

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- Researcher Şeymanur Yönt evaluated President Erdoğan's visit to Italy.
- Tensions continue to brew between the main opposition party and the People's Alliance in domestic politics.
- The Kurdish conference in Syria drew criticism from Ankara.

President Erdoğan's Visit to Italy



(Doğukan Keskinliç - Anadolu Agency)

The growing ties between Türkiye and Italy are drawing attention. Researcher Şeymanur Yönt analysed the President's recent visit to Italy.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the 4th Türkiye-Italy Intergovernmental Summit, meeting Italy's Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, in Rome. Several Turkish ministers, including the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Industry and Technology, and the Minister of Trade, accompanied the Turkish President, underscoring the multifaceted nature of the summit agenda.

The summit took place at a time of critical global developments, as the U.S. pushes for a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia

without properly addressing European security concerns while calling "Europe to step up in a big way to provide for its own defence" as J.D. Vance, the U.S. Vice President stated earlier this year at the Munich Security Conference. In this context, the defence industry agreements between Türkiye and Italy hold significance for them but also for Europe's broader defence strategy. Such cooperation is expected to bolster Europe's defence posture while strengthening both nations' defence industries through technology transfer and joint projects. For Türkiye, in particular, this promises to strengthen its robust defence industry.

The summit also provided a timely platform to advance economic cooperation between the two sides at a moment when trade wars are intensifying, and President Trump imposed extensive tariffs on nearly all countries during Liberation Day. Although Meloni's meeting with Trump this month sent positive signals regarding trade relations and negotiation opportunities between Europe and the U.S., Türkiye stands out as a significant and reliable economic partner for the EU at a time when the U.S. is no longer seen as a dependable trade ally. In this context, the summit can be viewed as a new chapter in trade relations between the two countries and potentially between the EU and Türkiye.

While it remains doubtful that this rapprochement will mark a turning point in Türkiye's EU accession process, it is reasonable to anticipate a further strengthening of political, economic, and defence relations between Türkiye and the EU in the near future.

War of Words Between the People's Alliance and CHP Intensifies

The political detente between the ruling AK Party and the main opposition CHP that began a year ago has now given way to an increasingly heated war of words. In particular, the CHP leadership has adopted a sharper political tone following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on corruption charges.

According to some experts, this tense political atmosphere is not merely the result of temporary electoral competition. Türkiye's political landscape is shifting on multiple fronts. Firstly, due to the nature of the presidential system, the political focus is increasingly centred on the two major parties. Secondly, key structural issues like the secular-conservative divide and the Kurdish question are undergoing transformation, with policy shifts that are reshaping the political equation. On top of these domestic changes, Türkiye is now responding more proactively to rapidly evolving global dynamics and regional crises.

In this context, the People's Alliance articulates its evolving political vision through the "Century of Türkiye" concept—an approach that signals a closer connection between state and nation in domestic affairs and a more assertive posture in foreign policy. The opposition, particularly the CHP, appears to be struggling to match this new political momentum with a clear and compelling alternative vision. Nevertheless, the CHP continues to maintain a significant voter base, which in turn fuels growing tensions in domestic politics.

Another part of this picture is the rising tension between the MHP and the CHP. It is worth noting that while the MHP has been strengthening ties with the pro-Kurdish DEM Party—a group it has traditionally viewed as an adversary—its tensions with the CHP continue to escalate. While the DEM Party appears to be adapting more effectively to the shifting political landscape, the CHP has displayed a more hesitant and indecisive stance.

Last year's dialogue process between the AK Party and the CHP was a valuable attempt to bridge these contradictions. Although this process has recently stalled, it is possible that, in the longer term, efforts to seek common ground between the two political camps may re-emerge—even if a de-escalation in the short run seems unlikely.



(TUR Presidency/Mustafa Kamaci - Anadolu Agency)

Kurdish Conference in Syria Draws Criticism from Hakan Fidan

Several Syrian Kurdish parties held a conference on April 26 in Qamishli, Syria. The event is significant as it highlights the presence of multiple voices among Syrian Kurds, rather than the dominance of a single organisation. However, remarks in the conference's final declaration advocating for a decentralised system of governance in Syria were criticised by Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who stated, "We do not accept any initiative that targets Syria's territorial integrity." Fidan also emphasised that Türkiye finds the presence of any armed group outside of Syria's central authority unacceptable.

Efforts to reinforce stability in Syria are directly tied to Türkiye's domestic "terror-free Türkiye" initiative. In this regard, MHP

leader Devlet Bahçeli, who instigated this process, labelled the conference "Qamishli provocation."

Meanwhile, the terror group PKK has yet to declare a decision to lay down arms or disband. As expectations for such steps grow in Ankara, recent discussions surrounding amendments to the penal execution law are being reported as part of efforts to establish a legal framework for the process.

Despite some recent negative developments in Syria, such as unrest in Druze areas and Israeli strikes, it is reasonable to expect a series of parallel developments regarding the Kurdish dossier in both Türkiye and Syria in the near future.

Highlights

- As Pakistan-India tensions continue, Türkiye's Communications Directorate denies allegations of sending arms aid to Pakistan.
- 18 arrested in the second wave of a corruption probe into Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.
- After last week's earthquake in Istanbul, state support for the renovation of risky buildings has increased to 1.875,000 Turkish liras.



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