This committee meets with Turkey at a crossroads unlike any it has seen since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and creation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The omens for national emergence are hot and cold. The economy is growing at a faster rate than any time in its modern history, rapidly propelling Turkey to the highest leagues of regional power and unprecedented global influence.

But the stability of that state and the legitimacy of its government is challenged by seemingly endless war, destruction and millions of refugees living in Turkey from neighboring Syria. A second military and terrorist threat comes from Kurdish separatists. In the national capital of Ankara, a dangerous split has emerged between the country’s President and his former closest ally. Across the country, liberal democratic standards are threatened by an increasingly autocratic government.¹

The simulation begins on 1 July 2016, and is tasked with responding in character to the above threats and many more posed against President Recep Erdoğan’s Turkey. The following brief

¹ John Feffer, ‘Forget China; Turkey is the next superpower; The nation has a booming economy, a powerful military, and increasing clout in the Middle East’, Salon, 14 June 2010,
will discuss a basic overview of the ruling party and its opposition, important current threats against the government (both internal and external), and a dossier with each of the participating characters and important information associated with each one.

In 2016, Turkey is poised to emerge as a great power, potentially recovering a regional and global role it has not had since the Nineteenth Century.

The economy is fastest growing in Europe or the Middle East Much of the widespread public support for President Erdoğan and his AK Party (AKP) is due to unprecedented increases in living standards, as well as his extremely popular support for giving religion greater prominence in public life. Reflecting city/rural divisions in other countries, the AKP is especially popular in Turkey’s poor and conservative countryside. But his policies have brought Turkey into confrontation with its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), where Turkey’s candidacy for membership has slowed.\(^2\)

The rise of the AKP also has brought enormous tensions within Turkey, where liberal secularists, especially in education, the media and military are alarmed by the changes in their country. How these tensions will play out is the problem facing the Turkish cabinet and this simulation.

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leadership through a presidential system. With these reforms, the presidency is much more powerful than before, and there are fewer restrictions on legislative actions, as well as fewer local legislators.

Following the sweeping reforms, Erdoğan was elected president in 2014 and transitioned from ruling as the Prime Minister to President. The AK Party has been accused of authoritarianism as a result of their responses to protests in Turkey in 2013, and since then their handling of websites such as Twitter or YouTube has been incredibly strict, while use of police force has become typical. The AK Party maintains a policy of integration and ascension to the European Union (EU), but as a result of the past few years of turmoil and international condemnation for several government decisions or actions, this process has slowed down significantly.

**Turkey economic outlook +**

Past 14 years performance has encouraged experts and international institutions to make confident projections about Turkey’s economic future. Turkey is expected to be one of the fastest growing economies among OECD members during 2015-2025, with an annual average growth rate of 4.9%.

![Annual Average Real GDP Growth (%) Forecast in OECD Countries 2015-2025](source: OECD)

**Republican People’s Party:**

The opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and is the main opposition party in Turkey. The CHP is founded on the principles of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, secularism and social democracy, and is a member of the Socialist International. The party holds 149 seats in the Grand National Assembly, making them the second largest party by a large margin. The CHP has made significant legislative gains under the leadership of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, breaking the AK Party’s majority in the Grand Assembly for a few months in 2015.

The CHP’s traditional power centers are along the Aegean coast and within large cities, and turnout numbers for these areas is on the uptick. With the increasingly non-secular policies and positions coming from the ruling AK Party, many Kemalists have moved their loyalty to the CHP who remain dedicated to Kemal’s founding principles.
The Cabinet of Turkish President Erdoğan
1 July 2016

Conquest; a Sunni Islamist militant command center comprised about a dozen militant groups, including the powerful (and internationally condemned) Al-Nusra Front. This command center is also supported by Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Direct conflict with Syrian government forces has happened along the border, and a series of border incidents have seriously strained inter-government relations. The spillover from the war and related issues has permeated into other issues within Turkey, including Islamic State terror attacks and reignited conflict with the Kurdish PKK. Currently President Erdoğan is weighing the potential of deploying the Turkish armed forces to combat Islamic State within Syria as a part of an ever growing international coalition.

The Gülen Movement

Fethullah Gülen is the main preacher for this Safi-Islamic religious and social movement which now bears his name. Openly antagonistic against the Kemalist secular basis of Turkey’s constitutional government, Gülen has lived in the United States since the late 1990s to oversee his movement’s growing number of private schools and universities, media investments, and various other money making enterprises. President Erdogan and his AKP increasingly describe the movement as the leading challenge to their authority, responsible for cultivation of a deep state’, or secret government including public officials in education, the civil service, the judiciary and the military, all loyal to the Gülenist cause.  

The Gülen Movement typically keeps its distance from religious political parties within Turkey, but after the founding of the AK Party in 2002 the movement and the party forged an

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alliance in the interest of mitigating the power of the military and the country’s traditional secularists. Over the next few years the partnership between the movement and the party flourished, and ever more members of the movement found their way into positions of government power as bureaucrats, judges, prosecutors, university teachers, and police forces.

A schism between the party and the movement began to form in 2011 and by 2013 the split became insurmountable. Following the massive 2013 Iranian oil for gold corruption scandal which ended in the arrest and prosecution of hundreds of AK Party government workers and many party leaders and cabinet members, Erdoğan blamed the investigation on the movement and its influence in the judiciary and the police system.

Soon thereafter the movement was even described by the AKP government, much to its surprise, as The Gülenist Terror Organization (FETÖ), and crackdowns and purges began. In December of 2015, government efforts to curb the movement’s influence continued, with a new round of arrests. As a result of the deep integration of movement followers into the government, it is impossible to know how successful these efforts have been.

Source: https://www.mapsofworld.com/turkey/
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

Turkey was slow to join the Western and Russian battle against the Islamic State in Syria, even after Islamic State members began using Turkey as a base, reaching Syria across its border with Turkey, and operating in Turkey. Turkey’s role in the conflict with Islamic State began in 2013 with ISIL’s first major terror attack on the country in Rayhanli. In the two years following that attack, a series of smaller attacks occurred culminating in the 2015 Suruç suicide bombing.

This attack was the first of the beginning of Islamic State’s campaign in Turkey, and frustrations with the AK Party government’s handling and lack of preparation sparked a series of revenge attacks perpetrated by the Kurdistan Worker’s Party’s armed wing (the PKK), initiating the Third Phase of PKK-Government conflict and ending the 2013 ceasefire. The launch of Islamic State’s campaign was merely started with this attack, and since Islamic State has managed to establish terror cells and networks throughout the country.

After the Suruç attack, Turkey began a bombing campaign of Islamic State targets in Syria, allowed the US military to use sites in Turkey for its Islamic State bombing campaign, and began a bombing campaign of Kurdish military targets in northern Syria (a part of the reescalation against the PKK and related groups). The bombing campaign has continued since, and remains active at the start of the committee. A series of suicide bombings took place in Istanbul in January and March of 2016, each sparking a response of increased shelling from Turkey. The President is weighing his decision to ramp up its involvement with the war in Syria as a way to combat Islamic State, but no move has been sent down yet.

6 ‘Turkey’s reluctance to join the fight against ISIL isolates country further’. Today’s Zaman, 17 February 2015, https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Turkey%27s+reluctance+to+join+the+fight+against+ISIL+isolates+country+-a0401958382
The Kurds and other related Kurdish separatist groups have been engaged in an armed conflict against the Turkish government since the late 1970s with a few breaks in conflict during two failed peace processes. For the Turkish military, this conflict, in which 40,000 have died, is their principle security threat. The AKP government also strongly support the campaign against the PKK.

Most recently, the government and the PKK agreed to a ceasefire in 2013 to begin drafting a pace process to the conflict. In May, the ceasefire was placed on shaky ground as a result of Turkish air forces in PKK dominated areas, and a PKK operation in response, which together caused a small riot. The ceasefire and peace process entirely collapsed in 2015 following the Islamic State suicide bombing in Suruç which killed more than 30 Kurdish activists. The PKK claimed government responsibility as a result of the government’s alleged funding of groups attached to Islamic State in Syria, thus contributing to terrorism in Kurdish lands.

As an act of revenge, the PKK led an operation which killed two policemen and one Turkish soldier over two days. In a retaliation for these attacks, the Turkish government launched Operation Martyr Yalçın using the air force and domestic operations to strike several PKK and Islamic State positions all along the Turkey-Syria border and in conflict areas in Northern Iraq (where there are both Kurdish and Islamic State positions), killing about 160 PKK members and upwards of 40 Islamic State fighters. Operation Martyr Yalçın represents the complete resumption of armed conflict.

Thereafter, conflict all across Turkish controlled Kurdistan between the government and the PKK resumed. In addition to conflict with the PKK, the Turkish government launched operations mainly in the form of bombing raids against the People’s Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia group and the armed wing of the Kurdish political party in Northern Syria primarily fighting Islamic State.

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The Turkish Military

The largest and best armed military in NATO after the United States, the Turkish military is a powerful force. The founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk, was an Army general. The military has taken control of the country repeated during the country’s history, most recently with the soft-coup of 1999, which toppled the civilian government and installed another. Often at odds with the AKP, the military is an independent force in Turkish politics that the AKP has worked hard to tame. While the military within Turkey is considered outside of civil society and therefore only takes direction from the government, historically Turkey’s armed forces are locked in a power struggle between the government and themselves.

The Turkish armed forces see themselves as the defenders of the secular Kemalist ideology, and have gone far enough to that end in the past to have overthrown governments. The military removed governments through coups d’états in 1960, 1971, and 1980, and engineered the dismissal of an Islamist Prime Minister in 1997. These moves were often supported by the public, and were perceived as being true to protecting the constitution. In 2007 military leadership released a letter expressing their concern at the increasing power of Islamists, including the AK Party’s presidential candidate and party co-founder Abdullah Gül, and within the letter made clear that the armed forces would intervene on behalf of the constitution and Kemalism if required. Since this letter, significant government led efforts to clean out Kemalist military leaders and to decrease the power of the military ensued, including the arrest or forced retirement of hundreds of officers between 2008 and 2011.

Dossier

Under the Turkish Constitution, the Cabinet (or Council of Ministers) is formally chaired by the

Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım. In practice, real authority is exercised by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

As chairman of the AK Party, he effectively chooses all Cabinet Minister and the Prime Minister, but chairing actual cabinet meetings is a break with history and controversial within Turkey, enraging the opposition who believe he is centralizing authoritarian power.

The simulation’s character list is made of cabinet ministers sitting on Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım’s cabinet (some members are omitted), with a few choice presidential advisors also sitting on the committee. Within the committee, the body will be chaired by Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım who while chairing retains the duties of the office of Prime Minister. Each character within the committee, in addition to their actions within the committee, have

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9 ‘Erdoğan holds first cabinet meeting as Turkish president’, Guardian, 19 January 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/19/erdogan-first-cabinet-meeting-turkish-president
portfolio powers which are established based on their respective positions and lives outside of committee.

For example, the Minister of Energy & Natural Resources holds authority over raw material extraction policies and government supervision over the energy sector because of their cabinet position, and because of the character’s personal life they may have powerful captains of industry whom they are close friends with. Either of these kinds of portfolio powers are valid to use both in and out of committee. For members of the committee who are not cabinet ministers, portfolio powers stem from the job title held even if it is outside of civil society, such as their position as a military officer or a high ranking member of the party, as well as a heavier lean towards personal crisis powers. The character list below is the main source for portfolio powers, and is then meant to be supplemented by additional research into a given position or ministry, as well as the person themselves. The character dossier is arranged in alphabetical order by first name.

Chair: Binali Yıldırım, Prime Minister

Cabinet:

- **Abdulhamit Gül, General Secretary of the AK Parti** – Though Gül has only been a member of the Grand National Assembly representing Gaziantep since 2015, he has been a figure in party politics since the mid-1990s. He served as the head of the youth wing for first the Virtue party in the late 1990s, then as the youth wing head for the Welfare Party where Gül became a deputy leader. During his tenure in the Welfare Party, Gül met then Mayor of Istanbul Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, where the political futures of both of them began. After the dissolution of the Welfare party as a result of a massive 80 person embezzlement case, Gül fell back into leadership of the Virtue Party as vice-leader, later changing parties to the People’s Voice Party for a leadership role until the party’s merger with Erdoğan’s AK Parti (Justice and Development Party). Gül was elected General Secretary in 2015, and in this role has broad authority over day to day party operations and general party political strategy. Throughout his 20 year career in party politics, Gül has more than a few contacts in parties all over Turkey.

- **Ahmet Arslan, Minister of Transport, Maritime, & Communication** – A career engineer and bureaucratic manager within the Ministry he now heads, Arslan is a newcomer to politics. Arslan was elected to the Grand National Assembly in 2015 to represent the far eastern district of Kars as a member of the AK Parti, and less than a year later he was appointed as the head of the transport ministry. As such, Arslan controls the ins and outs of the border, anything that is a good moving through Turkey, he has eyes on it. Arslan still maintains many friends in the private sector, and in 2010 was awarded the illustrious “Annual Bureaucrats who turn negatives into positives” award. He has a love of cheesy office posters, and frequently calls “positivity and synergy” meetings with his staff.

- **Berat Albayrak, Minister of Energy & Natural Resources** – Prior to his election, Albayrak was CEO to the mega-corporation Çalık Holding, where he had previously served as the manager of the US operations for the company, and was also the head of several important oil contracts for the company. He maintains contacts with the entire leadership of the Çalık Holding Company, and will always find allies with them. As Minister of Energy & Natural Resource, Albayrak holds authority over raw material extraction policies and government supervision over the energy sector. Albayrak is the son in law of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
Erdoğan through a marriage to his daughter, Ersa Erdoğan.

- **Bülent Tüfenkci, Minister of Customs & Trade** – Tüfenkci has been the Minister of Customs & Trade since November of 2015, and has been a member of the Grand National Assembly from Malatya since June of the same year. As the minister of Customs & Trade, Tüfenkci holds power over everything coming and going from Turkey. The ministry was the brunt of a major shakeup following the 2013 Iranian oil for gold scandal, and has also been given greater supervisory power over the southern border due to the Syrian crisis and rumors of Islamic State oil making its way into Turkey.

- **Colonel Ali Yazici, Chief Military Advisor to the President** – As his title would suggest, Yazici has been a military man for his entire life. His earned status as chief military advisor to President Erdoğan places Yazici in a historically difficult situation. Since Erdoğan’s assumption to power in the early 2000s, the Presidents and Prime Ministers of the AK Party have been actively limiting the military’s power, something relatively unheard of in Turkish politics. As a result, Yazici is constantly stuck in the center of the fight for power between civil society and the military. Though Yazici has his active role as a Presidential advisor, he retains his military rank and position, and has many friends among the officers in each branch.

- **Efkan Ala, Minister of the Interior** – After several appointments as governor of various provinces, Ala assumed a role as an undersecretary in 2007. Ala served in that role until the 2013 corruption scandal caused the firing of the previous Minister of the Interior, causing his rise to power the next day. Unlike the other cabinet ministers, Ala was never elected to any post, while the rest are members of the Grand National Assembly. As the Interior Minister, Ala has authority over the police forces of the state, in localities and on the national level, over the prison system, and every other aspect of domestic security/intelligence. Ala has found a difficult time responding to the multitude of internal threats that face Turkey today, from the Gülen Movement, the Kurdish PKK, and the increasing presence of Islamic State, and calls for his resignation from the opposition Republican Party have begun.

- **Fikri Işık, Minister of National Defense** – Işık assumed the post of Minister of National Defense only a month ago, on the 24th of May, previously holding the post of Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology. On behalf of the government, Işık is tasked with anything involving national security, including coordinating between the various defense industries and departments. This includes power over each branch of the military (including intelligence), the military justice system, and managing different military contracts in construction, equipment, and weapons procurement. While Işık has more than a decade’s experience in politics as a member of the Grand National Assembly representing Kocaeli, this is his first military post. His previous experience to politics was in education, and managing a restaurant named Reza (which he now owns in an Istanbul suburb).

- **General Hulusi Akar, Chief of the General Staff** – A career military genius, Akar in his position as Chief to the General Staff has command over every branch of the Turkish armed forces after the President and the Minister of National Defense, but nonetheless controls the day to day operations, and also has access to military intelligence. Akar has experience as a commander through several NATO missions, and maintains many long distance NATO friends, whom he keeps in contact with. Akar also has experience directly working with military intelligence, and maintains contact
with old co-workers in the Internal Military Security Brigade, a post he headed at one point. As the Chief of Staff, Akar directly commands the Special Forces Command Group which specializes in unconventional warfare and special operations. The group operates outside of any branch of the armed forces, and is only commanded by the chief of general staff. Akar spends most of his time preoccupied with the Turkish role in the Syrian Civil War, mainly organizing and training various militant groups.

• İsmet Yılmaz, Minister of National Education – A career consulting lawyer in the maritime transport sector, Yılmaz entered the political arena in 2007 to briefly serve as the interim minister of transport until elections could be held three months later. In 2011, Yılmaz re-entered the political scene as the representative for Sivas to the Grand National Assembly, and early on in his service the AK Party flagged him for leadership. In July of 2015, Yılmaz was elected as the President of the Grand National Assembly, a post he would hold until November of 2015 when he left office to assume the role of Minister for National Defense. Only a month ago on May 24th, 2016, Yılmaz left the defense ministry to assume his new role as Minister of Education. As the minister of national education, Yılmaz has authority over the entire schooling system within Turkey, as well as authority over higher education which traditionally runs as the main opposition sites for the party. Before the beginning of Yılmaz’s political career, he serves as the Vice-Chairman for the board Türk Telekom, the state run telecommunications company, and he maintains many contacts at the company, which is preparing for potential privatization pending legislation in the Grand National Assembly currently.

• Melih Ecertas, Chairman of the AK Parti Youth Wing – Ecertas has been an AK Parti loyalist his entire (yet still young) career. Ecertas is not an elected official, but rather a leading member of the party apparatus, and therefore wields a different sort of power. Ecertas as the head of the Youth Wing is in charge of the party’s image to, how the party caters policy points for, and event planning to engage younger (ages 18-30) voters. To stay with the times, Ecertas’ main focus has been on the party’s presence on the internet, particularly on the various forms of the party’s social media, which he has direct control over (Find him on twitter here: https://twitter.com/mecertas?lang=en). Ecertas can be seen constantly organizing youth focused events, helping to gain ground in referendums, local elections, and snap and general elections for the AK Party.

• Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs – Prior to his appointment as foreign minister in 2014, Çavuşoğlu served as the chief diplomat to the European Union for Turkey through several different committees and councils from 2003-2014 including the post of minister for European Union affairs. Çavuşoğlu also held diplomatic positions between Turkey and the United States and Japan during this time period, and as a result of his experience in the EU, Japan, and his service and schooling in the UK and US he is fluent in English, Japanese, and German in addition to his native Turkish. Çavuşoğlu is a founding member of the AK Party, and as a result of his service to the party and all of Turkey at the European Union, he is able to operate with relative freedom in terms of policy decisions. As foreign minister, Çavuşoğlu has power over the diplomatic presence of Turkey all over the world, as well as Turkey’s immigration and migrant services (a task supported by the ministry of interior).
• **Naci Ağbal, Minister of Finance** - A newcomer to politics, Ağbal was elected to the Grand National Assembly in November of 2015. However, his previous experience as a career civil servant prepared him perfectly for his role as the minister of finance. Ağbal’s civil service career began in 1989, and from his starting point as a financial inspection officer, he crunched numbers all the way to become an undersecretary for the minister of finance. He, alongside 200 other civil servants, resigned from his post in order to stand for election to the Grand National Council. The AK Party picked up his campaign, and immediately after his entrance into office Ağbal was tapped by the party for the minister of finance. As finance minister, Ağbal has control over tax affairs and financial regulation within Turkey, and control over fiscal and budgetary policy as well. If a single Lira is spend, saved, proposed, or earned, documents about it went by Ağbal’s desk.

• **Ömer Çelik, Minister of European Union Affairs** – Previously serving as the minister of culture and tourism, Çelik assumed his role as European affairs minister and head of the diplomatic mission for the ascension to the EU only a month ago on May 24th, 2016. A career journalist and political commentator, Çelik became one of the chief advisors for the AK Party in 2010 as a deputy representative from Adana, and eventually stood for election and won in 2015 (after years of already serving as the minister of culture). Çelik has a specialty within politics in foreign relations, and is a competent speaker and diplomat. Çelik still often appears as a guest journalist or commentator for several publications in Adana and Ankara, and often radio or television shows interview him for analysis of ongoing situations.

• **Recep Akdağ, Minister of Health** – Akdağ became the minister of health for the second time starting only a month ago on the 24th of May, 2016, but his first term stretched nearly the entire length of the AK Party’s rule from 2002-2013. Akdağ is an accomplished medical academic, having served on faculty at several universities around the world and published a number of research papers. He was elected a member of the Grand National Assembly in 2002 from Erzurum, and has represented the same province since. In his long first tenure as minister of health Akdağ was forced to deal with a number of public health crises, including the bird flu scare in the mid-2000s, as well as altering the health system to fit into European Union health standards for Turkey’s potential ascension to the European Union. A main task for Akdağ as he reassumes his former role is responding to the violence along the border with Syria, and ensuring that areas currently in active conflict surrounding the government’s fight with the PKK are supplied adequate health services despite the challenge of danger.
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