

# Turkey: Return to Stability?

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Since the mid-1990s, Turkish domestic politics have all too often been plagued by a chaotic atmosphere. The most direct origin of this is to be found in the December 1995 parliamentary elections, which did not lead to any obvious governing coalition; quite to the contrary, a number of alternatives were possible, of which the majority were eventually attempted. As is by now well known, the largest party in the parliament became the pro-Islamist Welfare party (Refah Partisi, RP) which however received a mere 21 per cent of the votes, far from a majority. This one-fifth of the ballot, with the Turkish electoral system favouring large parties and the parties that do well in the Anatolian countryside, actually gave the RP 158 out of 550 seats in the new parliament, or almost a third of the seats.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, neither of the two parties of the democratic right which had dominated the last decade's Turkish politics managed to achieve a leading position – actually neither of them managed to supersede the other. Former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller's True Path Party (DYP, Doğru Yol Partisi) received a larger number of seats in the parliament than Mesut Yılmaz' Motherland Party (ANAP, Anavatan Partisi), but the ANAP had a higher number of ballots cast for it than had DYP.<sup>2</sup> Hence both parties could still claim to represent the majority of the democratic right, something which further complicated their uneasy coexistence. This was particularly troubling for the political scene as before the elections speculations had been under way regarding a merger of the two parties under whichever would win the elections. It should be noted, nevertheless, that both parties received around 20 per cent of the votes each. Hence while the RP may have become the largest party in parliament, it is incorrect to speak of a 'triumph' of Islamism in the elections.<sup>3</sup> The major political faction was still by far the democratic right, as it has been during virtually the whole history of the Turkish republic. Together the two democratic right parties received the support of over 40 per cent of the electorate, which would be well enough for a stable majority in the Turkish electoral system.<sup>4</sup>

In the aftermath of the elections, as possible government coalitions were discussed, the major tendency both in the media and among large parts of the population was to advocate a coalition between the two parties of the democratic right. There was a near consensus that this was the most logical outcome of the elections and the most obvious coalition scenario. The reasoning was not without a point, for a number of reasons. The main reason, of course, was that even experts had difficulty explaining the distinction between the party programmes of the DYP and the ANAP. Mr Yılmaz recently called the two parties 'branches of the same tree'.<sup>5</sup>

The problem that prevented these parties from entering into coalition with each other, typically for the Turkish system, was the power struggle between the leaders of the two parties. A coalition, but especially a merger, would result in one of them having to step down for the other, something that each of them knows would mean an end to his or her political career. This power struggle in fact developed into a deep personal enmity between Mrs Çiller and Mr Yılmaz that has been clear especially during electoral campaigns. On the left of the political scene, the fragmentation is equally deep.<sup>6</sup> The social democrat parties were three in number for a short period in the early 1990s but two of them reunited in February 1995 to take down the number to two. All this has taken place in a political climate which favours big parties disproportionately, and where a 10 per cent threshold to parliament is applied.

The background to this singular political fragmentation lies in the consequences of the military coup of 1980. With the coup, all active political parties were shut down and their leaders were forced to stay out of politics for a number of years. When three years later multi-party democracy was reinstated, two military-created parties, one centre-left and one centre-right, were thought to compete for the vote. But capitalizing on public discontent with this 'guided democracy', Turgut Özal managed to get approval for his Motherland Party's participation in the election – and won a landslide victory.<sup>7</sup> As his party developed in the direction of the democratic right, there were now two democratic right and one democratic left party. Later, the former political leaders were permitted to return to the political scene, and immediately tried to assert control over what they felt was their logical successor party. As this led to conflicts with the new leadership, which had no interest in stepping down for the old generation, further fragmentation occurred, especially as the parties banned in 1980 were allowed to be reinstated in 1992. In a sense, thus, the fragmentation of the Turkish political scene can be seen as a malaise dating back to the 1980 military intervention.<sup>8</sup>

This form of intrigues and contradictions came to dominate politics, leading to a further distancing between the politicians and the population,

something which was to affect deeply especially the popularity of the centre-left. As a result the early 1990s witnessed a steady rise in public discontent with politicians in general, which only accentuated with the numerous corruption scandals that struck almost all parties, except Welfare and veteran Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Partisi, DSP). The centrist parties – which historically have commanded about 80 per cent of the electorate – proved incapable of tackling their problem. As Nicole and Hugh Pope put it, the centrist parties failed to 'catch the mood of the population', and 'continued irresponsibly down the path of self-destruction, devoting more energy to their attempts to topple their rivals rather than to the needs of the nation'.<sup>9</sup>

The time was ripe for the rise of populist and extremist parties. Even more than in the past, however, the extreme-left was unable to gain support except among university students, for two reasons. The first was an external factor – the perception of Communism as a failed ideology after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A second factor was internal – a perceived close linkage between the rebellious Kurdish PKK and Marxism-Leninism, which further discredited socialism in the eyes of the public. The two political orientations which were to benefit were on the one hand the pan-Turkic nationalists of the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), led by the charismatic figure of the late Alparslan Türkeş but unable to enter parliament, but above all the Islamic-conservatives (the RP), led by the equally charismatic Necmettin Erbakan. In the countryside especially, these two parties grew immensely, but as a whole the Islamists gained the upper hand. This was the case mainly because of the RP's excellent countrywide organization, and because of its seemingly unlimited funds, which enabled it to gain the support of the rural migrants to the big cities by humanitarian actions, distribution of food, finding jobs for people, etc. It is widely believed that the RP received funding from abroad, mainly from Saudi Arabia, without which its dramatic rise in popularity would probably have been impossible. Whatever the origins of its wealth, the RP managed to replace the social democratic parties as the main hope of the urban poor; indeed, one of the RP's many identities has been characterized as representing the 'new left' in Turkey.

Nevertheless, in the municipal elections of Spring 1994, the Welfare Party managed to gain power in a number of municipalities, among them the capital Ankara as well as Istanbul. This was a surprise for many, but most observers were still caught unprepared when Welfare became the largest party in the parliamentary elections of December 1995.

After several rounds of failed negotiations, among others between the ANAP and Welfare,<sup>10</sup> a coalition between the two democratic right parties was formed, allegedly under military pressure but in fact against the wishes

of both party leaders.<sup>11</sup> It was widely believed that the collapse of the coalition talks between Welfare and ANAP was a result of military intervention. The two parties had come so far as to negotiate the distribution of ministries between them, when the talks abruptly crashed only two days before the government was to be officially announced.<sup>12</sup> The given reason was disagreement over the ministries of Defence and the Interior – perhaps a somewhat light reason for the failure of a coalition. The media seriously speculated that Mr Yılmaz' wife might have influenced him by talking him out of coalescing with Islamists.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, a formidable coalition of crucial business circles, the secularist media, and – most importantly – the military had exerted pressure on the ANAP and Yılmaz to abandon all coalition plans to coalesce with the Islamists.

The reluctant ANAP-DYP government which followed was short-lived, hardly surviving three months in office. It foresaw that the party leaders would take one-year turns as Prime Minister starting with Mr Yılmaz. The uneasy 'marriage', as it was termed in the Turkish press, between Mr Yılmaz' ANAP and Mrs Çiller's DYP however only accentuated their enmity as both were jealously watching their own party members, fearing that any fraternizing between the parliamentary groups could be dangerous for their respective positions.<sup>14</sup> When Mr Erbakan presented a file charging Mrs Çiller with corruption, Mr Yılmaz had the bad political judgement of supporting this charge, obviously hoping that getting Çiller off her post by legal proceeding would enable him to take control over the entire democratic right. As the DYP deputies saw this happening, they instinctively united around their leader, breaking the coalition.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Mrs Çiller produced a similar file as the one on herself, regarding Mr Erbakan's assets and businesses. It seemed clear, then, that if Çiller was to go down, she would drag Erbakan with her in the fall, given the fact that the allegations against both were serious enough to have potentially grave consequences should they ever be brought to a courtroom.<sup>16</sup> Both the scandal-hungry media and other political parties subsequently showed considerable interest in these mutual corruption charges, and a process that neither Çiller nor Erbakan could control was starting to develop. However, as all other attempts to forge a new government failed, an obvious solution arose: forming a coalition together, something which would have the happy side-effect of a parliamentary majority guaranteeing that neither of the two would be stripped of their parliamentary immunity.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the role of the intrigues that were a part of the coalition-building, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that a mere fear of corruption charges pushed Erbakan and Çiller into each other's arms. However important a role

such considerations may have played, this alternative remained an untouched option, as Mrs Çiller, prior to the DYP-ANAP government, had portrayed herself as the staunchest defender of secularism and refused even to discuss co-operation with Welfare. Now the list of possible coalitions was expiring, since both democratic left parties were keen on staying in opposition.<sup>18</sup> But if one recalls that only roughly six months earlier, a coalition including Welfare had been aborted owing to the military's refusal, what made such a government possible? How was Welfare allowed to come to power and Erbakan allowed to become Prime Minister? And why would Welfare be 'allowed' to coalesce with DYP and allegedly not with ANAP, which after all was founded during military rule? Many observers actually saw the new coalition as a proof of military non-involvement in politics, revising their earlier opinions.

But a closer examination shows that the military policy has been consistent, and from its own precepts, totally logical during this entire time span. One main factor was that the military's influence in ANAP has traditionally been quite low, whereas the DYP was thought to be very close to the military. Compared with Mr Yılmaz, in any case, Mrs Çiller enjoyed far better personal relations with the army. An illustrating fact is that Doğan Güreş, the former military chief of staff, was elected a member of parliament on a DYP ticket, as well as several security officials such as a former head of the emergency rule in the Southeast.<sup>19</sup> Hence, as far as safeguarding secularism was concerned, the DYP was more trusted than the ANAP. Mr Yılmaz himself is known to be a convinced secularist, but a powerful Islamic-conservative wing was present in his party, a legacy of the Özal era and in fact led by the late President Özal's brother; as a matter of fact, the Sufi Nakşibendi order was heavily represented in the party, although the influence of Islamic groups had gradually declined since Özal's death in 1993.<sup>20</sup> These factors may have been crucial in the military's quest to prevent the ANAP from forming a coalition with the Islamists. Although there was no lack of trust for Mr Yılmaz personally, the question was if he would be able to stand up against both Welfare and his own conservative wing. The DYP, on the other hand, was thought easier to control, through its strong links to the military establishment.<sup>21</sup>

But the decision to let Welfare take part in a government was conditioned by other, additional factors. First of all, the most logical government formula not containing the RP had been tried and had failed. More importantly, all discussions in the political debate were centred on excluding RP from any coalition talks. This led to a certain public irritation, even among people who did not support RP. If Welfare was the largest party in parliament, this was after all the people's choice. And to refuse systematically to negotiate with RP would then be to ignore the people's

vote. A coalition government containing RP would moreover not necessarily represent a threat to either democracy, secularism, or the status of the military, as a secular party would form part of the coalition and hence be able to walk out on the RP if necessary. To try to exclude Welfare was thus in a sense both illogical and immoral, especially as RP claimed to be an 'Islamic-Democratic' party along the lines of western European Christian Democratic parties.

However, arguably the most important factor was that isolating Welfare while the other established parties kept discrediting themselves only strengthened the popularity of the Islamists. For years now, Welfare had the privilege of staying in opposition – by force – and being able to criticize each government and amassing popular support because of the simple fact that almost all other parties kept losing in popularity; Welfare could continue to promote itself as the untarnished, pure, and non-corrupt alternative, and above all in the name of God. Thus all political parties actually lost in strength in the 1995 elections except Welfare and Ecevit's DSP.

As the leaders of the democratic right and the democratic left did not show any sign of adopting a more responsible policy – personal enmity remained a priority over almost identical party programmes, and the secular politicians went on squabbling with each other instead of seeking to understand the reasons of Welfare's success – the popularity of Welfare could only be expected to rise. In the by-elections held during the summer of 1996, Welfare captured around 35 per cent of the total vote.<sup>22</sup> These by-elections were not representative for the entire country, as they took place mainly in rural areas and in the eastern part of the country, and where the RP had received similar figures in the December 1995 elections. Nevertheless the outcome was still a definite reason to worry for the secular establishment. Many observers acknowledged that Welfare's popularity could decrease only once the party was in power and would prove unable to fulfil its very far-reaching promises to the electorate.

The decision to let Welfare take part in a government can hence be seen as a calculated risk: the RP's long-term aims of transforming the Turkish state were well-known, but it was believed that the situation could still be kept under control through RP's coalition party, the DYP, which importantly kept control over key ministries such as Defence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs. These were some of the factors which opened the way for Erbakan to become Prime Minister; furthermore, as will be seen below, there may have been other and more covert considerations involved.

The fears many secularists had when seeing the Islamists come to power soon proved not to have been exaggerated. Instead of following the established rules, Welfare soon devoted most of its time and attention to the promotion and financing of Islamic revival in Turkey. In sum, three tendencies crystallized during the near-year that the Welfare-Path government (a popular name of the coalition and a contraction of the two parties' names) stayed in office. First, there was a strengthened role for Islam in the state apparatus and in society, as will be discussed shortly. Secondly, a higher degree of authoritarianism, especially among law enforcement organs, was tangible in the context of anti-government demonstrations, for example; human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have noted that the period of the Welfare-Path government coincided with a deterioration in the human rights situation in the country, which had slowly been improving until 1996. Thirdly, there was a gradual loss of the state agencies' cohesion. Cooperation between different organs of the state suffered notably under Erbakan's premiership, with a growing distrust between agencies known for their secularist character, such as the ministry of Foreign Affairs or the National Intelligence Agency (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı), and ministries or agencies that came under the increasing influence of the Islamists.

The main problem, which arose already after the municipal elections of 1994, was Welfare's systematic Islamicization of the local government apparatus wherever it was in power. Secular functionaries were methodically replaced with more loyal persons, something which became clear within a year and could be observed directly by the number of beards and headscarves in the local government offices. The same procedure was then implemented in the ministries that were allocated to RP in the coalition; in particular, the attempts to replace secularist judges around the country with more Islamically minded ones. A parallel procedure, although outside the control of the RP, was the dramatic increase of Islamist students at the social sciences faculties of the Turkish universities – which had as a direct corollary an increase in the number of Islamists seeking employment in the public sector. Several universities, including the dignified Marmara University in Istanbul, were affected by Islamic forces in their higher administrative echelons.

As in other countries in the Middle East, the Islamists focus their efforts on the system of education. As mandatory schooling was only five years in Turkey, parents were free to choose their children's form of schooling from grade six onwards. As a result, many children were put in Islamic Quran schools (*Imam-Hatip*) at an early age when they are easier to influence. The increase in the number and appeal of *Imam-Hatip* schools – which often have practical advantages as there are fewer students in each classroom –

has constituted an organized and deliberate effort to increase the Islamic consciousness of the young generation.<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of 1997, furthermore, a debate regarding the introduction of Sharia, Islamic law, arose – although this would be in direct contradiction with the Turkish constitution. Mr Erbakan defended the proponents of Sharia by claiming that secularists only make up three per cent of the country's population – despite the fact that over 75 per cent of the electorate voted for secular-oriented parties. As a response, a storm of protests and women rallies erupted, encouraged by the military and wholeheartedly supported by the democratic left. The unprecedented was the cold response these protests got from the democratic right. Mrs Çiller made some vague statements that every Muslim should follow Sharia, whereas Mr Yılmaz refused to endorse the protests since 'one could not protest against Islam'.<sup>24</sup> The actual reason is that both the DYP and the ANAP are to a significant degree dependent on the vote of traditional and conservative citizens, and were therefore careful not to appear as opponents of religion.<sup>25</sup>

The event that in retrospect can be termed the beginning of the end for Welfare was a larger demonstration in favour of Sharia which occurred in February 1997.<sup>26</sup> The demonstration took place in Sincan, a suburb of the capital Ankara, where the local RP mayor pronounced himself in favour of Sharia with sharp wordings.<sup>27</sup> A disturbing fact was that he was ardently supported in person by the Iranian ambassador, who thus made himself guilty of a flagrant breach of the principle of non-intervention in his host country's internal affairs.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, the mayor was jailed<sup>29</sup> and the ambassador returned to his home country,<sup>30</sup> but the scandal only got worse when the jailed mayor was visited by Şevket Kazan, the RP minister of Justice, in an obvious show of solidarity.<sup>31</sup>

In the midst of the scandal, the peaceful popular demonstrations increased in number and magnitude,<sup>32</sup> but were met by a surprisingly harsh reaction from the authorities. Through leaks from the Interior ministry it soon became clear that the police had received orders to deal harshly with demonstrations directed at either Islam or the government. This was a clear sign that the government did not hesitate to use violence against its opponents – hence a stronger authoritarian tendency.

This flow of events in the first months of 1997 was followed closely by the military leadership, which saw the situation as disturbing enough to proceed to action carefully but effectively. The first signals of military dissatisfaction actually came relatively early. The forum used was the powerful National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK), which includes the President, the Prime Minister, and the ministers of Defence, the

Interior, and Foreign Affairs, as well as five high-level military officials. The MGK is a consultative body with the authority to make policy recommendations to the government. Already in the autumn of 1996 the military contingent in the MGK began to complain of the level of Islamicization of the state. As this criticism was ignored by the government, the military tone rose. By January, the Commander of the Naval forces publicly stated that Islamic fundamentalism had grown to be a greater threat to the republic than the PKK.<sup>33</sup> During the February Sincan events, a contingent of tanks was sent through the town, in an obvious demonstration of force, and as a sign that the level of military tolerance was reached.<sup>34</sup> As no measures were still taken by the government, the generals saw themselves forced to take concrete measures. A MGK meeting scheduled for 28 February was chosen as the occasion, a meeting which lasted for an unprecedented nine hours.<sup>35</sup> Here the military leadership showed an unexpectedly strong reaction. A list of over 20 points was presented, on which a change in government policy was requested. Among these, the most important were:<sup>36</sup>

- (i) Obligatory public schooling was to be extended from five to eight years. This would entail that children could not be put in religious schools until after grade eight, when their minds would presumably be more difficult to indoctrinate;
- (ii) The systematic admission of Islamists into public service had to cease;
- (iii) Control was to be established over religious sects, and their financial sources investigated;
- (iv) The independence of the judiciary needed to be safeguarded (clearly pointing at the systematic appointment of Islamist judges);
- (v) The principles of the constitution were to be followed;
- (vi) Political parties were to be made legally accountable for members' statements.<sup>37</sup>

The government was given two months to change its policies in these and other fields.<sup>38</sup> During the MGK meeting, Prime Minister Erbakan was the only Islamist present, confronted with five high officers and secular politicians from the DYP. Erbakan claimed after the meeting that all decisions had been unanimous;<sup>39</sup> however it soon became clear that Erbakan had been highly reluctant to accept many of the provisions, and accepted them only in order not to lose face by going against an unanimous MGK.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore Erbakan did not immediately make it clear that he would sign the protocol of the meeting, which was necessary to give it legal force.<sup>41</sup>

The military behaviour has been termed as an ultimatum and has been criticized for being undemocratic as it instructs the popularly elected government to change its policy, on subjective grounds. Mr Erbakan quickly

stated that policy 'is made in the parliament, not in the MGK'.<sup>42</sup> Answering this, the military claimed – not without reason – that it merely urged the government to follow the law. Indeed, the judicial provisions that prohibit use of religion in politics have obviously not been followed. In fact a number of laws had been side-stepped, perhaps deemed obsolete or unfitting, but the fact remains that these provisions had not been abrogated and hence remained legally binding. Hence the military could hardly be said to commit any unconstitutional act by urging the government to ensure that certain laws were implemented. Furthermore, taking the events in the perspective of post-war Turkish history, the military seems to have opted for democratic means to influence the politics of the country. In 1960 and 1980 coups were undertaken to restore chaotic situations; in 1971 a clearly unconstitutional military ultimatum was used. This time the military influenced government policy through a constitutionally regulated organ, the National Security Council. In fact, one could argue that the MGK's role was increased in the 1982 constitution precisely to allow the military a channel of constitutional control over civilian politics.

Whatever the legal aspect, the result of the MGK meeting was a sizeable humiliation for the government. It soon became known as a government which had been reprimanded and taught a lesson. This increased the already existing tensions within the coalition and especially within the junior partner, Mrs Çiller's DYP.<sup>43</sup> A rising number of DYP deputies had been pressurizing the leadership to terminate the coalition with the Islamists as the government, in their opinion, was causing harm to the country. Such views, however, found no understanding with Mrs Çiller, who had acquired many enemies through her ambition and recklessness as well as her increasingly authoritarian control over the DYP. Hence the dissatisfaction within the party reached rebellious proportions and the long awaited defections started to occur. The DYP, once the second party in parliament with over 130 deputies, dropped dramatically in size as its deputies in large numbers defected to either Mr Yılmaz' ANAP or to the newly formed DTP (Democratic Turkey Party) under the leadership of Mrs Çiller's rival, former parliament speaker Hüsametdin Cindoruk.<sup>44</sup> Mr Cindoruk's aim to regain control over the DYP was not exactly hampered by Mrs Çiller's recklessness and self-inflicted unpopularity. In retrospect, her struggle to hang on to the government coalition with RP was, seen in the right context, totally understandable. The main reason seems to have been that Mrs Çiller feared that if she fell from power, the corruption charges against her would surface once again. Indeed, for over three years Mrs Çiller has been playing a very high game, in which she undoubtedly has been fairly successful, in staying in power until the summer of 1997 and still remaining leader of the DYP by late 1999. The popular anger at her that is widespread among large

sections of Turkey's especially urban and intellectual population is well illustrated by the abundance of sarcastic comments and caricatures of a power-hungry and opportunistic Çiller.<sup>45</sup>

And the government's problems were only beginning. On 21 May, state prosecutor Vural Savaş initiated a lawsuit in the constitutional court to ban the then still incumbent Welfare party on grounds of anti-secularism and anti-republicanism.<sup>46</sup> This lawsuit and its basis (such as a collection of statements of Erbakan and other RP officials) further discredited the coalition in the eyes of many secularist DYP deputies, and was certainly a factor which accelerated the defections from that party. As a result, the DYP's parliamentary group plunged to around 90 deputies. Hence the government rapidly saw its parliamentary majority withering away. As a remedy, Mr Erbakan tried to attract a small religious-nationalist party, the Grand Unity Party (GUP), a splinter-group from the ANAP that had nine seats in the parliament.<sup>47</sup> As the GUP demanded two ministerial posts and a lowering of the threshold barrier in parliamentary elections against small parties from ten to five per cent as condition for supporting the government, and as the rate of defections from the DYP in any case would give the government at best another three weeks even with the support of the GUP, Mr Erbakan threw in the towel and submitted his letter of resignation.<sup>48</sup> This move seems to have been conditioned by two factors: the first was a concern to answer the general belief shared by many secularists that 'the Islamists will never give up power willingly'. Hence Erbakan once again tried to show that RP was not anti-systemic, but similar to any other political party. But more importantly, Erbakan and Çiller seem to have believed that President Demirel would again give Mr Erbakan the duty to form a government, as it was an unofficial rule that the leader of the largest party in parliament should receive this duty first, others being assigned it when and if this first attempt would fail. In any case the two leaders seem to have thought that Mesut Yılmaz would prove unable to form a government if given that duty and that they could hence again form a government within a short time and this time with increased legitimacy.<sup>49</sup>

Thrashing the hopes of Erbakan and Çiller, President Demirel immediately gave Mr Yılmaz the task of form a new government, hence taking a clear stance against the Welfare-Path government.<sup>50</sup> The latter then proceeded to collect the support of all political forces that had been in opposition to the Islamist-led government.<sup>51</sup> In a quick act of lobbying, he further managed to receive the support of a sufficient number of DYP deputies to secure a majority.<sup>52</sup> Thus while the media were discussing the risk of early elections and deadlock, Mr Yılmaz announced the forming of a new government.<sup>53</sup>

This government, the 55th in republican history, became a minority government as the leftist Republican People's Party (CHP) refused to take an active part in it,<sup>54</sup> seeing it as a transitional government whose primary function would be to pave the way for early elections.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the parliamentary majority of the government rested upon four political parties as well as on a number of independent deputies, two of whom reached ministerial rank.<sup>56</sup> Hence the government consisted of a coalition between Yılmaz' ANAP, Ecevit's DSP, and Cindoruk's DTP, with the two smaller parties strongly represented in the cabinet despite their weakness in parliament compared to the ANAP.

Despite Mr Yılmaz' success in forming a government in an unexpectedly short period of time, this should not be taken for an emerging consensus in the Turkish political climate. Even if Mrs Çiller were to depart from politics, her role in contesting Mr Yılmaz for the leadership of the democratic right could presumably have been taken over by Mr Cindoruk, who had repeatedly announced his intention to reunite the democratic right – presumably under his own leadership. However, Mesut Yılmaz had a rare chance to increase his stature in Turkish politics. He was, one could argue, the first leader since Atatürk who received wholehearted support both from the people and the military as well as from the media. The coalition however rested on shaky grounds, based as it was on the support of four parties from two different ideological traditions.

The 1997 events in Turkey were described in a variety of ways both in Turkey and in the West. Depending on one's perspective, one may call the developments either a military near-coup – or the world's first 'post-modern coup', as some observers like to put it – or a general rebellion on the part of the secular establishment against the Islamist-led government. An illustrating fact in this context is that Mrs Çiller was considered by many secularists worse than Mr Erbakan: Erbakan may have been the enemy, but Çiller was the traitor.

What has in fact taken place in Turkey is a clear campaign, inspired from military headquarters, to eradicate the Welfare Party. The lawsuit in the constitutional court to ban the party was only the open, legal aspect of the campaign. Thus the Turkish military defended and increased its role in the politics of the country, although certainly more by perceived necessity than for its own interests.<sup>57</sup> In fact, 1997 marked a new trend for military involvement in Turkish politics. Hitherto, the military had basically left the government of the country to civilian administrations, while reserving the right to intervene massively when things got out of hand, as was done in 1960, 1971 and 1980. But this time, military policy was different. The more

subtle form of intervention that was practised in 1997 had as a consequence that, unlike in earlier military interventions, the same political forces and leaders were left to govern the country. This in turn meant that the military could not create a 'clean break' with the mistakes of the past, as was done at least in 1960 and 1980. Consequently, the military was unable to retire from the political scene as it had actually done on the aftermath of the two earlier coups, but continued to play an important role in day-to-day politics. This fact was proven recently when a group of disgruntled deputies, who had been left out of their respective parties' electoral lists,<sup>58</sup> tried to delay the April 1999 elections, when the new chief of staff Hasan Kıvrıkoğlu stated his opinion that delaying the elections would be detrimental to the country.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the military leadership has been drawn into politics to a larger degree than has been tangible earlier. This is by itself a development that causes worry, as this brings a risk of politicization of the military that would be detrimental to its position in society.

Going back to the 1997 events, it is notable that many observers wondered why the military waited so long to take action against Welfare although the coalition government, in the military's eyes, was harming the country by its policies. The reason, when analysed, is simple and has an undeniable logic. If the military wanted once and for all to staunch the progress of political Islam, forcing Welfare out of government and closing down the party would hardly be sufficient, although it would slow down the progress of Islamism. But as the organizational abilities and financial resources of RP and other Islamist organizations were well known, it was necessary to go deeper, so to speak to pull the movement up with its roots.

An analogy here is the military coup of 1980. Since mid-1979, anarchy and civil violence was taking a toll of over 20 deaths daily in the big cities, and large portions of the population were actually demanding a military intervention to put an end to the chaos. But the military waited a whole year, until 12 September 1980, to intervene. When the intervention took place, it proved to be well-planned and bloodless, in comparison with most military coups in history. Within a week, 138,000 persons had been arrested, and the widespread violence that plagued the country disappeared literally overnight. The military had thus used a year to map the extremist groups responsible for the anarchic condition in order to crack down on them quickly and effectively. In a sense, it can be argued that a similar strategy has been adopted this time. When RP members insulted the army publicly, no measures were taken either politically or judicially although the possibilities were present. Instead, military intelligence tracked down the various Islamist movements – especially the more extreme ones – as well as their organizational network and financial sources. In this endeavour, they were assisted by the fact that Islamic movements, which had previously

been operating underground, exposed themselves more openly during RP's time in government, obviously in the belief that they could now voice their claims with impunity. Hence, within 48 hours of the formation of Mr Yılmaz's government, two hundred officials were expelled from their positions, a yet unknown number of arrests were made, and the financial sources of a number of radical Islamist movements were frozen. Files intended for legal action have been prepared on several RP deputies and municipal politicians; the trial of the above-mentioned mayor of Sincan has already been concluded with prison terms for the mayor and several of the involved persons. In another case, Istanbul mayor Recep Tayıp Erdoğan was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for reciting a poem deemed to incite hatred and create divisions on religious grounds; the sentence was upheld in October 1998, effectively putting an end to Erdoğan's future political career. Mrs Çiller herself as well as her former associate and minister of the Interior, Mrs Akşener, were threatened by various legal proceedings for embezzlement and other charges.<sup>60</sup> Mrs Çiller has, among other charges, been targeted with the relatively absurd accusation of having been a spy for the CIA for a quarter of a century, something which shows the tone that the campaign against the Welfare-Path government took.<sup>61</sup>

The closure case against the RP received mixed but predominantly negative reactions abroad. First of all, there was doubt regarding the judicial process in the Constitutional Court and regarding the fairness of the Turkish judicial system in general, criticism that has recurred in the context of the trial of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who was apprehended in Kenya in February 1999.<sup>62</sup> Western observers seemed to interpret the process as a show with a predetermined outcome. Secondly, there has been a reaction in Turkey as well as abroad on the very principle of banning political parties. The issue at stake, then, is whether banning a political party – notably as it is the largest party in parliament and hence not a marginal, extremist formation – is compatible with democracy.<sup>63</sup> In Turkey both Islamists as well as many secularists have reacted against the idea, seeing such a development as unfit for the democratic society they want Turkey to be.<sup>64</sup> As an answer, those in favour of the ban have argued that although political parties are a cornerstone of democracy, this does not mean that there are no limitations on them – they must be required to operate within the spirit of the constitution.<sup>65</sup> In late 1997, the US State Department declared that the US was against the closure of the RP,<sup>66</sup> and responded negatively when the decision became public.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, in conjunction with many Turkish observers, the respected *Wall Street Journal* showed understanding for the outlawing of a party whose leader claimed that Islamic values will prevail, whether the transition period will be smooth or bloody.<sup>68</sup>

On 16 January 1998, the constitutional court announced the banning of

the Welfare Party with nine votes against two. As expected, Erbakan, former Justice Minister Şevket Kazan and six other RP officials were banned from participation in politics for five years. The RP took the decision with a mixture of shock and resignation. Until the end, supporters had hoped for a favourable decision. But the work to start a new party had already begun, under the leadership of long-time Erbakan ally Recai Kutan. However, younger forces within the new-born party, the Virtue Party or Fazilet Partisi (FP) initially seemed to take on a higher profile than they had in the RP. These included among others the new vice chairman Abdullah Gül, widely seen as a moderate Islamist,<sup>69</sup> and then Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In the first days after the decision, the general belief seemed to be that the FP, would move increasingly toward the centre. Under the leadership of the young cadres of the RP, the Islamic political movement would develop into an Islamic-democratic party. However, it remained clear that despite the political ban imposed on him, Necmettin Erbakan retained the reins of the party through his loyal ally Kutan who remained the head of the new party. This situation was analogous to the years after the 1980 coup, when most political leaders, including Ecevit and Demirel, were remote-controlling their respective parties from their seclusion on an island in the Marmara sea.

At the eve of the April 1999 elections, there was an impression that Turkey had regained some of its lost political stability. The ANAP-led government that stayed in power for little over a year arguably seemed to be more serious than previous ones, and comparatively more interested in the country's future than in personal enmities and intrigues. Political and religious extremism were successfully subdued, and the economy was flourishing despite the political crises of recent times. By late 1998, the government had succeeded in achieving its aim of halving inflation to 50 per cent on a yearly basis, a notable improvement from the close to 150 per cent that was seen during Çiller's premiership a few years earlier. A much-needed tax reform was pushed through the legislature, and most important, the different state agencies that had drifted apart were brought back on the same track. Also, in the domain of human rights and democratization, the struggle was taken up where it was left in mid-1996, and several improvements in this field have been noted by respected agencies such as Human Rights Watch.

The path of integration with Europe nevertheless suffered tremendously from the episode. A severe setback was the December 1997 Luxembourg summit of the EU, where Turkey was once again sidelined, this time in a more undiplomatic and tactless way than ever, from the list of membership

candidates. As far as relations with the EU is concerned, it is certain that the Islamist government played an important role in dissuading Europe even further from embracing Turkey. However, an equal amount of damage was done by the military role in politics, which brought back memories of the 1980 coup for the Europeans and further hampered Turkey's reputation in the EU. The Turks nevertheless felt offended by misplaced statements from EU officials, including Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker's opinion that 'it cannot be that a country in which torture is still going on can sit at table of the EU'.<sup>70</sup> Yılmaz's government responded by freezing political relations with the EU, and openly hinted at Germany's role in opposing Turkish membership, arguing instead that Germany's advocacy of the membership of the Central European countries reflected its need for '*Lebensraum*'. While such statements may have increased the gap with the EU, in the eyes of the Turkish public they restored some of the lost national honour. In the long run, however, the rejection by the EU may serve Turkey, in that it now knows that it needs to rely on itself and build connections to other trade partners elsewhere. Indeed, Turkey soon embarked on a renewed diplomatic offensive in the Caucasus and Central Asia, while intensifying its contacts with Israel in every field.<sup>71</sup> Through the new successes that ensued, Turkey gained back some of its self-confidence in the international arena. This was boosted even further by the gradual decimation of the rebellious Kurdish separatist PKK, a process that culminated in 1998–99 in first a standoff with Syria that resulted in Syria expelling the PKK and its leader Öcalan under the threat of Turkish military action, and finally in February 1999 in the capture of the PKK leader in Kenya.

However, the closure of the Welfare Party did not necessarily imply that the Islamist movement was defeated. Initially, there were some fears that part of the Islamist movement, feeling excluded from politics, would opt for non-democratic forms of pursuing their struggle. Nevertheless, the new Virtue party was able to keep the Party discipline of the RP – in fact all former RP parliamentarians with no exception joined the FP – and the party continued to develop in the opposite direction, that is, towards a reconciliation with the secular state. This said, cracks have appeared within the party with different forces pulling the party in different directions; nevertheless the FP has succeeded in keeping a united profile to the outside.

The secular–Islamic divide also remains in society. In the young generation, especially, a clear dichotomy can be seen between a larger, mainly urban secular stratum, and a smaller, Islamic-oriented stratum which predominantly has rural roots. This circumstance is clearly in concordance with Samuel Huntington's well-founded description of Turkey as 'a torn country'. On the other hand, the distinguished observer and historian, Professor İlber Ortaylı, puts forward the view that the secularist–Islamist

tension is actually an appearance, only on the surface. A reconciliation process is under way in the civil society despite the polarization in the political sphere. Rather, in this view, the problem is one of westernization:

It looks [like a democratization problem] but it is directly a westernization problem. In fact all of them [secularists as well as islamists] are individuals of a society which is modernizing, industrializing rapidly, which is opening to the outside world rapidly, and neither of the sides know either the East or the West, neither Islam nor Christianity nor secularism—none correctly know these ... Reconciliation will be achieved when society ... starts to know itself. We are already seeing the positive developments of this process. There is a growing interest in these subjects ... as well as moderation toward the other.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, many politically active Turks agree that Islamism is not a major threat to the republic and its stability. The old conflict between the extreme left and the extreme right is considered by many to have accentuated in later years. Naturally, the extreme right includes the Islamists and extreme leftists are secularists. But the controversy over Islam's role in the society is not the overshadowing concern for many Turks.

According to sources close to the military, it was thought in 1997 that the RP could have received a quarter of the votes in a national election if it kept its leadership, its financial resources, its organizational structure, and less tangible factors such as the very aura the party had created for itself. But with a new name, new faces and a financial capacity comparable to other parties, the figure would fall to only 12–15 per cent. This is believed by many observers to be the range of the actual support that Islamism commands in Turkish society, even given the recent Islamic revival. The RP, besides diehard Islamists, also attracted protest voters disillusioned with the infighting in the democratic right as well as what could be termed gratitude voters from the urban slums. Hence the argument goes that people who voted for RP for these reasons would not necessarily go on voting for Islamists under a different shape, but return to their former parties such as the DYP or ANAP. This thesis is supported by a diversity of sociological investigations, which asked Welfare voters (among others) to define their political identity. The result of the poll is seen in Table 1. As the table clearly shows, only half of the RP voters classify themselves politically as 'Muslims'. Hence it seems safe to assume that a distinctively lower proportion could be termed religious extremists. The core group of Islamic voters does seem to consist of somewhere between 10 to 15 per cent of the electorate.

TABLE 1  
POLITICAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF WELFARE PARTY VOTERS, 1997<sup>73</sup>

Political Self-identification	Percentage
Muslim	51.5
Muslim Democrat	28.2
Democrat	7.8
Nationalist	4.9
Liberal Democrat	1

The interim period between the fall of the RP–DYP coalition and the next general elections, which were subsequently determined to be held on 18 April 1999, was as noted earlier characterized by a return to stability. However, the government rested on the parliamentary support of two conservative parties and of two social-democrat parties. The only common denominator among the four parties was their aversion for Islamism and in particular the former government. Their co-operation was conditioned by a crisis mentality, in other words a perception of being a kind of national unity government. The economic and social policies of the parties differed according to their place in the political spectrum; and *within* the centre-left as well as the centre-right were dormant personal enmities and competition between antagonistic party leaders. The main ‘spoiler’ was CHP leader Deniz Baykal, who has earned notoriety as a career-minded politician whose main ambition has been to be the sole leader of the democratic left. However, the party had continuously lost votes since 1991 and Baykal attempted to exploit being in opposition. When allegations of corruption on the part of Mesut Yılmaz emerged in the fall of 1998, Baykal withdrew his party’s parliamentary support for the government, with the assertion that a prime minister facing corruption charges should immediately resign – something which would limit the life span of almost all Turkish governments drastically. In retrospect, Baykal’s move was immensely counterproductive. It opened the way for the formation of a minority caretaker government composed solely of Mr Ecevit’s DSP, resting on the support of ANAP and DYP.

Although this government followed policies little different from the previous one in which it had also taken part, the five months it stayed in power boosted the popularity of the DSP considerably. First and foremost, Ecevit’s government was lucky in being in power at the time of the apprehension of the country’s most wanted man, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. Credit for Öcalan’s capture was given to the DSP government’s judicious handling of the matter, in particular the diplomatic campaign that had dissuaded several European governments that had been vocal on the

Kurdish issue from granting the terrorist leader refuge. In particular, the diplomatic efforts that resulted in a blatant exposure of Greece as a state sponsoring terrorism showed the competence of the DSP administration, especially Foreign Minister Ismail Cem. A new assertiveness in Turkish foreign policy could be detected, propelled as mentioned earlier by the feeling of strength as compared to the two arch-rivals Syria and Greece. The Turkish military strength even allowed some observers to claim that the Turkish military is about to become the 'second most effective military force in the world', after the United States<sup>74</sup> – perhaps an unlikely statement at first sight, but the Turkish military's modernization programme of \$150 billion in the next 25 years nevertheless gives corroboration to the view of Turkey as an emerging regional great power.<sup>75</sup> In fact a few days before the 1999 elections, Ecevit declared that 'Europe may isolate Turkey as much as it desires to; Turkey is nevertheless a leader in its region.'<sup>76</sup> Besides these factors, the party's popularity also benefited immensely from the charisma and spotless reputation of its leader. Ecevit is among the few leading politicians who has never been accused of dishonesty despite his more than 30 years in politics.

The electoral campaign for the April 1999 elections differed little from its 1995 precursor. Again, the established parties' leaderships were totally unable to learn from the blatant mistakes of the past. The DYP's Çiller and ANAP's Yılmaz concentrated their respective campaigns on castigating each other's personalities, both tendering their resignation should their party fall behind the other. Their electoral campaign was hence more of an internal competition for the command of the democratic right than a campaign on the level of the whole country. An interesting development can nevertheless be noted in the profiles of the two parties, very much as a result of the political events surrounding the DYP-RP coalition. Tansu Çiller, whose campaign in 1995 had been based on fierce secularist rhetoric and on preventing the RP from coming to power, now competed with the FP for the religious votes of the Anatolian countryside. Çiller herself on some electoral posters even appears covering her hair, though far from wearing the Islamist type of headscarf. ANAP, on the other hand, developed a stronger secularist rhetoric than before and rid of its old Islamic wing turned into a neo-liberal party whereas the DYP became an openly stated conservative (*Mühafazakar*) party. In sum, the electorate of the two parties had diverged increasingly. But no party was judged to be in a position to compete for a first or second place in the polls shortly before the vote.

The FP, meanwhile, was predicted to be a front-runner in the elections, competing for the first place with the DSP.<sup>77</sup> However, Recai Kutan was

unable to match the charisma of Necmettin Erbakan, and the tarnished record of its one-year rule meant that it was aiming at sustaining its share of a fifth of the votes rather than increasing it. In March the FP, much like the CHP had done a few months earlier, made a move which turned out to be counter-productive. When the above-mentioned disgruntled deputies announced their intention to overthrow the DSP minority government, the FP approached them to clinch a deal. Accordingly, the FP would support their motion to overthrow the DSP government and subsequently vote to postpone the elections and give the disgruntled a new chance to be registered for the elections. In return, the disgruntled would support a FP motion to lift the article in the penal code on which Erbakan and his associates had been banned from politics. This Machiavellian scheme nevertheless failed to materialize and by the time the FP realized that the public reaction was vehemently negative to this political game, it had already lost a great deal of its credibility. The episode nevertheless gave another proof of the duplicity that all too often surrounds Turkish politics. In fact, it probably gave yet another push to Ecevit's popularity.

On the left, positions were changing as well. CHP leader Baykal displayed his usual attitude, lashing out at all parties but especially, of course, his rival Ecevit. The CHP continued to attract most leftist intellectuals and a good portion of the Alevis; however it was far from the mass-appeal party that it had been in the 1970s or even in 1991, when it mustered the support of over 20 per cent of the population, coming in third after the DYP. Many former supporters, including active politicians, had moreover abandoned the party in opposition to the leadership style of Mr Baykal and the lack of intra-party democracy. Meanwhile, the DSP was increasingly appearing to take a position as a centrist party, now very marginally on the left of centre. Ecevit on several different occasions publicly declared that the time of ideological rivalry is relegated to the past both globally and in Turkey; moreover he explained his surprisingly good relations with Turkish industrialists with the simple words that 'without industrialists there would be no jobs'.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the nationalist MHP was also thought to pass the 10 per cent threshold and enter parliament. Under the leadership of the academic Devlet Bahçeli, the MHP had dissociated itself from some of its more extremist, quasi-criminal youth wings and waged an election campaign on the stated aim to clean up the dirty politics of the country and eradicate corruption. Undoubtedly, the MHP also rode on the same nationalist tendency that helped the DSP.

The results of the elections nevertheless served several surprises, and were instructive as to the mood of the people. The deep fragmentation was still present, and a government would this time necessitate the support of at

least three parties. The winner of the election was the DSP, which received little over 22 per cent of the votes. The FP unexpectedly lost over a million votes and came in third with 15 per cent; ANAP and DYP were once again fighting an even race, but in a lower division this time. In the end, ANAP gathered an uneasy 13.2 per cent and DYP a disastrous 12.1 per cent. The CHP, not unexpectedly, fell below the threshold gathering 8.7 per cent. The most remarkable development was that the MHP more than doubled its vote, finishing as the second largest party with over 18 per cent of the vote.

TABLE 2  
1999 ELECTION RESULTS

Party	Percentage	Seats
Democratic Left (Ecevit)	22.1	136
Nationalist Movement (Bahçeli)	18.1	129
Virtue (Kutan)	15.2	110
Motherland (Yılmaz)	13.2	86
True Path (Çiller)	12.2	85
Republican People's (Baykal)	8.7	0
People's Democracy (Bozlak)	4.7	0
Independent Deputies	0.9	3

Western analysts immediately after the elections ascribed the success of the DSP and the MHP to a nationalist wave emanating after an 'euphoria' following the arrest of PKK leader Öcalan.<sup>79</sup> This analysis nevertheless presents only part of the truth, in the sense that a nationalist wind was blowing in Turkey, the MHP profiting from its demand actually to implement the death penalty passed on Abdullah Öcalan. But in fact, the main reason for the success of these two parties was related to public dissatisfaction with the four other main parties, their leaders, and very importantly, the corruption of the state. As mentioned earlier, the DSP benefited from the honest and statesmanlike aura of its leader, attracting especially former ANAP and CHP voters.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, the MHP benefited especially from former RP voters, that is potential FP voters, and secondly from former DYP voters.<sup>81</sup> In its campaign, the MHP was successful in projecting itself as a reformed nationalist party, instead of the band of extremist brigands many Turks recalled from the late 1970s. Moreover, its nationalist-conservative image with an allegiance both to the secularism of the republic and 'Turkish Islam' appealed to both Islamic- and secularist-minded voters. But the election, and especially the Nationalist performance, sheds light on the 1995 elections and the RP victory as well. In retrospect, it is now possible to conclude that the WP victory was the result less of a

genuine Islamic revival in large tracts of the population than a popular display of disappointment with the traditional political parties.

The RP was unable to sustain on the national level the popularity it had received by virtue of being an untried alternative. It managed to hold on to the municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul that it had captured in 1994, being rewarded for its accomplishments on the local level. But its short term in government had not impressed the electorate, which seemed to conclude that the RP, or now the FP, was no better than the established parties. In 1999 there remained only one untried alternative, one channel for the disappointed voters who desired neither to vote for the 'old' parties or for the FP. The MHP, astutely sensing the trend, had adjusted its profile and campaign – with an emphasis on anti-corruption measures – to attract these voters. Moreover, close to three million young people voted for the first time; the MHP was according to surveys able to capture over 30 per cent of the first-time voters. The result was beyond the wildest expectations of the party leadership.<sup>82</sup>

If a single conclusion is to be drawn from the 1999 elections, it is that voters sent signals that could no longer be misunderstood. In 1995, public disappointment had reduced the centre-right from 52 per cent in 1991 to 38 per cent. In 1999, the DYP and ANAP gathered no more than 26 per cent of the vote – half of what it had mustered eight years earlier. The message from the electorate to the DYP and ANAP was then obvious: the public was weary of the infighting in the centre-right, and the only way for the two parties to regain their lost credibility was to effect what they have been talking about for years – unity.

TABLE 3  
MAJOR SHIFTS IN TURKISH ELECTIONS 1991–99 (PER CENT)

Political Orientation	1991	1995	1999
Centre-Right	52	38	26
Centre-Left	34 <sup>83</sup>	26	31
Extreme Right	17	29	33

As far as the FP and, to a lesser extent, the DYP, is concerned, the elections proved that the climax of the utilization of religion in Turkish politics belongs to the past. The Islamic upsurge in politics may very well have turned out to be a wind that blew in with great force but exhausted itself, with the not so negligible 'help' of the military. In its place, a nationalist breeze is sweeping through the Turkish political landscape, a breeze that shows no signs of being significantly more enduring, being based just like the RP's popularity on dissatisfaction.

The underlying reason for both winds blowing into Turkish politics with such ease remains the division of the democratic right which left a suitable opening for them. And despite the clarity of the public message, most defeated party leaders pledged to stay in their posts. As the daily *Sabah* noted on 19 April, the leaders of the CHP, ANAP and DYP never won an election. All three lost every consecutive election that they have taken part in, only Deniz Baykal taking the consequences and resigning on 23 April.<sup>84</sup>

In a sense, the character of Turkish politics remains unchanged. The deep rifts within the democratic left and the democratic right that enabled first Welfare and later the Nationalists to reach their respective popularity show few signs of healing. Quite to the contrary, the underlying determinant of politics with some notable exceptions seems to remain personal ambition.

On the whole, there seems to be both reasons for optimism and pessimism as concerns Turkish politics and society. On the negative side, the great variations in political parties' electoral support have ultimately led to the extreme right being the largest political faction in 1999, surpassing both the democratic right and the democratic left. This is undoubtedly a cause for worry. But at the same time, the Turkish voters are showing their refusal to accept the workings of the current political system. It is no coincidence that the two parties least tainted by corruption, and who moreover waged campaigns against corruption, came out victorious in the elections. This shows a growing political culture among the Turkish electorate and will unequivocally, sooner or later, have to lead to the reform of the political system.

Turkey is therefore at a crossroads. Will the country be able to clear up its various problems or will the Turkish politicians remain unable to refrain from operating in a complicated political environment of intrigues and personal differences? The near future will doubtlessly show the path Turkey will embark upon. Turkey is muddling through internally and increasing its regional stature externally, but the question whether any comprehensive reforms of the political system can be expected remains unanswered.

#### NOTES

1. 'Islamists Come First', *Middle East International*, No.516, 5 Jan. 1996.
2. *Ibid.*
3. For a detailed overview of the 1995 parliamentary elections, see Harald Schüller, 'Parlamentswahlen in der Türkei', *Orient*, Vol.37, No.2 (1996).
4. See also 'Unedifying Race for Power', in *Middle East International*, No.517, 19 Jan. 1996.
5. *NTV Private Television Channel*, 7 April 1999.
6. On the issue of fragmentation, see also M. Hakan Yavuz, 'Turkey's Imagined Enemies: Kurds and Islamists', *The World Today* (April 1996).

7. For an account of the episode, see 'The Özal Era', in Erik Cornell, *Turkey in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges, Opportunities, Threats* (Richmond, 1999); or 'The Özal Revolution', in Nicole and Hugh Pope, *Turkey Unveiled* (New York, 1998).
8. See Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 'The Logic of Contemporary Turkish Politics', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.1, No.3 (Sept. 1997).
9. Pope and Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, p.331.
10. 'Islamists Close In', *Middle East International*, No.518, 2 Feb. 1996.
11. 'New Government at Last', in *Middle East International*, No.521, 15 March 1996.
12. *Milliyet* and *Turkish Daily News*, 26–28 Feb. 1996.
13. Private Television Channel ATV, 27 Feb. 1996.
14. 'Tensions Rise with Damascus', *Middle East International*, No.528, 21 June 1996.
15. 'Islamists Consolidate', *Middle East International*, No.527, 7 June 1996.
16. See also the biography of Çiller: Faruk Bildirici, *Maskeli Leydi: Tekmili Birden Tansu Çiller* (Istanbul, 1997).
17. The leader of the Democratic Left Party, Bülent Ecevit, hence reduced the formation of the WP-TPP government to a 'Money-Laundering Operation'. See 'Erbakan at the Helm', *Middle East International*, No.529, 5 July 1996; also Pope and Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, p.335.
18. See 'The Erbakan Whirlwind Sweep through Turkey', in *Middle East International*, No.530, 19 July 1996.
19. See e.g., Pope and Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, p.313.
20. See Sencer Ayata, 'Patronage, Party, and State: The Politicization of Islam in Turkey', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.50, No.1, 1996, p.44. See also Şerif Mardin, 'The Nakshibendi Order in Turkish History', in Richard Tapper (ed.), *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State* (London, 1991).
21. For the Motherland Party, see Üstün Ergüder, 'The Motherland Party, 1983–89', and for the TPP, Feride Acar, 'The True Path Party, 1983–89', in Metin Heper and Jacob Landau (eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey* (London, 1991).
22. See 'Islamists Consolidate', *Middle East International*, No.527, 7 June 1996. In Nov. of the same year another set of by-elections was held, where the WP still polled over 30 per cent. See, e.g., 'A Troubled System, in *Middle East International*, No.537, 8 Nov. 1996.
23. See Sencer Ayata, 'Patronage, Party, and State', pp.47–8.
24. See Doğu Ergil, 'Shariah and Darkness', *Turkish Probe*, 21 Feb. 1997.
25. For a detailed analysis of Islam in Turkey, see Svante E. Cornell and Ingvar Svanberg, 'Turkey', in David Westerlund and Ingvar Svanberg (eds.), *Islam Outside the Arab World* (Richmond, 1999).
26. See *Hürriyet*, 3 Feb. 1997; *Milliyet*, 3 and 4 Feb. 1997.
27. See M. Akif Beki, 'The Coup Conflict', *Turkish Probe*, 7 Feb. 1997. See also 'Uncomfortable Questions', *Middle East International*, No.543, 7 Feb. 1997.
28. See *Hürriyet*, 4 and 6 Feb. 1997.
29. See *Hürriyet*, 5 Feb. 1997.
30. See *Hürriyet*, 5 Feb. 1997.
31. *Hürriyet*, 16 and 17 Feb. 1997. See Raşit Gürdilek, 'Not the Best of Images', *Turkish Probe*, 21 Feb. 1997. See also See *Hürriyet*, 16 and 17 Feb. 1997.
32. See 'Secular Forces Rally', in *Middle East International*, No.544, 21 Feb. 1997.
33. *Milliyet*, 25 Feb. 1997.
34. See *Hürriyet*, 5 and 6 Feb. 1997.
35. See 'Turbulent Times', *Middle East International*, No.545, 7 March 1997. See also accounts in *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Yüzyil*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, 1 and 2 March 1997.
36. See newspaper reports, for example *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul), 2 March 1997; *Radikal* (Istanbul), 1 and 2 March 1997.
37. See *Hürriyet*, 2 March 1997.
38. For the implementation of these decisions, in particular the education bill, see 'Education at Issue', *Middle East International*, No.557, 8 Aug. 1997.
39. See *Milliyet*, 3 March 1997. See also Fikret Bila, 'Genelkurmay: Erbakanla Uyum Yok', [Chiefs of Staff: No Unanimity with Erbakan], *Milliyet*, 3 March 1997.
40. See, e.g., *Yeni Yüzyil*, 3 March 1997.

41. See *Milliyet*, 6 March 1997; *Hürriyet*, 6 March 1997.
42. See *Hürriyet*, 4 March 1997. Also television new broadcast in private channels *InterStar* and *Kanal D*, 3 March 1997.
43. See 'Temporary Relief', in *Middle East International*, No.547, 4 April 1997.
44. 'The Crisis Drags On', in *Middle East International*, No.552, 13 June 1997.
45. See e.g., Üstün Reinart, 'Ambition for All Seasons', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.3, No.1 (March 1999).
46. See *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, May 1997; and *Turkish Daily News*, 8 Oct. 1997, 11 Nov. 1997, and 29 Dec. 1997.
47. See *Hürriyet*, 12 June 1997. See also 'The Crisis Drags On', *Middle East International*, No.552, 13 June 1997.
48. See 'Erbakan Forced Out', in *Middle East International*, No.553, 27 June 1997, *Hürriyet*, 18 March 1997.
49. *Ibid.*
50. See *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, 20 and 21 June 1997.
51. See *Hürriyet*, 24 and 25 June 1997
52. For defections from the TPP, see e.g., *Hürriyet*, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, and 29 June 1997.
53. See *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, 30 June and 1 July 1997; 'An Unlikely alliance', *Middle East International*, No.554, 11 July 1997.
54. *Hürriyet*, 26 June 1997.
55. See *Hürriyet*, 3 July 1997; *Turkish Daily News*, 10 Oct. 1997.
56. See *Hürriyet*, 30 June 1997.
57. See the chapter on the military in Erik Cornell, *Turkey in the Twenty-First Century* (Lund, 1997) (forthcoming in English).
58. The so-called *Küskünler* or 'the disgruntled'.
59. See *Cumhuriyet*, 19 March 1999.
60. Regarding the accusations against Aksener, see *Hürriyet*, 2 July 1997; 'Turkey's Watergate', *Middle East International*, No.555, 25 July 1997.
61. See Robert Olson, 'The Rose of Istanbul', *Middle East International*, No.556, 8 Aug. 1997.
62. See Svante E. Cornell, 'Beyond Öcalan: A Window of Opportunity?', *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol.3, No.31, 21 Feb. 1999.
63. See also the discussion in Sami Kohen, 'Possible Ban on Party Divides Turkey', *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 Nov. 1997.
64. See for example the editorials of the editor-in-chief of *Turkish Daily News*, 12 Nov. 1997, 13 and 19 Jan. 1998, among others.
65. A statement which was repeated in the very words of the chairman of the Constitutional Court while making the decision public. See *Hürriyet*, 17 Jan. 1998.
66. See *Milliyet*, 14 Dec. 1997.
67. See *Turkish Daily News*, 19 Jan. 1998; *New York Times*, 17 Jan. 1998.
68. See *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 Jan. 1998.
69. See interview with Gül in Scott Peterson, 'Can Miniskirts and Veils Walk amid Mosques?', *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 Jan. 1998.
70. Originally stated in an interview with *Luxemburger Wort*. See *Xinhua*, 13 Dec. 1997, *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol.97-1, No.112, 15 Dec. 1997.
71. On the Caucasus, see chapter 7, 'Turkey: Priority to Azerbaijan', in Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (Richmond, 1999); on ties to Israel, see Amikam Nachmani, 'The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie', *Middle East Quarterly* (June 1998), pp.19-29, and Joseph Leitmann-Santa Cruz and Çağrı Erdem, 'Turkey: Benefiting from David's Army: Turkish-Israeli Defense Cooperation', *The International Relations Journal*, Winter 1997.
72. Interview with Professor Ortaylı in *Turkish Daily News*, 5 Jan. 1998.
73. The table is taken from an opinion poll published in *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Oct. 1997.
74. Private Communication by sources close to the military, Ankara, April 1998.
75. Of the \$150 billion, \$65 billion will be allocated to the air force, \$60 million to the ground forces, and \$25 billion to the navy. See e.g. Nachmani, 'The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie', *Middle East Quarterly* (June 1998), p.25.

76. *NTV* private television interview with Ecevit, 11 April 1999.
77. *Turkish Daily News*, 16 April 1999.
78. *NTV* private television interview with Ecevit, 11 April 1999.
79. See e.g. Andrew Finkle, 'Ecevit Quits as Turkey Veers to the Right', *The Times*, 20 April 1999; Evangelos Antonaros, 'Die Wahren Sieger sind die Rechtsextremisten', *Die Welt*, 20 April 1999; 'Fascister Går Framåt i Turkiskt Val', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 April 1999; Howard Schneider, 'Rightist Party's Gain Could Stir Ethnic Tension in Turkey', *The Washington Post*, 20 April 1999.
80. The 2 per cent drop in CHP votes and the 6 per cent drop of ANAP votes accurately make up for the 7.5 per cent upsurge of the DSP.
81. As shown by the sociological research conducted in the months before the election by Tarhan Erdem. Erdem's projections on election day proved very close to the final result (displayed continuously on private *NTV* television), and his account of the voters' movements also shed light on the developments. See also Taner Altunay, '18 Nisan'ın Sırrı', *Milliyet*, 22 April 1999.
82. 'Bu Kadar Oy Bekleliyorduk' ['We Didn't Expect This Many Votes'], *Cumhuriyet*, 20 April 1999.
83. The SHP which was the largest party of the left in 1991 had an electoral alliance with the pro-Kurdish DEP party, which was subsequently closed down. Its successor HADEP appeared on its own in 1995 and 1999, at both occasions gathering around 4.5 per cent of the vote. Hence the centre-left's figures for 1991 are in fact slightly exaggerated.
84. *Hurriyet*, 24 April 1999; *Turkish Daily News*, 24 April 1999.