

= Turkey =

Turkey ( / ˈtʊrki / ; Turkish : Türkiye [ ˈtyɾcije ] ) , officially the Republic of Turkey ( Turkish : Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ; pronounced [ ˈtyɾcije d ʔ ʔumˈhuʔijeti ] ) , is a parliamentary republic in Eurasia , mainly on the Anatolian peninsula in Western Asia , with a smaller portion on the Balkan peninsula in Southeast Europe . Turkey is a democratic , secular , unitary , constitutional republic with a diverse cultural heritage .

Turkey is bordered by eight countries : Syria and Iraq to the south ; Iran , Armenia , and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan to the east ; Georgia to the northeast ; Bulgaria to the northwest ; and Greece to the west . The Black Sea is to the north , the Mediterranean Sea to the south , and the Aegean Sea to the west . The Bosphorus , the Sea of Marmara , and the Dardanelles , which together form the Turkish Straits , divide Thrace and Anatolia ; they also separate Europe and Asia . Turkey 's location between Europe and Asia makes it strategically important .

Turkey has been inhabited since the paleolithic age by various ancient Anatolian civilizations : Aeolian , Dorian and Ionian Greeks , Thracians , Armenians , and Assyrians . After Alexander the Great 's conquest , the area was Hellenized , a process which continued under the Roman Empire and its transition into the Byzantine Empire . The Seljuk Turks began migrating into the area in the 11th century , starting the process of Turkification , which was accelerated by the Seljuk victory over the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 . The Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm ruled Anatolia until the Mongol invasion in 1243 , when it disintegrated into small Turkish beyliks .

In the mid 14th century the Ottomans started uniting Anatolia and created an empire encompassing much of Southeastern Europe , Western Asia and North Africa , becoming a major power in Eurasia and Africa during the early modern period . The empire reached the peak of its power in the 16th century , especially during the reign ( 1520 ? 1566 ) of Suleiman the Magnificent . After the second Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 and the end of the Great Turkish War in 1699 , the Ottoman Empire entered a long period of decline . The Tanzimat reforms of the 19th century , which aimed to modernize the Ottoman state , proved to be inadequate in most fields , and failed to stop the dissolution of the empire .

Effectively controlled by the Three Pashas after the 1913 coup d'état , the Ottoman Empire entered World War I ( 1914 ? 1918 ) on the side of the Central Powers and was ultimately defeated . During the war , the Ottoman government committed ethnic cleansing or genocide against its Armenian , Assyrian and Pontic Greek citizens . Following the war , the conglomeration of territories and peoples that formerly comprised the Ottoman Empire was divided into several new states .

The Turkish War of Independence ( 1919 ? 1922 ) , initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his colleagues in Anatolia , resulted in the establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey in 1923 , with Atatürk as its first president .

Turkey 's official language is Turkish , a Turkic language , spoken by 85 % of the population . 72 @. @ 5 % of the population are ethnic Turks ; and 27 @. @ 5 % are legally recognized ( Armenians , Greeks , Jews ) and unrecognized ( Kurds , Circassians , Arabs , Albanians , Bosniaks , Georgians , etc . ) ethnic minorities . Kurds are the largest minority group . The vast majority of the population is Sunni Muslim , with Alevis making up the largest religious minority .

Turkey is a charter member of the UN , early member of NATO , and a founding member of the OECD , OSCE , OIC and G @-@ 20 . After becoming one of the first members of the Council of Europe in 1949 , Turkey became an associate member of the EEC in 1963 , applied for full EEC membership in 1987 , joined the EU Customs Union in 1995 and started accession negotiations with the European Union in 2005 . Turkey 's growing economy and diplomatic initiatives have led to its recognition as a regional power .

= = Etymology = =

The name of Turkey ( Turkish : Türkiye ) is based on the ethnonym Türk . The first recorded use of the term " Türk " or " Türuk " as an autonym is contained in the Old Turkic inscriptions of the Göktürks ( Celestial Turks ) of Central Asia ( c . 8th century ) . The English name Turkey first

appeared in the late 14th century and is derived from Medieval Latin Turchia .

The Greek cognate of this name , Tourkia ( Greek : ??????? ) was used by the Byzantine emperor and scholar Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in his book De Administrando Imperio , though in his use , " Turks " always referred to Magyars . Similarly , the medieval Khazar Empire , a Turkic state on the northern shores of the Black and Caspian seas , was referred to as Tourkia ( Land of the Turks ) in Byzantine sources . The Ottoman Empire was sometimes referred to as Turkey or the Turkish Empire among its contemporaries .

= = History = =

= = = Prehistory of Anatolia and Eastern Thrace = = =

The Anatolian peninsula , comprising most of modern Turkey , is one of the oldest permanently settled regions in the world . Various ancient Anatolian populations have lived in Anatolia , from at least the Neolithic period until the Hellenistic period . Many of these peoples spoke the Anatolian languages , a branch of the larger Indo @-@ European language family . In fact , given the antiquity of the Indo @-@ European Hittite and Luwian languages , some scholars have proposed Anatolia as the hypothetical center from which the Indo @-@ European languages radiated . The European part of Turkey , called Eastern Thrace , has also been inhabited since at least forty thousand years ago , and is known to have been in the Neolithic era by about 6000 BC .

Göbekli Tepe is the site of the oldest known man @-@ made religious structure , a temple dating to 10 @,@ 000 BC , while Çatalhöyük is a very large Neolithic and Chalcolithic settlement in southern Anatolia , which existed from approximately 7500 BC to 5700 BC . It is the largest and best @-@ preserved Neolithic site found to date and in July 2012 was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site . The settlement of Troy started in the Neolithic Age and continued into the Iron Age .

The earliest recorded inhabitants of Anatolia were the Hattians and Hurrians , non @-@ Indo @-@ European peoples who inhabited central and eastern Anatolia , respectively , as early as ca . 2300 BC . Indo @-@ European Hittites came to Anatolia and gradually absorbed the Hattians and Hurrians ca . 2000 ? 1700 BC . The first major empire in the area was founded by the Hittites , from the 18th through the 13th century BC . The Assyrians conquered and settled parts of southeastern Turkey as early as 1950 BC until the year 612 BC . Urartu re @-@ emerged in Assyrian inscriptions in the 9th century BC as a powerful northern rival of Assyria .

Following the collapse of the Hittite empire c . 1180 BC , the Phrygians , an Indo @-@ European people , achieved ascendancy in Anatolia until their kingdom was destroyed by the Cimmerians in the 7th century BC . Starting from 714 BC , Urartu shared the same fate and dissolved in 590 BC , when it was conquered by the Medes . The most powerful of Phrygia 's successor states were Lydia , Caria and Lycia .

= = = Antiquity and Byzantine Period = = =

Starting around 1200 BC , the coast of Anatolia was heavily settled by Aeolian and Ionian Greeks . Numerous important cities were founded by these colonists , such as Miletus , Ephesus , Smyrna ( now İzmir ) and Byzantium ( now Istanbul ) , the latter founded by Greek colonists from Megara in 657 BC . The first state that was called Armenia by neighbouring peoples was the state of the Armenian Orontid dynasty , which included parts of eastern Turkey beginning in the 6th century BC . In Northwest Turkey , the most significant tribal group in Thrace was the Odrysians , founded by Teres I .

All of modern @-@ day Turkey was conquered by the Persian Achaemenid Empire during the 6th century BC . The Greco @-@ Persian Wars started when the Greek city states on the coast of Anatolia rebelled against Persian rule in 499 BC . The territory of Turkey later fell to Alexander the Great in 334 BC , which led to increasing cultural homogeneity and Hellenization in the area .

Following Alexander 's death in 323 BC , Anatolia was subsequently divided into a number of small

Hellenistic kingdoms , all of which became part of the Roman Republic by the mid @-@ 1st century BC . The process of Hellenization that began with Alexander 's conquest accelerated under Roman rule , and by the early centuries AD the local Anatolian languages and cultures had become extinct , being largely replaced by ancient Greek language and culture . From the 1st century BC up to the 3rd century AD , large parts of modern @-@ day Turkey were contested between the Romans and neighboring Parthians through the frequent Roman @-@ Parthian Wars .

In 324 , Constantine I chose Byzantium to be the new capital of the Roman Empire , renaming it New Rome . Following the death of Theodosius I in 395 and the permanent division of the Roman Empire between his two sons , the city , which would popularly come to be known as Constantinople , became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire . This , which would later be branded by historians as the Byzantine Empire , ruled most of the territory of present @-@ day Turkey until the Late Middle Ages ; although the eastern regions remained in firm Sasanian hands up to the first half of the 7th century AD . The frequent Byzantine @-@ Sassanid Wars , as part of the centuries long @-@ lasting Roman @-@ Persian Wars , fought between the neighboring rivaling Byzantines and Sasanians , took place in various parts of present @-@ day Turkey and decided much of the latter's history from the 4th century AD up to the first half of the 7th century AD .

= = = Seljuks and the Ottoman Empire = = =

The House of Seljuk was a branch of the K?n?k O?uz Turks who resided on the periphery of the Muslim world , in the Yabghu Khaganate of the O?uz confederacy , to the north of the Caspian and Aral Seas , in the 9th century . In the 10th century , the Seljuks started migrating from their ancestral homeland into Persia , which became the administrative core of the Great Seljuk Empire .

In the latter half of the 11th century , the Seljuk Turks began penetrating into medieval Armenia and the eastern regions of Anatolia . In 1071 , the Seljuks defeated the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert , starting the Turkification process in the area ; the Turkish language and Islam were introduced to Armenia and Anatolia , gradually spreading throughout the region . The slow transition from a predominantly Christian and Greek @-@ speaking Anatolia to a predominantly Muslim and Turkish @-@ speaking one was underway . Alongside the Turkification of the territory , the culturally Persianized Seljuks set the basis for a Turko @-@ Persian principal culture in Anatolia , which their eventual successors , the Ottomans would take over .

In 1243 , the Seljuk armies were defeated by the Mongols , causing the Seljuk Empire 's power to slowly disintegrate . In its wake , one of the Turkish principalities governed by Osman I would , over the next 200 years , evolve into the Ottoman Empire . In 1453 , the Ottomans completed their conquest of the Byzantine Empire by capturing its capital , Constantinople .

In 1514 , Sultan Selim I ( 1512 ? 1520 ) successfully expanded the empire 's southern and eastern borders by defeating Shah Ismail I of the Safavid dynasty in the Battle of Chaldiran . In 1517 , Selim I expanded Ottoman rule into Algeria and Egypt , and created a naval presence in the Red Sea . Subsequently , a competition started between the Ottoman and Portuguese empires to become the dominant sea power in the Indian Ocean , with a number of naval battles in the Red Sea , the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf . The Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean was perceived as a threat for the Ottoman monopoly over the ancient trading routes between East Asia and Western Europe ( later collectively named the Silk Road ) . This important monopoly was increasingly compromised following the discovery of a sea route around Africa by Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias in 1488 , which had a considerable impact on the Ottoman economy .

The Ottoman Empire 's power and prestige peaked in the 16th and 17th centuries , particularly during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent . The empire was often at odds with the Holy Roman Empire in its steady advance towards Central Europe through the Balkans and the southern part of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth . At sea , the Ottoman Navy contended with several Holy Leagues , such as those in 1538 , 1571 , 1684 and 1717 ( composed primarily of Habsburg Spain , the Republic of Genoa , the Republic of Venice , the Knights of St. John , the Papal States , the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Duchy of Savoy ) , for the control of the Mediterranean Sea . In the east , the Ottomans were often at war with Safavid Persia over conflicts stemming from

territorial disputes or religious differences between the 16th and 18th centuries . The Ottoman wars with Persia continued as the Zand , Afsharid , and Qajar dynasties succeeded the Safavids in Iran , until the first half of the 19th century . From the 16th to the early 20th centuries , the Ottoman Empire also fought many wars with the Russian Tsardom and Empire . These were initially about the Ottoman territorial expansion and consolidation in southeastern and eastern Europe ; but starting from the latter half of the 18th century , they became more about the survival of the Ottoman state , which began to lose its strategic territories on the northern Black Sea coast to the advancing Russians . Between the 18th and the early 20th centuries , the Ottoman , Persian and Russian empires were neighbouring rivals of each other .

From the beginning of the 19th century onwards , the Ottoman Empire began to decline . As it gradually shrank in size , military power and wealth , many Balkan Muslims migrated to the Empire 's heartland in Anatolia , along with the Circassians fleeing the Russian conquest . The decline of the Ottoman Empire led to a rise in nationalist sentiment among the various subject peoples , leading to increased ethnic tensions which occasionally burst into violence , such as the Hamidian massacres of Armenians .

The Ottoman Empire entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers and was ultimately defeated . During the war , the empire 's Armenians were deported to Syria as part of the Armenian Genocide . As a result , an estimated 800 @, @ 000 to 1 @, @ 500 @, @ 000 Armenians were killed . The Turkish government has refused to acknowledge the events as genocide and claims that Armenians were only relocated from the eastern war zone . Large @-@ scale massacres were also committed against the empire 's other minority groups such as the Assyrians and Greeks . Following the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918 , the victorious Allied Powers sought to partition the Ottoman state through the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres .

= = = Republic of Turkey = = =

The occupation of Constantinople and Smyrna by the Allies in the aftermath of World War I prompted the establishment of the Turkish National Movement . Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha , a military commander who had distinguished himself during the Battle of Gallipoli , the Turkish War of Independence was waged with the aim of revoking the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres .

By 18 September 1922 the occupying armies were expelled , and the Ankara @-@ based Turkish regime , which had declared itself the legitimate government of the country on 23 April 1920 , started to formalize the legal transition from the old Ottoman into the new Republican political system . On 1 November 1922 , the Turkish Parliament in Ankara formally abolished the Sultanate , thus ending 623 years of monarchical Ottoman rule . The Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923 led to the international recognition of the sovereignty of the newly formed " Republic of Turkey " as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire , and the republic was officially proclaimed on 29 October 1923 in Ankara , the country 's new capital . The Lausanne treaty stipulated a population exchange between Greece and Turkey , whereby 1 @. @ 1 million Greeks left Turkey for Greece in exchange for 380 @, @ 000 Muslims transferred from Greece to Turkey .

Mustafa Kemal became the republic 's first President and subsequently introduced many radical reforms with the aim of transforming the old religion @-@ based and multi @-@ communal Ottoman state system ( constitutional monarchy ) into an essentially Turkish nation state ( parliamentary republic ) with a secular constitution . With the Surname Law of 1934 , the Turkish Parliament bestowed upon Mustafa Kemal the honorific surname " Atatürk " ( Father of the Turks ) .

Turkey remained neutral during most of World War II , but entered the closing stages of the war on the side of the Allies on 23 February 1945 . On 26 June 1945 , Turkey became a charter member of the United Nations . Difficulties faced by Greece after the war in quelling a communist rebellion , along with demands by the Soviet Union for military bases in the Turkish Straits , prompted the United States to declare the Truman Doctrine in 1947 . The doctrine enunciated American intentions to guarantee the security of Turkey and Greece , and resulted in large @-@ scale U.S. military and economic support . Both countries were included in the Marshall Plan and OEEC for rebuilding

European economies in 1948 , and subsequently became founding members of the OECD in 1961 .

After participating with the United Nations forces in the Korean War , Turkey joined NATO in 1952 , becoming a bulwark against Soviet expansion into the Mediterranean . Following a decade of Cypriot intercommunal violence and the coup in Cyprus on 15 July 1974 staged by the EOKA B paramilitary organization , which overthrew President Makarios and installed the pro @-@ Enosis ( union with Greece ) Nikos Sampson as dictator , Turkey invaded Cyprus on 20 July 1974 . Nine years later the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus , which is recognized only by Turkey , was established .

The single @-@ party period ended in 1945 . It was followed by a tumultuous transition to multiparty democracy over the next few decades , which was interrupted by military coups d 'état in 1960 , 1971 , and 1980 , as well as a military memorandum in 1997 . In 1984 , the PKK , a Kurdish separatist group , began an insurgency campaign against the Turkish government . The Kurdish @-@ Turkish conflict to date has claimed over 40 @,@ 000 lives . Over 3 @,@ 000 Kurdish villages were burned by Turkish security forces and hundreds of thousands of Kurds displaced , and Kurdish political parties were banned . Peace talks were launched in 2012 , but hostilities restarted in 2015 following the Suruc bombing . Since the liberalization of the Turkish economy during the 1980s , the country has enjoyed stronger economic growth and greater political stability . In 2013 , widespread protests erupted in many Turkish provinces , sparked by a plan to demolish Gezi Park but growing into general anti @-@ government dissent .

On 15 @-@ 16 July 2016 , an unsuccessful coup attempt tried to oust the government .

= = Administrative divisions = =

Turkey has a unitary structure in terms of administration and this aspect is one of the most important factors shaping the Turkish public administration . When three powers ( executive , legislative and judiciary ) are taken into account as the main functions of the state , local administrations have little power . Turkey is a unitary not a federal system , and the provinces are subordinated to the centre . Local administrations were established to provide services in place and the government is represented by the governors and city governors . Besides the governors and the city governors , other senior public officials are also appointed by the central government rather than appointed by mayors or elected by constituents .

Turkey is subdivided into 81 provinces for administrative purposes . Each province is divided into districts , for a total of 923 districts .

Turkey is also subdivided into 7 regions and 21 subregions for geographic , demographic and economic purposes ; this does not refer to an administrative division .

= = Politics = =

Turkey is a parliamentary representative democracy . Since its foundation as a republic in 1923 , Turkey has developed a strong tradition of secularism . Turkey 's constitution governs the legal framework of the country . It sets out the main principles of government and establishes Turkey as a unitary centralized state . The President of the Republic is the head of state and has a largely ceremonial role . The president is elected for a five @-@ year term by direct elections and Tayyip Erdoğan is the first president elected by direct voting .

Executive power is exercised by the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers which make up the government , while the legislative power is vested in the unicameral parliament , the Grand National Assembly of Turkey . The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature , and the Constitutional Court is charged with ruling on the conformity of laws and decrees with the constitution . The Council of State is the tribunal of last resort for administrative cases , and the High Court of Appeals for all others .

The prime minister is elected by the parliament through a vote of confidence in the government and is most often the head of the party having the most seats in parliament . The prime minister is Binali

Y?ld?r?m , who replaced Ahmet Davuto?lu on 24 May 2016 .

Universal suffrage for both sexes has been applied throughout Turkey since 1933 , and every Turkish citizen who has turned 18 years of age has the right to vote . There are 550 members of parliament who are elected for a four @-@ year term by a party @-@ list proportional representation system from 85 electoral districts . The Constitutional Court can strip the public financing of political parties that it deems anti @-@ secular or separatist , or ban their existence altogether . The electoral threshold is 10 percent of the votes .

Supporters of Atatürk 's reforms are called Kemalists , as distinguished from Islamists , representing two extremes on a continuum of beliefs about the proper role of religion in public life . The Kemalist position generally combines a kind of democracy with a laicist constitution and westernised secular lifestyle , while supporting state intervention in the economy , education , and other public services . Since the 1980s , a rise in income inequality and class distinction has given rise to Islamic populism , a movement that in theory supports obligation to authority , communal solidarity and social justice , though what that entails in practice is often contested .

= = = Human rights = = =

Human rights in Turkey have been the subject of some controversy and international condemnation . Between 1998 and 2008 the European Court of Human Rights made more than 1 @,@ 600 judgements against Turkey for human rights violations , particularly regarding the right to life , and freedom from torture . Other issues , such as Kurdish rights , women 's rights , LGBT rights , and press freedom , have also attracted controversy . Turkey 's human rights record continues to be a significant obstacle to future membership of the EU . According to the Committee to Protect Journalists , the AKP government has waged one of the world 's biggest crackdowns on press freedoms . A large number of journalists have been arrested using charges of " terrorism " and " anti @-@ state activities " such as the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases , while thousands have been investigated on charges such as " denigrating Turkishness " or " insulting Islam " in an effort to sow self @-@ censorship . In 2012 , the CPJ identified 76 jailed journalists in Turkey , including 61 directly held for their published work , ranking 1st in the world , more than in Iran , Eritrea or China while Freemuse identified 9 musicians imprisoned for their work , ranking 3rd after Russia and China . A former U.S. State Department spokesman , Philip J. Crowley , said that the United States had " broad concerns about trends involving intimidation of journalists in Turkey . " Turkey has a ' Not Free ' rating by Freedom House .

In its resolution " The functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey " on 22 June 2016 , the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe warned that " recent developments in Turkey pertaining to freedom of the media and of expression , erosion of the rule of law and the human rights violations in relation to anti @-@ terrorism security operations in south @-@ east Turkey have ( ... ) raised serious questions about the functioning of its democratic institutions . "

= = = Law = = =

Turkey has a legal system which has been wholly integrated with the system of continental Europe . For instance , the Turkish Civil Law has been modified by incorporating elements mainly of the Swiss Civil Code , the Code of Obligations and the German Commercial Code . The Administrative Law bears similarities with its French counterpart , and the Penal Code with its Italian counterpart .

Turkey has adopted the principle of the separation of powers . In line with this principle , judicial power is exercised by independent courts on behalf of the Turkish nation . The independence and organization of the courts , the security of the tenure of judges and public prosecutors , the profession of judges and prosecutors , the supervision of judges and public prosecutors , the military courts and their organization , and the powers and duties of the high courts are regulated by the Turkish Constitution .

According to Article 142 of the Turkish Constitution , the organization , duties and jurisdiction of the courts , their functions and the trial procedures are regulated by law . In line with the aforementioned

article of the Turkish Constitution and related laws , the court system in Turkey can be classified under three main categories ; which are the Judicial Courts , Administrative Courts and Military Courts . Each category includes first instance courts and high courts . In addition , the Court of Jurisdictional Disputes rules on cases that cannot be classified readily as falling within the purview of one court system .

Law enforcement in Turkey is carried out by several departments ( such as the General Directorate of Security and Gendarmerie General Command ) and agencies , all acting under the command of the Prime Minister of Turkey or mostly the Minister of Internal Affairs . According to figures released by the Justice Ministry , there are 100 @, @ 000 people in Turkish prisons as of November 2008 , a doubling since 2000 .

In the years of government by the AKP and Tayyip Erdoğan , particularly since 2013 , the independence and integrity of the Turkish judiciary has increasingly been considered in doubt by institutions , parliamentarians and journalists both within and outside of Turkey ; due to political interference in the promotion of judges and prosecutors , and in their pursuit of public duty . The Turkey 2015 report of the European Commission stated that " the independence of the judiciary and respect of the principle of separation of powers have been undermined and judges and prosecutors have been under strong political pressure . "

= = = Foreign relations = = =

Turkey is a founding member of the United Nations ( 1945 ) , the OECD ( 1961 ) , the OIC ( 1969 ) , the OSCE ( 1973 ) , the ECO ( 1985 ) , the BSEC ( 1992 ) , the D @-@ 8 ( 1997 ) and the G @-@ 20 major economies ( 1999 ) . Turkey was a member of the United Nations Security Council in 1951 ? 1952 , 1954 ? 1955 , 1961 and 2009 ? 2010 . In September 2013 , Turkey became a member of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue ( ACD ) .

In line with its traditional Western orientation , relations with Europe have always been a central part of Turkish foreign policy . Turkey became one of the first members of the Council of Europe in 1949 , applied for associate membership of the EEC ( predecessor of the European Union ) in 1959 and became an associate member in 1963 . After decades of political negotiations , Turkey applied for full membership of the EEC in 1987 , became an associate member of the Western European Union in 1992 , joined the EU Customs Union in 1995 and has been in formal accession negotiations with the EU since 2005 . Today , EU membership is considered as a state policy and a strategic target by Turkey . Turkey 's support for Northern Cyprus in the Cyprus dispute complicates Turkey 's relations with the EU and remains a major stumbling block to the country 's EU accession bid .

The other defining aspect of Turkey 's foreign policy was the country 's long @-@ standing strategic alliance with the United States . The common threat posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War led to Turkey 's membership of NATO in 1952 , ensuring close bilateral relations with Washington . Subsequently Turkey benefited from the United States ' political , economic and diplomatic support , including in key issues such as the country 's bid to join the European Union . In the post ? Cold War environment , Turkey 's geostrategic importance shifted towards its proximity to the Middle East , the Caucasus and the Balkans .

The independence of the Turkic states of the Soviet Union in 1991 , with which Turkey shares a common cultural and linguistic heritage , allowed Turkey to extend its economic and political relations deep into Central Asia , thus enabling the completion of a multi @-@ billion @-@ dollar oil and natural gas pipeline from Baku in Azerbaijan to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey . The Baku ? Tbilisi ? Ceyhan pipeline forms part of Turkey 's foreign policy strategy to become an energy conduit to the West . However Turkey 's border with Armenia , a state in the Caucasus , was closed by Turkey in support of Azerbaijan during the Nagorno @-@ Karabakh War and remains closed .

Under the AKP government , Turkey 's influence has grown in the formerly Ottoman territories of the Middle East and the Balkans , based on the " strategic depth " doctrine ( a terminology that was coined by Ahmet Davuto?lu for defining Turkey 's increased engagement in regional foreign policy issues ) , also called Neo @-@ Ottomanism . Following the Arab Spring in December 2010 , the choices made by the AKP government for supporting certain political opposition groups in the

affected countries have led to tensions with some Arab states , such as Turkey 's neighbour Syria since the start of the Syrian civil war , and Egypt after the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi . As of 2016 , Turkey doesn 't have an ambassador in Syria and Egypt . Diplomatic relations with Israel were also severed after the Gaza flotilla raid in 2010 , but were normalized following a deal in June 2016 . These political rifts have left Turkey with few allies in the East Mediterranean , where rich natural gas fields have recently been discovered ; in sharp contrast with the original goals that were set by the former Foreign Minister ( later Prime Minister ) Ahmet Davutoğlu in his " zero problems with neighbours " foreign policy doctrine . In 2015 , Turkey , Saudi Arabia and Qatar formed a " strategic alliance " against Syrian President Bashar al - Assad .

Turkey has maintained forces in international missions under the United Nations and NATO since 1950 , including peacekeeping missions in Somalia and former Yugoslavia , and support to coalition forces in the First Gulf War . Turkey maintains 36 000 troops in Northern Cyprus , though their presence is controversial , and assists Iraqi Kurdistan with security . Turkey has had troops deployed in Afghanistan as part of the United States stabilization force and the UN authorized , NATO commanded International Security Assistance Force ( ISAF ) since 2001 . Since 2003 , Turkey contributes military personnel to Eurocorps and takes part in the EU Battlegroups .

= = = Military = = =

The Turkish Armed Forces consists of the Land Forces , the Naval Forces and the Air Force . The Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard operate as parts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in peacetime , although they are subordinated to the Army and Navy Commands respectively in wartime , during which they have both internal law enforcement and military functions .

The Chief of the General Staff is appointed by the President and is responsible to the Prime Minister . The Council of Ministers is responsible to the Parliament for matters of national security and the adequate preparation of the armed forces to defend the country . However , the authority to declare war and to deploy the Turkish Armed Forces to foreign countries or to allow foreign armed forces to be stationed in Turkey rests solely with the Parliament .

Turkey has the second largest standing military force in NATO , after the U.S. Armed Forces , with an estimated strength of 495 000 deployable forces , according to a 2011 NATO estimate . Turkey is one of five NATO member states which are part of the nuclear sharing policy of the alliance , together with Belgium , Germany , Italy , and the Netherlands . A total of 90 B61 nuclear bombs are hosted at the Incirlik Air Base , 40 of which are allocated for use by the Turkish Air Force in case of a nuclear conflict , but their use requires the approval of NATO .

Every fit male Turkish citizen otherwise not barred is required to serve in the military for a period ranging from three weeks to a year , dependent on education and job location . Turkey does not recognise conscientious objection and does not offer a civilian alternative to military service .

= = Geography = =

Turkey is a transcontinental Eurasian country . Asian Turkey , which includes 97 percent of the country , is separated from European Turkey by the Bosphorus , the Sea of Marmara , and the Dardanelles . European Turkey comprises 3 percent of the country . The territory of Turkey is more than 1 600 kilometres ( 990 miles ) long and 800 kilometres ( 500 miles ) wide , with a roughly rectangular shape . It lies between latitudes 35 ° and 43 ° N , and longitudes 25 ° and 45 ° E. Turkey 's land area , including lakes , occupies 783 562 square kilometres ( 302 535 square miles ) , of which 755 688 square kilometres ( 291 773 square miles ) are in Southwest Asia and 23 764 square kilometres ( 9 175 square miles ) in Europe . Turkey is the world 's 37th largest country in terms of area . The country is encircled by seas on three sides : the Aegean Sea to the west , the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean to the south . Turkey also contains the Sea of Marmara in the northwest .

The European section of Turkey , East Thrace ( the easternmost region of the Balkan peninsula ) , forms the borders of Turkey with Greece and Bulgaria . The Asian part of the country is comprised



mostly by the peninsula of Anatolia , which consists of a high central plateau with narrow coastal plains , between the Köroğlu and Pontic mountain ranges to the north and the Taurus Mountains to the south . Eastern Turkey , located within the western plateau of the Armenian Highlands , has a more mountainous landscape and is home to the sources of rivers such as the Euphrates , Tigris and Aras , and contains Mount Ararat , Turkey 's highest point at 5 @,@ 137 metres ( 16 @,@ 854 feet ) , and Lake Van , the largest lake in the country . Southeastern Turkey is located within the northern plains of Upper Mesopotamia .

Turkey is divided into seven geographical regions : Marmara , Aegean , Black Sea , Central Anatolia , Eastern Anatolia , Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean . The uneven north Anatolian terrain running along the Black Sea resembles a long , narrow belt . This region comprises approximately one @-@ sixth of Turkey 's total land area . As a general trend , the inland Anatolian plateau becomes increasingly rugged as it progresses eastward .

Turkey 's varied landscapes are the product of complex earth movements that have shaped the region over thousands of years and still manifest themselves in fairly frequent earthquakes and occasional volcanic eruptions . The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles owe their existence to the fault lines running through Turkey that led to the creation of the Black Sea . The North Anatolian Fault Line runs across the north of the country from west to east , along which major earthquakes took place in history . The latest of those big earthquakes was the 1999 İzmit earthquake .

### = = = Biodiversity = = =

Turkey 's extraordinary ecosystem and habitat diversity has produced considerable species diversity . Anatolia is the homeland of many plants that have been cultivated for food since the advent of agriculture , and the wild ancestors of many plants that now provide staples for humankind still grow in Turkey . The diversity of Turkey 's fauna is even greater than that of its flora . The number of animal species in the whole of Europe is around 60 @,@ 000 , while in Turkey there are over 80 @,@ 000 ( over 100 @,@ 000 counting the subspecies ) .

The Northern Anatolian conifer and deciduous forests is an ecoregion which covers most of the Pontic Mountains in northern Turkey , while the Caucasus mixed forests extend across the eastern end of the range . The region is home to Eurasian wildlife such as the Eurasian sparrowhawk , golden eagle , eastern imperial eagle , lesser spotted eagle , Caucasian black grouse , red @-@ fronted serin , and wallcreeper . The narrow coastal strip between the Pontic Mountains and the Black Sea is home to the Euxine @-@ Colchic deciduous forests , which contain some of the world 's few temperate rainforests . The Turkish pine is mostly found in Turkey and other east Mediterranean countries . Several wild species of tulip are native to Anatolia , and the flower was first introduced to Western Europe with species taken from the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century .

There are 40 national parks , 189 nature parks , 31 nature preserve areas , 80 wildlife protection areas and 109 nature monuments in Turkey such as Gallipoli Peninsula Historical National Park , Mount Nemrut National Park , Ancient Troya National Park , Ölüdeniz Nature Park and Polonezköy Nature Park .

Ankara , the capital of Turkey , is renowned for the Angora cat , Angora rabbit and Angora goat . Another national cat breed of Turkey is the Van cat . The national dog breeds are the Anatolian Shepherd , Kangal , Malaklı and Akba .

The last confirmed death of an Anatolian leopard , closely related to the Persian ( Caucasian ) leopard and native to the western regions of Anatolia , took place in the Bağözü village of the Beypazarı district in Ankara Province on 17 January 1974 . The Persian ( Caucasian ) leopard is still found in very small numbers in the northeastern and southeastern regions of Turkey . The Caspian tiger is an extinct tiger subspecies ( closely related to the Siberian tiger ) which lived in the easternmost regions of Turkey until the latter half of the 20th century , with the last confirmed death in Uludere , February 1970 . The Eurasian lynx and the European wildcat are other felid species which are currently found in the forests of Turkey .

## == Climate ==

The coastal areas of Turkey bordering the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas have a temperate Mediterranean climate , with hot , dry summers and mild to cool , wet winters . The coastal areas bordering the Black Sea have a temperate oceanic climate with warm , wet summers and cool to cold , wet winters . The Turkish Black Sea coast receives the greatest amount of precipitation and is the only region of Turkey that receives high precipitation throughout the year . The eastern part of that coast averages 2 @, @ 200 millimetres ( 87 in ) annually which is the highest precipitation in the country .

The coastal areas bordering the Sea of Marmara , which connects the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea , have a transitional climate between a temperate Mediterranean climate and a temperate oceanic climate with warm to hot , moderately dry summers and cool to cold , wet winters . Snow falls on the coastal areas of the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea almost every winter , but usually melts in no more than a few days . However snow is rare in the coastal areas of the Aegean Sea and very rare in the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea .

Mountains close to the coast prevent Mediterranean influences from extending inland , giving the central Anatolian plateau of the interior of Turkey a continental climate with sharply contrasting seasons .

Winters on the eastern part of the plateau are especially severe . Temperatures of ? 30 to ? 40 ° C ( ? 22 to ? 40 ° F ) can occur in eastern Anatolia . Snow may remain at least 120 days of the year . In the west , winter temperatures average below 1 ° C ( 34 ° F ) . Summers are hot and dry , with temperatures often above 30 ° C ( 86 ° F ) in the day . Annual precipitation averages about 400 millimetres ( 15 in ) , with actual amounts determined by elevation . The driest regions are the Konya plain and the Malatya plain , where annual rainfall is often less than 300 millimetres ( 12 in ) . May is generally the wettest month , whereas July and August are the driest .

## == Economy ==

Turkey has the world 's 17th largest GDP by PPP and 18th largest nominal GDP . The country is among the founding members of the OECD and the G @-@ 20 major economies .

The EU ? Turkey Customs Union in 1995 led to an extensive liberalization of tariff rates , and forms one of the most important pillars of Turkey 's foreign trade policy . Turkey 's exports were \$ 143 @. @ 5 billion in 2011 and reached \$ 163 billion in 2012 ( main export partners in 2012 : Germany 8 @. @ 6 % , Iraq 7 @. @ 1 % , Iran 6 @. @ 5 % , UK 5 @. @ 7 % , UAE 5 @. @ 4 % ) . However , larger imports which amounted to \$ 229 billion in 2012 threatened the balance of trade ( main import partners in 2012 : Russia 11 @. @ 3 % , Germany 9 % , China 9 % , US 6 % , Italy 5 @. @ 6 % ) .

Turkey has a sizeable automotive industry , which produced over a million motor vehicles in 2012 , ranking as the 17th largest producer in the world . Turkish shipbuilding exports were worth US \$ 1 @. @ 2 billion in 2011 . The major export markets are Malta , Marshall Islands , Panama and the United Kingdom . Turkish shipyards have 15 floating docks of different sizes and one dry dock . Tuzla , Yalova , and ?zmit have developed into dynamic shipbuilding centres . In 2011 , there were 70 active shipyards in Turkey , with another 56 being built . Turkish shipyards are highly regarded both for the production of chemical and oil tankers up to 10 @, @ 000 dwt and also for their mega yachts .

Turkish brands like Beko and Vestel are among the largest producers of consumer electronics and home appliances in Europe , and invest a substantial amount of funds for research and development in new technologies related to these fields .

Other key sectors of the Turkish economy are banking , construction , home appliances , electronics , textiles , oil refining , petrochemical products , food , mining , iron and steel , and machine industry . In 2010 , the agricultural sector accounted for 9 percent of GDP , while the industrial sector accounted for 26 percent and the services sector for 65 percent . However , agriculture still accounted for a quarter of employment . In 2004 , it was estimated that 46 percent of total disposable income was received by the top 20 percent of income earners , while the lowest 20

percent received only 6 percent . The rate of female employment in Turkey was 30 percent in 2012 , the lowest among all OECD countries .

Foreign direct investment ( FDI ) was \$ 8 @. @ 3 billion in 2012 , a figure expected to rise to \$ 15 billion in 2013 . In 2012 , Fitch Group upgraded Turkey 's credit rating to investment grade after an 18 @- @ year gap ; this was followed by a ratings upgrade by Moody 's in May 2013 , as the service lifted Turkey 's government bond ratings to the lowest investment grade Baa3 .

= = = History = = =

In the early decades of the Turkish Republic , the government ( or banks established and owned by the government , such as Türkiye ?? Bankas? ( 1924 ) , Sanayi ve Maadin Bankas? ( 1925 ) , Emlak ve Eytam Bankas? ( 1926 ) , Central Bank of Turkey ( 1930 ) , Sümerbank ( 1933 ) , ?ller Bankas? ( 1933 ) , Etibank ( 1935 ) , Denizbank ( 1937 ) , Halk Bankas? ( 1938 ) , etc . ) had to subsidize most of the industrial projects , due to the lack of a strong private sector . However , in the period between the 1920s and 1950s , a new generation of Turkish entrepreneurs such as Nuri Demira? , Vehbi Koç , Hac? Ömer Sabanc? and Nejat Eczac?ba?? began to establish privately owned factories , some of which evolved into the largest industrial conglomerates that dominate the Turkish economy today , such as Koç Holding , Sabanc? Holding and Eczac?ba?? Holding .

During the first six decades of the republic , between 1923 and 1983 , Turkey generally adhered to a quasi @- @ statist approach with strict government planning of the budget and government @- @ imposed limitations over foreign trade , flow of foreign currency , foreign direct investment and private sector participation in certain fields ( such as broadcasting , telecommunications , energy , mining , etc . ) . However , in 1983 , Prime Minister Turgut Özal initiated a series of reforms designed to shift the economy from a statist , insulated system to a more private @- @ sector , market @- @ based model .

The reforms , combined with unprecedented amounts of funding from foreign loans , spurred rapid economic growth ; but this growth was punctuated by sharp recessions and financial crises in 1994 , 1999 ( following the earthquake of that year ) , and 2001 ; resulting in an average of 4 percent GDP growth per annum between 1981 and 2003 . Lack of additional fiscal reforms , combined with large and growing public sector deficits and widespread corruption , resulted in high inflation , a weak banking sector and increased macroeconomic volatility . Since the economic crisis of 2001 and the reforms initiated by the finance minister of the time , Kemal Dervi? , inflation has dropped to single @- @ digit figures for the first time in decades ( 8 % in 2005 ) , investor confidence and foreign investment have soared , and unemployment has fallen ( 10 % in 2005 ) .

Turkey has gradually opened up its markets through economic reforms by reducing government controls on foreign trade and investment and the privatization of publicly owned industries , and the liberalization of many sectors to private and foreign participation has continued amid political debate . The public debt @- @ to @- @ GDP ratio peaked at 75 @. @ 9 percent during the recession of 2001 , falling to an estimated 26 @. @ 9 percent by 2013 .

The real GDP growth rate from 2002 to 2007 averaged 6 @. @ 8 percent annually , which made Turkey one of the fastest growing economies in the world during that period . However , growth slowed to 1 percent in 2008 , and in 2009 the Turkish economy was affected by the global financial crisis , with a recession of 5 percent . The economy was estimated to have returned to 8 percent growth in 2010 . According to Eurostat data , Turkish GDP per capita adjusted by purchasing power standard stood at 52 percent of the EU average in 2011 .

In the early years of the 21st century , the chronically high inflation was brought under control ; this led to the launch of a new currency , the Turkish new lira ( Yeni Türk Liras? ) in 2005 , to cement the acquisition of the economic reforms and erase the vestiges of an unstable economy . In 2009 , after only four years in circulation , the Turkish new lira was renamed back to the Turkish lira with the introduction of new banknotes and coins ( and the withdrawal of the Turkish new lira banknotes and coins that were introduced in 2005 ) , but the ISO 4217 code of the Turkish new lira ( TRY ) remains in use for the current Turkish lira in the foreign exchange market .

## === Tourism ===

Tourism in Turkey has experienced rapid growth in the last twenty years , and constitutes an important part of the economy . In 2013 , 37 @. @ 8 million foreign visitors arrived in Turkey , which ranked as the 6th most popular tourism destination in the world ; they contributed \$ 27 @. @ 9 billion to Turkey 's revenues . In 2012 , 15 percent of the tourists were from Germany , 11 percent from Russia , 8 percent from the United Kingdom , 5 percent from Bulgaria , 4 percent each from Georgia , the Netherlands and Iran , 3 percent from France , 2 percent each from the United States and Syria , and 40 percent from other countries .

Turkey has 13 UNESCO World Heritage Sites , such as the " Historic Areas of Istanbul " , the " Rock Sites of Cappadocia " , the " Neolithic Site of Çatalhöyük " , " Hattusa : the Hittite Capital " , the " Archaeological Site of Troy " , " Pergamon and its Multi @-@ Layered Cultural Landscape " , " Hierapolis ? Pamukkale " , and " Mount Nemrut " ; and 51 World Heritage Sites in tentative list , such as the archaeological sites or historic urban centers of Göbekli Tepe , Gordion , Ephesus , Aphrodisias , Perga , Lycia , Sagalassos , Aizanoi , Zeugma , Ani , Harran , Mardin , Konya and Alanya .

Turkey hosts two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World : the Mausoleum in Halicarnassus and the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus .

## === Infrastructure ===

In 2013 there were 98 airports in Turkey , including 22 international airports . As of 2015 , Istanbul Atatürk Airport is the 11th busiest airport in the world , serving 31 @, @ 833 @, @ 324 passengers between January and July 2014 , according to Airports Council International . The new ( third ) international airport of Istanbul is planned to be the largest airport in the world , with a capacity to serve 150 million passengers per annum . Turkish Airlines , flag carrier of Turkey since 1933 , was selected by Skytrax as Europe 's best airline for five consecutive years in 2011 , 2012 , 2013 , 2014 and 2015 . With 435 destinations ( 51 domestic and 384 international ) in 126 countries worldwide , Turkish Airlines is the largest carrier in the world by number of countries served as of 2016 .

As of 2014 , the country has a roadway network of 65 @, @ 623 kilometres ( 40 @, @ 776 miles ) . The total length of the rail network was 10 @, @ 991 km in 2008 , including 2 @, @ 133 kilometres ( 1 @, @ 325 miles ) of electrified and 457 kilometres ( 284 miles ) of high @-@ speed track . The Turkish State Railways started building high @-@ speed rail lines in 2003 . The Ankara @-@ Konya line became operational in 2011 while the Ankara @-@ Istanbul line entered service in 2014 .

In 2008 , 7 @, @ 555 kilometres ( 4 @, @ 694 mi ) of natural gas pipelines and 3 @, @ 636 kilometres ( 2 @, @ 259 mi ) of petroleum pipelines spanned the country 's territory . The Baku @-@ Tbilisi @-@ Ceyhan pipeline , the second longest oil pipeline in the world , was inaugurated on 10 May 2005 . The Blue Stream , a major trans @-@ Black Sea gas pipeline , delivers natural gas from Russia to Turkey . New undersea pipeline , with an annual capacity around 63 billion cubic metres ( bcm ) , will allow Turkey to resell Russian gas to Europe .

In 2013 , the energy consumption was 240 billion kilowatt hours . As Turkey imported 72 percent of its energy in 2013 , the government decided to invest in nuclear power to reduce imports . Three nuclear power stations are to be built by 2023 . Turkey has the fifth highest direct utilization and capacity of geothermal power in the world . Turkey is a partner country of the EU INOGATE energy programme .

Turkey 's first nuclear power plants are planned to be built in Mersin 's Akkuyu district on the Mediterranean coast ; in Sinop 's ?nceburun district on the Black Sea coast ; and in K?rklareli 's ??neada district on the Black Sea coast . Turkey has the fifth highest direct utilization and capacity of geothermal power in the world . Turkey is a partner country of the EU INOGATE energy programme , which has four key topics : enhancing energy security , convergence of member state energy markets on the basis of EU internal energy market principles , supporting sustainable energy development , and attracting investment for energy projects of common and regional interest .

Turkey 's internet , which has 35 million active users , holds a ' Partly Free ' ranking in Freedom

House 's index .

Water supply and sanitation in Turkey is characterized by achievements and challenges . Over the past decades access to drinking water has become almost universal and access to adequate sanitation has also increased substantially . Autonomous utilities have been created in the 16 metropolitan cities of Turkey and cost recovery has been increased , thus providing the basis for the sustainability of service provision . Intermittent supply , which was common in many cities , has become less frequent . In 2004 , 61 % of the wastewater collected through sewers was being treated .

Remaining challenges include the need to further increase wastewater treatment , to reduce the high level of non @-@ revenue water hovering around 50 % and to expand access to adequate sanitation in rural areas . The investment required to comply with EU standards in the sector , especially in wastewater treatment , is estimated to be in the order of Euro 2 billion per year , more than double the current level of investment .

= = Science and technology = = =

TÜBİTAK is the leading agency for developing science , technology and innovation policies in Turkey . TÜBA is an autonomous scholarly society acting to promote scientific activities in Turkey . TAEK is the official nuclear energy institution of Turkey . Its objectives include academic research in nuclear energy , and the development and implementation of peaceful nuclear tools .

Turkish government companies for research and development in military technologies include Turkish Aerospace Industries , Aselsan , Havelsan , Roketsan , MKE , among others . Turkish Satellite Assembly , Integration and Test Center ( UMET ) is a spacecraft production and testing facility owned by the Ministry of National Defence and operated by the Turkish Aerospace Industries ( TAI ) . The Turkish Space Launch System ( UFS ) is a project to develop the satellite launch capability of Turkey . It consists of the construction of a spaceport , the development of satellite launch vehicles as well as the establishment of remote earth stations .

In 2015 , Aziz Sancar , a Turkish professor at the University of North Carolina , won the Nobel Chemistry Prize along with Tomas Lindahl and Paul Modrich , for their work on how cells repair damaged DNA .

= = Demographics = =

According to the Address @-@ Based Population Recording System of Turkey , the country 's population was 74 @.@ 7 million people in 2011 , nearly three @-@ quarters of whom lived in towns and cities . According to the 2011 estimate , the population is increasing by 1 @.@ 35 percent each year . Turkey has an average population density of 97 people per km <sup>2</sup> . People within the 15 ? 64 age group constitute 67 @.@ 4 percent of the total population ; the 0 ? 14 age group corresponds to 25 @.@ 3 percent ; while senior citizens aged 65 years or older make up 7 @.@ 3 percent . In 1927 , when the first official census was recorded in the Republic of Turkey , the population was 13 @.@ 6 million . The largest city in Turkey , Istanbul , is also the largest city in Europe in population , and the third @-@ largest city in Europe in terms of size .

Article 66 of the Turkish Constitution defines a " Turk " as " anyone who is bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship " ; therefore , the legal use of the term " Turkish " as a citizen of Turkey is different from the ethnic definition . However , the majority of the Turkish population are of Turkish ethnicity . They are estimated at 70 ? 75 percent . Reliable data on the ethnic mix of the population is not available , because Turkish census figures do not include statistics on ethnicity . The three " Non @-@ Muslim " minority groups claimed to be officially recognized in the Treaty of Lausanne are Armenians , Greeks and Jews . Officially unrecognized ( mostly Muslim ) ethnic groups include Albanians , Arabs , Assyrians , Azeris , Bosniaks , Circassians , Georgians , Lazs , Persians , Pomaks ( Bulgarians ) , Yazidis and Roma . The Kurds , a distinct ethnic group , are the largest non @-@ Turkic ethnicity , around 18 ? 25 percent of the population . Kurds are concentrated in the east and southeast of the country , in what is also known as Turkish Kurdistan .

Kurds make up a majority in the provinces of Tunceli , Bingöl , Muş , Ağrı , Iğdır , Elâzığ , Diyarbakır , Batman , Şırnak , Bitlis , Van , Mardin , Siirt and Hakkari , a near majority in Gaziantep province ( 47 % ) , and a large minority in Kars province ( 20 % ) . In addition , due to internal migration , Kurdish communities exist in all major cities in central and western Turkey , particularly in Istanbul , where there are an estimated 3 million Kurds , making Istanbul the city with the largest Kurdish population in the world . Minorities besides the Kurds are thought to make up an estimated 7 - 12 percent of the population . Minorities other than the three officially recognized ones do not have any minority rights . The term " minority " itself remains a sensitive issue in Turkey , while the Turkish government is frequently criticized for its treatment of minorities . Although minorities are not recognised , state -run Turkish Radio and Television Corporation ( TRT ) broadcasts television and radio programs in minority languages . Also , some minority language classes can be chosen in elementary schools .

An estimated 2 - 5 percent of the population are international migrants . Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world , including 2 - 2 million Syrian refugees , as of September 2015 .

The country 's official language is Turkish , which is spoken by 85 - 94 percent of the population as mother tongue . 11 - 97 percent of the population speaks the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish as mother tongue . Arabic and Zaza are the mother tongues of 2 - 39 percent of the population , and several other languages are the mother tongues of smaller parts of the population . Endangered languages in Turkey include Abaza , Abkhaz , Adyge , Cappadocian Greek , Gagauz , Hérvén , Homshetsma , Kabard -Cherkes , Ladino ( Judesmo ) , Laz , Mlahso , Pontic Greek , Romani , Suret , Turoyo , Ubykh , and Western Armenian .

#### == Religion ==

Turkey is a secular state with no official state religion ; the Turkish Constitution provides for freedom of religion and conscience . The role of religion has been a controversial debate over the years since the formation of Islamist parties . For many decades , the wearing of the hijab was banned in schools and government buildings because it was viewed as a symbol of political Islam . However , the ban was lifted from universities in 2011 , from government buildings in 2013 , and from schools in 2014 .

#### === Islam ===

Islam is the dominant religion of Turkey with 99 - 98 percent of the population being registered as Muslim ( although some sources give a slightly lower estimate of 96 - 94 percent ) with the most popular sect being the Hanafite school of Sunni Islam . The highest Islamic religious authority is the Presidency of Religious Affairs ( Turkish : Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı ) ; it interprets the Hanafi school of law , and is responsible for regulating the operation of the country 's 80 ,000 registered mosques and employing local and provincial imams . Academics suggest the Alevi population may be from 15 to 20 million while the Alevi -Bektaşî Federation claims that there are around 25 million and according to Aksiyon magazine , the number of Shiite Twelvers ( excluding Alevis ) is 3 million ( 4 - 2 percent ) . There are also some Sufi Muslims . Roughly 2 percent are non -denominational Muslims .

The percentage of non -Muslims in Turkey fell from 19 percent in 1914 to 2 - 5 percent in 1927 , due to events which had a significant impact on the country 's demographic structure , such as the Armenian Genocide , the population exchange between Greece and Turkey , and the emigration of non -Muslims ( such as Levantines , Greeks , Armenians , Jews , etc . ) to foreign countries ( mostly in Europe and the Americas ) that actually began in the late 19th century and gained pace in the first quarter of the 20th century , especially during World War I and after the Turkish War of Independence . The Wealth Tax on non -Muslims in 1942 , the emigration of a portion of Turkish Jews to Israel after 1948 , and the ongoing Cyprus dispute which damaged the relations between Turks and Greeks ( culminating in the Istanbul pogrom of 6 - 7 September 1955 )

were other important events that contributed to the decline of Turkey's non-Muslim population .

#### ==== Christianity =====

Today there are more than 120 @, @ 000 people of different Christian denominations , representing less than 0 @. @ 2 percent of Turkey's population , including an estimated 80 @, @ 000 Oriental Orthodox , 35 @, @ 000 Roman Catholics , 18 @, @ 000 Antiochian Greeks , 5 @, @ 000 Greek Orthodox and smaller numbers of Protestants . Currently there are 236 churches open for worship in Turkey . The Eastern Orthodox Church has been headquartered in Istanbul since the 4th century .

#### ==== Judaism =====

There are about 26 @, @ 000 people who are Jewish , the vast majority of whom are Sephardi . There have been Jewish communities in Asia Minor since at least the 5th century BC and many Spanish and Portuguese Jews expelled from Spain were welcomed into the Ottoman Empire in the late 15th century , twenty centuries later . Despite emigration during the 20th century , modern @-@ day Turkey continues to have a small Jewish population .

#### ==== Agnosticism and atheism =====

According to a 2010 Eurobarometer poll 94 % of Turks believed in God while only 1 % did not . This indicates that 5 % of the population are agnostic with another 1 % being explicitly atheist . However , according to another poll by KONDA the percentage of atheism is 2 @. @ 9 % .

#### ==== Education =====

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for pre @-@ tertiary education . This is compulsory and lasts twelve years : four years each of primary school , middle school and high school . Less than half of 25- to 34 @-@ year @-@ old Turks have completed at least high school , compared with an OECD average of over 80 percent . Basic education in Turkey is considered to lag behind other OECD countries , with significant differences between high and low performers . Turkey is ranked 32nd out of 34 in the OECD's PISA study . Access to high @-@ quality school heavily depends on the performance in the secondary school entrance exams , to the point that some students begin taking private tutoring classes when they are 10 years old . The overall adult literacy rate in 2011 was 94 @. @ 1 percent ; 97 @. @ 9 percent for males and 90 @. @ 3 percent for females .

By 2011 , there were 166 universities in Turkey . Entry to higher education depends on the Student Selection Examination ( ÖSS ) . In 2008 , the quota of admitted students was 600 @, @ 000 , compared to 1 @, @ 700 @, @ 000 who took the ÖSS exam in 2007 . Except for the Open Education Faculty ( Turkish : Açıköğretim Fakültesi ) at Anadolu University , entrance is regulated by the national ÖSS examination , after which high school graduates are assigned to universities according to their performance . According to the 2012 ? 2013 Times Higher Education World University Rankings , the top university in Turkey is Middle East Technical University ( in the 201 ? 225 rank range ) , followed by Bilkent University and Koç University ( both in the 226 ? 250 range ) , Istanbul Technical University and Boğaziçi University ( in the 276 ? 300 bracket ) .

#### ==== Healthcare =====

Health care in Turkey used to be dominated by a centralized state system run by the Ministry of Health . In 2003 , the government introduced a sweeping health reform programme aimed at increasing the ratio of private to state health provision and making healthcare available to a larger share of the population . Turkish Statistical Institute announced that 76 @. @ 3 billion TL was spent

for healthcare in 2012 ; 79 @. @ 6 percent of which was covered by the Social Security Institution and 15 @. @ 4 percent of which was paid directly by the patients . In 2012 , there were 29 @, @ 960 medical institutions in Turkey , and on average one doctor per 583 people and 2 @. @ 65 beds per 1000 people .

Life expectancy ( as of 2010 ) was 71 @. @ 1 years for men and 75 @. @ 3 for women , with an overall average of 73 @. @ 2 .

= = Culture = =

Turkey has a very diverse culture that is a blend of various elements of the O?uz Turkic , Anatolian , Ottoman ( which was itself a continuation of both Greco @- @ Roman and Islamic cultures ) and Western culture and traditions , which started with the Westernisation of the Ottoman Empire and still continues today . This mix originally began as a result of the encounter of Turks and their culture with those of the peoples who were in their path during their migration from Central Asia to the West . Turkish culture is a product of efforts to be a " modern " Western state , while maintaining traditional religious and historical values .

= = = Arts = = =

Turkish painting , in the Western sense , developed actively starting from the mid 19th century . The very first painting lessons were scheduled at what is now the Istanbul Technical University ( then the Imperial Military Engineering School ) in 1793 , mostly for technical purposes . In the late 19th century , human figure in the western sense was being established in Turkish painting , especially with Osman Hamdi Bey . Impressionism , among the contemporary trends , appeared later on with Halil Pa?a . The young Turkish artists sent to Europe in 1926 came back inspired by contemporary trends such as Fauvism , Cubism and even Expressionism , still very influential in Europe . The later " Group D " of artists led by Abidin Dino , Cemal Tollu , Fikret Mualla , Fahrünnisa Zeid , Bedri Rahmi Eyübo?lu , Adnan Çoker and Burhan Do?ançay introduced some trends that had lasted in the West for more than three decades . Other important movements in Turkish painting were the " Yeniler Grubu " ( The Newcomers Group ) of the late 1930s ; the " On 'lar Grubu " ( Group of Ten ) of the 1940s ; the " Yeni Dal Grubu " ( New Branch Group ) of the 1950s ; and the " Siyah Kalem Grubu " ( Black Pen Group ) of the 1960s .

Turkish music and literature are examples of a mix of cultural influences . Interaction between the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world along with Europe contributed to a blend of Turkic , Islamic and European traditions in modern @- @ day Turkish music and literary arts . Turkish literature was heavily influenced by Persian and Arabic literature during most of the Ottoman era . The Tanzimat reforms introduced previously unknown Western genres , primarily the novel and the short story . Many of the writers in the Tanzimat period wrote in several genres simultaneously : for instance , the poet Nâm?k Kemal also wrote the important 1876 novel ?ntibâh ( Awakening ) , while the journalist ?inasi is noted for writing , in 1860 , the first modern Turkish play , the one @- @ act comedy " ?air Evlenmesi " ( The Poet 's Marriage ) . Most of the roots of modern Turkish literature were formed between the years 1896 and 1923 . Broadly , there were three primary literary movements during this period : the Edebiyyât @- @ ? Cedîde ( New Literature ) movement ; the Fecr @- @ i Âtî ( Dawn of the Future ) movement ; and the Millî Edebiyyât ( National Literature ) movement . The first radical step of innovation in 20th century Turkish poetry was taken by Nâz?m Hikmet , who introduced the free verse style . Another revolution in Turkish poetry came about in 1941 with the Garip Movement . The mix of cultural influences in Turkey is dramatized , for example , in the form of the " new symbols of the clash and interlacing of cultures " enacted in the novels of Orhan Pamuk , recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature .

Turkey has a diverse folkloric dance culture . Hora is performed in East Thrace ; Zeybek in the Aegean Region , Southern Marmara and East @- @ Central Anatolia Region ; Teke in the Western Mediterranean Region ; Ka??k Oyunlar? and Kar??lama in West @- @ Central Anatolia , Western Black Sea Region , Southern Marmara Region and Eastern Mediterranean Region ; Horon in the



Central and Eastern Black Sea Region ; Halay in Eastern Anatolia and the Central Anatolia Region ; and Bar and Lezginka in the Northeastern Anatolia Region .

= = = Architecture = = =

The architecture of the Seljuk Turks combined the elements and characteristics of the Turkic architecture of Central Asia with those of Persian , Arab , Armenian and Byzantine architecture . The transition from Seljuk architecture to Ottoman architecture is most visible in Bursa , which was the capital of the Ottoman State between 1335 and 1413 . Following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople ( Istanbul ) in 1453 , Ottoman architecture was significantly influenced by Byzantine architecture . Topkapı Palace in Istanbul is one of the most famous examples of classical Ottoman architecture and was the primary residence of the Ottoman Sultans for approximately 400 years . Mimar Sinan ( c.1489 ? 1588 ) was the most important architect of the classical period in Ottoman architecture . He was the chief architect of at least 374 buildings which were constructed in various provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century .

Since the 18th century , Turkish architecture has been increasingly influenced by European styles , and this can be particularly seen in the Tanzimat era buildings of Istanbul like the Dolmabahçe , Çırağan , Feriye , Beylerbeyi , Küçüksu , İhlamur and Yıldız palaces , which were all designed by members of the Balyan family of Ottoman court architects . The Ottoman era waterfront houses ( yalı ) on the Bosphorus also reflect the fusion between classical Ottoman and European architectural styles during the aforementioned period . The First National Architectural Movement ( Birinci Ulusal Mimarlık Akımı ) in the early 20th century sought to create a new architecture , which was based on motifs from Seljuk and Ottoman architecture . The movement was also labelled Turkish Neoclassical or the National Architectural Renaissance . The leading architects of this movement were Vedat Tek ( 1873 ? 1942 ) , Mimar Kemaleddin Bey ( 1870 ? 1927 ) , Arif Hikmet Koyunoğlu ( 1888 ? 1982 ) and Giulio Mongeri ( 1873 ? 1953 ) . Notable buildings from this era are the Grand Post Office in Istanbul ( 1905 ? 1909 ) , Tayyare Apartments ( 1919 ? 1922 ) , Istanbul 4th Vakıf Han ( 1911 ? 1926 ) , State Art and Sculpture Museum ( 1927 ? 1930 ) , Ethnography Museum of Ankara ( 1925 ? 1928 ) , the first Ziraat Bank headquarters in Ankara ( 1925 ? 1929 ) , the first Türkiye İş Bankası headquarters in Ankara ( 1926 ? 1929 ) , Bebek Mosque , and Kamer Hatun Mosque .

= = = Sports = = =

The most popular sport in Turkey is association football ( soccer ) . Galatasaray won the UEFA Cup and UEFA Super Cup in 2000 . The Turkish national football team finished 3rd and won the bronze medal at the 2002 FIFA World Cup and at the 2003 FIFA Confederations Cup ; while also reaching the semi-finals ( finishing 3rd by goals difference ) at the UEFA Euro 2008 .

Other mainstream sports such as basketball and volleyball are also popular . The Turkish men 's national basketball team finished 2nd and won the silver medal at the 2010 FIBA World Championship and at EuroBasket 2001 , which were both hosted by Turkey . They also won two gold medals ( 1987 and 2013 ) , one silver medal ( 1971 ) and three bronze medals ( 1967 , 1983 and 2009 ) at the Mediterranean Games . Turkish basketball club Anadolu Efes S.K. won the 1995 ? 96 FIBA Koraç Cup , finished 2nd at the 1992 ? 93 FIBA Saporta Cup , and made it to the Final Four of Euroleague and Suproleague in 2000 and 2001 , finishing 3rd on both occasions . Another Turkish basketball club , Beşiktaş , won the 2011 ? 12 FIBA EuroChallenge . Galatasaray won the 2015 ? 16 Eurocup , while in the same season , Fenerbahçe finished second in the 2015 ? 16 Euroleague . The Final of the 2013 ? 14 EuroLeague Women basketball championship was played between two Turkish teams , Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe , and won by Galatasaray .

The Turkish women 's national volleyball team won the silver medal at the 2003 European Championship , the bronze medal at the 2011 European Championship , and the bronze medal at the 2012 FIVB World Grand Prix . They also won a gold medal ( 2005 ) , six silver medals ( 1987 , 1991 , 1997 , 2001 , 2009 , 2013 ) and a bronze medal ( 1993 ) at the Mediterranean Games .

Women 's volleyball clubs in Turkey , namely Fenerbahçe , Eczacıbaşı and Vakıfbank , have won numerous European championship titles and medals . Fenerbahçe won the 2010 FIVB Women 's Club World Championship and the 2012 CEV Women 's Champions League . Representing Europe as the winner of the 2012 ? 13 CEV Women 's Champions League , Vakıfbank also became the world champion by winning the 2013 FIVB Women 's Club World Championship .

The traditional Turkish national sport has been yağlı güreş ( oiled wrestling ) since Ottoman times . Edirne has hosted the annual Kırkpınar oiled wrestling tournament since 1361 . International wrestling styles governed by FILA such as Freestyle wrestling and Greco -Roman wrestling are also popular , with many European , World and Olympic championship titles won by Turkish wrestlers both individually and as a national team .

= = = Cuisine = = =

Turkish cuisine is regarded as one of the most prominent in the world , its popularity is largely owed to the cultural influences of the Ottoman Empire and partly because of its major tourism industry . It is largely the heritage of Ottoman cuisine , which can be described as a fusion and refinement of Central Asian , Caucasian , Middle Eastern , Mediterranean and Balkan cuisines .

The country 's position between the East and the Mediterranean Sea helped the Turks gain complete control of major trade routes , and an ideal environment allowed plants and animals to flourish . Turkish cuisine was well established by the mid @-@ 1400s , the beginning of the Ottoman Empire 's six hundred @-@ year reign . Yogurt salads , fish in olive oil , and stuffed and wrapped vegetables became Turkish staples . The empire , eventually spanning from Austria to northern Africa , used its land and water routes to import exotic ingredients from all over the world . By the end of the 16th century , the Ottoman court housed over 1 @, @ 400 live @-@ in cooks and passed laws regulating the freshness of food . Since the fall of the empire in World War I ( 1914 ? 1918 ) and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 , foreign food such as French hollandaise sauce and western fast food have made their way into the modern Turkish diet .

= = = Media = = =

Hundreds of television channels , thousands of local and national radio stations , several dozen newspapers , a productive and profitable national cinema and a rapid growth of broadband internet use all make up a very vibrant media industry in Turkey . In 2003 a total of 257 television stations and 1 @, @ 100 radio stations were licensed to operate , and others operated without licenses . Of those licensed , 16 television and 36 radio stations reached national audiences . The majority of the audiences are shared among public broadcaster TRT and the network @-@ style channels such as Kanal D , Show TV , ATV and Star TV . The broadcast media have a very high penetration as satellite dishes and cable systems are widely available . The Radio and Television Supreme Council ( RTÜK ) is the government body overseeing the broadcast media . By circulation , the most popular daily newspapers are Zaman , Posta , Hürriyet , Sözcü , Sabah and Habertürk . Turkish television dramas are increasingly becoming popular beyond Turkey 's borders and are among the country 's most vital exports , both in terms of profit and public relations . Freedom House lists Turkey 's media as " partly free " .