

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- The transition of Afyonkarahisar's Mayor from the CHP to the AK Party marks a pivotal shift with broad implications for party dynamics and voter alignment in domestic politics.
- Testimonies to the public prosecutor from the imprisoned Mayor of Antalya directly threaten the CHP headquarters by exposing specific internal challenges for party leadership.
- The unveiling of Yıldırımhan, Türkiye's first intercontinental ballistic missile, marks progress in the defence industry and signals a changing political climate.

Mayoral Party Change Signals Trends in Local Politics



(TCCB/Mustafa Kamacı - Anadolu Agency)

Afyonkarahisar (Afyon)'s CHP mayor, Burcu Köksal, has joined the AK Party. While a single city mayor switching parties may seem minor for foreign pundits, this event invites two key political interpretations.

The AK Party remains a centre of attraction for local administrators and members of parliament in Ankara, as evidenced by the number of MPs from other parties elected in the 2023 general election and local officials from the 2024 local elections who have joined its ranks, including from smaller parties. This reflects a broader trend under

the presidential system, in which smaller parties and diverse political views seek greater influence within major central parties—a phenomenon that has also benefited the opposition CHP. Recent defections, including those from Afyon, further demonstrate the AK Party's continued appeal, especially compared to the CHP, which is struggling internally.

Secondly, Afyon's mayor's transfer exemplifies the AK Party's adaptation to shifting political trends. The party has remained in power for nearly 25 years by periodically renewing and forming alliances.

Previously, the mayor of Aydın and now the mayor of Afyon have both joined the AK Party. There are notable similarities between these two figures. Both are women politicians known as representatives of secular nationalism in Central Anatolia and the Aegean regions. It is widely acknowledged by many experts that secular nationalism has been on the rise for some time. Afyon, for instance, had long been a stronghold of conservative right-wing parties, yet in the last local elections, CHP achieved major success there with Burcu Köksal.

These mayoral transitions enable the AK Party to message voters directly, presenting reconciliation with successful opposition figures as a way to mend ties and reduce tensions with dissenting constituencies.

Legal Testimonies in Antalya Impacting CHP Headquarters

Antalya Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Muhittin Böcek, who was detained on bribery allegations and remains under arrest and suspended from office, as well as his son Gökhan Böcek, gave statements under the scope of the 'effective remorse' clauses in Turkish law. The most striking aspect of these statements concerns allegations involving CHP Chairman Özgür Özel and CHP Malatya MP Veli Ağbaba, who is known for his close ties to Özel. Böcek claimed that the CHP headquarters, through Ağbaba, demanded €1 million from him in exchange for securing his candidacy. Ağbaba denied the allegations.

In addition to Böcek, Uşak Mayor Özkan Yalım, who is also under arrest and suspended from office, stated in his testimony that he had given 1.2 million Turkish lira to Özgür Özel. Yalım's statements also included claims that certain delegates sought material benefits during the CHP congress campaign through which Özel was first elected party chairman.

These two consecutive developments could significantly shift the focus of ongoing investigations, which had previously centred on local administrations. Meanwhile, a separate



(Güven Yılmaz - Anadolu Agency)

legal process regarding the CHP congress, where Özel was first elected chairman, continues before a higher court. This week's events may establish a clearer link between local government issues and the party headquarters, signalling that the CHP's crisis may further intensify in the near future.

Yıldırımhan and the Shifting Domestic Political Climate



(Arife Karakum - Anadolu Agency)

Türkiye's defence industry is on an upward trend, exemplified by the unveiling of Yıldırımhan, the nation's first intercontinental ballistic missile with a reported 6,000-kilometre range. German media indicate that Berlin is closely monitoring both Yıldırımhan and the Tayfun Block-4, indicating increased international interest. As the July NATO summit approaches, speculation mounts that these strategic systems could underpin new defence agreements, illustrating Türkiye's evolving, more pivotal role in regional security.

Beyond the tactical implications, the missile has become a potent symbol within Türkiye's domestic sphere, offering a bridge across the country's historical divides. By featuring both the signature of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the secular founder of the Republic, and the tuğra of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I, the project physically manifests a synthesis of two identities often perceived as being in competition. This deliberate juxtaposition transcends traditional political friction, recontextualising these historical figures not as mutually exclusive poles, but as shared pillars of national pride.

The public reaction, particularly on social media, underscores the efficacy of this symbolic unity. By embracing both the Ottoman legacy and the modern Republic, the defence sector has successfully created a platform where Türkiye's diverse social and political segments can find common ground. This suggests that high-level technological achievements are serving as an effective foundation for domestic reconciliation, acting as a cohesive force that tempers long-standing internal polarisation.

Highlights

- A delegation consisting of prominent figures, including Queen Mathilde of Belgium, Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Defence Minister, paid a visit to Türkiye. Experts assess that the visit may signal the beginning of future co-operation initiatives, particularly in the defence industry.
- President Erdoğan travelled to Kazakhstan for official meetings and to attend the Organisation of Turkic States' informal summit.
- Israeli attacks targeting Al-Aqsa Mosque were condemned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Directorate of Communications.

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