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**TURKEY'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL EVOLUTION  
AND THE FUTURE**

*by William Hale*

Paper presented at the international conference on "US and EU Common Approaches to Turkey"  
*Rome IAI 20-21 November 1998*

## Turkey's Domestic Political Evolution and the Future

William Hale, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

(Paper for presentation at the Conference 'US-European Common Approaches to Turkey', Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, 20-21 November 1998)

For those unfamiliar with the story, the first part of this paper summarises the main developments in Turkey's politics since the last general elections, held in December 1995, and the current position of the government with its short-run prospects. The second part tries to broaden the focus, by considering future perspectives in a variety of contexts. These include the future of the party system and possible constitutional changes, the prospects for political Islamism and the political position of the armed forces, the human rights regime and the Kurdish question, and deeper changes affecting political culture, and the relationship between the state and civil society.

### (1) Recent Developments and Short-Run Prospects

#### (a) Turkey's Party Structure

Probably the most serious political problem currently faced by Turkey is the extreme fragmentation and instability of the party system, which has the predictable result of producing weak and fragile coalition or minority governments. In the last general elections, held in December 1995, no single party won more than 22% of the vote, though the pro-Islamist Welfare Party (Refah) led by Necmettin Erbakan came nearest to this, with 21.4%. Neither Refah or any of the four other parties which surmounted the 10% threshold necessary to qualify for any seats in the 550-member Grand National Assembly, Turkey's unicameral parliament, came near to securing an overall majority. Moreover, since the elections, no less than five other minor parties have been established or re-formed by defections from the major parties, so there are currently ten parties with parliamentary representation, plus 15 independents (for details, see the Appendix). Since December 1995 there have been three governments, all of them coalitions and two of them minority governments, with an average life-span of under 11 months, and fairly long periods with no established government, or a temporary caretaker administration. Taking the longer period since May 1993, there have been five governments, lasting an average of just over 12 months each. As a result, governments have drifted on without direction, or badly divided, and unable to implement effective or credible programmes to deal with pressing economic, social, cultural and external challenges.

Solutions for this phenomenon are not easy to establish, let alone implement.<sup>1</sup> Explanations are also complex and uncertain, but can probably be reduced to three main factors. First, the application of a proportional representation system of elections since 1961 has almost certainly increased the tendency towards a multiplication of parties, in spite of the application of a minimum vote threshold since 1983. However, the effects of this can be exaggerated, since it is not certain that changing the electoral system would, by itself, help to overcome the problem (the point is returned to later). Second as Maurice Duverger remarks 'multi-partism arises from the mutual independence of sets of antitheses' - that is, for instance, from fault-lines run across separate socio-economic, cultural or ethnic domains.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> However, some suggestions are made later in this paper: see p.000.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (London, Methuen, 1959) pp.231-34. Duverger applies his analysis primarily to France under the Fourth Republic, but it also seems quite appropriate in the present Turkish case.

Such divisions can clearly be located in the present Turkish party array, along the classic lines of left versus right (though this divide has become much less sharp or acute since the global collapse of communism and 'old socialism') of secularism versus Islamism, and ethnic or quasi-ethnic cleavages between Sunni and Alevi Muslims,<sup>3</sup> or between the ethnically Turkish majority and the Kurdish ethnic minority. Thus, the parties can be summarily be classified as those of the centre-right and centre-left, of those of the Islamist persuasion as opposed to the majority of predominantly secularist parties (though some of the centre-right parties also have Islamist tinges) and of parties with important blocs of support from Alevis or Kurds,<sup>4</sup> as opposed to those identified with the Turkish-Sunni majority. In most cases, individual parties can be identified with more than one of these cross-cutting elements.

Third, the party structure was severely fractured by the actions of the military regime of 1980-83, which dissolved all the pre-1980 parties, establishing new ones in their place. However, in practice it could not prevent the pre-1980 party leaders establishing successor parties, which then set up in competition with those which the military regime had allowed. Thus, Süleyman Demirel, who remained officially excluded from the political fray between 1980 and 1987, established the True Path Party (DYP) now led by Mrs Tansu Çiller, as a rival to the Motherland Party (Anap). The latter was founded by Turgut Özal with the permission (albeit not the encouragement) of the Generals, and is current led by Mesut Yılmaz. Similarly, on the centre-left, the present Republican People's Party (CHP) under Deniz Baykal is effectively the successor of the party of the same name led before 1980 by Bülent Ecevit.<sup>5</sup> However, Ecevit - who, like Demirel, was constitutionally excluded from official participation in politics until 1987 - nonetheless established a separate party, known as the Democratic Left Party (DSP) as a rival of the CHP and its predecessor, the former Social Democrat Populist Party (SHP).<sup>6</sup> Thus, the centre-right is divided between two parties similar in their policies, Anap and DYP, just as the centre-left is split between the CHP and DSP. These historical divisions are reinforced by personal rivalries - currently and most notably, between Tansu Çiller and Mesut Yılmaz on the centre-right, and between Bülent Ecevit and Deniz Baykal on the centre-left. Since each of these parties had built up its own network of patron-client dependencies at the political grass roots, mergers between them would be severely obstructed by locally institutionalised pressures.

<sup>3</sup> Alevi-ism can effectively be treated as a Turkish mystical version of Shi'ism, although it differs from the classic 'twelver' Shi'ism of, for instance, Iran, in important theological and political respects. Although no reliable data are available, it is said to command the loyalties of around 20% of the population. Unfortunately there is little literature in English on the Turkish Alevis, but see David Shankland, 'Diverse Paths of Change: Alevis and Sunni in Rural Anatolia', in Paul Stirling, ed., *Culture and Economy: Changes in Turkish Villages* (Huntingdon, Eothen Press, 1993) pp. 46-64.

<sup>4</sup> Both the nominally centre-left parties - that is, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Democratic Left Party (DSP) - are apparently supported by Alevis, although neither party issues an open or specifically pro-Alevi appeal. The only overtly and legal pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, the People's Democracy Party (HaDeP) has no parliamentary representation, but it also has to be said that the Welfare Party also formerly had the support of a large number of Turkish Kurds. These cross-cutting affiliations and identities illustrate the complexity of the model proposed by Duverger.

<sup>5</sup> This must be treated as a summary explanation of an extremely convoluted story. One of the parties allowed by the military to compete in the 1983 elections was the centre-left Populist Party, but this was challenged by the Social Democracy Party, which was excluded. The latter rapidly established itself, however, and the two parties merged in 1985 as the Social Democrat Populist Party (SHP). In 1992 a group of dissidents led by Deniz Baykal broke away from the party, to re-establish the Republican People's Party (CHP) but this re-united with the SHP under the CHP's banner, and Baykal's leadership, in February 1995.

<sup>6</sup> See previous note.

(b) *Government since 1995*

On 12 March 1996, following the indecisive elections of 24 December 1995 and after over two months of fruitless negotiations between the main parties, Mesut Yılmaz formed a centre-right coalition with the True Path Party.<sup>7</sup> However, this fell apart on 12 April, when Refah tabled a motion to set up a Commission of Enquiry to investigate Mrs Çiller's alleged malpractices in awarding privatisation contracts the previous year, during her premiership. Since around half the Anap MPs (including Yılmaz) failed to support her, the vote was carried. Relations between Anap and DYP reached breaking point, leading to the government's resignation on 5 June. With an evident promise from the Refah leader Necmettin Erbakan of dropping the corruption investigation, Mrs Çiller then entered into negotiations with Refah. The 'Refahyol' coalition was announced on 27 June 1996, with Erbakan as Prime Minister, and Mrs Çiller as deputy premier and Foreign Minister. Under the coalition protocol, Mrs Çiller was due to take over the premiership after one year. The government carried a vote of confidence on 8 July by 278-265 votes. The (then seven) members of the ultra-nationalist-cum-Islamist Great Unity Party (BBP), a breakaway from Anap, voted in favour of the new government, but 14 of Mrs Çiller's backbenchers stayed away, abstained or voted against. On 16 July, eight of them formally broke away from the DYP to form the Democratic Turkey Party (DTP) under Hüsamettin Cindoruk.

The first defect of the Refahyol government was the weakness of Çiller's hold over her own party (rather than that of Erbakan over his) and the fact that her entente with Erbakan simply was not credible except part of a cynical trade-off over the corruption charges. Opposition was further heightened by an automobile crash at Susurluk in western Anatolia, on 3 November 1996. In the accident, Hüseyin Kocadağ, the Head of the Istanbul Police Academy, Abdullah Çatlı, a 'Grey Wolf' ultra-nationalist militant and gangster who had been implicated in seven murders in 1978 and convicted on drugs charges in Switzerland, and Çatlı's mistress Gonca Us, were all killed in the same car. The driver of the car was Sedat Bucak, a DYP MP and Kurdish chieftain heading a large gang of 'village guards' (that is pro-government Kurdish militiamen paid for and trained by the armed forces) who was the only occupant to survive the accident. The crash suggested credible links between the security forces, the 'Grey Wolves', organised crime and pro-government Kurdish chiefs, but it has still to be properly explained. By the beginning of November 1998, 25 prosecutions had been launched, covering crimes including murder, gangsterism and narcotics smuggling, in which 75 suspects had been charged and the parliamentary immunities of both Bucak and of Mehmet Ağar, the Minister of Interior in the Refahyol government, had been lifted. However, after two years, only two convictions had been concluded, both of relatively low-ranking police officers. Most of the alleged ringleaders in these crimes were still at large, in some cases abroad.<sup>8</sup>

There was also fierce opposition to Erbakan's Islamist agenda from much of the state structure (the army, judiciary, and the civil service) as well as civil society (business and trades unions, the media, and other pressure groups). A prominent feature of this was Erbakan's foreign policy, which was quite at variance with the generally pro-western line pursued by Tansu Çiller, as Foreign Minister.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This and the subsequent narrative is based on contemporary Turkish press reports, mainly in the dailies *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet*. Specific references are given only for other sources, for quotations, economic statistics, or what appear to have been 'exclusive' reports.

<sup>8</sup> For a useful summary of the scandal, as it stood in November 1998, see *Milliyet*, 3 November 1998.

<sup>9</sup> For details, see Philip Robins, 'Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan', *Survival*, Vol. 38 (1997) pp. 82-100.

Domestically, the most contentious question faced by the government by early 1997 was the widely supported proposal to extend compulsory primary education from five to eight years. In principle, the Welfare Party did not oppose extending the period of compulsory education, but insisted on the continuation of the then-existing system, providing for separate Islamic junior high schools (nominally 'Schools for Imams and Preachers'). The alternative proposal, supported by the Motherland Party and the centre-left parties, called for the extension of the existing non-clerical state primary schools to cover the first eight years of education, and the gradual amalgamation of all junior high schools with the primary schools. It was this issue which was to prove a fatal cause of conflict for the government.

In the economy, the growth of GNP continued at a rate of 7.1% in 1996 and an estimated 8.2% in 1997. However, the government's plan to reduce inflation by bringing down the deficit in the consolidated budget to zero in 1997 proved to be a chimera, as the expected revenues from privatisation failed to materialise, and hefty wage hikes were awarded to civil servants together with large increases in agricultural subsidies. As a result, the budget deficit rose to an estimated 2.181 trillion (thousand billion) Liras in 1997, or about 9% of GNP, and consumer price inflation continued at 80.4% in 1996 and 85.9% in 1997.<sup>10</sup> In dealing with the Kurdish problem, the government failed to keep its promise to end the state of emergency regime: the fighting against the insurgents of the PKK continued, with attendant human rights abuses, and no end clearly in sight.

Public frustration at creeping Islamisation and corruption emerged in early 1997. In February, in the 'one minute of darkness' campaign, millions of ordinary citizens turned off their lights at 9.00 p.m. every evening as a powerful expression of protest, and frequently came out into the streets banging saucepans or joining candlelit processions. This was accompanied by protest marches by women's groups, Muslims of the Alevis sect, and secularist opinion generally, as well as fierce opposition from both business, the trades unions and the mass media. The conflict between the government and the military came out into the open on 2 February 1997, when the Welfare Party mayor of Sincan, an outer suburb of Ankara, organised 'Jerusalem Night' celebrations, at which calls for *jihad* were issued from the platform. In response, on 4 February, the army rolled its tanks down the main street of Sincan during the morning rush hour. The claim by the General Staff that this was just a normal training activity was very hard to believe, since it was fairly clear that the military demonstration was intended as a warning to the government, and Erbakan in particular. At a meeting on 28 February of the National Security Council (NSC), which brings together the armed forces commanders together with the President, Prime Minister and other ministers, the military chiefs raised the heat by issuing a long list of 'recommendations' to the government. The called among other things for legal measures to ban fundamentalist propaganda, strict adherence to the secularist provisions of the constitution, implementation of the eight-year education plan according to the secularist proposals, and a limitation of the number of Schools for Imams and Preachers. Erbakan accepted these recommendations, but did very little to implement them. Nonetheless, the military continued to insist on them at subsequent NSC meetings.

It was against this background that the Refahiyol government collapsed in June 1997. On 18 June Erbakan resigned, expecting to reconstruct the government by incorporating the BBP and to hand over the premiership to Tansu Çiller. However, President Demirel then passed on the office to Yılmaz, as he was constitutionally entitled to do. This provoked large-scale defections from the DYP to the DTP (as well as independents) reducing the DYP to 95 (later 92) seats. On 30

<sup>10</sup> Data from Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Turkey*, 1st quarter, 1998.

June, Yılmaz announced his successor government - a coalition of Anap, Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DSP) and Cindoruk's DTP, with outside support from the Republican People's Party, plus some independents. On 12 July 1997 this received a vote of confidence of 281-256 votes. In the current parliamentary arithmetic, Anap has 136 seats, while the DSP has 61 and the DTP 19, giving the government a total of 216 seats, or 54 seats short of an overall majority (270, allowing for the 11 current vacancies: see Appendix ). Hence, the government is dependent for its survival on the outside support of the CHP, with its 55 seats. Following the dissolution of the Welfare Party by the Constitutional Court in February 1998 (see below) a successor has been set up in the shape of the Virtue Party (*Fazilet*) led by Recai Kutan, which currently has 144 MPs. It is followed in size by the DYP with 96 seats: there are also 13 MPs of minor, mostly ultra-rightist, parties and 15 independents (see Appendix).

Since its establishment in June 1997, the government has proved more durable than many observers expected. To its credit, it succeeded in passing the eight year compulsory education bill in August 1997, soon after coming into office, and has also passed a tax reform bill in July 1998 which, if properly implemented, should succeed in filling at least part the gap in the state's finances. In the struggle against the PKK, the Turkish army appears to have re-established control over most of the south-east. The PKK itself is evidently in severe disarray, following the agreement with Syria of October 1998, and its leader Abdullah Öcalan has apparently taken refuge in Russia. However, the effectiveness of the government has been badly undermined by dissension between Anap and the DSP (mainly on economic policy issues) and its failure so far to make a more effective attack on the problems of inflation and the public sector deficit. Although, quite exceptionally, the government is expected to meet its budgetary targets for 1998, inflation has continued at a very high rate by international standards. In the year to September 1998, the rise in the wholesale price index stood at 65.9% and that of consumer prices at 80.4%, forcing the government to revise its wholesale price inflation target for 1998 upwards from 50% to 58%. The budget deficit for the first nine months of 1998 reached TL 3,033 trillion, or \$10.64 billion, with an expected public sector borrowing requirement equivalent to 9% of predicted GNP. While annualised GNP growth slowed to 4% in the second quarter of 1998, compared with annual growth of 8.2% in 1997, and the foreign trade deficit has widened, the government's domestic debt stock rose to TL9, 947 trillion at the end of September, or \$34.9 billion, and its overseas debt to around \$100 billion. In the wake of the economic collapse in Russia and east Asian markets, the Istanbul stock market composite index fell by 50% in dollar terms between the end of July and the end of October.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that there has been little effective action to deal with allegedly widespread corruption, and the apparent connection between sections of the security forces and organised crime which was revealed by the Susurluk affair, has also undermined public confidence in the government, and the political system generally. In fact, the trail originally unearthed by the Susurluk crash has broadened, and has not left the Yılmaz government unscathed. Admittedly, the most concrete allegations are those levied against the former DYP minister Mehmet Ağar, who is accused of sanctioning an international drug-smuggling operation, of providing Abdullah Çatlı, who died in the crash, with false identity papers and passport, of providing a diplomatic passport to mafia boss Yaşar Öz, who was wanted at the time by Interpol, and protecting the murderers of the casino magnate Ömer Lütfü Topal. However, the web has also spread to former Anap Minister of State Eyüp Aşık, who was forced to resign in September 1998, following the release of taped conversations between himself and another Turkish mafia godfather, Alaatin

<sup>11</sup> Data from *Briefing* (Ankara, weekly) 26 October 1998, p.18; 5 October 1998, p.33; 7 September 1998, p.24; 3 August 1998, p.26; *Milliyet*, 5 November 1998; Reuter's, 26 October 1998, and information from ABN-Amro, London.

Çakıcı, warning him of a plan to arrest him by the state intelligence organisation MIT: (Çakıcı, who is currently in gaol in France, faces possible indictment in Turkey for over fifty murders, including that of his previous wife Uğur and a former cabinet minister Cavit Çağlar). On 4 November 1998, Mehmet Gedik, the Anap party chairman in Bursa province, was also arrested for alleged links with the wanted Bursa businessman Erol Evcil, who is in turn alleged to have arranged the murder of money lender and banker Nesim Malki. Meanwhile, Deniz Baykal has alleged that he has further files linking the present government with organised crime, leading to accusations of blackmail by Ecevit. While the government is clearly attempting to point the finger of blame at Mrs Çiller and the DYP, there was a widespread suspicion that, as the Ankara weekly *Briefing* has put it, 'the efforts of the government currently reflect a struggle for control between Yılmaz and Çiller over a highly corrupt system, rather than an effort to clean it up.'<sup>12</sup>

In parliament, the government's most immediate source of weakness is its dependence on the outside support of Baykal, who prefers to keep Yılmaz on a short leash rather than give the administration full support by joining it. Two reasons can be suggested as to why the government has been able to muddle through, avoiding total collapse. First, although the government has a weak parliamentary position, there is insufficient support for any alternative, which would probably take the form of a coalition between Fazilet and DYP - effectively, a reconstruction of the 'Refahyol' government. Even with the support of the small ultra-rightist parties, which is not a foregone conclusion, and some independents, such a coalition could only muster about 260 seats, compared with around 280 for the present pro-government parties plus some independents. A new Islamist-DYP coalition would almost certainly encounter the strongest opposition from the military and much of civil society. Many MPs (including some in the DYP) will probably wish to avoid this. Almost certainly, President Demirel would try to avoid appointing Recai Kutan (who is effectively the representative of Erbakan) as Prime Minister, and is deeply hostile to Mrs Çiller. Second, Baykal prefers to stay out of the government, since he believes that its failures should redound to his advantage, enabling his CHP to take over from Ecevit's DSP as the standard-bearer of the centre-left. However, he does not wish to be seen as the instrument by which a generally pro-secularist government fell, and the Islamists returned to power, since both he and his followers are strongly committed to the secularist position. Hence, he has continued his current ambivalent attitude, by supporting the government in votes of confidence and other agreed measures, but only supporting other motions on a case-by-case basis. Since the start of the government, he has also been pressing for early general elections. Although it is not at all clear that his party would do particularly well in them, it is likely that it would at least perform more strongly than it did in December 1995, when it only just scraped over the 10% threshold: hence, new elections would almost certainly leave it in a stronger position than it is at present.

(c) *The short-run outlook: early elections? Prospects and implications.*

Under the Constitution, general elections will not be required until December 2000. However, in an attempt to stabilise his relationship with Baykal, Yılmaz met the CHP leader on 5 June 1998. He agreed that, in return for the CHP's support for an agreed legislative programme for the rest of 1998, early elections would be called in April 1999, to coincide with the local elections which would then be due (the exact date has since been fixed as 18 April). As his part of the bargain, Baykal agreed to support the government on a number of important measures,

<sup>12</sup> *Briefing*, 19 October 1998, p.9.

which were said to include bills to reform the social security system and local government, and a so-called 'Struggle against Reactionaryism' (read Islamism) law. The present government would resign at the end of 1998, to be succeeded by a temporary 'low-profile' government in which neither party leader would play an active part, although they would give it their support. This would stay in office until polling day. Misgivings about this agenda were then expressed by Ecevit and Cindoruk, but on 25 July it was announced that they had agreed to the plan. Accordingly, the proposal was put to parliament on 30 July. Since both the DYP and Fazilet support the idea of early elections (indeed, they favour holding them as early as possible) the motion passed by a majority of 486 to 11, with 44 abstentions or absences.

After this apparently firm decision, doubts about the plan began to surface during the summer. Cindoruk, whose party would almost certainly fail to surmount the hurdle posed by the current election law, raised both constitutional and practical objections to the plan. Instead, he favoured running the local elections as required in April, but postponing the general elections until the autumn of 1999. President Demirel appeared to take a similar position. Doubts were also voiced by some Anap ministers, who now expressed a preference for holding the elections as early as possible, perhaps in December 1998. Although the DSP appeared to abide by the original plan, the Prime Minister appeared to be tossing the whole idea back into the melting pot in early September, when he suggested that he was not happy with the plan, and appealed to the CHP to re-evaluate the situation. Surprisingly, Baykal responded by saying that 'certain parties [including, presumably, his own] are within their rights to reconsider a proposal they have already approved in parliament'.<sup>13</sup> However, while the pundits were trying to digest and interpret these Delphic pronouncements, Yilmaz turned the tables once more on 10 September by announcing that the elections 'will be held on 18 April 1999'.<sup>14</sup> According to the Prime Minister, there could be 'no question' of holding elections in November or December 1998 or postponing them until after April 1999, though the last possibility could be discussed if a proposal to that effect came from the CHP.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, at a subsequent meeting on 23 October, Yilmaz kept up the pressure on Baykal, by trying to persuade him to join the coalition, and drop his demand for a 'low profile government', so that a broadly-based administration could carry on into 1999. In a television programme later that day, he threatened that if the CHP failed to live up to its promise to pass the five agreed laws then their original agreement would be deemed null and void, and he would not resign as planned. Passage of the legislation was in turn judged to be difficult, since by mid-November parliament would be heavily preoccupied with preparing the 1999 budget.<sup>16</sup> Later, Baykal firmly rejected the idea of joining the government on the grounds that the move was designed to 'melt away the left': if the five laws were not passed by the end of the year, this would not be the CHP's fault, he claimed.<sup>17</sup>

Given this fluid and confusing situation, there seems to be something like a 50-50 chance that the elections will be held in April 1999. Alternatively, if the Yilmaz-Baykal agreement breaks down, then the Prime Minister might decide to opt for elections in February, as a means of clearing up the uncertainty.<sup>18</sup> A third option for Yilmaz would be to stay in office until the end of 1999, or even 2000, as he is

<sup>13</sup> Quoted, *ibid*, 7 September 1998, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted, *Milliyet*, 11 September 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> *Briefing*, 26 October 1998, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted, *Milliyet*, 3 November 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Suggestions of an even earlier date, including December 1998, have been made, but a snap election would appear to be ruled out for organisational reasons, according to the chairman of the Supreme Electoral Board, Tufan Algaz: *Briefing*, 19 October 1998, p. 6.



under pressure to do from business and other opinion. However, this would assume either that Baykal and his party join the government, or that the Prime Minister can reach a viable and long-term agreement with the CHP for outside support, both of which seem very problematic at present. Apart from Baykal's reluctance to join the cabinet, the formation of a new coalition would almost certainly encounter bitter disputes, especially between the CHP and DSP, on the distribution of government portfolios, with the CHP demanding ministries which both Yilmaz and Ecevit would be unwilling to concede. For his part, Hüsametdin Cindoruk clearly opposes the proposal of general elections next April, but his party only has 19 seats. Hence, he is in no position to prevent it, if the other government parties, plus CHP, Fazilet and DYP, abide by their previous decisions.<sup>19</sup> President Demirel is known to oppose the plan for April elections, but his constitutional powers are constrained, since he effectively only has powers of limited postponement rather than absolute veto over any bills passed by parliament. He has correctly pointed out that he has the sole right to appoint the Prime Minister, and could exercise this to refuse the government's nomination for the head of the temporary government. However, this would probably not damage the plan fatally. The temporary government would in any case have to win a vote of confidence in parliament, limiting Demirel's range of choices. Lastly, it should be pointed out that there is no great enthusiasm for early elections among the public, or the grass-roots structures of the ruling parties: hence, abandonment of the plan would probably not provoke much public opposition.

Predicting the results of the elections, assuming they are held in early 1999, is very hazardous, since much could change in the intervening period. Mid-term opinion polls in Turkey are notoriously unreliable, and there is a large percentage of 'don't knows'. Recent surveys suggest that Anap and Fazilet could each score around 20-25% (with Anap currently slightly ahead) leaving DYP, CHP and DSP with around 10-15% each. The ultra-rightist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) might just break through the 10% barrier, giving it a handful of seats, but other parties, such as Cindoruk's DTP and the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HaDeP) would fall well short of this.<sup>20</sup> On these figures, none of the main parties would have an overall majority in parliament. Almost certainly, none of them except DYP would be willing to form a coalition with Refah, while Fazilet and DYP together would probably be short of an overall majority. Hence, the prospects are that something like the present coalition will probably be re-formed after the elections. The main difference will probably be that Baykal will be reluctant to stay in his current 'on-off' position for too long, and will be under strong pressure to reward his followers with the fruits of office. Hence, an Anap-DSP-CHP coalition seems a likely outcome, and could be reduced to Anap-CHP if both these parties do better than currently expected. Either of these outcomes should produce a somewhat more stable government than at present.

In the short run, the prospect of elections will obviously limit the government's willingness to undertake potentially vote-losing structural reforms (such as raising the retirement age, scrapping or radically reforming the agricultural price-support scheme, or making the Central Bank independent). Inflationary populist economic policies will also be a temptation, though the government strongly denies it will head in this direction. Nor can the temporary government due

<sup>19</sup> Cindoruk has also argued that the proposal would be unconstitutional, on the grounds that Article 127 of the Constitution requires that general and local elections could only be held on the same day if the due date for general elections falls within one year of that required for general elections. His argument does not seem proven, but even if the Constitutional Court upheld such a plea, parliament could easily alter the constitution to the form required. A two-thirds majority would be required for this, but the massive majority by which the motion was carried on 30 July 1998 suggests that this could be done quite easily.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, *Briefing*, 28 September 1998, p.2.

to take office in January be expected to do much more than hold the fort. On the other hand, if Turkey crashes into a Russian-style economic meltdown (which is, on balance, judged unlikely) the parties may well decide to postpone the general elections anyway. In any case, and whoever is in power, the government faces some uphill economic tasks in the first four months of 1999, in which about \$21.2 billion in domestic debt, or about 60% of the existing debt stock, will be due for redemption. Given uncertainty in international markets, financing this debt is likely to prove difficult, unless high real interest rates are offered to investors. More broadly, this side of elections the political will for the implementation of basic structural reforms will almost certainly be lacking.<sup>21</sup>

## (2) Future Perspectives

### (a) *Party and Electoral Systems, and Constitutional Reform*

As the first part of this paper tried to suggest, the establishment of a more stable and less fragmented party system looks like one of the most important *desiderata* in Turkish politics. In most western European democracies, political loyalties can be broadly divided into those of the left or right, with additional parties representing the centre ground, or such diverse currents as environmentalism, racism, reformed communism, or religious or sub-state national identities. On the face of it, it would seem logical for Turkey to adopt at least part of this pattern, through mergers of the two centre-left and three centre-right parties into single parties, or at least cohesive blocs. Even though the serious institutional and personal obstacles to this cannot be ignored, such a development cannot be discounted in the longer run. A political party does not normally accept a merger with another one unless either or both of the parties feel their short or medium run future as a separate entity to be weak. On the centre-right, the DTP's prospects are currently very bleak, and it seems likely that the party will either be wiped out at the next elections, or only survive by means of a merger or alliance with Anap.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the DYP's future depends heavily on whether Mrs Çiller survives the serious charges of corruption and other malfeasance which are levied against her and her husband. If she does not, then it is likely that her party would either fall apart, or fall short of the 10% electoral threshold (perhaps both). In this case Anap would either merge with the anti-Çiller remnants of DYP, or at least take over its electoral base. On the centre-left, prospects are different, since neither DSP or CHP seems likely to wither away in the near future. However, of the two the DSP is probably in the weaker long-run position since it is heavily dependent on Bülent Ecevit's personality and his role as leader. Ecevit is now 73 years old, and there are rumours that he would prefer to retire some time after 2000: even if he did not, it is unlikely that he could carry on for long after that, leaving the field clear for the re-establishment of the CHP as the single party of the centre-left.

However, such a development would not necessarily overcome the problem of establishing effective and stable governments. Essentially, the Turkish electorate's ideological allegiances are currently split four ways, between the centre-right, the centre-left, the pro-Islamists, and a residual category representing mainly the ultra-right and the Kurdish identity. On the current showing, a united party of the centre-right would probably garner about 35% of the total vote, a united centre-left party about 30%, and the Islamists around 20%, leaving the fourth category of parties with a combined total of around 15%. Under the present electoral laws, a

<sup>21</sup> Information from ABN-Amro, London.

<sup>22</sup> Such an alliance would also be of benefit to Yılmaz's party, since although the DTP seems unlikely to score more than 5% at most in a future election, such a margin could still be of crucial value to Anap in putting it ahead of Fazilet. Moreover, DTP's current members are concentrated in the Aegean region, where Anap has generally been relatively weak, enabling Anap to overcome a fairly significant geographical gap in its support base.

party would probably need to win around 38% to capture an overall majority in parliament.<sup>23</sup> On these calculations, a combined centre-right party would still fall somewhat short of an overall majority, while a single party of the centre-left would be well behind the target, and unable to form a government except as part of an anti-Islamist coalition with the centre-right. More crucially, the Islamists would be left holding the balance of power, and might be able to force the formation of another Islamist-cum-centre-right coalition.

Alternatively it is often suggested that if the party leaderships are not willing to negotiate mergers voluntarily, they might be forced to do so by changes in the electoral system. Since the indecisive elections of December 1995, the idea of introducing a French-style double-ballot voting system, with single-member constituencies, has been much discussed in Turkey, as a replacement for the present d'Hont list system, with its multi-member constituencies. Under the new system, all parties would compete in the first ballot, and any candidate getting more than 50% would be declared elected. If no candidate achieved this (which is far more likely) then the two front runners would fight a run-off in the second round. The secularist centre-right parties, principally Anap, support the proposal, since their hope is that in cases where Fazilet and Anap are the only parties to qualify for the second round, then supporters of other parties would opt for Anap to keep Fazilet out. Fazilet opposes this change for precisely the same reason. Moreover, both the centre-left parties, DSP and CHP, are also unenthusiastic, since they fear that they would be the main victims of 'third party squeeze'. Hence, the idea of adopting this system for national elections has been put on hold, though it may well be introduced in mayoralty elections (which are currently run on a simple majority basis anyway). Another, more limited proposal is to reduce the current 10% minimum vote hurdle - possibly to 5%, or through some other modifications. One of the aims of this is to allow HaDeP to win at least some seats in the south-east, which would otherwise probably go to Fazilet. However, it would also let in MHP (assuming the latter does not quite make 10%) and generally increase the number of parties in parliament - making the job of coalition building even more difficult than it is already.

More broadly, it can also be argued that alteration of the electoral law, designed to reduce the fragmentation of the party structure, seem to have little effect on the behaviour of politicians. Since the 1995 elections, no less than five new parties have been formed by MPs originally elected for other parties. With one exception (that of the MHP) none of them are at all likely to break through the 10% threshold. One can only explain this phenomenon by assuming that Turkish politicians are incurable optimists, or that the leaders of small parties hope to blackmail the bigger ones into adopting them as candidates at the next elections. Whatever the explanation, the Turkish experience demonstrates the difficulties of 'political engineering', or trying to reform the party structure by altering the election laws.

<sup>23</sup> This calculation has to be a very inexact one since much would depend (a) on how many votes were 'wasted' by being given to parties which failed to surmount the 10% threshold, and (b) the size of the gap between the leading party, and the second runner. As Ersin Kalaycıoğlu remarks, 'The current electoral system of Turkey looks like proportional representation, but works as if it were a majority system'. In the 1987 elections, quite exceptionally, Anap (then under Turgut Özal) won 64.9% of the seats with 36.3% of the votes - a votes-to-seats ratio of almost 1:1.8. However, in subsequent elections this ratio has been reduced substantially - partly by changes in the electoral system, and partly because more parties have succeeded in overcoming the 10% threshold and their shares have been closer to one another. Thus, in 1995, the votes-to-seats ratio enjoyed by Refah, which was the leading party by a small margin, was 1:1.34. If repeated, this would mean that a party would need about 38% of the vote to win a bare overall majority. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 'Constitutional Viability and Political Institutions in Turkish Democracy', in Abdo I. Baaklini and Helen Desfosses, eds., *Designs for Democratic Stability* (New York and London, Armonk, 1997) pp. 190-91.

An alternative proposal designed to cope with the fragmentation of the party system would be to allow parties to form electoral alliances which might then solidify in parliament. Currently, this is forbidden under the electoral law, but it would only require a simple majority in parliament to alter the rules. In the past, parties have been able to evade the law by officially merging just before elections, and then splitting again soon after. Negotiations between Fazilet, DYP and some other small parties have taken place, but do not seem likely to develop into a full electoral alliance, even assuming the law is altered. Nor do other parties seem prepared to drop their differences. However, it has been pointed out that if a double ballot system is introduced for mayoralty elections, as seems quite possible, then inter-party alliances may develop anyway, so there may be movement on this front.<sup>24</sup> If they do develop, then Anap will probably be the main beneficiary.

Another striking feature of the Turkish parliament, which further increases the instability of the system, is the frequency with which MPs switch parties after their election, or resign from a party to become independents. By August 1998, no less than 71 deputies, or about 13% of the Assembly's total membership, had changed party at least once - and in many cases several times - since January 1996.<sup>25</sup> Of these inter-party transfers, 19 were straight switches from the DYP to DTP, which reflected genuine and serious divisions within the party over its attitude to the 'Refahiyol' coalition and the leadership of Mrs Çiller. However, the vast majority can only be explained by the fact that the party loyalties of many MPs are very weak, and that they are likely to join any party which appears to offer them the best personal benefits, whatever their party affiliation at the time of the election. Article 84 of the Constitution, which is designed to prevent deputies from switching parties, is clearly quite ineffective. One solution might be to alter Article 84 by requiring any deputy who resigns from the party for which he or she was elected to run for immediate re-election, but this can be criticised as an over-draconian restriction of the MP's legitimate autonomy. Given the present electoral system, it would also be hard to carry through in cases where a party is dissolved, as in the case of Refah, since by-elections would then have to be held in a large number of multi-member constituencies - tantamount almost to a general election.

More fundamentally, President Demirel and some others have suggested a major constitutional overhaul, moving Turkey from the present parliamentary system of government to a presidential or semi-presidential system, presumably on the models of the United States and France under the Fifth Republic, respectively. According to the first model, the President would be directly elected by the voters (rather than indirectly elected, as at present) for a fixed term, and would be the executive head of the government, rather than a symbolic head of state. He would choose his cabinet independently, regardless of party or whether the members were previously members of the legislature, and would not be dependent on a vote of confidence in parliament. On the second model, the President would again be directly and separately elected, but the Prime Minister and government would be appointed by him from within the parliament, and would need to maintain majority support in it.

The advantages of relative stability and continuity which such constitutional changes might produce cannot be ignored, but it also has to be said that they would face some formidable obstacles. In the first place, the French-style semi-presidential model would probably not go very far to cure the problems which the Turkish

<sup>24</sup> This suggestion has been made by, for instance, Mehmet Keçeciler, an Anap MP for Konya and a minister in previous Anap governments: see *Milliyet*, 11 September 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Data from *Briefing*, 10 August 1998, p.5. The record was held by Kubilay Uygun, who had transferred no less than seven times.

political system currently faces. By being directly elected, the President would have increased moral authority, but his constitutional powers would not be greatly enhanced (unless they were also increased in some other ways - by, for instance, giving him the unilateral power to dissolve parliament, or the right to veto legislation barring a two-thirds overruling vote in the legislature). The Prime Minister would still be faced with the task of forming a government from a fragmented assembly. If, on the other hand, a US-style presidency were instituted, the President would enjoy more independence, but would still need to cobble together a majority in the legislature to pass the budget and other legislation. In spite of occasional deadlocks, a US President whose party does not enjoy a majority in Congress can usually overcome this problem, but only through a complex and informal process of 'log-rolling', compromise, and individual persuasion. Essentially, the US system works because it is an established part of the political process and culture, which both sides are accustomed to handling. Moreover, the internal looseness and lack of ideological commitment of American parties gives the President considerable room for manoeuvre. Such conditions are simply not present in Turkey, so adoption of a US-style presidential system might well be a recipe for constant deadlocks between the legislature and executive.

Leaving aside these probable operational problems, the Turkish parliament is most unlikely to voluntarily accept such a major reduction in its power, or a corresponding increase in that of the President. Under the current constitutional rules, the Constitution can only be altered by a two-thirds majority in parliament (with a possible referral to referendum by the President) or by a three-fifths majority with a compulsory referendum. A change to a presidential or semi-presidential system is unlikely to be accepted by such a majority in the present or a likely future parliament. As an historical signpost, it is worth noting that in 1924, when the Turkish Republic's first Constitution was being drawn up, the Assembly refused to grant the President greater powers, even though that office was then occupied by Kemal Atatürk, who enjoyed virtually unchallengeable national authority at the time.<sup>26</sup>

#### (b) *Fazilet and the future of political Islamism*

Under the verdict of the Constitutional Court, which took effect on 22 February 1998, Refah was officially dissolved, due to statements and actions by Necmettin Erbakan and other prominent members of the party which were held to have contravened articles of the Constitution and other statutes making it illegal to exploit religious beliefs for personal or political gain. Erbakan and five other Refah MPs were expelled from parliament by the Court, and forbidden to run for public office or hold positions in any political party for the following five years.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Erbakan faces a possible gaol sentence for individual infractions of the law, while Tayyip Erdoğan, the mayor of Istanbul and the former party's second most prominent personality, is also confronted with a 10-month sentence. Meanwhile, the Virtue Party has continued under the leadership of Recai Kutan, who is regarded as effectively a proxy of Erbakan.<sup>28</sup> As a party, it could face closure for alleged financial irregularities, though whether these proceedings could be completed before the expected early elections is open to question.

<sup>26</sup> These included the proposal that the President should be elected for a seven year term, and that he should have the unilateral right to dissolve the Assembly and veto legislation, barring a two-thirds overruling majority: see Suna Kili, *Turkish Constitutional Developments and Assembly Debates on the Constitutions of 1924 and 1961* (Istanbul, Robert College Research Center, 1971) pp. 41-47.

<sup>27</sup> For the details, see, e.g., *Briefing*, 2 March 1998, pp. 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> On 28 October 1998 the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office announced that it would also be applying for the lifting of Recai Kutan's parliamentary immunity, so as to allow his prosecution for allegedly making defamatory remarks about the Alevi minority: *Reuter's*, 28 October 1998.

These prosecutions have left Fazilet with an uncertain future and some serious immediate problems. Of these, the most serious is probably its evident 'leadership gap'. With Erbakan and Erdoğan both officially removed from the political stage, Recai Kutan lacks the popular appeal which his two former colleagues both commanded. Voters who supported Refah in the 1995 elections may also have been disappointed by its failure to deliver on its promises while it was briefly in office - a particularly important factor for the many Turkish Kurds who voted for Refah - although the party has proved far more successful in local government. More broadly, one has to be careful not to exaggerate the Islamist phenomenon in Turkey. The political Islamists have attracted attention because they break with conventions, and are seen as part of a global movement, affecting a wide range of Muslim countries. On the other hand, the fact is that they still only represent a minority of opinion, and in Turkey they have to compete in the political marketplace with a majority of well-established secularist parties.

The point was made quite dramatically by public events in October 1998. On 11 October, demonstrators demanding the right for female students to wear 'Islamic' head scarves in class, who were supported by Fazilet from behind the scenes, formed a human chain around Istanbul which was reportedly supported by around 500,000 people. Two weeks later, however, on 25 October, far larger crowds - reckoned at 'millions' - turned out for marches and meetings to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic. The significance of the demonstrations was not just ceremonial, or a ritual expression of patriotism, since they had a specifically secularist tone. Placards carried by the marchers carried such slogans as 'Turkey is secular, and secular it will remain', or 'We are proud, powerful and Kemalist'. The millions of ordinary citizens in the demonstrations were accompanied by army officers and their families, but in many places, local Fazilet mayors and MPs were notable by their absence from the demonstrations.<sup>29</sup> The evidence of 25 October suggests that even though Turks may feel anger and frustration at the failures of the contemporary generation of politicians, Kemalism as a political principle still has a very impressive degree of public support.

This does not mean that Fazilet should be written off, however. It may have been unsuccessful in government, but its secularist rivals have not performed significantly better. The present leadership of Fazilet also seems anxious to avoid the mistakes of the past. On the weekend of 24-25 October, 250 party delegates attended a meeting at Alanya, at which they were reportedly told to 'establish good relations with everybody and don't provoke quarrels', 'chat with women and shake their hands', and 'visit other parties and obtain their opinions concerning Fazilet'.<sup>30</sup> Whether the party activists would adhere to this code of conduct remained to be seen, but the leadership was evidently anxious to project a new, 'clean' image. At the grass roots, it also appears that Fazilet continues the excellent organisation it inherited from its predecessor Refah. Hence, whatever happens to the leadership or the party organisation at the top, proxy leaders and/or a successor party are likely to remain an important force in Turkish politics. On the other hand, Fazilet does not seem to be near an electoral breakthrough, taking it up to the 35-40% threshold. Hence, it will probably not be in a position to form a government on its own after the elections. There is a chance it might be able to do so in coalition with the DYP, but, as earlier remarked, DYP's electoral fortunes also look very uncertain.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See reports in *Milliyet*, 26 October 1998.

<sup>30</sup> *Briefing*, 26 October 1998, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> For other information on the historical evolution and recent position of political Islamism in Turkey, see, in particular, Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden, Brill, 1981); Sencer Ayata, 'Patronage, Party and State: the Politicization of Islam in Turkey', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50 (1996); Metin Heper, 'Islam and Democracy in Turkey', *Middle*

(c) *The political position of the army.*

The downfall of the 'Refahyol' government in June 1997 is often characterised as a 'soft coup' by the military. Admittedly, the armed forces had played a major role in bringing the government's collapse to a head, notably through the demands issued by the National Security Council. However, this was only part of the story, since although there were some rather vague and veiled threats of a coup, it was clear throughout the crisis that the army was very reluctant to take this step. As General Cevik Bir, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff put it, 'it's not our job to run the country, neither is it our intention'.<sup>32</sup> As already described, the resignation of Refahyol had also been preceded by an impressive volume of public protests, and serious tactical miscalculations by the coalition leaders. It could thus be argued fairly convincingly that Erbakan had been removed from office by perfectly legal and constitutional means, and not primarily as a result of unconstitutional threats or actions by the military. Almost certainly, President Demirel, while careful not to exceed his constitutional powers, played a major role in persuading a critical mass of DYP backbenchers to desert Mrs Çiller. In effect, if there was a coup, it was as much one hatched in combination by the armed forces commanders and the President, as a unilateral military intervention. Moreover, the way in which the military chiefs handled the crisis, with frequent press conferences and 'briefings', suggests that they realised the importance of keeping public opinion on their side: without this, they might not have been able to act in the effective way which they achieved.

The possibility of a Fazilet victory in the next elections - even if it is a remote one - raises the question as to whether the armed forces might intervene to overturn the results. In August, President Demirel publicly hinted that if a Fazilet-DYP coalition were formed after the elections then 'the state' would act to defend the secular democratic order.<sup>33</sup> The warning is not without force, but it is also likely that the army would be very reluctant to take a leaf out of the Algerian book, for fear that this might produce similar results. More probably, it would probably act behind the scenes, and working with the President, to persuade DYP backbenchers not to support such a coalition, and thus give a secularist government a chance, as it did in June 1997. Short of such a crisis, it is also likely to keep up strong pressure on an Anap-led government to take tougher measures against Islamist activities in educational and other fields, as it is doing at present. In response, Yılmaz is likely to show outward compliance, but actual foot-dragging, since his party has a moderate Islamist component, which he does not want to drive into the hands of Fazilet.

(d) *Human rights and the Kurdish problem*

To judge by most western European commentary on Turkey, one could be forgiven for imagining that Turkish politics revolved entirely around these two issues. The previous discussion has tried to draw attention to the fact that this is far from the case. Nonetheless, it would be quite wrong to ignore them, since they are of pressing concern to many Turks, as well as overseas observers. On the first score, the present government has secured few advances, and prosecutions for offences which purely relate to oppositional statements, rather than overt support for terrorism, are still regular occurrences. As an example, in early October, the

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*East Journal*, Vol.51 (1997) and Ely Karmon, 'Radical Islamic Political Groups in Turkey', *MERIA Journal*, Vol.1, no.4 (January 1998: published on Internet at <http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/bcsa/meria.html>

<sup>32</sup> Quoted, *Briefing* 14 April 1997, p.8.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 17 August 1998, p.6.

chairman of the Human Rights Association Akin Birdal, who was recovering from a murderous attack by ultra-rightist gangsters, found himself faced with a charge in State Security Courts, allegedly for insulting the armed forces. Most of these prosecutions are brought under the much-criticised Section 8 of the 'Law for the Struggle against Terrorism' of 1991, or other articles of the Penal Code. In spite of Turkey's international commitments under the European Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, governments have not acted to end such prosecutions, are not likely to do so unless an effective and stable administration is established which can take some bold and badly needed steps. At the same time, foreign critics have to approach the topic carefully, recognising that stridently anti-Turkish campaigns are likely to be counter-productive, and that progress will probably be slow and incremental, rather than sudden and dramatic.

The recent departure of Abdullah Ocalan from Syria, and the apparent scaling down of PKK attacks in the south-east, suggest that the military phase of the Kurdish problem may be gradually ending. The Turkish army's unwritten alliance with Masud Barzani, the dominant leader in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, is also strengthening its position against the PKK. This tosses the ball into the politicians' court, though how they will react is uncertain. Several long-discussed moves - notably the withdrawal of the state of emergency regime in the remaining south-eastern provinces where it is still applied, and the ending of the 'village guards' system which has reportedly led to some flagrant abuses, will then become prominent items on the agenda. A serious effort to overcome the economic backwardness of the south-east would also be an important element in new policies. In all this, much will depend on the policies of the pro-Kurdish party, HaDeP, and whether it is allowed to compete in the forthcoming local and national elections. Certainly, the leadership of the party seems anxious to distance itself from the PKK, and to claim that it does not seek to undermine the territorial integrity of Turkey.<sup>34</sup> Its principal problem is that many of its grass roots-supporters, though far from all, are also supporters of the PKK, so that the leadership has to tread a fine line between avoiding closure by the courts, and not alienating part of its support base.<sup>35</sup>

How Kurdish voters are likely to behave in the next elections is, as usual, a mystery, as opinion polling in the south-east is very difficult and unreliable. However, some reports suggest that Fazilet is losing ground among the Turkish Kurds, as the previous Refah-led government failed to deliver on its promises to them. If so, then this should redound to the benefit of HaDeP, assuming it is allowed to run, and especially if the electoral law is altered (see above). The CHP is also likely to be a beneficiary, since it has relatively liberal policies on the language issue and the withdrawal of the present quasi-military regime in the region (whether it would implement them may be another matter). Anap, DYP and even MHP will probably retain some Kurdish support, through the exploitation of local patronage and tribal networks, plus some outright coercion. In the 1995 elections, Refah did well among Kurds settled in the poorer districts of the industrial cities of the west, which now probably account for about half the Kurdish population. Fazilet may well retain this support, but it is argued that many voters in this section of the electorate do not politically identify themselves as Kurds, so analysis is difficult.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance, the speech of the party's chairman, Murat Bozlak, at HaDeP's third national convention, on 1 November 1998, as reported in *Milliyet* on the following day.

<sup>35</sup> Henri J. Barkey, 'The People's Democracy Party (HADEP): the Travails of a Legal Kurdish Party in Turkey', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 18 (1998) pp. 135-36. There is now a substantial literature in English on Turkey's Kurdish problem: see, in particular, Kemal Kirişci and Gareth Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: an Example of Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London, Cass, 1997); Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (London, Macmillan, 1997) and Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, for Carnegie Commission for Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1998).



(e) *Corruption, political culture and an emergent civil society*

As the earlier part of this paper tried to suggest, the apparent penetration by parts of the state structure by organised crime, and its links with prominent politicians, is likely to strike many Turks as an equally serious threat to the democratic regime as Islamist radicalism or PKK terrorism. Public reaction has naturally not been lacking, as there have been constant calls by the media for a 'clean society', and claims that they are also trying to achieve it by party leaders. More concretely, an independent association, the 'Public Initiative for Enlightenment', which was set up after the Susurluk crash, has called for an 'Emergency Action Package' of new legislation to combat organised crime, including increased prison sentences for mafia leaders, the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of all MPs involved with them, and more independence and resources to be granted to the judiciary.<sup>36</sup> Almost certainly, a post-election government will be under strong pressure to implement such a programme, and will have done democratic government a serious disservice if it fails to do so.

Broadening this theme, Ersin Kalaycıoğlu characterises the present party system as one of 'amoral partyism'. As he puts it, 'the Turkish political elite plays by rules based on very short term interest calculations', exploiting a neo-patrimonial network in which parties stay in government mainly to reward their clients with emoluments drawn from the state budget. He argues that their supporters are not worried by the politicians' lack of fiscal rectitude, so long as they receive their rewards: the politicians for their part, are happy to do deals with the leaders of other parties, with whom they share few ideological objectives, simply to stay in power, producing unworkable governments.<sup>37</sup> Other commentators have doubted whether public opinion will force the elite to uproot gangsterism, on the grounds that this would 'damage the state', which still holds a dominant and autonomous position in Turkish political culture.<sup>38</sup>

Whether this situation will change, or is already changing, is the subject of much speculation. On the one hand, most existing accounts of Turkish political culture have suggested a high degree of state dominance.<sup>39</sup> Civil society - that is, independent associations, pressure groups, the media, and the like - are held to be weak and ill-developed. A survey by Piar-Gallup in August 1997 found that only 10% of Turks were members of any social, cultural or professional organisation: civil society evidently still has some way to go, if defined in those terms. Nonetheless, experience suggests that although there may still be a cultural attachment to the strong state paradigm, the state has actually grown notably weaker

<sup>36</sup> *Briefing*, 12 October 1998, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 'The Logic of Contemporary Turkish Politics', *MERIA Journal* (see n. 31) Vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1997).

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Kemal Kirişçi, speaking in 'Roundtable: Kemal Kirişçi and Bülent Aras, Four Questions on Recent Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy', *ibid.* Vol. 2 no. 1 (March 1998).

<sup>39</sup> E.g., Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Washington, Eothen Press, 1985); Ergun Özbudun, 'State Elites and Democratic Political Culture in Turkey', in Larry Diamond, ed., *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder, Col., Lynne Rienner, 1993). For possible alternative approaches, see Nilüfer Gole, 'Towards an Autonomization of Politics and Civil Society in Turkey', in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds., *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic* (Boulder, Col., Westview, 1994). Jenny B. White argues that, in Turkey, voluntary associations and other forms of civic activities are often 'organised on the basis of mutual trust and interpersonal obligations, rather than on an individual, contractual membership basis': she emphasises, however, that there is a wide array of popular movements in working class districts of Istanbul, of which she gives examples: Jenny B. White, 'Civic Culture and Islam in Urban Turkey', in Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (London, Routledge, 1996) pp. 143, 148-52.

since the 1950s. In the economy, the private sector is now the strongest and most dynamic element. Education, urbanisation, and the mass media have spawned a 'modern' network of autonomous structures, so that it is possible that Turkey may be moving towards a liberal system of pressure group politics. Most dramatically, the impressive and often spontaneous role played by the structures of a nascent civil society in protests against the Refahiyol government - such as civil rights societies, secularist pressure groups, women's associations, students, and organisations of both employers and labour - were a striking demonstration of what might turn out to be a more participatory, rather than supposedly representative democracy.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, the biggest task is to find a formula for the effective and stable mediation of relations between society and the state, since the political parties, which are supposed to play this role, are currently failing to perform the function effectively.

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<sup>40</sup> This point has been developed by, for instance, E. Fuat Keyman as part of a 'radical democracy project': see his paper 'Globalleşme ve Türkiye: Radikal Demokrasi Olasılığı', in E. Fuat Keyman and A. Yaşar Sarıbay, eds., *Küreselleşme, Sivil Toplum ve İslam: Türkiye Üzerine Yansımalar*, (Ankara, Vadi Yayınları, 1997).

## Appendix

## TURKEY: THE PARLIAMENTARY BALANCE, 1995-98

Party	Distribution of Seats			
	General Elections Dec.1995	Jul.1996	Aug.1997	Nov.1998
<b>Centre-right</b>				
Motherland Party (Anap) (Mesut Yılmaz)	132	131	139	136
True Path Party (DYP) (Tansu Çiller)	135	128	92	96
Democratic Turkey Party (DTP) <sup>1</sup> (Hüsamettin Cindoruk)	-	-	20	19
<b>Centre-left</b>				
Democratic Left Party (DSP) (Bülent Ecevit)	76	74	67	61
Republican People's Party (CHP) (Deniz Baykal)	49	49	49	55
<b>Islamist</b>				
Welfare Party (Refah) (Necmettin Erbakan)	158	158	151	-
Virtue Party (Fazilet) <sup>2</sup> (Recai Kutan)	-	-	-	144
<b>Others and independents<sup>3</sup></b>	-	10	30	28
<b>Vacant</b>	-	-	2	11 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>550</b>

<sup>1</sup> Formed by defectors from the DYP who opposed the DYP-Refah coalition and Mrs Çiller's leadership, in July 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Formed by former members of Refah (officially excluding Mr Erbakan) following the dissolution of the party by the Constitutional Court in February 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Currently (November 1998) includes Great Unity Party (BBP: defectors from Anap: current strength 8) plus Nationalist Action Party (MHP: current strength 3) plus 2 other parties and 14 independents (defectors from DYP and other parties).

<sup>4</sup> Includes six vacancies caused by the exclusion from politics until 2003 of Necmettin Erbakan and five other former Refah MPs, ordered by the Constitutional Court in February 1998.

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