Analysis of “victory” by region is merely useful for analysis purposes.

Viewing the results by province/region is important as it brings to light the intricacies that an overview of votes alone does not. For example these results highlight that while İhsanoğlu may have won 28.68 per cent more votes than Demirtaş, he succeeded in an outright victory in only one more province than Demirtaş. This suggests that although İhsanoğlu is popular with a greater number of voters, his and Demirtaş's support spreads across a similarly sized landmass. This becomes even more significant when viewed geographically; see below.



### *NTV Election Coverage*<sup>79</sup>

As the above image clearly demonstrates, there are distinct areas of Turkey that vote for particular parties. The more popular and largely more metropolitan, westernised Western areas largely vote for İhsanoğlu, this is most probably due to the fact that İhsanoğlu was seen as the more moderate Islamic option. While the son of an Islamic scholar and the former head of the OIC, he is not only

<sup>79</sup> 'NTV Election Coverage', *NTV*, (11/08/2014), accessed 19/08/2014 at: <http://secim.ntv.com.tr/>

a joint candidate for the CHP and MHP (thus drawing together two traditionally secular parties), he also repeatedly stated that as President he would hope to preside over Turkey's political arena with a unifying voice so as to prevent the polarisation of society, something Erdoğan has increasingly encouraged through his language.<sup>80</sup> He was thus able to draw on the conservative Islamic base which may have conventionally turned to Erdoğan, but has also attracted moderate voters. In contrast, the Eastern areas of Turkey, a Kurdish dominated region, turned towards Demirtaş, as not only is he Kurdish, but he is also a young, charismatic and popular politician. Demirtaş was the only Kurdish candidate to stand, and inevitably drew the support of Kurds in this largely Kurdish area. It must also be mentioned however, that more unexpectedly, for the first time in Turkey's history, a Kurdish candidate (identifying himself as such) drew support from Turkey's main cities such as Istanbul and Izmir, as well as other, western cities. Demirtaş succeeded in convincing voters (including, for the first time, the Liberal/Leftist electorate) that his party, HDP, has a real desire to be part of Turkey, presenting the party as a diversified combination of Turks, Kurds and other ethnic groups. Demirtaş also attracted the strategic vote of those against Erdoğan, as the Kurdish movement is seen by many as the only real challenge to the AK Party government.

---

80 Zeynalov, Mahir. "What can Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu bring to Turkey's presidency?." . <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/2014/07/08/What-can-Ekmeleddin-Ihsanoglu-bring-to-Turkey-s-presidency-.html> (accessed July 14, 2014).

What is even more significant is that in their separate areas of Turkey, from assessment of their percentages Demirtaş more popular. In the 11 provinces where Demirtaş gained an average of 61.4 per cent, whereas in the provinces where İhsanoğlu was more popular he only had an average support rating of 55 per cent. This bears particular weight given the ongoing question of Kurdish independence, an issue that has only increased in importance with the problems facing the Kurds in Iraq. When this is combined with the aforementioned information about low MHP turnout it becomes clear that party rifts and divisions played a huge role in Erdoğan's outright victory in the first round.

## Overview of Media Reporting Surrounding the Election

### In Turkey before the election

In the run up to the election the Turkish media was awash with speculation about who would win the election, with the majority predicting a victory for Erdoğan. On June 24, Sonar, an organisation in Turkey that forecasts election results, conducted a poll that found 52 per cent of those surveyed would vote for Erdoğan, while approximately 40 per cent said they would vote for İhsanoğlu.<sup>81</sup> Predicted support for HDP's candidate was approximately 7 per cent at the time.

Many observers in the West, as well as Kemalist mainstream media, presented the fear that Turkey would backslide into authoritarianism under Erdoğan's leadership and that the reforms that the AK Party sought to institute when it came to power in 2002 were not sincere.<sup>82</sup> There was some speculation that Erdoğan wanted to transform the presidency into a more powerful and politicised role; which would arguably contrast with the basis of democracy, that being the separation of powers.<sup>83</sup>

---

81 Rethink Institute, 'Presidential Elections', (01/08/2014), accessed 02/08/14 at: <http://www.rethinkinstitute.org/turkish-elections/>

82 Mahçupyan, Etyen, 'Why the AK Party became 'Authoritarian'', (16/07/14), *Dailysabah*, accessed 16/07/14, <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/etyen-mahcupyan/2014/07/16/why-the-ak-party-became-authoritarian>

83 Akyol, Mustafa, 'Will Erdogan be Turkey's next Ataturk?', *Al-Monitor*, (14/07/14), accessed 14/07/14 at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/akyol-ataturk-erdogan-president-akp-power-methods-illiberal.html>

This prediction stems largely from the statement Erdoğan made in early August, 'as the head of the executive, the president uses all his constitutional powers. If I am elected president, I will also use all of them. I won't be a president of protocol'.<sup>84</sup> The speculation that this change in role would likely revert Turkey back to Atatürk's principle of 'unified power' was made by some, however this was not commonly voiced in the Turkish media and was mostly among international news sources. Negative parallels between Erdoğan and Atatürk were also few and far between in Turkey, those that were made mostly coming from liberal leftist media sources, and were met by government controlled media with the presentation of Erdoğan as a strong leader, positively following in the footsteps of Atatürk, without reference to authoritarianism.

Some media outlets, such as *Hurriyet Daily*, also published articles outlining various scandals surrounding the election and campaigns. The most prominent of these has been tied to the OSCE report, which strongly criticised Erdoğan for his use of public funds in his campaign.<sup>85</sup> According to this report, published July 31, 'following Mr. Erdogan's speech, children's toys and women's scarves were distributed to the crowd' and he had also openly used his public office to campaign at events such as the inauguration of the high-

---

84 Yildirim, A Kadir, 'Turkey's Presidential Elections: What Is at Stake?', *Al Jazeera*, (08/08/14), accessed 08/08/14 at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/08/turkey-presidential-elections-201486148678440.html>

85 'OSCE slams use of public funds for Turkish PM Erdoğan's presidential campaign', *Hurriyet Daily*, (01/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/osce-slams-use-of-public-funds-for-turkish-pm-erdogans-presidential-campaign.aspx?pageID=238&nID=69880&NewsCatID=338>

speed train between Istanbul and Ankara on July 25.<sup>86</sup> There were also reports that in the first days of the campaigning between June 29 and July 10, Erdoğan appeared on the public broadcaster's news channel TRT Haber for 559 minutes, while İhsanoğlu was only covered for 137 minutes and Demirtaş just 18 minutes.<sup>87</sup> This reporting does not however, include coverage on private television channels (all those mentioned are public); which was significantly greater for all candidates.

## **In Turkey after the election**

There has been much discussion about what Erdoğan's victory will mean for Turkey in the Turkish media. Erdoğan's goal was to win the elections in the first round, and he did so by faring better than his party scored in the last local polls. However, the fact that Erdoğan did not win by any relatively great margin may hamper him during his tenure as the country's first directly elected president. *Daily Hürriyet* columnist Taha Akyol has claimed that the number of votes that Erdoğan obtained does not give him a mandate strong enough to legitimately amend the Constitution, transforming the system to allow him exercise full presidential powers, something which AK Party representatives dispute.

---

86 'OSCE slams use of public funds for Turkish PM Erdoğan's presidential campaign', *Hurriyet Daily*, (01/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/osce-slams-use-of-public-funds-for-turkish-pm-erdogans-presidential-campaign.aspx?pageID=238&nID=69880&NewsCatID=338>

87 'Public broadcaster TRT at center of contention during campaign', *Hurriyet Daily*, (10/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/public-broadcaster-trt-at-center-of-contention-during-campaign.aspx?pageID=238&nID=70204&NewsCatID=338>

---

Discussion has focused on what Erdoğan's presidential victory will mean for the AK Party. Some have noted that Erdoğan's ascent to Çankaya (the presidential palace) coalesces with the public rift within the AK Party between the supporters of president-elect Erdoğan and the outgoing president Abdullah Gül, and this move is seen by many to inaugurate a new era for the AK Party.

Turkey's future course will largely be determined by the outcome of an intra-AK Party struggle.<sup>88</sup> Bound up in this discussion has been the issue of who will replace Erdoğan as Prime Minister, with it being revealed on August 27 that Ahmet Davutoğlu, an Erdoğan loyalist, will take the role.<sup>89</sup> In the hours immediately following Davutoğlu's nomination as Prime Minister, media outlets in Turkey reported that Davutoğlu would seek to continue and also re-affirm the 'restoration movement' that has been underway in Turkey for the last twelve years the AK Party has been in power.<sup>90</sup> Some have expressed concern that Davutoğlu's appointment will only serve to further polarise Turkey,<sup>91</sup> believing that 'if Abdullah Gül had stayed in the picture, the victory of the pragmatists would be secured'.<sup>92</sup>

---

88 Babahan, Ergun, 'Turkey's future will be decided by the outcome of the struggle of the two fractions of the AKP', *T24*, (12/08/14), accessed 24/08/14 at: <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/ergun-babahan/iktidar-suleyman-avladinibogdurttu,9924>

89 'As it happened: Turkey's ruling party elects Davutoğlu as new chair', *Hurriyet Daily*, (27/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/as-it-happened-turkeys-ruling-party-elects-davutoglu-as-new-chair.aspx?pageID=238&nID=70965&NewsCatID=338>

90 Birsal, Gulse, 'Who is seeking this "restoration"?', *Hurriyet Daily*, (27/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/who-is-seeking-this-restoration.aspx?pageID=449&nID=70942&NewsCatID=527>

91 Birsal, Gulse, 'Who is seeking this "restoration"?', *Hurriyet Daily*, (27/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/who-is-seeking-this-restoration.aspx?pageID=449&nID=70942&NewsCatID=527>

92 Akyol, Mustafa, 'Toward more or less polarization?', *Hurriyet Daily*,

There has been much discussion over what the election results signify for the other main parties in Turkey. Two topics continue to dominate the media in this respect; the strong showing of HDP's Demirtaş, who is generally seen as the real 'star' of the election; and the failure of MHP and CHP's joint candidate İhsanoğlu. Liberal and social democratic commentators see Demirtaş' success as heralding the birth of a new left.<sup>93</sup> Some commentators have stressed the need for CHP to heed the call of this 'new left' and warn that the party is doomed if it persists in allying itself with the rightist MHP.<sup>94</sup>

---

(27/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/toward-more-or-less-polarization-.aspx?pageID=449&nID=70941&NewsCatID=411>

93 Taşkın, Yüksel, 'The Future is Calling', *Taraf*, (12/08/14), accessed 25/08/14 at: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/yuksel-taskin/gelecek-sesleniyor/30551/>

94 Bayramoğlu, Ali, 'The defeat of the CHP-MHP alliance makes a coalition alliance in the next election unlikely', *Yeni Safak*, (12/08/14), accessed 25/08/14 at: <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/AliBayramoglu/yeni-donemin-ilk-isaretleri/55298>

---

## International media both before and after the election

The international press has portrayed a generally similar account of the elections to the Turkish media, albeit being more critical of Erdoğan. In the UK left wing outlets such as *The Guardian* have been arguing since as early as March that ‘Turkey’s election may have ironically dealt a blow to democracy’.<sup>95</sup> In this aforementioned article, Simon Tisdall cited various speeches made by Erdoğan arguing that he spoke in an ‘angry, intolerant, dictatorial leadership style’ often referring to ‘the enemy within’.<sup>96</sup> It is particularly interesting to compare the language of western/international media to that of the Turkish media, which often gives the impression of Erdoğan being universally popular. In the western media there is often a greater focus on the youth of Turkey and resistance to Erdoğan and the AK Party than can be found in the Turkish press.

---

95 Tisdall, Simon, ‘Turkey’s election may ironically have dealt with a blow to democracy’, *The Guardian*, (31/03/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/31/turkey-election-blow-democracy-ironic-erdogan>

96 Tisdall, Simon, ‘Turkey’s election may ironically have dealt with a blow to democracy’, *The Guardian*, (31/03/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/31/turkey-election-blow-democracy-ironic-erdogan>

---

There has also been greater scepticism towards Erdoğan's nomination of Davutoğlu to take his role as prime minister within Western media. In the immediate aftermath of the presidential election *The Guardian* published an article stating that the Erdoğan loyalist had been long reported to be his successor and that there would undoubtedly be ramifications of this. Both Turkish and international media also claimed that Davutoğlu had publically stated that he and Erdoğan would serve together.<sup>97</sup>

Given the recent focus on IS and the role of the PKK in the region as a whole, some international media have also placed a greater focus on the Kurdish Question when discussing the recent outcome of the Turkish election.<sup>98</sup>

---

97 'Turkey's incoming prime minister says country needs new constitution', *Reuters* (27/08/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/08/27/uk-turkey-government-constitution-idUKKBN0GR18C20140827>

98 Coskun, Orhan and Solaker, Gulsen, 'Turkey's Kurdish peace process key to Erdogan's presidential hopes', *Reuters*, (03/04/14), accessed 27/08/14 at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/03/us-turkey-election-kurds-idUSBREA3218L20140403>

---

## **What does Erdoğan's presidential victory mean for Turkey and the current 'process'?**

As the aforementioned media reports demonstrate that there is a fear both internationally and within Turkey that under Erdoğan's presidency, that the country will become a more authoritarian state. The potential ramifications of this are far reaching but one possible outcome from an international perspective is that the change in system is likely to prove an obstacle to EU accession for Turkey, although EU accession has become less important among Turkey's public in recent years, with the credibility of the EU threatened as a result of recent economic crises within member states. Turkey's lack of accession is largely blamed on the fact that it has a Muslim society, and many do not see the obstacles to its membership in the EU as relating to a failure to meet EU standards.

More immediate political impacts of the election results include what can be seen as the end of nationalist politics in Turkey: both the MHP and the nationalist wing inside the CHP are in decline and the HDP has recognised that it will continue to grow as a party as long as it continues to transcend Kurdish nationalism and adhere to its policy of leftist plurality without discriminating against Muslim democrats, something which proved to be a mistake for previous social democrat parties.

These can all be seen as movements towards a solution to the Kurdish Question in Turkey, and as being strongly related with the

---

general standards of democracy in the country.<sup>99</sup>

As for the probable implications of the presidential election results on the ongoing process in Turkey; there are unlikely to be negative effects. The Kurdish opposition (BDP, HDP) has consistently supported Erdoğan's presidential candidature, and this support is likely to continue as long as the government stays loyal to the process and continues to take concrete steps forward in the near future.

Öcalan's statements following his meeting with HDP MP Sırrı Süreyya Önder at İmralı in July confirm this, and echo Erdoğan's assertion that the 'process' entered a new chapter. He noted, in advance of the passing of the new legislation that "there would be significant developments in the process in the coming period", adding that "in this time there will be political delegations and also talks...with the state delegation...the most important reality is that the process has reached a new phase."

---

99 Kizilkaya, Emre, 'Explained: Turkey's Presidential Election Results in a Nutshell', *Hurriyet Daily News*, (18/08/2014), accessed 22/09/2014 at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/explained-turkeys-presidential-election-results-in-a-nutshell.aspx?PageID=238&NID=70588&NewsCatID=338>

---

Following the İmralı meeting, HDP MP Önder also said that for the first time a programme and timetable for the process had been discussed at a meeting between Öcalan and the state delegation, adding: “I think that the questions Mr Öcalan emphasised at the beginning of the process; a legal framework, the removal of obstacles to democratic politics, sick prisoners, the fact the Anti-Terror law has no place in a democratic society, have for the first time begun to be linked to a programme and timetable.” The acknowledgment of the coming together of these components as comprising concrete steps towards progress, reflects the shift to a political engagement between the state and Öcalan, and the similarities in the discourse of both Öcalan and Erdoğan regarding the ‘new phase’ of the process reflects continued collaboration between the two.

Despite these positive developments, the presidential elections and Erdoğan’s victory have seen increased tension in Turkey and a heightened sense of polarisation throughout society.

Seemingly encouraging steps have simultaneously been met with setbacks. One example of this is the attack of members of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) who had gathered in İstanbul (Gaziosmanpaşa) in July, to campaign for “freedom for Öcalan”. As a result of the attack three members of the HDP were slightly injured, and another member, Ömer Delibaş, was heavily injured and later died in hospital.

Among nationalist circles of Turkey’s society and the Gülen

community, there remains a perception that Erdoğan is in a secret agreement with Öcalan and that he will allow for a separate Kurdish state to exist in the southern part of the country. At the same time, the resolution of the Kurdish conflict is also perceived to be the only way in which the government can democratise and legitimise its power.

## New Reform Package

### Background to the Reform Package

On 6 June 2014, the AK Party provided a workshop in the city of Diyarbakır, followed later that month by the announcement of a proposed new reform package on 26 June, a development which brought a new dynamism to what many saw as a “parked peace process” in Turkey. A major component of the package, which passed as the “*Law to End Terrorism and Strengthen Social Integration*” on 2 July, is the provision of legal immunity for state officials who have been involved in talks with members of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) as part of efforts to seek a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish Question. Although the timing of the package was criticised by some as a strategic electoral investment<sup>100</sup> by the ruling party, most responses from the Kurdish movement and liberals in Turkey have been positive, framing the reform in terms of a much needed concrete step by the government after what some have viewed as a long break from the process. The reform package has been defined as marking a new phase in Turkey’s process, signifying that ongoing talks between the State and Abdullah Öcalan have become legal and sparking new hope for a comprehensive roadmap between the parties.

---

100 Mehmet Y. Yilmaz, Editor in Chief of Turkish daily newspaper *Hurriyet* described the Law as a means of merely offering ‘a carrot to the people until the presidential election is over’ in *Today’s Zaman*, ‘The Reform Package on Talks with the PKK’, 27 June 2014 [http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/gunay-hilal-aygun\\_351505\\_the-reform-package-on-talks-with-pkk.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/gunay-hilal-aygun_351505_the-reform-package-on-talks-with-pkk.html)

---

The new Law focuses on legalising the process and it is in this sense a significant development. It comprises the fifth “democratisation package” to be released by the AK Party government, and of those, it is the most clearly related to the ongoing peace process. Despite this, the title of the Law avoids naming the conflict and the Kurds in particular, in order to preserve the Government’s position within nationalist sectors of Turkish society. Additionally, despite inaccurate media coverage to the contrary neither the law, the articles therein nor the explanation added to it, mention the Kurds, the PKK or the ongoing process but rather discuss the eradication of terrorism and a “solution process” more generally. It can therefore be seen as a skeleton law, the implementation of which will be supplemented through secondary legislation.

## Content of the Reform Package

Comprising six articles, the law provides a legal framework for dialogue, with a view to ending terrorism and increasing minority rights. This Law allows the government to determine the political and judicial steps needed to end terrorism and strengthen communities while also allowing for dialogue with groups or institutions from both inside Turkey and abroad. It places the burden of responsibility for the reintegration of militants into social life on the government. The Law also requires the government to provide the public with information regarding any such processes. Crucially, as mentioned, the Law protects those who are tasked to fulfil their duties within the frame of this law from administrative or criminal liability.

The Law can be outlined as follows:

- a. The Law aims to provide a legal framework for peace talks with Kurdish militants.
- b. It seeks to remove the risk of those involved in peace talks, namely Kurds, from being prosecuted if the political climate in Turkey turns against the peace process in the future.
- c. It also places responsibility for the rehabilitation of militants who lay down their weapons firmly with the government.
- d. The Law includes the following six articles:
  - i. The government will determine the measures to be taken in the fields of security, disarmament, and human rights, as well as political, legal, socio-economic, psychological, cultural steps.

- ii. If necessary, the Law allows individuals, institutions and organisations to make contact, establish dialogue and meet with individuals, institutions and organisations both inside and outside the country.
- iii. The government will take the necessary measures for those who put down their weapons and return home, accommodating their participation in social life.
- iv. The government will monitor the work conducted within the frame of this law and provide necessary coordination among relevant institutions and organisations.
- v. The government will provide information to the public about works conducted within the frame of this law.
- vi. The Law states that no administrative or criminal liability can be attributed to those who are tasked to fulfil their duties within the frame of this law.

## **Potential Impact of the Reform Package**

If successfully implemented, the potential impact of this legislation could include a comprehensive agreement between the Turkish Government and the PKK. Öcalan has stated from İmralı Island where he has been since 1999, that it is an 'historic development for this law to come to parliament'. Deputy Minister Besir Atalay argued on the part of the government that the Law will provide the foundation for 'a detailed road map of concrete steps' in the process.

The Law will require further implementing legislation and legislative reforms before it can take full effect and the potential impact can be celebrated. For example Article 4 of the Law will not be enough by itself to provide protection from nor amendment of Turkey's notorious Anti-Terror Legislation.

Mr Atalay's statement is important, because it points to larger shortcomings of the five democratisation packages introduced by the former Prime Minister. As noted, the Law does not lay out a clear and transparent process. Instead, it has increased executive powers, specifically that of the Cabinet which, according to Article 3 of the Law, now has full authority to make decisions relating to the process including drafting necessary legislation and regulations. Many fear this will morph into a means of further enforcing state authority on society.

Mr Atalay also commented on the necessity of the government talking directly to the PKK in the Qandil mountains, rather than to Ocalan alone. This statement has led to a reopening of discussion on the possibility of renewed violence, by political commentators in the Turkish media.

Additionally, the question of involvement of a neutral third party remains, and has not been resolved by the new Law. Without the involvement of a neutral third party the process will continue to stagnate. Until the government deals with the process in a more choreographed way, such piecemeal democratisation packages are

likely to continue to disappoint nationalists and other opposition groups. It has been argued that in trying to appease Kurdish groups in the run up to the presidential elections while also treading lightly on nationalist sentiment, the government has produced a law that is rather lacking in substance.

Although the government is sincere and on the right track, the process has been 'parked' for some time because it has lacked choreography. Up to this point, the 'process' has consisted of talks without any formal negotiations between two partners. In order to move forward, the government must continue to take steps to formalise the process and get to the substance of negotiations. Both those in government and in opposition realise that this calls for an impartial third party, but the government would still like to see how far it can get on its own through packages and reforms.

Despite its arguable lack of substance, it must be acknowledged that the new Law represents, to an extent, the parties' *de facto* recognition of the conflict, something which can only aid in strengthening obligations, already held by both the government and the PKK, to comply with Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention which provides minimum protection in all non-international armed conflicts. With the creation of this Law, under the Geneva Convention and other customary international laws, there would be potential international consequences if there were to be a renewal of violence.

## Criticism of the New Reform Package

In addition to allegations that the Law lacks substance, its wording has also proved contentious among Kurdish civil society, as well for former and current members of the PKK and members of Turkey's pro Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP). Most of the criticism expressed has related to the use of the words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist'. HDP Executive Committee Member Meral Danis Bestas, stated that use of these terms is 'not acceptable in reference to Kurdish groups and organisations'.<sup>101</sup>

Fears have been expressed that the formalisation of the Law will see it morph into a means of further enforcing Turkish State authority on society, with comparisons being drawn with the first article of the Law and terrorism laws in other countries.<sup>102</sup>

As mentioned, the content of the Law has also brought criticism from society, with claims that it does not go far enough and is overly vague in its promises and aims. Key issues of concern include the lack of any mention of third party interlocutors, or any reference to what precise measures will be taken to reintegrate and rehabilitate former militants.

---

101 <http://www.kurdishquestion.com/kurdistan/north-kurdistan/bestas-draft-bill-has-shortcomings/140-bestas-draft-bill-has-shortcomings.html>

102 Such as the 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in India.

Echoing another popular point of criticism, Mehmet Y. Yilmaz, Editor in Chief of Turkish daily newspaper *Hurriyet* stated that ‘it is not possible to say that the Law is a “major step” because ‘most of [the] directives will necessitate separate pieces of legislation to be adopted, indicating that the government plans to hold on to the “peace card” for a while longer’.<sup>103</sup>

As the Bill is currently drafted it will require further implementing legislation and legislative reforms before it can take full effect. For example Article 4 of the Bill will not be enough by itself to provide the protection and amendment of the Anti-Terror Legislation and the TCK will be required in order to provide full protection or those involved.

The Nationalist movement, in particular the MHP, has rejected this law and made clear that they will not give any support whatsoever and they are continuing to maintain their old policy in relation to the process. However the CHP have said they will conditionally support this as they believe that it will help to move the peace process along. The CHP has made a proposal to set up a “Commission for Social Reconciliation” and a “Joint Advisory Delegation” to work in civil society in a coordinated way with parliament, in response to the Law.

---

103 *Today's Zaman*, ‘The Reform Package on Talks with the PKK’, 27 June 2014 [http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/gunay-hilal-aygun\\_351505\\_the-reform-package-on-talks-with-pkk.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/gunay-hilal-aygun_351505_the-reform-package-on-talks-with-pkk.html)

---

As for the expectations of the Kurdish movement, it can be said that the Law has fallen short of their expectations, however there is an acceptance that the Law provides a new legal framework and direction to the ongoing process. Particular criticism by the Kurdish movement has consistently been voiced towards the AK Party's policy of denying the Kurdish identity and failing to recognise them a partner for the solution, instead focusing on terrorism. It has long been felt that the historic explanation of the rejection by Turkish society of the Kurds no longer holds water and that the AK Party Government should have the courage to stand together with the Kurds in seeking a solution publicly. The new legislation is likely to go some way in achieving meeting this expectation.

## **Scandal: A Challenge to Peace?**

### **Background**

The run up to Turkey's presidential elections saw extensive media references to past and present scandals faced by the AK Party, with various sources implying that the AK Party are inherently corrupt and have been so since they rose to power in 2002.<sup>104</sup> The scale of the coverage of these scandals both in national and international press led many to question whether they would have an impact on the election results, and on the AK Party's support base as a whole. This section will examine the history of corruption allegations faced by the AK Party.

---

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-337574-corruption-and-impropriety-not-new-to-ak-party-rule.html>, seen 13/08/14

---

## Past scandals

The first scandal to hit the AK party was in regards to Abdullah Unakitan, son of former Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan, who earned TL366 bn following his father's privatisation of certain industries and the reduction on imports of corn. Despite the alleged corruption, Unakitan was nominated by Erdoğan as a deputy candidate in the parliamentary elections of 2007 and was later appointed as finance minister. It was not until 2009 that Erdoğan removed Unakitan from his cabinet.

Allegations since then have included include the selling off of debt to the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund or the TMSF (for example the State bought the Deluxe Resort Hotel in Antalya from the Ceylan group for \$52 mn to pay off the group's debt in 2003 and then sold it on to an AK Party-supporting company for \$25 mn in 2005), as well as the sale of 1,800 hectares of land, worker residences and other assets to SEKA (a cellulose and paper factory) for \$1.1 mn when it was valued at \$51 mn in 2005.<sup>105</sup>

## Ongoing scandals

The most notable corruption scandal in the last year came to public attention on 17 December 2013. It involved scores of individuals including businessmen close to Erdoğan, key people in the Turkish government (namely MPs from the AK Party), as

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-337574-corruption-and-impropriety-not-new-to-ak-party-rule.html>

---

well as three ministers' sons. At the crux of the matter was the belief that the accused parties had been involved in the awarding of illegal building permits in Istanbul, as well as an alleged smuggling ring, which helped exploit a loophole in the West's sanctions thus allowing money laundering for Iran to occur (namely for the Iranian businessman Reza Zaeab). The scandal resulted in numerous people being detained by police and four ministers (Zafer Çağlayan, Egemen Bağış, Muammer Güler and Erdoğan Bayraktar) resigning. Allegedly, as a result of this scandal was a new ban on Twitter. The then prime minister Erdoğan also signaled the closure of social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube on a live television show in March 2014.<sup>106</sup> On 5 May a commission was set up to investigate the allegations, however this is not due to begin working until the new legislative year, which will begin October 1 2014.<sup>107</sup>

Various other corruption accusations have continued to haunt Erdoğan and the AK Party, mostly focusing on the tape recordings that were leaked to the press on 24 February 2014. The recordings appeared to capture Erdoğan instructing his son (Billal Erdoğan) to dispose of extensive hidden funds. Recordings of phone-tapped conversations were leaked online and resulted in the CHP demanding Erdoğan's resignation.<sup>108</sup> Further tapes were released

---

106 <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-343327-turkey-goes-to-polls-amid-corruption-and-tape-scandals.html>, seen 13/08/14

107 <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-350619-ak-party-still-reluctant-to-send-members-to-graft-commission.html>, seen 13/08/14

108 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/leaked-tapes-calls-erdogan-resign-turkish-pm>, seen 14/08/14

---

around 26 February.<sup>109</sup> This scandal is seen by many as the biggest crisis faced by the government since their coming to power, and international press coverage was damning.

On 16 July 2014 opposition parties in Turkey accused the government of stalling tactics to avoid potentially damaging revelations from the money laundering scandal of December 2013.<sup>110</sup> Riza Turman, an MP for the CHP, told Reuters that 'the government wants to prevent the disclosure of the reports until after the elections';<sup>111</sup> a view echoed by many.

On 22 July 2014 numerous Turkish police were accused of illegally wiretapping government figures including Erdoğan and Turkey's spy chief. Erdoğan publically accused the Gülen movement of being behind the leaked recordings, vowing to seek Gülen's extradition.<sup>112</sup> In response to the ongoing scandals on July 31 2014 Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, one of the founders of the AK Party, stated that the party 'has now been transformed into a structure that encourages corruption'.<sup>113</sup>

---

109 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/26/us-turkey-erdogan-idUSBREA1P0ZK20140226>, seen 14/08/14

110 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/16/us-turkey-corruption-idUSKBN0FL21T20140716>, seen 14/08/14

111 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/16/us-turkey-corruption-idUSKBN0FL21T20140716>, seen 14/08/14

112 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/22/turkish-police-accused-spying-prime-minister-arrested>, seen 14/08/14

113 <http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa/news-354309-ak-party-encourages-corruption-says-former-leading-party-member.html>, seen 14/08/14

---

On 13 August 2014 it was revealed that the police officers accused of wiretapping had filed a criminal complaint, claiming that their rights were violated during their detention.<sup>114</sup>

## **Impact of Corruption Allegations**

While the allegations brought against Erdoğan and the AK Party have impaired their credibility on an international level, the ruling party have exerted strong efforts to combat the allegations and to implement 'damage limitation'. This has namely been by way of countering scandal with allegations of foul play from the Gülen movement, as well as the renewed focus on the 'process' and on bolstering Turkey's economy.

Erdoğan's presidential victory, although not achieved by a large margin, demonstrates his tenacity as a political personality and the continued breadth and resilience of his support base.

## **Regional developments and their effect on Turkey's 'process'**

It is important to note that the process in Syria is connected to the process in Turkey. Rojava cannot be taken out of the equation in Turkey; nor should regional actors be forgotten, such as Iran and Iraq, specifically the KRG. The brewing conflict between the KDP and KCK not only effects relations between the PYD and KDPS,

---

<sup>114</sup> <http://en.haberler.com/accused-officers-take-rights-violations-to-court-512842/>, seen 14/08/14

but also those between the PKK and others as the PYD is the sister organisation of the PKK.

Despite the lack of hard evidence regarding regional policy toward IS some conclusions can be drawn regarding Turkey, Iraq and Syria. The humanitarian and refugee crisis created by the recent advance of jihadist militants IS through north western Iraq, specifically the Sinjar Mountains has exacerbated tensions in the region and garnered international attention for IS, including American air support.

The Turkish public is divided over policy of government toward IS. There are two general schools of thought: some believe the government has made great mistakes from beginning of the Syrian conflict. The other camp believes the government has rightly supported the opposition in Syria. This is evidenced by the government's response to such groups publicly – the government has not yet denounced support towards groups such as al Nusra. The government has also not publically admitted that any material support to the Syrian opposition has reached IS. Internally, many believe IS to be separate from other opposition groups. It is unclear which groups government support has benefitted and to which groups (and in which ways) the government continues to offer support.

There are claims that Turkey's support of the Syrian opposition, particularly Turkey's military support of the Free Syrian Army,

has reached al Nusra, al Qaeda and IS. Some have claimed that al Nusra and IS fighters have received medical treatment inside Turkey. Turkey has continued to keep borders open for the free flow of people and materials in support of the Syrian opposition, some of which is likely to have reached IS.

Factually, the situation is unclear because the government has and continues to deny that it has any kind of connections with IS, but on the other hand there are parts of the opposition which claim that the government is directly or indirectly supporting IS, also without factual evidence.

Some have claimed that the government of Turkey were aware of the preparations of IS in relation to their advances and actions in the region. It is likely that Turkey and the KRG are discussing and sharing intelligence in relation to this, in order to protect territories. There is little doubt that large numbers of Turkish nationals have travelled from Turkey to Syria in support of IS, and most Europeans who have left to join the jihad in Syria have transited through Turkey. It is therefore possible that the Turkish authorities have at best closed both eyes, or they have actively supported those heading for the Syrian jihad. Previously, it is likely that Turkey and the KRG were prepared to have IS as a neighbour in order to destabilise the Kurdish region of Syria, rather than to encourage Syrian Kurds politically and militarily. IS' goal, unlike other 'non state actors', has been the creation of a state. The influence of the Ba'athist regime in their

ranks can be seen in this aspiration and the institutions they have put in place. Clearly Turkey's policy to date has failed, as IS will not be contained as has been proven with their genocidal advance in Iraq.

Currently Syrian Kurdish forces, mainly the YPG, and the PKK are the only forces able to defeat IS in Iraq. This has forced the KRG to rethink its relationship with the Syrian Kurds, at least militarily. There are reports of Kurdish joint military command in north western Iraq, and recent reports speculate that the west is now communicating with 'terrorists' (PYD and PKK). The PKK's military success over IS and the attention it is garnering could potentially harden their position toward the internal process in Turkey. The Turkish government's approach to dictate packages and negotiations to the opposition may face emboldened leadership. It is likely that Turkey will reconsider its policy on Syria as a result of the clear failure of past approaches. It is becoming clear to both Turkey and the KRG that the solution of the Kurdish Question in Turkey is directly connected to the Kurds in Syria.

As the threat of the establishment of an Islamic State in the middle of the Kurdish regions in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria materialises, the Kurds seem to be the only fighting force able to fend off IS forces thus far. Emboldening of marginalised groups in the region will continue to effect regional relations.

## **Conclusion: What next for Turkey?**

### **New Cabinet**

Erdoğan elected the former Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu as head of the AK Party and the new Prime Minister of Turkey on 21<sup>st</sup> August, despite Abdullah Gül being the favoured candidate of the party according to polls conducted among AK Party members.

There has been some speculation that Gül may establish an alternative political party with a group of people from both inside and outside of AK Party circles, who are critical of the rising authoritarian features of the government and of Erdoğan himself. This is unlikely, however, and it is more feasible that Gül will wait until 2015, when he is likely to be accorded a new role under the AK Party.

It can be inferred that Erdoğan would rather not have a powerful figure occupying the AK Party leadership and that he has instead chosen a low-profile, 'caretaker' as prime minister, who will form a government loyal to Erdoğan in order to maintain his authority over the government and ruling party. Erdoğan has said that Davutoğlu's determination to battle the 'parallel state' was a key factor in his nomination, stating that Davutoğlu has faced many attacks from the parallel structure during his time in government, such as the stopping of MIT trucks and aid activities, as well as the

tapping of an secret official meeting, as well as facing slander from 'parallel media'.<sup>115</sup>

There have also been claims of unspoken tension within the AK Party, between the 'old guard' or 'elder brothers'; the older generation within the Party who include founding figures and include Bülent Arınç and others – and the 'new guard' or 'adolescents'; the younger generation within the party who are well educated, with academic backgrounds, and who surround Erdoğan as his consultants - Yalçın Akdoğan is one example.

Following his nomination, Prime Minister Davutoğlu announced the new cabinet of the 62<sup>nd</sup> government in Turkey as follows:

- Deputy Prime Ministers: Bülent Arınç, Ali Babacan, Yalçın Akdoğan, Numan Kurtulmus
- Foreign Minister: Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu
- Interior Minister: Efkan Ala
- Justice Minister: Bekir Bozdağ
- Finance Minister: Mehmet Şimşek
- Economy Minister: Nihat Zeybekçi
- Energy and Natural Resources Minister: Taner Yıldız
- Defense Minister: İsmet Yılmaz
- Family and Social Policies Minister: Aysenur İslam
- EU Minister: Volkan Bozkır
- Science, Industry and Technology Minister: Fikri İsiik
- Labour and Social Security Minister: Faruk Çelik

---

115 *Yeni Şafak*, 'Next President and PM vow to struggle with parallel state', 22 August 2014 <http://english.yenisafak.com/Politics/next-president-and-pm-vow-to-struggle-with-parallel-state-23.08.2014-3961?ref=manset-8> (last accessed 15/09/14)

---

- Environment and Urban Planning Minister: Idris Güllüce
- Youth and Sports Minister: Akif Çağatay Kiliç
- Food, Agriculture and Livestock Minister: Mehdi Eker
- Customs and Trade Minister: Nurettin Canikli
- Development Minister: Cevdet Yılmaz
- Culture and Tourism Minister: Ömer Çelik
- Education Minister: Nabi Avci
- Forestry and Water Affairs Minister: Veysel Eroglu
- Health Minister: Mehmet Müezzinoğlu
- Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications Minister:  
Lütfi Elvan

Only two members of the new cabinet are women.

Following the announcement of the new cabinet and the first Cabinet meeting under Davutoğlu, it was announced that Bülent Arınç will be the new coordinator of the 'solution process'. Prime Minister Davutoğlu stated, however, that he will personally be part of every aspect of the 'process' and will participate in all meetings regarding the solution and negotiation processes.

Work relating to resolving the Kurdish issue will therefore be under the responsibility of Prime Minister Davutoğlu and under the coordination of Minister Arınç and the 'process' will be conducted by the Secretary General of Public Security, which will continue to be strengthened.

Prime Minister Davutoğlu's role regarding the 'process', can be taken as a sign that he will not simply be a 'shadow Prime Minister' under the control of President Erdoğan, but rather will govern the solution process, supported by the President.

## **"New Turkey"**

It is probable that the government will announce another new package regarding the solution process this September. This is likely to contain a 'roadmap' of sorts, in addition to reference to amnesty. This follows what President Erdoğan has referred to as the movement towards a 'new Turkey'; the meaning of which will be explored in this section.

President Erdoğan's first speech following the presidential elections was based around the motto a "new Turkey"; a phrase which he has used consistently during his recent speeches, including televised speeches, public rallies and other appearances, to describe the changes introduced by the 12 year rule of the AK Party. Although there is ongoing debate surrounding the exact meaning of the phrase a "new Turkey", it can be largely understood as follows:

- 1) The continuity of the struggle against the "parallel state":** this refers to the ongoing struggle against Fethullah Gülen community members who are believed to be found mainly in the Turkish Judiciary and police forces within the country.

- 2) The continuity of the Kurdish peace process:** while the Fethullah Gülen community has been defined as one of the greatest threats to the peace process, the other perceived internal “threat” is defined as that of Kurdish nationalism. President Erdoğan has stated that the solution process will continue despite the attacks coming from internal and international threats.
  
- 3) Transition to the Presidential System:** President Erdoğan will try to convince his voters and the state bureaucracy in the benefits of having a presidential system in Turkey until the national elections in 2015. He is likely to continue to use the solution process as a powerful tool in his hand, in order to combine the benefits of a presidential system with the democratic autonomy demands of the Kurdish movement.

Shortly after Erdoğan’s presidential victory and at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the revolt by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) on August 15<sup>th</sup>, Öcalan is said to have told his lawyers visiting him in prison that “this 30-year war is nearing its end through democratic negotiations”. This statement can be interpreted as supportive of Erdoğan’s presidency, and as a clear signal that there is a willingness on both sides to continue to keep the ‘process’ on track.

## **DPI Board and Council of Experts**

### **Director:**

#### **Kerim Yildiz**

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

### **DPI Board Members:**

#### **Nicholas Stewart QC (Chair)**

Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom . Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.

#### **Professor Penny Green (Secretary)**

Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

## **Priscilla Hayner**

Co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

## **Arild Humlen**

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

## **Jacki Muirhead**

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

## **Professor David Petrasek**

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United Nations.

## **Antonia Potter Prentice**

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

## **DPI Council of Experts**

### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

## **Dr Mehmet Asutay**

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

## **Christine Bell**

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

## **Cengiz Çandar**

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

## **Yilmaz Ensarođlu**

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

## **Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres**

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

## **Professor Mervyn Frost**

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

## **Martin Griffiths**

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN

Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

### **Dr. Edel Hughes**

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

### **Avila Kilmurray**

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

## **Professor Ram Manikkalingam**

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

## **Bejan Matur**

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

## **Professor Monica McWilliams**

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.

---

## **Jonathan Powell**

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

## **Sir Kieran Prendergast**

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

## **Rajesh Rai**

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

## **Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza**

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

## **Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar**

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on Constitutional Citizenship and Transitional Justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



11 Guilford Street  
London WC1N 1DH  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0)203 206 9939

[info@democraticprogress.org](mailto:info@democraticprogress.org)

[www.democraticprogress.org](http://www.democraticprogress.org)

Twitter: @DPI\_UK