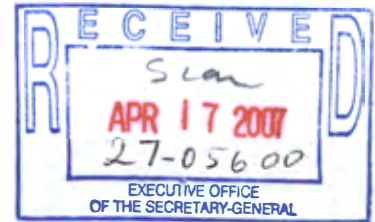


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RWS

Note to the Secretary-General

TURKEY: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



Electoral Politics

1. Turkish politics are now entering a period of instability as the country embarks on presidential elections for the coming month. The electoral process formally begins today, with the parliamentary parties submitting the names of their candidates. This will be followed by a debate and a maximum of three rounds of elections in parliament, the last requiring only an absolute majority. The inauguration of the new president will take place on 16 May. Meanwhile, on Saturday, 14 April, nearly 500,000 people gathered in Ankara for the largest demonstration in Turkey's history, against the anticipated presidential candidacy of PM Erdoğan who, while popular, is a controversial figure for the presidency.

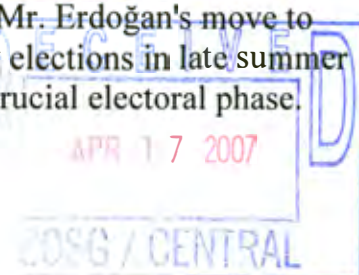
2. Given the parliamentary majority of his Justice and Development Party (AKP), Mr. Erdoğan could easily appoint himself or a close associate as President. Although the AKP has not publicly revealed its preferences, Mr. Erdoğan's candidacy is likely to be announced after the AKP leadership meeting on 18 April. There is still a remote possibility, however, that he will surprise his opponents and propose an alternative candidate.

3. The presidency, with ultimate veto power over political and judicial appointments, is the last branch of government not controlled by the allegedly Islamist AKP. In a struggle over the state apparatus, current President Sezer has vetoed over 3,700 AKP appointments since the AKP government took power in 2002, and 670 posts still remain vacant. The secular-military establishment now fears that the AKP would use the presidency and the judiciary to permanently alter the secular nature of the republic.

4. Despite a solid policymaking record and personal popularity, Mr. Erdoğan's Islamist outlook make him a highly controversial figure for the presidency. Recent polls suggest few Turks (including many of his supporters) endorse his presidency as it could foment political instability by provoking the secular-military establishment. Already, the opposition has made great efforts to de-legitimize his candidacy and prominent figures have openly discussed the prospect of a military coup later this year.

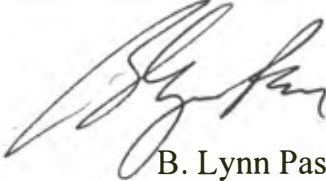
Implications

5. Domestically, even if political violence should not to be expected, Turkish politics will certainly be paralyzed for several months, as the AKP will need to manage the backlash from Mr. Erdoğan's presidency and assuage doubters that he will indeed conform to the secular traditions of the republic. Furthermore, Mr. Erdoğan's move to the presidential palace would implicitly mandate parliamentary elections in late summer instead of November, thus signaling the beginning of another crucial electoral phase.



6. In the coming months, Turkish foreign policy is expected to be cautious at best and any diplomatic initiatives would rest until autumn. The Turkish public, however, is in a radical nationalist mood. It especially demands a response to the question of Iraq and PKK terrorism. Yet, the Government may be keen to limit Turkish military activity until Mr. Erdoğan is firmly placed in the presidential seat. Thereafter, a spring offensive of the PKK, Iraqi-Kurdish provocations or the looming parliamentary elections may force a decision for a large-scale military operation.

7. DPA will continue to monitor developments and provide you with any updates, as necessary.



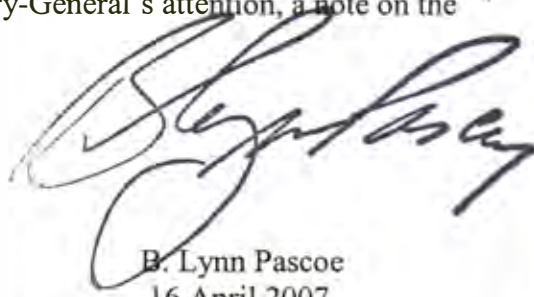
B. Lynn Pascoe
16 April 2007

Rec'd at 3:25

Note to Mr. Nambiar

TURKEY: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Please find attached, for the Secretary-General's attention, a note on the presidential elections in Turkey.



B. Lynn Pascoe
16 April 2007

cc: Ms. Kane
Ms. Vaccari