Turkey's Democratic Struggles

June 17, 2015

POMEPS Briefings 26

Project on Middle East Political Science

Contents

2015 Parliamentary Elections

Clientelism 2.0 vs. democracy in Erdogan's 'New Turkey' 5
By A.Kadir Yildirim, Furman University

Could Erdogan lose Turkey's upcoming election? 8
By Yüksel Sezgin, Syracuse University

Turkey's Kurdish party at the threshold 10
By A.Kadir Yildirim, Furman University

How the Kurds upended Turkish politics 12
By Kimberly Guiler, The University of Texas at Austin

Will Turkey's recent election send the country back to the politically turbulent 1990s? 13
By Emre Erdoğan, Istanbul Bilgi University, and David L. Wiltse, South Dakota State University

Previous Election Issues

How an election may undermine democracy in Turkey 17
By Aaron Stein, King's College London

Turkey's silenced spring. 19
By N. Turkuler Isiksel, Columbia University

Erdoğan's next moves 21
By Gonul Tol, Middle East Institute

'No Opposition, No Democracy' in Turkey's elections 23
By Lisel Hintz, George Washington University

Framing the Electorate: The Roles of Kurds, Women and Islamists

Turkish women's rights beyond Islamists and secularists *27*
By Yüksel Sezgin, Syracuse University

Different faces of Turkish Islamic nationalism 29
By Senem Aslan, Bates College

Turkey's secularization in reverse? 32
By Kristin Fabbe, Claremont McKenna College

The rift between the AKP and Gulen movement in Turkey 34
By Ramazan Kilinc, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Neoliberal Islam and emergent forms of social service provision in Turkey 36
By Gizem Zencirci, Providence College

Kurds, state elites, and patterns of nationhood in Iraq and Turkey 39
By Serhun Al, University of Utah

Why is Tunisian democracy succeeding while the Turkish model is failing? 42
By Yüksel Sezgin, Syracuse University

Online Article Index

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/03/13/clientelism-2-0-vs-democracy-in-erdogans-new-turkey/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/05/19/could-erdogan-lose-turkeys-upcoming-election/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/05/26/turkeys-new-kurdish-party-at-the-threshold/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/06/08/how-the-kurds-upended-turkish-politics/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/06/12/will-turkeys-recent-election-send-the-country-back-to-the-politically-turbulent-1990s/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/21/how-an-election-may-undermine-democracy-in-turkey/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/24/turkeys-silenced-spring-by-turkuler-isiksel/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/04/02/erdogans-next-moves/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/04/03/no-opposition-no-democracy-in-turkeys-elections/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/12/10/turkish-womens-rights-beyond-islamists-and-secularists/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/20/different-faces-of-turkish-islamic-nationalism/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/09/turkeys-secularization-in-reverse/

http://pomeps.org/2015/06/17/the-rift-between-the-akp-and-gulen-movement-in-turkey/

http://pomeps.org/2014/09/29/neoliberal-islam-and-social-service-provision-in-turkey/

http://pomeps.org/2015/03/05/kurds-state-elites-and-patterns-of-nationhood-in-iraq-and-turkey/

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/11/08/why-is-tunisian-democracy-succeeding-while-the-turkish-model-is-failing/

The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

On June 7, Turkish voters denied a majority to the long-ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and pushed the Kurdish Democratic People's Party (HDP) over the electoral threshold for the first time. A number of critical trends in Turkish politics came together in the June 2015 parliamentary election: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's authoritarian ambitions, Kurdish political evolution, an unpopular Syria policy and the stunning break between AKP and the Islamist Gulen movement. POMEPS Briefings 26 "Turkey's Democratic Struggles" brings together more than a dozen essays published by the Project on Middle East Political Science and the *Monkey Cage* that help to make sense of the stakes and results of this crucial election.

AKP's electoral setback has been widely interpreted as a repudiation of long-building efforts by Erdogan to amend the constitution and consolidate semi-authoritarian rule. Its defeat should be placed in context, of course. It still won the largest share of seats in the election, even if it failed to secure the majority to which it aspired. As Emre Erdogan and David Wiltse explain, it may still emerge victorious since no grouping of very ideologically different parties has yet been able to formulate a governing coalition. It could form a new coalition government on its own terms, or else send the country back to early elections.

In the year before the election, many observers worried that Erdogan's authoritarianism and the opposition's disarray could doom Turkish democracy. Turkey's opposition went into the election cycle scarred by the 2013 repression of protests in Gezi Park and allegations of fraud in the March 2014 local elections. Dark warnings about Erdogan's authoritarian ambitions circulated widely, with many convinced that the AKP clientelist juggernaut and the dysfunction of the opposition would turn the 2015 election into a referendum legitimating fundamental constitutional changes. An election, they worried, could undermine democracy. The resurgence of the opposition in this election, and particularly the success of the pro-Kurdish HDP, has at least temporarily dented this narrative and renewed some hope for the resilience of Turkish democratic institutions.

Other key political cleavages have taken on new meaning in this environment. Turkey's Kurds have taken stock of the limitations of AKP's Kurdish outreach and the opportunities and risks posed by the new status of Syrian and Iraqi Kurds. The HDP's electoral success came in large part at AKP's expense, while challenging the Turkish nationalist convictions of other major opposition parties. Meanwhile, AKP's surprising break with the Gulen Movement split the potent Islamist networks upon which it long relied.

POMEPS Briefings 26 "Turkey's Democratic Struggles" offers essential background by leading scholars on these rapidly shifting politics.

Marc Lynch, Director of POMEPS
June 17, 2015

2015 Parliamentary Elections

Clientelism 2.0 vs. democracy in Erdogan's 'New Turkey'

By A.Kadir Yildirim, March 13, 2015

Observers inside and outside of Turkey are increasingly raising concerns over the authoritarian turn in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's "New Turkey." The economic foundations of this turn have not been heavily analyzed, however, and are especially important because Erdogan's power does not rely on military might, as do many other dictatorships in the region. Instead, Erdogan's power rests on what might be called an upgraded version of clientelism, or clientelism 2.0.

Two features set clientelism 2.0 apart from more common types of personalistic clientelism or simple abuse of power. The sheer extent of corruption and the way Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have seemingly turned it into a science is mind-boggling. Many public procurement bids, public land sales, or privatizations of considerable size go through the system with the blessing of government leaders. For example, in reference to rezoning plans in Istanbul that were involved in the Dec. 17, 2013 corruption probe, former minister Erdogan Bayraktar stated that, "… a large part of the confirmed zoning plans that are in the investigation file were made under the orders of Mr. Prime Minister [Erdogan]." Likewise, this new upgraded clientelism serves less for the personal gains of party officials and more to sustain the party's grip on power and to further its political goals. The combined effect of upgraded clientelism is that AKP can *consistently* extract resources from society for patronage, which in turn largely insulates it from conventional types of accountability, thereby displaying characteristics similar to rentierism and the authoritarian governance associated with it.

Erdogan's upgraded clientelism operates through a complex mechanism that rests on two principal sources of revenue, in addition to the regular government budget, to function. On one hand, the prime minister commands a substantial, yet secretive, extrabudgetary discretionary fund, *Ortulu Odenek*. Legally, the prime minister can allocate this money as he or she pleases without any oversight or accountability. Moreover, the prime minister is not required to disclose where the money is spent. According to recent media reports, this account was allocated 1.24 billion Turkish liras in 2013 (approximately $700 million). In 2003 when Erdogan first began using this account as prime minister the same figure was 103 million liras (approximately $70 million). The total budgetary allocation between 2003 and 2014 is over 7 billion liras (between $3.5 and 4 billion depending on fluctuations in currency value), a substantial amount for any government, especially those purporting to be democratic.

On the other hand, a sophisticated rent-seeking system reigns over public procurement bids, both at the local and central government levels. Local AKP officials reportedly encouraged donations to be made to handpicked NGOs like TURGEV, which is run by Erdogan's son, Bilal Erdogan, or for future "projects" of the party. These "donations" usually range between 10 percent and 20 percent of the bid amount. Interestingly, some theologians even issued religious edicts that justify these "donations." Due to the nature of these transactions, we do not have precise information on the amount of such "donations" for the cause of AKP. Anecdotal evidence however provides some context. For example, when a major Turkish daily, Sabah, was up for sale, the then-Prime Minister Erdogan asked several business owners who were close to him to chip in to buy the newspaper and maintain its control, which they did in 2013, according to various audio tapes made public. Seven business owners pitched in for a total purchase amount reported by Turkish daily Today's Zaman to be around $700 million.

Distribution of various benefits, such as jobs, money and other services constitute the most important mechanism to buy acquiescence among the constituency in many clientelism-nestled systems. Erdogan's "New Turkey" is no exception. Widespread charges of nepotism and

favoritism in the hiring practices of staff agencies, usually with the added benefit of extraordinarily high pay scales, is one layer of such distributive networks. Another layer is a series of subsidies that benefit the lower classes. For example, the heavily subsidized health-care system and low inflation rates – after decades of continuous high inflation ranging mostly between 35 percent and 70 percent – decrease the cost of living for many in the country, functioning as de facto subsidies.

On the heels of the transformation of the Turkish economy following the economic liberalization process in the 1980s and 1990s, AKP rode the high waves of a rising, socially conservative, economically liberal bourgeoisie to create its own economic elite. Through clientelism and an extensive patronage network, the party managed to secure two distinct benefits. First, this core business group offered political support to AKP and Erdogan by way of controlling the public opinion and promoting the party's political agenda. Second, this bourgeoisie formed the core of Erdogan's financial coffers, which ultimately became the economic bedrock of his new regime.

Here are a few examples of the extent of the patronage networks. Ethem Sancak, a business owner believed to have close ties to Erdogan, purchased a public motor company, BMC, which was estimated to be valued at around 1 billion Turkish liras ($480 million) for around 750 million liras ($358 million). According to Taraf daily, the land itself of BMC is valued between 1-1.5 billion liras. Sancak also owns three newspapers, Aksam, Star and Gunes, which appear to be functioning as propaganda outlets for AKP.

Businessman Mehmet Cengiz is another example. According to Taraf newspaper, Cengiz won 28 bids in the last decade or so with an approximate worth of 88 and 100 billion liras ($46 and 52 billion). In 2005, Cengiz purchased a major public aluminum processing company, Eti Aluminum, as part of the government's privatization drive for $305 million. The company was a profitable one at the time with annual profits close to $30 million. Moreover, according to Turkish daily Radikal, Oymapinar Hydroelectric Company, a public hydroelectric company, was included in the deal for no additional cost to Cengiz. Oymapinar's annual profitability was at around 100 million liras (about $60 million).

And as one final example, Turkey will host the largest airport in the world. Istanbul's new airport is slated to open in 2018. The highest bid for the project was in excess of $29 billion and won by a five-company consortium of Limak Holding AK, Cengiz Holding AS, Kolin Insaat, Mapa AS and Kalyon Group. All business owners in this consortium are reportedly very close to the AKP government. Moreover, the agreement between the state and the consortium stipulates that the State Treasury is a guarantor for all the debt of the consortium in case things go wrong, which effectively translates into an absolutely-no-risk investment.

In addition, no-bid government contracts and bid-rigging allegations have also become more common in recent years. For example, a bureaucrat working with the former E.U. Minister Egemen Bagis alleges the widespread use of no-bid government contracts in the ministry. This may put many state and local agencies at the risk of prosecution because such no-bid contracts violate state regulations and draw criticism from many in the bureaucracy. The European Union, indeed, launched an investigation into "misuse" of E.U. funds in the face of these allegations. Additionally, the AKP government has amended the Public Tender Act more than 30 times since it took power in 2002, seemingly a strategy to put more sectors beyond the act's reach. According to Ayse Bugra, a professor at Bogazici University in Turkey, in 2012, more than 30 percent of all government contracts were handed without a bid.

In stark contrast to providing generous business deals, the state levies excessive financial costs against business owners who chose not to be co-opted by AKP. For example, a former media mogul, Aydin Dogan, was billed 826 million liras ($516 million) for taxes and fines in 2009. Similarly, the Koc family, owners of one of the largest industrial conglomerates in Turkey, was fined 65 million liras ($30 million) against its Tofas auto manufacturer in

2013 and 160 million liras ($61 million) against Turkish Petroleum Refineries Corporation (TUPRAS) in 2015.

With clientelism so rampant and publicly evident, why do judicial authorities not take action against perpetrators? Alternatively, why is there little popular reaction to widespread corruption? The logic of this new clientelistic system demands the co-optation of critical actors into AKP's patronage network. Several judicial reforms between 2010 and 2014 allowed AKP to control, manipulate and subjugate the judicial branch to the executive branch. The result is either lack of investigation into allegations of corruption or the undermining of ongoing prosecutions. The graft charges of Dec. 17-25, 2013 illustrate this point.

The popular dimension of the issue reveals two crucial dynamics about Erdogan's new clientelism. The extensive control of the media by Erdogan and the AKP allows for consistently positive coverage in the public and private media outlets. The opposition, by contrast, lacks any serious, or positive coverage, in the same outlets, which bolsters AKP's talking points to win public opinion. Likewise, lower socioeconomic classes tend to depend on the government's subsidized health care or, as Fuat Keyman notes, "free coal, free food, and free primary school textbooks for the poor and disadvantaged segments of society." These subsidies are usually strategically targeted to ensure acquiescence and support from a large segment of the lower income population.

One of the great casualties of this "New Turkey" is the democratic process. The media suffers greatly in the face of governmental pressure: Journalists are being prosecuted and imprisoned at rates that put Turkey among the worst jailers of journalists in the world. Societal and parliamentary opposition is being greatly intimidated and suppressed. Increasing levels of authoritarianism are best illustrated by the excesses of a new partially approved internal security bill, which expands police powers to use "deadly force" against protesters and conduct warrantless searches. Similarly, the intolerance against the opposition reveals itself most recently in the intense public discussions about how the main opposition party, The Republican People's Party (CHP), and the largest bank of Turkey, Is Bankasi (CHP holds a share of the bank), are under threats of shutdown and government takeover, respectively. The domestic woes of the Erdogan regime also translate into a Turkey that is weak and confused in the international arena as illustrated by the hesitancy to face the Islamic State threat on its borders, by its regional isolation and by a marked weakness in attracting international investment, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's recent visit to New York.

This new upgraded clientelistic system, or clientelism 2.0, of Erdogan's is one of the reasons why many Turks did not take issue with widespread reports in the Turkish media that 1 billion euros ($1.3 billion) were stashed in Erdogan's private residence on the day of the first graft probe on Dec.17, 2013. For many Turks who support AKP, Erdogan's "New Turkey" boiled down to either realizing the party goals at all costs or their continued attachment to this extensive network of clientelism.

Turkey is no Saudi Arabia or Iran as far as hydrocarbon resources and rentierism are concerned. Yet, Erdogan's "New Turkey" looks, in some ways, awfully similar to classic cases of rentier states. At its core, both rely on the buying of popular acquiescence and patrimonialism, a form of governance where all power flows from the ruler. The nature of state-society relations and governance remains the same – with the state at the center of societal distribution of benefits – but the key difference between the two is the financial source of the rentier structure. In other words, Erdogan's upgraded clientelism exhibits identical patterns of behavior to rentierism with emphasis on "the allocative function of the state and the circulation of rent throughout the economy over the productive economic sphere."

Those expecting Turkey to remain a democratic regional powerhouse may be forced to revise that assumption in light of this new quasi-rentier clientelism 2.0 system, a system that seeks to erode recent democratic inroads. Not only does Erdogan's power rest on this extensive patronage network, but through his cronyistic relationships with

numerous business owners, the AKP government has found a vast and reliable source of revenue, reducing their reliance on the support of Turkey's citizenry. If Turkey, with its level of economic development and large middle class, is unable to uphold democratic governance in the face of clientelistic challenges, are the forces of traditional patrimonialism too powerful to overcome for the rest of the region?

A.Kadir Yildirim is an assistant professor of political science at Furman University in Greenville, S.C., where he teaches courses on comparative politics, politics of the developing world, Turkish politics and the Middle East. He was previously a postdoctoral fellow in regional political economy at Princeton University's Niehaus Center.

Could Erdogan lose Turkey's upcoming election?

By Yüksel Sezgin, May 19, 2015

With less than three critical weeks left before the June 7 parliamentary elections, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is running out of time and support to realize his dream of "Turkish-style presidentialism."

According to the Turkish constitution, the president is supposed to be nonpartisan, but Erdogan is running his own electoral campaign and touring the country with a Koran in hand. In his public speeches, Erdogan tells supporters that the existing parliamentary system is ineffective and unsuited to transform the country into a world power and therefore the system needs to be replaced with a presidentialist system through the rewriting of the constitution. In order to do that, Erdogan is asking the electorate to give his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) a supermajority of 400 seats – a minimum of 367 seats or 2/3 majority is needed to change the constitution – in the 550-seat national assembly. But in Turkey's current political climate, this goal is out of Erdogan's reach.

In the 2002, 2007 and 2011 parliamentary elections the AKP won 363, 341 and 326 seats, respectively; it has never commanded a 400-seat strong majority, even under Erdogan's premiership. In order for AKP to gain 400 seats, it has to win about 60 percent of the popular vote. Considering that in the 2014 local elections the party gained only 46 percent of the popular vote, the goal Erdogan has set for himself and his hand-picked successor, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, is not a realistic one. Moreover, it is unlikely that AKP will be able to win even 330 seats (3/5 majority) in the parliament – the minimum number of seats required to take the proposed constitutional changes to a referendum.

In order for a political party to secure representation in the parliament it has to win at least 10 percent of the valid votes cast nationally. The current electoral threshold, put in place by the military regime in the 1980s, remains the highest in the democratic world. In the 2011 elections, only three parties were able to pass the 10 percent threshold: AKP, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP). Kurdish parties have never been able to clear the threshold. However, as projected in some recent polls, there is a good chance that pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) will pass the threshold in the upcoming election and win between 50 and 55 seats in the parliament. An HDP victory would likely come at the expense of AKP: The seats

currently held by the governing party in the southeast region would most likely go to the Kurdish party – further denting the AKP's parliamentary control.

In the 2014 local elections, AKP won 46 percent of the popular vote, while CHP won 28 percent and MHP won 15 percent. If HDP clears the 10 percent threshold on June 7 while AKP, CHP and MHP maintain their shares of the vote, the AKP will control approximately 286 seats. Although this would allow the AKP government to remain in power for another term – it takes 276 seats to form a government – it will fall short of Erdogan's 400-seat supermajority and be a major roadblock for implementing a presidential system of government.

This would be one of the better possible scenarios for AKP and Erdogan. There is another possible – but less likely – scenario in which opposition parties increase their share of the vote and the AKP cannot secure 276 seats, forcing them to form a coalition government. Erdogan and Davutoglu seem to be keenly aware of this possibility: In recent weeks both have made public statements warning of the "evils" of coalition governments.

The goal of 400 seats is unreachable, but what about 330 seats? If the HDP falls under the 10 percent threshold and fails to gain representation in the parliament, and both CHP and MHP lose the share of the vote they had in 2014, it is possible that AKP could win 330 or more seats. But this is an unlikely contingency. According to a recent survey conducted by Koc University in partnership with the Open Society Foundation and Ohio State University, from 2014 to 2015 the share of the electorate who believe that the economy was in a state of decline increased from 30 percent to 48 percent. Similarly, about 40 percent of the voters surveyed identify unemployment as the most pressing challenge facing the nation. The survey results also indicate that a growing number of people, including some who supported the AKP in previous elections, think the Turkish political system is corrupt. Moreover, 42 percent of respondents believe that the CHP, the main opposition party, is better suited to address corruption than the governing AKP; whereas only 26 percent believe that AKP is best suited to address corruption. More than half of the voters also reportedly believe that in comparison to four years ago the AKP government's performance has worsened in all but two policy areas: healthcare and urban transformation.

In brief, while the voter confidence in AKP's ability to govern is in steady decline, the electorate's confidence in the competence and ability of the opposition parties to solve Turkey's problems has significantly increased in comparison to the previous eight years. These projections suggest that the opposition parties might actually increase their collective share of the vote, thus making it very difficult for Erdogan's party to secure even 330 seats.

Having won two constitutional referenda in the past (2007 and 2010), Erdogan appears to believe that the public will again rubber stamp his wishes and usher in a new era of "Turkish-style presidentialism." But even if the AKP wins 330 or more seats and brings the constitutional amendment to a referendum, voters may not grant his wishes. Although Erdogan claims that presidential systems are superior to parliamentary systems, according to the Koc survey, only 27 percent of the general electorate and 43 percent of the AKP supporters surveyed agreed. Even though 60 percent of respondents think that the country needs a constitution, 66 percent believe that the constitution should be the outcome of a compromise between the parties. More importantly, only 31 percent of AKP voters surveyed support the idea that the party that holds the parliamentary majority should be able to unilaterally decide on the question of the constitution and government type. Given the public skepticism toward presidentialism and the idea of a new constitution unilaterally imposed by a single party (e.g., the AKP), it is likely that Turkey will continue to remain a parliamentary democracy for the foreseeable future. This will, however, deepen the current governance crisis by worsening the existing principal-agent problems and fuel internal tensions within the AKP that may eventually bring about a split within the ruling party.

Yüksel Sezgin is an assistant professor of political science and the director of Middle Eastern Studies Program at Syracuse University.

Turkey's Kurdish party at the threshold

By A.Kadir Yildirim, May 26, 2015

Turkey's voters head to the polls June 7 in a critical test of the future of the country's democratic system. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), headed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, seems to be on course to win a fourth consecutive victory though, if polls are to be believed, without a supermajority in the parliament. What makes this election different from others in Turkish history is the critical role of a Kurdish party contesting elections for the first time, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). The traditional leading opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) has long positioned itself as the bulwark of secularism in Turkish politics, with an electoral ceiling of roughly 20 to 25 percent. Previous Kurdish parties have solely focused on Kurdish ethnic identity and long-standing grievances and have routinely been banned by Turkish courts, with independents rarely winning more than 5 percent.

This year's election campaign has been different: It is the ruling AKP which has doubled down on religious and ethnic identity issues, while its opponents have scaled back their traditional attention to those concerns in favor of economic issues. The campaign trail has been dominated by the AKP's Erdogan brandishing copies of the Koran proclaiming that he "was raised with Koran and have been living with it" and that the opposition has a "heretical mindset" and "nothing to do with religion." Similarly, Erdogan has provocatively suggested that "Turkey does not have a Kurdish problem" while condemning the Kurdish "peace process" initiated by an AKP government led by Erdogan himself in late 2012. The AKP, in other words, has all but invited its opponents to pursue a secular, anti-religion or Kurdish ethnic identity oriented campaign.

Instead, opposition parties are veering away from identity politics, with the secular-religious divide and (Kurdish) ethnic identity taking backseat vis-à-vis bread and butter issues. Both CHP and HDP have emphasized a minimum wage on the campaign trail, with the CHP proposing a 50 percent increase in minimum wage from 1,000 Turkish liras ($380), per month to 1,500 liras ($569), two annual bonus pension payments and plans for a "mega city" to be the engine of economic production in Turkey. The HDP responded by proposing a minimum wage of 1,800 liras ($683) per month, while drawing attention to issues of corruption, gender equity and environmental protection.

In contrast to previous election campaigns, where aggressively secular or Kurdish electoral platforms alienated conservative Turkish voters, both parties have this year gone out of their way to avoid attacks on religion (CHP) or Turkish identity (HDP). It seems to be working, at least up to a point. According to a public opinion survey by HDP, the electorate, indeed, buys the change in HDP. While the share of voters who would "never" cast their vote for the HDP stood at 85 percent in August 2014, the same figure dropped to 15 percent in March 2015, an astonishing swing in such a short time. Another survey finds that those who want HDP to pass the electoral threshold rose from 18 percent in April 2015 to 50 percent in May. Personal interviews with the electorate support the findings in surveys. The perception of AKP's "invincibility" has begun to fade, as the CHP and HDP chip away at AKP's initial substantial lead in the polls. Recent public opinion surveys suggest that AKP hovers between 38 and 44 percent of the votes – far from its desired supermajority.

The biggest question is whether the HDP can clear the extraordinarily high 10 percent national threshold that the Turkish electoral law requires to win seats in the parliament. If it does, then the AKP's ambitions to consolidate an increasingly authoritarian single party rule would be checked, and Turkey might finally make headway in solving its longstanding Kurdish problem. An HDP which cleared the 10 percent threshold would command a sizable minority representation in the parliament and prove itself as a worthy counterpart in negotiations. It

would also be able to stand against Erdogan's plans to establish a "Turkish-style" presidential system in Turkey.

This is not impossible. Conservative Kurds are moving away from AKP to HDP, especially after the Turkish government's inaction in Kobani, Syria where Kurds faced a horrific fate at the hands of the Islamic State in October 2014 alienated many Kurds. In addition, HDP's liberal discourse is particularly attractive among at least some secular voters who are also concerned about the party's electoral prospects because the failure to clear the threshold would imply a prolonged, and possibly more authoritarian, AKP rule. Many recent polls put HDP above the threshold, usually between 10.4 percent and 11.4 percent, although a number of other polls put HDP below the threshold by a couple of points. HDP needs a slight push from secular Turks in Turkey's west or conservative Kurds in the east who have consistently supported AKP in recent years to secure its parliamentary representation.

If HDP fails to eclipse the threshold, however, surveys suggest that the AKP, and not its rivals, would obtain most of the seats that HDP should have won as the next popular party. The difference between 9 percent and 10 percent for HDP could result in a swing as large as 60 to 70 seats for AKP. This is large enough of a difference to allow AKP to pass a constitutional amendment on presidentialism, with or without a referendum based on other parties' performances. For AKP, keeping HDP below the threshold has become the unexpected key to victory.

This scenario could create its own problems, including possible tensions and violence in the country. Civil unrest and the creation of a "de facto autonomous Kurdish region" within Turkey are the more likely options for an HDP that falls short in the elections. Electoral defeat could also galvanize the HDP's sister party, the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), which commands great presence in local governance across the eastern and southeastern provinces dominated by Kurds. This would likely involve a greater role for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), whose civil society activism and presence in local institutions has grown in recent years and could stand to benefit from the failure of a Kurdish party attempting to play by the Turkish government's electoral rules.

Ultimately what is at stake is the long-running Kurdish question that looms large for many ethnic Kurds *and* Turks in the country. If HDP moves in a direction where "*Türkiyelileşme*" – roughly translated as the process of pursuing "a political future within Turkey" – rather than separatism reigns the party discourse, then the dynamics of the Kurdish question can change dramatically. HDP's move away from a separatist discourse is a major sigh of relief for many. CHP and many in the right side of the political spectrum would be likely to support a peace process within a unitary Turkey framework. The party now adheres to a radical *democratic* discourse to solve the Kurdish question, which not only entails equality on the basis of ethnicity but also gender, socioeconomic status and religion.

In the long run, such a transformation might usher in genuine democratic consolidation in Turkey. On one hand, the Kurdish question's security orientation is likely to change significantly. The decrease in the uncertainty surrounding the Kurdish side's ultimate goals should allow better prospects for finding a political solution to the problem. On the other hand, public opinion has been a major concern for political parties as far as engaging in a political solution to the Kurdish issue goes. The trust deficit in terms of the Kurdish movement's ultimate goals has permeated the nationalist mood that rules over the majority of the Turkish population. The move away from separatism on the Kurdish issue will enable non-Kurdish parties to have a freer hand in dealing with the Kurdish question. All of this depends on whether HDP manages to clear the fateful 10 percent threshold on the June 7 elections.

A.Kadir Yildirim is an assistant professor of political science at Furman University in Greenville, S.C., where he teaches courses on comparative politics, politics of the developing world, Turkish politics and the Middle East. He was previously a postdoctoral fellow in regional political economy at Princeton University's Niehaus Center.

How the Kurds upended Turkish politics

By Kimberly Guiler, June 8, 2015

Turkish voters delivered a crushing blow Sunday to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which lost its 12-year majority in parliament and saw its vote share drop from 50 percent in the 2011 general election to 41 percent. Although the party still earned a plurality of votes in the election, the result has all but doomed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ambition to rewrite the Turkish constitution and transform his office into a super-presidency, consolidating his grasp on power.

The elections also represented a significant victory for the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), which passed Turkey's required 10 percent electoral threshold, increasing its vote share from 6 percent in 2011 to nearly 13 percent. HDP broadened its appeal by reaching out to secular and liberal Turks, especially those who coalesced during anti-government demonstrations in 2013. In addition, the party appears to have attracted former Kurdish AKP supporters, who had become disheartened by Erdogan's increasingly hostile attitude towards the Kurdish peace process and disillusioned by widespread corruption and extravagant spending on the part of Erdogan and his inner cadre.

Voters who defected from the AKP may have also been responding to Turkey's deteriorating economic situation. The country's growth rate, which was 7.5 percent per year on average between 2003 and 2006, decreased to 2.58 percent by the end of 2014. On April 24, the Turkish lira reached a record low of 2.742 against the U.S. dollar, and levels of foreign direct investment have also been on the decline. These economic issues have been amplified by the erratic behavior of Erdogan, who has been interfering with the independence of regulatory bodies in an effort to determine central bank interest rate policies ahead of the election.

HDP was able to capitalize on mounting dissent by emphasizing a rights-based platform and urging the electorate to vote strategically. In particular, the party's campaign materials argued that a vote for HDP was a vote against the presidential system and against a single-party AKP government. One campaign poster read, "In this election, a vote for HDP does not have to be a vote for those who comprise HDP. In such critical elections, voters can vote strategically. The most fruitful, most assured and shortest road for those citizens who want to get rid of the AKP and Erdogan regime is to vote for HDP and to help HDP pass the threshold."

Although Turkey's Kurdish population expressed jubilation over the election results — setting off fireworks and waving HDP's flag in the streets of the primarily Kurdish city of Diyarbakir on Sunday evening — other voters in Turkey appear conflicted, if not angered, over the result. HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas's post-election speech, in which he openly thanked Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) founder Abdullah Öcalan, set off a wave of incensed comments across social media as some Turkish voters wondered whether HDP's assurances regarding inclusivity and democracy were just empty promises.

In coming days, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu will be tasked with the job of forming a coalition government. Turkish law stipulates that if a coalition is not formed after 45 days, Erdogan will be able to call for a new election. Pundits are already predicting that an early election is likely, as the leaders of the major parties have all stated in public speeches that they will not form a coalition government with the AKP.

Interestingly, whereas the AKP was able to form a single-party government in 2002 with only 34.28 percent of the vote, today the party will be unable to do so with a greater percent of the vote. The AKP's unlikely rise to power in 2002, despite its relatively small share of the vote, occurred after all existing parties but two failed to pass the electoral threshold. As editor of the English-language Hurriyet Daily News Murat Yetkin shrewdly pointed out, the AKP may have been a victim of its own dependence on the unfair

10 percent threshold rule. If the threshold had been lowered to 5 or 7 percent, argued Yetkin, the AKP still would have been prevented from adopting Erdogan's presidential system, but its parliamentary majority would have been salvaged.

Whatever the result of the forthcoming coalition negotiations, one thing is clear: Erdogan and the AKP no longer have the enthusiastic, broad-based popular mandate the party enjoyed during its heyday. At the hands of the Kurds, we may finally be witnessing the beginning of the end of Erdogan.

Kimberly Guiler is a PhD candidate in government at the University of Texas at Austin.

Will Turkey's recent election send the country back to the politically turbulent 1990s?

By Emre Erdoğan and David L. Wiltse, June 12, 2015

For more than a decade, Turkey has experienced a historic period of political stability, with the Islamic-based Justice and Development Party (AKP) governing alone for 13 years. That's a sharp contrast to the turbulent period between 1991 and 2002, during which Turkey endured four general elections, nine confidence votes and six prime ministers.

But Turkey's era of single-party governance ended this week, when the AKP took only 41 percent of the vote in June 7 parliamentary elections — 18 seats short of a majority. Three other parties were voted in: the two nationalist parties, Republican People's Party (CHP), with 132 seats, and National Movement Party (MHP), with 80 seats; and the pro-Kurdish Democratic Peoples' Party (HDP), with 80 seats. If these four parties fail to build a governing coalition within 45 days, a new election must be scheduled. Can they do it, and if so, how?

Coalition negotiations in the next few weeks will give us a good idea about what Turkish politics will look like in the next few years. What will each party demand in order to be included in a governing coalition: some of the material spoils of power, shared policy priorities, or some other goal?

Political science research into how European democracies have formed governments has given us theories that may offer insight into Turkey's next government. There are two principal groups of coalition formation theories. *Policy-blind theories* based on game theory assume that parties are interested in getting into power — and therefore focus on the number of seats required to form a minimum winning coalition. *Policy-seeking theories* assume that actors enter a coalition to achieve their preferred policies, in which members of the winning coalitions have similar policy preferences or ideological positions. The parties in Turkey have two main options in forming a government, since none want a new election:

Negotiate based on policy aims and political similarities. This will be difficult, given sharp differences among these parties and years of increasing polarization and enmity.

Return to 1990s-style politics, in which coalition negotiations and governance focus on dividing the spoils of political power.

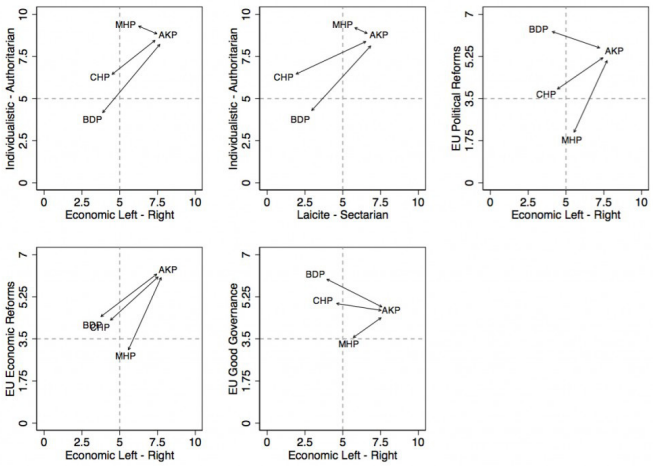
To imagine how they might follow the first course, one first has to make sense of Turkey's ideological landscape — which is not simple.

One way to try to identify the policy preferences of political parties involves estimating each member of parliament's ideological position. Toward that end, we, along with Evren Celik Wiltse, are developing a "scaling method" that gives numerical scores to legislators' ideologies based on their parliamentary votes. That's complicated by the fact that, according to our calculations, an average Turkish member of parliament (MP) is absent for 56 percent of roll calls, almost double the rate in other Western democracies, with significant variation across political parties. Opposition parties use abstention as a strategic tool. This abstention issue makes commonly used methods such as NOMINATE or IDEAL inapplicable in Turkey. (We will be writing more about our methods in a forthcoming paper.)

We found that MHP parliamentarians are most likely to vote with the AKP, especially on such critical issues regarding secularism, gender roles and other social values. The CHP and HDP have more cohesive voting patterns within their parties, and both are further from the AKP's party mean than the MHP.

However, there is still considerable distance between the MHP's and AKP's ideologies, particularly on issues that rouse the MHP's fervent nationalism. AKP positions on joining the European Union and on Kurdish reconciliation are two such issues. Though the MHP and AKP may vote together more often than any other party, differences on those two points may create an impasse in coalition negotiation.

To visualize the proximity between the parties on several key policy areas we have placed the parties' positions using data from the 2010 Chapel Hill Expert Survey. In these graphs, the length of the lines represents the policy distance between parties — which you can see on different issues. On the issues of secularism and the role of authority in society, the MHP and AKP are close.



Turkish political party positions on key issues. Data comes from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. (Figure: David L. Wiltse)

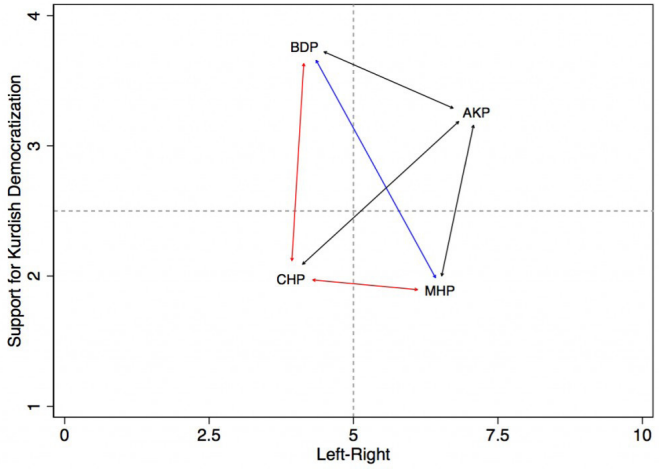
The distances between parties grow as we move into other critical issues. Since the 1990s, Turkey has hotly debated whether or not to join the E.U., which would require profound political, cultural, and economic reforms. Both the HDP and AKP have favored the liberalization that joining the E.U. would require, believing that would help their constituents. From their points of view, the necessary reforms would offer an opportunity to reverse certain constitutional provisions that they feel hinder religious and cultural rights.

But the nationalist parties have been skeptical. The CHP fears challenges to key founding principles of the Turkish Republic. Of central concern are statism, nationalism and secularism. The MHP shares those concerns but is deeply wary of a dilution of the ethnic Turkish identity that it sees as the *raison d'etre* of the unitary Turkish state.

All the minority parties have generally opposed the economic changes required to join the E.U., defending statist economic principles, while AKP was moving ahead with economic reforms over the past 13 years. Finally, the broad subject of "good governance" shows a cluster of AKP, CHP and HDP support, with the usual MHP opposition to joining the E.U. In sum, the controversial reforms required for E.U. accession and the issues lurking beneath them make forming a coalition even more complicated.

The most divisive issue is Kurdish reconciliation. Using survey data, we estimated each party's position based on its supporters' opinions. The graph below shows each parties' constituencies' support for the "Kurdish reconciliation process" versus a left-right scale. The AKP has made several controversial concessions to the Kurdish population in recent years by removing language restrictions, opening Kurdish broadcasting and making political inroads into the Kurdish southeast -- virtually all of which have been adamantly opposed by the nationalist parties. As the graph shows, the AKP's supporters stand at equal distance from the HDP and the MHP, with those parties at opposite poles.

The Kurdish issue is perhaps the most important issue that stands in the way of an AKP-MHP coalition. This suggests that the AKP has an opportunity to build a government reaching out to either the MHP or HDP. But the choice is deeply consequential: continue with Kurdish reconciliation moving toward HDP, or reverse course by effectively killing the program to win support of the MHP. However, neither scenario is likely to produce a stable coalition.



Support for the Kurdish reconciliation process, by Turkish political party. Data: Hakan Yılmaz and Emre Erdoğan. (Figure: David L. Wiltse)

Given all this, can a coalition emerge by the deadline — and if so, what would it look like? There's no possibility that the three minority parties could form a coalition; the ethnic nationalism of the MHP and Kurdish orientation of the HDP are mutually exclusive. And the policy differences between the parties will make negotiation tough should it take place on purely programmatic terms. A return to the 90s and the ideologically odd, patronage-based coalitions that emerged in that era would seem to be a possibility, as would the accompanying instability.

What might be a better option that could save the country from a return to the 90s is for a minority government to take seat. Minority governments occur when a party agrees to vote for a prime minister and cabinet, but doesn't participate in government. This has been used elsewhere in the world in similar situations. In the Turkish case, this would most likely happen with MHP support.

Minority governments aren't unprecedented in Turkish political history, but they've generally been used after a coalition has fallen apart, acting as a "caretaker." This would be especially advantageous for the MHP given its history and its 80 parliamentary seats. As second party in the economically disastrous 1999 DSP-MHP-ANAP coalition, the MHP lost all of its seats in the 2002 election.

In today's questionable economic environment and with corruption controversies surrounding AKP ministers and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, this would allow the MHP to take a strong role in policymaking, yet avoid the responsibility and potential costs that would come with a formal role in the government. The critical question is whether they would forgo the patronage that would flow from control of a few ministries.

Critically, this would be a key test of whether Turkish parties have moved beyond the previously volatile neo-patrimonialism toward a more democratic expression of the people's mandate.

Emre Erdoğan is an associate professor at Istanbul Bilgi University and founder of Infakto Research Workshop. David L. Wiltse is an assistant professor at South Dakota State University and formerly a lecturer at Hacettepe University in Ankara.

Previous Election Issues

How an election may undermine democracy in Turkey

By Aaron Stein, March 21, 2014

On Dec. 17, swarms of Turkish police, acting at the behest of prosecutors known to have links to the Gulen movement, arrested the sons of three cabinet ministers and at least 34 others for graft. The move signaled the definitive end to the alliance of convenience between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Fetullah Gulen, the U.S.-based Imam who presides over a global movement of followers dubbed the Hizmet (or Service) movement.

In response, the Gulen movement has leaked numerous audio recordings online that purportedly implicate Erdogan, his family, and many of his closest advisers in corruption. The recordings have rocked Turkish politics and have prompted Erdogan to rely heavily on nationalism, political polarization, and questionable legal tactics to frame the allegations as a massive conspiracy aimed at forcing him from power. Erdogan has since directed the bureaucracy to purge members of the police force of suspected Gulen sympathizers, sidelined the graft probe's prosecutors, and is believed that have played a direct role in the government's recent decision to shut down access to Twitter. In doing so, Erdogan has sought to transform the March 30 local election into a referendum on his tenure as prime minister, and, by extension, to use populist electoral tactics to absolve him of graft allegations.

To ensure that a criminal case is not pursued, Erdogan is resorting to "strongman" tactics that are eroding the foundation of Turkey's democratic system. While the Gulenists' use of leaked audio recordings are far from perfect, their recent actions are a reflection of Erdogan's previous willingness to use them to advance his own political interests, regardless of the rule of law.

According to political scientist Joel S. Migdal, "strongman" leaders operating in "weak states" sometimes have an incentive to weaken the bureaucracy to ensure that rival political actors don't accrue the tools and power needed to overthrow them. They therefore have a perverse incentive to weaken certain elements of the bureaucracy, while favoring others. Erdogan has used this tactic before, but, in a significant contrast from the present, the Turkish prime minister previously used the Gulen movement to weaken his main political enemy, the military, and other Kemalist strongholds in the bureaucracy.

The alliance has never been all that cozy and the rash of audio recordings that have since leaked clearly indicate that the Gulen movement had been making preparations to defend itself, should its alliance with the AKP falter. Nevertheless, after the 2002 election, Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Gulenists had an incentive to cooperate. The two Islamist movements, despite having different political aspirations/worldviews, had a shared incentive to further liberalize Turkish society and to curb the power of the military. And, in order to do so, both needed to gain more political power.

After the AKP narrowly avoided being closed down for alleged "anti-secular activities" in 2008, Erdogan and his allies launched a judicial counter offensive spearheaded by the same Gulen allied prosecutors who had launched the recent AKP graft raids.

The two trials, known as Ergenekon and Balyoz, were originally intended to curb the power of Turkey's "deep state" – and by extension, the military, and other Kemalist secular strongholds like the constitutional court – but eventually grew to include well-known critics of the AKP and Gulen on trumped up charges of terrorism/coup plotting. The evidence for the Balyoz trial hinged on electronic documents that technical analysis has since shown was digitally altered. Nevertheless, the court sentenced 300 military officers to lengthy prison sentences.

Yet, while the AKP certainly succeeded in curbing the power of Turkey's military, it did so through the use of a bureaucratic proxy that posed an indirect challenge to

Erdogan's authority. Thus, after the military had been marginalized, Erdogan soon faced a new political threat, that he himself helped create. And, like other leaders before him, he had a choice: accept the status quo and try to appease the Hizmet – which would thereby have created a non-AKP allied power center in the bureaucracy – or work to curb the movement's influence. Erdogan opted for the latter over the former. A clash was inevitable.

To counteract the Gulenists' influence in the judiciary and police force, Erdogan has since taken steps to bring the judiciary under his indirect control, moved to tighten the state's control over social media, and has increased the power of Turkey's intelligence agency – which is headed by a close political ally. Yet, just like in the case of Ergenekon and Balyoz, the tactics are at odds with established democratic procedure, and thereby erode the AKP's stated intention of strengthening Turkish democracy.

Nevertheless, Erdogan has championed the ballot box as the final arbiter of all that ails Turkish politics. Yet, in doing so, Erdogan is practicing majoritarian politics in an increasingly polarized political climate. Thus, as Turks prepare to vote in local elections this March, an AKP victory in key cities like Ankara and Istanbul could spark further anti-government protests. To counteract such a possibility, the government is certain to take more steps to ensure that the right to peaceful protest is further encroached upon.

And, when paired with the likely leaking of more recordings, Erdogan is sure to deem it necessary to further increase his hold over the government bureaucracy. Thus, even while Erdogan appears to have calculated that increased political polarization is the key to electoral success, it has come at a steep price for Turkish democracy.

While the AKP's poll numbers may only decrease by a few percentage points (or perhaps not change at all), it will soon be faced with the prospect of governing an incredibly fractured electorate, and a sizeable minority who may deem Erdogan to be illegitimate. The scenario suggests that Erdogan may continue to resort to the strongman tactics he has been using to try to stifle dissent, both inside the bureaucracy and on the streets. And, more broadly, how elections can have "anti-democratic" implications.

Aaron Stein is a PhD candidate at King's College London.

Turkey's silenced spring

By N. Turkuler Isiksel, March 24, 2014

With less than two weeks to go before municipal elections in Turkey, the Turkish telecommunications authority ordered a ban on access to Twitter. The move came just hours after a speech in which Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, promised his government would "root out Twitter and all that."

This is the latest move in the AKP government's sustained and insidious campaign against freedom of speech in Turkey. Turkey's record on civic and press freedom has never been stellar, but under Erdogan's rule, the persecution of journalists, publishers, NGOs, academics and assorted critics took on the character of a personal vendetta. For a leader who served a prison term for reciting a political poem, these curbs on the freedom of expression are particularly ironic.

Despite his hostility to the microblogging platform, Erdogan himself espouses a kind of minimalism, that is, toward democracy itself. "Minimalist democracy" is not a term invented by the Turkish prime minister to justify his government's infringements on civil and political liberties in Turkey. It is a term of trade in democratic theory, originating in the thought of 20th century economist Joseph Schumpeter. Schumpeter understood democracy to be "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote." His minimalist conception is prominent among policy-makers, political scientists and public intellectuals. For instance, the widely used Polity dataset of political regimes takes the existence of open and competitive elections as the criterion for coding whether a country is democratic. Polity considers Turkey to be a "competitive multiparty democracy" with a relatively high democracy score of 7 out of 10.

As its name indicates, minimalist democracy is appealingly parsimonious. It demands little more than the procedural device of a fair electoral system that guarantees each citizen a vote. For minimalists, elections have no metaphysical qualities. They do not give voice to "We the People," divine the common good, convey a shared sense of justice or forge a mandate. Elections (and democracy itself) are simply a way to pacify politics: The prospect of an electoral victory gives malcontents an incentive to settle their disagreement by voting rather than fighting. The prospect of a peaceful alternation of power, so the story goes, gives "losers" of any one round of elections a strong incentive to stay in the "game" (e.g., not stage a coup) in the hope of mustering an electoral majority in the next round. Similarly, it gives "winners" an incentive to refrain from unpopular actions (e.g. corruption, incompetence, widespread persecution) lest they lose their electoral majority in the next cycle.

And indeed, the AKP government plays by the minimalist rule book. Erdogan understands democracy to mean one very simple thing: government elected by a popular vote. He views neither constitutionally guaranteed rights -- among them, freedoms of speech and information -- nor institutions such as the separation of powers and checks and balances, to be integral to a democratic system. Instead, he believes that the state should be turned over lock, stock, and barrel to whoever wins the largest percentage of the vote in a general election. Until the next round of elections produces a different winner, the ruling party is entitled to restrict civil rights, muzzle the press, pack the judiciary with supporters and amend the constitution, all without forfeiting its democratic credentials.

These political tactics, though repressive, do not amount to large-scale violations of Turkey's notoriously authoritarian constitution. There is no evidence that Erdogan's party has rigged elections. Opposition parties do exist; they can campaign freely and contest elections. For these reasons, the minimalist democrat would greet Turkey's woes with a

shrug: When political mismanagement becomes egregious enough, the electorate will "throw the rascals out."

And yet, this is precisely the problem. Given Turkey's tanking economy, the government's violent suppression of the Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013, and a recent corruption scandal implicating ministers in Mr. Erdogan's cabinet, along with the Prime Minister himself, we would expect the AKP to suffer in the municipal elections on March 30. However, opinion polls suggest that the AKP's share of the popular vote in major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara remains secure. Audiotapes that allegedly reveal Erdogan's orders to his son, Bilal, to hide their clandestine stash of foreign currency have barely moved the prime minister's sky-high popularity ratings.

Part of the reason for this is that, as Turkish journalist Yavuz Baydar noted in a New York Times op-ed, the AKP has ruthlessly curbed the free flow of news and information in Turkey. The government controls news organizations by threatening the business interests of media moguls, initiating prosecutions and levying administrative penalties against them. In a series of wiretapped phone conversations released last month, the prime minister is heard instructing a TV news producer to yank ongoing coverage of an opposition leader's criticisms of his party, who dutifully follows his orders. In the wake of the Gezi Park protests, several high-profile journalists, columnists and editors who insisted on reporting on the events were sacked. As a result, news outlets have long since stopped reporting on events that cast a negative light on the government. (Mr. Baydar himself has since been fired from his job as ombudsman for the daily Sabah newspaper.)

Although these draconian curbs do not prevent Turkey's young, urban, educated elite from mobilizing against the government, they do curtail the free flow of information to vast segments of the electorate who rely on TV and newspapers as their primary source of news and information. There, critics of the AKP government have been portrayed as foreign agents, saboteurs, anarchists, coup conspirators or worse. In the run-up to election season (municipal elections on March 30 will be followed by the first-ever popular elections for president on Aug. 10), the lack of unhindered, professional news reporting has enabled the AKP government to consolidate its self-serving political narrative.

And there's the rub. The mobilization of an effective opposition, on which the minimalist theory of democracy relies, presupposes a thriving sphere of political debate. By drastically curtailing the free circulation of information (of which the Twitter ban is the latest episode) and ensuring that no criticism of his government can be aired on mainstream news outlets, Erdogan has cut off vital circuits of public debate and opinion-formation. Freedom of information and speech, in turn, rely on the existence of constitutional guarantees, an independent judiciary and an effective system of checks and balances. The happy event of an alternation in power, which minimalists seize on as the hallmark of democratic rule, cannot occur without a whole host of fragile institutions to sustain the otherwise childishly simple device of the vote. Minimalist democracy, it seems, is too minimal to be democratic.

For now, Turkey seems doomed to play out this tragic paradox. Because Erdogan believes that democracy consists only in elections, Turkey may not see a peaceful, electoral alternation of government in the near future. As it turns out, you can't spell "democracy" in 140 characters or less.

Turkuler Isiksel is an assistant professor of political science at Columbia University.

Erdoğan's next moves

By Gonul Tol, April 2, 2014

Turkish citizens went to the polls for local elections on March 30 to decide on far more than new mayors. After recent corruption investigations implicated members of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's family and cabinet amid censorship scandals, they also voted on the future of Erdoğan. According to unofficial results, Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) received 45.6 percent of the votes – up 5 percent from the last local elections – with its principal challenger, the Republican People's Party (CHP), more than 16 percentage points behind.

Erdoğan's strong showing, despite the corruption allegations against him supported by Fethullah Gulen, his former ally and leader of the Islamic Gulen movement, has puzzled his domestic opponents and the international community. Erdoğan's domestic rivals went to the polls with high hopes of dealing a significant blow to his 12-year rule. Fueling their optimism was not only the corruption allegations and Gulen rift, but the anti-government movement, which has been simmering since the June 2013 protests. Yet Sunday's result appeared to mark the latest in a long line of defeats for the prime minister's secular, conservative and liberal opponents.

Several factors account for the failure of Erdoğan's competitors to pose a significant electoral challenge to his leadership.

After the tension between the AKP and the Gulen movement came to a head in December 2013, when prosecutors believed to be members of the Gulen movement initiated a raid on dozens of individuals allied with Erdoğan, including the sons of three ministers and an AKP mayor, over corruption charges, Fethullah Gulen mobilized his media, his supporters within the police force and the judiciary to weaken the prime minister. He called for his supporters to vote for the second party after the AKP in each district, which left his base with two options: the secular CHP and the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP). Gulen's call seems not to have resonated with his supporters, who are skeptical of the secular CHP and do not see eye to eye on major issues with the MHP, making the AKP the only option.

The CHP also failed to mobilize a larger anti-AKP voting bloc than its traditional base. Hoping to ride on the fissure in the Gulen-AKP alliance, the CHP allied with the Gulen movement and attacked Erdoğan with Gulenists' illegally wiretapped recordings. The CHP's alliance with the Gulen movement and its uncritical use of illegal wiretappings might have alienated potential newcomers who harbor deep resentment toward the movement due to its alleged role in the Ergenekon case, which led to the imprisonment of dozens of military figures, Kemalist intellectuals, and activists to the party base.

Yet the most significant factor behind the AKP's strong standing in local elections is the economy. Corruption is prevalent in Turkey, but voters tend to punish politicians for corruption only when the economy is perceived to be doing poorly. After a volatile 1990s, the AKP has presided over steady high growth and modest inflation. Despite the slowdown in economic growth over the past year, Turkish voters seem to credit the government for the economic development and relative stability that have marked the nearly 12 years of its rule.

Regardless of the factors behind the AKP victory, the win could have broad implications for Turkey's turbulent political landscape. Erdoğan is likely to interpret the result as a popular seal of approval, and will assert his authority even more strongly in a power struggle continuing into this summer's presidential election and next year's parliamentary elections. After being targeted by Gulen supporters within the judiciary and the police force, Erdoğan's first move will be to root out Gulenists within the state and target businesses and civil society organizations close to the

movement. That Gulenists allegedly posted a recording on YouTube of a secret meeting of security officials about possible intervention in Syria right before the elections has given such action new urgency.

Erdoğan is likely to give up his long-held dream of becoming Turkey's first directly elected president in favor of purging Gulenists from state institutions, a mission that requires full control over the party. He will likely seek to alter his party's term limit rules to run for a fourth term as prime minister in 2015, and will let President Abdullah Gul seek reelection in August.

A renewed mandate will also strengthen Erdoğan's hand in the Kurdish peace process, an ongoing government-led initiative aimed at ending the three-decade conflict between security forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Facing the most challenging time of his 12 years in Turkish politics, Erdoğan walked a thin line on the eve of the elections, appealing both to Kurds and Turkish nationalists within his base. In an effort not to alienate nationalists but to keep the peace process moving, the Turkish government unveiled a reform package that addressed Kurdish demands halfway. The peace process stalled, but that might now change. Erdoğan may revive the process to address the domestic and regional challenges that the Kurdish issue has posed and secure a Kurdish alliance against his domestic opponents in the run-up to the general elections.

Further, Erdoğan had been dragging his feet on normalizing relations with Israel before the municipal elections, since such an action is highly controversial among his Islamic grassroots supporters. Now that local elections are over, he might take a step toward repairing Turkish-Israeli diplomatic ties to reclaim Turkey's tarnished image in Western capitals.

But that might take more than exchanging ambassadors between Ankara and Tel Aviv. To revive Turkey's stalled European Union membership bid, reclaim the country's leadership role in the Middle East and reassure Washington of his democratic credentials, Erdoğan needs to undo the damage that Turkish democracy has suffered from illegal wiretapping and breaches against the rule of law and freedom of expression. The latest election results show that he has considerable political capital to do so.

Gonul Tol is director of the Center for Turkish Studies at the Middle East Institute.

'No Opposition, No Democracy' in Turkey's elections

By Lisel Hintz, April 3, 2014

After local elections on March 30, Turkish opposition figures are up in arms, claiming to have incontrovertible evidence of widespread voting fraud and calling into question the institutional integrity of Turkey's electoral system for the first time in recent history. While criticized for many other democratic deficiencies since the establishment of the republic in 1923, Turkey has generally been recognized by the international community as holding free and fair elections. The majoritarian victories and even consistent electoral gains of the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, or AKP) over the last three general elections were accepted as legitimate. Unprecedented as they were, these election wins were understood mainly as approval of the tangible benefits available to AKP supporters during Turkey's period of sustained economic growth and general political apathy or lack of a credible alternative among its opposition rather than as any kind of electoral foul play.

As opposition members presciently suggested before last Sunday's elections, however, growing indicators pointed to AKP's attempts to tilt the votes in its favor, no matter the cost. Independent news reports confirm what thousands of poll station volunteers have been tweeting and posting, circumventing the government's already highly criticized bans on Twitter and YouTube to document instances of ballots pre-marked for the AKP, votes for opposition parties discarded, massive registration irregularities, armed attacks on opposition supporters and vehicles, and voting by undocumented Syrian refugees incentivized by AKP groups. For the quantitatively inclined, preliminary analysis of voting in the hotly contested mayoral race in Ankara, for example, demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between ballot boxes with greater numbers of invalid votes and ballot boxes favoring the AKP. Many more ballots were recorded for the main opposition Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, or CHP) at polling stations in Ankara than were registered at the Supreme Election Board, and election monitors claim that the ballot box used by Ankara's CHP candidate Mansur Yavas contained zero votes for his own party. Clearly, something is newly amiss in Turkey's elections.

What went wrong this time?

A proximate cause might be the corruption investigation – also unprecedented in Turkey's history in terms of scale and scope – initiated in mid-December 2013 and unfolding online like the soap opera serials for which Turks are famous, with a new, secretly recorded transcript leaked and immediately going viral nearly every evening. The content of the alleged recordings ranges from discussions between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his son about how to hide massive amounts of cash (which Erdogan dismissed as a "montage" fabricated by his enemies rather than disputing outright the nature of the discussion) to Erdogan's haranguing a newspaper owner to the point of tears over his publication's critical coverage of the AKP's Kurdish strategy. In a would-be-laughable-except-it's-terrifying case of "Wag the Dog," the Turkish foreign minister, national intelligence chief, and deputy chief of the general staff allegedly discuss the ease of justifying an intervention in Syria through provocative military operations.

Following thousands of reshufflings in the police and judicial institutions that were spearheading the corruption investigations – and believed by Erdogan to be trying to sabotage his party's electoral chances at the behest of former ally and now rival Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen – the shutdown of Twitter and YouTube demonstrated yet again how far the government would go to maintain its vise-like grip on power. Like many of the government's recent efforts to crack down on opposition, however, its move to deny social media access to an Internet-saturated population proved both useless and embarrassing. Princeton-based Turkish economist Dani Rodrik tauntingly tweeted that his 84-year old mother

was back on Twitter 30 minutes after access was blocked: "No sweat."

Turkey's tech-savvy teyzes (elderly women) aside, a corruption scandal alone seems insufficient in accounting for the magnitude of electoral manipulation observed. And why now? Corruption, in various forms, has long been a mainstay of Turkish politics across the ideological spectrum. While the center-right AKP's preferred moniker of "AK Parti" – or "pure party," as ak means "white" or "clean" in Turkish – was deliberately used by its supporters to connote a new party tradition of clean politics, the sweetheart deals to supporters and other corrupt practices emerging from the leaked tapes may confirm what critics suspected about the shady foundations of Turkey's recent economic development and particularly its construction boom. However, that doesn't seem to diminish the loyalty of its faithful following. There's initial exit polling evidence to suggest that the corruption scandal had no substantive effect on voting behavior of either (still significant) supporters or dissenters.

A more plausible explanation of Turkey's electoral sham lies in the evolving nature of its opposition, a continuously shape-shifting entity that Erdogan and his party can neither understand nor control. While opposition parties struggled to contest the AKP's growing power during much of its rule, the Gezi protests – which began the summer of 2013 as a small environmental movement and exploded across the country following viral images of police brutality against peaceful protesters – unleashed a tidal wave of simmering resentment against the government's increasingly authoritarian practices and opened up new channels of political participation. Turkish youth in particular, many of whom previously showed little interest in politics, but also women, Alevis, LGBTs, staunch secularists, and millions of others rallied in protest against the AKP's patronizing and even demonizing treatment of those who opposed it. Peaceful demonstrators during the Gezi protests were called delinquents, looters, and terrorists, and accused of disgraceful actions such as attacking and urinating on a veiled woman and drinking alcohol in a mosque – all of which proved to be false.

More recently, demonstrators mourning the death of 15-year old Berkin Elvan, who was hit in the head by a teargas canister as he went to buy bread during the protests, were called necrophiliacs. This repeated "othering" behavior by the AKP, far from delegitimizing and demoralizing its critics, has instead fostered a sense of solidarity among otherwise disparate segments of Turkey's society. How long this solidarity in opposition formed during Gezi will last is unclear, but it currently serves as a basis for mobilization with which the AKP continues to prove inept at handling, seen in this week's violent dispersal of those gathered outside the Supreme Election Council to demand recounts.

Kedi lobisinin başkanı konuştu. Emri ben verdim!

Not just the mobilizational power but also the spirit of Gezi pervades objections to electoral manipulation, defying the AKP's attempts to snuff it out. The wickedly humorous wit and creativity used to critique the AKP's brutal police crackdowns that drove millions of people to the streets during the height of the Gezi protests in 2013 are being deployed in full force to delegitimize the handling of the elections. The symbolic animal of choice this time around – in place of Gezi's penguins, which were displayed to protest CNN Turk's showing of a penguin documentary while CNN International broadcast live images of police violence in Istanbul's Taksim square – is the cat, referencing a comment by Turkey's energy minister that a cat entering a power distribution center was to blame for power outages during ballot-counting. With electricity

cuts delaying, and arguably distorting, procedures in over a third of all provinces, satirical memes depicting maps of cats' pervasive mobilization across the electoral map and cats appearing stunned to be accused of such actions effectively mock both the ridiculousness of the excuse and, at a deeper level, the fickle nature of the rule of law in Turkey. Cat-themed critical humor has spread from social to traditional media, with a "cat lobby" meme published in Turkey's most widely read English newspaper poking fun at the tendency of the AKP government to blame its many problems on nefarious international "interest lobbies" working covertly to prevent Turkey's rise as a great power.

From foreign spies to terrorists to necrophiliacs, being in the opposition camp in Turkey doesn't look pretty. This delegitimizing rhetoric appeared again during the elections, with Erdogan deeming opposition forces "worse than Assassins," referring to medieval groups that would murder their rivals to produce instability. It is this factor – the absolute unwillingness by Erdogan and his government to attribute legitimacy to any form of opposition – that best explains the electoral manipulation Turkey is experiencing. For a prime minister who declared to those objecting to his style of rule during Gezi: "We will see at the ballot box," there was no room for allowing an opposition he can't comprehend or respect to take the seats of power in key cities such as Ankara and Istanbul. His victory speech, vowing that those who opposed him will "pay the price," was positively chilling in this respect.

On a larger scale than the electoral irregularities and their ongoing contestation, it is this larger issue of legitimacy of opposition, and the knee-jerk reaction of demonizing anyone that defies or disagrees with the AKP's will that poses the greatest obstacle to democratization in Turkey. To be sure, Turkey has struggled, and continues to struggle, with issues such as minority rights, freedom of expression, free press, gender equality, and other fundamental components of democracy since the establishment of the republic in 1923. Now more than a decade into the 21st century, some advancements have been made under AKP rule – such as increased religious expression for Sunni Muslims in the public sphere – but the simultaneous undermining of previously established rights and freedoms suggests the AKP seeks to institutionalize a regime that tailors rules and institutions to suit its own values rather than be representative of – or even listen to – Turkey's entire electorate.

The AKP government's behavior in the run-up to and aftermath of the 2014 local elections is indicative of a much broader and deeper problem. There is a colloquial Turkish expression – olmazsa olmaz – meaning that if a component of something is missing, then the "something" itself just can't be. It denotes a prerequisite of sorts, a typical Turkish example of which might be "No melon and white cheese, no raki meal." It's simply not a meal at which you would drink raki if the other elements were missing. This brings to mind a phrase well known to political scientists that sums up the Turkish case: No opposition, no democracy.

Lisel Hintz is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at The George Washington University and is currently a visiting research fellow at Bilkent University in Ankara.

Framing the Electorate: The Roles of Kurds, Women and Islamists

Turkish women's rights beyond Islamists and secularists

By Yüksel Sezgin, December 10, 2014

On Nov. 24, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced at a women's rights conference that he did not believe in gender equality because it contradicted the laws of nature. Erdogan's comments angered many people within and outside Turkey, who accused the president and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government of misogyny. Secular critics of Erdogan and his party argue that women's rights have regressed in Turkey under the 12 years of AKP rule since 2002. They are right about the scope of the problems facing Turkish women today, but wrong to blame those deeply rooted problems only on Islamists.

Turkey before the 2002 election of the AKP was no feminist utopia. In 2001, under the rule of a secular coalition government led by the social democrat Bulent Ecevit, Turkey ranked only 81 out of 175 countries in the United Nations Development Program's Gender-related Development Index, which measures the gender gap in human development in terms of health, education and income. Turkey lagged behind not only the Western European democracies but also such Muslim-majority states as Saudi Arabia (68), Lebanon (70), Jordan (75) and Tunisia (76). Similarly, according to the UNDP's 2001 Gender Empowerment Measure, which captures inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making, Turkey ranked 66 out of 70 states, again coming behind such countries as Namibia (29), Botswana (31), Malaysia (45) and Pakistan (58).

In pre-AKP Turkey, about one in 10 women in the east lived in polygamous marriages (despite the prohibition of polygamy since 1926), and about 200 girls and women every year were killed by close relatives in the name of protecting "family honor." In July 2001, the social democratic-led coalition government passed a regulation requiring female nursing students to undergo virginity tests before being admitted into their studies. Merve Kavakci, a democratically elected member of parliament, was expelled from the National Assembly because her head was covered. To prevent Kavakci from taking oath with her headscarf, Ecevit, the left-leaning prime minister at the time, chanted from the podium "put this woman in her place!" Such was the "place" of women in Turkey before the AKP ascended to power.

The first AKP government under Erdogan's premiership was actually cause for some hope among many Turkish women. In 2004, Erdogan's government passed a new penal code greeted by many as an important step toward gender equality and protection of women's sexual and bodily rights. It criminalized marital rape, eliminated the old penal code's patriarchal and gender-biased language and imposed a number of measures to prevent sentence reductions traditionally granted by Turkish courts to perpetrators of honor crimes. In August 2012, the AKP-controlled parliament also adopted a new domestic violence law.

Despite these positive legislative initiatives, things have not improved on the ground. Indeed, Turkey has become one of the worst countries in terms of violence against women. For example, between 2002 and 2009, the murder rate of women skyrocketed by 1,400 percent. Since 2002 about 7,000 women have been murdered in Turkey. According to official figures, in 2013 alone, about 28,000 women were assaulted. As many argue, Erdogan's sexist policies and perpetuation of machismo culture are largely responsible for the country's rampant gender-based violence problem.

Nor has economic growth offered significant improvements. According to the UNDP, Turkey's GDP per capita income (in 2011 purchasing power parity terms) rose from $13,090 in 2000 to $18,167 in 2012. In other words, there was about a 39 percent increase in per capita income over a period of 12 years – the last 10 years of which were under AKP rule. According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap

Index, in 2013 Turkey ranked 123 out of 136 countries in terms of women's participation in the labor force with only 30 percent. In comparison, the ratio of female participation in the labor force in neighboring Greece was almost double at 59 percent.

On the same index, Turkey ranked 103 in terms of women's political empowerment. In the 2011 parliamentary elections, 22 percent of seat victories on the AKP list went to women, compared to 17 percent of the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP) list victories. In the last municipal elections, of the 662 city and borough mayoralties won by the AKP, only six were won by women. CHP's results were a little better but still shamefully low: of 186 mayoralties won by the party, only seven went to female candidates. When it comes to women's empowerment, Turkey's Islamists and secularists have a lot to learn from the Kurdish Peace and Democratic Party (BDP) – 23 of 83 mayoralties the party won in the last elections went to female candidates.

What is more, according to the UNDP, economic expansion did not translate into better health and education opportunities for Turkish women. In 2002, Turkey ranked 70 out of 169 countries on UNDP's GDI. In 2007, about five years after AKP came to power, Turkey was still 70 on the GDI index, even though its rank on the Human Development Index improved from 88 to 79 over the same period. In 2008 on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII, a composite index that replaced the earlier GDI and GEM) Turkey ranked 77, while in 2013 it ranked 69 out of 187 countries. Over the same period, Turkey's HDI rank also improved from 83 to 69. Despite an overall increase in income and access to education and health care, the Turkish government has largely failed to improve the status of women and reduce persisting gender inequalities, especially with respect to women's participation in the labor force and political empowerment.

While this sorry record reflects poorly on the AKP governments, it should not be used to forget the long history of struggles for Turkish women. Turkey was one of the worse places in the world to be a woman before the AKP, and it still is today.

Yüksel Sezgin is an assistant professor of political science and the director of Middle East Studies Program at Syracuse University.

Different faces of Turkish Islamic nationalism

By Senem Aslan, February 20, 2015

On Dec. 17, 2013, Turkish prosecutors started a corruption investigation into the activities of the sons of three ministers of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, businessmen close to the government, and bureaucrats. The corruption allegations later included then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan after wiretapped telephone conversations between Erdogan and his son about hiding large sums of cash were leaked on the Internet. The prosecutors were believed to be followers of Fethullah Gulen, an Islamic scholar who lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania.

The scandal exposed a conflict between two longtime Islamist allies, the AKP and the Gulen movement, which has rapidly reshaped the Turkish political scene. Many analysts have argued that the rift emerged from a power struggle. Erdogan was threatened by the growing influence of Gulenists within the state while the Gulenists were concerned about Erdogan's increasing authoritarianism and personalization of power. While there is certainly something to this, there are also deeper reasons for the schism. The AKP-Gulen conflict also resulted from an ideological clash about the nature of the relationship between Islam and Turkish nationalism.

The AKP, which has ruled Turkey since 2002, is typically described as a moderately Islamist party. The less well-understood Gulen movement is Turkey's most influential and internationally active religious network. The community refers to itself as the Hizmet (service) movement, encompassing a large commercial, media and education network, inspired by the teachings of Fethullah Gulen. Although Gulenists portray themselves as members of an apolitical, civil movement, this image is misleading. The movement has been an influential player in Turkish politics since the late 1980s. In the 2000s, it openly allied with the AKP government, supporting a number of its key policies, most importantly the weakening of the power of the military and secularist judiciary. Many have alleged that the Gulenists have come to dominate many cadres in the state bureaucracy, particularly the police and the judiciary, making them a significant political force to reckon with in Turkish politics. Today the AKP government accuses the movement of forming a parallel organization within the state to capture state authority. Since the corruption probe the government has purged hundreds of alleged Gulenists from the cadres of the police and the judiciary.

In the past decade, scholars have noted the rise of a different conception of Turkish nationalism, called Muslim or Islamic nationalism, which has led to a transformative shift in the official state discourse. The AKP and the Gulen movement share some broad tenets of Muslim nationalism. Challenging the secular and Westernist character of Kemalist nationalism, they emphasize Muslim identity as the key element in defining Turkishness. Accordingly, the ideal Turk should have a strong moral character informed by Sunni Islamic values. They criticize Kemalist nationalists for being elitist and imitative, forcing people to change their authentic selves in the name of Westernization. Muslim nationalists endorse this strong discourse of victimhood and present themselves as the genuine representatives of the Turkish nation. Building on this sense of victimhood, they hold Kemalist nationalists responsible for Turkey's loss of status in the international arena, attributing it to the defensive and inward-looking character of Kemalist nationalism. Instead, Muslim nationalists imagine Turkey to be a major world power, guided by an assertive and ambitious foreign policy that rests on building Turkey's soft power and economic strength. They associate national pride with economic success and desire that Turkey play a leadership role, particularly in the Muslim world.

Such commonalities aside, there have been significant disagreements between the AKP and the Gulen movement. It is true that these two groups' nationalist

discourses can be fluid, and at times multi-vocal. Unlike the Gulen movement, the AKP is subject to the pressures of electoral politics. The Gulen movement's discourse can be inconsistent, partly because what its representatives say or do in their "window sites" can differ from what they say or do in private. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the broad points of contention.

The most important difference between the Gulen movement and the AKP is that while the first advocates an ethno-cultural understanding of Turkishness, the latter prioritizes Muslim identity over ethnic identity. Fethullah Gulen is a leading advocate of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, endorsing the view that Turkish Islam is unique and superior to the Islam of other ethnic groups. According to this view, Islam did not come to the Turkish world from the Arabs but came to Anatolia from Central Asia by way of Sufi dervishes. This Sufi connection makes Turkish Islam more moderate, tolerant and open to interpretation and change than the Arab and Persian forms of Islam, which are more prone to radicalization. Gulen emphasizes the importance of Turkey's cooperation with the Central Asian countries to create a strong Turkic world. In his schools that are spread all around the world, his followers try to familiarize their students with Turkish-Islamic morality and culture, teaching them the Turkish language and history. In Gulen's writings and the movement's spectacles, such as the Turkish Language Olympiads, the central emphasis has been on exalting and praising the culture of Turkish Anatolia.

For the AKP, on the other hand, the main points of reference are Ottoman and Islamic history. The AKP's symbolic capital rests heavily on Ottoman and Islamic references as seen, for instance, in the official celebrations of the conquest of Istanbul or the prophet Muhammad's birthday. The AKP's nationalist view downplays the role of ethnicity. It does not emphasize a hierarchy of nations within the Muslim world and does not contain a critical discourse about other Sunni-Muslim ethnic groups. In that sense, the AKP holds on to a more universalist-Islamist perspective. It is nationalist because it imagines a Turkey-centered Muslim world but the Muslim identity is more dominant in its conception of the Turkish nation than a unique Turkish ethnic identity. Erdogan's special interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and his outright support of activists who tried to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza in violation of Israel's naval blockade in 2010 were informed by his Muslimhood-centered nationalism. In contrast, Gulen criticized the initiative for violating Israel's sovereignty. The disagreement between the AKP and Gulen in fact first revealed itself during the Gaza flotilla crisis.

This divergence in their nationalist perspectives has important implications for their relations with minorities in Turkey, particularly the Kurds. While both groups use the discourse of Muslim brotherhood as a bond between the Turks and the Kurds, the AKP has endorsed a more pragmatic approach toward the resolution of the Kurdish problem. In his speeches, particularly those in the Kurdish provinces, now-President Erdogan frequently brings up the concept of citizenship, downplaying the discourse of ethnic Turkish identity. The AKP government's recognition of many Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights and its negotiations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have faced the Gulen community's opposition. What crystallized the rift between the two former allies were their clashing views about the Kurdish question. The movement has been much less compromising toward Kurdish nationalism. The movement sees the resolution of the Kurdish conflict through the recognition of Kurdish linguistic rights (with elective Kurdish classes in schools) and the provision of more social services to the Kurdish areas but stops short of any negotiations with the PKK and its affiliated groups. It refrains from forming relations with Kurdish nationalists and supports military solutions to end the insurgency. The pro-Gulen television channel, Samanyolu, is noted for its militaristic and nationalist TV series. Because of its heavy emphasis on Turkish nationalism, the Gulen movement has not been popular with Kurdish activists. Many believe that the movement was behind the mass arrests of pro-Kurdish activists. Starting in 2009, thousands of journalists, politicians, mayors and publishers were arrested because of their alleged membership in the KCK, the urban, political wing

of the PKK. While the movement has opened several schools in Turkey's Kurdish southeast as well as in Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region, Kurdish activists have perceived these schools as institutions of assimilation.

Unlike its relations with the Kurds, however, the movement has had closer relations with the leaders of Turkey's non-Muslim minorities, such as the Greek Orthodox and Jewish communities. Since the 1990s, the movement's Journalists and Writers Foundation has organized meetings on interfaith dialogue, bringing religious minority leaders together. The Gulen movement's public face has nurtured a discourse of religious tolerance and engagement and boasted of helping non-Muslim communities solve their daily problems resulting from social prejudices.

The AKP, on the other hand, has had a more distanced relationship with Turkey's non-Muslims. Despite pressures from the European Union, it refrained from addressing the major problems of Turkey's non-Muslim minorities. While it undertook legal reforms to ameliorate the institutional autonomy and property rights of non-Muslim minorities, it dragged its feet to enforce these changes. Particularly at times of political challenge, the spontaneity and ease with which the AKP's rhetoric can take an anti-Westernist, anti-Christian or anti-Semitic tone underline the stronger weight of its Islamist tradition. The defiant, conspiratorial discourse of Erdogan, accusing the West, Zionists, secularists and non-Muslims during and after the 2013 Gezi protests, and his derogatory remarks about Jews and Armenians have recently made hate speech against non-Muslims more visible and ordinary in the public space. For example, in an interview, Erdogan stated: "Let all Turks in Turkey say they are Turks and all Kurds say they are Kurds. What is wrong with that? You wouldn't believe the things they have said about me. They have said I am Georgian. Excuse me, but they have said even uglier things. They have called me Armenian, but I am Turkish."

The analyses of Muslim nationalism in Turkey have largely ignored the conflicting trends within the Islamic discourse about Turkish national identity. Like Kemalists, Muslim nationalists have not been coherent and monolithic nor have they necessarily endorsed a more inclusive understanding of Turkishness. The two main constructions of Muslim nationalism have been exclusivist and intolerant of diversity, but in different ways. How the conflict between the movement and the AKP will be resolved is still not very clear. But the way it is resolved and the upcoming general elections in June will have serious implications for Turkey's democracy, social peace and relations with minorities.

Senem Aslan is assistant professor in the Department of Politics at Bates College. She is the author of "Nation-Building in Turkey and Morocco: Governing Kurdish and Berber Dissent" *(Cambridge University Press, 2014).*

Turkey's secularization in reverse?

By Kristin Fabbe, February 9, 2015

Critics of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have long voiced suspicion that the party harbors a "hidden agenda" of "Islamizing the state." Those concerns have been inflamed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly repressive governing style at home, regional support for the Muslim Brotherhood and the allegedly ambivalent response to the rise of the Islamic State, whose violent bid to resurrect a caliphate is pressing up against Turkey's south eastern borders. What does the claim of "Islamizing" the state actually mean, however? A closer look at two key sectors – the Directorate of Religious Affairs and education – provides a window for analyzing such claims.

The AKP's efforts in these two sectors also intersect with its increasingly acrimonious power struggle with the Gulen movement. The followers of the exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen constitute a large and influential religious community in Turkey. The movement originally helped bring the AKP to power, long supported its politics and was instrumental in using its supporters in the police and the judiciary to launch a barrage of court cases starting in 2007 that helped to cement the AKP's dominance. The cracks in the Gulen-AKP alliance began to surface in February 2012, when pro-Gulen prosecutors attempted to subpoena Hakan Fidan, the head of the National Intelligence Organization and a close Erdogan confidant. In November 2013, Erdogan hit back by announcing his plans to abolish Turkey's vast network of cram-schools (*dershaneler*), an educational system dominated by Gulen's sympathizers and an important source of the movement's revenue. The Gulenists then unleashed a corruption probe targeting a number of AKP members that came dangerously close to Erdogan himself. Throughout 2014 Erdogan intensified his rhetoric against the Gulenists, accusing the movement of creating a "parallel state" and attempting to foment a coup. The year was marked by waves of AKP retaliation against Gulen affiliates in the judiciary, police, media and even financial sector, culminating in December 2014 with government raids and arrest warrants for 31 of the movement's alleged members on terrorism charges.

While there is no doubt that Erdogan often justifies political maneuvering through an appeal to religious attachments, this is hardly unique in Turkey's history. Although officially "secular" in name as based on the constitutional principle of "*laiklik*," the Turkish state has never been secular in sense of being "neutral" toward religion. Since the establishment of the Turkish republic, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which was created to operate directly under the control of the Office of the Prime Minister, has maintained a firm grip on the production of an officially sanctioned version of Sunni Islam.

The Diyanet was at its weakest during the Kemalist heyday of the 1920s and 1930s, though President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's government still made nominal appeals to Sunni institutions, elites and attachments. Kemalism is typically thought of as synonymous aggressive secularization, though in practice the Kemalists created a protected place for official Islam under the purview of the state. The Kemalists tasked religious elites at the Diyanet with producing modern Turkish translations of the Koran and other sacred texts, as well as publishing sermons for use in mosques across the country in an effort to create a sacred-synthesis between religion and nation. Today, under Law 633 (last updated in 1965), the Diyanet has a mandate to "operate affairs related to belief, worship, and moral principles of the Islamic Religion, enlighten the public about religious issues and administer places of worship." In practice, this means that the Diyanet is responsible for the creation of sermons and mandatory school textbooks on religion as well as staffing mosques and Koran courses.

Many observers claim that the AKP has expanded the Diyanet's authority and reach since taking executive power through elections in 2002 (and further consolidating power

in 2007 when the AKP's Abdullah Gul succeeded Ahmet Necdet Sezer as president). Is this true? One often cited statistic is the increasing number of civil servants working for the Diyanet under the AKP's tenure. Others point to the Diyanet's massive annual budget, which was approximately 4.5 billion Turkish lira (around $2.1 billion) in 2013 according official statistics.

Both of these claims need to be put into historical perspective. According to research by Nihat Ayturk, Yasar Celik, and Enver Sahinaslan published in the Diyanet's official journal (*Diyanet Dergisi*) the number of Diyanet employees also rose considerably in the three decades between the political opening of the late 1940s and the 1980 military coup, from approximately 1,200 to 50,000 individuals. Consistent Diyanet personnel data from 1980s until the present has been more difficult to locate; but this is the data needed to put any more recent personnel increases in proper perspective. Regarding the Diyanet's budget, Istar Gozaydin finds that from 1993 until 2008, the Diyanet's funding remained fairly consistent relative to other government expenditures. Indeed, since as far back as 1951, Gozayadin tracks that the Diyanet's share of the state budget has held fairly steady between 0.5 and 1 percent. I find that the most recent statistics do not deviate much from the trend Gozaydın identifies, with the Diyanet having approximately 1.1 percent of the overall government budget in 2013.

This is not to say definitively that the AKP has not or will not use the Diyanet as a political tool. Problems could arise if the AKP decides – and is able – to leverage the Diyanet as a political weapon against the Gulen Movement. A 2003 wikileaks cable noted that the cooperation between the AKP and the Gulenists "dovetails at the Diyanet and other elements of the bureaucracy." One of these "other elements" was the judiciary, which has since been torn asunder by the Gulenist-AKP power struggle. In a rare and lengthy televised interview with the Turkish media on Jan. 31, Diyanet President maintained that the organization remained "above politics," though he also lamented that many of the Diyanet's imam-civil servants had recently lost their jobs after having been sucked into the political fray.

A second prong in the claim that the AKP is "Islamizing" Turkey is the highly publicized controversy regarding the government's alleged expansion of the Imam-Hatip schools, which nominally provide Islamic "vocational education" (*mesleki egitim*). The New York Times recently called this the "latest front in Turkey's cultural wars," in which the AKP has "gradually injected religion into public life over the past 12 years in an effort to reshape Turkish society."

The number of Imam-Hatip schools, which were originally created at the founding of the republic with the expressed purpose of training religious functionaries, has waxed and waned since the 1920s as the result of complicated changes in vocational and overall education policy. The schools were closed between 1930 and 1948 and were then gradually reinstated in 1949 (together with elective religion courses in state schools). The number of Imam-Hatip schools grew steadily throughout the 1950s and even increased after the "secularist" military intervention in 1960. This growth continued for well over three decades: Imam-Hatip students made-up 2.6 percent of the overall secondary students in 1965, growing to 8 percent in 1985 and 10 percent in 1997. Policies carried out by Turkey's military government in the 1980s also firmly secured religion's place in "regular" public schooling when it included article 24 in the new constitution, obliging all students to take religion classes from grades four through twelve.

Given the long historical lineage of the Imam-Hatip system and state-sponsored religious education, observers should perhaps worry less about the Islamization of state education and more about how the imminent closure of cram-schools and other Gulenist schooling institutions will shape the overall educational and political landscape. Many Imam-Hatip teachers and students are believed to sympathize with the Gulenmovement and a number of public school teachers – both in the Imam-Hatip and "regular" public school system – have supplemented their income for years by working at cram-schools after hours. The AKP's assault on Gulenist infrastructure could thus have unpredictable ripple effects across education and politics. According to a bill passed in parliament in the spring of 2014, the cram-schools will either have to shutter their doors or covert

themselves to state monitored private schools by September 2015. Cram-school teachers who lose their jobs are being promised a place in the state system, though it is unclear how the state plans to absorb affiliates of a movement that it is simultaneously trying to purge.

In Turkey, unlike the Arab world, opposition to the state has rarely taken a strong religious form. Turkey has also been largely immune to the influence of Salafi-style religious ideologies. The question is whether or not this could change given recent domestic divisions, which are not between Islamists and secularists as Turkish politics is often cast, but amongst Islamists with pro-regime and anti-regime politics. There is also the issue of whether the Gulenist-AKP split may force other religious orders (*tarikatlar*) to take a more definitive political stance, thereby shaping the upcoming 2015 general elections.

Kristin Fabbe is an assistant professor in the department of government at Claremont McKenna College.

The rift between the AKP and Gulen movement in Turkey

By Ramazan Kilinc June 17, 2015

On May 29, 2015, the Turkish government seized Bank Asya, an Islamic bank that was founded by the followers of the Gulen movement. This seizure, which came just a week before the parliamentary elections, was part of an 18-month-long political feud between the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the Gulen movement, a social Islamic movement led by US-based Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen.

When prosecutors initiated a corruption probe that rocked the AKP government and led the resignation of four ministers in December 2013, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the prosecutors, whom he thought were affiliated with the Gulen movement, of staging a coup against the government in collaboration with international powers, particularly the US and Israel. Since then, the government has implemented a number of repressive policies to weaken social and economic basis of the Gulen movement.

Although there had been previous ideological differences between the AKP and the Gulen movement, nobody expected that the dispute between them would go this far. Historically, the Gulen movement focused its attention on education and charity and distanced itself from politics. The movement denounced political Islam and supported the center right parties throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

In the 2000s, however, the movement supported the AKP for two reasons. First, by denouncing political Islam and coming up with the ideology of conservative democracy, the AKP offered itself as a center-right political party. Second, the military intervention in 1997 threatened both groups, and the prospect of weakening a common enemy brought these ideologically different Islamic groups together.

Once the AKP consolidated its power through three consecutive parliamentary elections in 2002, 2007 and 2011, the relationship between the two actors started to deteriorate. After 2011, the AKP focused its attention to change the system to a Turkish-style presidential system that would give the president expansive powers. Erdogan ambitiously sought to rule the country without having to find a consensus with other political and civil actors.

Especially after the Gezi protests which started in the summer of 2013 as a backlash against government's plan

to construct a shopping mall in a city park in Istanbul, Erdogan increasingly turned to authoritarianism and grew contemptuous toward any criticism of his government. The government's increasing intolerance toward critical viewpoints brought to surface the differences and tension between the AKP and the Gulen movement.

Erdogan's repressive policies against the Gulen movement rested on four pillars. First, the party used its control of business and media to discredit the movement. The businessmen who financed the movement faced several government tax audits. The AKP used pro-government media, formed through monetary contributions from the cronies that received big businesses from the state, to discredit the movement. Media controlled by the Gulen movement has faced government intimidations through police raids, the arrest of journalists and accusations of terrorism and treason.

Second, the government had a witch-hunt against the movement. Arguing that the Gulen -affiliated bureaucrats constituted a parallel state within the state and had staged a coup against the government in December 2013, the state reassigned or dismissed thousands of bureaucrats. The government went even further to close down the Turkish Police Academy with the assumption that many graduates were affiliated with the Gulen movement.

The AKP government also stigmatized Gulen-affiliated schools in Turkey. Erdogan asked his electorate to withdraw their children from these schools. The decade-old Turkish language competition programs that the movement organized with the support of the Turkish parliament had to change its venue from Turkey to other countries just because Erdogan did not allow the competition to be performed in Turkey. Erdogan even lobbied against the movement in his foreign visits and pressured countries to close down Turkish schools abroad run by the movement.

Third, the government passed new bills to increase its oversight over the judiciary in an effort to invalidate corruption charges against the government and to discredit the Gulen movement through judicial activism. The government amended the law on the constitution of Higher Council on Judges and Prosecutors and formed a new council composed mostly of the members closer to the government. The government, through newly-instituted courts with pro-government judges and prosecutors, started new investigations against the Gulen affiliated journalists accusing them of being part of a terrorist organization. The government declared Gulen a terrorist and requested that the US deport him.

Finally, the AKP government employed the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) to justify its policies and to demonize the Gulen movement. Through the use of state resources and benefits, the government got the loyalty of other Islamic communities. Right before local elections of 2014, presidential elections of 2014 and parliamentary elections of 2015, the pro-government religious groups ran full-page ads in the newspapers supporting the government. Similarly, thanks to its control over the mosques in Turkey, the Diyanet gave sermons during Friday prayers that supported the political positions taken by the government. This cooperation between the government and other Islamic communities increased isolation of the Gulen movement within the conservative circles in Turkey.

The new alliance between the state and other Islamic communities shifted the priorities of the AKP government as well. While the AKP justified its policies in reference to conservative democracy in the first decade of 2000s, its focus has shifted toward populist Islamism in the recent years. In contrast to its strong support to the EU membership in the past, the AKP leadership and their media supporters have employed a new discourse that emphasizes the importance of Erdogan and Turkey for the Muslim world.

Populist Islamism had two basic tenets to persuade its supporters. First, the AKP pointed out how the party brought religious freedoms such as the removal of the headscarf ban in public offices. By highlighting these freedoms, the party threatened the electorate of a return to the past when there were limitations for the manifestation of religious beliefs in the public sphere if the party lost its

public support. Second, the party emphasized its pro-Islamic foreign policy, such as helping Syrian refugees, supporting Palestinians and increasing the discourse around pan-Islamism. In addition, supporters of the government used conspiracy theories and portrayed any critical actor against the government as a traitor and collaborator with the international powers. In this regard, the Gulen movement was portrayed as the Trojan horse for the US and Israel to undermine the increasing presence of the Islamic discourse in Turkey and beyond.

How does the rift between the AKP and the Gulen movement influence democracy in Turkey? The events in the last two years ended the alliance between Islamic groups but opened an opportunity for further dialogue between secularists, Kurds, Islamic social movements and some liberals. This contributed to a pluralist democracy that Turkish people aspire to have.

What brought the AKP to power in the early 2000s was a social coalition that gathered around the party to counter bureaucratic authoritarian institutions. Turkey experienced several reform packages and became closer to the EU membership. However, the 2010s brought another crisis for democracy. This time, Erdogan, by increasing executive control over judiciary and legislative, attempted to create a new authoritarianism around his own personality. In the wake of the June 7 elections, a new social coalition seems to have emerged to stop the new tide of authoritarianism and the rift between the AKP and the Gulen movement has contributed to the fermenting of this coalition across religious and secular lines.

Ramazan Kilinc is an assistant professor of political science and director of the Islamic Studies Program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Neoliberal Islam and emergent forms of social service provision in Turkey

By Gizem Zencirci, September 29, 2014

The study of Islamic social services generally relies on one of two analytical frameworks that attribute Islamist advantage either to political strategy or religious culture. The political strategy framework assumes that Islamist movements use social service provision as a medium for distributing clientelistic favors and acquiring electoral support. In this view, Islamists are seen as having an advantage due to their success in creating and consolidating patron-client networks. The second framework, in contrast, attributes the success of Islamist social service provision to religious-cultural reasons. In this perspective, Islamist advantage is attributed to their presumed cultural affinity with religious notions of need, charity, and poverty.

In contrast to these dominant perspectives I advocate for an economic explanation that takes into account both how Islamist movements benefit from processes of neoliberalization, as well as how neoliberal technologies of poverty governance have been incorporated into Islamist social service provision. Thus, I suggest that the Islamist advantage neither stems exclusively from political strategy or religious culture, but rather is the outcome of the successful blending of neoliberal ethics and religious values.

The Turkish case is illustrative of this phenomenon. Since the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power in 2002, the Turkish welfare regime has acquired both neoliberal and Islamic characteristics. This neoliberal-

Islamic welfare regime is marked by the incorporation of market logics into the financing of assistance programs, the selection of eligible recipients and the distribution of monetary and in-kind assistance to the poor. The success of Islamic social service provision in Turkey cannot be understood without paying attention to the complexities of neoliberal Islam.

Justice and Development Party and the Reconfiguration of the Turkish Welfare Regime

The Turkish case also helps us understand how Islamists reshape national welfare regimes when they move from opposing the state to being the state. Because alternative social service provision by Islamist movements are a constitutive element of their public legitimacy, understanding how these movements act when they become responsible for national welfare policy is important.

One of the reasons behind JDP's ongoing success has been its ability to create a cross-class coalition between the rising Muslim bourgeoisie and the poor. By combining a commitment to free market principles with a dedication to Islamic social values, the JDP has garnered support among large segments of the Turkish population.

JDP's variant of Islamic neoliberalism was also instrumental in its reconfiguration of Turkey's welfare regime. On the one hand, the JDP eliminated the public benefits system that characterized the country's pre-existing developmental welfare regime. For example, the 2004 Law on Social Security and General Health Insurance introduced incentives for the provision of specific health services and insurance programs by the market. On the other hand, social assistance programs which targeted the poor expanded. In 2004, the JDP transformed the previously existing Social Fund (which was created in 1986) into a Social Solidarity and Mutual Assistance (SSMA) Ministry. The number of SSMA foundations (public welfare offices) increased and they were given more responsibility. In addition, the JDP encouraged the creation of SSMA associations (private charity organizations) that were expected to assist the state in social service provision even if they were legally part of the NGO sector. As a result, many Islamic associations began to focus on social service provision instead of political activism. Further, the state endorsed a moral language which encouraged charitable giving. By referencing Islamic religious values and glorifying the Ottoman heritage of social generosity, the JDP sought to channel the philanthropic donations of the new Muslim bourgeoisie toward the provision of social services.

This social assistance-based welfare regime integrated market ethics with religious values at various stages of the poverty alleviation process.

Financing Assistance

Although JDP's neoliberal welfare regime was largely and somewhat paradoxically funded by public funds, private Islamic philanthropy also played a key role in financing social service provision. Islamic business firms often donated food, clothing, and monetary funds to public and private welfare organizations. In addition to these large-scale donations, which either consolidated already existing business-political relationships or confirmed those that are in the making, many welfare organizations also collected smaller donations from the Turkish public. To this end, many organizations began to use humanitarian advertisements. These charitable ads juxtaposed visual representations of the ideal poor, such as the elderly, women, and orphans with slogans of brotherhood, solidarity, and goodness. In addition to participating in national and transnational *kurban* (sacrifice) campaigns, prospective donors could choose from a plethora of relief and developmental projects (e.g., building schools, hospitals, wells) organized in a number of Muslim countries including Niger, Sudan, and Palestine. The goal of these charitable projects was to appeal to the religious sensibilities of the new Muslim middle classes who struggled to balance the moral dilemmas of pious wealth. In such a conjuncture, generosity became a venue for self-fulfillment and not just a religious duty performed in order to become closer to God.

The Deserving Poor

In contrast to traditional Islamic charity, which assumes that the needy do not have prove their status in order

to be assisted, under the new welfare regime acquiring information came to be seen as the proper way to determine whether an applicant was truly deserving of assistance. The collection, analysis, and cataloging of information about the poor began as soon as a person applied for aid. As part of their application, each potential recipient was expected to provide a number of documents such as a cover letter, a completed application form, a photocopy of one's national ID card, and a *muhtar*[1]-issued poverty certificate, etc. These documents were filed under the personal folder of each applicant, which were then handed to "social investigation" teams – ad hoc groups consisting of a mix of volunteers and workers who conducted home visits in order to determine whether or not the applicant's household situation matched the information on his/her file. Social investigation teams observed the conditions of the household, asked questions, and took extensive notes during these visits. Each team was provided with a "Social Investigation Form" that included questions to be asked to each applicant. Decisions about whether or not, and if so what type of assistance would be provided was decided via social investigation. As a technique of eligibility, social investigation focused on finding the truth about poverty because as one volunteer put it, "Applicants were known to lie." These concerns about truthfulness lead to the institution of a new information system, Social Assistance Information System (SOYBIS), which centralized information about each applicant that received social assistance from state welfare foundations. Presented as a model that would bring "service with one-click," SOYBIS aimed to make sure that applicants would not be able to falsify their information in order to collect assistance from a variety of organizations. These new technologies of determining deservingness made the poor an object of state surveillance, thereby transforming social assistance into a new technique for disciplining the poor.

Distributing Assistance

In addition, new technologies for distributing social assistance also emerged. First, since charitable giving traditionally skyrocketed during the month of Ramadan, many supermarket chains began to offer "Ramadan packages." The package system reformed the religious practice of giving to the poor during the month of Ramadan. These packages generally included imperishable food items such as grains, pasta, rice, and canned goods. These packages could be purchased for between 25 and 50 TL (12 – 25 USD) depending upon the generosity of the individual donor. Ramadan packages were also used by welfare organizations. Both during the month of Ramadan and the rest of the year, organizations frequently distribute food boxes by packaging goods donated by Islamic business such as supermarket chains.

Despite its popularity, the package system came under scrutiny because it was argued to constrain individual agency: the recipients had no say in what would be included in the food boxes. In order to address this shortcoming, the "social market" was invented. The social market is a collection of rooms usually adjacent to public welfare offices and private charity organizations. These rooms were set up in a market-like manner. Shelves mounted on the room's walls carried clothing items, shoes, and food. Most social markets also included shopping carts, a barcode system and checkout counters. The market-like character of social assistance distribution was argued to enhance the "freedom" of recipients who could pick and choose what they really need instead of receiving "hand-outs."

In short, the Turkish case illustrates that pro-market values have transformed the terrain of Islamic social services in novel ways. In response to the key questions of this workshop, I would argue that the Islamist advantage neither exclusively stems from effective political strategy nor can be merely attributed to a cultural affinity with "indigenous" values. Rather, Islamists have been effectively able to adjust their social services within a market-oriented conjuncture by bringing Islamic values and neoliberal ethics in alignment. Future research into this topic might explore how Islamic movements negotiate pro-market and anti-market understandings of charity, need and poverty, and how these movements might continue to provide social services without adopting neoliberal technologies of governance.

Gizem Zencirci is an assistant professor of political science at Providence College.

1 *Muhtar* are the elected heads of neighborhoods and villages.

Kurds, state elites, and patterns of nationhood in Iraq and Turkey

By Serhun Al, March 5, 2015

Today, both Iraq and Turkey falter with the dilemma of accommodating their Kurdish populations into the common national community on the one hand and preventing any current and future risks of territorial loss and ethnic violence on the other. Turkey's limping peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Iraq's unsteady relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) reflect the unintended consequences of these states' nation-building strategies in their post-Ottoman eras. While modern Iraqi national identity was mostly affiliated with Arab identity by state elites throughout the 20th century, the monolithic construction of Turkish national identity lacked any space for the expression of Kurdish identity in the public sphere. As the gradual partition and the final demise of the Ottoman Empire occurred amidst wars and conflicts over identity claim-makings by a variety of external powers and internal communities, the quest for an appropriate nationhood has become a question of ontological (in)security for the post-Ottoman state elites in Iraq and Turkey.

Thus, the cycle of construction, persistence, and change of modern Iraqi and Turkish national identities, particularly in relation to the competing modern Kurdish identity, entails analytical and theoretical exploration in the sense of revealing what actually motivates state elites in accepting or rejecting an identity category other than the one defined by the state. Challenging the conventional *security versus liberty* dichotomy as a mutually exclusive policy options in dealing with minority identities, this article argues in a macro-historical trajectory that the logic of state elites in Iraq and Turkey in granting liberty for the Kurdish identity has also been primarily motivated by the state security. Thus, liberty itself has functioned as an instrument for the security of the state in the sense of protecting the territorial integrity and preventing future anti-state uprisings.

Post-Ottoman Iraq and Two Visions of Nationhood

Historically, there have been two major competing visions of Iraqiness. The first is Iraqi patriotism (*wataniya*), which is more favorable to cultural diversity since it promotes an overarching Iraqi identity without prioritizing the Arab culture, history, and language. This approach crosscuts group identities such as Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis in order to strengthen a sense of belonging to the Iraqi state rather than to a particularistic collective group. The second vision of Iraqi nationhood is based on Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya*), which envisions a homogenous nation by placing Arab identity as the dominant marker of the state in addition to the pan-Arab unity with other states in the region.[1]

During the British mandate (until 1932) and under the monarchical rule (1921-1958), Iraq was governed by the Arab Hashemite dynasty, which primarily idealized an (Sunni) Arab state especially through the means of public education and army.[2] The ruling elites of the Iraqi monarchy were intermittently challenged by tribal Kurdish opposition such as the Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji uprisings in the 1920s and the Kurdish revolt by Mullah Mustafa Barzani in 1943 that later led to the foundation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946. These anti-state challenges reinforced the securitization of Kurdish identity on the one hand and the concern for the security of the state on the other.

It was only after the regime change in 1958 under the leadership of General Abd al-Karim Qasim who established the republic that patriotic Iraqi identity was endorsed. The new constitution of 1958 recognized Kurds

1 Eric Davis (2005). *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

2 Eli Amarilyo (2015) "History, Memory and Commemoration: The Iraqi Revolution of 1920 and the Process of Nation Building in Iraq," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51:1, 72-92.

and Arabs as the equal partners of the Iraqi state. This paradigmatic policy change toward Iraqi nationhood was not independent of the transnational context of other anti-colonial liberation movements as it was in tandem with socialist worldviews in the bipolar world of the Cold War.[3] Due to this anti-colonial nature of the new regime, pan-Arabists also showed some support to Qasim. However, their reference of national development was Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt whose policies were fostering pan-Arab unity as seen in the short-lived United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria (1958-1961). On the other hand, Qasim and his core coalition of power consisted of Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), Kurds and other non-Arab communities who were not in favor of pan-Arabism.[4]

Despite the inter-ethnic euphoria of the 1958 revolution, the rule of Qasim was far from stable and sustainable since pan-Arabists, especially through their influence in the military, functioned as veto players to the development of Iraqi patriotism. Besides, demands for Kurdish autonomy by KDP would hardly find support from pro-Qasim supporters. Thus, the Baghdad-Kurdish conflict broke out again in 1961. Qasim and many of his supporters were removed from government by the Baath party in 1963, yet the Baathists could only control the state in 1968.[5] Amidst these chaotic decades of elite changes, military coups, and power struggles, the pan-Arabist Baath Party gradually consolidated its power along with the rise of Saddam Hussein to the presidency in 1979. In between, two accommodation attempts with Kurdish opposition failed that proposed autonomy and national rights for the Kurds (e.g., al-Bazzaz Declaration of June 29 in 1966 and the Manifesto of March 1970). These attempts were more an outcome of security-driven concerns of the ruling elites in the sense that both territorial integrity of the state and survival of the regime would be at risk unless the strong Kurdish opposition in northern Iraq was appeased. For instance, even after the Gulf War (1990-1991), Saddam's regime was voluntarily ready to leave northern Iraq to the control of the Kurds in order to survive the regime in the rest of the country.[6] It was only after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that the Baath regime was toppled and the de facto Kurdish autonomy became officially and constitutionally secured.

Turkey's Puzzle between Ottoman Future/Past and Kemalist Past/Future

Post-Ottoman Turkey has also become a site of competing visions of collective identity for building the ideal nation. There have been basically two powerful currents. The first and historically dominant one has been the founding ideology of Kemalism. which envisioned a strictly secular, linguistically homogenous nation which would culturally face towards Europe. The collective memory building was mostly based on rejecting the Ottoman past which was seen as 'backward', 'despotic', and culturally too heterogonous. Especially the idea of ethnically heterogeneous society was seen as the main reason behind a weak state. A strong state for the republican founding elites was possible only through a homogenous nation and a unitary state. This Kemalist worldview became the raison d'état throughout the twentieth century under the firm protectorate of the military.

The second discourse of nationhood, which has become hegemonic by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002, envisions a nation with Ottoman nostalgia and neo-Ottoman future along with Islamic undertones.7 Under this framework, public expression of the Kurdish identity has found more refuge due to the emphasis on the overarching Muslim identity on the one hand and the common Ottoman heritage on the other. This is why the AKP government since 2002 has uttered the notion of "new Turkey" to make a sharp distinction

3 Orit Bashkin. (2011). "Hybrid Nationalisms: Watani and Qawmi Visions In Iraq under 'Abd Al-Karim Qasim, 1958–61," IJMES 43, No. 2, 293-313.

4 Sami Zubaida (2002). "The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq," *IJMES* 34, 205-215.

5 Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett (2003). *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship.* New York: I.B. Tauris.

6 Burak Kadercan (2013). "Making Sense of Survival: Refining the Treatment of State Preferences in Neorealist Theory," *Review of International Studies,* 39 (4): 1005-1037.

7 Jenny White (2012). *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

with the old regime.8 Recent steps such as state promotion of the Kurdish TV channel, the foundation of living languages institute, and the ease on the public expression of Kurdish identity have led to the de facto recognition of the Kurds by the state.9 Additionally, the recent ambiguous peace process with the PKK has become the most efficient propaganda apparatus of AKP's 'new Turkey.'

It was within these two visions of nationhood in the post-Ottoman Turkey that the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have become a contested zone. In the first two decades of the Republic, tribal Kurdish uprisings were harshly suppressed (e.g., Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, Agri rebellion in 1930, and Dersim rebellion in 1937-38). The possibility of an independent Kurdish state as stated in the "infamous" Treaty of Sevres in 1920 along with local uprisings convinced the founding elites of the Turkish Republic that any recognition of Kurdish identity would endanger the territorial integrity of this newly established post-Ottoman state. As a reaction, the politicization of the Kurdish identity and mass-mobilization of pro-Kurdish political movement in Turkey has been a late-comer compared to the Iraqi Kurds. Until the late 1980s, there was neither a strong, well-organized, externally networked party such as the KDP nor a national figure like Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The rise of the PKK, the personality cult of Abdullah Ocalan as its founder, and pro-Kurdish legal parties constituted the major challenge to the Turkish state after the 1980s.[10]

Patterns of Nationhood and the Logic of the State Elites

If one looks at the ebbs and flows within the boundaries of nationhood in these two states, there seems to be a common pattern of policy change toward the Kurds in the name of national security. However, what is interesting is that both exclusionary and inclusionary policies have been primarily motivated by state security concerns rather than rights-based concerns. As the Kurdish opposition in Iraq has historically been more threatening (or more beneficial) to the central state and survival of particular regimes, fluctuations between carrot and stick policies seem to be more frequent throughout the twentieth century than that of in Turkey. When exclusion and repression was thought to be more useful to secure the central state, regime power, and territorial integrity, the framework of the Iraqi nation (more pan-Arabist) was adjusted accordingly. However, when appeasement and accommodation was considered to be serving the state security and particular regimes, Iraq was envisioned more as a land of both Arabs and Kurds. Similarly, if the Kurdish identity has been de facto recognized in Turkey after the 2000s, it is mostly because the status quo policy throughout the 20th century has itself become a threat to the security of the state (*devletin bekaası).*

In other words, state elites have been more pragmatic and strategic actors than blindfolded nationalists or wholehearted democrats. Overall, either in excluding Kurds from the narratives of nationhood or incorporating them within the boundaries of nationhood, the logic of the state elites in Iraq and in Turkey has been primarily based on securing the state from potential territorial disintegration and anti-state oppositions. Then, the conventional dichotomy of *security versus liberty* should not be necessarily seen mutually exclusive in this context since liberty is an instrument of security as well. Unless this security pattern is overcome, distrust rather than mutual assurance is more likely to prevail between the state actors and non-state ethnic agents in Iraq and in Turkey.

Serhun Al is a PhD candidate in the department of political science at the University of Utah.

8 M. Hakan Yavuz, Ed. (2006). *The Emergence of New Turkey: Democracy and AK Parti.* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

9 Serhun Al (2015). "Elite Discourses, Nationalism and Moderation: A Dialectical Analysis of Turkish and Kurdish Nationalisms," *Ethnopolitics,* 14 (1): 94-112.

10 Serhun Al (2015). "Local Armed Uprisings and the Transnational Image of Claim Making: The Kurds of Turkey and the Zapatistas of Mexico in Comparative Perspective," *Globalizations,* DOI:10.1080/14747731.2014.991541.

Why is Tunisian democracy succeeding while the Turkish model is failing?

By Yüksel Sezgin, November 8, 2014

In an influential book in 1991, Samuel Huntington established the "two-turnover" test to distinguish between emerging and consolidated democracies. For a democracy to be consolidated, according to the test, free and fair elections must twice have led to the peaceful handover of office between an incumbent and a successful challenger. As Huntington notes, this is a very difficult test. American democracy was not consolidated until Jacksonian Democrats lost the presidency to the Whigs in 1840.

The secularist Nida Tunis's defeat of the moderate Islamist Ennahda in Tunisia's elections last week brought the fledgling democracy a big step closer to passing Huntington's test. The elections also strengthen the embattled forces for democracy throughout the Middle East and Muslim world. Tunisia's successful democratic experiment despite rising extremism and a weak economy trumps Turkey's already bogus claim to being the model for democratizing Muslim countries. In reality, Turkey has never been a viable model for Muslim democracy, since it was never a free or liberal democracy in the first place. Except for the short period 1974-1979, Freedom House has consistently classified Turkey as only a "partly free regime."

If there is any model of Muslim democracy post-Arab Spring, it is Tunisia, not Turkey. In fact, Turkey has a lot to learn from Tunisia's compromise- and tolerance-based politics. The repression following the 2013 Gezi demonstrations reflects the increasingly authoritarian and police-state character of the Turkish regime. As recent Freedom House, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reports show, Turkish democracy is in steady decline. By intervening in judicial affairs and relying on anti-democratic and even brutal measures, the ruling party violates the principle of separation of powers and the fundamental rights and liberties of Turkish citizens.

While Turkey has descended down this authoritarian spiral over the past two years, Tunisia has achieved the most impressive democratic transformation in the history of the region. Tunisia had its first free elections in October 2011 after the fall of the Ben Ali regime. Ennahda won a plurality of seats (41 percent) and soon reached a power-sharing agreement with two secular parties in the Constituent Assembly. One of the things Tunisians got right was the rejection of presidentialism in favor of parliamentary democracy. Tunisians recognized the dangers of presidentialism in a country with a weak democratic tradition and historic lack of checks and balances. Tunisians also chose proportional representation with a zero-percent national threshold, giving the greatest possible representation to different voices in parliament. Turkey headed in the opposition direction. The AKP government tried unsuccessfully to use its majority to change the country's parliamentary system into a presidential regime and to switch from the current PR-based electoral system to a "first-past-the-post" majoritarian system, which could give the AKP a supermajority while denying smaller parties' representation. Turkey has one of the highest and most undemocratic electoral thresholds (10 percent) in the world; but the lack of representativeness of the electoral system has never been a real concern for the AKP elite. Despite earlier promises by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, AKP has never seriously considered lowering the threshold, but rather has exploited current rules to increase its share of seats in the parliament.

The most striking difference between Tunisia and Turkey lies in their approach to constitution-writing, which lawmakers in both countries have undertaken in recent years. Tunisians adopted a new, fairly democratic constitution in January 2014 with the backing of an astounding 94 percent of the national assembly. In Turkey,

by contrast, the parliament failed to reach a consensus to produce the country's first civilian constitution — a failure mostly due to the ruling AKP's insistence on establishing a presidential system of government. As a result, the country remains bound by the military-imposed 1982 constitution, which lags in almost every respect behind the Tunisian Constitution of 2014.

Turkish and Tunisian societies are highly polarized along the secular-religious axis. According to the World Values Survey (WVS), 84 percent of Turks and 65 percent of Tunisian describe themselves "religious," while 14 percent of Turks and 27 percent of Tunisians refer to themselves as "not religious." Low levels of interpersonal trust also characterize both societies: Only 12 percent of Turks and 16 percent of Tunisians consider others trustworthy (the same measure for Netherlands and the U.S. are 66 percent and 35 percent, respectively). The secular-religious divide has created in both societies an atmosphere of distrust that can inhibit cooperation between parties. This atmosphere has certainly taken its toll in Turkey, where secular and religious politicians refuse to compromise and write a new social contract. Tunisian politicians, on the other hand, seem to have weathered this trust crisis and are now on the road toward consolidated democracy.

Why did the Turks fail and the Tunisians succeed? I think there are two possible explanations: one is based on ideological identification, and the other on leadership styles of Erdogan and Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the Tunisian Ennahda movement. First, compared to Tunisians, Turkish people more rigidly identify with a particular ideology and political party. The WVS asked people in both countries to place themselves on an ideological scale of 1 (left) to 10 (right). 18 percent of Turks and 7 percent Tunisians were on left side of the scale, while 35 percent of Turks and 13 percent of Tunisian were close to the right end of continuum. There were more Tunisians in the center than Turks, 39 percent vs. 28 percent. More interestingly, 35 percent of Tunisians answered "I do not know," compared to only 5 percent of Turks. The greater number of centrists and the lack of ideological rigidity may have encouraged Tunisian politicians to be more flexible and pragmatic, thus enabling compromise between religious and secular groups.

Second, Erdogan's divisive and increasingly authoritarian style of politics has damaged Turkish constitutionalism.

Tunisia has been a success story largely because of Ghannouchi's positive role in the constitutional process. Erdogan is neither an intellectual nor a religious leader. It is true that he further liberalized the Turkish political system in 2002-2011, but since then he has turned increasingly authoritarian and corrupt. On the other hand, Ghannouchi is a true intellectual with deep knowledge and understanding of both Western and Islamic philosophy and history. Since the fall of the Ben Ali regime, he has become the voice of moderation and reason in Tunisia. He seems to have better and more sincerely internalized democratic culture and values than Erdogan. While Erdogan interprets his 52 percent majority as the mandate to disregard the will of the other 48 percent, Ghannouchi keeps reminding his fellow citizens that even a 60 percent majority in a divided society where democracy is not yet fully established should not be taken as a mandate to monopolize power.

Yüksel Sezgin is an assistant professor of political science and the director of Middle East Studies Program at Syracuse University.

The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see http://www.pomeps.org.

COVER PHOTO CREDIT:
MACPEPPER