

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN TURKEY AT THE PRESENT STAGE

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Annotation: *Turkey's political system operates within the framework of a multiparty system, although it is largely dominated by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP). The transition from a one-party system to a multiparty democracy has changed the political landscape, but the high electoral threshold has historically limited the representation of small parties. Turkey's political system is facing democratic challenges, including concerns about the independence of the judiciary and media freedom. This article talks about economic policy, electoral reforms and public administration strategies and is central to the changing role of political parties in the life of Turkey's future.*

Key Words: *Multiparty system, Republican People's Party (CHP), Justice and Development Party (AKP), Electoral threshold, Party leadership role, Democratic challenges, Foreign policy shift (West to East), Presidential-parliamentary elections.*

Significant characteristics of Turkey's political, party, and electoral system:

Multiparty system: Turkey has a multiparty political system where different parties compete for power and representation in parliament. The party system of modern Turkey has gone through a long process of formation and transition from a one-party system, where the main political determinant of the country was the Republican People's Party (CHP), created in 1923 by M.K. Ataturk, to a multiparty one. This transition actually took place in 1946, when the country held its first multiparty (in fact, bipartisan) elections. In addition to the CHP, the Democratic Party was fighting for a place in the political arena. As of 2023, there are 122 political parties in Turkey.

The dominance of two major parties: Despite the multiparty system, two major parties - the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP) - have traditionally dominated the political arena in Turkey. According to the results of the 2023 parliamentary elections, the AKP won 268 of the 600 seats in the Turkish parliament, while the CHP won 169 seats.

High threshold for entering Parliament: In Turkey, there was an electoral threshold that was 10 percent of the total number of votes cast. This made it difficult for small parties to enter parliament. Due to the serious criticism of the electoral legislation of the Republic of Turkey, the possibility of lowering the threshold to 5 percent has been discussed for many years. As a result, in 2022, the Justice and Development Party, together with the Nationalist Movement Party, adopted amendments to the election law, which provided for lowering the threshold to 7 percent.

The role of the party leader: In the Turkish political system, the personality of the party leader plays a significant role, and political parties are often associated with specific people. It is the leader of the party who is the personification of the party, with whom it is

associated and, perhaps, will be associated for many years to come. A striking example of such a party is the CHP, whose ideological and permanent leader is still considered to be M.K. Atatürk, who passed away in 1938.

Problems with democracy: Turkey's political system is facing criticism due to restrictions on freedom of speech, judicial independence, and other aspects of democracy. For example, in mid-2013, when Erdogan insisted on destroying the green historical park, some young people tried to protect the trees, but Erdogan ordered the police to use physical violence, which led to the hospitalization of some protesters. This has prompted hundreds and thousands of people to come out to streets and squares to protest for several days. Erdogan did not give up, and the police continued to attack peaceful demonstrators. After these events, the AKP and its media took an authoritarian-populist position and explained all the failures of politics as the result of conspiracies between the West and traitors in the country. Erdogan eliminated colleagues who disagreed with him during the Gezi protests and turned the AKP into a one-man party.

The role and place of political parties in the Turkish political system:

The Justice and Development Party has been ruling for the past 22 years. The party was founded in 2001 by the then ex-mayor of Istanbul, R.T. Erdogan, and positions itself as centrist and moderate Islamist. It is worth noting that the ideological and value attitudes of the AKP are somewhat different from those that were inherent in it in 2002, when the AKP came to power.

At that time, this party owed its success to a well-structured program that took into account the needs of Turkish society. Its members, apparently realizing the fatigue of the population from Islamist slogans and their futility against the background of developing secularism at that time, decided to move away from exclusively conservative beliefs, focusing on more pressing things.

Its past programs were generally oriented towards its closest European and American allies and were West-centric in nature. After the entry of R.T. In 2014, there was a "turn to the East" in Turkish politics, which was reflected, among other things, in the party's programmatic attitudes, which acquired a more conservative color. The AKP's current program is more devoted to domestic policy issues, namely, solving socio-economic problems.

The foreign policy section consists of a number of ideologues embedded in the text, including Turkey's characteristic "neo-Ottomanism." Turkey, under the auspices of the AKP, intends to carry out a number of domestic political reforms, including changing the electoral legislation and the constitution, as well as achieving economic success by significantly increasing exports and reducing unemployment.

At the moment, there are several parties in Turkey that are members of the ruling "People's Alliance". As of 2023, the People's Alliance unites the Justice and Development Party, the Nationalist Movement Party, the Great Unity Party, and the New Welfare Party. The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has long been in opposition to the ruling AKP, but today it is part of the government's "People's Alliance" and cooperates with the party led by the president. The HDP was founded in 1969 by a pan-Turkist and nationalist. Turkish, who also headed the radical youth wing of the HDP "Grey Wolves" (Bozkurt), and after his

death continues to be considered the inspirer and the main leader of the party. The HDP is far-right, and the pool of its supporters and voters is predominantly made up of nationalist-minded citizens and adherents of the ideology of pan-Turkism and pan-Turanism.

The National Alliance is an opposition bloc consisting of the Republican People's Party, the Good Party, the Party of Democracy and Progress, the Party of Happiness, the Party of the Future and the Democratic Party.

The largest representative of the alliance is the Republican People's Party, which is also Turkey's oldest party and represents the country's main opposition force. The CHP is a social democratic party that adheres to the ideology of "Kemalism" and unites the secular part of Turkish society, which shares democratic views and does not recognize Islamic conservative values. The leader of the CHP is K. Kilicdaroglu, Erdogan's main rival, as well as the main critic of his foreign and domestic policy.

In the period 1923-1946, the CHP was not only the dominant political force, but actually the only parliamentary party in Turkey. This time is ambiguously assessed by historians as the years of a harsh authoritarian regime. In the first competitive elections in 1950, the CHP lost its leadership (39.6%), losing to the Democratic Party created by former members of the CHP (55.2%).

As a result, the CHP went into opposition and from that moment on was never able to secure enough dominance in parliament to form a one-party government. In the 1960s, the left-democratic wing, led by Bulent Ejevit, gained great influence in the CHP, which ousted Ismet Inenya as leader of the CHP in 1972.

Under Bulent Ejevit, the ideological and political platform of the CHP became center-left, while maintaining its commitment to nationalism in combination with democratic socialism.

The role of Turkey's political parties at the present time

The last major elections in Turkey were held in May 2023. They were universal: they elected both the president and the parliament. Prior to that, parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 2018. Table 1 shows a comparison of the results of the parties in the parliamentary elections of 2018 and 2024.

Table 1. Comparison of the results of the parliamentary elections in 2018 and 2023 (data by party)

Parties	The final result	The difference compared to 2018	The number of mandates	Difference compared to 2018.
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	35,6%	-6,9%	268	-27

Republican People's Party (CHP)	25,4%	+2,7%	169	+23
Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	10,1%	-1%	50	+1
The Good Party (IYI)	9,7%	-0,3%	43	-0
Green Left Party (YSP)	8,8%	-2,9%	61	-6
Re-Prosperity Party (YRP)	2,8%	A new batch	5	+5
Victory Party (ZAFER)	2,2%	A new batch	0	-0
Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP)	1,7%	Participated according to HDP lists	4	+4
Great Unity Party (BBP)	1%	Participated according to AKP lists	0	-0

The ruling party has lost its unique position in Turkey's political system. The trend that began in 2018 continues to be relevant, and after the 2023 elections, the AKP has lost 7% over the past five years.

Many analysts noted that the party had returned to the level of support it started with in 2002. On the one hand, the AKP remained the leading party in six out of seven regions. The ruling party managed to get deputies in 79 provinces out of 81.

On the other hand, its rating increased only in six provinces, while the party's results worsened in the remaining 75.

There is a drop in numbers in megacities. Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Izmir, Konya and Istanbul have seen the largest decrease in the number of votes cast in favor of the AKP. However, there is a positive trend in the south-east and east of the country.

AKP won in 670 ilches (second-level administrative unit), losing in 81 districts compared to 2018. In 274 ilches, it took second place, which is 71 districts more than in

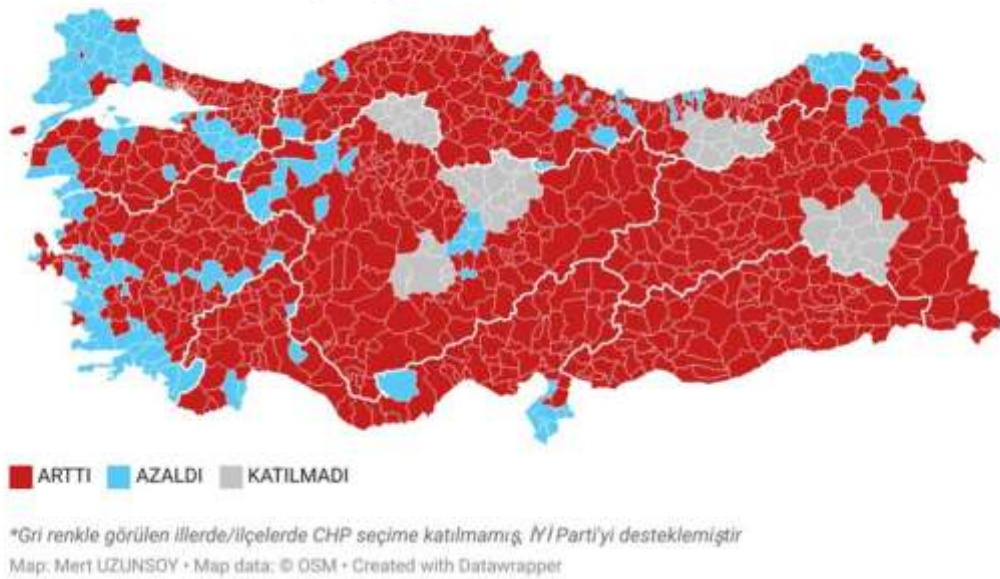
2018. In fact, this shows that the ruling party more often takes a back seat on the ground. The bulk of its support continues to be maintained in Inner Anatolia and on the Black Sea coast. Due to the declining advantage in large cities, it is fair to call the AKP a party supported by the rural population.

At the same time, the Kemalists were able to maintain their status as the main opposition party against the background of an unconvincing performance by their partners. They improved their score by almost 3%. On the other hand, they failed to overcome the psychological mark of 28%.

The Republican People's Party showed growth in 66 provinces, and it lost some support in eight provinces (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. The rise (red) and fall (blue) of HP support at the elche level

CHP 2018-2023 Oy Değişimi



They were able to become the main party in the Aegean region, which was not the case in the penultimate elections. In 22 provinces, its growth was more than 5%. There is an increase in results in the interior areas. It is significant that the CHP has increased its share of support in areas where a single list of Kemalists and "Khoroshists" is being put forward (for example, in Riza, Chorum, Erzincan), but it is losing ground in some of its electoral bases. In addition, an additional evidence of the CHP's popularity in major cities is that the mayors of Ankara, Antalya and Istanbul are members of the Republican People's Party.

At the same time, Ankara Mayor Imamoglu Ekrem is one of the key figures of the CHP, who was even prosecuted for calling the cancellation of the results of the first Istanbul mayoral election, in which he won, "stupidity."

Thus, the outcome of the 2023 elections can be called the retention by the AKP-led coalition of the majority of seats in parliament due to an alliance with small nationalist parties, however, there is still a trend towards a decline in the popularity of the AKP due to general fatigue with Erdogan's policies and not the most successful monetary policy (maintaining a low key rate with high inflation).

The Justice and Development Party is actually going through a crisis. The unprecedented success she achieved 20 years ago has been replaced by a series of failures in both domestic and foreign policy. Record collapses of the lira, which is reaching historical lows, social protests, a sharp cooling of relations with Western countries against the background of Ankara's expensive cross-border operations in neighboring Syria and Iraq, as well as personnel changes in the party associated with the departure from the AKP of reputable politicians in the person of A. Davutoglu and A. Babacan, do not contribute to raising the rating of the party of R.T. Erdogan and himself the president.

At the same time, the influence of the opposition is growing in cities, and the pro—Erdogan bloc is growing in rural areas. However, the departure of the National Coalition to the right did not find support among the electorate. Largely because of this, CHP did not grow as fast as expected. In addition, an important factor in these elections was the underestimation of the "shy right" factor, which led to inflated expectations of obtaining a parliamentary majority.

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