



March 2 - 5, 2006

PICSim | 2006

The Middle East '06

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The Republic of Turkey

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to PICSim 2006!

My name is Charm Tang, and I am excited to be chairing the committee representing the Republic of Turkey. My director Milton Wilkins and I, as well as the rest of the PICSim staff, have worked hard to make sure you enjoy your experience here at Princeton. Last year's conference was quite successful, and hopefully this year's will be just as enjoyable.

I am currently a junior at majoring in molecular biology with a certificate in East Asian studies. I was involved in Model UN for four years in high school, and I was the social chair of International Relations Council (the parent organization here that runs PICSim) for the last two years. Originally born in Chicago, I am from Salt Lake City, Utah, so I love to ski and snowboard, go hiking, and all that outdoorsy stuff.

The head staff of PICSim chose this region as the focus of this year's conference because this region is, without doubt, a constantly changing and ever-important area in today's international politics. However, while the Middle East is reported in Western media every day, many misconceptions still abound, especially regarding the region as a whole. Turkey is not often considered when many discuss the Middle East, but with 95-97% of its territory in Asia and the Kurdish people comprising 20% of its population, Turkey is very much involved in Middle Eastern politics. However, Turkey also has the unique position of being at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. Considering its current bid for European Union membership and the increasing interactions of Western and Eastern politics, Turkey stands to play an important future role between Western and Eastern associations and integration.

Hopefully, through the efforts of the all the committees and countries working together at PICSim, we will be able to better understand the troubles that face this region. Good luck with research, and I look forward to seeing you for a great conference! If you should have any questions, please feel free to email me.

See you in March!



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Princeton Interactive Crisis Simulation 2006



Committee Positions

NOTE: The Ministry is part of Turkey’s executive branch; each is nominated by the PM and finally appointed by the President.

President - Ahmet Necdet Sezer [Designated for the Chair]

The secular President Sezer was elected President in 2000, succeeding President Suleyman Demirel. Devoting most of his career to promoting social and legal reforms that would strengthen Turkey’s candidacy for UN membership, Sezer is still determined to see his dream of Turkish membership come-into fruition. The Kurdish question weighs heavily on his mind, as well as the fact that he may be losing control over the government to less capable or differently-motivated forces within his own regime. Committed after his election to limiting the power of the presidency, which he saw as too great for the leader of a secular democracy, he now shares more power than he may have wished to with a strengthened Islamic AK party that has dominated the government since the 2002 election. Sezer may fear that he himself is now playing second-fiddle to a conservative and inexperienced Prime Minister. Legally, Sezer is Commander and Chief of Turkey’s armed forces.

Prime Minister - Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [Designated for the Director]

Ascending to the office of Prime Minister in 2003, Islamic AK party member Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seems as committed as his President to seeing a reformed Turkey become a full member of the EU. However, some fear that he and his party’s inexperience in governance and conservative ideology will cause turmoil within the government, as evidenced by the Erdoğan’s occasional clashes with his secular President over the latter’s liberal and reform-minded stratagems. These factors in turn may someday sabotage the PM’s own ambition to draw Turkey closer to Europe, which was greatly pleased by Sezer’s progressivism. As Prime Minister and former head of the dominant party, today Erdoğan may have more executive power than Sezer.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs - Abdullah Gül

The former Prime Minister resigned from office only months after the 2002 election, at which time Erdoğan filled his seat. Like his successor, Gül is a member of the Islamic AK party who was strongly opposed to the U.S.-led invasion in Iraq and strongly desires to see Turkey become a full member of the EU. Before leaving office, Gül hoped to reestablish ties between Turkey and its Arab and Persian neighbors in the Middle-East. In 2002, he invited the leaders of five Middle Eastern countries to a summit aimed at devising a strategy to avert the U.S invasion. Unlike other members of his party, Gül is not one to be overly upset by the apparent dissolution of Turkey’s “strategic partnership” with America.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State - Abdüllatif Şener

Şener offers an alternative viewpoint on domestic issues, providing council to Erdoğan and Sezer based heavily on the assessments of other ministers and his own analysts.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State - Mehmet Ali Şahin

Şahin offers an alternative viewpoint on domestic issues, providing council to Erdoğan and Sezer based heavily on the assessments of other ministers and the council of his own analysts.

**Minister of Defense - Vecde Gönül**

Since its establishment in the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and in the shadow of the Treaty of Sevres, Turkey's foreign policy focus has always been its national security. Recent events force Gönül's fellow ministers to rely-upon his wisdom and experience to help the President and PM determine the Republic's next move: Turkey has potentially lost its "strategic alliance" with America, leaving the Republic without allies in its own war on terror. Furthermore, Turkey's threat to invade Northern (Kurdish) Iraq following the U.S. invasion in 2003 is more than evidence enough of Turkey's growing apprehension towards hostile Kurdish peshmergas (militias), who could harbor terrorists.

Minister of Internal Affairs - Abdülkadir Aksu

Held responsible for providing domestic security and civil protection for Turkish citizens and civil servants, Aksu acts as the bureaucratic bridge between the Secretary of Defense and the Minister of Justice, the latter of whom held responsible for the conditions of prisons. Empowered to reign-in the PKK and Kurdish insurrectionists, most allegations of overzealous counterterrorism, torture, and prisoner abuse would ultimately fall on Aksu's desk. With Turkey's escalation of counterterrorism efforts in the wake of increasing terror attacks, and with Europe watching Turkey's human rights situation more intently than ever, Aksu finds himself in a more sensitive position than some of his predecessors.

Minister of Finance - Kemal Unakitan

The President and Prime Minister's fiscal consultant and the man responsible for monitoring Turkey's sizeable national deficit, Unakitan's chief concern is the rapidly strengthening Turkish economy, now hopefully on the comeback from sharp declines in productivity in 2001 yet still suffering from the nation's massive debt. Like much of the now-dominant AK party, Unakitan's concern is the potential benefits of increased trade with members of the EU, both as a CU partner and as a potential full-fledged member.

Minister of Justice - Cemil Çiçek

Turkey's "Attorney General" and also the minister responsible for his nation's prison conditions, Çiçek is one of the most important players in dictating Turkey's diplomatic relationship with the EU, a relationship whose fate will be greatly determined by the liberalization of Turkey's legal code and Turkey's protection of human rights. Çiçek's guidance is of special importance to his President, who has already spent much of his political capital promoting such reforms as abolishing the death penalty and lifting restrictions on women and Kurds, much to Europe's pleasure.

Minister of Health - Recep Akdağ

Minister Akdağ's chief concern is the potential epidemic of avian flu, which has recently had its first diagnosed cases in Anatolia.

Minister of Energy and Natural Resources - Hilmi Güler

Turkish foreign policy will always somehow affected by its control over water and energy resources, which themselves are vital diplomatic and commercial capital. Güler's field is vital to understanding Turkey's diplomatic and commercial relationships with its neighbors in the Middle East and with the Western world. More importantly, Güler is one of the most important



men in the ministry, as he may help his government to assess how these resources should be allocated amongst the Turkish people, and traded with the world so as to change these relationships.

Minister of Education - Hüseyin Çelik

With Turkey again questioning its “Western Vocation,” its secular values, its society-wide prejudices towards the Kurds, and its own international identity, Çelik’s primary concern will be the impact that the emerging and conflicting worldviews will have on the integrity of his country’s Kemalist educational system. A possible point of contention that the Minister of Education may bring to the floor is whether maps of Anatolia under the failed Treaty of Sevres should be taught in the classroom, a practice that has had a potentially negative impact on the Turkish worldview.

Minister of Agriculture - Sami Güçlü

Aware that the staple of Turkey’s recovering economy is agriculture, still responsible for 34% of the nation’s GNP, Güçlü hopes to make sure that Turkish industrialization does not take federal attention or support away from Turkey’s most reliable traditional enterprise.

Minister of Labor and Social Security - Murat Başesgioğlu

In a time of sweeping social reform, political uncertainty, diplomatic tension with Europe, and regional instability, one of Başesgioğlu’s chief concerns (among many) will be recent events’ effects on Turkey’s Kurdish population and workforce, among the largest in the Middle East. Kurdish strikes could hurt Turkey’s ability to produce, which in turn would hurt Turkey’s prosperity in the long run. Of course, even worse problems could develop. Başesgioğlu would be the first to remind his fellow ministers that the PKK was once a Worker’s Party as opposed to a terror cell.

Minister of Industry - Ali Çoşkun

With Turkey’s economy recovering and industries only growing, Çoşkun’s chief concerns are maintaining Turkish productivity, potential labor disputes, and (of course) the effects of competition with the Western world and the EU, which could be either a help or a hindrance to Turkish self-sufficiency.

Minister of Housing and Public Works - Zeki Ergezen

Geography

The Republic of Turkey is the nearest meeting point for Europe, Asia, and Africa, as it lies at the junction between Europe and Asia. Throughout history, its geographic location has given Turkey a unique and pivotal role in the politics and interactions of both Europe and Asia. This is accentuated by the three bodies of water that surround Turkey, with the Black Sea to the North, the Aegean Sea to the West, and the Mediterranean Sea to the South (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, Turkey has the Sea of Marmara enclosed entirely within its borders. The Sea of Marmara and the rivers Bosphorus and Dardanelles (the Turkish Straits) connect the Black and Aegean Seas, and they effectively separate Turkish territory in Europe and Asia (known as Thrace and Anatolia, respectively).



Figure 1: Map of Turkey (source - CIA: *The World Factbook*)

Thrace comprises approximately 3% of Turkey's total area (inclusive of water and land territory) at 24,378 km², while Anatolia comprises approximately 97% at 790,200 km². Turkey is further divided into seven geographic regions: the Black Sea, Marmara, Aegean region, Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, East Anatolia, and Southeast Anatolia regions. Turkey's two European neighbors are Greece and Bulgaria; its six Asian neighbors are Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.¹

Turkey has a temperate climate with milder weather in the coastal regions and harsher seasons in inner Anatolia.² There are narrow coastal plains and several mountain ranges, with a high central plateau running through Anatolia. However, each of the seven geographic regions is characterized by unique and diverse features, ranging from rivers to mountains and plains. Northern Turkey, especially in the Marmara region, is prone to severe earthquakes (several major earthquakes have struck the region in the past ten years).

History and People

From the Hatti people (3000-2000 B.C.), the Bronze Age cities of Troy I and II, and the Hittite Empire (1660-1190 B.C.) to the Byzantine Empire (330-1453 A.D.) and Constantinople, the era's leader in art and culture, Turkey has had a rich and diverse history filled with a variety of peoples and cultures. While many ethnic groups have lived in what is now modern Turkey, the Turks were the first people to dwell in all of Anatolia.³ The Turks, who had adopted Islam by the 10th century, arrived from Central Asia through continual migration and incursions. A Turkoman tribe living on the Turkish Byzantine border founded the Ottoman Principality, and

¹ Republic of Turkey – TurkishEmbassy.org at Washington D.C. *Country Profile*. www.turkishembassy.org/

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.



the geographic location of the principality and the weak state of the Byzantines combined to make the Ottoman principality the strongest state within the Islamic world by the 1300s.

During its 600 years in power, the Ottoman Empire (1600-1923 A.D.) and the Turkish civilization advanced in modernity and grew in strength until the 1880s, when internal disturbances and conflicts began to weaken the empire. The Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1918 after World War I, when it was defeated by the Allies and forced to sign the Mondros Armistice and the Treaty of Sevres (which divided the Empire's lands). Several efforts for Turkish independence sprang up, but none were truly well-organized or effective until Mustafa Kemal, a successful military figure in the Ottoman forces, launched a war for independence in May of 1919. By 1923, the Ottoman Empire was replaced by the modern Republic of Turkey. In 1924, Kemal was presented with the name of Atatürk, meaning "father of the Turks." Atatürk is hailed for his principles of republicanism, nationalism, secularism, popularism, and revolution, and even in contemporary times is he considered a great national hero.⁴

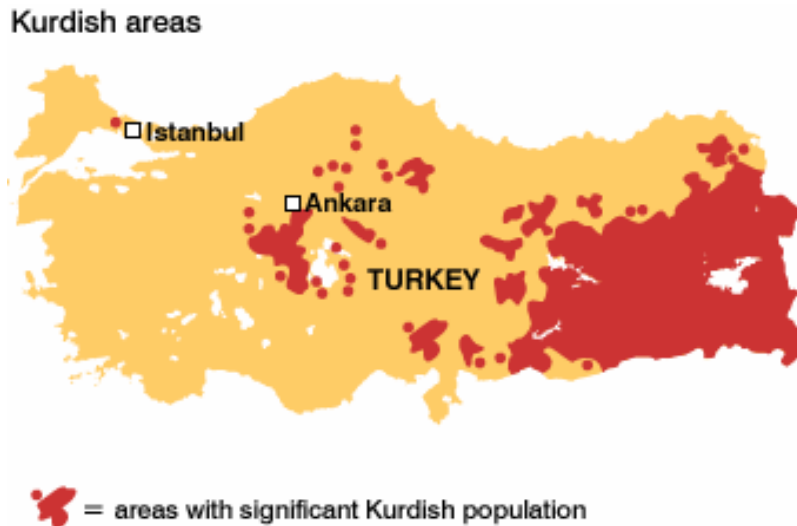


Figure 2: Geographic distribution of Kurdish population (source: news.bbc.co.uk)

The Republic of Turkey now has an estimated population of 69.6 million.⁵ 99% of Turks are Sunni Muslims, with Christians and Jews making up the rest of the population. The two largest ethnic groups are the Turks and Kurds (also mostly Sunni Muslim) at 80% and 20%, respectively, but because of the government's commitment to nationalism and one Turkish cultural identity, it basically does not recognize different ethnic groups.

Government

Turkey's government is a republican, parliamentary, and secular democracy with three branches of government. The official language is Turkish, and the capital is Ankara, with a population of approximately four million. (The largest city is Istanbul at about ten million.) The country is divided 70 provinces, each one varying in socio-economic development and ethnic composition.

⁴ Turizm.net. *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*. <http://www.turizm.net/turkey/history/ataturk.html>

⁵ CIA – The World Factbook. *Turkey*. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tu.html>



However, the Turkish system is strongly centralized, with many decisions at the national level affecting residents on the provincial level.

The Constitution sets forth the fundamental rights according to natural and contemporary law to which every Turkish citizen is entitled. According to the Constitution:

“The state has been given the function of removing the political, economic and social obstacles which limit the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, which are not in accord with the principles of a social legal state and justice, and to attempt to prepare the necessary conditions for developing the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the people. The State has been given the duty and is obliged to provide for the family unity of the Turkish citizens who work in foreign countries, for the education of their children, for their cultural needs and social securities.”⁶

While Turkey has gone through several constitutional versions, the current government is primarily based on the original framework of Constitution during the War of Independence and the revised 1984 Constitution. The executive branch includes the President and the Council of Ministers. The President, among other responsibilities, functions as the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces on behalf of the National Assembly and decides when to use the Armed Forces. The President is also responsible for ratifying and publishing international agreements⁷. The current President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, was elected in May 2000 with approximately 60% of parliament’s vote and is serving until 2007.⁸ Sezer, formerly the chief justice of the Constitutional Court, is the first president to not have been an active politician or a military commander. The Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is selected by the President from among members of parliament. Erdogan is currently the leader of the Islam-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP), and he considers Turkey’s entrance into the EU a top priority. Ministers are nominated by the Prime Minister and appointed by the President. The Foreign Minister is Abdullah Gul; the Interior Minister is Abdulkadir Aksu; and the Finance Minister is Kemal Unakitan.

The legislative branch consists of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The Assembly elects the President for seven-year terms. There are 550 seats in the Assembly, and members are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. The purposes of the Assembly are to legislate, amend, and nullify laws; monitor the actions of the Council of Ministers; debate and pass national budgets; ratify the printing of currency and the declaration of war; ratify international agreements; and declare amnesty or pardons (unless specified otherwise in article 14 of the Constitution).⁹ The Assembly may also delegate the authority to issue “Decrees with Power of Law” to the Council of Ministers when necessary.

The judicial branch consists of independent courts acting on behalf of the nation and the superior courts: the Constitutional Court; the High Court of Appeals; the Council of State; the Court of

⁶ TurkishEmbassy.org. *Constitution – Politics and Policy*.

⁷ TurkishEmbassy.org. *Constitution – Executive Branch*.

⁸ CIA – The World Factbook.

⁹ TurkishEmbassy.org. *Constitution – Legislative Branch*.



Accounts; the Military High Court of Appeals; and the Military High Administrative Court. According to Turkish law, the power of the judiciary is exercised by Judicial and Administrative Military Courts, and the superior courts examine the verdict for the last and final ruling.¹⁰

Turkey has had a multiparty system since 1946, with 49 political parties registered since December 1, 2004.¹¹ The parties that currently have the greatest number of seats in the Assembly are the AKP and the Republican People's Party (CHP), with 368 and 171 seats, respectively.¹² In fact, in the 2002 elections, the AKP won an overwhelming victory over other political parties, creating the first two-party parliament since 1946 and the first single-party government in the last 15 years. Many consider this recent occurrence, especially in light of the fact that the AKP has Islamic roots, to indicate a significant realignment and direction for Turkey's political landscape.

Economic Situation

Modern industry and commerce contributes much to Turkey's economy, with industry as the main contributor to GNP (>30%).¹³ The largest industry is textiles and clothing, with other growing sectors including the automotive and electronics industries. Turkey's industries produce more exports when compared to other Middle Eastern countries, but it still exports much less than other European countries. Employment, however, is still primarily agriculture-based, accounting for over 35% of total employment (in 2004).¹⁴ Farming is still rather inefficient, although it has become more effective in recent years. Fishing is also a major agricultural economic contributor.

In the 1980s, Turkey moved to reform its strongly centralized system to a privately owned sector (however, the government still owns and controls a large proportion of economic sectors).¹⁵ The reforms have initiated growth, but the Turkish economy experienced sharp recessions in 1994, 1999, and 2001. These recessions resulted in high inflation, a weak banking sector, and a volatile market. From 1999 to 2002, the government worked with a strict IMF plan to invigorate the economy. However, the internal and public disputes, increasing inflation, and other economic problems led to a need for a revised IMF plan and unprecedented amounts of IMF lending.¹⁶ Under the new IMF plan, the Turkish government has continued to implement new structural and policy reforms aimed at improving the economy. The government is also actively seeking increased foreign investment and strengthening intellectual property legislation.¹⁷ Despite continual high debt and inflation, the economic situation has been gradually stabilizing and improving.

¹⁰ Turkishembassy.org. *Constitution – Judicial Branch*.

¹¹ CIA – The World Factbook.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Encyclopaedia of the Orient. *Turkey: Economy*. http://i-cias.com/e.o/turkey_2.htm

¹⁴ CIA – The World Factbook.

¹⁵ Travel Document Systems. *Asia – Turkey – Economy*. <http://www.traveldocs.com/tr/economy.htm>

¹⁶ *Turkey – Growth and Structure of the Economy*. <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/53.htm>

¹⁷ Ibid.



Turkey and the EU

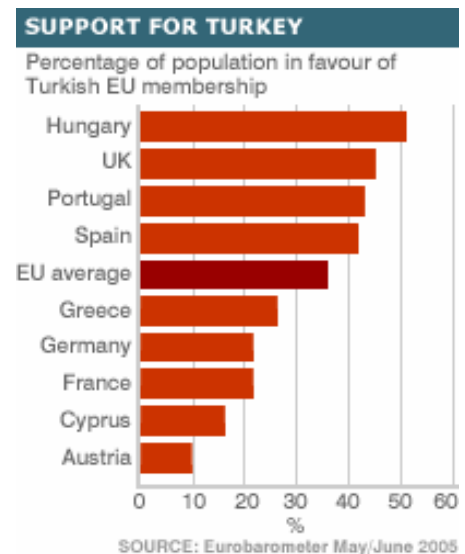
One hope for improving Turkey's economy is its incorporation into the European Union (EU). Turkey first began its efforts for admittance into the European Community in 1959. It formally applied for membership again to the EU in 1999, and negotiations officially opened on October 3, 2005. However, while talks have started, this prospect still seems extremely tenuous, especially as it remains to be seen if Turkey can meet the EU's many demands.

Many see Turkey's entrance into the EU as a way to build and strengthen a bond between the West and the Muslim world, considering Turkey's geographic location and culture. Proponent hope that Turkey's accension will eventually lead to increased stability in the region. Others advocate that Turkey's population of well-educated youth will help Europe assuage their growing problem of an aging workforce. Turks see EU membership as a route for accelerated modernization and economic benefits, with the convenience of traveling ease throughout Europe. The Kurdish population hopes that inclusion in the EU will serve as a guarantee against discrimination.

However, several obstacles stand in the way. One major delay in opening official talks involved Austria's preference to grant Turkey a "privileged partnership" rather than grant full accession. Austria also wanted language incorporated that explicitly limits the EU's ability to incorporate new members in the future. While Austria eventually compromised, this sentiment still is a strong indication of the difficulty Turkey will experience in its bid for EU membership.¹⁸

Many other Europeans also hold reservations about Turkey's inclusion in the EU. Many claim that Turkey is not culturally European and that Turkey's Muslim heritage will clash with the other predominantly Christian countries and their policies. Others fear that Turkey's accession will lead to a wave of Turkish immigrants into Europe; still others cite that even already and in the future, Turkey's inclusion will prevent EU unification efforts. Turkey's large size worries some that it will consequently have too much power in the EU, or that its poorer economy will end up costing the other European countries too much.

Other difficulties include that, through the long chapters of negotiations and reviews of Turkey's current legislation, Turkey must incorporate approximately 80,000 pages of EU law. Furthermore, all 25 EU members must ratify Turkey's accession treaty, and this poses problems as France and Austria have already stated that they will hold national referendums to determine Turkey's inclusion. Even if Turkey becomes an EU



¹⁸BBC News. *EU hails Turkey membership talks*. <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4307700.stm>



member, negotiations are anticipated to take until 2014, with the most realistic date for accession in 2020.¹⁹

Yet another issue is the Turkey's relationship with Cyprus. With Cyprus now an EU member willing to use its vote against Turkey, the Turkish government may have to reconsider its refusal to recognize Cyprus. Turkey has recognized Cyprus as an EU member while noting that this does not amount to full diplomatic recognition. So far, the EU has demanded that Turkey must recognize Cyprus and normalize relations with all EU members, as well as implement customs policies uniformly to all members (currently, Cypriot export ships are not allowed to dock at Turkish ports).

These delays and the EU's demands have caused support for Turkey's membership to decline in both the EU and Turkey, especially as EU made explicit that it would suspend negotiations "in the case of a serious and persistent breach in a candidate state of the principles" on which the EU was founded.²⁰ Support in Turkey has declined in recent months, although it is still relatively high (>60%).

Human Rights Crisis

Turkey's history of human rights violations ranges from accusations of torture and excessive military force to limitations in freedom of expression in religion and press. The situation with the Kurds accounts for many of Turkey's violations in the military, judicial, and political sector, while its staunch commitment to secularism and history of political violence are reasons for its violations of freedom of expression.²¹ In the past decade, reforms have been made, but improvement has been inconsistent and evidence of human rights abuse is still prevalent.

Journalists, politicians, and others who publicly express non-violent dissent have been persecuted and imprisoned throughout modern Turkish history. The government has also banned any teaching of, use of, or publications containing non-Turkish languages and representing non-Turkish cultures. Television and radio broadcasts have been censored, and laws restricting freedom of expression (such as an article regarding insult to state institutions) are still included in the latest version of the criminal code.²² In recent years, journalists and politicians who would have been jailed several years ago have been acquitted, yet the government continues to indict some for non-violent expression.²³ Some small progress has been made, however, in that media broadcasts in formerly restricted languages (such as Kurdish) are now permitted.

The issue of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners has also improved recently due to reforms and the government's repeated claims of no tolerance for such actions. However, there are still frequent reports of abuse. Part of the problem seems to be that there is little to no monitoring of individual jails and police stations; there is also often a lack to proper legal counsel for many

¹⁹ BBC News. *Country Profile – Turkey*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1022222.stm

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Human Rights Watch. *Human Rights Overview: Turkey*. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/01/13/turkey9882.htm>

²³ Ibid.



detained persons.²⁴ Improvements made in recent years have been effectively reversed by new anti-terror legislation.

Fixing the Turkish human rights situation has been painstakingly slow, but progress is still discernible. Reformers are hopeful that a disgruntled and frustrated Turkish society and the new requirements for attaining EU membership will do much to promote human rights in the near future. However, while these prospects look promising, reform must still contend with a past of a political violence and an unwillingness to change in the government and military structures.

The Kurdish Question

Turkey's Kurdish population, with approximately 25 million people mostly located in southeast Turkey, is its largest minority group, yet it is still unrecognized and continually persecuted. It is because they are the largest minority that they are perceived as a possible threat to Turkish national unity. The majority of Kurds have assimilated into Turkish society, especially in the urban areas. Yet, many Kurds still recognize themselves as Kurdish and strive to maintain their culture and language (Kurdish), representing a further threat to a homogenous Turkey. Indeed, language suppression has been the government's main strategy for assimilating the Kurds. From 1980 to 1983, the government passed several laws specifically banning Kurdish and the possession of written or audio Kurdish material.²⁵ The government has also banned several political parties sympathetic to the Kurdish cause.²⁶

The Turkish government's claim that the large Kurdish minority posed a threat is not entirely unfounded. Since the inception of modern Turkey, there have been several Kurdish revolts and separatist movements. Atatürk suppressed a Kurdish revolt motivated by the new republic's renunciation of Muslim practices. Uprisings in the 1930s, 1940s, 1960s, and 1970s were also put down by the Turkish army. However, it is the 1984 separatist rebellion that is the root of the current Kurdish conflict.

Kurdish activists for civil rights have often used passive means within the political system to fight for equal rights. However, in 1984, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) (now the Kurdistan People's Congress, or Kongra Gel) and its leader Abdullah Öcalan turned to a violence and terrorism in pursuit of a separate Kurdish state. Throughout the 1990s, violence increased as the PKK guerrillas targeted both military forces and innocent civilians, sometimes from bases located in Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The PKK has killed community leaders and schoolteachers (for their compliance with legislation against teaching Kurdish in schools). The government has retaliated by mobilizing military force against not only PKK insurgents, but also Kurdish villages suspected of harboring PKK insurgents or being sympathetic to the PKK cause. In some cases, the government has burned entire villages and forced evacuations for thousands of Kurdish villagers.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ GlobalSecurity.org. *Kurdistan – Turkey*. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-turkey.htm>

²⁶ Ibid.



The PKK cause has not been helped by the Iraqi Kurdish population. The Iraqi Kurds sought help from the Turkish military to protect them from Saddam Hussein's oppression, so in 1992, the Kurds assisted Turkey in attacking and eliminating Iraqi PKK bases.²⁷ Syria also helped to attack PKK bases in Lebanon.

Turkey has extended more rights and enacted more civil reforms since beginning their bid for EU membership. However, as mentioned before, reforms are still highly inconsistent and often not enforced. The military, while not as politically influential as in the past, has always held the position that the best way to reach regional stability is to eliminate the Kongra Gel; this viewpoint is still difficult to dismiss in Turkish politics. Furthermore, the US war on terrorism has given Turkey more justification for its militant stance in fighting Kurdish rebels by claiming that such groups are terrorist organizations and must be dealt with as such. In fact, Prime Minister Erdogan has criticized the US for not taking a more active position against Kongra Gel and other Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq and denouncing the US for having a dual and hypocritical policy against terrorism.²⁸

The Kurdish conflict is what currently has the most ties for Turkey to the Middle East region and represents a link between its European and Asian counterparts. Not only must the government try to comply with and enact EU human rights requirements, but it must still somehow effectively stem the violence from Kurdish rebels. Moreover, it must do so not only with rebels within Turkey, but also with rebels throughout its Middle East neighbors. With the US war in Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdish population, close attention must be paid to this particular conflict.

Turkish Healthcare and the Avian Flu

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is responsible for creating and implementing Turkish health policies, and most of the health care spending is done by the Ministry. Most healthcare facilities are owned by the central government. However, the number of privately owned healthcare facilities is increasing, particularly in larger urban areas.²⁹

In the early 1960s, Turkey made efforts to socialize the system in order to provide better access and distribution of healthcare to rural areas. Although the situation has improved since then, much of the socialization is only on paper, and proper healthcare in rural areas is still largely a problem.³⁰ The centralized system has yet to provide the necessary infrastructure in non-urban areas to support the policies and reforms passed to help alleviate this problem. For example, compulsory rural service for physicians or assigning physicians to different rural areas has not been successful in improving distribution of health services because of the lack of proper support systems.

A potential problem currently facing Turkey is the threat of avian flu. The deadly H5NI strain of avian flu (the same strain that killed 60 people in southeast Asia previously) was discovered in

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Atav, A.S. *Politics of health care in Turkey: A demonstration in model development and testing*. Journal of Multicultural Nursing and Health. Winter 2001.

³⁰ Ibid.



the village Kiziksa (northwestern Turkey) in early October.³¹ The Health Minister Recep Akdag has stated that the situation is under control and that Ankara is prepared for a flu epidemic.³² However, despite that the prospect of an avian flu epidemic developing is still quite small, the presence of the flu has already had implications against Turkey. For example, the EU has banned the import of feathers and live birds from Turkey until April. Other consequences may include further economic detriment, a worsening of relations with Europe, and panic and unrest among the Turkish population.

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³¹ BBC News. *Turkey bird flu is deadly strain*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4337918.stm>

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