



THE GREAT LEAP

TURKEY UNDER ERDOGAN

Marek Matusiak

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MAIN POINTS

- Before the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power in 2002, Turkey was a country which couldn't be measured by Western political standards due to the role the army played in the state, the radical nationalist state ideology and the degree of internal instability. The AKP, a grouping with Islamic roots and a pro-European manifesto, gained a strong political mandate and was thus able to thoroughly redefine the guidelines of Turkey's politics; in effect, it changed Turkey's politics irreversibly. The state based on secular elites representing military and state administration circles and on a secular-nationalist ideology which existed from 1923, has to a great extent moved into the past.
- The reforms launched by the AKP offered Turkey a chance to become part of the West as regards legal and political standards, while maintaining its cultural and religious distinctness. The AKP's rule gave the country nearly a decade of social peace, political stability, growing prosperity, the development of democracy and the rule of law.
- However, as the AKP has been gaining in strength, it has demonstrated to the West with growing assertiveness the distinctness of the Turkish state model and civilisational identity. In turn, the system of government has been turning more and more into the personal rule of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (first as prime minister and then as president). With time Erdogan's rule has become increasingly disrespectful to the state's legal and political order, and has gagged and repressed his critics. This has greatly blemished the AKP's previous achievements, has led to the erosion of the state's constitutional order and has created the image of Turkey as an authoritarian, unpredictable and unreliable state.
- Since Erdogan became president in August 2014, the Turkish state and political system have been based on the will of

a single man whose power is not unlimited but who is still strong enough not to meet any open resistance. Despite the emancipation efforts made by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who is the constitutional head of the executive, Erdogan remains the keystone of the existing order and the central decision-maker as regards political and state issues. The reform and pro-European policy can be resumed only if he decides it should be, and this highly unlikely given the logic of the consolidation of power, the scale of abuse committed already and personality features.

- Turkey's internal situation remains relatively stable, the macroeconomic results are good, and the political supremacy of the AKP and the president seem to be unchallengeable. The authoritarian practices have so far not resulted in a substantial drop in approval ratings. However, there is increasing evidence that Turkey is about to turn a corner. The country's results are continually less impressive both domestically and on the international arena. The government's policy is focused on protecting its power and fighting real and imagined enemies. Social sentiments are deteriorating, the polarisation of views is escalating and more and more violent incidents in socio-political life have been seen. Turkey's geographic proximity to Syria and its involvement in the conflict there pose the threat that instability could spill over into Turkey's territory.
- It is difficult to make any forecasts regarding Turkey's socio-political future. The previous state model was disassembled and cannot be reinstated. The project aimed at bringing Turkey closer to the European Union will certainly not be resumed as long as the AKP remains in power. The governance model built by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is bringing Turkey closer to countries like Russia. However, given the scale of internal diversity inside Turkey and the growing social polarisation, it does not seem sustainable in the long run. The stance which the Turkish public takes will decide on Turkey's

future and its political and civilisational identity. Their values, aspirations and needs are, however, extremely difficult to determine. Public opinion polls and everyday experience have given grounds for formulating a number of mutually contradictory theses.

- The parliamentary election is scheduled for 7 June 2015 and the scale of the AKP's victory will serve as a key prognostic for the future development of the political situation in Turkey. If the party's result is close to what it achieved in 2011 (49.8%), this would confirm that there is no alternative for the AKP and would make President Erdogan intensify his efforts to change the political system by constitutional means. A significantly lower result, for example around 40%, would block the plans for the political system reform, and in an extreme situation could make the AKP lose the parliamentary majority which allows the party to be self-reliant. This scenario would certainly result in increasing political tension resulting from the imbalance between President Erdogan's personal ambitions and the strength of the government party's mandate. This would lead to an escalation of social tension, divides within the party and a long-term erosion of the AKP's power.

I. THE WAXING AND WANING OF THE KEMALIST REPUBLIC

The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed in 1923, born out of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the subsequent victory of the massive resistance movement led by General Mustafa Kemal (he named himself Atatürk in 1934) in the war against foreign intervention (mainly Greek and French).

The Sèvres Peace Treaty (1920) dictated by the Allied powers, provided for the partition of the greater part of the Ottoman Empire and imposed on Turkey the role of a rump state deprived of sovereignty. The victory of the forces led by Mustafa Kemal, which rejected the dictate of the Western powers and at the same time refused obedience to the Ottoman government in Istanbul, allowed Turkey to maintain sovereignty and defend its territories in Asia Minor (the cradle of the Ottoman Empire), eastern Thrace and a scrap of the Middle East.

The movement's leaders believed that the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I and also in the previous wars in the Balkans and Libya were in part caused by the civilisational backwardness and "moral decay" of the empire, which in their opinion were an effect of the feudal socio-political system, the Muslim religious obscurantism and the multi-ethnic nature of the state.

The Ottoman Empire ruled by a sultan caliph was replaced with the Republic of Turkey, a Turkish secular national state which had been dispossessed of a great part of its territory and a huge part of its non-Muslim population¹. This meant the end of the old order

¹ As a consequence of the loss of Arab territories, the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and the exchange of population with Greece. It also needs to be emphasised that in Ottoman times and at the dawn of the Republic 'Turkishness' was a kind of confessional-cultural-state identity, and many representatives of the new state's elites were of Kurdish, Slavonic, Circassian and Albanian background. It was not until republican times

and the beginning of a top-down, ideologised, uncompromising and at times brutal reconstruction of the country. It was contemporary to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and equalled it in the profundity of the changes it introduced in such areas as: state organisation, culture, lifestyle, attitudes towards religion, etc.

The new government, capitalising on the legitimacy it had gained through the victory in the war, deliberately and consistently broke the historical continuity. Contrary to the intentions of the Muslim population of Anatolia, who had resisted the foreign intervention defending their faith and the old order, the six centuries old legacy of the Ottoman Empire was rejected in the identity, political, religious and linguistic aspects². These were replaced with 'Kemalist' ideology based on Westernisation, secularism, Turkish nationalism and the cult of Mustafa Kemal himself (which took on an increasingly semi-religious incarnation over time). At the same time, systematic modernisation efforts were made. The army was put on guard of the new state and its ideological foundations, and it employed military measures to crush the resistance against the new order.

Turkey's status as a frontline state in the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century has contributed to a further consolidation of the primacy of the Kemalist military, administrative and judicial establishment in the life of the state. Even though the

that 'Turkishness' became redefined as an ethno-cultural (but not racial) identity.

² As a consequence of the thorough language reforms implemented in Turkey throughout the 20th century, the historical Ottoman language - the language of the upper classes, which was used in documents and literature - is comprehensible only to a very limited extent to a speaker of modern Turkish. This is an effect of the change of alphabet from Arabic to Latin, to changes in grammar and to the consistent removal of Arabic and Persian words from the language, replacing them with neologisms. One illustration of the scale of the changes is the fact that even Atatürk's manifesto speeches and his canonical quotations originating from the 1920s and 1930s written on public buildings have been modernised on a regular basis throughout the twentieth century to make them understandable to ordinary citizens.

single-party regime which had been introduced upon the setting up of the republic, ended in 1950, the army in fact controlled the subsequent cabinets until the end of the 20th century using formal and informal measures. It stood above current politics, and at the same time reserved the right to intervene and/or suspend the constitutional order (the coups in 1960 and 1980, and the forced government dismissals in 1971 and 1997).

The strict secularity of the state, the nonreligious lifestyle as a promoted cultural standard and the pro-Western geopolitical orientation (NATO membership and aspirations to join the European Economic Community) all brought Turkey closer to the Western world. At the same time, in terms of domestic policy, Turkey remained distant from the West. The Kemalist establishment professed nationalism as part of the state's manifesto, was convinced of the inviolability of Turkish sovereignty and strongly suspicious about the external world³, and did not want any major changes.

The factors which kept Turkey distant from the West included the role of the army in politics, the militarisation of public life, the brutality and the impunity of the state apparatus, violence in socio-political life (including left-wing and right-wing terrorism) and the scale of internal cultural and class differences⁴. One effect of the extremely nationalist state ideology⁵ was the fact that the system discriminated against and persecuted groups which did

³ Turkish political writings reveal that suspiciousness of the external world and the tendency to believe conspiracy theories has been characteristic of a great part of Turkish state elites, including the present ones. This is sometimes determined as 'Sèvres syndrome', as a reference to the treaty the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign after World War I.

⁴ Symbolised by the division into Westernised 'White Turks' mainly from Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, who are political and economic leaders versus the conservative 'Black Turks' from central Anatolia who are usually worse educated and in fact underprivileged.

⁵ The song, *Türkiyem*, contains the essence of this. It was written on order from the military regime after the 1980 coup and was frequently broadcast on the radio and TV at that time. Pursuant to instructions from the generals who led the coup, this melody was used in prisons at the time of interroga-

not fit in with the model of citizen resulting from the Kemalist ideology: a secularised or moderately religious Sunni Turk.

The 'deep state' (*derin devlet*), a network of secret, informal and mutually autonomous groups of representatives of military and civilian elites, is a phenomenon which remains a mystery to a great extent. 'Deep state' units were initially formed for military purposes: for organised resistance and sabotage in the event of Soviet aggression. However, over time they in fact turned into political and ideological groups protecting the secular and nationalist nature of the state and their own privileged position in the state. Political violence (involving murders, terrorist attacks and acts of incitement) was used extensively in addition to behind-the-scenes moves to achieve these goals.

The coup in 1980 and the subsequent direct military rule marked the apogee of the state model based on the army. 500,000 people (representing a full spectrum of views) were arrested, 50 people were officially executed and 600 more died in unclear circumstances.

The late 1980s and early 1990s brought a change in the conditions in which Turkey had functioned from the end of World War II (the

tions and torture. In 2010, one of the victims of the coup bought the copyright to this song and banned it being played ever again:

*Treason has pervaded my heroic race
There is suffering and hatred in all hearts
My enemies are not valiant, they are cowards
A Turk may not have other friend and patron but another Turk
Let's rejoice at the principles our Father [Ataturk] gave us
Let's run towards the purposes he showed us
Turkey, Turkey, my paradise
My unequalled nation
My Father, leader of Turkishness and youth
This great fatherland is your achievement
We, the whole nation, are following in Your footsteps, enjoying the love
Live long Republic, our dearest Fatherland!*

Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmXjoZHEgvE>

http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/darbenin_sarkisina_en_agir_darbe-954104

Cold War ended, increased efforts to join the EEC were made and international economic co-operation was developing). The 1990s – as can be seen from the present perspective – marked the beginning of a long and convulsive end of the previously existing political and state order. As opposed to what happened in Central Europe, which enjoyed its regained sovereignty and made efforts to integrate with Western Europe, the 1990s was a lost decade for Turkey. The country was plunging into internal instability⁶ and political⁷ and financial crisis⁸. In effect, Turkey entered the new millennium with a pauperised society, a disgraced political class, a powerful army (but still degenerated due to its political engagement and the lack of supervision)⁹ and with an increasingly hollow republican state ideology.

The snap election held in 2002 was a turning point. The army did not conceal its ire when the election was won by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) which had been formed a year earlier and drew upon the tradition of political Islam. The voting

⁶ The intensified activity of the armed and terrorist Kurdish underground forces (PKK), the escalation of radical Islamic sentiments (e.g. the massacre of Alevi in Sivas in July 1993) and the still unresolved murders of public persons and terrorist attacks.

⁷ The prime minister changed eight times between 1989 and 2001 (without taking into account government reconstruction). In 1997, the army brought down the government for the fourth time in the Republic's history, this time without bringing tanks to the streets and without introducing a military regime, but instead with pressure from the republican establishment: the army, the senior state officials, the media and non-governmental organisations.

⁸ The financial crises in 1994, 1999, and the one which especially painfully affected the public – in 2001, “so-called” black Wednesday. Annual GDP fell by: 4.7%, 3.4% and 5.7% respectively (World Bank data). In 2001, over one million jobs were liquidated, wages were reduced by 20%, and the Turkish currency lost 40% of its value. In 1990–1999, the average annual inflation rate in Turkey was 78%. Cf. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2003/082903.htm>

⁹ For example, the ‘Susurluk incident’ in 1996, when a high-ranking police officer from Istanbul, a Kurdish MP and a contract killer linked to the radical right terrorist organisation known as the Grey Wolves were discovered to be travelling in one car when it crashed.

regulations then in force and the fragmentation of the political scene played into the AKP's hands. As much as 46% of the votes in the election were cast for parties which did not manage to reach the 10% electoral threshold. This meant that the AKP, with a 34% support level, gained 66% of the seats. None of the parties represented in the previous term entered parliament. This spelt the end of many groupings which had been dominant on the Turkish political scene for decades. Had the election threshold been 5% and not 10%, and had seven and not two parties entered parliament, Turkey's political contemporary history would undoubtedly have looked different.

II. THE AKP EPOCH – FROM DEMOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY

The Justice and Development Party has ruled Turkey by itself without interruption since its first electoral victory in 2002. As its monopoly on power has been strengthening throughout years, the AKP's policy has undergone major changes. Not only has its political zeal failed to slacken, it has in fact been steering the country into newer and ever more unknown waters. The changes have been made in Turkey under the AKP's rule and are momentous and to a great extent irreversible. The process of transformation process still seems far from over. For this reason, it is difficult to provide clear diagnoses and forecasts for Turkey's political reality.

To put it in simple terms, the first stage of the AKP's rule, which lasted around one decade, brought Turkey unprecedented reform in the spirit of EU standards, a rapid modernisation and growing prosperity. The AKP's achieved its ultimate victory in its rivalry with the army for influence in the state around 2012 and this made it possible for the first time in Turkey's history to establish civilian control over the armed forces¹⁰. This put an end to the primacy the Kemalist state-establishment and of the secular-nationalist ideology as regards political choices and the values shared by the Turkish public. In 2005, Ankara embarked upon accession negotiations with the EU. After a decade of the AKP's rule, the Republic of Turkey reached its historic peak in terms of prestige, position and influence.

¹⁰ This process was sealed by the amendment of article 35 of the internal regulations of the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri İç Hizmet Kanunu*) in July 2013, imposing on the army the obligation "to protect and defend the Turkish fatherland as defined by the constitution of the Republic of Turkey." This provision was recognised by the army as its formal title to become engaged in politics.

The second stage, especially following the anti-governmental street protests in 2013, has been characterised by a massive step backwards as regards the rule of law and democratic standards, and by consistent efforts to redefine the state identity as neo-imperial and conservative-Islamic. Turkey has made ever more frequent hints that in spite of its NATO membership it, like for example Russia, has a revisionist approach towards the present global order. Even though, pursuant to the constitution, Turkey is a parliamentary-cabinet democracy, since the presidential election in 2014, the state has been governed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has disregarded any restrictions imposed by the law and the political system, and has openly employed the state apparatus to combat his opponents. The political system being formed in Turkey can be branded – as one former AKP member has put it – an “authoritarian Islamist majoritarianism”¹¹. Everything seems to indicate that, under Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s rule (and there are no alternatives at present), Turkey will move increasingly further away from the West in terms of domestic and foreign policy.

It is impossible to find a clear answer to the question as to why the AKP has changed its policy and when this took place precisely. One theory is popular amongst the AKP’s critics; it suggests that the reforms conducted by the party from the very beginning were only instruments to be employed in the process of taking over power, abolishing the old order and turning Turkey back from its way Westwards. This, however, is a gross oversimplification. The present political vector is more an effect of a number of objective, situation-based and personal factors which together led the AKP to reveal the dark side of its potential (that, at least, would be the Western viewpoint). The scenario being implemented at present – even though it was possible to imagine in 2002 – was not the only possible one, nor was it inevitable.

¹¹ Cf. https://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/suat-kiniklioglu/gul-and-the-end-of-the-golden-era_356233.html

While looking for the sources of the AKP's present policy, one should bear in mind that:

- a) Since the beginning of the 21st century, the West's ability to impose its standards on the rest of the world has been steadily weakening as a consequence of a set of political, economic and technological factors.
- b) Turkey is a country with an imperial past, a large demographic and economic potential and a strategic geographical location. At the same time, its culture and history makes it distant from both Europe and the Arab Middle East. All this has as a natural consequence pushed Turkey to seek an identity of its own and a role as an independent entity in international relations.
- c) The attempt to totally reject the Ottoman legacy and replace it with a relatively shallow Kemalist ideology has resulted in an identity crisis in modern-day Turkey (which is masked by aggressive nationalist rhetoric). The end of the Cold War, which had defined Turkey's place for almost 40 years, and the burn-out of the state ideology required a new answer to the question concerning the state's identity, its attitude towards its own past and position in the world.
- d) When the AKP came to power, Kemalism was in fact an empty form. A set of emotions and mental stereotypes, and the cult of Atatürk was all that remained of it; and even then it was only as the father of the nation and a hero rather than the author of ideas which could be used as a signpost for the future. The defence of the previous ideological order by the secular part of society was to a great extent a manifestation of the defence of the group interest or fear that the religious right could take power.
- e) The 1980 coup and the years of the military regime inflicted deep trauma on Turkish society. While in the 1960s, and especially in the 1970s, the Turkish public was strongly engaged in

politics, the experience of political repressions after 1980 and the simultaneous development of consumption-oriented capitalism (being an effect of the liberal economic reforms carried out in the 1980s) made a great section of the Turkish public lose interest in any forms of political or public engagement¹². Furthermore, the turbulent 1990s and the high election threshold decimated the diversity on the Turkish party political scene in the election in 2002. In effect, the AKP has in fact had no political competitors until present, and the Turkish public is predominantly interested in issues concerning everyday life rather than political standards. As Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the main opposition grouping, the Republican People's Party (CHP), has admitted "democracy and the freedom of the media are issues for intellectualists and not ordinary citizens"¹³.

- f) The process of pro-European reforms and the liberalisation of the political system in the first decade of the AKP's rule were used as an instrument for gaining sovereign power in the state and enabling the expression of a religious-conservative identity. Since the goal to gain absolute power was achieved, the determination to continue political reform weakened. In turn, the fact that France and Germany blocked accession negotiations with the EU, the economic and political weakening of the European Union and Turkey's sensitivity to the use of double standards with regard to Muslims in socio-political life made the Turkish government strongly disillusioned with the idea of European integration.
- g) The first decade of the AKP's rule was a clear success in terms of internal affairs and economic and foreign policy. This offered

¹² Cf. http://www.academia.edu/3462506/Necessary_conformism_An_art_of_living_for_young_people_in_Turkey_NPT_

¹³ Cf. <http://www.taraf.com.tr/politika/kilicdaroglu-secimde-hedefimiz-yuzde-35/#>

the government growing public support and improved its international position. Furthermore, as a natural consequence, this made Ankara more assertive and it finally resisted the West's arrogation of the right to tell Turkey what it should and should not do.

- h) The special characteristics of the Turkish public – the cult of the leader and the patriarchal culture – have favoured strong, charismatic leaders at the expense of conciliatory politicians and has contributed to the government's authoritarian behaviour being accepted. Initially, Erdogan was only one of a triumvirate in the AKP. He was the most charismatic one, but he also was the least experienced in politics on the central level and had a clearly weaker personnel base than the more moderate Abdullah Gul (president in 2007–2014). At present, Erdogan has total dominance in the party and the state, and is viewed by a section of the public not as an elected politician but more as a national hero. As a result, support for him has some features of fanaticism.
- i) As the stimuli for the implementation of political reforms weakened, the West became less appealing and Erdogan's personal dominance strengthened, Turkish politics over the years became increasingly ideologised. Mustafa Akyol, a publicist initially supporting the AKP, has characterised this process as follows: “a rational and pragmatic paradigm blessed the AKP with great success, but that very success soon began to tempt Erdoğan and his close circle to believe they can simply imagine a new ideological world and turn it into reality”¹⁴. The neo-Ottoman concepts of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu have played a major role in this process. In his vision, Turkey will inevitably regain its role as a powerful state that will lead the Muslim world and will co-operate with the West on pragmatic

¹⁴ Cf. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogans-trouble-with-the-good-old-akp.aspx?PageID=238&NID=79139&NewsCatID=411>

terms. These concepts have brought historiosophic categories into the Turkish political mindset – objective historical laws, historical logic, etc. – at the expense of short-term pragmatic political calculation¹⁵.

- j) The breakout of the ‘Arab Spring’ shifted Ankara’s weight of attention to the Arab world, stirring up the hopes that the Turkish regional leadership promised by Davutoglu, which had previously been in the realm of cherished but not quite real desires, could finally be realised.
- k) Turkey’s domestic policy has always been determined to a great extent by the government’s relations with influential actors who remain outside political parties. The struggle with the army was the leitmotif of the first decade of the AKP’s rule. Since around 2012, the confrontation with the Fethullah Gulen Movement (once an ally of the AKP) has become the main point at issue in political life (cf. Appendix 1). It has become especially bitter since the movement made an attempt to overthrow the government in December 2013 (cf. Appendix 2).

In the struggle with the army the AKP was the underdog and the clash acted a catalyst to the launch of pro-European reforms. The desire to destroy the Gulen Movement, which is to a great extent a hidden enemy, has, however, provoked the government to regularly violate the standards of a democratic state governed by the rule of law. The measures employed included using the state apparatus for its own purposes, suppressing the freedom of speech, purges in the state apparatus, etc.

- l) All these factors have additionally been coupled with President Erdogan’s personal features: megalomania, authoritarian

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. the interview given by Ahmet Davutoglu as part of his manifesto for the pro-governmental newspaper *Yeni Safak* in March 2013: <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/yazidizileri/yuzyillik-parantezi-kapatacagiz-494795>

tendencies and (something he had previously restrained) resentment towards the Western civilisation linked to the forced Westernisation of Turkey in the 20th century and the persecution of Islam.

Whatever the sequence and the hierarchy of the factors listed above, taken together they have all resulted in Turkey leaving the path of development towards a pluralistic democracy and the rule of law under the AKP's government. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's policy has been laying waste to the previous achievements at an express rate, has contributed to the increase in internal tension, brought Turkey into the conflict in the Middle East, and has built an image of Turkey as an authoritarian, unpredictable and unreliable state. In effect, it did not take long before Turkey lost its prestige and become isolated in the international arena¹⁶. One clear example of this was its painful defeat in the race for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in October 2014. In the secret vote, Turkey lost to Spain, receiving only 60 out of 193 votes (Turkey was chosen in 2008 when it was backed by 151 nations).

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-international-isolation-erdogan.html>

III. ON THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) was formed in 2001 by splintering off from the ideological formation named Milli Gorus (National Vision), from which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, former president Abdullah Gul and deputy prime minister Bulent Arinc originate.

Milli Gorus was an Islamic, conservative, nationalist, anti-Western and “anti-Zionist” formation. All of its incarnations as political parties were banned on charges of acting against the secular nature of the state, and its short-lived rule (1996–1997) was ended by the army’s intervention.

The new party was formed in response to disillusionment with Milli Gorus’s dogmatism and the conviction that a formation openly questioning the ideological foundations of the state and in conflict with the army had no future. The AKP in contrast was designed as a party which could operate within the existing political system, aiming to change it from within. It relinquished the political Islam slogans and chose far-reaching pragmatism instead, and set the goal to enable the conservative-religious identity to be expressed through the liberalisation of the political system. This let it neutralise accusations of religious radicalism, to attract new circles to the AKP (for example, the Fethullah Gulen Movement), to expand its electorate, gain support from the West and, above all, to guarantee it immunity from the army.

In contrast to Milli Gorus, the AKP presented itself as a conservative-democratic grouping, which wanted EU membership and styled itself as a Muslim equivalent of Christian Democrats, which was a novelty on the Turkish political scene. The party’s manifesto, worded in the liberal-conservative idiom, envisaged Turkey opening up to the globalising world, without, however, neglecting to offer due respect to the traditional values and structures as guarantors of social unity. It emphasised the need

to make evolutionary changes and opposed social engineering. It mentioned guaranteeing respect of human rights, the freedom of speech, belief and religion and equality of citizens before the law amongst the tasks of the state. It appealed for a government model with limited power leaving citizens room for own initiatives and participation in decision-making processes. It opposed the bureaucracy usurping power. Last but not least, it promised to build an inclusive political nation, united through geography and the common “bittersweet memories”¹⁷.

By carrying out the reforms rapidly, the AKP earned a great degree of confidence from various circles – from religious conservatives to a section of the liberal intelligentsia. This happened regardless of the fact that the AKP had acted inconsistently on many occasions since taking power. Democratisation and state building were often given lower priority due to political logic¹⁸, European integration slogans were accompanied by outbursts of religious and conservative rhetoric and some controversial or even outright unlawful methods were employed in the struggle with the old establishment (cf. Appendix 3). The transformation of Islamists into democrats aroused distrust in many circles in Turkey and also suspicions that this was merely a smokescreen and a tool to take power and divert Turkey from its course towards the West.

Some of the steps which contributed to the democratisation, modernisation and economic development of the country in the first decade of the 21st century had been taken before the AKP took power. These included Kemal Derviş’s programme of financial

¹⁷ Cf. The AKP’s electoral manifesto from 2002, *Her şey Türkiye için*, p. 12. http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/eyayin/GAZETELER/WEB/KUTUPHANEDE%20BULUNAN%20DIJITAL%20KAYNAKLAR/KITAPLAR/SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI/200304063%20AK%20PARTI%20SECIM%20BEYANNAMEESI%202002/200304063%20AK%20PARTI%20SECIM%20BEYANNAMEESI%202002%200000_0000.pdf

¹⁸ Mainly the struggle with the army, Kurdish separatism and electoral rivalry.

and economic reforms (2001–2002), and the political reforms led to EU candidate status being granted to Turkey in 1999. But it was the continuity of government, the political stability (the parliamentary election in 2011 was the first non-snap election in 34 years) and the strong political will to pursue the reforms ensured by the AKP, that were decisive for country’s transformation.

The AKP made a significant legislative effort to bring Turkey closer to meeting the political criteria of EU membership in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. For example, six complex ‘harmonisation packages’ were adopted, a new criminal code came into force, and major constitutional amendments were made. Precedence over domestic legislation was also granted to the international treaties and conventions ratified by Turkey. In effect, accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU were officially initiated in October 2005.

The reforms were also continued in subsequent years, albeit at a slower rate. Amendments were made to the foundations act (thus improving the situation of the third sector and of national minorities) and the criminal code (for example, changing the wording of article 301, which penalised the “offence of Turkishness”). A package of constitutional amendments concerning the judiciary and the army was adopted in a referendum on 12 September 2010¹⁹. Five legislative packages were adopted between 2011 and 2014 bringing the Turkish judiciary system and criminal law closer to EU standards²⁰ and introducing stricter anti-corruption regulations. These included amendments to a number of repressive articles of the criminal code and the act on combating terrorism (*Terörle Mücadele Kanunu*).

¹⁹ For example, making it possible for military personnel to be tried by the civilian courts. Despite the obvious internal political context, which was additionally emphasised by the date of the referendum (the 20th anniversary of the coup of 1980), the EU saw them as a step in the right direction.

²⁰ Cf. <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/06122013161517.pdf>

In effect, the AKP established civilian control over the army, curbed the impunity of the state apparatus, and improved access to the administration of justice, public services and information. It also restrained corruption in the public sector and made the functioning of this sector more transparent. It took measures as part of the system to improve the protection of human rights, the rights of women²¹ and children, and to prevent torture, early school-leaving, sex discrimination and sexual abuse. It also made efforts to change the mentality and practices of the state apparatus (these included training for hundreds of thousands of police officers, gendarmes, judges, public prosecutors, prison personnel, welfare workers, etc.).

The AKP's rule has resulted in a kind of 'desacralisation' of the state, an appreciation of the Turkish public (who had previously been viewed by the elites as 'material to be civilised') and a strengthening of the sense of personal security as perceived by citizens. This has contributed, for example, to the rapid development of the non-governmental sector, first attempts to initiate public debate on the taboo issues, i.e. the Armenian Genocide in 1915, and rising confidence among Turkish citizens to sue their own state at the European Court of Human Rights (the number of claims brought against Turkey increased fourfold between 2005 and 2011).

After decades of nationalist indoctrination, the AKP's rhetoric brought to the Turkish political discourse a vision which had

²¹ Including the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the establishment of a parliamentary commission for the equal status of women and men, and introducing a life sentence for so-called 'honour killings', the recommendation to *Diyanet* (Office for Religion) not to admit religious weddings to couples whose marriage is not registered at a secular institution (to act against marriages with minors and polygamy), fostering women's activity on the labour market and offering equal opportunities to them in professional life, and actions aimed at a full school enrolment of girls at elementary and secondary school levels.

previously been formulated only by liberal intelligentsia circles – the vision of a democratic pluralist state where each individual's rights and cultural and religious identity are respected, and where the state is for citizens and not the other way around. The AKP as the governing party has made a number of unprecedented gestures with regard to ethnic and religious minorities: Greeks and Armenians, Alevi, Assyrians and Roma people, and above all with regard to Kurds (who form at least 15% of the country's population).

The policy of negating and repressing Kurdish identity which was pursued from the onset of the Republic provoked an outburst of the armed separatism in the east of the country in the 1980s. The effects of the civil war included a permanent militarisation of the south-eastern part of the country, regular violations of human rights and over 30,000 casualties²². Under the AKP's rule, the first attempt in the history of the Republic of Turkey was made to launch a political peace process aimed at causing the Kurdish guerrilla forces (PKK) to lay down their arms in exchange for greater autonomy offered to regions inhabited by Kurds (as part of the decentralisation of the country as a whole). The moves made as part of the concessions offered to the Kurdish population included the creation of a national TV channel which broadcast pro-

²² According to official data, in 1989–1999 (when the PKK's leader Abdullah Ocalan was arrested), 5,564 public sector workers and 4,727 civilians were killed 'on the Turkish side' in the fights with the PKK. The official statistics fail to include not only the victims on the PKK's side, who were predominantly Turkish citizens, but also the victims among the Kurdish population who faced repressions due to their real or alleged connections with the PKK. During the state of emergency which continued in south-eastern Turkey for more than 20 years (martial law in 1978–1987 and the state of emergency in 1987–2002), paramilitary militias (so-called 'village guards'), radical Islamic groupings (Hezbollah) and mafia structures were among the forces used to combat the Kurdish guerrillas and to force the civilian population to be loyal. Torture was used on a massive scale at penal institutions in south-eastern Turkey. 520 people went missing between 1991 and 1999. Cf. <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/26-yilin-kanli-bilancosu/guncel/gundemde-tay/24.06.2010/1254711/default.htm>; <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/52998-turkiyede-gozaltinda-kayiplar>; <http://www.ihddiyarbakir.org/map.aspx>

grammes in Kurdish, permission to establish Kurdish language and culture departments at three universities and to use Kurdish as the language of instruction at private schools, as well as to use Kurdish in political campaigning and also in courts and prisons.

As with other key issues, the AKP's policy with regard to Kurds has been inconsistent, and has included periodical returns to nationalist rhetoric and intensified repression. Its ultimate effect is less and less certain, especially given the increasingly authoritarian tendencies in Ankara's policy and the dynamics of changes in the Middle East. At the same time, the AKP was the first political force in the history of the Republic of Turkey to have a sufficient level of power, public support and will to start treating the Kurdish issue in political and not strictly military terms. This has changed the living conditions of millions of Turkish citizens.

Despite the AKP's achievements even after a decade of reforms the democratisation of Turkey remained far from completion. The new constitution has not been adopted (the one currently in force is a leftover of the coup in 1980), the articles of the criminal code which constrain the freedom of speech and the repressive act on combating terrorism have not been repealed, there is still no guarantee that state officials may face criminal liability for abuse of power, and the law enforcement agencies and central regulators can still be used by politicians for their own ends. Despite the profound changes, Turkey (both as a state and as a nation) remained under the influence of a culture permeated with authority, hierarchy, violence, impunity, the conservative-patriarchal spirit, corruption and nepotism. Therefore, when the AKP's policy line changed and the country started drifting towards authoritarianism, this process was not opposed, and in many ways moved along old tracks.

IV. THE TURKISH CIVILISATIONAL LEAP

The giant economic and civilisational leap seen in Turkey since 2002 has been the source of the high public approval ratings for the AKP (the number of votes cast for this party increased from 10 million in 2002 to 21 million in 2014).

Turkey is still a country of social contrasts on a scale unseen in the EU. Four Turkish universities are classified among the world's 200 best higher education facilities. At the same time, the number of illiterate adult citizens of Turkey exceeds 3 million²³. The difference in the average age of population in the east and the west of the country is 18 years²⁴. Marriages with minors²⁵, polygamy²⁶ and so-called honour killings – all phenomena traditionally associated with the less developed eastern part of the country – are in decline, but still remain a reality.

The scale of the changes which have taken place in Turkey since 2002 was aptly reflected in the AKP's electoral slogan in 2011 "*Hayaldi gerçek oldu*" ("What was a dream has become reality"). Although Turkey's population has grown by almost 7 million²⁷, prosperity has increased and has become more widespread, the availability and quality of healthcare has improved rapidly, education has become more accessible to the general public, transport

²³ Cf. <http://www.konda.com.tr/tr/verican.php>, computer graphics titled *2,6 milyon yetişkin kadın okuryazar değil*

²⁴ The average age of a resident of Sirnak province bordering on Iraq is slightly above 18 years, and in Canakkale province in western Turkey is 37 years. Cf. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/en_genc_sirnak_en_yasli_canakkale-1077629

²⁵ For example, the former president Abdullah Gul married his wife, Hayrunisa in 1980 three days after she had officially turned 15 (however, it is possible that her family did not register her birth immediately).

²⁶ Cf. <http://www.haber7.com/neler-oluyor-hayatta/haber/994254-iste-turkiyede-kumanin-en-cok-oldugu-koy>

²⁷ From 69.87 million in 2002 to 76.67 million in 2013. Data from the Turkish Statistical Office (TÜİK).

infrastructure has been developed, and IT has been more easily accessible under the AKP's rule.

Turkey's GDP *per capita* (PPP) rose from US\$10,000 in 2002 to almost US\$19,000 in 2013 (data from the IMF). The percentage of households qualified as the middle class increased from 18% in 1993 to 41% in 2010²⁸. The percentage of people living below the poverty line in the first decade of the 21st century fell from around 16% to 5% of the population²⁹. Goods and services have become more easily accessible; for example, the annual number of domestic flight passengers rose from around 9 million in 2002 to 76 million in 2013³⁰.

Budget expenditure on welfare and healthcare has been growing. In 2002, the value of benefits was equivalent to 0.5% of GDP, and in 2013 this rate rose to 1.5% of GDP³¹. 8 million people are subsidised by the state to pay for their health insurance. The mortality rate of children under 5 fell from 32 per 1,000 children in 2002 to 14 in 2013. The statistical life expectancy has risen 5 years since the beginning of the 20th century, and is now 75.

There has been a rapid development in infrastructure: airports, motorways, high-speed railways and hospitals. In Istanbul, a railway tunnel running under the Bosphorus has been built, and a third bridge across the strait and the third airport are under construction. The urbanisation of the country has gained

²⁸ The middle class as defined according to the World Bank's criteria, i.e. a minimum of US\$10 (PPP) daily per person. Data from the World Bank's report *Turkey's Transitions. Integration. Inclusion. Institutions*, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/12/04/000470435_20141204124514/Rendered/PDF/905090v20ESWowoipofinaloprintonov29.pdf

²⁹ Data as in *op. cit.*, p. 44.

³⁰ Data as in: <http://www.dhmi.gov.tr/istatistik.aspx>

³¹ Data as in: <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/106-welfare-policies-are-the-key-to-the-akp%E2%80%99s-electoral-successes.html>

momentum. The urban population has increased from 43 million to 55 million, i.e. from 66% to 73% of the total population (World Bank's data). Rapid development has been seen not only in the three big metropolises, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, but also in the cities in central and eastern Turkey, the so-called Anatolian Tigers, including: Denizli, Kayseri, Konya, Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş.

Over 50 state universities and over 40 private universities were established between 2006 and 2014³². The number of Internet users increased from 11 per 100 in 2002 to 46 per 100 in 2013. Even though the knowledge of foreign languages is still not something the Turkish public can be especially proud about, Turkey is among the fastest improvers in this regard and international rankings currently rate Turkey more or less on the same level as France and Italy³³. Thus the period of the AKP's rule has brought about a rapid modernisation in financial and social terms. The living standards of most citizens have improved, and promotion to the middle class and consumer goods have become much more accessible. The AKP's rule has also offered the Turkish public significantly higher standards as regards infrastructure and the quality of public services.

The driving force behind the Turkish 'economic miracle' was the unprecedented construction and consumption boom (consumption accounts for 70% of Turkey's GDP), financed largely by loans. This was possible because the monetary and credit policies had been eased worldwide on a scale unseen before. However, one consequence of this is the rapid increase in company and household debt. Turkey has a population of 74 million, and the number of credit cards issued there is 57 million³⁴ and the aggregate debt

³² Cf. http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BCrkiye%27deki_%C3%BCniversite_ler_listesi

³³ Cf. <http://www.ef.com/~/media/efcom/epi/2014/full-reports/ef-epi-2013-report-master.pdf>

³⁴ Cf. http://www.bkm.com.tr/istatistik/pos_atm_kart_sayisi.asp

on these cards is worth around US\$45 billion, approximately 30% of which are outstanding debts. The indebtedness of households as compared to their incomes rose from around 5% in 2002 to 50% in 2012. In effect, the scale of indebtedness of individuals and companies is becoming an increasing problem for Turkey, and many economists warn that the Turkish prosperity seen at the beginning of the 21st century may turn into a painful slump³⁵.

³⁵ Cf. e.g. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jessecolombo/2014/03/05/why-the-worst-is-still-ahead-for-turkeys-bubble-economy/>

V. ON THE ROAD TO AUTOCRACY

A run of electoral successes and victories in confrontations with the establishment³⁶ gradually strengthened the AKP, weakened its determination to carry out reforms and encouraged it to employ conservative and religious rhetoric. 2013 marked a turning point. The street demonstrations initiated by the protests against the liquidation of Gezi Park in Istanbul³⁷ (which Prime Minister Erdogan saw as an attempt to overthrow the government) and the corruption scandal in December (cf. Appendix 2) served as a catalyst for Erdogan's building of his personal power, for the rapid deterioration of legal and democratic standards and the marginalisation of moderate politicians in the AKP.

Erdogan became president after his victory in the election in August 2014. Even though in the Turkish political system this is a non-partisan and to a great extent a ceremonial position, Erdogan has remained the unquestioned party and government leader. He is the one who makes the key political and staffing decisions, he often chairs government meetings and holds top-level international talks. At the same time, the prestige of this office allows him avoid political responsibility and criticism. The monumental presidential palace (*Ak Saray*), which cost US\$615 million and has 1,150 rooms, is an external symbol of Erdogan's position in Turkey.

President Erdogan's dominance, which openly violates the Turkish constitutional order, is possible because of the high level of

³⁶ The crisis linked to the election of Abdullah Gul as president in 2007, the unsuccessful attempt at banning the AKP in 2008, the constitutional referendum in 2010, and the dismissals of the head of the general staff and three types of armed forces in 2011.

³⁷ The public protests which began on 28 May 2013, initially only on a small scale in Istanbul in defence of Gezi Park which was about to be liquidated later turned into mass demonstrations in all major urban centres against the brutality of the police and the government's arrogance. Eleven people were killed in the protests.

public support, the nomination for prime minister of Ahmet Davutoglu, who is loyal to Erdogan, and the scale of the president's influence in the government party, the state apparatus, business, and the media. Erdogan wants to strengthen and legally sanction his monocracy through the introduction of the presidential political system in Turkey following the parliamentary election in 2015. However, the AKP may be unable to gain a constitutional majority.

Erdogan's autocratic system is based on personal loyalty. He has been removing the AKP's experienced and moderate politicians from the decision-making process, replacing them with new people who are completely dependent upon him. This process will be crowned with the parliamentary election in June this year. Given the internal party regulations which were adopted in the early days of the AKP and are at this moment very convenient to Erdogan³⁸, over 70 of the AKP's most experienced politicians will be eliminated from politics, including the incumbent parliamentary speaker, two deputy prime ministers and a few members of the cabinet. The loyalty priority is causing an expansion of personal clientelist networks from the top government levels to the local level, and an increase in corruption (Transparency International moved Turkey five positions lower in 2014 than in 2013)³⁹.

The civilian secret service (*Milli Istihbarat Teşkilati*, MIT), which Erdogan dubbed "the most important state institution"⁴⁰ is an important element of Erdogan's government system. The head of MIT, Hakan Fidan, from the moment of his nomination in 2010 was reputed to be Erdogan's closest aide (Erdogan branded him as his "mystery box") or even 'person number two in the state',

³⁸ A cap of three consecutive terms for: membership in parliament and holding political party and government positions.

³⁹ Cf. e.g. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5sZp_tEVTc

⁴⁰ Cf. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28355030.asp>

who has been put in charge of the most critical issues, such as the Kurdish peace process and the support for the Syrian armed opposition⁴¹. A crisis in relations between the head of MIT and the president was observed at the beginning of 2015, when Hakan Fidan handed in his resignation and stated he would take part in the parliamentary election as an AKP candidate⁴². Erdogan criticised Fidan's decision on several occasions, and then forced him to withdraw from participation in the election and return to his previous position. These incidents will certainly have an impact on the personal relations between the president and Fidan. However, the role of the secret services will not be reduced. One proof of this is the fact that a separate building allocated to MIT will be built as part of the presidential complex.

The methods employed by Erdogan to consolidate public support and his own political camp include the use of the narrative 'with or against us', stigmatising his critics and pointing to new internal and external enemies who are allegedly sabotaging Turkey's successes. The logic of closing ranks and protecting group interests at any price has additionally been reinforced through the confrontation with the Gulen Movement ongoing since December 2013⁴³. The polarising rhetoric finds fertile ground amongst the Turkish public, who indulge in conspiracy theories. This results in rising social tension and the radicalisation of political views. One effect of the escalating atmosphere of internal conflict is the increasing presence of political violence. Examples of such incidents include

⁴¹ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303643304579107373585228330>

⁴² He was probably persuaded to do this by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, who wanted to use this as a way of ensuring his government a stronger position in dealings with the president after the election.

⁴³ One example of this was the pardoning (under government pressure and despite hard evidence) of four former ministers involved in corruption scandals which were revealed as a consequence of the wave of arrests in December 2013. Cf. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/parliament-acquits-four-ex-ministers-on-corruption-but-vote-stirs-ruling-akp.aspx?PageID=238&NID=77188&NewsCatID=338>

recurring fights at university campuses between supporters of radical political groupings, mainly Kurds and Turkish nationalists, some of which resulted in deaths⁴⁴, or the radical left's terrorist attack on the prosecutor's office in Istanbul in March 2015⁴⁵. This could potentially pose the risk of a return of the political violence on the streets which was characteristic of Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s.

Restricting the freedom of speech and the use of the state apparatus to spy on and fight his political opponents are inherent in the process of building Recep Tayyip Erdogan's personal power. Each case of criticism (expressed in the media, on the Internet, at a university, etc.), any sign of protest or any other form of opposition activity can be termed slander or another kind of illicit behaviour, and meet with a reaction from the prosecution authorities or, for example, be punished by the loss of a job. For instance, the doctors who offered medical aid in a mosque to injured demonstrators during the protests in summer 2013 faced charges of contaminating a sacred place and aiding criminals. Erdogan and other members of the government elite (for example, the mayor of Ankara, Melih Gokcek) sue their critics for libel on a regular basis, and usually win in court⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/new-turkey-nationalists.html> and <http://t24.com.tr/haber/universitede-kavga-hazirli-gi-emanetleri-getirin-orgutculer-halay-cekeceklermis,289417>

⁴⁵ Cf. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/17/opinion/mustafa-akyol-paranoia-and-polarization-in-turkey.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0

⁴⁶ At the end of February 2015, the number of individuals who measures were taken against in connection with the alleged slander of the president reached 67 (summons to give statements, investigation, arrest, indictment, fine imposed, etc.). The legal grounds for these measures are provided by article 299 of the Turkish criminal code, which defines the crime of "offence of Turkishness, the Republic, state authorities or institutions." These measures have been taken for example in response to putting up posters, chanting political slogans, posting on social networking services or being the author of press or TV publications. Cf. <http://www.diken.com.tr/her-gun-yeni-bir-sorusturma-erdogana-hakaretle-suclananlarin-sayisi-67yi-buldu/>; <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-ubIq-BchOd-F4LqQW3LEDGg16MeormYjO58DnO9ejwE/edit?pli=1#gid=256169234>

Access to around 70,000 Internet URL addresses is permanently restricted in Turkey following court verdicts (over 16,000 addresses were restricted in 2014 alone)⁴⁷. Restrictions on access to social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., are imposed frequently. The Turkish government is also the global leader on the number of requests to remove inconvenient content sent to social networking services⁴⁸. The government wants to be able to restrict access to any website using administrative procedures and to force Internet providers to archive data concerning users' activity and to reveal these data to state authorities⁴⁹.

Although the private media market is very well developed in Turkey (hundreds of newspapers, dozens of TV channels, including more than ten news channels), Freedom House Foundation has classified this country as 'not free' in terms of freedom of the press. The greater part of large media outlets form elements of multi-sectoral business conglomerates which are extremely susceptible to political pressure due to access to lucrative state orders they are offered. The newspapers with a clear pro-government bias account for around 40% of the press⁵⁰, and a significant section of the other media outlets apply self-censorship at the editorial staff level and dismiss journalists who criticise the government. In effect, fear and self-censorship is becoming widespread among journalists themselves⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Cf. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=79262&NewsCatID=339> and <http://www.diken.com.tr/bir-yilda-tam-3-bin-94-mahkeme-karariyla-16-bin-600-adres-hakkinda-islem-yapildi/>

⁴⁸ Between July and December 2014, 60% of requests of this kind sent to Twitter originated from Turkey. Cf. <http://www.statista.com/chart/3217/twitter-content-removal-requests/>

⁴⁹ The acts regulating this issue were repealed by the Constitutional court. Another attempt may be expected in February 2015, when the president of the court changes.

⁵⁰ Cf. <http://econoscale.com/2014/02/15/erdogans-rise-to-power-through-the-media/>

⁵¹ Cf. the comprehensive report on the Turkish media written by the experienced journalist Yavuz Baydar: <http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Turkish-Journalism-Yavuz-Baydar.pdf>

Almost all news channels broadcast each public speech of the president *in extenso* (they are sometimes broadcast on more than ten TV channels simultaneously). The scale of government pressure on the media was evident for example at the time of the protests in 2013, when foreign TV channels gave incomparably more publicity and in a shorter time than the Turkish ones. The recordings of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's telephone calls which were leaked to the Internet revealed that he had personally instructed media editors what kind of opinions they should publish to meet the government's expectations. The fact that on numerous occasions the outlets sympathetic with the AKP have published almost identically sounding pro-government headlines or articles gives grounds for the suspicion that the government provides instructions for the media in a regular and organised manner⁵². Furthermore, between 2010 and 2014, the Turkish courts imposed around 150 bans on circulating information concerning important issues (state security being the usual reason given)⁵³. In the global press freedom ranking published by Reporters Without Borders, Turkey fell from the 98th position (in 2005) to 154th (in 2014)⁵⁴.

Since the mass protests in summer 2013 (over 8,000 people injured, 7,700 suffered respiratory problems connected to the use of pepper spray and 11 died), the government has responded with

⁵² On 5 March 2015, columns with the same title were published by thirteen authors in five pro-governmental daily newspapers.

Cf. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/13_kose_yazarindan_ayni_baslik_diliniz_kaba_vicdaniniz_tas-1306617 and <http://www.diken.com.tr/kabatas-korosuna-yanit-sosyal-medyadan-diliniz-yalan-vicdaniniz-kara/>

⁵³ These include the eavesdropping devices found at the prime minister's office, the bombardment of the civilian population by the Turkish air forces in Uludere in December 2011, the terrorist attacks in Reyhanli in 2013, the anti-corruption operation in December 2013, the fact that the military police stopped a convoy of trucks heading to Syria sent by the Turkish intelligence agency in January 2014, and the leaks from the secret meeting at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning Syria in March 2014.

⁵⁴ This ranking is not absolutely dependable (for example, there is some doubt as to whether the press really has more freedom in Russia and Tajikistan than in Turkey), however it correctly illustrates the scale of regress seen in Turkey.

violence to any attempts to hold street protests. More than 1,500 people were beaten or injured and over 11,000 were arrested in 2014 as a consequence of police suppression of protests and demonstrations⁵⁵. The police used pepper spray on 224 occasions to suppress demonstrations. Eight people were killed and over 400 injured due to pepper spray or by being hit with a tear gas canister⁵⁶. The governmental public security package of laws officially named as ‘The Package for the Protection of Freedom’ adopted in March 2015 has given the police more extensive powers to use firearms, detain and search people and property, and tap telephones (for up to 48 hours without a court decision)⁵⁷.

One effect of the increasingly repressive and polarising government style in Turkey is the re-emergence of the fear to openly express one’s views, of self-censorship and discouragement from being engaged in socio-political activity. In civilisational terms, this moves Turkey away from the Western world and has a toxic effect on the atmosphere in public life. However, a person with ‘unorthodox views’ is still not at risk of being kidnapped or treacherously murdered by chronically ‘unidentified perpetrators’, and opposition parties and non-governmental organisations have not been banned as yet, which makes present-day Turkey distinct from the Kemalist state.

⁵⁵ These data have been taken from the annual report of the Human Rights Association (Insan Haklari Dernegi, IHD). IHD, which was founded in 1986, is an organisation historically linked to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. It is especially interested in monitoring cases of human rights violation in south-eastern Turkey. In effect, a significant part of the incidents registered by this association and taken into account in the report have been placed in the context of the Turkish state’s struggle with the Kurdish underground (PKK) ongoing since the 1980s, and due to this it is more difficult to evaluate them only in terms of whether they meet the legal and democratic standards of the Turkish state authorities. Nevertheless, IHD’s detailed reports are a reliable source of knowledge on the status of human rights in Turkey. Cf. <http://ihd.org.tr/images/2015/son-hd-2014-raporu.pdf>, pages 13-14 and 119-162.

⁵⁶ Cf. <http://www.diken.com.tr/emniyetin-biber-gazi-masallari-insan-sagli-gina-zararsiz-2014te-hayatini-kaybeden-kimse-yok/>

⁵⁷ Cf. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/explained-turkeys-controversial-security-bill.aspx?pageID=238>

VI. TURKEY'S CIVILISATIONAL IDENTITY UNDER AKP RULE

The identity of the Republic of Turkey, pursuant to the state's manifesto, was built on opposition towards the Ottoman Empire, negating the civilisational links with the Middle East and rejecting the history before 1919. An antagonistic separation of the state and religion, reminiscent of the French *laïcité*, was introduced. Islam became supervised by the state (a Presidency of Religious Affairs, *Diyanet*, was established in 1924) and pushed to the private sphere.

The Turkish state's policy on religion underwent fluctuations throughout the 20th century; for instance, it was less strict in the periods when the army viewed an upsurge in leftist sentiments as the main threat to the state. For similar reasons, the state establishment would admit – albeit selectively and sporadically – some references to the Ottoman past (for example, in 1986, the Bosphorus Bridge was named after Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror, and a banknote with his portrait was issued⁵⁸). However, when the Cold War was over and the Communist threat ceased to exist, the 'religious reactionaries' (*irtica*) were defined by the army as the main threat to the state's ideological foundations; and this entailed intensified persecutions of religious Muslims.

In the 1990s, Muslim women wearing the veil were denied access to universities, legal measures were taken against Muslim fraternities, and participation in religious practices could be a sufficient reason to be dismissed from a job in the state administration. A female MP who came to the parliament's opening session wearing a headscarf was deprived of her parliamentary seat and Turkish citizenship. Conservative-religious parties were banned.

⁵⁸ A 1,000 lira banknote which was in circulation in 1986–1992. This banknote was the only one in the history of the Republic of Turkey to display an image of a ruler from the Ottoman dynasty.

When the AKP came to power, the process of revising the state's approach towards history and religion began. As the AKP gained in strength, it more and more openly challenged the ideological principles of Kemalism and took on the task of returning dignity to the religious majority among the Turkish public, of reconstructing the civilisational bonds with the Middle East and restoring, what it saw as Turkey's rightful position as an empire.

One symbolic change in the state's attitude towards religion was the gradual lifting of the restrictions on wearing headscarves by female state administration workers, university students and secondary school pupils. In the area of education, graduates of *imam-hatip* (secondary schools whose curriculum includes the doctrine and history of Sunni Islam and the Arabic language) were allowed to be admitted to universities, and their number has radically increased (by 73% between 2010 and 2014 alone)⁵⁹. An education reform was introduced allowing students to be transferred to *imam-hatip* schools after four years of education (and not eight as had previously been the case). Age restrictions for Koranic course participants were lifted. The president has also promised that compulsory Ottoman Turkish language lessons will be introduced into school curricula⁶⁰.

Diyanet, which was initially created as the state's tool to control religion, under the AKP's rule has been used to promote and advance religion using public money. Between 2002 and 2013, *Diyanet's* personnel (including imams) grew from 74,000 to 129,000, and the number of mosques it sponsors increased from 75,000 to 84,700. In 2014, *Diyanet's* budget was worth US\$2.6 billion or the equivalent of 160% of the budget of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 180% of the Healthcare Ministry's budget and 340% of the

⁵⁹ Cf. <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/340-looking-strong-but-fragile-a-new-akp-and-a-%E2%80%9Cnew-turkey%E2%80%9D.html>

⁶⁰ Cf. footnote 2.

budget of the Ministry for the Economy⁶¹. These moves have provoked allegations that the AKP is building a missionary state.

Another symbolic move is returning the original function to Byzantine churches which had functioned as mosques in the Ottoman era and had the status of museums in republican times). This has happened to Hagia Sophia churches in Iznik/Nicaea (2011) and Trabzon/Trebizond (2013). Similar speculations crop up on a regular basis regarding the Hagia Sophia basilica in Istanbul.

Only some of the actions taken by the government to promote conservative values, including Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's wrathful tirades on moral issues⁶², have translated into real changes of legislation, but they have significantly affected the atmosphere of public life in Turkey. For example, the president has openly appealed to the public to strengthen so-called 'neighbours' pressure' (*mahalle baskısı*) on people drinking alcohol⁶³.

As regards the state identity, the Ottoman Empire has not only been rehabilitated under the AKP's rule (which seems to be a natural move after decades of ideologically motivated negation), the state leaders are even keen to present modern Turkey as predestined to play the role of a neo-Ottoman power that will lead Muslims from across the globe and protect their rights. Hence its standing up for the rights of Muslims in Myanmar, monitoring the respect of Muslims' rights in the EU, etc. In practice, Turkey's aspirations to be granted this status are based on feeble grounds, and Ankara's policy towards the Middle East antagonises rather than garners support for it in the region (regardless of the great

⁶¹ Cf. <http://t24.com.tr/haber/5-bin-imam-ogretmen-oldu,244880>, <http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/2014-yili-butcesinin-ayrintilari-belli-oldu/Blog/?BlogNo=440307>

⁶² For example, condemning abortion, Caesarean sections, immorality in TV shows, coeducational dormitories, drinking alcohol and smoking, and propagating that each family should have at least three children, etc.

⁶³ Cf. http://www.todayszaman.com//anasayfa_erdogan-calls-for-neighborhood-pressure-against-smokers-alcohol-drinkers_374344.html

degree of enthusiasm for Turkey in the Arab world seen in the first phase of the Arab Spring resulting from Ankara's strong support for the changes).

As regards history, the AKP has made a synthesis of the republican, Ottoman-Islamic and pan-Turkic threads, presenting them in imperial terms. In its vision for Turkey's future power, the governing camp uses dates as landmarks: 2023 (the 100th anniversary of the republic), 2053 (the 600th anniversary of the conquest of Constantinople) and 2071 (the 1000th anniversary of the Battle of Manzikert⁶⁴). Soldiers wearing costumes from the 16 historic 'Turkish' empires, including the Hun, Avar, Khazar, Uyghur, Seljuq, Tatar, Timurid, Great Mughal and Ottoman empires are part of the ceremonial setting in the Ak Saray presidential complex.

At the same time, regardless of the great changes in the state's attitude towards religion and history, the AKP has never suggested that the republic should be abolished or that a legal order based on Islamic principles should be introduced. In the opinion of Serif Mardin, a highly respected Turkish sociologist, this is linked to the 'Turkish uniqueness' as compared to the Muslim world – the attachment to the ideas of the state. In effect, even in the case of politicians who have a religious view of the world, the "state is one millimetre ahead of religion" – it is a constant reality which determines the framework of action⁶⁵. The AKP leaders' ambivalent attitude to the state set up by Ataturk is presumably also an effect of the strong nationalism characteristic of the greater part of the Turkish public and of the fact that they owe their position to the social advancement which was possible because of the republic's egalitarian education policy.

⁶⁴ This battle was fought in 1071 in what is now eastern Turkey (near Mus) between the armies of the Byzantine Empire and the Great Seljuq Empire. The Seljuq side won, and the Byzantine Emperor Romanos Diogenes was in captivity for a short time. In the longer perspective, the victory of Manzikert opened up the way to Anatolia for Seljuq Turks.

⁶⁵ Cf. <http://www.aawsat.net/2007/12/article55260541>

VII. THE TURKISH PUBLIC UNDER AKP RULE

The first period of the AKP's rule gave Turkey 10 years of social peace, political stability, improving living conditions, stronger democracy, and the rule of law. This definitely made higher civilisational and political standards entrenched among the Turkish public.

The removal of the Kemalist ideological muzzle has made it possible to express identities and views which had earlier been persecuted. The AKP's relatively liberal rule in both political and economic terms has offered various social groups (conservative, liberal, left-wing, Kurdish, etc.) the opportunity to develop in accordance with their own needs and values. This accelerated internal differentiation among the Turkish public, which is a natural process in a democracy. Non-governmental organisations representing the whole spectrum of views have developed rapidly. A strong conservative-religious middle class has emerged which is both keen to use the conveniences offered by modern technological solutions and proud of its identity and live in accordance with their values. At the same time, Western liberal values have permeated Turkey more strongly than ever before.

The removal of the common denominator in the form of the Kemalist ideology has made the Turkish public more free and diversified, but also less united and more susceptible to political polarisation, in particular as regards social values. The non-competitive Turkish political scene and the serious restrictions on public debate have brought about a situation where there is no indicator that could reveal the Turkish public's preferences as regards politics and their general outlook on the world. Everyday experience and conclusions from sociological studies provide good grounds both for the statement that Turks are becoming increasingly conservative and something quite the reverse. For example, the Turkish public opinion researcher Volkan Ertit claims that even though under the state has lost its secular nature under the AKP's

rule, and external manifestations of attachment to Islam have become more commonplace, in fact the Turkish public are becoming more and more secular in terms of their values and lifestyle. This is an effect of the new communication technologies, capitalism and a rapid urbanisation⁶⁶.

The AKP's retreat from the liberal-democratic path, followed by a sudden regress, and the policy of deliberate polarisation have made public sentiment very unstable and has divided the public. Furthermore, the culture of authority, hierarchy and violence, which had seemingly been gradually ebbing since the beginning of the 21st century, has regained its strength. Although this is impossible, given the size and the diversification of Turkey's population, the government is aiming to ideologically consolidate the Turkish public again using conservative and religious slogans.

Civil society's attempt to oppose these processes, the most vivid example of which were the protests against the liquidation of Gezi Park (if one disregards the peripheral purely hooligan element) was brutally pacified. In effect, people became discouraged from any engagement in public activity and focused on their private lives instead. The Kurdish minority who, as it seemed when peace negotiations with the PKK began in March 2013 were offered the chance to find their place in the newly defined Turkish state, at present appears to be gradually detaching itself from Turkey. Turkey's political evolution, despite the still high support for the AKP, is leading to a constant deterioration of public sentiment across Turkey⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brQcfxHsg6I> and <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/turkey-military-polarization.html>

⁶⁷ Data from the Metropoll opinion research centre suggest that in April 2014, 45% of respondents believed that Turkey was generally heading in the right direction, while 39.6% were of the opposite opinion. In January 2015, 51.5% of respondents saw this direction as wrong and 36.2% as right. Cf. <https://twitter.com/metropoll/status/561184853790830592/photo/1>. The swing in late 2013/early 2014 was linked to the anti-governmental anti-corruption operation conducted in December 2013.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

The AKP's rule has changed Turkey in a strong and irreversible way. However, it is still difficult to predict how the situation will develop further, since 90 years on from the founding of the republic, Turkey in many respects still appears to be an unfinished experiment. As a consequence of the AKP's reforms, the republic which existed from 1923 – a state based on secular government elites and Kemalist doctrine, turning its back on the Middle East and politically incompatible with the West – no longer exists. At the same time, the achievements in building a democratic state governed by the rule of law have to a great extent been wasted. The present governance structure does not comply with the constitution, and the tripartite division of power increasingly appears to be a fiction. The present Turkish state and political system are in fact based on the will of a single man whose power is certainly not unlimited but still strong enough not to meet with open resistance. As the president openly expresses his political and ideological preferences, both state authorities and often even ordinary citizens are very eager to track, stigmatise and punish behaviours and statements which fail to comply with the conservative canon of values or the government's political interest.

It seems very unlikely that the negative trend as regards democratisation and the rule of law will be reversed or even slow down under Erdogan's rule, considering his character, the scale of abuse already committed and the logic of consolidation of power. However, Erdogan's ambitions as regards the introduction of the presidential system in Turkey may be blocked because the AKP may be unable to gain a constitutional majority, and because of the mounting problems the Turkish government needs to face: economic, social and international. A 'palace coup', i.e. the removal of Erdogan from power in case he becomes too great a burden for the country, at present seems very unlikely, but cannot be ruled out.

The parliamentary election scheduled for June 2015 poses a potential threat to the AKP's monopoly on power. The AKP is doubtlessly bound to garner the strongest support during the election. However, the results achieved by the other parties, above all the Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), will be of key significance. If this grouping succeeds in crossing the 10 per cent electoral threshold and enters parliament as the fourth political force, the government party will not only fall short of a constitutional majority—it might not even have an ordinary parliamentary majority⁶⁸; and this would place the AKP in a new situation – the need to form a coalition after 13 years of ruling the country alone.

At the same time, more and more facts indicate that Turkey is heading towards a turning point. The country is achieving ever fewer successes at home and on the international arena. The government's policy is focused on protecting its power and fighting real and imagined enemies. This is accompanied by an increasingly hysterical and manipulative propaganda which has grabbed the greater part of the media space. Social sentiment is deteriorating, and a polarisation of views is escalating. Turkey's geographic proximity and involvement in the Syrian conflict poses the threat that instability could spill into Turkey's territory (the Kurdish population's riots, the increasing presence of Islamic extremists and problems with refugees). Furthermore, speculations that Erdogan is seriously ill (cancer) have been repeated on a regular basis.

The sentiments among the Turkish public and the condition of the economy will decide on the future of the country. The reasons why the AKP has won and will win elections in the foreseeable future include the improvement of Turks' living standards since 2002, the lack of a political alternative, and the strength of the party's hard-line conservative electorate. However, economic turbulence or a crisis might upset the AKP's monopoly on ruling the country.

⁶⁸ Cf. a simulation carried out by the Turkish opinion research centre Metro-poll: <https://twitter.com/nblaser18/status/57500041833506432/photo/1>

Meanwhile, it is impossible to predict what condition the Turkish public will be in and what their sentiments and the trend in possible political choices will be like when faced with an economic and political crisis. What is certain is that the present model of a state governed by a single political force will have a long-lasting impact on Turkey, even should the government change.

MAREK MATUSIAK

APPENDIX

1. The Fethullah Gulen Movement (Cemaat)

A religious, social and political movement dating back to the 1970s, focused around the Muslim leader Fethullah Gulen (b. 1941), who has been resident in the USA since 1999.

Officially, this movement has no organisational structures and is an informal association of individuals and institutions following Gulen himself and his teachings. In practice, this is a network of thousands of organisations, institutions and companies scattered all over the world but acting in a coordinated way. Many members of this movement keep their involvement with it secret.

This movement has strong influence in all spheres of public life in Turkey. For example it has been building influence in the police, the public prosecution authorities and the judiciary since at least the 1990s⁶⁹ (to a great extent through consistent and undercover infiltration). Schools, universities, the media (including Turkey's most popular *Zaman* newspaper and the English language newspaper *Today's Zaman*), banks, companies, charities, non-governmental organisations, etc. are linked to the Gulen Movement.

Education is one of the movement's pillars outside Turkey. It runs over one hundred schools and institutes of higher education worldwide, including in Europe, Central Asia, South-Eastern Asia, Africa and also in the USA. These are usually secular schools offering high-quality education in English.

In his official teachings, Gulen emphasises the need to combine faith with modern science, democracy and the free market, and the importance of dialogue between different religions and cultures. In practice, the movement is known for promoting

⁶⁹ Cf. https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/o9ANKARA1722_a.html

conservative Muslim values among the people within its orbit (especially school children). As a socio-political circle, the Gulen Movement has for years made ruthless efforts to maximise its influence in Turkey, employing such methods as surveillance, intimidations, arrests and judicial abuse (owing to its influence in the state apparatus).

The Gulen Movement formed an alliance with the AKP in 2001. The government party and Prime Minister Erdogan himself brought a strong political mandate to this alliance, while the Gulen Movement brought its staff (state administration workers who were its secret members) as well as institutional, media and financial support. Despite the historic (the AKP leaders originate from a different political and religious tradition than Gulen) and political differences (for example, the movement is more moderate in criticising Israel), these two circles had the common goal to disassemble the old state establishment.

The movement and the public prosecutors and police officers linked to it, vested with special powers by the government, were the driving force and the executors of the Balyoz and Ergenekon mass trials (see below) which definitively put the final seal on the end of the army's privileged position in the Turkish political system. As regards this issue, the movement remained outside the AKP's effective control, set the tempo and the scale of the process of calling the military officers to account, and often surprised Prime Minister Erdogan himself with its moves (for example, the arrest of the former head of the general staff, Ilker Basbug in 2012).

In exchange for the services offered to the AKP government, *Cemaat* gained space for further expansion: in the education system, in the state apparatus, etc. This movement's activity outside Turkey - education and promotion of Turkish language teaching (including Turkish language competitions held on a grand scale) - fitted in with the building of Turkey's international prestige under the AKP's rule.

The army was gradually but nevertheless consistently being subordinated to the civilian government, and as such the government no longer viewed it as a political threat. In turn, the Gulen Movement itself, which had an independent position in the state administration and displayed the ambition to conduct a policy of its own, was becoming a problem for Erdogan.

Before the election in 2011, the prime minister removed the people who were believed to have links with Gulen from the AKP party lists. In autumn 2013, the government decided to close the *dershane*, i.e. the private educational institutions which held preparatory courses for university examinations (an essential part of around 4,000 *dershane* in the country were linked to the Gulen Movement, and thus were an important element of its social and financial base).

The Gulen Movement first responded to the attempts to restrict its position in the state in 2012, with an attempt to remove Hakan Fidan, the head of the civilian secret services who is Erdogan's close aide (he was summoned to give statements as a suspect in a case launched against an illegal Kurdish organisation), and, most importantly, by launching the anti-corruption campaign targeted against Erdogan and his milieu in December 2013. It was in fact an attempt to overthrow the government and provoked one of the most serious crises during the AKP's rule.

December 2013 marked the beginning of determined efforts made by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoglu, who succeeded him as prime minister, to completely destroy the Gulen Movement inside and outside Turkey (these have included efforts to have Gulen extradited from the USA). Both sides have used the state structures in this struggle.

In order to deprive Gulen of influence, the government has held massive staff purges and reshuffles in the police, military police and public prosecution authorities (these have affected thousands

of people, and have been conducted – at least in part – on a random basis, due to the fact that membership in the movement is secret). It has also arrested journalists representing the media outlets linked to Gulen and has taken control of the private Bank Asya, which has connections with the movement.

The Gulen Movement, using those of its undercover representatives who have kept their positions in the state administration, including senior positions, has responded to this by leaking information concerning the government's most critical moves (including plans to take further measures against the movement)⁷⁰ and has been sabotaging its policy⁷¹.

The conflict between Erdogan and the Gulen Movement has been one of the main pivots in Turkey's political life, and will remain so in the immediate future. It is difficult to predict how it will end. The president has a strong political mandate and concentrated power in the state. However, the movement is a difficult opponent to defeat, given the scale of the dispersal of its influence and its covert nature. This conflict has had a devastating effect of the Turkish state.

2. The arrests on 17 December 2013

On 17 December 2013, the police arrested 49 people who had close links with the government on charges of corruption, including the sons of four ministers (including the Minister of Internal Affairs) and a number of businessmen linked to the AKP. The charges included accepting large bribes from Reza Zarrab, a businessman

⁷⁰ One of the sources of the leaks is the Twitter account of a user nicknamed Fuat Avni. Cf. <https://twitter.com/FuatAvniEng> (English version).

⁷¹ One example of this is the incident which took place on 19 January 2014 near Adana. A convoy of trucks heading to Syria dispatched by the Turkish intelligence agency (MIT), which according to unconfirmed information was transporting weapons, was stopped under the threat of the use of arms and searched by the Turkish military police. Cf. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/mit-tirlari-boyle-durduruldu>

of Iranian origin, who acted as an agent in illegal financial transactions, bypassing the international sanctions imposed on Iran. Regardless of the obvious internal political context (the conflict between Erdogan and the Gulen Movement), it appears that the suspicions that members of the government elite have been involved in corruption seem to be well-grounded. Telephone calls of the most senior state officials, including Muammer Guler, the minister of internal affairs (who gave instructions to his son about what he had to state regarding the sources of cash found in his house, around US\$400,000), and above all the conversations of Prime Minister Erdogan with his son Bilal, were recorded using wiretapping and then made available to the general public online. In the fear that the police could search the houses of his family members, the prime minister instructed that all cash be taken away from his son's house and hidden (as can be concluded from the context, the cash belonged to Recep Tayyip Erdogan himself), and also from the houses of his brother and son-in-law, and others. After a whole day of intensive efforts to hide the money, Bilal Erdogan informed his father that only around 30 million euros in cash was left to be disposed of⁷².

3. Ergenekon and Balyoz

Ergenekon and Balyoz are the codenames of the mass court trials held in 2008–2013 and 2010–2012 respectively. In total, 254 active and retired military officers, state officials, politicians and representatives of academic circles and the media were sentenced in the Ergenekon case. Almost 20 people received life sentences (including General Ilker Basbug, who served as chief of staff in 2008–2010). In the Balyoz case, the court sentenced 325 Turkish Army officers (including 89 generals and admirals; 24 of them were in active service) to between 13 and 20 years in prison.

⁷² Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DQ84uIWYyg&feature=youtu.be&list=PLmH3I5hKwHWbXLGLueBfiziI4POvuKnhP>

In the court's opinion, those sentenced in the Ergenekon case were guilty of membership in a secret organisation which, after the AKP took power in 2002, had allegedly made efforts to destabilise the situation in the country (for example by murdering representatives of the Greek and Armenian minorities) and thus to open the way to a military coup. This organisation was allegedly identical to the 'deep state'. The Balyoz case concerned a coup which was allegedly plotted in 2003 by a group of Turkish Army officers in order to overthrow the newly elected AKP government. The coup was to be preceded by several terrorist attacks staged in Istanbul and the shooting down of a Turkish fighter airplane above the Aegean Sea (which would have been blamed on Greece).

Both the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials lacked transparency and involved large-scale controversies. A substantial part of the evidence presented was of poor quality, was inconsistent, and raised suspicions of having been fabricated (for example, the references in the alleged conspiracy documents of 2003 to facts which took place later, the documents originating allegedly from 2003 were created in a text editor version introduced in 2007, etc.).

The army's hostile attitude towards the AKP was a real fact (as late as 2007, the Turkish General Staff in an official memorandum suggested that it might intervene should Abdullah Gul be elected president). It is also true that the 'deep state' existed (and this fact still remains to be sufficiently examined). It may be assumed on the basis of the knowledge available that some of the hundreds of convicts could be guilty of criminal acts.

At the same time, from the present perspective, many facts indicate that both Ergenekon and Balyoz were political trials and formed an element of the struggle between the conservative circles on one side, i.e. the AKP and the Gulen Movement, and the secular state establishment on the other, above all, the army. Both the Ergenekon organisation and the Balyoz conspiracy, according

to facts known today, were fictitious and were conceived as a collective instrument used to neutralise political and ideological opponents⁷³.

One proof that these were political trials is found in the fact that once the confrontation between the AKP government and the Fethullah Gulen Movement escalated, a large part of those sentenced (including 230 in connection with the Balyoz case) were released from prison in 2014 (on various legal grounds). The journalist who was the first to publish documents which allegedly proved the existence of the Balyoz conspiracy in 2010 was arrested in March 2015⁷⁴, and President Erdogan has admitted in public that he had been misinformed as regards the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials by a “parallel government structure”, i.e. the Cemaat⁷⁵.

⁷³ Cf. http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2009_jenkins_between-fact-and-fantasy.pdf and <https://cdogangercekler.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/plot-against-the-generals.pdf> (the author of this text is a professor at Princeton University and son-in-law of one of the generals sentenced).

⁷⁴ Cf. <http://www.diken.com.tr/baransu-balyoz-belgelerini-altan-congarogur-ve-tayizle-birlikte-inceledik/>

⁷⁵ Cf. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/we-were-deceived-erdogan-says-accusing-parallel-structure-of-misinformation.aspx?pageID=238&nID=79936&NewsCatID=338>