



# TURKEY REPORT

No 7

## All eyes on the constitution.

AKP's new term after June 2011 elections has been marked by the bid to rewrite the current constitution, which was drawn up after a military coup three decades ago. The civil society and all political actors involved have reached consensus on the fact that Turkey needs a constitution that will wipe away the remnants of the coup and address historic problems. The Kurdish issue and freedom of expression are two of the main longstanding problems that the new constitution is expected to address. The Constitutional Reconciliation Commission, which consists of three representatives of all four parties of the Parliament, was founded in order to undertake the task of drafting the new charter.

The completion of the first draft was initially scheduled for the end of December 2012. Recently, at a meeting with AKP officials, Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that he will wait till January for parliament's cross-party commission to work out compromise on the new constitution. An extension of two or three months is expected to be given and according to estimations the first draft could be completed within the extended period. However, given the pace of the discussions and the inability of the involved parties to agree on important provisions the questions of whether the procedure will continue smoothly and a finalised text will be produced as planned are repeatedly raised. After the finalisation of the first draft the text will be most probably submitted to a referendum. Nevertheless, since the procedure that will be followed has not been defined yet it will be interesting to see how the debate will evolve.

As far as the drafting progress is concerned, the part about fundamental rights has been completed, with no consensus though. The part about state apparatus is currently being drafted. The Parliament's Constitutional Reconciliation Commission failed to reach consensus on several provisions, among them provisions that could mark important steps forward towards the resolution of the Kurdish issue; the definition of citizenship and education in mother tongue are two of the controversial provisions. The article on equality and non-discrimination did also cause disagreement among the parties. Proposal to change the administrative system into a presidential one was met with opposition by the other three parties.

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## **Turkey- Iraq Relations: More than Sectarian Division.**

Turkey's already stiff relations with Iraq continue to worsen. Recently Iraq refused to allow, a Turkish civilian airplane, which was carrying the Turkish Minister of Energy Taner Yıldız and dozens of Turkish businessman, to enter its airspace.

Mutual relations between the two countries quickly deteriorated immediately after the American troops withdrew from Iraq in late 2011. Maliki, seemed to have maintained well-balanced policies toward Iraq's Sunni and Kurdish minorities, and his political rivals in his first term, between 2006 and 2010, moved to consolidate his personal authority over almost every institution in the country, including the parliament. This, inevitably, alienated Sunnis and Kurds - Turkey's main allies in Iraq - further and led Ankara to think that Maliki had an authoritarian agenda which could eventually cause disintegration of the country.

Turkey and Iraq have also differed over the on-going civil war in Syria. Thus they placed themselves at opposite sides towards the conflict. Turkey, along with the Western countries and the majority of the Arab Middle-East states, openly supports the Free Syrian Army. Conversely, Iraq, which assumes that the Shia Maliki government will be the next target of the Sunni insurgency should Assad fall, supports Bassar Assad. Although Iraq avoids of declaring its support for Assad, it is reported that thousands of Iraqis Shiites flocked to Syria to fight against the Free Syrian Army. Maliki government also turns a blind eye to Iran's arms, supplies and influx of the Iran Revolutionary Guards to Syria via the Iraqi territory.

Determined to keep Iraq united under the centralised power of Baghdad, Maliki accuses Kurdistan Regional Administration (KRG) of undermining Iraq's unity and having the option of an independent Kurdish state in its agenda. In this regard, Baghdad argues that KRG is supported by Turkey diplomatically and economically and points out the frequent official visits by Turkey and vast amount of Turkish investments in the region. It is still not clear whether KRG is interested in becoming an independent state under the protection of Turkey or stay as a part of a federal Iraq.

Yet, it is obvious that Turkey and KRG enjoy good relations, from which both sides benefit, at least for now, before the suspicious eyes of Maliki government. On the one hand, thanks to its close relations with KRG, Turkey can claim that it does not have problem with Kurds but with Kurdish separatism and have a stake in exploitation of rich oil fields in the Northern Iraq. On the other hand, KRG can depend on exporting its oil via Turkish ports and on Turkey's diplomatic protection and even military power against Maliki. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that in the Middle East there are fragile, tactical alliances rather than cemented, strategic alliances.

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## Turkey's Booming Defense Industry

Thanks to allocation of more financial sources to armament programmes and generous incentives provided by Turkish government to the companies, Turkish defense industry experiences its golden age.

During Cold War, Turkish Army, which was one of the least mechanised armies in NATO, mostly depended on transfer of surplus weapons from its Western allies and purchasing of downgraded versions of American military equipment via Foreign Military Sales (FMS). Although there were always some talks of need for building a national defense industry, these did not go beyond basic maintenance and producing some infantry weapons.

In 1980's thoughts turned into serious efforts and most of current major companies of the Turkish defense industry such as Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), Turkish Engine Industries (TEI) and Roketsan, were created. In this process, offset deals struck with Western arms manufacturers which signed arms selling deals played a critical role.

Nevertheless, in 1990's production in these facilities came almost to a halt when Western companies' offset obligations expired and European and even American government of Democrat Bill Clinton acted reluctantly to approve the new arms deals with Turkey because of human right violations in the country.

Since 2002, both Turkish defense industry and Turkish armed forces, benefited from the growth of Turkish economy. Erdoğan's government approved the much-awaited, expensive purchases. Agusta-Westland was selected to jointly produce A-129 attack helicopter; submarine tender went to HDW, Turkish Navy's long-time partner, new attack crafts and mine warfare ships were also ordered from Germany; Boeing was ordered to build four AWACS- type airplanes, Turkey joined the Joint Strike Fighter Program as level 3 partner and intends to buy over a hundred stealth F-35 aircrafts.

It is certain that Turkish industry will greatly benefit from this, since all these system will include Turkish made components. Thus, Turkish defense companies will keep their production lines open, employ tens of thousands of skilled workers, technicians and engineers and gain know-how to develop modern weapons for Turkish Armed Forces and export markets.

In addition, Turkish industry reached to capacity of designing and manufacturing totally indigenous weapons systems like various types of wheeled and tracked armored vehicles, artillery pieces, guided anti-tank rockets, cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, corvettes, electronic warfare and satellite system.

Although producing a medium missile with 2500 km range, as demanded by Prime Minister Erdoğan, seems a little bit unrealistic for now, Turkish defense industry is on track of being one of the most developed in the Middle East.

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## Erdoğan and Gül: more and more diverging

Something that is interesting to observe currently in Turkey is how the relation between the two AKP's personalities is being formulated in light of the debate about the presidential system and different views on several issues. Although Prime Minister Erdoğan has repeatedly rejected any talks of a rift, dismissing them as attempts to create intra-party antagonism, contradicting statements and diverging opinions over several issues suggest the opposite.

A clash was occasioned by the Republic Day demonstrations when President Gül asked the police to remove barriers blocking the march of opposition groups to Atatürk's Mausoleum in Ankara, thus overlooking Erdoğan's orders. This provoked Erdoğan's reaction who stated that "double-headed rule will lead the country nowhere," implying that the President exceeded his authority. Gül supported his intervention as part of the responsibilities attributed to him under the constitution. Furthermore, the two leaders were divided by a different approach towards the hunger strike of the Kurdish inmates. While Erdoğan deprecated the hunger strike as a "show," Gül approached the matter with more sensitivity. Along the same lines, Erdoğan's calls for removing the immunities of ten BDP deputies, within the framework of an investigation into a video that shows the deputies hugging PKK members were met with Gül's opposition. The latter has expressed his concerns, recalling the events of 1994 when the lifting of the immunities of Leyla Zana and other Kurdish lawmakers led to their imprisonment. Erdoğan's plans to change the administrative system are also not being backed by Gül, who stated recently that such decisions should be opened to broader dialogue. Finally the two leaders disagreed over the popular TV show The Magnificent Century; while the Prime Minister strongly criticised it for distorting history, calling on the judiciary to investigate, the President extended his support to the series on the grounds that it reflects the people's interest in the Ottoman Empire.

When it comes to the debate about presidency and speculations that Erdoğan is planning on pursuing the post for himself, analysts say that Gül will not abandon the post very easily. At the same time a survey conducted in October suggested that Abdullah Gül is a stronger candidate (20.7%) for the presidency than Erdoğan (20.3%).

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