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Turkey Goes to the Ballot Box

2014 Municipal Elections and Beyond

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ALI ÇARKOĞLU

In announcing his resignation from the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP), İstanbul Parliamentary deputy Muhammed Çetin summed up the recent developments in Turkish politics saying that “with these corruption scandals, the AK Party has turned black.” Further, he warned that there is unrest within the ranks of the party that may lead to further resignations.² The AKP or in its Turkish acronym the “AK”, literally translated as “unblemished” or “pure white” party came to power in November 2002 with about 34 percent of the popular vote. Since then, the AKP has increased its electoral support to 47 percent in 2007 and then to 50 percent in 2011. However, by the first week of January 2014, nearly eleven years after it came to power, many have begun to argue, likely prematurely, that the AKP may soon see its supremacy come to an end.

In early morning raids on December 17, 2013, the sons of the interior minister, the economics minister and the environment and city planning minister were detained along with the general manager of the state-controlled *Halkbank* and three construction sector tycoons. During the investigation, the police apparently confiscated millions of dollars in cash of Turkish lira and various currencies

that are alleged to have been used in bribery, fraud, money laundering and smuggling of gold. The spiraling graft scandal resulted in a cabinet reshuffle on the evening of December 25, 2013, effectively ousting those ministers accused of corruption. By the end of February 2014, nine AKP MPs had left the party over the row.³

This operation is yet another reflection of an increasingly heated feud between the AKP and the moderately Islamist Gülen group, known also as the *hizmet* or “service” movement. Its influential founder Fethullah Gülen, a preacher and former imam, started the group, but left Turkey in 1999 to avoid prosecution and is currently living in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania. Many claim that the group has considerable influence over several state institutions, particularly the judiciary, the police, and the national intelligence organization. Because the Gülen movement was a critical ally in the AKP’s efforts during their early years in power, this tension between the AKP and Gülenists came as a surprise to many. However, the collaboration between Prime Minister (PM) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government and the movement has increasingly turned sour. Among the many factors creating this tension between the government

and the movement that will be highlighted below, the government's announcement of plans to close down or strictly regulate the network of prep-schools (*dershaneler*) controlled by the movement appeared most important. Such a move was aimed at depriving the movement of considerable revenue as well as an impressive and effective recruitment network.

On the economic front, the most visible impact of the recent developments was felt in the Turkish lira's loss of value and significant increases in the interest rates.⁴ Although global economic developments have also contributed to Turkey's currency problems, the greatest crisis in the country is a political one.⁵ After being in power for more than 11 years, the AKP government now appears unable to control its bureaucracy and tackle the policy challenges these developments pose.⁶ As local elections draw near, it is not unreasonable to think that the real impact of the clash between the Gülen movement and the AKP government will be felt on the political domain. Turkish voting behavior depends on the citizens' short-term evaluations of governments' economic policy performance as well as

slowly changing long-term ideological orientations. The long-term ideological predispositions of the Turkish electorate have worked to the advantage of the AKP and are likely to continue to do so for the near future. The recent changes in the economy have not yet taken a toll on the AKP's popularity and unless deeper economic problems develop before the local elections, the state of the economy may not significantly decrease AKP support.

In order to evaluate these consequences, a brief background of the AKP tenure in power and its relations with the Gülen movement will be offered. After providing alternative explanations as to why the falling out has occurred between the movement and the government, an assessment of the political consequences of these developments within the context of the March 2014 local elections will be provided. To this end, a brief characterization of the determinants of voters' choice in Turkey will be discussed and implications for the local election dynamics will be underlined. In conclusion, the aftermath of local elections and its implications for U.S.-Turkish relations will be evaluated.

BACKGROUND TO MARCH 2014 LOCAL ELECTIONS

AKP has won three general elections in a row, each time by a wider margin.⁷ From an electoral perspective, Turkey now has a predominant party system where a single party is consistently supported by a winning majority of voters and thus is able to monopolize power.⁸ What is equally important is the dominance over the government organs that it has demonstrated during its tenure.⁹ Governmental dominance came only in the AKP's second term after it survived the conflict that arose around the presidential election and its remarkable electoral success in the July 2007 general election. The following month a prominent founding member of the AKP, Abdullah Gül, was elected as the President and created a more cooperative policy-making environment for the AKP.¹⁰ Gül exercised his powers to appoint personnel to key bureaucratic posts who were more cooperative with the government, thereby allowing the AKP to resolve many policy bottle-necks and permitting more control and pacification of the secularist opposition and the military.¹¹ Following the EU harmonization reforms, the AKP successfully eliminated the institutional privilege reserved for the military under the 1980 military regime tutelage system.¹² Many retired as well as active duty military personnel, including high-ranking generals, were brought before the courts in a series of trials such as *Ergenekon*, *Sledgehammer* and *Internet Memorandum*, and charged with planning a coup against the government.¹³ Finally, through a

package of Constitutional amendments approved in a September 2010 referendum, the AKP reshaped the higher courts and the Supreme Council of Public Prosecutors and Judges. It increased the number of members appointed by the president and elected by the parliament, consolidating executive control over the judiciary. It thus reduced the power of the traditional republican elite that stood in opposition to the AKP's policy-making initiatives.¹⁴

The AKP's predominance brought about a number of achievements in economics and both domestic and international politics. In economics, the Turkish economy grew by 230 percent between 2002 and 2012, and became the 17th largest economy in the world. The chronic inflation of the 1990s was reduced from 29.8 percent in 2002 to about 7.4 percent in 2013. Between 2002 and 2011, the average yearly growth rate was 5.2 percent and unemployment remained around 9.7 percent. Turkish trade volume increased 18 percent on average between 2002 and 2013 while the budget deficit as a percentage of GDP was reduced from 10.2 percent in 2002 to 2.8 percent for the same period.¹⁵

On the domestic political front, the AKP managed to consolidate its electoral base by effectively eliminating all center-right and pro-Islamist parties. Despite a risky initiative to address the Kurdish problem, they were able to keep nationalist voters and the military-led secularist opposition under control.

THE PUZZLE OF AKP DOMINATION

Given the AKP's successes on the electoral and policymaking fronts, one is tempted to conclude that the party has indeed established itself as an effective predominant party on the running of the governmental apparatus. However, from the very start of the AKP's tenure, there have been several political players that were effective in opposing its rule. At every juncture of opposition or resistance to AKP rule it is possible to observe that an elaborate link was established between the covert elite groups and the masses. During their first term came the military, and the old bureaucratic establishment coalescing at different junctures with the then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Towards the end of the AKP's first term came a clash over the presidential election. Mass support against the AKP was mobilized through the so-called 'Republican Rallies' that gathered millions in city centers.¹⁶ During these early phases of confrontation, the AKP was able to build a coherent block of supporters from amongst conservative circles that also included the Gülen movement. The most recent phase of defiance to AKP came in 2013 with mass uprisings sparked by the Gezi Park project imposition.¹⁷ Although apparently unlinked to one another, the Gezi protests were followed in December 2013 by the opening of a series of corruption investigations by the police and the legal establishments, both of which have long been suspected of being influenced by the Gülen movement. Even though AKP succeeded in achieving large electoral victories, in a manner directly in line with the tenure of a predominant political party, it is puzzling that there were such major governance failures. These failures are largely due to elite opposition. In the last stage of this opposition the Gülen movement has developed an effective resistance against AKP's leadership and prime minister.

The founding of the AKP came only 15 months before the November 2002 general election as a response to center-right parties' complete loss of political credibility after corruption scandals and the collapse of the Turkish economy. The financial crisis of 2001 shaped the main tenets of the economic policy package the AKP would present to the Turkish public as it came to prominence in 2002. The AKP's initial ideological flexibility and pragmatism can also be seen as a direct consequence of these developments.

By all accounts, the 2002 election was a critical one that set the country on a new path. A combination of factors explains this development. First, the nation's center-right parties were miserably failing to meet the expectations of their constituencies. The clumsy relief efforts that followed the two powerful earthquakes that hit İstanbul and Kocaeli—the two most developed and industrialized provinces of the country—in 1999, sealed the public's impression of them as failures. Second, the Turkish economy had fallen into a state of financial bankruptcy as a direct result of the patronage policies followed by these parties. The leadership of the center-right parties was diminished in large part to their complacency towards corruption and the patronage politics that bankrupted the public budget. Third, the internal struggle within the conservative Islamist circles of the National View (*Milli Görüş*) movement, between the old-guard elite cadres and the younger generation politicians was coming to an end and thus preparing the background to a struggle for domination over the many conservative alliances within the movement. The cooperative engagement between the Gülen movement and the AKP leadership appeared to be convenient for the early stages of their venture in Turkish politics. A window of opportunity was opened for the younger generation of Islamists in their struggle against the old guard con-

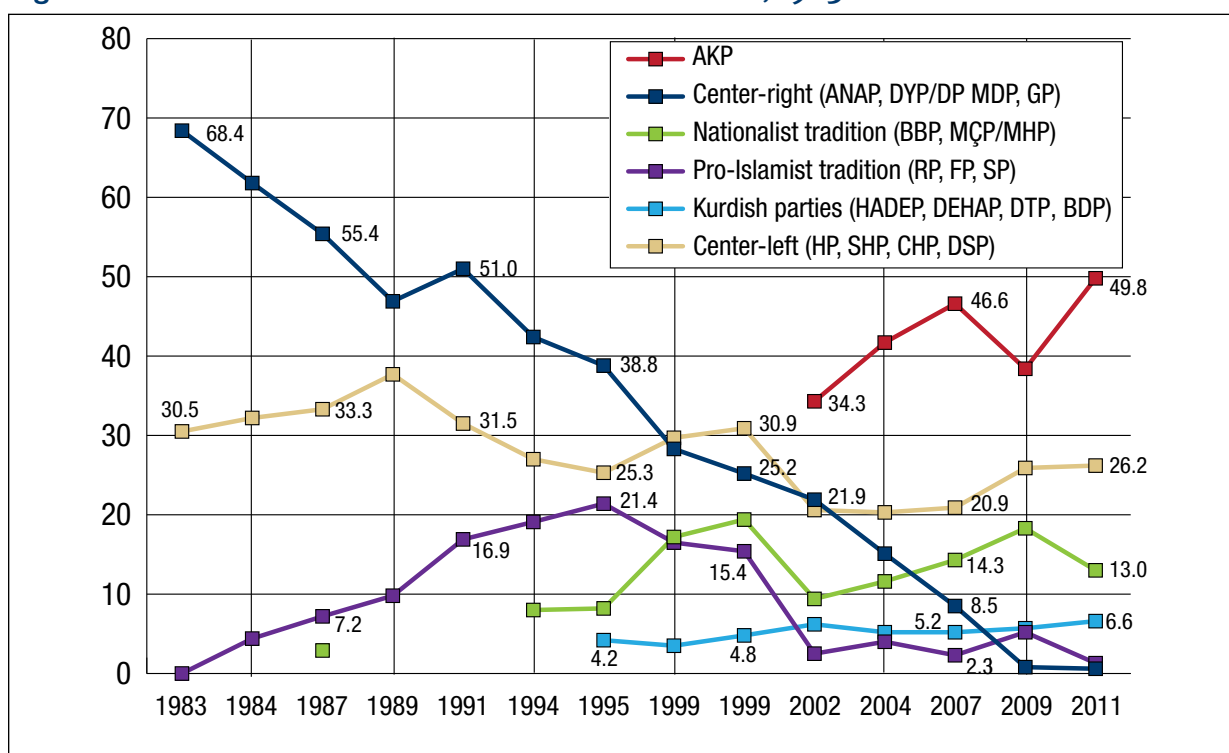
servatives who had been unsuccessful in avoiding an open confrontation with the country's strictly secularist military. These younger generation politicians, from among whom came the founding fathers of the AKP, were denied any role in renewing the pro-Islamist electoral tradition then controlled by the older generation cadres of the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*-FP). As such, they were pushed to take the ultimate challenge in the 2002 general elections by running as a separate party.

Under these precarious circumstances, the rise of the AKP necessitated a careful balancing act. Various conservative groups had to be managed to balance each other within the party. The election results of 2002 were a direct outcome of the 10 percent representation threshold that gave the AKP just under two-thirds of the seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) with only about one third of the total vote share.¹⁸ Ironically, this threshold had been introduced after the military coup in the early 1980s as a measure to prevent marginal parties at both ends of the left-right ideological divide from being seated in the Parliament and avoid the instability that Turkey experienced during the coalition governments of the 1970s. As such, the AKP was comfortable within the TGNA, but it also felt a pressure to legitimize its hold on the legislature as well as the executive office. This legitimization was necessary first as an outcome of the huge gap between the electoral support behind the party and its representative power of control in the TGNA. Second, the party's leadership cadres all came from the *Milli Görüş* movement which had already been punished by the Constitutional Court for being against the secularist principles of the Republic. As such, the party had to carefully distance its policy stances from the older generation pro-Islamist leadership in order to avoid closure cases against the AKP.

Third, in the early years of its tenure, the party still faced considerable electoral support from timeworn center-right parties like the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*-DYP) and Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*-ANAP) which, together, had about 15 percent support and a reactionary populist Young Party (*Genç Parti*-GP) which had about 7.3 percent national support. The right of center parties such as the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*-SP) remained around 2.5 percent and the Turkish Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*-MHP) at 8.4 percent in 2002.¹⁹ These center-right parties were only slowly consolidated behind the AKP, which raised its vote share to 47 percent in 2007 and then to 50 percent in 2011. In 2007, center-right groups received only about 8.5 percent of the vote and, in 2011, less than one percent. The right-of-center pro-Islamist SP received 2.3 percent of the vote in 2007 and 1.3 percent in 2011. The MHP bounced back in 2007 to receive 14.3 percent and consolidated its support base at around 13 percent in 2011. In other words, the AKP's early years can be seen as a struggle for domination over the remnants of the center-right and right-of-center parties. It was with the 2011 election results, the AKP finally consolidated its dominance over the center-right. But the defiance from the right-of-center nationalists and pro-Islamists remain an electoral power to be reckoned with as they together command about 14.3 percent of the popular vote.

Figure 1 shows the development of electoral support for the main party groups in Turkey.²⁰ In this picture, the continual decline of the center-right wing and the consolidation of political support behind the AKP are striking features. While the center-left appears to have maintained its support base at about 30 percent until the 1999 general election, the appearance of the AKP decreased its vote

Figure 1. Electoral Trends in General and Local Elections, 1983-2011



Source: <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>
Local elections are shown by vertical lines.

share to about 20-25 percent. While the nationalist right-wing rode a rising wave in the late 1990s, it suffered a significant drop from 2002 general elections onwards. Since the 2004 local elections, the nationalist traditional parties have managed to maintain their support above the 10 percent of the vote needed to enter into parliament. While the support for Kurdish parties remains in the range of 5 to 7 percent, the old-generation center-right wing parties' support has been reduced to insignificant levels.²¹

As the AKP initially lacked voters' strong party identification and the committed support of elite circles, it had to quickly build coalitions both within the conservative circles as well as the larger circles of opposition. The only glue that could hold all these groups together was economic growth.

Given the extraordinary reform initiatives in the aftermath of the 2001 economic crisis that were prepared by World Bank economist Kemal Derviş, the AKP had an easy policy option: follow the already working economic policy and do not deviate from the principles set by Derviş's team. This initial determination to follow the economic policy set under the IMF program effectively ended in 2006.²²

Upon being elected in 2002, the AKP government first had to deal with a wave of elite and popular opposition organized during the presidential election of Spring 2007. That was followed by the so-called 'Republican Rallies' and the general election in July 2007.²³ Together, these elections had significant consequences. First, was the consolidation and legitimization of the AKP's political grip

over the executive office. Its vote totals were more than double those of its closest competitors and so freed itself from the challenges of legitimacy that were put on the public agenda continuously in the aftermath of the 2002 election. Second, was the appearance of a party built around Kurdish identity, Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*-DTP). The emergence of an electoral Kurdish party tradition in Turkish politics is a significant development that rendered tackling of the Kurdish problem through progressive reforms easier for the AKP, but this issue only rose to salience in the country's political agenda in the aftermath of 2011 general elections.²⁴

In the first half of 2008, a legal case was opened against the AKP asking for it and 71 leading members—including PM Erdoğan—to be banned from active politics of five years.²⁵ This case eventually failed due to a legal technicality, but is likely to have had an influential impact upon AKP's approach towards the judiciary and the September 2010 Constitutional reform that reshaped the higher courts and the Supreme Council of Public Prosecutors and Judges.²⁶

Since 2011, it seems that the voters of the center-right tradition have long receded and most likely have moved into the ranks of the center-left Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*-CHP). A number of controversial candidates that have little acquaintance with the CHP tradition like Mehmet Haberal have been given safe, electable positions within the ranks of the CHP. These candidates are speculated to have been placed within the CHP in order to make the party more appealing to those who traditionally supported the center-right.²⁷ Given these moves, it is likely that the old center-right tradition is still alive within the CHP support base and thus forms

a credible locus of resistance to the AKP tenure. Obviously, if this line of argumentation is credible then one could argue that the center-right and left is coming together against the dominance of the AKP.

The right half of the Turkish political spectrum is resilient and kept alive largely by the nationalist fervor mobilized by the reforms aimed to solve the Kurdish problem. However, the resilience of the right-of-center and nationalist resistance was challenged, in the weeks preceding the 2011 general elections, by the release of indiscreet footage showing senior MHP officials together with young women.²⁸ By eliminating a resilient right-of-center nationalist resistance center to the AKP domination, the electoral scene would have become much clearer and easy to predict. However, this strategy did not seem to work as the MHP did manage to remain above the 10 percent threshold.

On the domestic front, the legitimacy of the AKP's stronghold over the executive office necessitated the building of a large coalition within not only the substantial and growing conservative circles, but also within both the reactionary and relatively more liberal segments of Turkish society. The EU reforms to meet the Copenhagen political criteria and start the negotiation phase of the EU-Turkey relations, together with AKP's struggle to eliminate the remnants of military regime tutelage presented a framework in which to build these coalitions.²⁹

The results of 2011 general elections clearly show a consolidation of AKP support. Not only did the AKP vote share increase at the expense of the center and right-of-center parties (with the exception of MHP), but the volatility and fragmentation of electoral support at the party system level also came down.³⁰ The establishment of a predominant

party system under the control of the AKP created a stable and more predictable political environment in the country. However, as can be expected in ruling parties' internal conflicts, rising levels of corruption eventually came to challenge the party establishment.³¹ With the graft scandal brought onto the agenda by the Gülen movement, the AKP's inner factional struggles came to the surface.

Simultaneously, the expected degeneration trend within a predominant party system was also revealed by the corruption allegations. The second major resistance to AKP rule was hence created by not only the Gezi Park protests but came from within its own coalition as it was initiated by the Gülen movement.

THE RIFT BETWEEN THE AKP AND THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT

Why, then, did the coalition between the AKP and the Gülen movement break apart? The popular line adopted by the AKP leadership in answering this question is that the Gülen movement has had a secret agenda of running a “parallel state” with its linkages in the security and judicial establishment and that the movement sold-out or betrayed the AKP.³² PM Erdoğan argued that the Gezi protests and the corruption allegations were created and supported by the same “circles of treason.” In fact, two developments during the Gezi protests were significant from this perspective. One was the observation that significant groups of pro-Islamist youth *did* participate in the protests. The other was the open support given by conservative intellectuals to the Gezi protests; their declarations were reported widely in the media.³³ The conspiratorial explanatory framework adopted by PM Erdoğan and the circles of intellectual support around him was that all of the Gezi protests were the making of provocateurs and were supported by western lobbies with a stake in higher interest rates. Prime Minister Erdoğan blamed the “interest lobby” for the Gezi Park protests. However, Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay blamed Gezi protests on the Jewish diaspora.³⁴ As such, it appears that PM Erdoğan was aiming to dilute the Gezi Park resistance by distancing it from any association with the conservative circles and hence creating a polarized struggle between its own traditional support base of pro-Islamist conservative circles and the liberal center-left together with non-Kurdish extreme-left-wing.³⁵

It has long been observed that, initially, the Gülen movement was a critical ally to the AKP in its efforts to pacify and control the traditional republi-

can elite circles of resistance to its rule.³⁶ However, the movement is composed of a large, increasingly sophisticated, financially potent and functionally effective global network that has active branches all over the world.³⁷ As such, it has slowly become more and more exposed to various influences that have naturally modified its policy preferences. Those new inclinations have diverged from the AKP’s line on a number of significant domestic and foreign policy issues. The Gülenists’ security policy preferences seemed to diverge from the government’s when an effort to prosecute the head of the National Intelligence Organization (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, MIT) appeared.³⁸ The foreign policy row between Israel and Turkey on the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident also appears to have become a point of contention between the government and the movement.³⁹ The movement’s friendlier stance towards Israel may be linked to its attitudes towards Iran. The movement’s Sunni orientation negatively perceives Iran’s Shi’a identity and Iran’s increasing influence over regional dynamics might be the underlying cause of this disagreement.⁴⁰

Perhaps the most significant difference of the Gülen movement compared to all other and earlier pro-Islamist conservative circles is their long-term investment in placing their cadres of sympathizers into the state bureaucracy. The movement is determined to follow an autonomous line of policy formulation and influence rather than just adopting a servant’s role.⁴¹ From an ideological perspective, the movement’s orientation towards idealism and achievement appears to work best when it has secure and privileged access to state resources. When the government’s proposed new education policy threatened to put an end to the private prep-schools that the movement controls, the tensions between the government and the movement

peaked. These prep-schools are critical not only for raising funds, but also for the recruitment of new generations of followers. The schools draw young people who tend to come from underprivileged families and who can easily be mobilized by easier access to higher education. The movement's heavy reliance on this privileged access to the state during the AKP government's tenure not only led to a negative public image, but also appears to have created outright jealousy among the competing conservative pro-Islamist circles.⁴² As such, having moved away from the well-established norms of engagement with the state and having become a distinct sub-state actor, the Gülenists created their own opponents within the other competing conservative Islamic brotherhoods as well as from within the old style state bureaucracy.

The government's authoritarian and contemptuous reaction to the Gezi protests is likely to have threatened the Gülenists, an elite, white-collar, bureaucratic social network. Unlike AKP, they did not enjoy control over large masses of people.⁴³ It also appears that the timing of the graft allegations

curiously coincided with the preparations of the AKP candidate lists for the local elections. Having been threatened by the attitude of the government during the Gezi events and building on rising mistrust due to earlier disagreements, it is highly likely that the two sides could not agree on whom to support and run in the local elections. Even independent from the choices of local election candidates, the likely developments after those elections may not be palatable to the tastes of the Gülen movement. If the AKP wins yet another election, PM Erdoğan would most likely return to earlier plans to institute a presidential system around his charismatic figure. Among the factors that shape a working democratic presidential system, separation of powers and institutionally strong legislative and judicial branches of government are considered necessary. However, the presidential system design proposed by the AKP appears to have ignored these characteristics.⁴⁴ Given the history of disagreements between the AKP and the Gülen movement, such a possibility appears unacceptable to the movement, a sentiment which could explain the decision to unleash the graft allegations.

VOTING BEHAVIOR IN TURKEY: IMPACT OF THE ECONOMY AND CORRUPTION

Voting behavior in Turkey is shaped by a multitude of factors that can be grouped under two major headings.⁴⁵ The influences that take shape over the long term are primarily the consequences of individuals' political socialization from their early childhood to the present day. Conventional left-right orientation and attitudinal traits along the secularist as opposed to Islamist world views are examples of such long-term influences. The short-term influences upon party choice primarily concern performance evaluation on different policy areas. Among these policy areas, those that fall under economic policy appear most influential. However, many issues on the country's agenda could potentially influence voters' choices. Key to understanding the issue developments that have led up to the local elections of 2014 is corruption.

From answers given to two open-ended questions concerning the top two most important problems of Turkey asked in seven nationally representative sample surveys between Fall 2002 and Spring 2013, it is possible to observe that bribery and corruption ranges in the margins (1 to 2.4 percent) and receives almost no attention. However, prior to the AKP's rise to power, corruption and bribery ranked significantly higher among the country's most significant issues.⁴⁶ This may have changed after the debate intensified around the graft scandal, but data is not yet available to back this assumption.

Since economic issues are often seen as the most important issues on the country's agenda, the

extent to which voters are satisfied with the economy is a significant question. When the performance of the government's economic policy was evaluated in eight nationally representative sample surveys between 2002 and 2013, there is a generally declining trend for negative assessments over the years.⁴⁷ In the 2002 general elections, retrospective evaluations of the effect of the government's policies on the economic conditions of respondents' families and the country were overwhelmingly negative. There appears to be a gap between the retrospective and prospective responses. The future expectations are typically more optimistic than are the assessments concerning the past. In 2007, expectations for the economy's future become less negative as compared to 2002. In 2008, when the global crisis hit the country, the voters' assessments concerning the government's economic policy performance immediately worsened. Since 2008, the public's negative feelings about the economy have been steadily in decline. When the AKP won its third general election victory in 2011, the overall level of negative evaluations of the government's economic policy performance was comparable to the level of 2007. However, in the aftermath of 2011 general elections, the public's expectations of the government's economic policy performance appeared to steadily worsen, but continued to improve when asked about past economic performance. As such, the gap between past and future assessments disappears. As the 2014 local elections approach, it is possible to observe that the economic performance approval ratings are not particularly worsening. The levels of negative appraisals are slightly higher than the immediate past, but compared to 2002, they are comfortably lower.

ELECTORAL DYNAMICS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

In local elections, similar forces are at play, but it must be kept in mind that turnout will most likely be lower than the general elections. One reason for lower turnout is that the central government is still more important because of its control over the national agenda and budgets. Another is the first-past-the-post election system in local elections. Particularly in a predominant party system where the likely outcome of an election is relatively easier to predict in favor of the predominant party, voters may be more likely to stay away from the voting booth.

When participation rates in all general and local elections between 1950 and 2011 are taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that with the introduction of compulsory participation in elections by the 1980 military regime, the turnout rates shifted upward. However, this shift was only temporary. Voter turnout rates have declined almost continuously since the 1983 election and in the last three elections it has settled around 85 percent.

One important observation concerning this post-1980 period is that two exceptional local elections have taken place in this period. In both 1994 and 2009 the local elections had a higher turnout rate than those observed in the previous general election. In the pre-1980 period, no such local elections occurred. A higher turnout rate than general election preceding it suggests that the local election in question might witness contention for a vote of confidence. People are attracted to the polls because of a tougher competition for a vote of confidence to the ruling party or coalition. Another important point to keep in mind is that certain demographic groups like the younger generation

have a lower tendency to vote. When the turnout rate is high, the younger generation will also likely come out to vote. As such, their preferences are more accurately reflected in the election outcome.

Both the Gezi Park protests as well as the corruption allegations are likely to turn the March 2014 local elections into a vote of confidence for the AKP government and thus increase the turnout rate. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether the apparently alienated young masses of Gezi protestors will vote at all and, if they do, for whom they are likely to cast their vote. When turnout increases, the preferences of the younger generation may determine the winner of mayoral elections at the margin. Hence, the political preferences of younger voters are of utmost importance. Before the Gezi Park protests, the AKP was dominant among the younger voters as well, but that influence has now been called into question.

Candidate characteristics and charisma are also likely to influence the local election outcomes more than in general elections. In the minds of the voters, the main question about the candidates is whether they will be able to deliver the expected services in cooperation with—and mobilizing financial help from—the central government? Besides lower turnout rates and the importance of candidate characteristics, several other patterns are also observed in local elections. A general tendency is that unless the local elections are perceived as a vote of confidence, party preferences in the earlier general election do not change for the local elections. Provincial centers vote predominantly for the winner, and larger urban settlements lead this change. Change is much slower in smaller Turkish towns than larger ones. Economic difficulties are also expected to trigger changes in the upcoming elections. However, the above depiction

of the polling concerning economic policy performance suggests that, unless a new financial crisis hits the country, the economy is not likely to exert any force on the election results. If the economy is perceived to be doing well, the voters are also not likely to consider the election as a vote of confidence and the turnout rate is also likely to remain relatively low.

Given the relatively favorable evaluations of the government's economic policy performance, how will the voters react to corruption allegations? A recent article by Marko Klasnja and Joshua A. Tucker claims that in "low-corruption" countries like Sweden where corruption is relatively rare, voters tend to punish politicians for corruption regardless of the state of the economy.⁴⁸ However, in "high-corruption" countries like Moldova, where bribery and corrupt deals are relatively more

prevalent, voters tend to punish politicians for corruption only when the economy is also perceived to be doing badly. When the perceptions of the state of the economy improve, voters tend to be less concerned about corruption.

In the case of Turkey, the evaluations of the state of the economy may not be deteriorating. However, when and if these evaluations do worsen, then their influence upon the vote choice will increase, especially if Turkey becomes seen as a "high-corruption" country in the minds of the voters. For this line of causation to work, the public perceptions about PM Erdoğan's government being corrupt has to settle in the minds of the voters at large. If the perception settles around the idea that the graft allegations are well-founded then the impact of any damage upon the perceptions of the economy for the vote choices will be magnified.

LIKELY RESULTS OF LOCAL ELECTIONS

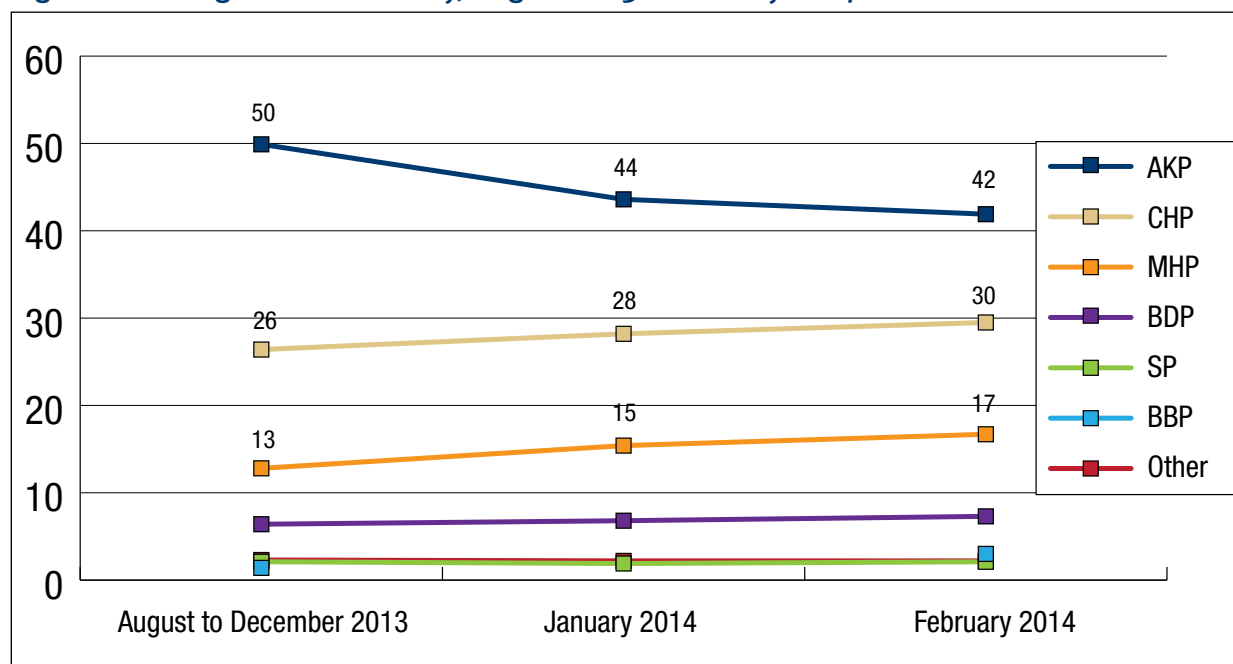
How then are election outcomes likely to take shape? Over the last few months, a total of 72 polls have been published in newspapers or websites concerning the major provincial local election results as well as the whole country at large.⁴⁹ Technical qualifications and hence credibility of these results vary across firms.⁵⁰ However, their average results (given in Figure 2) do not only help to grasp where electoral dynamics are going, but also to understand what kind of information is accessible to the masses.

Polling on the national and local elections is in some areas very similar. First, there was about an eight percentage point decline in AKP support; prior to the graft scandal in early December 2013, they polled at about 50 percent but now sit at 42 percent support.⁵¹ Since the timings of these field-works are ambiguous and may overlap with one

another, it is preferable to compare the monthly averages. The overall trend in the support for the AKP appears to be moving downward. However, the difference between January and February averages is too small to indicate significance. The AKP loss is good news for CHP and MHP, each of whom achieved slight gains in that period, which led to a decline in the gap between the AKP and its closest opponent, the CHP.

A more or less similar picture arises from the smaller Anatolian provinces as well as İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara. In the two largest provinces—İstanbul and Ankara—the AKP lead appears comfortable. In İzmir, the gap between CHP and the AKP is narrower but solidly in favor of CHP. In Diyarbakır, the AKP trails the BDP and that gap appears to have widened in the last month. In Eskişehir, the AKP is behind the CHP and in Antalya and Adana the gap between the AKP and its opponents is within the margin of error. In Adana, the MHP also appears to be close behind the AKP and CHP.

Figure 2. Polling Results – Turkey, August 2013 - February 2014



Most curious in this picture is that the graft scandal of December 2013 appears to have had no big impact on the overall results. There is some slight reduction of support for the AKP, but the gap between them and their competitors have not closed in any significant way. What is not found in these polling results are explanatory variables for the party choices of respondents. As such, a full explanation as to why these trends have emerged is difficult to make. A critical variable for local elections is an evaluation of the candidates from different parties. Is it true that PM Erdoğan still has national

appeal among the masses that will help local candidates carry the local elections? Given the row between the Gülen movement and the government, the importance of PM Erdoğan's personal appeal and credibility as well as the candidates and their characteristics is now even more pronounced. Moreover, it looks like the corruption allegations have not convinced significant segments of the AKP constituency to vote for another party. Those who take these allegations seriously are already most likely voting for the opposition and few voters seem to have shifted away from the AKP.⁵²

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

For the time being, the Turkish public does not appear to be changing its party preferences. Dozens of polls published over the past few months diagnose only a slight decline in the support for the AKP that does not close the large gap it commands over the opposition parties. Besides technically poor polling and potential manipulation of the published results, the lack of a decline in AKP support after the corruption scandals might be due to the lack of a credible opposition.⁵³ The literature on predominant parties stresses that opposition parties are likely to self-destruct with incompetence, clumsy organization and non-credible policy positions. This might be happening in Turkey as well. Yet another reason for AKP's continued strength may be the fact that economic conditions within Turkey are reasonably strong and not in great danger of deteriorating significantly. Since corruption and graft allegations do not appear to have influenced the public's preferences, voters will most probably stick to their usual vote choice criteria. Nothing significant can change the ideological predispositions of the Turkish electorate in the short-run. Changes in ideology come primarily with age, political socialization and cohort replacement. Persistent waves of education reform could raise children with different world views and, within a generation or two; voters may become more conservative or progressive depending on the choice of curricula. It appears that the only significant variable that could change voter preferences in the short term is the evaluations of the government's economic policy performance. However, besides personal experience, what matters in these evaluations are perceptions and partisan preferences of individuals. If one is a partisan supporter of the AKP, he/she would interpret the

economic conditions in a way that conforms to the expectations of AKP partisanship. As such, the two-way linkage between partisanship and evaluations of the government's economic policy performance mutually enforce one another.

Changing turnout rates could also be another factor that can counteract authoritarian tendencies among the AKP leadership. One significant group in Turkey that is not fully part of the Turkish electorate and typically does not have a high turnout is the youth. Any policy to change this trend and engage the youth has the potential to create change in Turkish electoral choices. However, the younger generations might still remain alienated after the Gezi Park protests and may not turnout to vote in the local elections. Given the background of the Gezi protests and corruption allegations, one crucial factor to keep in mind is the public's perceptions of fairness in the local elections. Turkey has a long history of organizing fair and competitive elections. This is a critical election where the fairness of the election results should not be compromised.

Several conclusions are worthy of note on the developments in Turkey and their implications for the larger neighboring region and the U.S.-Turkey relations. The first concerns the nature of the AKP's predominant party status. The inner party fractionalization and corruption, together with rising self-confidence and complacency are features of ruling predominant parties. These characteristics seem to have caught up with the AKP and are causing some deterioration in its electoral base. However, despite its weakening support, the AKP still commands a comfortable lead in the polls and is likely to survive the challenges in the approaching local elections. What is perhaps more important is the extent to which opposition parties can gather support behind their candidates. If the

gap between the AKP and the opposition remains too large, PM Erdoğan is likely to be encouraged to run for the presidency. Otherwise, despite losing perhaps in many of the local races, the opposition may be encouraged to continue its resistance to PM Erdoğan's aspirations for the presidency.

The second concerns the implications of the weakening power base of the AKP for Turkish politics. An AKP that is weaker, but still in a commanding political position, is likely to face challenges in making and implementing policy. This is especially true when one considers the ongoing rift between the Gülen movement and the government that is crippling the Turkish bureaucracy. This conflict is likely to continue behind the scenes. The AKP government struck back against the Gülen movement, which it sees as responsible for the graft allegations. In a conspiratorial twist, the AKP elite have argued that the movement has hidden ambitions to capture and control the state apparatus. The AKP has thus mobilized all resources at its disposal to effectively close any breathing room for its opponents. Access and use of the internet is being restricted to keep the media campaign against the AKP under control. This exchange between the movement and the government is a fight between asymmetric powers. Given the backing of the state apparatus, the AKP is likely to eliminate yet another of its opponents. The conflict between the AKP government and the Gülen Movement is bound to have repercussions for US-Turkey relations. The fact that Gülen resides in Pennsylvania creates a convenient image in Turkey that he is being manipulated to serve the American interests. It is not clear how the Obama administration could distance itself from the movement. However, given the AKP administration's past record with the public suggestions that their western allies are involved in Turkey's domestic affairs, similar stances will likely be

taken at convenient junctures as the conflict develops between the movement and the government. However, it is highly unlikely that, in the short-run, these attacks will turn into meaningful changes in Turkish policy towards the US or the West at large.

The third concerns the implications for Islamist movements in Turkey and in the neighboring region at large. By eliminating the Gülen movement, Turkey's position as a role model for the Arab Spring may come to a definitive end. How will these developments reshape the relationships between the Turkish state and the Islamist movements? The AKP government's reaction and potential elimination of the Gülen movement will have repercussions for the future of Turkish civil society and the conservative Islamist groups. Will the Islamist groups' future engagement with the state be more open and active, or will they be more likely to sink under the surface of politics? How much of an electoral impact could the Gülen movement mobilize against the government and aim at resolving the conflict via electoral punishment or reward? Answers to these questions will have implications for the shape other new democracies in the Middle East will take.

The fourth concerns the implications of Turkey's apparent instability for foreign policy. Given that the continuing rift between the Gülen movement and the government has led to gridlock and indecision, Turkey's ability to serve as a bastion of stability in the broader Middle East is diminished. By the same token, Turkey's role as a barrier against the turmoil on its borders and a reliable partner for the West may become more questionable. Turkey's status as an island of stability in a fragile region is no longer accurate. A Turkey consumed by domestic infighting may not necessarily contribute to the stabilization of the disorder on its borders and elsewhere in the Middle East. Still, Turkey's

ability to adopt a credible and pro-active policy to offer a solution to chaos in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq is likely to diminish.

As the struggle unfolds, two competing mid to long-run scenarios are worth considering. The first is pessimistic. It claims that, rather than building consensus around policy initiatives, a new constitution written by democratically-elected representatives, or a presidential system that listens to and accommodates various groups within Turkish society, the AKP is building a more authoritarian regime. The other is more optimistic and claims that by eliminating behind the scene influences of the Gülen movement in the country, the AKP will become more likely to pursue along the democratic reforms and tackle the Kurdish problem more effectively. Which version of these two scenarios will be realized is yet uncertain.

The outcome of either scenario has direct implications for the US-Turkey relations. An AKP victorious over the movement may turn more despotic and will inevitably push Turkey away from the like-minded global policy circles wherein both countries could cooperate. A repressive regime in Turkey would inexorably keep Turkey distant to the European Union and weaken the deterrent power of NATO alliance. All of these speculative

developments at the extremes of historical scenario writing are likely to be seen by global economic decision-makers as well as the AKP leadership in advance. Hence, unless inevitable by circumstance, rational actors would do their best to avoid falling into this trap of becoming more and more authoritarian which eventually would undermine their credibility, power and historical legacy. Global power circles and civil society should at this stage engage all parties in Turkey to provide a wider perspective and incentives for cooperation within a democratic regime. Only as such could alternative visionary perspectives be created to avoid an inevitable sour ending for the impending dynamics in the country and keep Turkey an open democracy.

The optimistic scenario is also likely to be stressful since then a new wave of reform initiatives will have to be implemented. Meeting the growing political and economic expectations of a demographically young country like Turkey will necessitate a closer cooperation between the US and Turkey. The challenge in this scenario is to make sure that both countries share a common vision for regional and global dynamics. This requires closer engagement and conversation between not only the security circles but also the business and civil society in both countries.

ENDNOTES

1. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer and Gamze Avcı who commented on an earlier version of this paper, to Yusuf Magiya and Kerem Yıldırım for their assistance in data collection. However, I am alone responsible for the final form of the article.
2. See “AK Partili Muhammed Çetin Partisinden İstifa Etti (Muhammed Çetin from AKP Resigned from his party)”, *Hürriyet*, January 31, 2014, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/25707298.asp>. Daniel M. Kselman’s PhD dissertation at Duke University *Electoral Institutions, Party Organizations, and Political Instability* (2009) reports that party switching was quite common in the Turkish Grand National Assembly between 1987 and 2007. The highest rate of party switching was observed for the 19th parliamentary session between 1995 and 1999 due primarily to involuntary switches caused by party closures. However, even without involuntary party switchers, the percentage of MP’s who switched parties remains far higher in sessions between 1991 to 2002 (33 percent in 1991-1995 session, 19 percent in 1995-1999, and 21 percent in 1999-2002) than in 2002-2007 sessions (9 percent) (Kselman, 2009, 177). Hence the rising resignations are a clear new sign of parliamentary instability in the making for the AKP term. See also Sabri Sayarı, “Non-Electoral Sources of Party System Change in Turkey”, in *Essays in Honor of Ergun Özbudun, Volume 1 Political Science*, (İstanbul: Yetkin Yayınları, 2008): 399-417.
3. On the December 17 corruption scandal see Taha Özhan “What Happened on December 17?”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 3, 2014, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/what-happened-on-dec-17.aspx?page-ID=449&nID=60481&NewsCatID=436> and Joe Parkinson and Emre Peker, *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 2013, “Turkish Police Detain High-Profile Figures in Corruption Probe, Istanbul’s Stock Index Falls More Than 2%”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303949504579263601010522432>. For an early review of the state of anti-corruption policy see Zeyno Baran, “Corruption: the Turkish challenge”, *Journal of International Affairs*, 54, 1, (2000), 127-46 and Bryane Michael, “Anti-Corruption in the Turkey’s EU Accession”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 3, 4, (2004), 17-28.
4. See RT Report, December 31, 2013, “Graft scandal hits Turkish economy by \$100 bln – Deputy PM”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://rt.com/business/turkey-graft-probe-losses-009/>; William L Watts, *Market Watch*, February 29, 2014, “Turkey rate hike stirs Black Wednesday memories”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/turkey-rate-hike-stirs-black-wednesday-memories-2014-01-29> and also, Reuters, February 3, 2014, “Turkey’s big rate hike to squeeze banks’ profits – Moody’s”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/03/turkey-moodys-banks-idUSL5N0L82IB20140203>.
5. For instance, see Ziya Öniş, “Turkey and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East”. *Mediterranean Politics*, (forthcoming, 2014), 1-17.
6. Recent developments exemplify AKP’s inability in dealing with bureaucracy. Prosecutors conducted an operation to determine whether the intelligence agency smuggles weapons to Syria. See Fehim Taştekin, *Al Monitor*, January 20, 2014, “Turkish intelligence service trucks reveal secrets”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/turkish-intelligence-trucks-smuggle-syria.html>. Also, 96 judges and prosecutors are changed following the corruption case and other cases against the AKP: *World Bulletin*, January 22, 2014, “96 judges, prosecutors changed in Turkey”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=127382>.
7. For details, see Menderes Çınar, “The electoral success of the AKP: cause for hope and despair”, *Insight Turkey*, 13, 4 (2011), 107-127 and also, Ziya Öniş, “The triumph of conservative globalism: the political economy of the AKP era”, *Turkish Studies*, 13, 2 (2012), 135-52.
8. See Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Vol. 1). CUP Archive, (1976): 193-196. Also refer to Ali Çarkoğlu, “Turkey’s 2011 General Elections: Toward a Dominant Party System?” *Insight Turkey*, 13, 3 (2011), 43-62 and Şebnem Gümüşçü, “The Emerging Predominant Party System in Turkey”, *Government and Opposition*, 48, 2 (2013), 223-44 for the predominant party system in Turkey.
9. See Gümüşçü (2013) for a similar line of argument.
10. The republican elite managed to impede Gül to be elected to Presidency and forced the AKP into an early election in July rather than in November as was scheduled. For details of this presidential elec-

- tion controversy see Ali Çarkoğlu, “A New Electoral Victory for the “Pro-Islamists” or the “New Centre-Right”? The Justice and Development Party Phenomenon in the July 2007 Elections in Turkey”, *South European Society and Politics*, 12, 4 (2007a), 501-19.
11. See Menderes Çınar, “The Justice and Development Party and the Kemalist Establishment”, in U. Cizre (ed.), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 109–31.
 12. Aylin Güney and Petek Karatekelioğlu, “Turkey’s EU Candidacy and Civil–Military Relations: Challenges and Prospects”, *Armed Forces and Society*, 31, 3 (2005), 439–62.
 13. Ersel Aydın, “Ergenekon, new pacts, and the decline of the Turkish “inner state”, *Turkish Studies*, 12:2, (2011): 227-239. Gareth Jenkins, “Ergenekon, Sledgehammer, and The Politics Of Turkish Justice: Conspiracies And Coincidences”, *MERIA Journal*, 15, 2 (2011) accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.gloria-center.org/category/2011-06-14-02/>. Yaprak Gürsoy, “The changing role of the military in Turkish politics: democratization through coup plots?”, *Democratization*, 19, 4 (2012), 735-60.
 14. The term “elite” is used interchangeably for both the secularists as well as pro-Islamist ruling party or opposition groups. It refers simply to a small group of people in their respective parties or factions who control a disproportionate amount of power.
 15. For details of these economic indicators, see the World Bank Online Databank (<http://data.world-bank.org/>) and TurkStat webpage (<http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=kategorist>).
 16. On Republican Rallies see BBC, April, 14, 2007, “Secular Rally Targets Turkish PM”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6554851.stm>. Zeyno Baran, “Turkey Divided”, *Journal of Democracy*, 19, 1 (2008), 55-69; Hakan M. Yavuz and Nihat A. Özcan, “Crisis in Turkey: The Conflict of Political Languages”, *Middle East Review*, 14, 3 (2007), 118-35.
 17. On Gezi Park events see Yeşim Arat, “Violence, Resistance and Gezi Park”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 45, 4 (2013), 807-809.
 18. The Turkish electoral system necessitates a nation-wide 10 percent vote share within the valid votes for any political party to win representation in the TGNA. Since only the AKP and the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP) went over this threshold all other parties which covered approximately 47 percent of the votes got no representation in the TGNA:
 19. The nature of left and right in Turkish politics has peculiar characteristics that are not shared with the Western tradition. See, Ali Çarkoğlu, “The Nature of the Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in the Turkish Context”, *Turkish Studies*, 8, 2 (2007b), 253-71.
 20. On Figure 1 the acronyms for political parties are used in the following way: *Demokrat Parti*-DP; *Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi*-MÇP; *Büyük Birlik Partisi*-BBP; *Genç Parti*-GP; *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*-HADEP; *Demokratik Halk Partisi*-DEHAP; *Halkçı Parti*-HP; *Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti*-SHP; *Demokratik Sol Parti*-DSP; *Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi*-MDP; *Refah Partisi*-RP and *Saadet Partisi*-SP.
 21. An obvious line of argument that could follow from this picture is that the AKP had effectively turned itself into the new center-right wing. Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest and Stability in an Islamic Society* (London, U.K.: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 113-20 uses micro-individual level self-positioning from survey data and show that the AKP constituency remains right-of-center on the traditional left-right continuum.
 22. On the financial crisis that preceded AKP’s coming to power see Caroline Van Rijckeghem and Murat Uçer, *Chronicle of the Turkish Financial Crises of 2000-2001* (Istanbul, Turkey: Boğaziçi University Press, 2005).
 23. For a detailed account of the events surrounding the much disputed 2007 general election see Çarkoğlu (2007a). For later developments on the economic front see Murat Uçer’s historical assessment Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, *Quo Vadis Turkish Economy? Thinking Through the Recent Record, Policy Debates, and the Way Forward*, (Istanbul, Turkey, EDAM, 2009) accessed February 26, 2014, http://www.edam.org.tr/document/discussion%20paper%20series_ucer.pdf.
 24. Güneş M. Tezcür, “Trends and characteristics of the Turkish party system in light of the 2011 elections”. *Turkish Studies*, 13, 2 (2012), 117-134. And also, Fırat Cengiz and Lars Hoffmann, “The 2011 General Elections in Turkey: Potential Implications on Domestic and International Politics in the Shadow of a Discourse Change?”, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65, 1 (2012), 255-69.
 25. For details of the party closure case, see Şebnem Gümüşçü and Deniz Sert “The power of the devout bourgeoisie: the case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45, 6 (2009), 953-68.

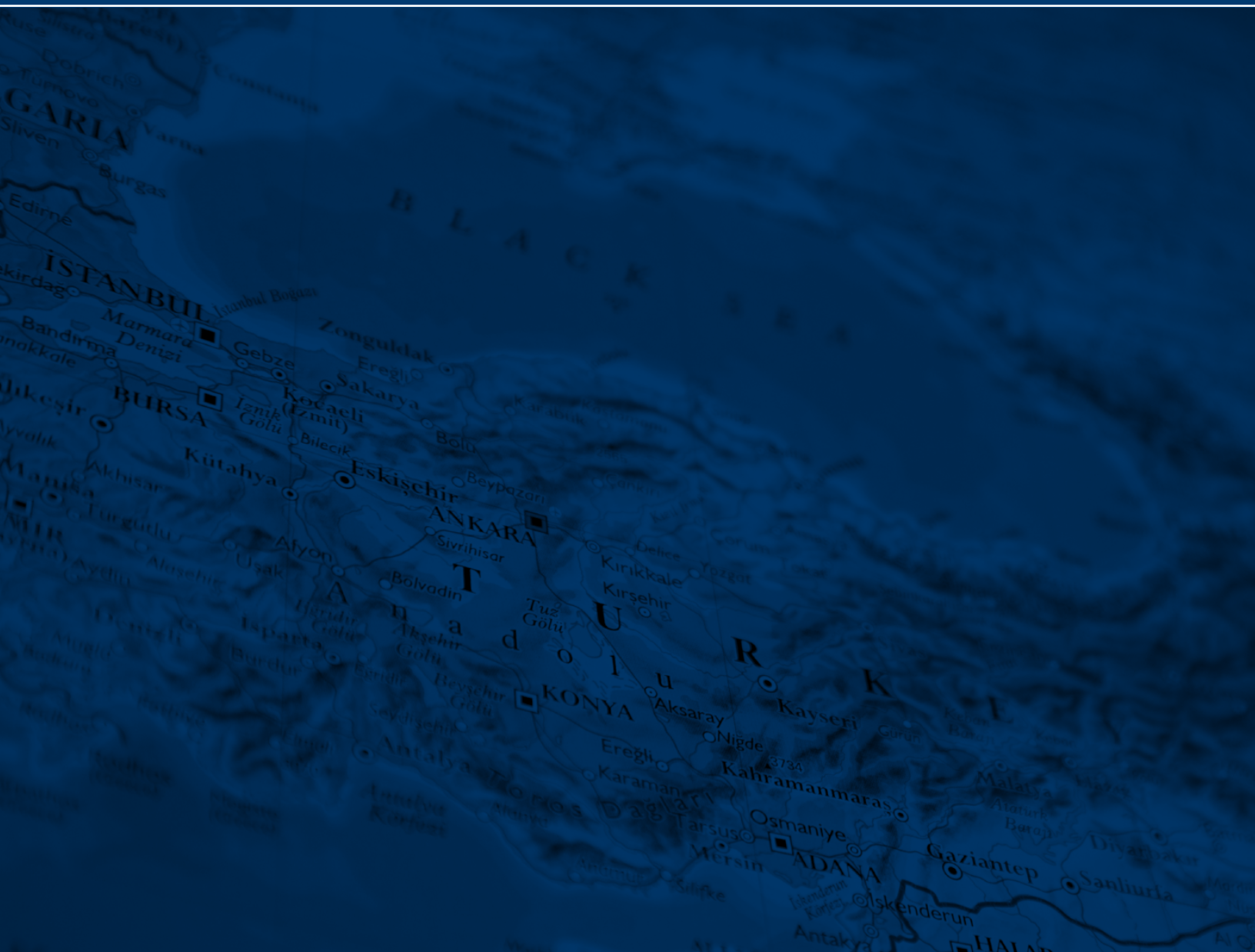
26. See Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “Kulturkampf in Turkey: the constitutional referendum of 12 September 2010”, *South European Society and Politics*, 17, 1 (2012), 1-22
27. Abdullah Aydoğan and Jonathan B. Slapin, “Left-right reversed Parties and ideology in modern Turkey. Party Politics”, *Party Politics* published online 7 June 2013, DOI: 10.1177/1354068813487280, (2013).
28. Attacks against MHP were especially based on surveillance tapes and scandals, for details see, *Hürriyet*, May 9, 2011, “Political row deepens in Turkey over MHP tape scandal”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=akp-mhp-row-deepens-over-tape-scandal-2011-05-09>.
29. In this respect, many liberals also supported the AKP. For details see, Murat Somer, “Does it take democrats to democratize? lessons from Islamic and secular elite values in Turkey”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 44, 5 (2011), 511-45.
30. In the aftermath of 2011 election, the geographical pattern of the AKP dominance became clearer. The AKP expanded its electoral dominance well into the western coastal provinces and remained dominant in all major metropolitan areas except Izmir. The opposition of the CHP retreated back into the western coastal provinces. See Çarkoğlu (2011, 58).
31. Çarkoğlu, (2011, 59).
32. For details of the rift between the AKP and Gülen movement see Can Erimtan, January 27, 2014, *RT*, “AKPgate in context: Tayyip Erdoğan and the ‘parallel state’ in Turkey”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://rt.com/op-edge/turkey-scandal-erdogan-247/>.
33. See the text of the declaration see Emek ve Adalet (Labor and Justice) website: accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.emekveadalet.org/arsivler/9716>. On Islamic socialism movement in Turkey and its support for the Gezi protests see the interview with theologian İhsan Eliaçık, Qantara.de, January 15, 2014, “The Koran and Social Justice”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-turkish-theologian-ihsan-elia-cik-the-koran-and-social-justice>.
34. See, Kadri Gürsel, *Al Monitor*, July 9, 2013, “Turkey’s Israel Problem”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/turkey-israel-normalization-threat-gezi.html#>.
35. The reluctance of the Kurdish left-wing to join forces with the Gezi protesters was a noticeable development that could be attributed primarily to the on going Kurdish opening and negotiations with the Kurdish leadership. See Nilüfer Göle, “Gezi-Anatomy of a Public Square Movement, *Insight Turkey*, 15, 3 (2013), 7-14.
36. For details of the alliance between AKP and the Gülen movement, see Ömer Aslan, *Fair Observer*, February 2, 2014, “An Alliance Split Apart: The AKP Battles the Gülen”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.fairobserver.com/article/alliance-split-apart-akp-battles-gulen-movement>.
37. See Sophia Pandya and Nancy Gallagher (Eds.). *The Gülen Hizmet Movement and its Transnational Activities: Case Studies of Altruistic Activism in Contemporary Islam* (Brown Walker Press, 2012).
38. See Pinar Tremblay, *Al Monitor*, January 8, 2014, “Turkish Intelligence Agency (MIT) at center of political storm”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/turkey-mit-akp-gulen-battle-power-struggle.html>.
39. See Joe Lauria, *Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010, “Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704025304575284721280274694>.
40. See Mustafa Akyol, *Al Monitor*, January 3, 2014, “What you should know about Turkey’s AKP-Gülen conflict”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/akp-gulen-conflict-guide.html>.
41. See Ertan Aydın, *Project Syndicate*, January 10, 2014, “Turkey’s Failed Bureaucratic Coup”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ertan-aydin-traces-the-recent-corruption-scandals-roiling-turkish-politics-to-the-religious-hizmet-movement-s-colonization-of-the-judiciary>.
42. For details of competition between other Islamist groups and the Gülen Movement see, Bill Park, *Open Democracy*, January 27, 2014, “Turkey’s struggle: Erdoğan vs Gülen”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/bill-park/turkeys-struggle-erdoğ-vs-gülen>.
43. On Gülen movements popular basis see Abdülkadir Selvi, *The New Turkey*, January 21, 2014, “Political Power of the Gülen Movement”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.thenewturkey.org/political-power-of-the-gulen-movement/new-turkey/8650>. On Gülen movement and Gezi protest linkage see the interview with Hasan Karakaya at t24 web site accessed February 26, 2014, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/dun-hocafendi-gezcilere-destek-veriyordu-bugun-ise-gezciler-hocafendiye-destek-veriyorlar/245213>.

44. See Pinar Aydınli, Reuters, November 6, 2012, “Turkey’s Erdoğan has eye on new, strong president’s role”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/06/us-turkey-presidency-proposal-idUSBRE8A50VS20121106>.
45. For a summary of the literature on Turkish voting behavior see Ali Çarkoğlu, “Voting Behavior in Turkey”, *Handbook of Modern Turkey*, M. Heper and S. Sayarı (eds.) (Routledge, 2012), 160-70.
46. In a survey aimed at unearthing the attitudes towards corruption in Turkey F. Adaman, A. Çarkoğlu and B. Şenatalar *Household View on the Causes of Corruption in Turkey and Suggested Preventive Measures*, translation of the earlier TESEV report, (Istanbul, Turkey: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı-TESEV, 2002) report 14.5 percent placing corruption and bribery among the top two most important issues in the country. Three of the surveys reported here are the election surveys in Ali Çarkoğlu, “Economic evaluations vs. ideology: Diagnosing the sources of electoral change in Turkey, 2002–2011”, *Electoral Studies*, 31 (2012), 513-21. Results are also used from International Social Survey Program (ISSP-<http://www.issp.org/>) Religion- Fall 2008, Social Inequality-Fall 2009, Family and Gender Roles-Spring 2013 and from Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Religion Society and Politics in a Changing Turkey*, (Istanbul, Turkey, TESEV Publications, 2007) (accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/RSP%20-%20Turkey%2011%202006.pdf>).
47. A total of five economic evaluation questions are asked in all these surveys. Wording of these questions can be found in the appendix of Çarkoğlu (2012).
48. See Marko Klasnja and Joshua A. Tucker, “The Economy, Corruption and the Vote: Evidence from Experiments in Sweden and Moldova”, *Electoral Studies*, 32, 3, (2013), 536-43.
49. On Istanbul, there were 14 polls, in Ankara 12 and İzmir 8 similar polling results. In addition there were six polling results from Eskişehir, Adana and Antalya. In Diyarbakır we had five.
50. Some report a detailed account of their sampling and fieldwork procedures while others do not even mention their total number of observations. Some conduct their interviews face-to-face, others conduct phone interviews. For some, we know the exact dates of their fieldwork for others this piece of information is left ambiguous.
51. This is the average support for AKP found in February for seven different polling firms.
52. Also see Klasnja and Tucker (2013).
53. Recent news note apparent manipulation of polling results see *Hürriyet Dailynews*, February 7, 2014, “MHP furious over opinion poll manipulation claims”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.hurriyetaileynews.com/mhp-furious-over-opinion-poll-manipulation-claims.aspx?pageID=449&nID=62184&NewsCatID=338> and *Today’s Zaman*, February 7, 2014, “Leaked audio reveals Habertürk manipulated opinion poll”, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-338712-leaked-audio-reveals-haberturk-manipulated-opinion-poll.html>.

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