

ANALYSIS

OCTOBER 2015 NO: 18

ELECTIONS IN TURKEY

KILIC BUGRA KANAT



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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	7
INTRODUCTION	8
THE JUNE ELECTIONS AND PERFORMANCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES	10
THE AFTERMATH OF THE ELECTION AND THE COALITION FORMATION PERIOD	20
TIMELINE	21
DRIVERS OF NOV 1 ELECTIONS	25

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ABSTRACT

The June 2015 general election has proven to be one of the most important elections in recent Turkish democratic history. For the first time in 13 years, no single party has won enough votes to create a ruling majority government. As the country heads for yet another round of elections on November 1, it is important to analyze the results of the June polls one more time as a background to the upcoming elections. It is also critical to examine the developments between June 7th and early October in Turkish domestic politics to get a better sense of what might be lying ahead in terms of electoral results and chances of a single-party government as opposed to a coalition. This election analysis will be divided into three main parts. The first part will provide an examination of the June election results and the main forces that influenced them. The second part of the paper will deal with the coalition formation process that failed in the period after the elections and provide a timeline of the coalition formation process. Finally, the third part will focus on variables that will influence the voting behavior of the Turkish electorates in the upcoming elections.



This election analysis will focus on the June election results, the coalition formation process that failed in the period after the elections and variables that will influence the voting behavior of the Turkish electorates in the upcoming elections.

INTRODUCTION

The June 2015 general election has proven to be one of the most important elections in recent Turkish democratic history. For the first time in 13 years, no single party has won enough votes to create a ruling majority government. As the country heads for yet another round of elections on November 1, it is important to analyze the results of the June polls one more time as a background to the upcoming elections. It is also critical to examine the developments between June 7th and early October in Turkish domestic politics to get a better sense of what might be lying ahead in terms of electoral results and chances of a single-party government as opposed to a coalition. This election analysis will be divided into three main parts. The first part will provide an examination of the June election results and the main forces that influenced them. The second part of the paper will deal with the coalition formation process that failed in the period after the elections and provide a timeline of the coalition formation process. Finally, the third part will focus on variables that will influence the voting behavior of the Turkish electorates in the upcoming elections.

In the run-up to the June 1 elections, pundits found themselves struggling to predict the

election outcome owing to the unusually high variations in the results of public opinion polls. These polls unearthed an unprecedented number of undecided voters even just a few weeks prior to the election. Although polls in Turkey easily predicted the final ranking of the political parties in the election, predicting the percentage of the vote or the number of MPs the parties would gain or lose proved extremely challenging. This challenge was a product of the joint effect of an unusually high number of undecided voters and the People's Democratic Party's (HDP) gamble to pass the 10 percent threshold.

The 10 percent national threshold for parties entering parliament was imposed on Turkish politics by the military junta of 1980 in order to prevent a proliferation of small parties in parliament and to push the political system towards a two party state. Although it was considered anti-democratic at the time, the threshold has not been eliminated or lowered due to disagreement between political parties on what the threshold should be. In the June elections, the threshold worked against the biggest political party, leading to the Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) loss of its single party rule. The HDP's goal of passing the threshold significantly mobilized its voters, and at the same time, united those who wanted to end the single party government of the AK Party. Some of the undecided voters, who had previously voted for the AKP, voted for the HDP or the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and as a result, the AK Party experienced decline in votes. Election results demonstrated that more nationalist voters, who felt that they had a strong alternative party in their electoral districts, moved away from the AK Party and voted for the secondary parties. If they were Kurdish nationalists they aligned with the HDP, and if they were Turkish nationalists, especially in Central Anatolia, they voted for the MHP.

As a result of the changing dynamics in the country, for the first time in 13 years, four

parties passed the ten percent threshold. As predicted, the AK Party won the majority of votes in the election, but with a margin that was less than expected. In fact the AK Party won only 40.8 percent of the votes. The MHP, meanwhile, garnered the most votes it has seen since the 1999 elections, winning 16.29 percent of the vote, which corresponds to a 17 percent gain in votes since the last election. The two parties on the left of the political spectrum, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the HDP, together garnered 38 percent of the vote, the highest percentage of the votes won by leftist parties since the 1980 military coup. However, the CHP, despite a more positive and aggressive campaign in the elections, lost one percent of its votes and only received 25 percent of the votes. The political party that gained most in this election was without a doubt the HDP, which received over 13 percent of the vote.

In terms of representation, the new parliament is one of the most diverse and representative in the history of Turkish democracy. In terms of gender ratio, it has more female MPs than ever, with 96 representatives. As for representation of non-Muslims in parliament, the new parliament became relatively better represented with seven non-Muslims, including the first MP from the Yazidi minority community. Also, for the first time in this election, Turkish citizens living in different countries around the world were able to vote in the general election. Although diaspora turnout was lower than expected (around 32.50% of total 2,866,979 voters), it was an important improvement for electoral standards in Turkey. In total, turnout for this election was a healthy 83.92%, which is in the same range as the 2011 and 2007 elections, albeit lower than the 2014 local elections (which was at 89.2%).

Despite the positive outcome of an increase in the diversity of MPs, the country was faced with the difficult task of forming a coalition government, something it had not tried to do in over

a decade. As early as the night of the election, it became obvious that the task at hand would not be easy. The MHP was the first party to speak out about a potential coalition government. Their Party leader, Devlet Bahçeli, said that the MHP voters gave them the responsibility to be the “main opposition party” and expressed his intention not to participate in a coalition government. Bahçeli suggested that the AK Party should form a coalition government with either the HDP or together with the CHP and the HDP. For Bahçeli, in case of failure to create a coalition government based on these scenarios, Turkey would need to go to early elections.¹ As for the HDP, while they did not oppose a coalition government in general, they stated even before the election that they would not consider forming a coalition government with the AK Party. This “election promise” was upheld after the elections. In one of the first statements by the party, HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş reiterated the position that his party would only consider being part of a coalition that did not include the AK Party.² Both parties outlined principles and set preconditions that they believed were necessary for them to form a coalition government. Only the CHP expressed some willingness immediately after the election to form a coalition government, but again, this did not include the AK Party. Instead the CHP was interested in forming a coalition with the other two opposition parties, in what the leader of the CHP, Kemal Kilicdağroğlu, argued constituted a “60% bloc.”³ Over the next two months, it appeared that the CHP might change its position as it proceeded to go through lengthy coalition negotiations with the AK Party. In the end, however, no combination

1. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/29225631.asp>

2. <http://www.dailysabah.com/elections/2015/06/11/turkeys-pro-kurdish-hdp-maintains-stance-on-a-coalition-without-ak-party>

3. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-main-opposition-chp-pushes-for-coalition-govt-without-akp.aspx?PageID=238&NID=83993&NewsCatID=338>

of parties were able to form a coalition government. Thus, President Erdogan used his constitutional powers to call for an early election on November 1, 2015. With this decision, Turkey will now see its fourth election in 20 months.

President Erdogan tasked Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to form a caretaker government to take Turkey to the November 1 election date. The next month will be critical to Turkey as Turkish forces are now not only fighting an increasing offensive against the PKK, but have also begun their fight against ISIS in Syria in coordination with the international coalition.

THE JUNE ELECTIONS AND PERFORMANCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

The Justice and Development Party (AK Party)

For the AK Party, the June 2015 elections were one of the most challenging ones in its history. It lost its ruling majority, but still managed to gain an electoral victory, a continuation of a series of wins since it came to power in 2002. In this sense, the June election became the AK Party's 11th election victory in a 13-year period. The AK Party's 13-year run of power has been a unique instance in Turkish political history as a single political party has been able to win numerous consecutive elections by such large margins. However, after three consecutive terms of single party government, the AK Party failed to win enough seats to govern the country by a ruling majority, which was a major shock to AK Party members. Until recently, there was hope that the party would stay in power as a single party government until at least 2023, the centennial of the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Given that perception, the psychological impact of this election's results on the party was particularly high. While the AK Party lost its ruling majority, it still held on to the overall majority with 40.87% of to-

tal votes. This translates into 258 seats in the 550-seat Parliament. The AK Party, despite the decline in the votes, continued to be the party with the most diverse geographical representation.

Following the June 2015 general elections, various explanations have been provided for the 9% loss in AK Party votes from the 2011 elections (in which the AK Party garnered 49.95% of the vote). There was a decline of almost a 2.5 million votes cast for the party, despite the increase in total number of voters from 52.8 million to 56.6 million. While some polls in the run-up to the election had predicted a decline in votes for the AK Party, not many of them demonstrated a decline as large as 9 points. The percentage drop was especially shocking after a successful Presidential race for former AK Party Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in August 2014, in which he won 52 percent of the vote and became the first popularly elected President of Turkey. The AK Party was also successful in local elections in March 2014, in which the party increased its votes from 39% in 2009 to 46 percent and recovered some of the losses that the party faced in the 2009 local elections. Of course, there is not a single variable that can explain this decline. A range of factors were provided as possible reasons in the after election studies and analyses.

From the very beginning, election fatigue played an important role in the June elections. Over the last two years, party organizers have constantly mobilized support for the AK Party first during the March 2014 local elections and later during the August 2014 Presidential race. Party supporters were also mobilized during significant domestic political crises in the country, including the Gezi Park protests, and again after the December 17 operations. In both the local and presidential elections, the AK Party organized more election rallies than the other parties. As a result, the party branches, which are largely composed of volunteers, experienced a significant degree of election and mobilization fatigue.

In the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015, following the August 2014 Presidential election, local and general party conventions took place. During these conventions most of the local cadres of the party experienced notable change. This occurrence was the result of the AK Party's three term rule, which limits MPs to serve three terms, resulting in many three-term MPs having to leave their seats before the June 2015 elections. These changes to the local cadres as well as the upper echelons seriously impacted the performance of the party in the elections. In many regions, during the June elections, the AK Party lacked some of its most experienced, visible, and popular names due to the three term rule.

In addition to intra-party transitional challenges, the AK Party faced criticism for some of their candidate choices in certain localities. Post-election analyses have demonstrated that in the eastern and southeastern regions, the AK Party voters were not content with their party's candidates. This was expressed most openly in the predominantly Kurdish populated cities, where people complained that the candidates put forward were disconnected with AK Party voters and local people. These names not well connected with the local party branches proved unable to mobilize support from local people.

The short periods between the elections over the last two years have also made it extremely hard for the party and its local branches to prepare for a new election as an incumbent party. Although the incumbency has brought a lot of advantages for the AK Party and its candidates, the rise in the expectations of the society made the job of the government more difficult. The expanding middle class in Turkey and the globally integrated youth voters that emerged during the AK Party years have contributed to raised expectations for the government. The AK Party, with this round of election campaigning, failed to provide a satisfactory vision of the future for these voters. Although many of the middle income

voters still voted for the AK Party, the lack of enthusiasm was obvious in the election campaign.

A related problem was apathy on the part of some AK Party voters. After more than ten consecutive election victories, many AK Party voters assumed that the party would win the election even if they didn't personally go to the ballot box. Others were not happy with the ruling party in one way or another, but did not see an alternative to the AK Party. These voters stayed home on election day instead of shifting their votes. According to these voters, not voting was meant to be a political message for the AK Party. In part because of these factors, there was a slight decrease in the voter turnout for the AK Party and a swing of the votes to HDP and MHP. Considering these issues, the AK Party has spent the last few months of the election campaign mobilizing voters to go to the polls.

The AK Party's 13-year run of power has been a unique instance in Turkish political history as a single political party has been able to win numerous consecutive elections by such large margins.

In addition to voter apathy and fatigue, a second and less visible aspect of the decrease in votes for the AK Party relates to the Turkish economy. Although there has not been a serious economic crisis, low growth rates combined with the diminishing value of the Turkish lira played an indirect role in the voters' perception of the economic situation in the country. When looking at economic growth in Turkey, there has been a serious correlation between the number of AK Party votes in the last 13 years and the growth rate of the economy. When the AK Party reached its highest peak in the 2011 general elections, the growth rate was 8.9 percent and when, other than the 2002 elections,

the AK Party got the lowest vote in local elections in 2009, the growth was negative 4.8. Even though Turkey is not facing a crisis like the one in 2009, there has been a significant slowdown in the growth rate over the last year. In the first quarter of 2015 the growth rate was at 2.6 percent and the second quarter of 2015 is expected to be lower than that. During this period, the dollar-lira exchange rate and the serious crises around Turkey, including the crises in Ukraine, Syria and Iraq all played a hand in impacting the Turkish economy.

For the middle class, who are considered to be the backbone of the Turkish economy, this situation was worrisome. In most circumstances for the middle class, the most significant issue in the election was the the economy. The economic sit-

uation magnified some issues that were not taken into consideration beforehand by the voters. In a period of an enlarging middle class with increasing expectations meet with economic difficulties, voter sensitivity to any form of problem in the country increased rapidly. Greater attention was paid by voters to issues related to the statements of the AK Party officials regarding the economy. Together with the economic slow down, these instances of dissatisfaction resulted in less willingness to mobilize in the elections. Thus, this election's results demonstrated yet another correlation between the situation of the economy and the AK Party votes in the elections.

A third factor leading to the decline in AK Party votes was the loss of the Kurdish vote. Tra-

2002-2015 ELECTION RESULTS AND GDP GROWTH		
ELECTION	OUTCOME	GDP GROWTH
2002 GENERAL ELECTION	AKP: 34.28% CHP 29.4%	6.2 PERCENT
2004 LOCAL ELECTIONS	AKP: 41.67% CHP 18.23 % 10.45%	9.5 PERCENT
2007 GENERAL ELECTIONS	AKP: 46.58% CHP: 20.88% MHP 14.27%	4.7 PERCENT
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION	AKP: 80.1% CHP 16.5% DSP: 3.1%	4.7 PERCENT
CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM (AK PARTY SUPPORTED)	YES VOTE: 68.95% NO VOTE: 15.97%	4.7 PERCENT
2009 LOCAL ELECTIONS	AKP: 38.39% CHP 23.08% MHP 15.97%	- 4.8 PERCENT
2010 CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM (AK PARTY SUPPORTED)	YES VOTE: 57.88% NO VOTE: 42.21%	9.2 PERCENT
2011 GENERAL ELECTIONS	AKP: 49.83% CHP 23.08% MHP 15.97%	8.8 PERCENT
2014 LOCAL ELECTIONS	AKP: 43.31% CHP: 25.59% MHP: 17.63%	2.9 PERCENT
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION	AKP: 51.79% CHP/MHP: 38.44% HDP 9.76%	2.9 PERCENT
2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS	AKP: 40.78% CHP: 24.95% MHP: 16.29% HDP: 13.12%	2.3 PERCENT



Source: www.tradingeconomics.com OTC Interbank

ditionally, the AK Party has been very successful in appealing to voters from different ethnic groups in Turkey. In the predominantly Kurdish populated regions of the southeast and eastern Turkey, the AK Party has historically garnered a significant amount of votes and actually became the only party other than the HDP that could appeal to the voters in this region. In addition to the conservative Kurdish voters, the party has been able to gain liberal Kurdish votes, especially in the Western regions of Turkey and metropolitan cities. Kurdish support for the AK Party has largely been due to the party's push for democratic reforms. Moreover, in the last 13 years, the AK Party has done more to address the Kurdish issue than any of its predecessors. In addition to significant democratic reforms in the first years of the AK Party government, which paved the way for the beginning of the accession negotiations with the EU, in 2009, in a "Democratic Opening," the government established a 24-hr Kurdish language state television channel to go on air and universities were allowed to teach Kurdish language and literature courses for the first time. Following this "opening," the AK Party government, assuming a significant degree of political risk, launched a "resolution process" with the PKK in order to deal with this problem and reach a reconciliation on this issue that had been going on since the formation of the Turkish Republic.

All of this was altered, however, during the crisis in Kobani, which proved to be a significant turning point for AK Party support among Kurdish voters. Clashes between Syria's Democratic Union Party (PYD) and ISIS in the Syrian border town of Kobani generated a major crisis in Turkish domestic politics and foreign policy. Miscommunication between the government and the local population, as well as the successful use of this miscommunication by the HDP played an important role in the AK Party's loss of Kurdish votes. Although Turkey accepted more than 180 thousand refugees from Kobani in a matter of days and provided medical treatment to the wounded, Turkey was harshly criticized by Kurdish groups in the region for not providing enough support for the armed Kurdish groups protecting Kobani from the ISIS militants. For some, it was Turkey's decision not to intervene militarily and for others it was Turkey's unwillingness to provide military support for the armed Kurdish groups that generated discontent among the Kurds in the region. It was clear, however, the Kurds expected Turkey to "do more" to save Kobani. Turkey later allowed the passage of the Peshmerga forces from Northern Iraq to Kobani to fight against ISIS, but the absence of Turkish military action in support of PYD was interpreted by some segments of the local

population as indirect support for ISIS. With nationalism among the Kurds on the rise, many in the region saw President Erdogan's statements on the crisis, not as a description of the situation, but as his wish about the future of Kobani. In particular, the statement "Kobani may fall at any moment" (in a speech Erdogan was in fact criticizing the international lack of attention to the Syrian civil war and Kobani itself) was not well received. This was propagated in the region by some Kurdish groups as active support from the AK Party and President Erdogan to the ISIS forces. During the election campaign, the HDP, using the Kobani events to their advantage, targeted President Erdogan and portrayed him as anti-Kurdish in an effort to unite the Kurdish votes and rally anti-Erdogan groups under its' flag. The campaign message "We will not let you become President" was appealing to Kurds and other opposition groups who wished to see the AK Party lose power.

As a result, the AK Party lost a significant number of Kurdish votes to the HDP in the June

elections. According to a post-election survey conducted by Konda, there was a 57% vote shift from the AK Party to the HDP.⁴ This is particularly obvious in the predominantly Kurdish cities of Turkey's southeastern and eastern regions. Kurdish nationalism, as a result of the conflict in Syria as well as repeated ISIS attacks in the Kurdish areas, became the most dominant force shaping voting behavior of the Kurds in Turkey. In previous election cycles, the more religious and conservative Kurdish groups in Turkey aligned with the AK Party instead of the Kurdish nationalists, however, due to the situation on the ground, the Kurdish ethnic identity appeared more consolidated and voters of the region preferred to align with Kurdish nationalists. Although some argue that the AK Party's election discourse is partly to blame for the electoral loss among the Kurds, the Kobani factor and the subsequent rise of Kurdish nationalism were the strongest factors in the shift of votes.

4. http://survey.konda.com.tr/rapor/KONDA_7HaziranSandikveSeçmenAnaliziRaporu.pdf

SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA HDP AKP VOTES						
CITY	2011 GENERAL ELECTION		2014 LOCAL ELECTIONS		2015 GENERAL ELECTION	
	HDP	AKP	HDP	AKP	HDP	AKP
ADIYAMAN	*6.56% 20,063	67.3% 205,968	**5.3% 6,157	54.9% 174,094	22.63% 70,979	58.0% 181,809
BATMAN	*51.48% 113,378	37.1% 81,778	**55.9% 91,231	32.8% 80,563	71.4% 193,545	18.9% 50,955
DIYARBAKIR	*61.7% 419,095	32.2% 218,552	**55.1% 396,215	35.0% 251,952	77.73% 640,689	14.8% 122,027
GAZIANTEP	*5.39% 44,610	61.7% 81,778	**6.2% 55,578	54.6% 490,089	15.32% 142,951	47.0% 438,955
KILIS	*0.13% 83	59.5% 38,976	0.8% 354	51.9% 35,206	4.07% 2735	49.2% 33,034
MARDIN	*60.9% 195,581	32.2% 103,402	0% 0	37.4% 129,239	72.05% 278,691	19.9% 76,997
SANLIURFA	*26.97% 182,915	63.5% 430,453	**30.5% 239,154	61.7% 483,221	38.08% 297,417	46.8% 365,326
SIIRT	*42.5% 51,809	48.0% 58,623	**49.4% 30,846	41.2% 56,174	64.73% 94,184	28.7% 41,665
SIRNAK	*72.3% 125,282	20.6% 35,714	**59.6% 16,286	20.4% 39,307	83.84% 189,044	9.7% 21,901

*indicates independent votes

** indicates BDP candidates

Another important factor in the the AK Party's loss of votes in the Southeast and Central Anatolia was the presence of an alternative party that was better able to align itself with the changing interests of the region's electorate. In Southeast Anatolia, the HDP, and in Central Anatolia the MHP, presented themselves as strong alternatives to the AK Party. In the Southeast, due to an increasing ethnic solidarity and growing nationalism among Kurds, the HDP presented itself as a more Kurdish nationalist alternative to the AK Party. In the same vein, in Central Anatolia, the MHP gained more votes from Turkish nationalists who were concerned with the increasing tension between the HDP and the AK Party and the future of the resolution process.

From the beginning of the Kurdish "opening," a significant group of AK Party voters in Central and Western Anatolia were skeptical about the resolution process and questioned whether the government was giving too much away in the process. There existed a lack of trust that the PKK would fulfill its end of the requirements of the resolution process. The AK Party was initially able to convince a majority of these skeptical voters of the merits of the resolution process and gain their support. However, this situation changed as a result of a few overlapping developments. First, the extension of and seemingly endless nature of the process started to make many voters increasingly anxious about its future. There was an increasing number of reports warning of the worsening situation of public order and increased empowerment of the PKK in the Southeast of Turkey. In particular, the city organization of PKK, the KCK, was reportedly gaining strength in the region. This prospect generated serious concerns among the nationalist voters in Anatolia. The escalation of the discourse between the AK Party and the HDP also resulted in serious worries for nationalists. Support from the U.S. and the international coalition against ISIS for the PYD forces exacerbated these concerns. Moreover, the overall rise of the HDP

and the increasing possibility of the HDP achieving the 10% parliamentary threshold also added fuel to the growing nationalist reaction. As the AK Party and the HDP exchanged bitter accusations, the AK Party voters who felt uncomfortable about this escalation considered the AK Party not assertive enough to deal with the HDP's increasing nationalist tone, and as a result voted for the MHP.

In the aftermath of the Kobani crisis, another critical turning point for the MHP emerged that determined the voting behavior of yet more nationalist voters. During the first week of October of 2014, protests took place in many of the major Southeastern cities. What started as protests against the government's response to the Kobani crisis quickly escalated and turned into major riots where protestors attacked and looted government buildings. Lynching and looting took place while security forces failed to control the situation on the ground. Ultimately, 42 people died during these protests. Voters found themselves aligning even more closely with the MHP's skeptical and critical position against the resolution process.

Such a visible shift in votes from the AK Party to the MHP and the HDP was ultimately the result of increasing nationalistic emotions among voters, and more importantly, the existence of parties that better catered to these nationalist feelings. A post-election study done by Konda⁵ shows that the AK Party lost around 3.5% of its votes to each of these nationalistic parties. This shift was especially apparent in the Anatolian cities of Kayseri and Erzurum.

People's Democratic Party (HDP)

More surprising than the AK Party's loss of its single party government was the pro-Kurdish HDP's gain of over 10% of the national vote. Entering this election for the first time as a party rather than with independent candidates, the HDP soared past the electoral threshold, gaining 13%

5. Konda post-election study

of the vote and 80 seats in parliament. If we count the independent votes during the 2011 election under the HDP umbrella, the party gained over 7% of the general votes in this election. There are various explanations for this significant electoral gain. First of all, the more religious and conservative segments of the Kurdish society that typically align with the AKP moved to the Kurdish nationalists. Additionally, the possibility of passing the ten percent threshold for the first time mobilized most of the Kurdish population to vote for the HDP. Threshold mobilization together with the ethnic identity mobilization surpassed other political identities and alignments.

As mentioned above, the Kobani crisis and the clashes between Kurdish groups in Iraq and Syria with ISIS, served to consolidate Kurdish ethnic identity and significantly shaped the voting behavior. The HDP proved successful in channeling this newly revived regional ethnic nationalism and the perception of an existential struggle in the Northern Syria into votes. These changes in voting behavior were most obvious in the most conservative segments of the Kurdish society. The aforementioned events also impacted the voting behavior of the liberal Kurds who had previously distanced themselves from the more nationalist brand of Kurdish politics. The feeling of ethnic solidarity, together with the perception of the abandonment by the AK Party, played an important role in the consolidation of the Kurdish voters behind the HDP in the elections. Under this social psychology, the re-alignment of the Kurdish voters with the nationalist Kurdish party was almost unavoidable.

Another factor that led to the increase of the HDP votes was the party's attempt to portray itself as a party not just for Kurds, but for the general electorate. It was a paradoxical situation. The party's main message of being a party for all of Turkish society contradicted with the Kurdish nationalism that has been inherent in their politics. However, the party was successful in manag-

ing this contradiction. By presenting themselves as a party for people from all regions of Turkey, they were able to "normalize" themselves and successfully gain votes from Kurds who were less nationalistic and had different ideological leanings compared to those in Southeast Turkey. Moreover, the decision to enter the election as a party, rather than as independent candidates, as they had done in previous elections, allowed people in all parts of Turkey to vote for the HDP. In previous elections, the HDP candidates running as independents were only nominated in the Southeast, preventing those in other parts of the country to cast a vote for the HDP. In many different parts of Turkey, the HDP had managed to average 2 to 3 percent of votes. In previous elections, due to the minimal number of votes in non-ethnically Kurdish cities and localities, sister parties of the HDP did not nominate candidates. However, in the June 2015 elections, even though the HDP candidates did not expect to gain notable margins in the election, voters were mobilized in an effort to assist the possibility that the party might pass the national 10% threshold.

The tactical voting habits of non-Kurdish, anti-AK Party voters in this election were also important. Knowing that removing the AK Party from the government would be impossible, anti-AK Party voters instead attempted to simply reduce its ruling majority by bringing the HDP into the parliament. A fourth party in the parliament was seen as the best way to end the single party government status of the AK Party or at least weaken the AK Party government into a single government with a thin majority. More importantly, the elevation of the HDP was viewed as a catalyst to eliminate the AK Party's chances of reaching the qualified majority necessary to change the constitution, as would be necessary for a referendum that could transition Turkey into a Presidential system. Although post election studies show that this mobilization was less than anticipated, it gave the party a morale advantage

and enthusiasm during the electoral campaign. The situation of anti-AK Party strategic voting was most obvious in the metropolitan areas, particularly in the western regions of Turkey. The HDP ran a smart political campaign to reach first time voters. There were more than 1.100.00 first time voters in the June elections.⁶ The party was able to connect with some of these voters through their campaign and election rhetoric. Not only did they use humor in their campaign ads, but the party leaders presented the HDP as a liberal, inclusive and peace loving political party capable of resolving problems between the Kurds and Turks and responding to the demands of the young voters. Both the positive portrayal of the party in the international arena and the HDP's own effective campaign were appealing to first time voters, who played an important part in pushing the party past the 10% threshold.

Additionally, diaspora voters played an important part in the rise of votes for the HDP. There were almost 3 million voters in the diaspora. Although in general the turnout rate of the diaspora community was lower than expected, the party enjoyed extensive mobilization in Western countries. When viewing only diaspora votes, the HDP received the second highest number of votes with 21.03 percent. The AK Party garnered the highest number of votes with 49.30 percent. The HDP gained its highest percentages among diaspora voters in Canada, Poland, Italy, Ukraine, Finland, Kazakhstan, Japan, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom.⁷

The final factor that played a role in the increase of HDP votes was the bombing at an HDP rally in Diyarbakir a few days before the election. The attack consolidated HDP voters and generated an impression that the party and all Kurds were under attack. In the day after the attack, the bombing was portrayed as part of the

attacks against Kurds in the region. Although the net impact of this bombing cannot be measured, its mobilizing effects were felt on election day. As people went to the polls on June 7, pictures of those who had been wounded in the attack were circulated and played a significant role in the mobilization of the Kurdish voters around Turkey.

The Kobani crisis and the clashes between Kurdish groups in Iraq and Syria with ISIS, served to consolidate Kurdish ethnic identity and significantly shaped the voting behavior.

It is worth mentioning that, following the election, there were reports of electoral irregularities, such as intimidation of voters by the PKK.⁸ After the elections, the AK Party officials, including the deputy Prime Minister Yalcin Akdogan, raised the issue of electoral threats and irregularities.⁹ In particular, there were complaints about threats made by the PKK to village chiefs about making sure that every vote from that village went to the HDP. According to the Supreme Election Council (YSK), there were many ballot boxes in the region with 100 per cent of the votes registered to the HDP. In fact, even before the elections, the AK Party's elected representatives from several localities claimed that ballot box observers from other parties were threatened and resigned from their posts, leaving the HDP observers as the only observers over the ballot boxes in many districts.¹⁰ While it is not entirely clear if this had a dramatic effect on election results, AK Party leadership argues that this will also be an issue in the next elections.

6. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/29189922.asp>

7. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/29225400.asp>

8. <http://haber.star.com.tr/acikgorus/hdp-doguda-secimleri-nasil-kazandi/haber-1038054>

9. <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1124958-basbakan-yardimcisi-yalcin-akdogan-haberturke-konustu-cozum-sureci-bitmedi>

10. <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2015/06/07/ak-partili-musahitlere-tehdit>

Republican People's Party (CHP)

The Republican People's Party (CHP) garnered the second largest majority, after the AK Party, with 25% of the vote (132 seats); but overall experienced a 1% decrease in the number of votes from the 2011 general elections. These numbers came as a disappointment to the CHP, who predicted a much better showing of 30%. The party followed a new campaign plan, focusing mainly on economic issues and blaming the AK Party for economic inequality in the country. Unlike in other elections, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu and other CHP leaders avoided bringing up issues such as secularism and Kemalism. This was viewed as a positive development for the party. However, this change ultimately did not translate into success at the polls. The CHP could not extend its base outside its traditionally successful regions in any serious capacity. It did poorly in the southeast and eastern part of Turkey and was also unable to challenge the MHP in Central Anatolia. Despite the high hopes for the CHP for June 2015, real gains failed to come to fruition.

The shift in votes from the CHP to other parties was most notable in cities in the eastern part of Turkey, such as Tunceli. In that city, where the CHP won 56 per cent of the vote in 2011 elections, support for the party decreased to 20 per cent. Meanwhile the independent candidates supported by the BDP that received 22 per cent of the votes in 2011 increased to 60 percent of the vote for the HDP in 2015. This vote shift was less dramatic in other major cities and towns, but could still be observed. For instance, in Besiktas, one of Istanbul's major town centers and a traditional CHP stronghold, the shift from the CHP to the HDP was 6 percent, and in other major municipalities such as Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara there were also decrease in the votes of the CHP, though less dramatic than the decrease in votes for the AK Party. The CHP expected a major shift of the vote from the Alevi voters during the election, owing to its strategy of nominating Alevi candidates. This strategy proved successful as post-election analysis has demonstrated that the CHP kept the Alevi vote throughout Turkey.

CENTRAL ANATOLIA AKP MHP VOTES						
CITY	2011 GENERAL ELECTION		2014 LOCAL ELECTION		2015 GENERAL ELECTION	
	AKP	MHP	AKP	MHP	AKP	MHP
ESKİŞEHİR	44.06% 221,437	14.55% 73,138	39.1% 204,873	11.2% 204,873	35.93% 208,226	16.84% 89,226
ISPARTA	53.01% 135,137	19.04% 55,457	39.9% 48,550	44.5% 54,164	44.11% 114,348	27.06% 70,152
KONYA	69.63% 808,274	13.16% 152,797	64.3% 774,717	18.5% 222,504	65.45% 798,526	16.42% 200,395
ANKARA	49.20% 1,466,284	14.59% 434,666	44.9% 1,415,973	7.8% 245,624	41.21% 1,320,525	18.02% 577,417
KİRSEHİR	50.78% 66,165	21.92% 28,558	42.2% 28,954	31.0% 21,243	39.61% 52,732	39.61% 42,801
KIRIKKALE	62.08% 104,696	18.84% 31,768	44.3% 50,577	30.0% 34,216	50.62% 81,710	28.87% 46,610
AKSARAY	66.08% 131,968	17.98% 35,912	59.8% 58,363	34.3% 35,163	58.39% 119,659	30.31% 62,110
YOZGAT	66.62% 171,840	18.33% 47,285	56.2% 25,676	38.2% 17,459	58.31% 139,934	27.90% 66,958
KAYSERİ	64.94% 477,514	18.01% 132,444	59.0% 450,626	27.0% 206,378	52.41% 409,658	27.81% 217,348
SİVAS	63.32% 233,493	9.91% 36,545	58.3% 106,887	3.8% 6,914	57.66% 212,734	18.20% 67,145

Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) won 16% of the vote and saw an increase of about 3% from the 2011 general election. In Central Anatolia, the party attracted a lot of traditional conservative AK Party voters. As usual, the traditional voting bloc of the MHP included the conservative and nationalist segments of Anatolia. Other MHP voters this year were those who had concerns about the direction of the Kurdish resolution process, which was explained at length before. As the table above shows, the shift of votes from the AK Party to the MHP, was greatest in the major population centers of Central Anatolia.

VOTE SWING 2011 - 2015				
CITY	AKP	CHP	MHP	HDP
ADANA	-7.50%	-1.99%	-1.60%	6.72%
ADIYAMAN	-9.20%	-5.21%	-0.38%	16.19%
AFYON	-8.03%	-0.28%	8.81%	1.05%
AGRI	-31.71%	-1.20%	0.35%	37.02%
AKSARAY	-7.69%	-5.08%	12.42%	1.73%
AMASYA	-6.50%	-1.62%	7.94%	1.18%
ANKARA	-7.99%	-1.93%	3.43%	4.25%
ANTALYA	-4.43%	-0.44%	1.17%	4.94%
ARDAHAN	-14.00%	-7.65%	-2.18%	18.05%
ARTIVIN	-8.04%	-4.08%	9.27%	2.72%
AYDIN	-6.22%	2.44%	0.04%	5.21%
BALIKESIR	-7.67%	0.23%	6.36%	2.45%
BARTIN	-7.09%	1.70%	2.31%	1.24%
BATMAN	-18.73%	-5.76%	0.47%	9.63%
BAYBURT	-3.30%	-1.29%	7.79%	1.08%
BILECIK	-5.25%	4.06%	-1.48%	3.30%
BINGOL	-20.12%	-1.83%	1.47%	8.09%
BITLIS	-20.23%	-0.38%	0.74%	18.03%
BOLU	-6.47%	4.54%	-0.03%	1.67%
BURDUR	-6.02%	1.95%	4.58%	1.48%
BURSA	-9.05%	2.97%	3.28%	4.00%
CANAKKALE	-7.33%	0.08%	5.38%	2.68%
CANKIRI	-6.42%	0.63%	5.58%	0.84%
CORUM	-6.18%	-1.73%	7.00%	1.85%

CITY	AKP	CHP	MHP	HDP
DENIZLI	-7.05%	3.94%	1.39%	2.96%
DIYARBAKIR	-18.80%	0.95%	1.05%	13.40%
DUZCE	-6.52%	3.64%	-0.43%	2.03%
EDIRNE	-6.21%	2.08%	2.46%	2.65%
ELAZIG	-14.47%	-6.52%	6.37%	15.25%
ERZINCAN	-8.19%	-4.75%	7.31%	5.51%
ERZURUM	-17.23%	-2.09%	10.24%	9.62%
ESKISEHIR	-8.13%	0.77%	2.29%	3.58%
GAZIANTEP	-14.89%	-3.08%	8.48%	10.12%
GIRESUN	-5.84%	-1.64%	6.61%	1.00%
GUMUSHANE	-9.07%	-2.68%	9.83%	1.51%
HAKKARI	-7.64%	0.12%	1.46%	6.52%
HATAY	-6.85%	-2.08%	1.37%	5.44%
IGDIR	-17.38%	1.93%	-7.01%	26.20%
ISPARTA	-8.90%	0.51%	8.02%	1.81%
ISTANBUL	-9.04%	-1.85%	1.68%	7.09%
IZMIR	-10.65%	8.55%	2.49%	5.66%
KAHRAMAN-MARAS	-8.00%	-3.01%	6.94%	5.15%
KARABUK	-10.00%	-1.81%	12.00%	1.12%
KARAMAN	-1.87%	-3.41%	4.56%	1.20%
KARS	-15.93%	-4.63%	-3.23%	24.71%
KASTAMONU	-6.94%	3.84%	4.14%	0.67%
KAYSERI	-12.93%	0.33%	9.80%	2.31%
KIRIKKALE	-11.46%	0.17%	10.03%	1.26%
KIRKLARELI	-4.65%	-2.54%	4.67%	2.31%
KIRSEHIR	-11.17%	-3.13%	10.23%	4.78%
KILIS	-10.32%	-7.52%	14.64%	3.70%
KOCAELI	-6.35%	12.46%	-9.29%	5.30%
KONYA	-4.18%	-3.57%	3.26%	2.94%
KUTAHYA	-9.97%	-0.56%	11.17%	0.88%
MALATYA	-9.87%	-3.05%	3.25%	6.83%
MANISA	-10.09%	0.44%	6.88%	4.05%
MARDIN	-6.36%	-2.66%	1.77%	8.31%
MERSIN	-6.36%	-2.66%	1.77%	8.31%
MUGLA	-6.54%	-0.09%	2.62%	4.34%
MUS	-18.58%	-3.03%	-2.25%	26.83%
NEVSEHIR	-7.98%	-1.63%	9.70%	1.39%
NIGDE	-6.37%	-0.11%	6.48%	1.19%

CITY	AKP	CHP	MHP	HDP
ORDU	-7.20%	5.87%	1.22%	0.04%
OSMANIYE	-4.21%	1.84%	-0.19%	3.83%
RIZE	-2.30%	1.82%	0.43%	1.14%
SAKARYA	-4.95%	-0.34%	4.42%	1.97%
SAMSUN	-8.93%	1.41%	6.58%	1.18%
SANLIURFA	-18.09%	1.08%	2.56%	16.92%
SIIRT	-19.92%	-1.57%	1.25%	23.02%
SINOP	-7.45%	-2.42%	8.67%	1.24%
SIRNAK	-11.85%	-1.59%	1.20%	12.67%
SIVAS	-5.66%	-0.30%	8.29%	-3.28%
TEKIRDAG	-4.80%	-0.06%	1.71%	4.39%
TOKAT	-4.42%	-2.51%	6.15%	1.27%
TRABZON	-3.67%	-1.19%	5.71%	0.88%
TUNCELI	-5.59%	-35.61%	3.75%	37.95%
USAK	-11.81%	-1.43%	10.99%	2.39%
VAN	-20.80%	-2.75%	-0.29%	26.12%
YOZGAT	-8.31%	-1.91%	9.57%	0.96%
ZONGULDAK	-9.19%	1.54%	10.11%	-1.69%

THE AFTERMATH OF THE ELECTION AND THE COALITION FORMATION PERIOD

The results of the June elections forced the country into a period of coalition bargaining that Turkey has not experienced for the last 13 years. Following the election, there were many different reactions by party leaders regarding the possibility of a coalition government. As stated above, the MHP quickly positioned itself as the main opposition party and expressed its unwillingness to be part of a coalition government. The HDP welcomed the idea of forming a coalition government, but only if it didn't include the AK Party. The CHP also appeared willing to consider a coalition government but first with its so called "60 percent" bloc – comprising the three opposition parties, and then potentially with the AK Party.

Given the difficulty in reconciling these positions, many commentators expressed the challenges of forming a coalition government and the high likelihood of early elections. Although some of these parties changed their previous positions, the "red lines" and conditions that they brought to coalition negotiations could not be reconciled.

A few days after the election, it became very clear that the CHP's goal of forming a 60% bloc coalition would not be achievable, mostly due to the irreconcilable positions of the HDP and the MHP with regard to the Kurdish question. The MHP made very clear its position against joining with the HDP. Under these circumstances, there were discussions about the possibility of three different options, one included a coalition between the AK Party and the CHP, another a coalition between the AK Party and the MHP, and a third of a minority government of the AK Party endorsed by one of the political parties, most probably the MHP. During this period, many in Turkey considered a coalition between the AK Party and the CHP as the best possible option. There were several reasons for this line of thinking. The prospect of an AK Party and CHP coalition was expected to tone down the political polarization in the country. For others, a coalition between the two would have enough MPs for a qualified majority, which meant that the two party would be able to jointly design a new constitution. However, there were challenges for forming such a coalition as well. The first problem was the distance between the grassroots of the two political parties. Although two parties engaged in negotiations about coalition formation, neither the AK Party nor the CHP bases were comfortable with the situation. Anti AK Party feelings among the CHP voters and anti CHP sentiments among AK Party supporters made it difficult for these parties to persuade their bases. Most of the details of coalition negotiations between the two parties are unknown for the public, but in the aftermath of the failure of the negotiations, AK Party was quick

to outline the issues upon which the two parties failed to agree, and the CHP did not refute them.

The second option of a coalition government between the AK Party and the MHP initially sounded more feasible for the conservative segments of the AK Party. There was an overlap between the voter bases of these two political parties in Anatolia. This coalition was seen as a viable alternative for the conservative and nationalist segments of the voters of the AK Party and was likewise desirable for the young voters of the MHP, who were more enthusiastic about becoming a part of the governing coalition. On top of that, since the December 17 operations, there has been a silent cooperation at the bureaucratic level between AK Party and the MHP. The bureaucratic elites belonging to these parties, therefore, also considered this a desirable option. However, there again proved to be a number of challenges. For the AK Party, the more liberal segments of the party felt that a coalition with the MHP would further alienate the Kurdish voters and stall the resolution process. One of the preconditions of the MHP for the formation of a coalition with the AK Party was ending the resolution process. Furthermore, the MHP had its own concerns about becoming the junior partner in a coalition government. The last time the MHP played such a role was during the coalition before AK Party's electoral victory in the November 2002 elections. During this time, it became the major loser of the coalition government. In the later phases of the coalition negotiations, the MHP began to follow a new strategy by rejecting both the formation of a coalition government and rejecting support for an AK Party minority government.

TIMELINE

The following part of the paper will provide a timeline of the developments during the coalition building period. It also outlines the main issues that have emerged during this process that affected voter behavior in the November 1 elections.

June 8

- President Erdogan issues a written statement addressing election results. He urges all parties to show “sensitivity and responsibility.”
- Before the announcement of the formal results of the elections, the MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli holds a press conference, stating that his party is ready to play the role of main opposition party and that if the other parties cannot form a coalition government, the MHP is ready for early elections.

June 9

- HDP Leader Selahattin Demirtaş tells reporters that he does not plan to join the AK Party in a coalition government.
- CHP Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu Tweets on the possibility of early elections, stating, “An early election would have no use other than wasting time and disrespecting the will of the people who hoped through us.”
- Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu resigns in a procedural move. President Erdogan asks him to stay and serve as Prime Minister until a new government is established.
- Survey results are released, which indicate that the AK Party would win 45% of the vote if the election was repeated.

June 11

- MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli lists the following terms for considering an MHP-AK Party coalition:
 - Launching the probe into December 17 corruption allegations against several AK Party officials
 - Curtailing President Erdogan's powers
 - Ending the Kurdish peace process

June 18

- Official election results are announced, meaning that parliament will assemble on

Tuesday 23 June 2015 and begin the process of electing a speaker.

Turnout was 83.92%

AKP: 258 seats

CHP: 132 seats

MHP: 80 seats

HDP: 80 seats

June 19

- The possibility of an CHP-MHP-HDP coalition begins to be discussed.
- Kilicdaroglu suggests his party would be willing to give the MHP leader Bahceli the position of Prime Minister as part of a coalition deal.
- MHP Deputy Chairman Yusuf Halacoglu firmly declines Kilicdaroglu's offer, stating that "Bahceli would not abandon his principles for the sake of being Prime Minister. He also voiced that Bahceli had decided that the MHP would not form a coalition with the CHP"
- HDP co-chair Figen Yuksekdog states that any coalition formed between the CHP and MHP must include a commitment to the Kurdish peace process.

June 22

- The HDP announces Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat as their candidate for speaker.
- Firat says, regarding the possibility of an early election, "This is not a threatening point for us."

June 23

- The YSK announces a tender for 60 tons of yellow watermarked envelopes and 1600 white ballot papers in preparation for the possibility of early elections.
- The new Parliament meets for the first time.

June 24

- Former CHP leader Deniz Baykal is announced as the CHP's candidate for parliamentary speaker.

- Former cross-party presidential candidate Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu is announced as the MHP's candidate for parliamentary speaker.

June 26

- Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz is announced as the AK Party's candidate for parliamentary speaker.

June 30

- First and second rounds of Parliament Speaker Elections take place.

July 1

- Ismet Yilmaz of the AK Party is elected the new parliament speaker.

July 9

- PM Davutoglu is given the mandate by Erdogan to form a coalition government. Regarding this task, Davutoglu states, "I will ask for meetings with all political parties and plan to have the first round of talks next week," and, "If we approach this in an openhearted and transparent way, showing empathy toward each other, in the end, we can agree on a formula which will not leave Turkey without a government."

July 13

- PM Davutoglu has his first coalition meeting. He meets with CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu.
- MHP leader Bahceli said in a statement: "Under today's conditions in Turkey, the formation of a coalition by the AKP and the CHP should be accomplished without delay. If this is not considered sufficient, then the HDP should also be affiliated in the partnership to be built."
- PM Davutoğlu says his meeting with Kılıçdaroğlu was "genuine and friendly." These were initial talks but they agreed to a second meeting, he says.

- CHP deputy leader Haluk Koç says the parties agreed to discuss a strong government that could overcome the many internal and external problems facing the country. The CHP will never be the cause of deadlock, he adds.

July 14

- PM Davutoglu hold talks with MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli.
- MHP Leader Bahçeli says that his party would prefer to stay in the opposition rather than joining a coalition, and suggests that the AK Party seek a coalition with the CHP and HDP, while hinting that his party will “do what is required of it” if a coalition cannot be reached.

July 15

- PM Davutoglu meets with HDP co-leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag.
- PM Davutoglu states, in the aftermath of this meeting, “We could talk about any topic [with the HDP], but a framework for a potential coalition partnership is not there,” and that “Talks will continue, but there is no a mechanism like the one we have established with the CHP.”

July 21

- Omer Celik, the AK Party minister responsible of leading talks with CHP, holds a meeting with CHP deputy leader Haluk Koc.

July 22

- While at an event in Kirikkale, MHP leader Bahçeli declares that his party is launching preparations for the next election “today.”

July 23

- CHP representative Deniz Baykal says the MHP’s approach to coalition talks shows they desire an early vote and to usurp the CHP as the main opposition party. He also

stated, “I see the possibility of an early election as more likely. Well-intentioned steps have been taken for a coalition but if we look realistically there are various difficulties.”

July 25

- AK Party and CHP hold their first official coalition meeting.

July 28

- The AK Party and CHP hold second coalition meeting.
- AK Party representative Omer Celik states that the meeting was productive, and that all issues were discussed and each party’s positions understood. He also pointed out that the issue of lowering the election threshold would be left for party leaders to discuss.
- CHP spokesperson Haluk Koc tells reporters that there are both areas where the two parties agree and disagree.

July 29

- CHP reduces earlier announced 14 points for coalition to 5 points, including:
 - Education
 - Foreign policy
 - Kurdish problem
 - Constitution
 - Economy

July 30

- PM Davutoglu says that his party has not ruled out a coalition with the MHP and is still in contact with them. He also states that the AK Party is still in contact with the MHP despite Bahçeli’s announcement that his party would not be part of a coalition government. He also remarks that ongoing talks between the CHP and AK Party are exploratory.
- AK Party and CHP hold third day of coalition talks. Haluk Koç, the head CHP negotiator, says the sides discussed financial

discipline, monetary matters and a growth strategy "that embraces all layers of society".

August 1

- AK Party and CHP hold fourth meeting. CHP spokesperson Haluk Koc states, "What we discussed today isn't just any coalition, it is an effort to solve Turkey's large problems."
- Celik notes that, "Until agreement is reached on the final point, there is no agreement at all. And in any case, we have not yet moved to that kind of discussion."

August 2

- CHP Party leader Kilicdaroglu tells Haberturk that he believes PM Davutoglu is willing to enter into a coalition, but that President Erdogan opposes it and wants new elections.

August 3

- AK Party and CHP hold 5th meeting. The CHP says the decision now rests with AK Party leader Ahmet Davutoğlu, while AK Party negotiator Ömer Çelik praises the civil atmosphere of the talks.
- MHP leader Bahceli states: "These two parties should not run away from the great responsibility history has loaded upon them. They must demonstrate the determination and will to form a government in the national benefit. It is neither possible nor right for Turkey to continue further with a temporary government."

August 10

- AK Party and CHP leaders Davutoglu and Kilicdaroglu meet over dinner.

August 13

- At the last coalition meeting between the AK Party and CHP Davutoglu and Kilicdaroglu, the leaders announce that they could not form a government.
- CHP leader Kilicdaroglu later says he was

offered a short-term election government and not the four year reform government pursued by the CHP. He also expects to be asked by President Erdogan to try and form a government without the AK Party.

August 17

- PM Davutoglu meets with MHP leader Bahceli, but announces after the meeting that no deal was reached.
- PM Davutoglu sites Bahceli's unwillingness to abandon its platform, and disinterest in being part of coalition government as reasons for failure.

August 18

- PM Davutoglu returns the mandate to form a coalition government given to him on July 9th and says that he could not form a coalition.
- CHP leader Kilicdaroglu states that with the failure of AK Party to form a coalition, he should be offered a mandate to form a coalition government.

August 19

- President Erdogan says that he won't give CHP leader Kilicdaroglu a mandate to form a coalition government.

August 20

- President Erdogan meets with Parliamentary speaker Ismet Yilmaz, in a procedural step that comes before the forming of an all-party government before an election.

August 21

- President Erdogan says that a repeat election should be held on November 1.

August 23

- CHP leader Kilicdaroglu alleges that Erdogan's decision not to allow the CHP the chance to form a coalition government amounts to a "civilian coup."

DRIVERS OF NOV 1 ELECTIONS

The difficulties of a coalition negotiation process is something that many Turks have forgotten. In the history of Turkish democracy, coalition formations have always been challenging and time consuming enterprises. In the 1970s and in the 1990s, coalition negotiations dominated domestic politics in Turkey. Governments that were formed after these challenging negotiations seldom brought any stability or achieved political reform in the country. The political deadlocks they created frequently led to early elections or to military coups.

The coalition formation process this year, as expected by many, ended with the failure of the political parties to form a government. As a result, for the first time in the history of Turkish politics, a caretaker government has been formed in order to take Turkey to another election on November 1. Considering the political situation in the country, the fragile economy, and the geopolitical crises surrounding Turkey, the November 1 elections will be an important election that takes place in a very short period of time. The political parties launched their campaigns in the last few weeks. This time around, the candidate nomination process has proven more challenging to the AK Party than for the other political parties. Due to exceptional circumstances, the AK Party has chosen to allow its three termed MPs to become candidates again in this round of elections. This exception was made in order to repair some of the problems that took place in the previous election. The AK Party administration feels that the experience, the visibility, and the popularity of these senior lawmakers are necessary in order to garner more votes.

In addition to the candidacy of 24 three termed MPs, such as Ali Babacan, Besir Atalay, Faruk Celik, Mehdi Eker, and Cemil Cicek, the party has also revised most of its candidates in the Eastern and Southeastern cities. For instance,

all of the MP candidates in Agri (4), Bingol (3), Diyarbakir (11), Hakkari (3) and Igdır (2) and all but one MP candidates in Bitlis (3), Kars (3), Mus (2), Siirt (3), Tunceli (2), Van (8), Kilis (2) and Sirnak (4) have been changed. The majority of the list has been changed in cities such as Adana (10 over 14), Afyon (2 over 5), Amasya (2 over 3), Bursa (9 over 18), Denizli (4 over 7), Edirne (3 over 3), Elazig (2 over 4), Erzurum (4 over 6), Giresun (3 over 4), Gumushan (2 over 2), Isparta (3 over 4), Mersin (10 over 11), Kastamonu (2 over 3), Kayseri (6 over 9), Kırklareli (2 over 3), Mardin (4 over 6), Mugla (4 over 6), Sanliurfa (8 over 12), and Aksaray (2 over 3).

Some of these changes took place in the lower ranking in the list but more major changes in the electable ranks of the lists have changed as well. As stated above, other political parties have more or less maintained the same lists. What changes have been made to other parties' lists have been more cosmetic than substantial. The AK Party, in its assessment of the election results of the June general elections, regarded its MP lists as one of the reasons for the decline of its votes and thus made these significant changes. The candidate lists are expected to play an important role especially in the cities with tight MP races such, as Samsun (MHP), Aydin (CHP), Balikesir (MHP), Van (HDP), Diyarbakir (HDP), Erzincan (CHP), Giresun (MHP), Kayseri (MHP), Sivas (CHP), Eskisehir (CHP). In these cities the party winning the June election won its MPs with a margin of only a few thousand votes. Owing to this, these have become the primary cities where the AK Party expects candidates' names to play an important role in mobilizing the base and gaining the necessary votes to increase the number of AK Party MPs.

The voting behavior of the Turkish electorate in this coming election will be determined by several factors. In addition to the same factors that affected voting behavior in the June elections, there are several issues that have become

more prominent in the last three months. Developments in the Kurdish issue, including the increased attacks by the PKK, the fate of the resolution process, and the fight against terrorism will play a strong role in the elections. In addition, the electorate will also be paying attention to debates among the political parties about their role in the coalition building process. There will be significant debates between the AK Party and the CHP over the failure of coalition talks and further disputes among the opposition parties over their failure to create “a 60 percent bloc.” In addition to the CHP, the MHP will also try to respond to criticisms about its role in the failure of the formation of a coalition government. In both the case of the breakdown of the resolution process and the failure of coalition formation, voters will vote in accordance with their judgment on who to blame for the current situation in the country.

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The most significant domestic development since the June election has been the escalation of the conflict with the PKK. It is still not clear why the PKK decided to end the ceasefire in July and return to violence when many people hoped that an HDP victory would bring about a significant level of improvement in the resolution process. Even though there was significant tension between the HDP and the AK Party during the elections, this was not considered something that would lead to the collapse of the resolution process. In fact, it was thought that the presence of the HDP in parliament would be an instrumental factor in pushing forward the resolution process.

However, in the aftermath of the elections, HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas openly said that the HDP would not be a coalition partner of the AKP and some HDP MPs began to make controversial statements about the resolution process and the Kurdish question. Furthermore, in a July 11th statement declaring the end of the ceasefire, the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), an organization under the PKK, said it is ready to attack dam constructions and construction equipment in the region.¹¹ Although initially Demirtas tried to explain that this statement was not meant to signal a wholesale end of the ceasefire, but rather a partial reaction to the construction of the dams, statements continue to come confirming earlier interpretations of the original statement.

One of the most important turning points of the process came after an attack by the ISIS in Suruc, the town bordering Kobani. Ten days after the KCK statement, 31 young people died in an attack by ISIS in the town of Suruc. The day after this attack two escalatory statements came from Demirtas and a senior PKK figure, Cemil Bayik. Both of them called on Kurdish communities to defend themselves against attacks. The same day, a gendarmerie was killed by the PKK and the next day the PKK executed Turkish two police officers in their home. Since then, attacks on Turkish police and military officers have continued to escalate. Another major attack occurred in Daglica, leaving 16 officers and soldiers dead; another occurred in Igdir, where 13 police officers were killed. Such attacks have further increased the tension in the region. Meanwhile, some provincial HDP governors have declared autonomy, and serious clashes have taken between government and Kurdish forces in towns like Cizre. As of early October 2015, there doesn't seem to be an end in sight to the violence.

11. <http://t24.com.tr/haber/kck-ateskesin-bittigini-acikladi-bundansonra-tum-barajlar-gerillanin-hedefinde-olacaktir,302608>

The aftermath of attacks in Daglica and Iğdir brought demonstrations in almost all of the major cities of Turkey. During most of these demonstrations, the HDP party buildings became targets. The funerals of the fallen soldiers have also turned into protests in some cities. These developments and the issue of national security, a spike in nationalist feelings, as well as the demand for the revival of the resolution process will seriously impact the voting behavior. These factors will create two very different center of gravities in the electoral behavior. The messages put forward by political parties during their campaigns regarding the resolution process, the PKK and national security will be closely scrutinized by voters. If the PKK attacks stop in the run-up to the election, perhaps their significance will decrease for the voters in different regions, but for the Kurdish voters in the region it will continue to shape their voting preferences. The local people in the southeastern cities reacted negatively to the outburst of violence in October 2014, with many accusing Kurdish political actors of not acting responsibly and endangering the relative calm and peace that the region was enjoying throughout the resolution process. This time the Kurdish voters may also react negatively toward the HDP and its inability to take a strong position throughout the escalation of violence. This would impact both the HDP and the AK Party votes in these regions. In addition, one of the key constituents in the election will be the more nationalist and conservative voters who aligned with the MHP in June elections. Opinion polls show that the MHP will suffer a decrease in their votes mostly because of the party's position against participating in a coalition government during the coalition negotiations.

Another important issue in the minds of the voters will be the economy. Although it has drawn less attention and discussion than other issues after the June elections, the economy is seen as having been one of the most significant factors

affecting votes for the AK Party in elections since November 2002. Today, although Turkey is not experiencing a negative growth rate, the growth numbers have been lower than in previous years. The main issue that has been frequently mentioned as a catalyst for the country's negative economic outlook is the value of the Turkish lira against the dollar. Since the June elections, the Turkish lira has lost significant value, with the value of one dollar passing the 3 lira line. This loss in value is generating major concern in the Turkish business sector as well as medium and small size enterprises in the country. Most of these enterprises buy the raw materials and do their borrowing in US dollars. Instability in the exchange rate of the lira significantly affects the finances and budgets of these businesses. As mentioned above, we see a direct correlation between the economic situation of these groups and the AK Party votes. In the November election, voters may hold the uncertainty and political vacuum generated by coalition formation process responsible for the economic situation rather than the AK Party policies. Thus, just like the polls in the immediate aftermath of the election, voters may consider the coalition negotiation process as the biggest threat to the economy and act to prevent it from happening again and vote for stability and predictability.

Finally, the failure of political parties to form a coalition will have an important impact on the voting behavior in the upcoming elections. Concerns about the failure of coalition formation and a crisis of the coalition government were already prevalent among the voters even before the June elections. The parties came into the coalition process with difficult preconditions and red-lines that made it impossible for a coalition government to be formed. The optimism among some about the formation of a grand coalition between the AK Party and CHP, a coalition that even after establishment would be hard to manage, ended with disagreements and accusations.

Issues surfacing in the months following the June elections will ultimately be the ones most discussed. The positions of the opposition parties during this process will be a significant topic that will be debated during the campaign period. There will be an increase in accusations, which began to appear even before the formal start of the campaign process. Although opposition parties have cited President Erdoğan as the reason for the failure of the coalition process, the failure to coordinate positions during this process,

just like the problems faced during the election process for the speaker of the parliament, demonstrated the incapability of the opposition to build a coalition or come together. Under these circumstances, it is yet to be seen what these parties are going to pursue in their campaigns and what messages they are going to give in order to explain their record following the June 7 elections. The debates among political parties will be one of the factors that will shape their behavior in the run up to the November 1 elections.

The June 2015 general election has proven to be one of the most important elections in recent Turkish democratic history. For the first time in 13 years, no single party has won enough votes to create a ruling majority government. As the country heads for yet another round of elections on November 1, it is important to analyze the results of the June polls one more time as a background to the upcoming elections. It is also critical to examine the developments between June 7th and early October in Turkish domestic politics to get a better sense of what might be lying ahead in terms of electoral results and chances of a single-party government as opposed to a coalition. This election analysis will be divided into three main parts. The first part will provide an examination of the June election results and the main forces that influenced them. The second part of the paper will deal with the coalition formation process that failed in the period after the elections and provide a timeline of the coalition formation process. Finally, the third part will focus on variables that will influence the voting behavior of the Turkish electorates in the upcoming elections.



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