

# Secularism and Foreign Policy in Turkey: New Elections, Troubling Trends

by [Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](/experts/soner-cagaptay)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](/experts/soner-cagaptay)

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family Senior Fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.



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In 2007, two crucial political developments will unfold in Turkey: the AKP-controlled parliament will select a new president, and the public will vote in nationwide legislative elections. Both events come at a time when Turkish popular sentiment toward the West has weakened significantly, paralleling Ankara's recent shift toward engagement with countries like Iran and Syria. Given the secular opposition's fractured state in advance of the elections, many are wondering whether the outcome will accelerate or reverse these troubling trends.

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, Turkish Research Program director Soner Cagaptay offers a comprehensive look at the various factors that make 2007 a pivotal year for Turkish democracy, secularism, and foreign policy. Beginning with an outline of AKP policymaking, he demonstrates how the current government's rule has been accompanied by a number of problematic developments, including the erosion of checks and balances on the executive branch and the muting of opposition forces in the media and judiciary. Given the potential impact of further political consolidation along these lines, Washington should do all it can to help preserve Turkey's secular, pro-Western legacy.

\*Includes a detailed map, charts, and photos

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