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## The 2014 Presidential Elections in Turkey: Old Wine in a New Bottle?

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### Abstract

The paper provides an overview of the 2014 presidential elections in Turkey, a seminal moment in Turkish political history. President-elect Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's aspiration for transforming Turkey into a presidential system is expected to have significant ramifications for Turkey and the Middle East. The paper examines the unique aspects of the presidential elections, focusing on the nomination process and election campaigns. It also sheds light on the external voting campaign and its results, as the diaspora vote constituted one of the novelties of these elections. Future implications of the election results are analysed by focusing on the current political situation in Turkey. The paper concludes that the presidential election process did not overcome the hardening divisions among the key groupings in Turkey, political polarization is therefore likely to continue and the election process has actually added to the climate of uncertainty regarding the design and functioning of political institutions.

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“Today, the day that the first publicly elected president is inaugurated, is the day when Turkey rises from its ashes, when the construction and development of a new Turkey gains force.”<sup>1</sup>

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

## 1. Introduction

On 10 August 2014 a presidential election was held in Turkey to determine the twelfth president of the Republic. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the winner of the race, securing slightly over 51% of the votes in the first round. The election attracted significant domestic and international media attention as it was the first time that the president was being elected through direct vote<sup>2</sup> and it was anticipated that this would be the beginning of a new era for Turkey. Prior to the election, Erdoğan emphasized numerous times that he intended to change the constitution in order to give the presidency, a mostly ceremonial post according to the current constitution, a powerful executive role.<sup>3</sup> The election was also considered a test for Erdoğan’s popularity and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) legitimacy, as it took place shortly after a number of political crises: only one year after the country’s famous Gezi protests<sup>4</sup> which challenged Erdoğan’s increasingly authoritarian policies and was considered to be one of the most important grassroots political movements in recent times; only eight months after the corruption allegations that forced four ministers to resign;<sup>5</sup> the fallout with the Gülen Movement;<sup>6</sup> and three months after the Soma mining tragedy that exposed the failure of government regulation in an accident-prone industry.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>‘Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sworn in as Turkey’s President’, *Financial Times*, 28 August 2014, [Online], Available: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e343f986-2ebc-11e4-afe4-00144feabdc0.html#ixzz3BmFcvBDV>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>2</sup> Previously the members of the parliament elected the president for a single seven-year term.

<sup>3</sup>“Turkey’s Erdogan Seeks An Expanded Role As President,” NPR, 10 August 2014, [Online], Available: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/08/10/339266869/turkeys-erdogan-seeks-an-expanded-role-as-president>; Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, “Turkish Premier Runs for President, an Office He Plans to Strengthen,” *New York Times*, 1 July 2014.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the Gezi Protests see Amnesty International’s comprehensive report published in October 2013: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/eur440222013en.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> For more info on this topic see ‘Turkish Minister’s Sons Arrested in Corruption and Bribery Investigation’, *The Guardian*, 17 December 2013, [Online], Available: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/17/turkish-ministers-sons-arrested-corruption-investigation> [5 November 2014]. ‘No longer a shining example’, *The Economist*, 4 January 2014.

In the wake of these crises, Erdoğan's future performance in what is a deeply divided society and tense domestic political environment is a matter of concern. While Erdoğan and his followers claim that the election results will usher in a new period of prosperity and national glory (what they call 'New Turkey'), the domestic opposition and international observers note the country's drift towards authoritarianism. For all the encouraging narratives of further democratization and development on Erdoğan's part, policy experts and representatives of international organizations declared their concerns regarding one-man rule, censorship and the disappearance of the rule of law in Turkey. Election reporting also reflected many of these concerns. For instance, according to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the election process took place in an environment dominated by Erdoğan and his party.<sup>8</sup> Observers pointed to the increasingly authoritarian nature of Erdoğan's prime ministry, and it was thus feared that the election results would only serve to consolidate his grip on power, enabling him to further entrench his power through constitutional amendments and other legal and policy changes.

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of this important election in the context of recent political developments in Turkey. The paper argues that the presidential election process, far from overcoming the institutional impasse and political polarization, has actually added to the climate of uncertainty in the design of political institutions. Every political movement in the country is likely to go through a period of self-reflection on its leadership, strategies and overall goals. Not surprisingly, both the governing Justice and Development Party and the opposition Republican Peo-

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<sup>6</sup> The Gülen Movement is a faith-based community led by Fethullah Gülen, a priest living in self-exile in the United States. The Movement has developed to become one of the most powerful business and political networks inside and outside Turkey, and has supported the AKP government since its early years. This alliance has enabled Gülenists to take over key judicial and security institutions. For more info see 'The clash of former allies: The AKP versus the Gülen Movement, 7 March 2014, [Online], Available: <http://www.mei.edu/content/clash-former-allies-akp-versus-gulen-movement>, [5 November 2014]. Or see Kadri Gursel's article at Al Monitor 'Gülenist-AKP Clash is not in the Open', 16 August 2013, [Online], Available: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/turkey-erdogan-akp-gulenism-the-service-power-struggle.html> [5 November 2014].

<sup>7</sup> For more info please see 'Soma Tragedy: Erdogan Faces Fall-Out from Mine Disaster', *Der Spiegel*, 19 May 2014, [Online], Available: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/soma-mine-disaster-reveals-cracks-in-turkish-leadership-a-970284.html>, [5 November 2014].

<sup>8</sup> 'International Election Observation Mission: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions', 11 August 2014, [Online], Available: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/122553?download=true>, [11 September 2014].

ple's Party (CHP) held conventions soon after the presidential election,<sup>9</sup> and the Kurdish political movement has begun to discuss its options in the fast-changing Turkish and Middle Eastern landscape. Moreover the country has seen more than its share of political crises in the past two years in the form of mass protests, corruption allegations, and politically motivated purges in the judiciary. A new and more-or-less stable institutional structure is needed in the face of the challenges at home and abroad, but President-elect Erdoğan's ambition to amend the constitution along the lines he prefers will probably aggravate the uncertainty, at least in the short-term.<sup>10</sup>

The paper is organized as follows: the first section examines the historical background of the presidential elections. The second section describes the political stakes involved in the 2014 presidential race, paying specific attention to some of the novel features of the election. The following two sections present an analysis of the nomination process and the candidates' campaign promises and strategies, situating them against the backdrop of recent political developments in Turkey. The fifth section addresses one of the novelties of this race, namely the diaspora vote. The sixth section offers an analysis of the election results and the consequent political climate. The paper concludes with some predictions about the future of electoral politics and institutional design in Turkey.

## 2. Background

The AKP has been in power since 2002. Since then they have managed to build a stable winning coalition, in great part thanks to relatively successful economic growth rates<sup>11</sup> – the downsides of this growth model will be discussed below. The party and its leader, Erdoğan, have also taken credit for legislating various European Union (EU) accession reforms during the early years of government, especially those pertaining to fundamental liberties. In turn, the secularist opposition

<sup>9</sup> 'CHP to hold extraordinary convention in fall: Kılıçdaroğlu', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 15 August 2014; Tulin Daloglu, 'Erdoğan out, Davutoglu in as AKP leader', *Al-Monitor*, August 2014. [Online], Available: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/08/turkey-akp-davutoglu-new-prime-minister.html> [11 September 2014].

<sup>10</sup> See the following report for more info:

[http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote23\\_Cagaptay-2.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote23_Cagaptay-2.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> OECD indicators demonstrate that Turkey has managed to retain relatively high levels of growth even after the 2008-9 crisis, even though the unemployment has been consistently above the OECD average. See <http://www.oecd.org/economy/turkey-economic-forecast-summary.htm>

represented by the CHP and its former leader Deniz Baykal emphasized the secularist-Islamist dichotomy as the central axis of Turkish politics. The AKP's claim to hold together a socially conservative yet politically liberal-democratic coalition of voters enabled it to confront the military and high courts in moments of tension, as various reform-minded intellectuals, as well as foreign actors, supported the government against what they perceived as the encroachments of militantly secularist and undemocratic opponents. Finally, the 'Kurdish opening' envisioned a reform process with regards to Kurdish minority rights, including a state-sponsored Kurdish TV channel and the use of Kurdish languages at various universities (Tekdemir, 2014).<sup>12</sup> More importantly, the AKP has underlined its determination to resolve the Kurdish Question and has initiated a vague yet popular initiative to end the conflict with the Kurdish rebels.

However, for all the self-claimed policy successes and undeniable electoral victories, the opposition to the AKP has become more vocal over the years. As will be discussed in the rest of the section, the AKP's economic model, relying on developments in the housing market and the construction sector (not to mention rampant corruption),<sup>13</sup> and incurring a high degree of individual and government debt, imposes great risks for human life, the environment and financial stability. The government's rhetoric of human rights and democratization contrasts sharply with the lack of serious reform and a shift away from the protection of basic liberties. The unofficial ceasefire has brought calm to the Kurdish region, as battle deaths due to armed confrontations between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish military fell sharply between March 2013 and September 2014, but the government has not taken the promised bold steps regarding the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue. The confrontation with the high courts and the military was supposed to end the grip of undemocratic institutions on political decision-making, but the AKP leadership appears more interested in staffing tutelary bodies (like the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors and the Board of Higher Education) with loyalists than dissolving

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<sup>12</sup> See also: Michael M. Gunter, 'The Closing of Turkey's Kurdish Opening', *Columbia SIPA Journal of International Affairs*, 20 September 2012, [Online], Available: <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/closing-turkeys-kurdish-opening/>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>13</sup> Corruption appears to be intrinsic part of the economic and political model, rather than an incidental side effect. Nepotistic and corrupt relationships between public and private actors have allowed the AKP government to arrange public bids, distribute mining and land grants, and deregulate labor standards. For an incisive analysis, see: Aslı Iğsız, 'Brand Turkey and the Gezi Protests: Authoritarianism, Law, and Neoliberalism (Part One)', *Jadaliyya*, 12 July 2013, [Online], Available: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/12907/brand-turkey-and-the-gezi-protests-authoritarianis>

or reforming them.<sup>14</sup> The much-celebrated military coup trials ended on an anti-climactic note, as the due-process violations throughout the trials left them devoid of procedural legitimacy and scores of defendants were released almost immediately after the government's fallout with the Gülen movement, which was assumed to orchestrate the prosecutions.<sup>15</sup>

The AKP's attempt to position itself as a catch-all party has resulted in a contradictory rhetoric that straddles Turkish nationalism and Islamism, neo-liberal principles and social-protectionist ones, political liberalism and intolerance towards individuals and groups who do not fit the AKP's social and political vision. This ambiguity partly explains why more than a decade of one-party rule and a string of election victories do not provide clear signals for where Erdoğan and his party stand on most issues. One thing is beyond doubt, though: "In 2002, the AKP came into power and into bitter confrontation with the self-appointed guardians of the Turkish establishment. A decade on, it has become the establishment."<sup>16</sup>

As a result of these tensions, the social and political distance between the AKP voters and the opposition has been widening for some time.<sup>17</sup> Arguably, each election process widened this gap. For instance, the 2010 referendum on the constitutional amendments saw a degree of political polarization far beyond voters' differing views on the content of the amendments. Likewise,

<sup>14</sup> These Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors and the Board of Higher Education were established after the 1980 coup to increase the executive's and military's control over the judiciary and universities. A constitutional amendment in 2010 democratized the selection mechanism for the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, but the opacity of the election process has been questioned since. The first elected Board reflected the alliance of the Gülenists and the AKP, but following the breakup of this coalition, the government sought to purge the Gülenists in October 2014 election for some of the seats on the Board. For recent developments, see Kadri Gursel's 'AKP pursues scorched-earth tactics against Gulenists', *Al-Monitor*, 4 September 2014 [Online], Available: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/turkey-akp-gulen-rift-erdogan-judiciary.html#>, [5 November 2014]. The Board of Higher Education is likewise dominated by pro-government academics.

<sup>15</sup> See Soner Cagaptay, 'What's Really behind Turkey's Coup Arrests?', *Foreign Policy*, 25 February 2010, [Online], Available: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/25/whats\\_really\\_behind\\_turkeys\\_coup\\_arrests](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/25/whats_really_behind_turkeys_coup_arrests), [11 September 2014]. See also: Gareth Jenkins, 'Falling Facades: The Gulen Movement and Turkey's Escalating Power Struggle', *Turkey Analyst* (2014), [Online], Available: <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/81-falling-facades-the-g%C3%BClen-movement-and-turkeys-escalating-power-struggle.html>.

<sup>16</sup> A. Finkel, 'What now for Turkey's Ruling Party?', *BBC*, 31 October 2012, [Online], Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20141894>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>17</sup> This is not to argue that the opposition is a unified bloc, or that the discontent with the AKP has remained constant over time for different sections of the opposition. At least a section of the nationalist and socially conservative voters of the MHP appear to agree with the AKP in various ideological dimensions. Many self-designated liberals supported the AKP until 2011, if not later, and withdrew their support only recently.



strong presence of Erdoğan and his vision for a new Turkey dominated the campaign before the 2011 general election, yet the opposition, which was divided along every dimension except in its antipathy towards the AKP, saw another resounding AKP victory. Even the March 2014 municipal election became a platform to contest national-level differences, rather than local ones. The top two opposition parties, Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Action Party (MHP) have not been able to capture sufficient votes to unseat the AKP or force it into a coalition government since 2002. The party of the Kurdish political movement, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP),<sup>18</sup> has managed to challenge AKP's hegemony at the municipal level, but it is worth noting that its impact remains limited at the national level. All in all, different opposition actors disagree with the AKP government for different reasons, and they are not united; yet the government's dismissive and repressive attitude towards dissent – one should only be reminded of police violence during peaceful protests, the increasing number of journalists under arrest, and constant references to conspiracies implicating domestic and foreign enemies – results in a political atmosphere that seems to be in constant crisis mode.

This dismissive attitude towards all kinds of dissent and heavy-handed treatment of protest brought things to a boiling point in late May 2013. Spur-of-the-moment protests that started in Istanbul's Taksim Square spread throughout the country. Initially a small group of young people were organizing a sit-in at the Gezi Park across from Taksim Square, protesting against the government's urban development. The police brutality and disproportionate violence meted out during a peaceful protest touched a nerve and transformed the protests into a mass demonstration against urban transformation, environmental degradation, and restrictions on the freedom of speech, peaceful protest and press freedom.<sup>19</sup> Excessive amounts of tear gas and water cannons were used to suppress the protestors. Police violence resulted in several deaths as well as injuries to many others, which, in turn, drew the attention of the international community. Domestic media institutions were under constant pressure from the government; consequently

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<sup>18</sup> BDP politicians established the People's Democracy Party (HDP) in 2013 to run for municipal elections in the western parts of Turkey. Since then the two parties have more or less merged in their membership and administration; therefore it is common practice to see BDP, HDP and BDP/HDP used interchangeably.

<sup>19</sup> For more info see C. B. Tensel, 'The Gezi Park Occupation: Confronting Authoritarian Neo-Liberalism', *Open Democracy* (2013), [Online], Available: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/cemal-burak-tansel/gezi-park-occupation-confronting-authoritarian-neoliberalism>, [11 September 2014].

most of them did not dare to televise what was going on despite the fact that it was a critical moment in Turkish history.

The Gezi protests reflected the long-standing discontent among various groups who felt that they did not belong in the AKP's vision of Turkey. The verbal attacks against cultural, political, ethnic and religious minorities, ranging from accusations of alcohol abuse and moral depravity to disparaging remarks about their ethnic or religious background, were prevalent before the Gezi protests (and were probably among the reasons why so many people found it necessary to defy Erdoğan), but these accusations only became more aggressive during and after the protests. The prime minister and other ministers have blamed the international community, some unnamed foreign countries, and a supposed lobby that sought a sharp increase in the interest rate, for the protests.

The Gezi uprisings brought together a social movement that gained support from people with different political convictions and party affiliations, as well as others who had never been part of any ideological group before but felt the urge to act against the AKP's increasingly authoritarian rule. It revealed that Turkey was far from the rosy picture that the government was trying to portray to its voters and the outside world. What is also striking is that the so-called secular-conservative divide, which has been a lazy label to describe the nature of political polarization by many academics, policy experts, journalists and the like, does not suffice to explain the transformations and fragmentations in Turkey.

The Gezi protests may have revealed the government's shortcomings and emboldened countervailing forces, but they did not change the way things were getting done in Ankara, at least in the short-term.<sup>20</sup> Yet, another crisis, perhaps resulting from the opportunity structure after the protests, tested the government's internal cohesion. The Gülen movement, in alliance with the AKP government since its early days and in charge of much of the police, intelligence and judicial activity thanks to this alliance, initiated a powerful campaign against Erdoğan, who was in turn trying to choke the movement's financial resources by closing down the mostly Gülenist-run

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<sup>20</sup> O. Bakiner, 'Gezi at One: Rethinking the Legacy of the Gezi Protests', *Jadaliyya*, 6 June 2014, [Online], Available: [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18023/gezi-at-one\\_rethinking-the-legacy-of-the-protests](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18023/gezi-at-one_rethinking-the-legacy-of-the-protests), [11 September 2014].

private education institutions. As the rivalry intensified, unknown sources began to release audiotapes that implicated several government ministers, businesspeople, and the prime minister's own family in an elaborate network of corruption.<sup>21</sup>

Since December 2013 the pro-Gülen police officers and prosecutors have been looking for ways to indict AKP leaders for corruption, while Erdoğan and his close circle of loyalists in the government are busy purging the Gülenists from the police and the judiciary. The corruption allegations, the resignation of implicated ministers, and the internal division of social conservatives led the opposition to hope that the AKP would lose votes. Yet, the corruption scandal has not cost the AKP as many votes as one would assume: the party carried the March 2014 municipal elections in most regions of the country. The results of the local elections illustrated that the AKP and its charismatic leader Erdoğan managed to maintain the more-or-less unconditional loyalty of most of their supporters. Yet, the scandal has left behind an institutional impasse: Erdoğan wants to redesign the police, intelligence and judicial institutions, but has not succeeded in doing so.

Immediately after the local elections, the country was shaken by reports from the mining town of Soma in Western Anatolia on 13 May 2014. 301 miners were killed in an explosion that caused an underground fire in the Soma Mine – the worst mining disaster in Turkish history. Upon close inspection, it became clear that the tragedy, like so many others that go unreported, could have been avoided if the management had acted responsibly and if the government had enforced precautionary regulations. The Soma tragedy was neither an accident nor an isolated event; it exposed the dark side of Turkey's neoliberal growth trajectory that set no moral or legal limits on businesses that wanted to reduce labour costs. Erdoğan and the AKP could have paid a political price for such a tragedy,<sup>22</sup> but it was not (and still is not) clear if the opposition could propose an effective alternative that would convince the voters.

<sup>21</sup> It is also important to underline here that a significant amount of the corruption allegations were about violations of the 'zoning code, zoning of urban lands under conservation for construction, the illegal provision of building permits, informal relations and bribery.' B. Kose, 'The Culmination of Resistance Against Urban Neoliberalism in Turkey', *ROAR Magazine* (2014) [Online], Available: <http://roarmag.org/2014/01/resistance-urban-neoliberalism-turkey/>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>22</sup> Some observers even argued that Erdoğan could choose not to run for president after the Soma tragedy. For example see *Der Spiegel's* report on Soma: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/soma-mine-disaster-reveals-cracks-in-turkish-leadership-a-970284.html> [11 September 2014].

In conclusion, a government that was still popular yet encountering serious policy failures was confronting angry yet hopelessly divided opposition groups on the eve of the presidential election. It was in this context that Erdoğan launched his campaign for the highest office of the country.

### **3. Presidential elections in Turkey: What was special?**

The office of the president is endowed with limited power in modern Turkey. Article 104 of the current constitution gives the president the authority to approve or veto laws, send bills to the Constitutional Court, appoint members to important judicial and bureaucratic institutions, declare a state of emergency, and represent the state in the international arena, but does not grant explicit policy-making powers as would be the case in a presidential system. The constitution does name the president “head of the state,” but, in practice, presidents have not used this title for running government affairs. Formally the parliament has elected the president, although it should be noted that Turkey’s long history of military interventions has meant that the members of the parliament enjoyed little discretion until at least 1989 – former generals were chosen as president between 1961 and 1980, and the *de facto* military ruler was elected president in a questionable referendum in 1982. Popular politicians have often toyed with the idea of a stronger presidency, but no government has succeeded in passing the required institutional modifications.

The constitutional amendment of 2007 (Amendment 21/10/2007-5678/2) created an interesting situation in this regard. It stipulated popular elections for the office of the president, the first to be held in 2014. This change aimed to boost the electoral legitimacy of the office, but did not alter its powers and responsibilities. The period between 2007 and today saw the increasing consolidation of political power under the Justice and Development Party government and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which reignited the debate on the merits of a presidential regime. Erdoğan’s supporters advocated a strong, policy-making president, while the opposition voiced the concern that such a shift would result in a dictatorship or some kind of competitive authoritarianism in the absence of meaningful checks and balances on presidential power. In the end, Erdoğan’s ambition did not disappear, but there was no constitutional change to enable a presidential regime.

For Erdoğan, there was an additional reason to seek a stronger presidency. The rift within the governing coalition has led to a vicious power struggle between Erdoğan's supporters and the Gülen movement since late 2013.<sup>23</sup> As described earlier, unidentified people who are suspected of having ties to the Gülen movement have publicized evidence pointing to corruption involving Erdoğan and his family. As a result, Erdoğan needs immunity from prosecution, which, in turn, means that he needs to stay in politics. Furthermore, his reaction to the corruption allegations was to start a witch-hunt in the police and the judiciary in the hope of eliminating Gülenists. The overhaul of the police and the judiciary has resulted in a chaotic situation whereby no actor, including Erdoğan himself, seems to have sufficient information and authority to rearrange these institutions and stabilize the bureaucracy. Under these circumstances Erdoğan's best strategy was to acquire even more power for himself and those around him.

The other actors on the political stage have long defended the continuation of the parliamentary system. Therefore, the CHP, the MHP and the Kurdish political movement declared that the 2014 presidential elections should present a choice between candidates, rather than between systems of government. HDP's candidate Selahattin Demirtaş even declared that he would opt for limiting the powers of the president and the central government in order to pave the way for a more decentralised system.<sup>24</sup>

After much discussion and debate, a two-round run-off was the chosen election procedure, which is quite typical in presidential systems, but was a novelty in Turkey. Accordingly, each candidate should receive at least 50% of the votes in order to get elected. In case none of the candidates could reach this percentage in the first round, a second round was to be held between the two

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<sup>23</sup> See the link for more information on this topic: G. H. Jenkins, G.H, 'Falling Facades: The Gulen Movement and Turkey's Escalating Power Struggle,' *Turkey Analyst*, (2014), [Online], Available: <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/81-falling-facades-the-g%C3%BClen-movement-and-turkeys-escalating-power-struggle.html>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>24</sup> See Demirtaş' interview with *The Wall Street Journal*: <http://www.wsj.com/tr/article/SB10001424052702303714604580029093368783392.html>, [11 September 2014].

candidates who received the highest percentage of the votes in the first round. This made inter-party electoral coalitions and strategic voting possible.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. The nomination process

Public debates about Turkey's first popular election for presidency focused on two interrelated questions: first, would Prime Minister Erdoğan run for president, and second, would the largely symbolic office of the president be transformed if Erdoğan were elected? It is important to note that the 30 March 2014 local elections tested the waters for all parties. Although the local elections were about municipal governance, the climate of political polarization after the Gezi protests and the corruption scandal meant that they could be considered, in Cagaptay and Jeffrey's words, a 'quasi-referendum'.<sup>26</sup> As the municipal elections revealed that the AKP did not suffer huge losses among voters despite the important events mentioned above, most observers anticipated that Erdoğan would not face a sudden loss of support for the presidential elections.

It was clear that Erdoğan wanted nothing less than a strong presidency for himself, even though the constitution did not grant the president such power. Furthermore, the coherence of the ruling AKP depended in large measure on Erdoğan's personal management of all the intra-party dynamics, so his departure for a higher office could potentially lead to in-fighting. Especially then-President Abdullah Gül's possible return to the AKP could have complicated those dynamics, since Gül was among the few people who had sufficient support and legitimacy inside the party to stand up to Erdoğan's one-man rule. Despite these constraints, Erdoğan decided to run for president.

Around the time that Erdoğan was testing the waters for his candidacy, the opposition was busy searching for a contender. The main opposition, CHP, held meetings with all opposition parties to nominate a consensus candidate. Since the CHP's vote share in general and municipal elections has oscillated between 20% and 26% in the past decade, its leaders thought that reaching out to conservatives and perhaps the Kurdish voters was the only way to stop a comfortable Erdoğan

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<sup>25</sup> The constitution has specific regulations for the nomination of presidential candidates. See the official website for details: <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/docs/Kanunlar/Pdf/6271.pdf>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>26</sup> S. Cagaptay and J. F. Jeffrey, 'Turkey's 2014 Political Transition: From Erdoğan to Erdoğan?', *Policy Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, No. 17, (2014).

victory. In the end, the CHP announced Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, an academic and former diplomat who was little known inside the country, as the consensus candidate. The “consensus” reflected an agreement between the CHP and the MHP, to the exclusion of the Kurdish political movement. Later, a number of small parties (whose combined vote share does not exceed 5%) decided to support İhsanoğlu’s candidacy. After the fallout with the CHP, the Kurdish political movement, represented by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and its offshoot People’s Democracy Party (HDP) in the parliament, decided to nominate Selahattin Demirtaş, a young lawyer and politician who served as the HDP’s (and previously the BDP’s) co-chair.

Virtually every person in Turkey knows who Erdoğan is and what he stands for. Therefore, his campaign was premised less on presenting him to the voters than delivering his message of strong presidency. Conversely, the other candidates did have to build familiarity and rapport with the voters. İhsanoğlu was born and raised in Egypt, and his achievements as a historian and as former Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) earned him reputation in academic and diplomatic circles, but he was unknown to the general public.<sup>27</sup> The CHP’s expectation in nominating him was to break the ice with the observant Muslim masses (for, after all, much of his intellectual and diplomatic work dealt with Islamic history and institutions) without losing the secularist voter base (İhsanoğlu is known to lead a secular life). In a country where more than half the population votes for parties with a socially conservative outlook, the CHP leadership opted for a strategy of deemphasizing its secularist roots, and instead presenting İhsanoğlu as an enlightened Muslim and cool-headed gentleman who could overcome the polarization and bitterness of politics under the AKP. It was hoped that İhsanoğlu would win over the sceptical secularists who disliked the implicit legitimation of political Islam through his nomination, and get votes from nationalist MHP voters as well as some AKP voters who no longer supported Erdoğan.

Demirtaş was facing another uphill battle. He was supported by the Kurdish movement, which secured majority vote shares in much of the Kurdish region, but did not get more than 6-7% na-

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<sup>27</sup> ‘CHP, MHP name ex-OIC head İhsanoğlu as joint presidential candidate’, *Today’s Zaman*, 16 June 2014 [Online], Available at: [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_chp-mhp-name-ex-oic-head-ihsanoglu-as-joint-presidential-candidate\\_350485.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_chp-mhp-name-ex-oic-head-ihsanoglu-as-joint-presidential-candidate_350485.html), [11 September 2014]; Kemal Kirişçi, ‘A Challenger In Turkey,’ *The Indian Express*, 19 June 2014, [Online], Available: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/a-challenger-in-turkey/>, [11 September 2014].

tionwide. Even though the BDP/HDP spokespersons emphasize that their message of democratization and peace should appeal to all citizens, the majority of the non-Kurdish voters tend to identify these parties with the Kurdish movement in Turkey and ignore their overall message, or hold an actively antagonistic stance against what they consider “terrorists without weapons.” Demirtaş, described as the “candidate of the oppressed” by his supporters, campaigned on a message of solidarity across race, ethnicity, and gender lines, hoping to overcome the perceptions that were produced and reproduced throughout the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish insurgency. His hope was to attract the left-leaning voters, Kurdish and non-Kurdish, across the country, and especially in the larger cities. He was presented by the international media as a popular candidate for the Kurds as well as democratic, liberal, environmentalist and left-leaning Turkish voters.

## 5. Election campaigns

The election campaigns reflected the candidates’ expectations and strategies. What made the campaign process unusual was that Erdoğan was aspiring for a hands-on presidency, whereas İhsanoğlu and Demirtaş did not seek policy-making power. It was as though one candidate was running for an entirely different position.<sup>28</sup> Overall, Erdoğan continued to deliver his signature speeches full of vitriol, while emphasising the message that he would be a strong president if elected. He presented his self-declared policy achievements as leader of the AKP as proof of future success. His publicity campaign, which included socializing with businesspeople and celebrities over dinners or soccer games, stirred much controversy for its politicization of every walk of life, yet it was the message that Erdoğan wanted everyone to understand before he moved to the higher office: it pays off to be inside his entourage.

Meanwhile, İhsanoğlu spent considerable time and energy to demonstrate his credentials as an appropriate candidate for nationalists and social conservatives, as well as secular-minded voters. His speeches, meetings and selective tomb visits to commemorate deceased right-wing politicians were meant to portray the image of a candidate who shared the worldview of right-leaning voters.

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<sup>28</sup> See an interview with political scientist and CHP politician Binnaz Toprak: ‘People will choose not only president but also regime of Turkey’, *Today’s Zaman*, 20 July 2014, [Online], Available: [http://www.todayszaman.com/monday-talk\\_people-will-choose-not-only-president-but-also-regime-of-turkey\\_353497.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/monday-talk_people-will-choose-not-only-president-but-also-regime-of-turkey_353497.html) [11 September 2014].



He was calm and respectful, in obvious contrast to Erdoğan. For all his individual efforts, İhsanoğlu appeared isolated for much of the campaign period. The CHP and MHP leaders were supportive, but there was no grassroots mobilization for the candidate. Indeed, polls showed that many CHP voters were apathetic, and large sections of MHP voters tended to favour Erdoğan over İhsanoğlu. As we shall see, the lack of grassroots support haunted the İhsanoğlu candidacy all the way to the end.<sup>29</sup>

In accordance with his claim to represent disadvantaged sectors, Demirtaş met with women's groups, LGBTI organizations, and paid a visit to the site of the Soma mining tragedy. While Erdoğan offered more of the same under a new institutional setting and İhsanoğlu offered more of the same with a new face, Demirtaş spoke of substantive change. Despite his presence in national politics for several years, most people knew little about him or his family. Through interviews in the media, the Demirtaş family showed that they led simple, unpretentious lives.<sup>30</sup> His witty reminders of the enormous wealth gap between himself and Erdoğan served to accentuate this image. As a result, Demirtaş did manage to overcome the initial scepticism of many non-Kurdish voters about voting for the representative of the Kurdish political movement. Another unique aspect of his campaign was the use of Kurdish language throughout the election campaigns.<sup>31</sup>

A word on the financing of the campaign process: the state has traditionally provided public financing for political parties that receive more than 3% of the total vote, and the state television is mandated to provide equal propaganda time for candidates in general elections. Since the presidential election was not party-based, private financing became an important issue for the first time. Erdoğan used his own business connections as well as the AKP's machinery to raise funds,

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<sup>29</sup> 'Lack of support led to failure of joint candidate,' *Today's Zaman*, 11 August 2014, [Online], Available: [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_lack-of-support-led-to-failure-of-joint-candidate\\_355338.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_lack-of-support-led-to-failure-of-joint-candidate_355338.html), [11 September 2014].

<sup>30</sup> 'A portrait of Selahattin Demirtaş', *Today's Zaman*, 17 July 2014, [Online], Available: [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_a-portrait-of-selahattin-demirtas\\_353264](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_a-portrait-of-selahattin-demirtas_353264), [11 September 2014].

<sup>31</sup> 'International Election Observation Mission: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions', *Ankara* 11 August 2014, [Online], Available: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/122553?download=true>, [11 September 2014].

while the other two candidates managed to raise much smaller sums.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, in a country with no history of citizen-backed campaign financing the incumbent with wealthy connections had an easy financial victory over the little-known candidate and the “candidate of the oppressed.” Moreover, the state television (TRT) decided to forfeit its mandate in order to support Erdoğan’s candidacy: İhsanoğlu and Demirtaş received a tiny fraction of the time that Erdoğan did on publicly funded channels throughout the campaign process, not to mention the fact that most private media networks are either at the hands of businesspeople affiliated with Erdoğan’s entourage or have been practicing self-censorship in order not to antagonize Erdoğan.

The OSCE’s report on the presidential elections explains this situation:

While all three candidates actively campaigned, the campaign of the Prime Minister was the most visible. The misuse of state administrative resources and lack of clear distinction of key institutional events with campaign activities granted him an undue advantage, contrary to national legislation and at odds with paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and the Report on the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes by the Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, although *de jure* freedom of assembly was recognized and all the candidates had the right to campaign freely, Erdoğan’s position as the Prime Minister gave him a significant advantage in terms of media coverage and visibility.<sup>34</sup> Campaign financing and publicity were heavily biased in favour of Erdoğan, and at least in the case of the state television, this was done illegally.

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<sup>32</sup> Erdoğan raised over 55 million Turkish Liras, while İhsanoğlu raised 8.5 million and Demirtaş raised 1.2 million. See: <http://www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/iste-cumhurbaskani-adaylarina-yapilan-bagis-miktari/haber-330495>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>33</sup> International Election Observation Mission, ‘Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions’, *Ankara*, 11 August 2014 [Online], Available: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/122553?download=true>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>34</sup> These issues were touched upon at the OSCE’s election monitoring report, where it was stated that three out of five monitored TV stations, including the public broadcaster, TRT1, displayed a significant bias towards the Prime Minister. See *Ibid.*

## 6. External Voting Rights and Election Campaigns Abroad

External voting is one of the many mechanisms that home states implement in order to keep the diaspora involved/interested in homeland politics. The extension of citizenship to the members of diaspora and the right to cast the absentee vote give diaspora members a feeling of attachment and a sense of belonging that remind them that they are still part of the political processes of a country where they call 'home' even if they do not currently reside there.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, external voters have a stake in 'determining the future of the polity' in their homeland.<sup>36</sup> According to the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), around 115 countries have regulations that allow external voting mechanisms.<sup>37</sup> In some countries, the scope of the external voting is limited due to the small size of the emigrants and in some others it might play a key role. In the Turkish case, the estimated difference that the external voters can make in an election is around 1 to 5%.<sup>38</sup>

What was interesting about the August 2014 presidential elections was that for the first time 2,798,726 Turkish citizens who reside outside Turkish borders had the right to vote to elect the president directly.<sup>39</sup> This number constitutes almost 5% of the electorate. Absentee voting had been introduced almost three decades earlier; however Turkish citizens who lived abroad could only cast their votes at the border, which was a limitation that negatively affected the participation rate. This was changed with the 2008 amendment to the law on elections and voter registration<sup>40</sup> and with a more recent amendment in 2012,<sup>41</sup> when the AKP government introduced regu-

<sup>35</sup> D. Lainer-Vos, 'Diaspora-Homeland Relations as a Framework to Examine Nation-Building Processes', *Sociology Compass*, No. 4. Vol. 10 (2010), 894-908. For a more through theoretical discussion see R. Baubock, 'Expansive Citizenship: Voting Beyond Territory and Membership', *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2005), 683-687.

<sup>36</sup> See R. Baubock, 'Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation: A Normative Evaluation of External Voting', *Fordham Law Review*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (2007), 2394.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in M. Collyer, 'A geography of extra-territorial citizenship: Explanations of External Voting', *Migration Studies*, (2013), 1-18.

<sup>38</sup> See the following link for more information: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-350260-pm-as-candidate-for-president-may-receive-half-of-overseas-vote.html>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>39</sup> See the official website for further details: [http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/HaberDosya/2014CB-Kesin-GumrukYurdisi-Grafik.pdf?\\_afLoop=22656611625189210](http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/HaberDosya/2014CB-Kesin-GumrukYurdisi-Grafik.pdf?_afLoop=22656611625189210), [11 September 2014].

<sup>40</sup> Law No. 5749/2008 amending the Law No. 298/1961 on Elections and Voter Registration.

lations in order to facilitate voting procedures for Turkish immigrants.<sup>42</sup> In May 2012 migrants from Turkey obtained the right to vote at the consulates and embassies in their host countries.<sup>43</sup> In places where the number of potential voters is large, such as Germany, the government negotiated with host states in order to set up stadiums, schools or other convention rooms in order to distribute ballot stations. This could be interpreted as a sign of the AKP's new policy towards the Turks abroad, which was based on creating an active and politically mobilized diaspora, who have thus far built scattered networks and produced low political impact in the host countries despite their large population.<sup>44</sup>

There are reportedly 1.5 million Turkish citizens eligible to vote in Germany, the country that hosts the highest number of first- and second-generation immigrants from Turkey (nearly 3 million). France is second with more than 600,000 migrants from Turkey, the Netherlands third with more than 450,000, Austria fourth with around 270,000 and Belgium fifth with nearly 200,000. The United States has around 85,000.<sup>45</sup> For the presidential elections, the Supreme Electoral Board has set up ballot boxes in 54 countries (with 118 representations) where more than 500 Turkish citizens live. The absentee votes were cast between July 31 and August 3, 2014 and they were sent to Turkey through the diplomatic courier system to be counted all together with the other votes cast inside Turkey.<sup>46</sup> This procedure drew a lot of criticism for its proneness to election fraud, especially among the anti-AKP media outlets in the diaspora.

<sup>41</sup> The official link to the law: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/05/20120518-3..htm>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>42</sup> For more info please see: <http://www.ytb.gov.tr/index.php/yurtdisinda-oy-kullanma.html>. The official link to the law: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/05/20120518-3..htm>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>43</sup> Any Turkish citizen who is 18 or older can vote in elections and referenda. They are not automatically registered but the only condition to vote is to get one's address registered in a nearby consulate. See the link for details: <http://www.memursen.org.tr/haber/yurt-disindaki-turklerin-e-posta-ile-oy-kullanabilmesine-imkan-veren-yasakomisyon-dan-gecti/>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>44</sup> For more information on Turkey's newly emerging approach to its citizens abroad see: D. Aksel, 'Kins, Distant Workers, Diasporas: Constructing Turkey's Transnational Members Abroad', *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2014), 195-219.

<sup>45</sup> For more info see: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-350260-pm-as-candidate-for-president-may-receive-half-of-overseas-vote.html>. [11 September 2014].

<sup>46</sup> For more info see A. Okyay, 'External Voting to be Implemented for the First Time in Turkey's Forthcoming Presidential Elections', [Online], Available: <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/news/citizenship-news/1080-external-voting-to-be-implemented-for-the-first-time-in-turkey-s-forthcoming-presidential-elections>, [11 September 2014]. According to other media sources the number of countries were 54 and the number of ballot boxes were 103, see <http://gundem.bugun.com.tr/sandiklar-bos-kaldi-haberi/1211193>, [11 September 2014].

Turkey's politics have long had a transnational dimension thanks to the Turkish and Kurdish migrants and asylum seekers who carried their 'struggle' outside Turkish borders, by political movements in Turkey that established satellite institutions abroad, and by the Turkish state itself through its official mechanisms which were established to facilitate and monitor its citizens' life abroad.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the election campaigns and the rhetoric that they created also diffused to Europe, with Germany in particular becoming the heart of transnational election campaigns. It was clear that the simmering tensions in Turkey during the last decade were reflected within the migrant groups from Turkey. The first sign of this was Erdoğan's visit to Germany in May 2014, which caused uproar among the diaspora members who opposed the AKP and Erdoğan's authoritarian rule in Turkey. Several German newspapers commented on the issue and some institutions even expressed their expectation that he would cancel his visit. When he visited Cologne on 24 May 2014, the political divisions were very much visible in Germany, where left-leaning Alevite and Kurdish groups were protesting while Erdoğan's supporters were laying rose petals on his way. It is said that 45,000 to 50,000 people protested against Erdoğan's visit, while 15,000 people were welcoming his presence with a demonstration.<sup>48</sup> What was interesting to see was that the anti-Erdoğan protest was not solely organized by the diaspora in Germany but supporters came from all over Europe, including the United Kingdom, by using all means of transport just to show their solidarity. Some TV channels in Turkey broadcast the whole protest event live. The synchronization of the campaigning mechanisms at home and abroad was one of the most spectacular phenomena during the presidential election campaigns.

CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu also visited Essen in Germany in early June 2014, right after Erdoğan's visit. His move was welcomed by many German media outlets and caused less controversy compared to Erdoğan's visit. During his speech addressing CHP supporters in Germany, he constantly referred to the Soma mine incident and the Gezi protests in order to give the message that CHP condemns the current policies of the government and the veer to more authoritarian rule in Turkey. He visited Germany again at the end of June in order to present CHP and MHP's joint candidate İhsanoğlu

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<sup>47</sup> B. Baser 'Inherited Conflicts: Spaces of Contention between the Turkish and Kurdish Second-Generation Diasporas in Sweden and Germany', (European University Institute, Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> H. Topcu, 'Koln'de Onbinlerce Kisi Erdoğan'ı Protesto Etti', *BBC Türkçe*, 25 May 2014, [Online], Available: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2014/05/140524\\_koln\\_yuruyus.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2014/05/140524_koln_yuruyus.shtml), [11 September 2014].

to the Turks and political circles abroad. As enthusiastic as his program sounded, CHP leader's speeches failed to convince many traditional CHP voters to vote for the joint-candidate. For instance, many Alevites in Germany, who are seen as the CHP's secular voter base abroad, voiced concerns over the CHP's candidate, partly because his close relations with the Sunni Gulf monarchies raised suspicions of a sectarian bias in his worldview. While there is no conclusive evidence to assess whether they voted for İhsanoğlu, it can be presumed that they did not campaign enthusiastically for him.

Demirtaş also recognized the importance of the diaspora vote and its potential impact on the election results.<sup>49</sup> He organized an election campaign in Europe and visited cities with considerable Turkish and Kurdish populations. In his speeches in the diaspora, he followed the exact same style that he pursued in Turkey: he talked about minority rights, further democratization in Turkey, creating possibilities for peace negotiations and finally he underlined the importance of Gezi protests and the demand for certain reforms regarding human rights, freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of press. Echoing his line in Turkey, he tried to overcome the perceptions that he was the Kurds' candidate by presenting a more comprehensive approach to Turkey's problems.

## **7. Analysing the election results**

On 10 August 2014, Prime Minister Erdoğan received 51.8% of the votes in the first round. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (at roughly 38.4%) and Selahattin Demirtaş (at 9.8%) were far behind in terms of the percentage of the votes that Erdoğan received. The results mean that after nearly 12 years as prime minister, Erdoğan will rule Turkey five more years, this time as the president.

The elections showed that CHP and MHP failed to expand their voter base. Cicek (2014) compares the percentage of votes that these two parties received in the local elections and demonstrates that the so-called consensus candidate's vote share was less than the sum of each individual par-

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<sup>49</sup> Diaspora members also opened websites where they informed people about voting procedures abroad. See for example: <http://Demirtaşlondon.wordpress.com/>

ty's vote share in previous elections.<sup>50</sup> Cicek also argues that Demirtaş's performance at the elections could be interpreted as a success story in the sense that his vote share far exceeded the 4 to 6 per cent that the pro-Kurdish HDP has been receiving in the elections.<sup>51</sup> Erdoğan's victory and Demirtaş's rising profile as an important political figure in Turkish politics are the new matters of debate for today's Turkey.

Many commentators explain Erdoğan's first-round victory with the absenteeism of voters who would have supported other candidates. While it is true that the turnout rate of 74% falls short of that of the municipal elections four months earlier, it is still impressive in a comparative light. The motivations of those who did not vote are yet to be studied. While one can speculate that many CHP and MHP voters boycotted İhsanoğlu, even Erdoğan and Demirtaş, who have received more votes than what their respective parties did four months before, lost votes in certain districts. In other words, it is difficult to verify an election boycott with the available data. What seems much more obvious is that many MHP voters chose Erdoğan instead of İhsanoğlu, and that İhsanoğlu's right-leaning message did not manage to attract the AKP voters.

The diaspora vote deserves special attention. The total number of votes cast abroad as well as at customs was 530,116 (526,541 of them were valid votes), which meant that the rate of participation was 18.94%.<sup>52</sup> The results were disappointing in terms of participation but this is certainly not a Turkey-specific result, as the participation rate of the external voters is usually low across the board.<sup>53</sup> With regards to the Turkish presidential election, in certain cases, such as the United Kingdom or Sweden, the ballot boxes were located only in capital cities and many diaspora members could not afford to travel long distances to cast their vote. Also the information related to voting procedures was not distributed extensively and many diaspora members complained that

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<sup>50</sup> For a more detailed analysis see: C. Cicek, '2014Cumhurbaskanligi Secimleri ve Kurt Siyaseti Uzerine: Basarinin Kapsami, Mekani ve Kaynagi' (2014), Available: <http://zanenstitu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Cumhurbaskanligi-Secimleri-Kurt-Siyaseti-Final.pdf>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For more details, the official website is:[http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/HaberDosya/2014CB-Kesin-GumrukYurdisi-Grafik.pdf?\\_afrLoop=22656611625189210](http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/content/conn/YSKUCM/path/Contribution%20Folders/HaberDosya/2014CB-Kesin-GumrukYurdisi-Grafik.pdf?_afrLoop=22656611625189210), [11 September 2014].

<sup>53</sup> See J. Lafleur and M. Sanchez-Dominguez, 'The political choices of emigrants voting in home country elections: A socio-political analysis of the electoral behaviour of Bolivian external voters', *Migration Studies* (2013), 1-27.

they did not know anything about the appointment system or other procedures. In the end the Supreme Electoral Board announced that Erdoğan received 329,340 votes (62.55%), İhsanoğlu received 153,523 votes (29.16%) and Demirtaş received 43,678 votes (8.30%) in the entire diaspora.

Ayhan Kaya, who has written extensively about the Turkish diaspora in Europe estimates that at least the 40% of the diaspora members support Erdoğan or sympathize with the AKP in general. His research on the Turkish immigrants also suggests that the diaspora members who tended to keep their Turkish citizenship were the ones who had conservative leanings.<sup>54</sup> The results point out a higher support level for Erdoğan outside Turkish borders, as Erdoğan received roughly 10 to 11% more votes abroad compared to the percentage that he received in Turkey. Although the general results include countries that are outside Europe, the distribution of votes in Europe, where most Turkish migrants live, reveals how popular Erdoğan is among the diaspora members. One reason for his popularity is that since 2002, the AKP has considered mobilizing abroad as important as mobilizing within the country. New civil society organizations, networks, businessmen associations and migrant organizations have grown extensively within the last decade. Moreover, the AKP managed to attract conservative-leaning votes from a larger segment of the Turkish migrant community. Erdoğan's frequent visits to Germany, in which he called for the diaspora members not to assimilate into German society<sup>55</sup> and made constant remarks on Turkish rights within Germany and Europe at large, found a receptive response from Turkish migrants who feel discriminated against or poorly integrated into their host communities. In addition, many diaspora voters have felt neglected by other political parties for so many years that they appreciated the AKP's interest in formulating policy about the diaspora.

Certainly each host country has a unique diaspora population with different political behaviour and varying degrees of integration and mobilization patterns.<sup>56</sup> In Germany, Erdoğan received

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<sup>54</sup> For more info see: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-350260-pm-as-candidate-for-president-may-receive-half-of-overseas-vote.html>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>55</sup> 'Turkish PM Erdoğan slams German media, calls for 'integration' but 'no assimilation' in Cologne,' *Hurriyet Daily News*, 24 May 2014.

<sup>56</sup> P. Odmalm, 'Turkish Organizations in Europe: How National Contexts Provide Different Avenues for Participation?', *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2009), 149-163.



76,817 votes while İhsanoğlu received 26,578 and Demirtaş 8,538. In the USA, we see a different picture. İhsanoğlu received 8,081 votes, while Erdoğan received 1,651 and Demirtaş received 644.<sup>57</sup> İhsanoğlu received the majority of the votes in London, receiving 2,525 compared with Demirtaş 1,358 and Erdoğan 1,195.<sup>58</sup> In Sweden, Erdoğan was the winner of the elections (with the following vote distribution: Erdoğan 736, İhsanoğlu 470, and Demirtaş 234) and in France he had a solid victory (Erdoğan 16,329, İhsanoğlu 3,774, and Demirtaş 4,634). This shows that Erdoğan was the most popular candidate for most, but not all, diasporas. The results also reveal that the profile of migrants in the diaspora determine their voting behaviour. For instance, majority of the migrants from Turkey living in the UK are estimated to be Alevites and this might be an explanatory factor for the results from the ballot in London. Another important observation is that İhsanoğlu himself did not organize visits to the diaspora populations and did not run a proactive campaign. It was the CHP leadership that bore the public relations part of his presidential campaign in Germany and elsewhere. Diaspora voters did not know İhsanoğlu before, and did not have the chance to witness his own vision apart from watching his speeches on Turkish TV channels. This could also explain the low participation of CHP and MHP voters.

Although many groups organized joint protests and actions against the AKP rule in Turkey, such as the above-mentioned anti-Erdoğan protests in Germany, when it came to casting votes there was no unity within the opposition. It was hardly there in Turkey and almost non-existent in the diaspora. What was also striking about the diaspora votes was that a higher percentage of votes were expected for Demirtaş, especially in countries such as Germany, where the Kurdish diaspora is politically active. It is possible to speculate that the percentage of votes for Demirtaş did not reflect the mobilization potential of the Kurdish political movement in the diaspora, but more evidence is needed to prove this claim.

## 8. Conclusion

Erdoğan's victory in the first round, the lacklustre performance of the consensus candidate İhsanoğlu, and Demirtaş's success in capturing almost 10% of the vote as the "candidate of the op-

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<sup>57</sup> The official website is: <https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/sspsCumhurbaskani.jsf>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

pressed” sparked debates about the future of party politics. For the AKP, the question of succession is likely to unsettle the peace and stability achieved by a stream of electoral victories and Erdoğan’s personalistic management style. Erdoğan handpicked former Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu as his successor, to the conspicuous exclusion of other party notables, especially former President Abdullah Gül. So far there is no sign of a deepening crisis, but the discontent within the AKP may grow in the future.

The CHP and the MHP have to come to terms with the defeat. The militant secularists in the CHP have already risen up in rebellion against Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, and the debate about whether the party should shift leftward, embrace militant secularism and nationalism, or continue its pragmatic approach, has been reignited. The supporters of Demirtaş appear to be mildly optimistic because while the vote share is far from an electoral victory, it is the first time that a candidate with what can be called a radical democratic discourse has managed to receive so many votes.

What does the future hold for Turkey? Clearly, political polarization will not disappear quickly. Erdoğan delivered a conciliatory victory speech, but his previous record suggests that he thrives in polarized contexts. The fact that Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the main opposition party, boycotted the inauguration ceremony is a clear sign that further polarization is ahead, although it should be noted that the sides of the polarized debate are not coherent themselves, as each major political party is divided into rival camps. In the governing AKP, the succession crisis seems to be under control – at least for now. Analysts ask whether the AKP will implode without Erdoğan as its leader.<sup>59</sup> The opposition is divided, too, not because the spoils of success are hard to share, as is the case for the AKP, but because electoral failure should be properly addressed. At the time of writing, the CHP was facing a number of resignations after Kılıçdaroğlu consolidated his power within the party in the September 2014 leadership congress.

In his victory speech Erdoğan emphasized the economy, the democratization program and the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Kurdish region as priorities: “Our main priority will be

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<sup>59</sup> S. Cagaptay and J.F. Jeffrey, ‘Turkey’s 2014 Political Transition: From Erdoğan to Erdoğan?’ *Policy Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, No. 17, (2014).

developing the economy, increasing welfare, to continue with determination on our strategic path to the EU, continue reforms and the solution process".<sup>60</sup> Newly appointed Prime Minister Davutoğlu seconded these aspirations in a recent speech and clarified AKP's agenda one more time in line with his vision of the future New Turkey. Yet, the so-called New Turkey may look very different from these rosy descriptions: signs of economic slowdown and a looming debt crisis are hard to ignore; the pace of the negotiations with the Kurdish insurgency is frustrating; and there is no indication of democratic reform. Added to all of these domestic difficulties is the fact that Turkey is engulfed in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

Turkey has been suffering from institutional chaos for a while now. Ever since the AKP leadership and their erstwhile allies in the Gülen community had the fallout, the government has been firing or relocating personnel in the judiciary and the police in order to eradicate the Gülenist influence. The chaos is likely to continue, but the 2015 general elections raise hopes for a resolution, one way or another. The elections will shape the parliament that Erdoğan will have to work with for most of his tenure. Erdoğan needs a parliament majority to empower his office, which depends not only on the AKP's capacity to capture votes, but also on the possibility of opposition to Erdoğan's plans inside the party. The CHP and MHP will look for ways to improve their vote shares in the hope that they can take part in a governing coalition. The HDP's hope is to finally exceed the 10% threshold, and establish itself as a powerful national-level party.

Added to these challenges ahead, perhaps the most important problem that requires an urgent action plan and resolution among the others is the peace process.<sup>61</sup> The PKK's and BDP's demands from the Turkish state include freedom for mother tongue education, recognition of Kurds as a distinct minority, the release of PKK detainees, improved jail conditions and eventual house arrest

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<sup>60</sup> 'Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sworn in as Turkey's President', *Financial Times*, [Online], Available: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e343f986-2ebc-11e4-afe4-00144feabdc0.html#ixzz3BmFcvBDV>, [11 September 2014].

<sup>61</sup> In a recent article, Hamid Bozarslan defines CHP and MHP as the static actors in Turkish politics while he points out to the rise of two important political blocks who have been establishing a new hegemony in Turkish politics since the beginning of 2000s: AKP and BDP. These two parties have been dominating the political debates around the peace process and they will play a vital role after the presidential elections. However, minding Turkish politics and how political parties transform themselves and adopt discourses to the needs of time, it is also possible to see a new CHP as a dynamic player in the future. Considering the fact that the CHP claims to be going through a period of self-reflection and transformation for the last couple of years, new dynamics might emerge out of intra-party rivalries and contentions. H. Bozarslan, 'Turkiye'de 2010'larda Kurt Meselesi', in M. Aktas (ed.) *Catisma Cozumleri ve Baris* (Iletisim Yayinlari, Istanbul, 2014), 75.

for Öcalan, and preparing a new constitution that recognizes Kurdish rights. The AKP still shifts between a nationalist rhetoric and a reconciliatory attitude. The Kurdish side does not trust the government because of the arrests of numerous Kurdish activists and politicians, lack of progress in terms of the right to education in the mother tongue, and the government's refusal to lower the 10% national threshold for general elections. It is a peace process that is proceeding in a peculiar way that we are not accustomed to observe in other conflict cases in the world. There is no third-party intervention; rather, quasi-reforms are expected to unburden a mutually hurting stalemate position, but the international (mostly regional) conjecture may put both sets of actors in a difficult situation in the future. The violence that broke out during the Islamic State siege of Kobane is a case in point. The leader of the PKK is still imprisoned, opposition parties as well as rival Kurdish parties are excluded from the 'negotiation process' and the government still has no concrete 'democratic package' or an action plan. More importantly, the commission of 'wise people'<sup>62</sup> organized by the AKP right before the Gezi protests demonstrated that especially in Western Turkey trust and support for the current peace process is low. A process, which cannot guarantee societal support for such a process after a brutal low-scale civil war, will make the situation even harder to resolve in the future.

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<sup>62</sup> The AKP initiated a series of meetings between groups of intellectuals, journalists, activists and artists, known as 'wise people's commissions,' and citizens. They were sent to different regions in Turkey in small groups in order to test waters for a potential peace process and report about the concerns and expectations that the people in different regions hold regarding AKP's policy towards the Kurdish Question. See: R. Oran, *Kürt Barisinda Bati Cephesi*, "Ben Ege'de Akilken for insights into the work of the commission in Western Turkey, Aegean Region. The book lays out the societal fragmentations and the negative attitudes of the locals with regards to the peace process, and the possibility of negotiating the release of the PKK leader from prison and amnesty to PKK fighters. It shows that there is complaint about non-transparency and there are doubts about the 'next step' that the government will take once disarmament is achieved.

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