



## **Is Prime Minister Erdogan taking Turkey in the right direction?**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has faced more scrutiny and public opposition than at any other time in his twelve year reign. Erdogan has won three elections in comfortable fashion and has helped establish a stable and multi-party political landscape over that span, curbing the military's influence on politics which has successfully overthrown multiple Turkish governments. He has also presided over a time of great economic growth in the country. Further, Erdogan has made inroads with Turkish Kurds who have been in bloody conflict with the government for thirty years, claiming the lives of over 40,000 people.

However, Erdogan's government is also facing corruption charges implicating high ranking members of his cabinet and family in bribery and embezzlement scandals. He has also cracked down on the press, blocking social media outlets such as Twitter and YouTube during times of unrest, including the Gezi Park protests. Wiretappings released to the public also provide evidence that the government has either co-opted or strong-armed Turkish media outlets, not allowing them to publish dissenting articles or to cover the protests of 2013. Accusations of performing unjust trials to root out elements in the press, army, police force and media have also hounded the Prime Minister in recent years.

Erdogan has reached term limits as the Prime Minister of Turkey and intends to run for President in August in the first democratic presidential elections in the country's history. The President was previously elected by Parliament. Currently, the position does not have as much political weight as that of Prime Minister, but Erdogan is attempting to give the position more political weight so that he can continue to govern the country legally.

To this end, we will be discussing whether or not Erdogan has led Turkey in the right direction and should continue governing. You will each be tasked with filling the roles of various groups in Turkey's political climate, conveying your group's position on Prime Minister Erdogan rule.

### **Structure**

#### *Preparation*

Each group will have approximately twenty minutes to do research into their respective group's viewpoints. Afterwards a mock trial will take place in which the prosecution and defense will argue over Erdogan's premiership.

#### *Opening Statement (2-3 minutes)*

Both sets of attorneys will make opening statements to the jury, introducing their cases as clearly and persuasively as possible. The opening statements should lay out the general picture and facts.

- Questions to consider: Why are you being taken to trial or being tried? What evidence do you intend to present and what witnesses do you intend to call to support your case? How will you prepare to counter the opposing side's opening arguments during the next phase?

### *Presenting Evidence and Questioning Witnesses*

The prosecution and then defense will call the groups to the stand, questioning them on particular aspects of the case. The attorneys will have an opportunity to question their opposition's witnesses as well.

- Questions for Attorneys to consider: Why are you questioning these witnesses? What do you hope their testimony will show? What questions will you ask? What questions will you try to avoid? Why? How might you try to ask questions in a way that might help the truth come to light? What else do you need to consider in questioning the witnesses?
- Questions for Witnesses to consider: What is your background and/or relationship to the case? How do you feel about the defendant and the case? How does the case affect you directly? Do you have any stake in the outcome? Do you have any particular motive here?

### *Closing Remarks (2-3 minutes)*

The attorneys will make closing remarks, summarizing their case utilizing the testimonies and highlighting key evidence presented.

- Questions to consider: Questions to consider: How did the evidence support your argument? What specific points did opposing counsel offer that you can directly refute? What do you hope to gain from winning the case? Why should the judge/jury decide in your favor?

## **Players**

**Attorneys:** The prosecution and defense must prepare their cases using the testimony of representatives from the various groups. They must have an opening and closing argument illustrating their viewpoint and may call witnesses to the stand for questioning.

- Prosecutors: Build a case against Erdogan's government. (4)
- Defendants: Build a case defending Erdogan's government. (4)

**Economists (2):** The Economists must look into the performance of Turkey's economy during Erdogan's rule and his future ambitions for it.

Recommended readings:

- <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/04/business/analysis-defterios-turkey/index.html>
- <http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-us/turkey/factsandfigures/pages/economy.aspx>
- <http://news.yahoo.com/turkey-economy-risks-choppy-waters-under-erdogan-presidency-042656645.html>

**Islamists (2-3):** 97% of the Turkish population is Muslim and Erdogan's moderate Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) has held the most parliamentary seats since 2002. During his reign, Erdogan has met varying levels of success in altering Turkey's long secular state, lifting a headscarf ban and limiting the consumption of alcohol in public.

Recommended reading:

- <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/03/30/uk-turkey-education-idUKBRE82T12D20120330>
- [http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/hilal\\_kaplan/2014/03/12/is-erdogan-authoritarian](http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/hilal_kaplan/2014/03/12/is-erdogan-authoritarian)

**The Press (2):** The State's censorship of the press has come under fire in the last several years as leaked wiretaps reveal that Erdogan has played a role in censoring the press during the Gezi Park protests and his government has blocked Youtube and Twitter before. Turkey is also among the worst countries in the world when it comes to freedom of press, imprisoning more journalists than almost any other country in the world.

Recommended reading:

- <http://cpj.org/blog/2013/12/turkey--worlds-top-press-jailer-once-more.php>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/21/turkey-blocks-twitter-prime-minister>
- <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-06/turkey-increases-control-over-internet-amid-corruption-probe.html>

**Judges (2-3):** Turkish courts have been a source of upheaval as some elements in the judicial system have been implicated in a coup 'plot' to overthrow the government. Reforms to the judicial system implemented in 2010 allow the government to appoint and dismiss judges.

Recommended reading:

- <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140640/steven-a-cook/turkeys-democratic-mirage>
  - (Foreign Affairs subscription required)
- <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/06/17/uk-turkey-eu-idUKKBN0ES1ZX20140617>
- <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/03/us-turkey-corruption-idUSBREA1211V20140203>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/25/turkey-sledgehammer-coup-trial-verdict>

**The Army (2-3):** The Army has long been one of the major powers in Turkish politics, but Prime Minister Erdogan has curbed their influence on politics. The military sees itself as a “guardian of the secular state” and “Kemalism” that Turkish founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk implemented after World War I. The military has been behind four coups since 1960. The most recent one in 1997 deposed a Turkish government that was similar to the AKP in its Islamic roots. Some in the Turkish military have also faced increasing pressure from the government for allegedly participating in plots to overthrow the Turkish government in what are known as the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer plots.

Recommended reading:

- <http://world.time.com/2012/09/24/turkeys-massive-military-trial-opens-old-wounds-and-new-anxieties/>
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/10/AR2010041002860.html>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24457491>

**The Kurds (2):** Turkish Kurds have long been embroiled in a conflict against the Turkish government, resulting in the deaths of 40,000 people. The conflict has gone on for thirty years with only a brief ceasefire from 1999 to 2004. Since that time, the insurgency has continued to rage. Prime Minister Erdogan has long promised to establish peace with the Turkish Kurds, an ethnic group that make up almost one fifth of the entire Turkish population. He has engaged in peace talks with the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), and appears to be making progress, though the talks are currently stalled. His government has increased the linguistic and cultural rights of the Kurds despite heavy criticism from nationalistic elements in Turkey.

Recommended reading:

- <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/03/us-turkey-election-kurds-idUSBREA3218L20140403>
- <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/02/pkk-supports-akp-gulen-conflict.html#>
- <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-346659-erdogan-silent-about-pkk-attacks-for-sake-of-presidential-elections.html>