Understand Turkey

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Turkey has recently experienced suicide bomb incidents, conflict in Southeastern Anatolia and a failed military coup.

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The country linking Europe and Asia has some major assets, but faces challenges caused by rapid development.
After over a decade of strong economic growth, Turks have seen their standard of living rise significantly, but long-standing issues remain — including the Kurdish conflict and juggling Islamic and secular lifestyles — and a failed coup increased these tensions. The war in Syria has brought Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) suicide bombers to Istanbul while Turkey has become the refugees’ route to Europe, prompting a deal for Turkey to take back refugees in exchange for EU privileges.

Political Turmoil
Turkey's troubled period of suicide bombings and conflict with Kurdish insurgents seemingly reached a nadir in July 2016, when a faction of the military instigated a coup against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The night of drama saw the Turkish parliament bombed and a military blockade of Istanbul's Bosporus Bridge — subsequently renamed the 15th July Martyrs' Bridge for the civilian lives lost in the thwarted putsch. The AKP responded by dismissing or detaining over 100,000 suspected plotters from judges and generals to civil servants and teachers, and lobbied the US to extradite the accused coup mastermind, Turkish cleric Fetullah Gülen. Some 38,000 prisoners were released early to accommodate arrested plotters, and Amnesty International raised concerns about treatment of detainees.

Terrorist Attacks
The coup came against a background of increased violence in Turkey, largely due to the collapse of a two-year ceasefire with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The virtual civil war between the Turkish military and Kurdish insurgents in southeastern Anatolia is bleakly symbolised by Cizre, where the deserted, bullet-riddled houses reflect those found across the nearby Syrian border. PKK splinter group the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) has also carried out bomb attacks in Ankara and Istanbul. Meanwhile, ISIL suicide bombers struck locations including Istanbul’s Hippodrome, the city’s main thoroughfare Istiklal Caddesi, and Ataturk International Airport.

Economic Progress
The 2016 coup was an unwelcome flashback for a country that once experienced a coup every decade, but has recently enjoyed the kind of golden age not seen since its 18th-century Tulip Era. When the AKP came to power in 2002, the Islamic party took a sure hand of the secular...