

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- The vast majority in Türkiye views the 168-signatory declaration as an outdated attempt to revive social polarisation during Ramadan.
- The DEM Party faces a litmus test regarding its political identity amidst efforts to move beyond the shadow of armed conflict.
- Ankara formally rejects claims of a military incursion into Iran, reaffirming its commitment to the territorial integrity of its neighbours and regional stability.

Old Fault Lines vs New Realities: The Secularism Manifesto Debate in Türkiye



(Muhammed Enes Yıldırım - Anadolu Agency)

In recent days, Türkiye has witnessed an attempt by certain circles to revive long-standing polarisations that many considered to be relics of the past. A group of 168 individuals, comprising well-known journalists and academics, released a manifesto asserting that secularism in the country is under immediate threat. This narrative, however, appears to overlook the political evolution of the last two decades. While an elite cabal historically viewed the broader population's values as a challenge to their interests under the guise of protecting secularism, the reality on the ground suggests a shift. Despite the AK Party's 24-year tenure, the secular administrative framework remains intact, and claims of systematic

interference in personal lifestyles lack a concrete, recent catalyst to justify such an alarmist stance.

The timing of this declaration has proven particularly contentious, coinciding with the arrival of Ramadan, a period when the vast majority of Turkish society aligns its daily life with spiritual reflection and religious observance. As a distinct cultural and spiritual atmosphere encompasses the nation, the decision to trigger a high-voltage ideological debate at this moment is seen by many as a sign of detachment from the country's social fabric. Critics argue that instead of contributing to a constructive national dialogue, the manifesto serves to reignite artificial tensions during a month traditionally defined by communal harmony and mutual respect.

The reaction from the political sphere has been swift, with both the AK Party and the MHP issuing firm rebukes against the claims. While a small minority has come forward to support the manifesto, their stance highlights a broader struggle to adapt to Türkiye's evolving socio-political landscape. This group appears to be operating under an outdated political agenda that fails to resonate with the country's current dynamics. Consequently, while such initiatives may cause temporary ripples in the national discourse, they are increasingly viewed as exceptions rather than reflections of the general public's priorities or the nation's contemporary reality.

DEM Party's Identity Crisis Amidst Shifting Political Paradigms in Türkiye

Recent discussions in Ankara's political corridors seem to have focused on the future trajectory of the DEM Party, particularly following rumours regarding a potential name change to the "Democratic Republic Party." While the party leadership officially denied these claims, the emergence of such a title is significant within the Turkish political context. The concept of a "Democratic Republic" is closely associated with the discourse of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who has previously used the term to signal a move away from separatist policies toward a vision of shared governance within a unified state. Regardless of whether a formal rebranding occurs, the mere presence of this debate suggests a strategic exploration of the party's positioning within the national framework.

The movement, which has historically operated under various names in Turkish politics, now faces a critical litmus test as it attempts to move beyond the long-standing shadows of armed conflict and the Kurdish issue. It is widely acknowledged that the PKK has historically exerted a restrictive authority over the party's political room for manoeuvre. However, as the prospect of the PKK laying down arms gains traction, a radical transformation within the party is anticipated. Some observers suggest that a more autonomous and pluralistic internal debate is already emerging, necessitating a comprehensive revision of the party's political rhetoric to align with Türkiye, which is making significant strides in resolving decades-old grievances.



(Abdullah Güçlü - Anadolu Agency)

This transitional phase has revealed growing friction among factions within the party's hierarchy. Certain cadres, particularly those heavily influenced by traditional socialist ideologies, appear to be struggling to adapt to this new order, clinging instead to an outdated political vocabulary. In contrast, a segment of the leadership seems increasingly aware of the shifting tides and is demonstrating a willingness to synchronise with Türkiye's contemporary political realities. The ability of the DEM Party to modernise its agenda and distance itself from historical pressures will likely determine its relevance in the future of the country's democratic landscape.

Ankara Prioritises Iran's Territorial Integrity Following Speculative Reports of Border Intervention



(Volkan Furuncu - Anadolu Agency)

As regional instability persists, Türkiye has found itself at the centre of intensifying speculation regarding its stance towards Iran. Following reports in various media outlets suggesting that Ankara might establish a buffer zone within Iranian territory to prevent potential migration surges in the event of an external attack, official bodies have moved swiftly to clarify the nation's position. Both the Ministry of National Defence and the Presidency's Directorate of Communications have categorically denied these claims. Some experts evaluate these reports as provocations aimed at undermining Türkiye's anti-war stance. Ankara's primary objective remains the preservation of Iran's territorial integrity and the prevention of any new conflict that could further destabilise the shared border.

The scrutiny of developments within Iran extends beyond border security to encompass broader regional dynamics. Last week's announcement of an alliance between five Kurdish parties operating in Iran, including PJAK, the Iranian wing of the PKK terrorist organisation, to challenge the current regime has been closely monitored. This comes at a time when Türkiye is actively pursuing its "Terror-Free Türkiye" initiative, aimed at strengthening the domestic front and fostering constructive relations with Kurdish populations in Iraq and Syria. The resolution of the Syrian civil war and the subsequent warming of ties in the region serve as a precedent for Türkiye's preference for stability over chaos, highlighting the strategic importance of maintaining a consistent policy towards its neighbours.

Ultimately, Türkiye's diplomatic and security framework is built upon the dual pillars of domestic balance and regional peace. The official discourse underscores that a peaceful, unified, and stable future for its neighbours is an essential prerequisite for Türkiye's own national security. By rejecting interventionist narratives and focusing on the sanctity of sovereign borders, Ankara seeks to insulate the region from the destructive spillover of external interventions. In this context, ensuring that neighbouring states remain intact remains the cornerstone of Türkiye's long-term regional strategy.

Highlights

- A Turkish fighter jet crashed in the western province of Balıkesir on Wednesday, resulting in the tragic death of the pilot. President Erdoğan has announced that Türkiye has launched a comprehensive investigation into the causes of the F-16 crash.
- Following the completion of the National Solidarity, Brotherhood, and Democracy Commission's report, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly Numan Kurtulmuş has commenced a series of visits to political parties. These consultations aim to discuss legislative arrangements expected to be tabled in Parliament following the conclusion of Ramadan.
- Akif Çağatay Kılıç, Chief Advisor to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, hosted Igor Khovayev on Wednesday to discuss the ongoing normalisation process between Azerbaijan and Armenia, for which Khovayev serves as Russia's special envoy.

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