

### *From the Desk of the Editor*

As this issue of TPQ went to press, Turkey was going through a period of acute strain. Terrorist shootings at the gate of the United States Consulate in Istanbul which ended in six fatalities, the arrests of retired military personnel on suspicion of affiliation with the ultra-right wing group “Ergenekon” and most importantly, the case before Turkey’s Supreme Court on the closure of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and banning of 71 of its high ranking politicians made up a torrent of international news headlines. As always, mixed signals could be heard from Europe: from suggestions that negotiations with the EU could be suspended if the AKP is banned, to calls that a suspension would only be victimizing the victim a second time, namely strengthening the entrenched powers and nationalist anti-EU forces in Turkey. In this issue, we offer an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the nature of the ongoing debates in the country and the roots of the polarization that has taken the form of a showdown.

Cem Toker, attempting to distance his analysis from the daily turmoil, assesses the Turkish political system enshrined in the Constitution, Political Party Law, Electoral Law and the Governmental Procurement Law, which he argues those with power could use, in time, to consolidate their power without the checks and balances a functional democracy offers. He explains that at the root of the problems are the structural realities that breed corruption, authoritarian reflexes, and distrust within society.

In the East where vicious cycles of underdevelopment, distrust in the state, tribal social structures, religious sects and patriarchal values converge to bring about what many people have referred to as Turkey’s “achilles heel,” institutional ineffectiveness and unchanging mindsets stemming from Ankara are illustrated starkly. Ekrem Güzeldere questions whether the central Turkish government has the courage and vision to counter nationalistic approaches embedded in certain state institutions and segments of society in his critical evaluation of the rhetoric and plans for socioeconomic development in Southeast Anatolia.

One of the core challenges Turkey faces today pertains to the division of social responsibilities among the state, the market, and the family. This theme is analyzed through the viewpoint of the welfare regime in Turkey by Daniel Grütjen. Grütjen argues that too much of the social burden is left in the realm of the family and private actors rather than being provided by the state on the basis of citizenship. This may, in fact, be one of the factors that renders women more dependent and more vulnerable to “neighborhood” notions of morality and make religious sects which provide social services popular.

Emphasizing that the U.S. has absolutely no interest in lessening the secular nature of the Turkish state, David Arnett points out that conspiracy theories voiced by

representatives of the Turkish military and judiciary regarding the U.S. bringing the AKP to power and simultaneously weakening the secular nature of the state is in direct contradiction to their actual policy aims. He concludes that the most pressing structural problem for Turkish democracy is weak civilian control over the military and the lack of a truly independent judiciary.

Mustafa Akyol, offering a controversial take on Turkey's current woes, points out that the rejection by the new Turkish Republic of the late-Ottoman efforts to synthesize Islam and modernity might have contributed to the slow pace of modernization in the country. He highlights that the educated religious class could have been utilized as a positive force for change in the early republic; but instead the religious forces had to go underground and played a destructive role in Turkish modernization. Akyol notes that the tradition of Ottoman Islam has persisted within Turkey and argues that as observant Muslims modernize, they will move from the periphery of society to more prominent roles.

This stands in strong contradiction to what Korab-Karpowicz argues, namely that "by evoking the great suppressed forces of religion, (the AKP) brings them to preeminence in the public sphere (and) dominated by those forces, Turkey will lose its secular and democratic character." Pointing out the "political naiveté" of Europeans, he underlines the risk that the directives imposed on Turkey by the European Union and the support of AKP by EU representatives may ultimately play a role in turning the country into an Islamic state.

Hakan Yılmaz draws on public opinion surveys in arguing that the socioeconomic change in Turkey over the last decades is creating dynamics which may lead to a constructive change in the teachings of religion and nationalism in the country. However, he also points out that there is a risk that the divisions in society become further consolidated to the point of having two parallel worlds co-existing.

In light of the dramatic global shifts in economic variables and political alliances, Haluk Önen offers an analysis of Turkey's adaptation and integration with the world. He particularly emphasizes the risks of populism and points out measures that can be taken for a more healthy political system, such as the establishment of a second chamber of parliament.

Robert Johnson analyzes Turkey's policy towards "foreigners" in the country, tracing the widespread mistrust, also reflected in concrete policies, to its Ottoman heritage. He argues that "the degree to which any society can be characterized as 'open' is best measured by the way that foreigners are treated by both the government and society at large" and comments that the government, despite its embrace of the pursuit of EU membership, has not been consistent with this vision in the implementation of a new approach to foreigners. Practices and "unspoken policies" regarding minorities and foreigners are, indeed, an area where progress is not visible in Turkey.

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Ruairi Patterson examines the roots of the rise of nationalism in Turkey, especially as it relates to the EU reform process. He raises the question of whether the AKP's strenuous efforts to get the accession process underway was geared mainly towards strengthening it *vis-à-vis* its adversaries in the state establishment. "As the party became more powerful and well-entrenched it had less need for support and legitimacy derived from the EU" he explains, also pointing out that for Turks, accession seemed more and more a distant prospect; given the public opinion polls in EU member states and the ability of the Cyprus issue to stall the process. The question remaining is whether the AKP could have kept the momentum for EU reforms going through strong leadership rather than pandering to the emotional swings of the public opinion.

The examination of trends in Turkish civil society and philanthropy provided by Filiz Bikmen is a source for optimism in this bleak picture. Bikmen points out the remaining weaknesses of the sector but also notes the significant progress it has made in recent years. She highlights the reform of the tax framework for philanthropy as one of the most important hurdles ahead. She ends with an encouragement that this third sector "not shy away from being visionary and proactive".

As TPQ we are proud of continuing to provide you with often clashing perspectives of dynamics in Turkey and its neighborhood, not straying away from provocative views but ensuring analytical and constructive approaches.

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