

Turkey Changes, By the Numbers

Mar 15, 2008



Articles & Testimony

On Friday, Turkey's chief prosecutor filed a case in the Constitutional Court to shut down the Justice and Development Party, which controls the national government, and ban the president, prime minister and senior party officials from politics for five years. The party -- known by its Turkish initials AKP -- is accused of threatening Turkey's secular democracy, among other things, by using religion as a criterion in making appointments to top bureaucratic posts.

The tensions have been building for some time. Last spring, millions took to the streets to protest the AKP's presidential candidate, an observant Muslim. The military even threatened to intervene to preserve secular rule. Then, last month, the AKP government lifted Turkey's long-standing ban on female college students wearing Islamic head scarves to class, sparking further debate about the country's identity and future.

The AKP's political roots are in Turkey's Islamist opposition, and since the AKP took power, the country has undergone a dramatic transformation. The economy has boomed under its pro-business policies. At the same time, Turks' attitudes toward the United States and the European Union have soured significantly, and voters have turned away from secular politics.

Five years after the AKP took power, data from polls and other sources show how much has changed in Turkey.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the [Turkish Research Program \(templateI02.php?SID=12&newActiveSubNav=Turkish%20Research%20Program&activeSubNavLink=templateI02.php%3FSID%3D12&newActiveNav=researchPrograms\)](#)

at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, is the author of [Secularism and Foreign Policy in Turkey: New Elections, Troubling Trends \(templateC04.php?CID=268\)](#). ❖

Los Angeles Times

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