

Turkey



CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Modern day Turkey is located at the site of some of the world's most important civilizations. Greek, Roman, and Byzantine ruins and Ottoman buildings dot the Turkish landscape and testify to the region's historical prominence. With its large population, influential culture and strong connections with both Europe and the Middle East, Turkey continues to play an important role as a regional power and bridge between Islam and the West.

In 1453, the Turks, then known as the Ottomans, defeated the Byzantine Empire and captured the capital city of Constantinople, renaming the city Istanbul. The Ottoman Empire expanded greatly under rulers such as Suliman the Magnificent, who was sultan from 1520-1566. At its height, the Empire occupied an area that today includes Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, parts of southeastern Europe, and large parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The Ottomans thus controlled a significant part of the Muslim world. As the rulers of the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina, they were considered protectors of the Islamic faith. The Caliph--or spiritual leader of Islam--was chosen by the Ottoman ruler and resided in Istanbul. Though essentially Muslim in nature, the Ottomans tolerated other religions. At its height, the Ottoman Empire included millions of Christians and Jews as well as Muslims.

Flag

The basic form of the flag was established in 1793 during the Ottoman Empire period. The flag shows the symbols of Islam, a white crescent and a five-pointed white star on a red field. There is no official explanation for the red background. Speculation is that the red represents the blood of the battlefield on which the Ottoman Empire was born (battle of Kossovo in 1448).



Turkey: Facts

Capital	Ankara
Government	Republican Parliamentary
Government	Democracy
Head (Prime Minister)	Tayyip Erdogan
Economy	Capitalist
Independence	1923
Area (sq. km)	780,580
Population (millions)	72
Adult Literacy	87.4%
Pop. Growth Rate	1.01%

Source: CIA World Fact book. Military data for year 2005. All others for year 2008. GDP figures are in Purchasing Power Parity. Tuberculosis data for year 2006 and Health Care % of GDP for year 2005 from WHO.

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After three centuries of expansion, the Ottoman Empire began a decline in the 17th century that continued for the next 300 years. During successive wars, the Empire shrank as it lost acquired territories, and failed to keep up with a modernizing Europe. The rule of a series of ineffective sultans weakened the central state, contributing to poorly organized government structures and rampant corruption. Powerful regional leaders took advantage of the central power void, which added to the Empire's decline. Having lost most of its remaining European colonies in the Balkan Wars of 1911-1913, the Empire's death knell was sounded when it found itself on the losing side of World War I.

As the victorious Western powers began to carve up what remained of the Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Kemal emerged as a young, charismatic hero of the war. He formed a national liberation army, in defiance of the Sultan's government. Eventually adopting the surname Atatürk (Father of all the Turks), he led his small, ill-equipped army to victory over both invading armies and internal rebel factions. In 1922, the Turkish mainland was liberated and an armistice was signed, with Atatürk renouncing all claims to non-Turkish territories. Its Arab colonies were divided between France and Britain and its remaining European possessions were freed, becoming independent nations. The Ottoman Empire was dead, but in 1923, the republic of Turkey was established. Atatürk became its first president.

Atatürk was determined to make the new republic a modern state. While Turkey was called a democracy, there was initially only a one-party system, Atatürk's Republican People's Party. Thus he was able to stamp out any dissent. With such a mandate, Atatürk undertook sweeping political, cultural, and socio-economic reforms. In just a matter of years, he transformed the Muslim country into a secular state, stating that religion would become a matter of individual conscience. He replaced the *sha'ria*, or Islamic legal code, with new Civil Codes, Penal Codes and Business Law based on European models. These reforms improved the rights of women. Polygamy was abolished and women were given equal rights in divorce, custody, and inheritance. He also set in motion a wide-ranging reform of the military.

The cultural reforms were equally dramatic. Education became a priority and co-educational. As a result, literacy rates greatly increased. The Arabic alphabet was

abandoned and the Latin alphabet was adopted. Western hats replaced the fez, women replaced the veil with western clothes, the day of rest was moved from Friday to Sunday, and the Islamic calendar gave way to the Western calendar. Western surnames were adopted by everyone with Atatürk leading the way. He is still revered in Turkey, and a national holiday is celebrated every year in his honor.

Since Atatürk's death in 1938, the country has continued on its secular path. A two-party system was instituted with the elections of 1950. The victorious Democratic Party introduced reforms to reduce the control of the central government. More private initiative was allowed and restrictions on religion and religious education were eased. But economic difficulties and ineffective governments resulted in coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980. In each case, the military quickly returned power to elected governments. However, the military continued to play a strong role behind the scenes. In November 2002, the Islamic-oriented Justice and Development party (AKP) won a clear majority in the Turkish legislature. Recep Tayyip Erdogan was elected to be the prime minister. The AKP party is tied to moderate Islamic beliefs. The secular establishment and Western governments are wary of a government in Turkey with Islamic ties.

The most serious secular test of the current administration happened in 2008. A lawsuit was filed against the AKP party. It was accused of trying to introduce Islamic law in defiance of the constitution. If successful, the lawsuit would have barred the main party leaders from holding office for five years. The Supreme Court narrowly defeated the measure. Instead, the Court imposed a fine on the AKP for anti-secularism.

In March of this year local elections will be held. The next general election will be in November 2012.

TURKEY TODAY

Classified as a developed country by the CIA, Turkey is located in Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia. It is literally at the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, and between Islam and the West. In size, the country is slightly larger than Texas.

Turkey stands as proof that democracy and Islam can coexist and do so with a vibrant economy. There has

been separation between church and state since the 1920s, along with the use of the Roman alphabet and women's suffrage. But with the increasing devoutness of religious Muslims worldwide, the country is struggling to maintain its secular, or non-religious psyche. In 2003, a Muslim political party came to power and a Muslim moderate became Prime Minister. Since then, any attempt to move the government away from its secularism draws attention and protests. When a devout Muslim President was elected in the 2007 elections, the largest rally in Turkish history was held in protest. In the past, the presidency has always been a secular post. The army is considered the keeper of the secular flame and it is not shy about reminding the government where the line is drawn. There have been coups in the past when the military found the central government problematic.

To solidify its connection to the West, Turkey is actively seeking [EU](#) membership. It has long felt that geography, trading relationships, and its role in [NATO](#) should qualify it for membership. The country has reformed many of its environmental, economic, and social policies to meet EU entry requirements. Yet there is disagreement among the EU countries about Turkey's candidacy. Someone commented, "much of Turkey is a feudal state with a veneer of industry on top". It lacks the established social structures of a typical EU country, with clan connections more important than business relationships.

Turkey has been struggling with an insurgency within its borders. A small percentage of its Kurdish minority population belongs to the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It has waged a violent 24 year-old campaign for self-rule in southeast Turkey, which has killed 44,000 people. Now that the Kurds in Iraq have a self-governing community on the other side of the Turkey-Iraq border, it is feared that the Kurds may join together to create a homeland between southeastern Turkey and Northern Iraq.

Human Rights

Although a democracy, Turkey's military has played a strong role in the government and society since Kemal Atatürk created the modern Turkish state in the 1920s. The military has a record of human rights abuses and has been quick to intervene when it perceived the civil society to be unstable.

[Coups](#) have occurred with some frequency, including 1960, 1971, and 1980. The government has been especially criticized for its oppression of two groups: Kurdish separatists in eastern Turkey and Islamists who disagree with Turkey's secular orientation.

Turkey's poor human rights record has been cited as one of the issues keeping it from joining the [EU](#). The EU expressed particular concern over the use of torture of political prisoners and the legality of the death penalty. Turkey has since made some attempts to bring its laws and practices closer to the European norm. For example, Turkey has passed legislation removing the death penalty and granting more cultural rights to minority Kurds.

Since the capture and trial of Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999, conflict in the Kurdish areas of Turkey has declined somewhat. The government has made some small compromises, including allowing some Kurdish-language radio programming for the first time. However, the official government position is still that there is no such thing as a Kurdish people and they are routinely referred to in government media as "Mountain Turks." Turkey also continues to face some international criticism for the government-sponsored murder and expulsion of over a million Armenians during World War I. Many consider this event the 20th century's first [genocide](#), though the Turkish government still strongly objects to the use of that word.

Although Turkish women continue to face the same discrimination in employment and problems of spousal abuse as women in many countries of the world. Turkey's secular constitution has given women more rights than in most other Islamic countries. Polygamy was made illegal in the 1920s, and a new law went into effect in January 2002 that gave women equal legal rights with men--a first for a Muslim nation. But Turkey has been criticized for laws that forbid some Islamic customs. For instance, women are not allowed to wear headscarves in government buildings or on university campuses. Some female students have left school rather than follow this ban.

In 2007, the headscarf ban was eased on university campuses, a move that created a storm of protest. Devout Muslim women contend that it allows them to go to school instead of staying home. Secular women counter that it is introducing religion into a secular institution. Their greatest fear is that once this starts, where does it

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end? Recently the government tried to criminalize adultery, a crime that in Muslim countries sometimes results in female honor killings while the male perpetrator goes free. Women who do not wear headscarves want to be just as protected as those who do. The ban was referred to the Turkish Supreme Court for a ruling. In 2008, the Court reinstated the headscarf ban. They ruled 9-2 that it went against the secular principles of the constitution.

Through the passage of minimum age requirements for work and education reform, Turkey has decreased the number of children between the ages of 9-14 years who work. However, child labor still remains a problem in Turkey. The ILO estimates that around one million children work in Turkey. This means that of every 100 people in the labor force, 5 are children aged 6-14. The labor force participation for rural children is about 15% and under 4% for urban children. Although Turkey ratified the *ILO Convention #138 on Minimum Age* and the *Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention #182*, many children under the age of 15 years are employed. The minimum working age is 15 in most cases, but children as young as 13 can be employed if the work is not harmful to their health and does not interfere with their education. However, for agricultural work the age minimum is set at 12.

Environment

With rapid industrialization, Turkey has experienced several large environmental problems. They include soil erosion, air pollution from industry and vehicle emissions, water pollution from oil spills, and the depletion of natural resources. Increased shipping traffic through the Bosphorus Straits has heavily polluted the waters around Turkey. In 1994, there was a large oil spill off the coast of Turkey. The high volume of oil being shipped through the Bosphorus Straits makes it likely that another large oil spill may occur sometime in the future.

Since the 1970s, the Turkish government has made a more concerted effort to address environmental issues. In 1983, Turkey passed the overarching Environmental Law and in 1991 created the national Ministry of the Environment. In addition, Turkey is building hydroelectric energy sources in the southeast part of the country to replace coal for power generation. Currently, 32% of electricity is generated by alternative ener-

Turkey: Health

Birth Rate	16/1,000
Death Rate	6/1,000
Life Expectancy - Male	70
Life Expectancy - Female	75
Infant Mortality	38/1,000
HIV/AIDS Cases	NA
HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate	>1/1,000
Tuberculosis Rate	29/100,000

gy sources-hydro, geothermal and wind. In working to join the EU, Turkey has updated and modernized its environmental legislation. EU standards will require an enormous outlay for infrastructure. The country needs wastewater treatment plants, better solid waste management, and conservation of biodiversity. Enforcement of the new rules is weak, which is probably related to the cost of such improvements.

In 2008, after years of silence, Turkish government leaders announced they would sign the Kyoto Protocol. The reason cited was that Turkey could not be an active participant in discussions for what rules will come after the Kyoto Protocol in 2012 if they did not sign the Treaty. In January 2009, the bill to ratify the Treaty was being debated in Parliament. By signing it, Turkey would be committing itself to cut GHG emissions to 0.5% over 1990 levels. The country is currently at 1.3%.

Turkey has plans to jump on the nuclear bandwagon, reviving its long-deferred quest for nuclear power. With its rapidly expanding economy and not very many energy resources of its own, the country wants to build five nuclear power plants. This would equal about 10% of its projected energy needs. While nuclear energy is a "clean" source of energy as it is produced, it requires the storage of radioactive waste for thousands of years. No nuclear power country has yet opened a long-term storage facility. Recognized environmental leaders France and the UK have been quietly polluting the English Channel with radioactive runoff from their plutonium reprocessing plants. Thus one Turkish nuclear expert advises he would rather see Turkey work to improve its electrical grid, which leaks as much as 25% of the power that it produces, than see nuclear power plants built as an excuse for obtaining nuclear weapons.

While health care in Turkey is provided free of charge, availability and quality of health care remains poor.

Current expenditures on health care equal 5.7% of GDP. About 70% comes from public funds. Despite the level of spending, there are few medical facilities and approximately 1.1 physicians per 10,000 people. Due to the low standards of public health care coverage, many people seek medical services in private hospitals and abroad. These conditions are reflected in a high infant mortality rate (37 per 1,000). Average life expectancy is 73 years. There is an increasing incidence of tuberculosis (29 per 100,000). The prevalence rate for HIV/AIDS is said to be less than 1 in 1,000.

The H5N1 avian flu virus was first reported on chicken farms in Turkey in October 2005, following the spread from Russia and Kazakhstan. It was assumed that migratory birds were the culprits. All of the cases in Turkey have been contained, but it is possible for the virus to appear again in the chickens that are on the migratory routes of the wild waterfowl. Turkey has had 12 human cases of bird flu, four of which have died. The human deaths were among people who had been in close contact with infected birds.

Economy

Turkey's economy is a complex mix of the old and the new. The country has a modern industrial base alongside a large traditional agricultural sector. Farming still accounts for 35% of employment. While the government still plays a major role in industry, banking, and transportation, the private sector is growing rapidly.

In the 1990s, Turkey's economy suffered from a series of weak coalition governments with poor economic policies. This led to several years of boom-and-bust economic cycles. Finally, Turkey had a severe banking

and economic crisis in 2001 accompanied by rising unemployment.

The Turkish economy has made a dramatic turnaround since 2001, with recent annual growth rates often above 6%. The CIA recently changed Turkey's designation from a developing to a developed country. Turkey's per capita income of about \$12,900 would put it roughly in the middle among world economies.

Since the 2001 crisis, Turkey's economy has recovered strongly thanks to good monetary and fiscal policies and structural economic reforms made with the support of the IMF and the World Bank. It also benefited from investor interest in emerging market economies, such as Turkey's. The country has successfully privatized some large state-run entities such as electrical distribution facilities and the major oil refining company, Tupras. It has reduced government expenses for social security by raising the retirement age to 65. In the past, the retirement age was 43 for women and 47 for men. However, the rule does not become effective until 2048! Two other problems are: 1) productivity remains low by international standards and 2) there is a lack of competition in the economy.

Turkey began opening the economy to greater international trade in the 1980s. Turkey's location has long given it an advantage in trade. All maritime trade with the Black Sea has to pass through the Bosphorus Straights, making it one of the world's most important shipping lanes.

The country has a good manufacturing base with textiles, consumer electronics, and motor vehicles playing a particularly important role in the economy. Turkey's export partners are more diversified than they were in the past. The country's five biggest partners used to buy 50% of its exports. That percentage has been reduced to 37% of exports.

The European Union is Turkey's largest trade partner. The country has applied to join the EU. After several delays, accession negotiations were begun in 2005. Turkey aims to adopt the EU's basic system of laws and regulations by 2014. While such an adoption will significantly contribute to modernizing the Turkish economy, implementation will be costly and difficult. Public opinion in Turkey is strongly in favor of joining the EU, for the people have witnessed how even the poorest countries, like its longtime rival Greece, have

Turkey: Economics

GDP (billions)	\$931
GDP Per Capita	\$12,900
GDP Growth Rate	4.5%
Unemployment	7.9%
Inflation Rate	10.2%
Exports (billions)	\$142
Imports (billions)	\$205
External Debt (billions)	\$294

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seen their standard of living soar with EU membership. However, Turkey's pace of reform has slowed recently, thus the country received an EU report critical of its progress to date.

As with so many other countries, Turkey is being negatively impacted by the 2008 global economic slowdown. GDP growth has slowed sharply. The forecast for 2009 is an anemic 1.5% GDP growth rate. Since EU countries are Turkey's biggest export market, and most of these countries are now in recession, this does not bode well for Turkey.

Besides membership in the WTO, Turkey has signed trade agreements with many other countries. In 1992 the country and 10 of its neighbors formed the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council to expand regional trade and economic cooperation.

In the last few years Turkey has been putting its financial house in order. Net public debt, as a percentage of GDP, has fallen from 74% in 2001 to 39% at the end of 2008. Turkey's seven straight years of tight fiscal policy had brought public sector balances under control, with the overall public sector deficit less than the 3% of GDP requirement in the EU's Maastricht criteria. However, with the global economic meltdown, that number is back up to 6.4% of GDP. In addition, the Istanbul Stock Exchange Index has fallen sharply and the lira has weakened against other currencies.

If the global recession continues, Turkey may be forced to renew a \$10 billion IMF loan agreement that expired in May 2008. Back in May, the government enthusiastically proclaimed its freedom from IMF guidance. Many countries are reluctant to use IMF funding, for in order to qualify they are forced to put in place austerity measures that are not popular with their citizens.

In the banking sector, reforms have firmly established the independence of the Central Bank from political interference. The banks seem strong, with few non-performing loans. They are maintaining a ratio of 17.5% of their deposits as liquid assets.

Though Turkey has made great progress reducing inflation, it has not yet accomplished the low levels prevalent in most other industrialized countries. With the global recession, inflation is back up over 10%.

After years of low levels of foreign direct investment (FDI), Turkey succeeded in attracting \$22.3 billion in FDI in the first five months of 2008. Because market conditions are reducing foreign capital flows, FDI in 2009 should be about \$10-\$12 billion. A series of large privatizations, the stability fostered by the start of Turkey's EU accession negotiations, strong and stable growth, and structural changes in the banking sector have all contributed to the rise in foreign investment. Turkey has taken steps to improve its investment climate through administrative streamlining, simplified foreign investment rules, and strengthened intellectual property legislation. However, high taxation, gaps in intellectual property rights, and a number of disputes involving foreign investors in Turkey demonstrate that roadblocks to foreign investment remain.

Security

Although Turkey's international role is more limited now than when it was still the Ottoman Empire a century ago, its size and location make Turkey a strategically important country. Turkey has often seen itself as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, and between Islam and the West. At the beginning of the 20th century, the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was often considered the most important security question of that time. Today, a century later, such difficult regional conflicts as Iraq and Kuwait, Israel and the Palestinians, and the break up of Yugoslavia all have connections to unresolved problems from the end of the Ottoman era.

As a member of NATO, Turkey played an important role during the Cold War as the only member country that actually bordered the Soviet Union. The NATO airfield at Incirlik remains one of the alliance's most important bases. While Turkey's long history of conflict with Russia and the former Soviet Union made

Turkey: Security (Armed Forces)	
Military expense as % of GDP (2005)	5.3%
Military expenditures (millions)	\$12,155
Military expense per capita	\$171.20

membership in NATO logical, its even longer history of tensions with neighbor and fellow NATO member Greece occasionally led to strains within the alliance. Several times the nations came close to war, especially over conflict in Cypress, which Turkey invaded in 1974. The two countries also came uncomfortably close to war in the mid-1990s over a disputed boundary among islands in the Aegean Sea.

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey's importance has increased. Turkey was an important ally in the coalition that defeated Iraq in the Gulf War in 1991. The no-fly zone in northern Iraq was patrolled by aircraft based in eastern Turkey until the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Turkey has important cultural and historical ties with many of the central Asian republics and the US has often preferred Turkish to Iranian, Russian, or Saudi influence in that important region of the world. While Turkey was not directly involved in the recent conflict in the Balkans, Serbs and others there still often refer to Muslims there as "Turks." Concern that violence in the former Yugoslavia between Orthodox Christians and Muslims could draw NATO members Turkey and Greece into opposite sides of the conflict was one reason that the US intervened to stop that conflict from spreading. Turkey has a long history of military cooperation with the US through NATO.

In recognition of Turkey's important international stature, the country was elected to hold one of the non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council for 2009-10. It will hold the rotating presidency in June 2009.

Regionally, the war in Iraq and the militancy of Iran are causes for concern. Turkey and Iran are similar in population size and economy. But if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, the two countries would no longer be equals in a very combustible area. While Turkey has ratified all the most stringent additions to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the government does not like these odds. They have revived plans to build some nuclear power plants, but it's unclear if their only intention is to produce nuclear power, or to re-equalize their relationship with Iran by having access to nuclear bomb-making material.

After 9/11, Turkey became an important ally in the US war on terror. The country, however, did not support the US invasion of Iraq. At the time, the newly elected Prime Minister Erdogan forbade the US use of Turkish land as an assembly point and a second front at the

start of the Iraq war. Without this second front, all US-led coalition troops had to invade from one direction (the south). This allowed some Sunni's loyal to Saddam Hussein to escape northward. A second front would have allowed the US to trap them by attacking them from two directions. However, since that time, Turkey has allowed 70% of non-combat supplies for American troops in Iraq to go through its territory.

Turkey supported the US war on terror efforts in Afghanistan, supplying resources and troops and allowing the US to use Turkish military bases throughout the military and peacekeeping campaigns. This support has come despite some Turkish citizens' criticism of US foreign policy in the Islamic World. In 2007, Turkey took charge of a NATO group command in Afghanistan. The country currently has about 1,200 troops in Afghanistan.

Turkey has a very serious domestic terrorism issue. A small percentage of its Kurdish minority population belongs to the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It has waged a violent 24 year-old campaign for self-rule in southeast Turkey, which has killed 44,000 people. Now that the Kurds in Iraq have a self-governing community on the other side of the Turkey-Iraq border, the PKK has set up camps in Iraq that they use as a springboard for attacks in Turkish territory. Because Iraq is a sovereign country, the Turkish military was powerless to pursue them. But in 2007, the Turkish parliament gave approval for the army to bomb PKK targets in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. The Turkish government has a long-term concern that the Turkish and Iraqi Kurds may join together to create a Kurdish homeland between southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

The continuing tug between secular and Islamic political forces in Turkey has created a new domestic terrorist group. Prosecutors claim to have uncovered a plot by a group of ultra-conservative secularists to overthrow the AKP government. Some 80 conspirators have been arrested. Their alleged plan was to create chaos through a string of assassinations and bomb attacks designed to provoke the army to intervene.