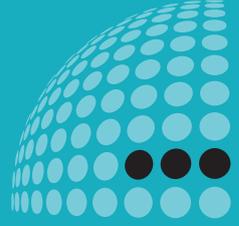


# SETA Policy Brief



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## Politics in 2012

Hatem Ete, Galip Dalay, Sami Orçun Ersay, Doğan Eşkinat



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Turkey experienced the repercussions of the 2010 constitutional referendum that symbolized the loss of political power of the forces behind the tutelary system, and the 2011 elections that signified society's approval of a construction of a "new Turkey". These two critical events shifted the ground for all political actors, institutions and groups. However, upcoming local, presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015 have exerted considerable influence over the performance of political actors on Turkey's reconstruction process. While political parties could not remain indifferent to the message from the constitutional referendum and the parliamentary elections in support of democratic reforms, they were also reluctant to take any radical steps in 2012 prior to the upcoming election cycle. This tension made possible only minor steps to consolidate the democratic political climate, and any substantial reform process was rendered impossible.

The following analysis offers a look into the performance of Turkish political parties in 2012 under the influence of those tensions, and summarizes recent developments on two items in Turkey's political agenda: the anti-tutelage struggle and coming to terms with the legacy of military coups; and the PKK's disarmament and the resolution of the Kurdish question.

### Eliminating the Tutelary System and Confronting the Military Coups

The year 2012 was a period when the ongoing process of eliminating the tutelary influences over the political system continued—a process that has been the defining element in the country's political agenda for the past decade. Turkey's efforts to institute civilian rule that began with the European Union reforms in the early 2000s has continued throughout the 2007 coup plot trials and beyond. This process, which had led to public debate following the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials, moved to a new stage in 2012. Following the announcement of the verdicts on some of the coup plot trials (e.g., in the Atabeyler and Sledgehammer cases), the court cases are expected to be concluded soon as the court has requested the prosecutor's final opinion in the Ergenekon case. In addition, recent steps in bringing past junta members to justice has signaled a new direction in Turkey's coming to terms with military coups. In this regard, the most important development of the year was retired General Kenan Evren and retired General Tahsin Şahinkaya becoming the first "successful" junta members to be tried for their crimes in the Republic's history. Bringing the 1980 junta to justice also made it possible for other military coups to stand trial: An investigation of the 1997 "post-modern coup" continued throughout the year and led to the arrests of high-profile figures, including former Deputy Joint Chief of Staff retired General Çevik Bir, and the former head of the Council on Higher Education Kemal Gürüz.

Efforts to institute civilian rule that had manifested themselves through judicial instruments since 2007 changed in 2012 as the legislative branch came to play a more prominent role. A 1,404-page report by a parliamentary Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda, based on 132 witness testimonies, represented the first instance in the Republic's history that the parliament sought accountability for crimes committed against itself. Similarly, debates on former Prime Minister Adnan

Menderes, and a recent proposal to clear the criminal records of the political prisoners from the 1980 coup, indicate that the legislative branch is to assume an even more central role in Turkey's future efforts to consolidate civilian rule.

### **The AK Party and Contending Visions for a New Turkey**

The proof of the retreat of the tutelary powers came with the September 12, 2010 constitutional referendum, the Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) victory in the June 12, 2011 election, and the AK Party's subsequent designation of this new period as the "craftsmanship" period for creating a "new Turkey", coupled with its announcement of its "2023 Vision"—2023 being the centenary of the foundation of the Republic. All these events led both political circles and the general public to ascribe the role of building a new Turkey to the AK Party in 2012. However, with three consecutive elections awaiting Turkey in 2014-2015, the lack of a societal compromise regarding major political issues, the lack of any realistic alternative to the AK Party, and the events in the Arab world have made a significant impact on the pace and orientation of this process. In addition, an intense debate about, and the search for, possible parameters for a new Turkey have further complicated this process. As a result, it is possible to assert that Turkey is still in a "transition period" and has not yet fully embarked on the process of constructing a new Turkey.

In addition, 2012 was the year in which differences in opinion on the construction of a new Turkey became clearer, and in which the AK Party received the most criticism from the sections of society that had been supporting it over the last decade. The AK Party was subjected to intense criticism for abandoning its objective of constructing a democratic political system after gaining power without the tutelary constraints, for compromising with the tutelary actors which have maintained their presence in the system, and for adopting a religious conservative agenda. In response to these criticisms, the AK Party said that it has pursued the reform agenda, without deviation, to the extent that was possible under the conditions. These criticisms need to be regarded as a natural result of the contestation between diverse visions for a new Turkey and the struggle for hegemony before the construction of a new Turkey was fully pushed forward. So long as these criticisms and the struggle for hegemony do not turn into a self-acquired democratic accreditation, they will create a healthier and more inclusive construction process that will start to contribute to the democratization of the system, and to strengthen the democratic political culture.

With its self-ascribed mission of constructing a new Turkey, as revealed by its declaration of the "2023 Vision", the AK Party does (and should) have the right to determine the timeline, priorities and direction of the project. However, while the AK Party embarks on this mission, it should be conscious of potential risks emanating from the nature of the transition period and from pursuing a politics of balance. In this regard, the most significant risk would be the adoption of policies that might upset the public's beliefs and damage the sense of trust that people have developed in the AK Party.

### The CHP and the Politics of Transition

2012 was the year that the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party, gave up on its search for a new political platform and resolved to adopt a permanent platform of transition. Since its May 2010 leadership change, the party has embarked on finding a new identity and platform. After over two years of trying, however, it is difficult to claim that the efforts have paid off. Having made radical changes to its parliamentary group in the 2011 elections, the main opposition party finally put an end to a long-standing power struggle between its current administration and the old party elite following three party congresses that took place in February and July.

However, after several party congresses, a constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections, the CHP has failed to demonstrate the same resolve that it showed in removing their predecessors in changing the party's old identity and political platform. Party Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu allocated a considerable number of the executive positions vacated by the old elite to new faces that still represented the CHP's old ways, thereby strengthening the perception that the party was unwilling to alienate its traditional voter base by making a radical break with its now obsolete political platform.

As such, the current composition of the party administration reflects the popular-level diversification between the CHP's neo-nationalist and social democrat voter blocs—a situation that has effectively led to elite-level struggle at every critical junction. The three elections scheduled to take place in 2014-2015 make it extremely difficult for Kılıçdaroğlu to side with one of the warring factions, and therefore make it nearly impossible for the party to settle on a new and clear-cut identity and platform to end the quest that began in May 2010. In light of this balance of power, it is possible to conclude that a "politics of transition" replaced the CHP's "transition politics" as of 2012.

The CHP's search for a new identity and subsequent indecisiveness has led to notable fluctuations in its politics through the year. The attempts of various factions to play a leading role within the party, coupled with the administration's efforts to compensate for the shortcomings in its reform program through rhetoric and mass mobilization, has led the CHP to move away from its center-left position to resemble a marginal left organization. In this sense, the party not only participated in rallies organized by radical left and neo-nationalist groups, but also associated itself with various other mass protests and demonstrations that threaten to trigger sectarian strife and destroy social peace.

The year's main outcome for the Republican People's Party was that radical change was no longer a possibility due to the party's prolonged transformation period. It also became clear that the representatives of old and new identities and politics have consolidated their hold on the party organization. Therefore, the CHP has created the perception of a party that cannot let go of its old identity despite its problems, and at the same time cannot demonstrate the resolve necessary to develop a new identity. Having thus far blamed its slow progress on the 2010 referendum and the 2011 elections, the party administration is unlikely to take any radical steps before three upcoming elections.



### **MHP and the Politics of Compensation**

The year 2012 was when the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) felt a strong need to make up for its past mistakes. Having assumed a position of indifference with regard to anti-tutelage efforts, with a few notable exceptions, such as its role in resolving the 2007 presidential crisis, the party either failed to correctly interpret the 2010 constitutional referendum's role in undermining the tutelary system, or knowingly positioned itself on the weaker side of the debate. At odds with both its party tradition and *Zeitgeist*, the MHP has managed to keep the potential costs of its referendum campaign at a minimum by positioning itself as a safe haven in the face of Turkey's ever-violent Kurdish question. Still, the past year made it clear that postponing the party's much-needed adaptation to the country's emerging political scene was no longer an option. In this context, MHP Chairman Bahçeli sought to appeal to its traditional nationalist-conservative voter base by endorsing Prime Minister Erdoğan's February 2012 call to "raise a religious generation" and introducing two elective courses on the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's life into the controversial education reform bill.

For the MHP, the 10<sup>th</sup> Party Congress that took place on November 4 marked the past year's most critical development. Although incumbent Chairman Bahçeli secured re-election, the intra-party opposition's 40 percent approval rate signaled their potential to influence party positions on critical issues.

The main item on the MHP's future agenda continues to be the party's efforts to develop a new political platform that will successfully make up for its losses during the 2010 constitutional referendum campaign. Moreover, whether or not the intra-party opposition will manage to convert their numbers into political power remains to be seen. If the MHP's performance in the upcoming local elections fails to satisfy the party's supporters, the intra-party opposition may be able to rely on the legitimacy they acquired during the congress in order to accumulate more political power within the party administration.

### **The BDP and Squandered Opportunities for Becoming a Political Actor**

The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) drew closer to the PKK following a long-standing debate between civilian politics and militancy in 2012. A variety of developments, including some BDP deputies' embracing of PKK militants, the party's emergence as the leading proponent of the hunger strikes, and its appeal to Öcalan and the PKK at every critical junction, has led to this conclusion. In this regard, the past year led to the BDP's diminishing role as a political actor striving to create political channels to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish question.

Having long followed the PKK-endorsed line instead of convincing its popular base of a more reasonable political roadmap, the BDP did not break with tradition during the hunger strikes. During the crisis, the party participated in the hunger strikes to become part of the problem at the expense of its potential role as a mediator between its popular base and the broader public. This marked the BDP's failure to seize the opportunity to boost its political influence and instead represented the party's conscious efforts to assume a secondary role to strengthen Öcalan's hand. This passive stance also made it less likely for the BDP to be taken seriously by the government, and undermined the party's potential to lead its popular base.

For the BDP, the greatest crisis of the year followed leaked footage of nine BDP deputies embracing PKK militants at an illegal roadblock near Şemdinli on August 17, 2012. The BDP deputies' friendly attitude toward the militants caused outrage from the government and the broader public. The Chief Prosecutor's office in Van petitioned the Ministry of Justice for clearance to try a total of 10 deputies involved in the event, while Prime Minister Erdoğan's statements in support of stripping these deputies of their parliamentary immunity contributed to the debate. As of December 2012, the parliament has not yet taken any steps with regard to the issue.

In addition to these crises, the BDP also held an emergency party congress over the past year. The party's Second Emergency Congress held on October 14 resulted from the continued detention of numerous party administrators as part of the KCK trials.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the party congress did little to overcome the problems at hand. In this sense, the BDP congress seemed to have been less influential on the party's identity and political platform than similar processes held by the AK Party, the CHP and the MHP over the past year.

At a time when regional developments have become prominent on the Kurdish question and the PKK's future prospects, and the government's intention to resolve the issue was met with the PKK's misinformed violent response, the BDP has continued to demonstrate its well-known dependence on the PKK instead of developing as a much-needed political alternative. In this context, the party has generously wasted opportunities to present a political agenda that could have contributed to solving national and regional problems favorably for a peaceful resolution, while sticking to its position under the PKK's shadow.

### **The PKK and the Kurdish Issue: Between Security and Dialogue**

The PKK attack on Silvan, Diyarbakır, on July 14, 2011 cast its shadow over the year 2012, a year which saw a rising number of clashes between security forces and PKK members, and the increasing adoption of security-oriented language and policy instruments. This in turn led to the political agenda focusing on the settlement of the Kurdish issue losing ground to the logic and measures of fighting terrorism. Aside from that, the following developments have exerted significant impact on the course of the Kurdish issue throughout the year: the escalation of violence and the diversification of tactics, the effects of the Arab Spring and regional developments, and the hunger strikes and their political repercussions.

Widening the scale of violence, diversifying its combat-style and making the AK Party its main target formed the PKK's central strategy in 2012. To maximize the damage to Turkey and the AK Party government, the PKK committed violent attacks against civilians, as demonstrated with the detonation in Gaziantep. The organization acted on the premise that any initial mass outcry against the PKK would eventually turn against the government over its failure to prevent these attacks. Plus, the developments in the Arab world were believed to increase the costs for Turkey of the rising tide of

1. The KCK (Union of Communities in Kurdistan) is an urban extension of the PKK organization. Having been established in 2005 to pursue "democratic confederalism" the organization remains subject to ongoing judicial proceedings that began in 2009.



violence and to pave the way for a Kurdish Spring, an allusion to the Arab Spring. The PKK's newly developed strategy for its field operations was to replace its traditional "hit and run" approach with new methods, such as "hit and stay", "area defense", and "territorial control," were further testaments to the PKK's Arab Spring-inspired strategy. Lastly, the PKK's perception of the AK Party as the repository of real power in the country, coupled with the success of the party—unlike the discredited state—to appeal to a wide audience in the east and southeast regions of Turkey, led the PKK to see it as a threat to its projected future hegemony of the region, thus making the AK Party its main target.

In addition, the disparate and opposing stances taken by Turkey, Iran and Iraq on the Syrian crisis alleviated the regional pressure on the PKK and enhanced its ability of movement and of conducting the attacks on Turkey. Plus, the PYD, the Syrian Kurdish movement which has close ties to the PKK, filled the power vacuum created by the Assad regime's withdrawal of forces from the country's north, which strengthened the PKK's perception that the Arab Spring was strengthening its position.

In 2012, regional developments exerted the most significant impact on the course of the Kurdish issue. Until the dust settles on the regional developments, a structural change in the settlement of the Kurdish/PKK issue will not be forthcoming. This uncertainty has caused the government to shuttle between adopting a security or negotiation measures to deal with the issue.

Despite the determination of the AK Party government to solve the Kurdish issue through democratic and political measures, as seen by the introduction of elective Kurdish courses into schools' curricula, the facilitation of court appearances in the mother tongue, and pledging access to public services in the mother tongue, it could not avoid the language of "combating terrorism" from dominating the political agenda. In the upcoming years, the AK Party needs to prevent this "combating terrorism" approach and mindset from dominating the political climate and to forestall the PKK's projection of societal decomposition by introducing hope for a peaceful resolution of the issue through democratization.

# POLITICS IN 2012

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, Turkey experienced various repercussions from the 2010 constitutional referendum and the 2011 elections—two developments that, respectively, symbolized the tutelary system’s disempowerment and the society’s approval of a new and democratic country. Turkey’s success in eroding the tutelary regime following a stormy decade of heavy contestation has effectively shifted the ground for all political actors, institutions and groups. Political parties that allied themselves previously with the tutelary actors have made considerable efforts to adapt themselves to changing circumstances: The Republican People’s Party (CHP) was compelled to change its chairman, while the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) found itself almost unable to pass the national threshold requirement in the 2011 elections, and therefore embarked on a new strategy to compensate for past mistakes. Although the 2010 constitutional referendum mandated the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) to bring about a democratic “new Turkey”, the results failed to influence the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which continued to follow its PKK-oriented political agenda and maintained severe disinterest in national issues in 2012.

In this sense, it is possible to assert that two simultaneous trends amplified and contradicted each other at different periods in 2012: First, the construction of a new Turkey rose to prominence with the 2010 constitutional referendum and the 2011 elections; and second, the domestic and international factors on the construction process’s pace, context and tendencies. A crucial part of the latter has consisted of pressures related to the upcoming local, presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014-2015 that are expected to cause major changes to the AK Party leadership. At the same time, the Arab Spring’s and the Syrian crisis’s shaping of a new regional order have exerted considerable influence on the country’s construction process.

In line with aforementioned parameters, the political debate over the past year saw contestation over the program to construct a new Turkey, and disputes around its instruments, timeline and inclinations. The following is a snapshot of the search for a new Turkey with reference to political parties’ performance and recent developments on political issues.

Technical shortcomings and the criticism that prolonged detentions serve as de facto punishment led the parliament to pass the Third Judicial Reform Package in July that abolished the Special Mandate Courts, pending their verdicts on existing cases.

## II. ELIMINATING THE TUTELARY SYSTEM AND CONFRONTING MILITARY COUPS

Efforts to eliminate the tutelary system's influence over the political process, which began in the early 2000s and has dominated the political agenda ever since, continued in the past year. Having begun with legal and constitutional arrangements, the country's demilitarization process moved onto coup plot trials and also to attempts to bring the organizers of past coups to justice in 2012. In the past year, these processes continued simultaneously with a new reconciliatory step when the parliament became involved through a Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda. Turkey's efforts at demilitarization not only led to court cases, indictments and political debate, but also helped create a new regime where civilian actors and politics replaced military tutelage and its actors.

### The End of the Coup Plot Trials

The Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials emerged as the two leading coup plot cases that dominated Turkey's political agenda in 2012. Having begun in 2008, the former continued with 274 defendants, including CHP deputy-elects Mehmet Haberal and Mustafa Balbay, whose continued detention led the main opposition party to criticize and attend the hearings. Without a doubt, the most striking development of the year was the arrest of retired General İlker Başbuğ, former Joint Chief of Staff, as part of the ongoing "Internet Memorandum" investigation. Başbuğ's continued detention, coupled with the charge of "establishing and running a terrorist organization" brought against him, caused considerable strife among political leaders as well as the broader society.<sup>1</sup>

Technical shortcomings and the criticism that prolonged detentions serve as de facto punishment led the parliament to pass the Third Judicial Reform Package in July that abolished the Special Mandate Courts, pending their verdicts on existing cases. In November, the Istanbul 13<sup>th</sup> Supreme Criminal Court requested the prosecution to present its final opinion, a development that signaled the trial's imminent conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the Sledgehammer trial, where a total of 365 defendants faced charges, came to an end after over two years. Although high-profile figures such as former Commander of the Air Forces retired General Halil İbrahim Fırtına, former Commander of the Navy retired Admiral Özden Örnek, and former Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army retired General Çetin Doğan were originally sentenced to life imprisonment, their sentences were reduced to 20 years in prison. MHP deputy-elect Engin Alan was sentenced to 18 years in prison.<sup>3</sup> The ruling led to different reactions from across the political spectrum. While Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized the importance of the appeal process, the CHP leadership accused the court of surrendering its conscience to political power holders.<sup>4</sup> The MHP's decision to appeal the verdict was followed by BDP Deputy Chairman

1. Erdoğan prefers ex-army chief's trial to continue without arrest, *Today's Zaman*, 9 January 2012.

[http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=268134](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=268134)

2. Turkey's Ergenekon conspiracy trial approaches endgame, 11 December 2012.

<http://news.yahoo.com/turkeys-ergenekon-conspiracy-trial-approaches-endgame-161228660.html>

3. Sledgehammer Coup Plot Verdict Shakes Turkish Military, *Turkish Weekly*, 25 September 2012.

<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/142543/sledgehammer-coup-plot-verdict-shakes-turkish-military.html>

4. Erdoğan: Judiciary acted very sensitively in Sledgehammer case, *Today's Zaman*, 27 September 2012.

[http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=293592](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=293592)

Mahmut Övür, CHP's 'Sledgehammer' conundrum, *Today's Zaman*, 23 September 2012.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-293179-chps-sledgehammer-conundrum.html>

Gültan Kışanak's call for coming to terms with Turkey's tradition of military coups and militarist culture instead of focusing on individual cases.<sup>5</sup>

The conclusion of the Atabeyler trial July was also symbolic of the end of an extraordinary period of coup plot trials. Similarly, the verdict on the Sledgehammer case, a more high-profile trial, hinted at the gradual regularization of civil-military relations in Turkey. As the Ergenekon trial nears completion, all coup plot trials are expected to end in 2013. As such, the Third Judicial Reform Package abolished the Special Mandate Courts that have received harsh criticism due to prolonged detentions and other technical shortcomings. These developments ensure that the Turkish public opinion moves its attention from coup plots to past military coups.

### Bringing Organizers of Military Coups to Justice

The bringing to justice members of the 1980 military junta was made possible by the constitutional referendum in September 2010. In May 2011, the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's office asked retired General Kenan Evren and retired General Tahsin Şahinkaya to testify as suspects in the 1980 coup investigation. Following the investigation's conclusion, Ankara's 12<sup>th</sup> High Criminal Court accepted the prosecution's indictment on January 10, 2012. The first hearing that took place on April 4, 2012 marked the first instance of perpetrators of a military coup being held accountable in a court of law. Motions from across the political spectrum to intervene in the case led to hopes that Turkish society would focus its efforts on coming to terms with the past, unlike in the coup plot trials that created significant political polarization.

The 1980 coup trial also increased the hopes for bringing to justice other organizers of previous military interventions. The first such instance was the HAS Party's petitioning of the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's office to investigate the February 28 process.<sup>6</sup> This year-long investigation led to the arrests of then Deputy Joint Chief of Staff retired General Çevik Bir and former head of the Council of Higher Education Kemal Gürüz. Furthermore, the prosecutor's office also issued an arrest warrant for MHP deputy and Sledgehammer suspect Engin Alan. Whether or not the prosecution should press charges against civilian collaborators over the February 28 process remains a heavily debated issue to this day. As the prosecution makes final changes to the February 28 indictment, the trial is expected to begin early in 2013.

### A Parliamentary Inquiry into Military Coups

In the area of Turkey's coming to terms with military tutelage and military coups, parliament's all-party Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda proved one of the most effective channels over the past year. Having held its first meeting on August 28, the commission heard testimony from 132 politicians, bureaucrats, business people, journalists and other victims through to November. The commission's findings included

The conclusion of the Atabeyler trial July was also symbolic of the end of an extraordinary period of coup plot trials. Similarly, the verdict on the Sledgehammer case, a more high-profile trial, hinted at the gradual regularization of civil-military relations in Turkey.

5. Gov't says Sledgehammer ruling not final, opposition blasts decision, *Today's Zaman*, 21 September 2012. <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-293101-govt-says-sledgehammer-ruling-not-final-opposition-blasts-decision.html> <http://www.cnnturk.com/2012/turkiye/09/22/bdpden.balyoz.yorumu/677693.0/index.html>

6. HAS Parti (The People's Voice Party) was an offshoot of the National Outlook movement that was founded by a group of former Felicity Party elites following an intra-party dispute over leadership. Headed by Numan Kurtulmuş, the party received around 1% of the votes in the 2011 parliamentary elections. In 2012, the party terminated itself as the majority of its leadership joined the AK Party.

The February 28<sup>th</sup> process refers to a period of political turmoil in 1997 where the military indirectly ousted the Islamist Welfare Party from power and initiated a public campaign to diminish Islamist power including in non-political areas such as business and the media.

The parliamentary commission's work offered a unique opportunity for the parliament to examine crimes perpetrated against its institutional presence and it successfully convicted military juntas in the minds of the public.

individual chapters on the 1960 coup, the 1971 memorandum, the 1980 coup, the 1997 "post-modern" coup and the 2007 "e-memorandum", and emphasized that military coups have derived authority and legitimacy from one another.<sup>7</sup> The commission's work offered a unique opportunity for the parliament to examine crimes perpetrated against its institutional presence and it successfully convicted military juntas in the minds of the public. Having delegated this task to society via elections and to the judiciary via the courts, the legislative branch came to terms—albeit after a half-decade delay—with military interventions into its authority. Although the commission's membership unanimously endorsed the conclusions and suggestions, partisan disagreement over the report's contents led the CHP and the MHP to produce alternative reports.<sup>8</sup>

### Conclusion

Developments in coup plot cases, the beginning of junta members' trials, and the commission's final report altogether suggest that Turkey has entered a new period in its efforts to hold accountable the perpetrators of military coups and memoranda. In this sense, the country has reached a phase where military junta members will be brought to justice, a critical threshold in reaffirming recent achievements in civil-military relations. As two prominent figures from the 1980 junta face justice, similar developments are likely to take place in the February 28 "post-modern coup" in upcoming months. The all-party consensus in the Turkish parliament over the need to come to terms with military coups demonstrates that the crime of military coup has led to serious consequences for all social groups. Not only sharing survivors' grievances with the broader public but also bringing perpetrators to justice and abolishing junta laws are important for Turkey's efforts to establish well-founded civilian politics.

CHRONOLOGY	
January 10, 2012	Ankara 12 <sup>th</sup> High Criminal Court accepts indictment against Kenan Evren and Tahsin Şahinkaya, the surviving members of the 1980 military junta.
January 17, 2012	The HAS Party petitions an Ankara court to investigate the February 28 "post-modern" coup.
April 11, 2012	The Turkish parliament passes an all-party motion to establish a Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda.
May 9, 2012	Prime Minister Erdoğan criticizes the waves of arrest the in February 28 investigation by stating that "these waves will drown the country."
June 1, 2012	Istanbul 14 <sup>th</sup> High Criminal Court rules for Former Joint Chief of Staff retire General İlker Başbuğ's arrest pending trial as part of the ongoing Internet Memorandum investigation. Prolonged public debate surrounds the charge of "administering a terrorist organization."
July 2, 2012	The Turkish parliament passes the Third Judicial Reform Package including the abolishment of Special Mandate Courts.
July 17, 2012	Nine defendants charged with an assassination attempt against Prime Minister Erdoğan are acquitted in Atabeyler case, the first judicial process focusing on Turkey's long-ignored "deep state" networks.
September 21, 2012	Istanbul 10 <sup>th</sup> High Criminal Court announces its verdict on the Sledgehammer Case.
November 28, 2012	The Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda presents its 1,404-page report to Cemil Çiçek, speaker of the parliament.

7. Coup report introduced to Parliament, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 28 November 2012.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/coup-report-introduced-to-parliament.aspx?pageID=238&nid=35654>

8. Commission urges state to apologize to coup victims in final report, *Today's Zaman*, 28 November 2012.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-299527-commission-urges-state-to-apologize-to-coup-victims-in-final-report.html>

### III. THE AK PARTY AND CONTENDING VISIONS FOR A NEW TURKEY

The main challenge for the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) in 2012 has been to embark on the building of a new Turkey, while deepening the elimination of the tutelary system. The constitutional referendum of September 12 (2010) and the AK Party's election victory at the June 12 (2011) election have given the party the mandate of commencing on building a New Turkey free of any guardianship in 2012. The AK Party's declared vision of 2023— the centenary of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey— which formed part of the party's campaigning strategy before the 2011 election indicated that the party was willing to take up its new role of building a 'New Turkey.' As such, after ten years of struggle with the tutelary system, it is plausible to claim that the party has embarked on the building of a 'New Turkey' in 2012.

However, the three consecutive elections awaiting Turkey in 2014-2015, the lack of a societal compromise regarding the major political issues facing Turkey, the lack of any realistic alternative to the AK Party, and the events in the Arab world have exerted a significant impact on the pace and orientation of this process. In addition, intense debate about, and the search for, the possible parameters of a new Turkey have further complicated this process. As a result of these dynamics, it is possible to argue that Turkey is still in a "transition period" and has not fully embarked on constructing a new Turkey.

Before we account for why 2012 should be regarded as a transition period for a new Turkey, it is imperative to understand and to reflect on the transformation that Turkey has been through and the political performance that the AK Party—as the principal actor of this period—has exhibited in the last decade.

#### The End of the Tutelary System

It is possible to divide the AK Party's 10 years in government, which began in 2002, into periods.<sup>9</sup> Between 2002 and 2006, relations with the EU were at the center of the AK Party's political agenda. The AK Party saw value in utilizing the EU's Copenhagen Criteria on accession to enhance the political space which had been weakened during the 1990s. In so doing, the party believed that it could weaken the anticipated resistance to the reforms by the old guards, and thus the EU reforms were situated at the heart of the democratization process. While the attainment of a date for the commencement of accession negotiations was the most significant political goal of this period, comprehensive and systematic reform packages—the harmonization of Turkey's judicial system, laws and legislations with that of the EU—have defined the political climate. Due to these reforms, the military's influence on domestic and foreign policy has significantly been reduced, whereas civilian control over both areas has improved.

The first major resistance to the enhancement of the civilian control over politics as a result of the EU reforms took place with the election of a new president by the parliament to replace the incumbent Ahmet Nejdet Sezer in 2007, and it was a concerted effort to deny the AK Party's choice. To that effect, republican rallies had been organized, and on April 27 an e-coup—a stern warning against the election of Abdullah Gül as president—was issued by the military, and the Constitutional Court issued a contro-

After 10 years of struggle with the tutelary system, it is plausible to claim that the party started the building of a new Turkey in 2012.

9. For a good piece evaluating the AK Party's rule along the four periods, see Hatem Ete, "AK Parti iktidarını dönemleştirme" ("Periodization of AK Party's rule"), *Sabah Gazetesi*, 29.09.2012. <http://www.sabah.com.tr/Perspektif/Yazarlar/ete/2012/09/29/ak-parti-iktidarini-donemsteltirme>

For Turkey and the AK Party this period was new and challenging. The single target of reducing the tutelary system was replaced by a plurality of possibilities of building a new Turkey.

versial decree<sup>10</sup> nullifying the parliamentary voting process. The AK Party responded to these developments by calling an early election. Due to these factors, this election acquired a further significance by representing another dimension of the struggle between the democratization agenda versus the tutelary system. The AK Party gained the mandate from the people for its second term in government by garnering 47 percent of the total votes in the July 22, 2007 election. On March 14, 2008, the old guards—in a suicidal attempt—filed a closure case against the party, which had received the support of almost half of the electorate only eight months previous. After four months of uncertainty, the Constitutional Court narrowly decided to not close the AK Party. However, this led the party to abandon the passive struggle it had previously pursued against the tutelary system from 2006 to 2009 in favor of a more active one that called for its elimination.

The AK Party started with removing the tutelary actors and then continued with the ideology of this system. With the Ergenekon, Balyoz (Sledgehammer) and other judicial cases, the military and other tutelary actors that attempted to resort to non-democratic means to exert power on the political system were removed from power. These cases ended the decisive role that these tutelary actors were exercising on the political system, while contributing to the democratization of the system itself. With the September 12, 2010 constitutional referendum, this process gave way to the process of building a new Turkey. Though the referendum package was primarily aimed at eliminating the judicial bureaucracy's newly acquired guardianship role in the regime, after the military's retreat from the political sphere, in spirit, it was trying to democratize the political system that was constructed after the military coup of 1961. The passage of this package with 58 percent support was testament to the defeat of the tutelary system by the democratization process and the will of the people. This result coupled with the AK Party's victory—with 50 percent of the vote—in the June 12, 2011 election, its declared vision for 2023, and its conceptualization of this new term as being its "craftsmanship" period demonstrated that the AK Party was both willing and capable of embarking on the process of building a new Turkey.

### The New Turkey and the Struggle for Hegemony

For Turkey and the AK Party this period was new and challenging. The single target of reducing the tutelary system was replaced by a plurality of possibilities of building a new Turkey. Turkey entering three consecutive election processes between 2014 and 2015 and the vast majority of the AK Party's governing cadres that have been in the government for ten years will be resigning from their legislative and executive positions will affect the parameters of the building process. In addition, differences in opinion regarding whose priorities will dictate the building process, and also by what means and according to what schedule, also indicate that the new period will be fraught with challenges.

2012 has been the year in which these differences in opinion emerged, and in which the AK Party received the most criticism from the sections of society that had been supporting it over the last 10 years. Up to today, the AK Party has received support from large and varied socio-political spectrums due to its struggle against the tutelary

10. This controversial decree required 367 MPs to be present during the voting for the election of president at the parliament. Many jurists and lawyers argued that the decree itself was unlawful and motivated by the political factors to prevent the election of Abdullah Gül as president.

system. However, following the September 12, 2010 referendum and the June 12, 2011 elections, when the anti-tutelage struggle that facilitated the partnership was replaced with the building of a new Turkey, the various segments of society which had stood together under the leadership of the AK Party began to divide due to different perspectives regarding the building.

Throughout 2012, a period of intense debate occurred between the two groups. While the AK Party defended its position by arguing that it had pursued the reform agenda and building a new Turkey without deviation, to the extent that it had been possible, it was subjected to intense criticism for abandoning its objective of constructing a democratic political system after gaining power without tutelary constraints, for compromising with the tutelary actors which maintained their presence in the system, and for adopting a religious conservative building process in its agenda. It is worth keeping in mind that here the style and content of the criticism is due to differing visions of a new Turkey, and therefore rather than being mere criticism, they include claims to the realization of an alternative political vision.

The Fourth Party Convention held on September 30 serves as the most succinct image of the construction process envisioned by the AK Party.<sup>11</sup> With the participation of two actors, Numan Kurtulmuş and Süleyman Soylu, at the conference the balance between the Islamic-leaning conservative and the center right, both of which comprise the AK Party's identity components, can be read as an indicator of the social consensus valued in the building process. The Prime Minister's convention speech, the document distributed about the party's vision for 2023, the centenary of the foundation of the modern Republic of Turkey, and the identities and speeches of the foreign leaders invited to the convention contain important clues regarding the kind of construction process envisioned by the AK Party. Based on the convention, it can be said that the AK Party envisages a Turkey that is a fully-functioning democracy, is at peace with its historical and religious past, and is involved in developments in the region.

Within the framework of the AK Party's 2023 vision, the reforms to which it publically committed to at the convention involve a comprehensive policy of construction intended to remove the effects of tutelage from the political system. This vision includes many promises, such as the abolition of restrictions on the establishment and activities of political parties, the ensuring of justice in representation, the restructuring of the political system, the acceleration of trials, the access to public services and the ensuring of legal defense in the mother tongue, the repealing of legislative provisions that create the perception of ethnic discrimination, the repealing of legislation that serves as the basis for coups, the restructuring of military school curricula, not compromising liberty for security, not deviating from the EU target, the realization of a new constitution. As well as provisions directed at the democratization of the political system, the party included promises ranging from administrative reform to employment, the struggle against poverty to the strengthening of legal defense provisions, R&D, to an effective foreign policy.

The AK Party's promises relate to a policy of deepening and spreading the democratization process and confronting and settling the past practices of the tutelary system. As a result, following the constitutional amendment facilitated by the September 12, 2010

The AK Party envisages a country that is a Turkey that is a fully-functioning democracy, is at peace with its historical and religious past, and is involved in developments in the region.

11. For a detailed account of the Convention, see Hatem Ete, "Yeni Türkiye'nin Kongresi" ("New Turkey's Convention"), *Star-Açık Görüş*, 07.10.2012. <http://haber.stargazete.com/acikgorus/yeni-turkiye-kongresi/haber-695112>



There was a lot of criticism directed at the AK Party during the building process. The strongest and most concrete manifestation of these criticisms was seen in the context of the Uludere incident

referendum, the September 12, 1980 putschists were prosecuted, an investigation regarding the February 28, 1997 post-modern coup was launched, and all the coups and coup attempts in the Republic's history were investigated by a parliamentary commission and shared with the public, as well as the continuing court cases regarding the preparation of a coup environment and charges of attempting a coup, and a portion of them reached a decision. Meanwhile the reform process intended to institutionalize democratic politics continues unabated. The reforms that can be classified under this heading comprise of the process of writing a new constitution, the parliament's passing of the Third Judiciary Reform Package, the preparation of the Fourth Judiciary Reform Package, and the sharing of the 63-article political reform package with the public at the AK Party's convention.

However, there was a lot of criticism directed at the AK Party during the building process. Two understandable reasons can be mentioned concerning the criticism. First of all, as the power of the tutelary actors over the political system decreased, the rhetoric and policies of the AK Party, which had achieved power without tutelary constraints, were naturally subjected to more detailed examination. So long as the AK Party is in power without tutelary constraints, it will be deprived of the tolerance which it had previously drawn on. Secondly, the circles which had previously adopted a common perspective with the AK Party as it targeted the removal of the old tutelary system naturally separated from the AK Party due to the different visions they held regarding the building of a new Turkey. As a result, the AK Party's opposition has expanded due to the divergence of views between the AK Party and the circles which previously allied themselves with the party regarding the building process. These two reasons led to the AK Party being placed under the spotlight and exposed to intense criticism during 2012.

It is possible to collect the most common criticisms about the AK Party's performance during the building process in 2012 under three general headings: first, that the AK Party has abandoned reformist politics after weakening the tutelary actors, secondly that it has compromised with some tutelary actors which have sustained their existence within the system, and finally that it has even situated itself as the center of a new guardianship.

The strongest and most concrete manifestation of these criticisms was seen in the context of the Uludere incident.<sup>12</sup> On December 28, 2011, 35 villagers from Uludere who had been smuggling goods across the border from northern Iraq into Turkey and who were thought to be a group of PKK militants crossing the border were killed in bombings by aircraft belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces. For a long time questions, such as whether the operation was intentional or accidental, who ordered the bombing, and whether the government and the AK Party administration reacted properly after the attack, were questioned. The AK Party was accused of being slow to display solidarity with the families of victims, to understand the real scope of the incident, and in bringing the perpetrators to justice. While there have been those who have claimed that the AK Party has taken under its protection the "the new army" which is assumed to have been purified of putschists, there have also been those who claim that, contrary to what was thought, the AK Party has not been able to achieve power without tutelary

12. The Uludere incident (also referred to as the Roboski incident in Kurdish), took place on December 28, 2011 near the Turkish-Iraqi border. Two Turkish F-16 jets fired at the villagers, who were smuggling goods from Iraq to Turkey, killing 35 villager. The military later claimed that they had mistaken these villagers for members of the PKK.

constraints, and has therefore fallen into the trap set by the tutelary actors within the army. The inability of the AK Party to meet the expectations regarding the victims, the incident, and perpetrators has increased the criticisms against its building process.

The AK Party argues that the inquiry into the incident has been responsibly managed since the first day, and that the discomfort voiced by the public stems partly from the tragedy of the incident, and partly from some segments trying to keep the Uludere incident on the agenda due to it serving as an opportunity for settling accounts. The AK Party has been emphasizing the injustice of the criticism against itself by stressing what it has done concerning the Uludere incident. The party said that it expressed its regret over the “accident” from the beginning, the necessary measures for reducing the harm inflicted were taken without delay, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister’s wife, Emine Erdoğan, visited the victims to share their grief at the official and unofficial level respectively, and an administrative investigation and a parliamentary commission were launched to identify and punish those responsible.

Another criticism that can be considered under this heading was voiced in the context of the Specially Authorized Courts (ÖYM). These courts played a central role during the period of purging tutelary actors from the center of politics. During this period the excesses in the investigation and trial stages of the cases within these courts were overlooked due to their function in strengthening the democratic system. However, once the tutelary system was reduced, and the AK Party’s resulting power began to be understood, these courts became targets for criticism. As the tutelage powers retreated, the courts, which had previously been hailed as enhancing the democratic system, were accused of being the most powerful instruments in the “AK Party regime.” Especially as these courts occasionally, by exploiting the power bestowed upon them, attempted to supersede the tutelary actors in whose decline they had played a role, they became the focus of intense criticism.

The AK Party abolished the ÖYM on the grounds that they were instruments of the “elimination period,” and as such might damage the societal consensus needed for building a new Turkey, and that through the passage of time, these courts themselves had acquired a tutelary appearance and flavor. Yet, as the existence of these courts was cited by many as an indication of the authoritarian regime that the AK Party was supposedly establishing, their abolishment was also referred to by many as a sign that the AK Party was turning away from its reformist agenda. Hence, in both cases, these courts produced a political cost for the AK Party.

During 2012, the other oft-heard criticism directed at the AK Party was related to the pace of the reforms. The AK Party was severely criticized for not putting enough political capital into writing a new constitution, for not meeting the political and cultural demands of previously suppressed identities, especially the Kurdish one, for not initiating an extensive and systematic reform package to purge the political system of all tutelary effects, and for abandoning the EU goal. The AK Party’s proposal for a presidential system was also put into this group of criticism. As the AK Party’s language and policies in these areas were criticized for slowing-down the reform process, sporadically they were also cast as evidence of the AK Party’s total abandonment of its reformist character. In a nutshell, it has been argued that the AK Party’s democratization perspective was and is confined to the strengthening of its own position within the system. Once the tutelary system had been pushed back, the AK Party felt secure about its power and lost appetite for further democratization.

During 2012, the AK Party was severely criticized for not putting enough political capital into various structural enhancements and reforms.



The political and social groups who had made common cause with the AK Party when the tutelary system was being reduced have diverged on subsequent topics, as a result of their different perspectives of the building process.

The AK Party has constantly rejected these allegations and pledged the continuation of the democratization process. On the Kurdish issue and the new constitution, it claimed that the lack of progress does not stem from its lack of determination; rather it comes from the absence of support from other relevant actors. The AK Party says that its policies in the coming years will be defined by its 2023 vision, by which time the system will have been completely purged of any tutelary residue, the goal of economic growth and political stability attained, and domestic peace realized through finding resolutions to intractable political questions.

During 2012, the third oft-heard criticism directed at the AK Party was related to the direction of the construction process. The AK Party has been accused of strengthening the religious conservative values within society through fostering a pious generation, clearing all the previously erected hurdles in front of the graduates of the religious high schools at the university entrance exam, and introducing Qu'ran and Siyer, the life of Prophet, as elective classes into education curricula. The AK Party's cooperation with the Islamist governments of post-revolution countries in the Arab world has also been framed within this context.

The AK Party argues that while the critics might have different political perspectives, their criticisms reflect the vestiges of the Kemalist ideology. The criticized discourse and policies are only aimed at correcting the injustices inflicted upon the pious and conservative segments of society and in normalizing the state-society relations without threatening different lifestyles.

All these criticisms, irrespective of their (in)validity, are the natural product of the construction process. As mentioned above, the construction process, by its very nature, has to base itself on a perspective or vision. This perspective would determine the content, method, instruments, and timeline of the construction process. Naturally, the AK Party's perspective also shapes its approach to the construction process. Criticism of this perspective also needs to be regarded as equally natural.

The political and social groups who had made common cause with the AK Party when the tutelary system was being reduced have diverged on subsequent topics, as a result of their different perspectives of the building process. These differences alone need not harm either the building process or the democratic character of the system to be built. To put it differently, the fading of the alliance does not pose a threat to the democratic nature of the building process. The democratic character of the prospective system should be underpinned not by the nature of alliances, but by the principles upon which the system will be built. The AK Party needs to be questioned not by with whom it is embarking on the building process, but by which principles are guiding this building process.

Likewise, the timeline of the building process is not directly related to the democratic nature of the system to be built. The political actors who have the responsibility for building a new Turkey will naturally take into account political events, election dates, people's common sense and other issues, and will thus develop a schedule that will not produce a heavy political cost for them. What is important here is not the timetable of the process, but the adherence to the goal of building a new Turkey. The AK Party should have the liberty to determine when the building process will happen based on its own priorities, as long as it continues to adhere to the building of a new Turkey.

Lastly, the criticism regarding religious conservatism is also not related to the democratic nature of the political system to be built. This criticism comes from a positivist/materialist mindset cultivated by the republican elites in Turkey a century ago that associates piousness with backwardness and authoritarianism. It is interesting to see that the political and social groups which joined the struggle against the tutelary system in the name of a democratic political system are currently adopting a language which gave legitimization to tutelage itself. The allegations of religious conservatism at the centre of the AK Party's agenda for the building process do not indicate a democratic deficiency in itself. On the contrary, as long as this agenda facilitates the equal participation of the conservative majority in the political system, ensures their trust in the system, and gives back the rights denied to them in the name of western-oriented nation building, it serves for the establishment of a democratic political system. Besides, these debates and reactions regarding even the partial amelioration of the rights of religious people illustrate that Turkey still has a long way to go in order to normalize the religious life in the country.

To sum up, in 2012 the debates surrounding the probable parameters of building a new Turkey, instead of focusing on the democratic nature of the process, centered on the emergence of diverse perspectives regarding the process among the social and political groups who had previously collaborated with the AK Party against the tutelary system. This is the natural result of political normalization and the struggle for hegemony over the ideas upon which the new Turkey will be built.

### Conclusion

Passionate debates and contending visions about the parameters for a new Turkey have defined the political sphere in 2012. On the one hand, there have been unmistakable developments in the direction of building a new Turkey. On the other hand, 2012 witnessed a significant level of criticism regarding the wide gap between the expectations and developments. Certainly, the prospect of three consecutive elections by 2015, that a significant portion of the ruling cadres of the AK Party will be taking a break from parliamentary politics, the lack of a compromise between political actors and different segments of the society regarding the major political and social issues facing Turkey, the lack of a credible political alternative, and the uprisings in the Arab world have exerted an important influence on the performance of the AK Party. In addition, lessening the polarization in the society, facilitating a minimum common ground between different societal groups, and the desire to include the previously eliminated old guards and their social bases into the process constitute the other factors that have delayed this building process. These factors made it difficult for the AK Party to devise a phased transition to building a new Turkey. In this context, instead of embarking on a comprehensive and full democratization program, it is highly likely that the AK Party will pursue a partial and politically less-costly reform process until 2015.

In 2012, the AK Party was heavily criticized by its former allies who had supported the party's struggle against the old guards for failing to address those concerns before fully launching the process of building of a new Turkey. As long as these criticisms remain focused on the contending visions for Turkey, instead of accusing the government of totally abandoning the project, they should be regarded as beneficial. Moreover, as long as all the sides to the debate on the nature and content of a new Turkey take into

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account the challenges that the AK Party is facing while struggling to make sure that their visions are given due consideration, these debates and contentions would help institutionalize a democratic political system in this transition period, which might continue until 2015, before the construction of a new Turkey being fully launched. During this process, the main concern of these debates should focus on the democratic nature of the prospective system that will be established and the attainment of the needed societal peace.

Of course, after 10 years of democratic momentum and defeating the tutelary system, society was expecting to start constructing a new Turkey. In this period, the AK Party's slowdown on this and advancing a partial reform process has significant potential risks. The most significant risk might stem from the desire to pursue a balanced politics and to not alienate the old guards from the political system. This might damage the sense of trust that people have developed in the ability of the AK Party to solve the intractable questions that Turkey has been facing over the last decade, and might give the impression that the political sphere is returning to what it was previously.

The AK Party's inability to address the concerns and to satisfy the conscience of people after the Uludere incident, the recent attempt to lift the parliamentary immunity of pro-Kurdish BDP members of the parliament, the disproportionate force used to suppress demonstrations and rallies, and the hasty announcement of policies pertaining to important issues without due prior considerations have also caused uneasiness even among the segments of society who strongly support the AK Party's vision of building a new Turkey.

In short, the AK Party does (and should) have the right to determine the schedule, priorities and direction of building a new Turkey. However, it should be conscious of the potential risks that such a mandate possesses. It should avoid language and policies that might upset the public's conscience, damage the sense of trust that people have developed in the party, and give the sense that the political sphere is once again contracting.

CHRONOLOGY	
December 29, 2011	Images from UAVs led Turkish fighter jets to bomb what is believed to be a PKK team near the Iraqi border, leading to the death of 35 civilians.
February 1, 2012	Prime Minister Erdoğan, in an extended meeting with the chairmen of the AK Party branches, stated that they would "foster a pious generation."
February 7, 2012	Specially Authorized Prosecutor Sadettin Sarıkaya summoned five intelligence officers, including the current and previous chiefs of the intelligence service, for their alleged roles in the KCK organization.
September 1, 2012	Prime Minister Erdoğan signals that lawmakers who embraced the PKK members may be stripped of their parliamentary immunity.
September 5, 2012	Democratic Party Chairman Süleyman Soylu joined the AK Party.
September 22, 2012	Chairman of dissolved HAS Party joined the AK Party.
September 30, 2012	The AK Party held its Fourth Convention in Ankara.
October 3, 2012	Speaking at the party assembly meeting, PM Erdoğan stated that the AK Party is determined to finish writing a new constitution by the end of the year.
November 6, 2012	The AK Party submitted its proposal for a "presidential system" to the New Constitution Settlement Commission.

#### IV. THE CHP AND THE QUEST FOR NEW CENTER-LEFT POLITICS

In 2012, the Republican People's Party (CHP) gave up on its efforts to conclude its "transition politics" program that the party had followed since 2010 and resolved to adopt a "politics of transition" strategy. In order to better understand this change, one ought to look back to May 2010 when the party felt compelled to break with its old ways.

The Republican People's Party was greatly affected by the end of the tutelage system. As the constitutional referendum of September 2010 marked the end of the decade-long contestation between the military-bureaucratic establishment and the AK Party government, the new equilibrium compelled the party to revise its political platform. Also while the Turkish parliament held a vote on holding a referendum on the proposed amendments to the 1982 Constitution, on May 2010 a website leaked footage of CHP Chairman Deniz Baykal that would cause him to step down within days. Having situated himself as the political mouthpiece of the establishment, Baykal was forced out along with his followers. In other words, the apparent obstacle for the CHP in realigning its policies in line with the country's new political circumstances had been eliminated.

Since its leadership change, the CHP has continued in its efforts to renew its identity and political platform. However, it is difficult to claim that the party has succeeded in changing despite over two years of trying. Without a doubt, changing as a result of external circumstances (as opposed to demands from within the party organization) renders the transformation even more challenging. As the demands for change stemmed from outside the party, the agenda for change found itself faced with internal resistance that the party has found difficult to tackle. Nevertheless, the CHP administration succeeded in its efforts to eliminate the old elite's influence to consolidate its power following three party congresses between February and July 2012. This marked the second critical junction in the party administration's 30-month tenure following radical changes to the party's members of parliament (MP) with the June 2011 elections.

Having demonstrated great decisiveness in undoing the residual influence of their predecessors, the new CHP administration failed to show the same courage in formulating a new party identity and political platform over a 30-month period that witnessed five party congresses, a constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections.

Afraid of alienating the party's traditional voter base, newcomer Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has been reluctant to make radical changes to the CHP's old politics. To reassure his electorate, he allocated a considerable number of prominent positions vacated by the old elite to new faces who symbolized the old ways. Today, the CHP's executive body reflects the popular-level contestation between neo-nationalists and social democrats, a peculiar arrangement that has caused public struggles within the party administration on nearly all key political fronts. Since that the party is faced with three upcoming elections in 2014-2015, Kılıçdaroğlu remains unlikely to clearly associate himself with either warring faction.

The situation at hand renders it impossible for the CHP to conclude its reform efforts and settle upon a precise political identity and political platform. Therefore, it is possible to maintain that, in 2012, a "politics of transition" strategy replaced the party's "transition politics" strategy that emerged out of the leadership change of May 2010.

Today, the CHP's executive body reflects the popular-level contestation between neo-nationalists and social democrats.

Having come to power as a weak leader in 2010, Kılıçdaroğlu successfully achieved his absolute control over the party administration.

### Ushering in the New Elite

Early in the year, the primary item on the CHP administration's agenda was to put an end to the ongoing intra-party power struggle. The opposition's successful petition campaign for an emergency congress and the administration's decision to hold its own emergency congress led the party to host two extraordinary events over 48 hours in February 2012. The opposition's final defeat in this process manifested itself in the CHP's 34th Party Congress on July 17-18, 2012. Kılıçdaroğlu not only secured a second consecutive term as chairman but also managed to make his mark on the 60-member party assembly where 57 were on the chairman's endorsed list. However, Kılıçdaroğlu's simultaneous endorsement of pro-change and neo-nationalist candidates reflected the party's intention to try to meet two contradictory demands at the same time.

Having come to power as a weak leader in 2010, Kılıçdaroğlu successfully achieved his absolute control over the party administration by effectively putting an end to intra-party power struggles in the February and July congresses. However, this victory did not mean that he managed to eliminate the obstacles for changing the party. Until now, the presence of factionalism has been used to legitimize the new administration's reluctance to push for change. Yet Kılıçdaroğlu's decision to engage in a limited removal of the old elite by replacing these with new representatives of the old politics prevented a new political platform's emergence out of this victory. In other words, despite the elimination of the old actors, and Kılıçdaroğlu's accumulation of near monopolistic power within the party administration, he failed to remove the obstacles for the party to find a new identity and politics. Not only did the process fail to make room for change but it also perpetuated the pains of change. Thus, Kılıçdaroğlu effectively traded away the "New CHP" ideals in order to remove the old party elite.

### Identity Quest

The failure of the elite-level reshuffling to lead to change in party identity rendered it effectively impossible for the CHP administration to develop a consistent position on the new developments in Turkey's political landscape. Competing discourses within the party that began to manifest themselves in 2011 continued to make their mark on nearly all critical issues throughout the year. Kılıçdaroğlu chose to position himself as a neutral arbitrator in contestations between the neo-nationalists and social democrats instead of siding with either faction. At times, this strategy proved inadequate in preventing disputes from surfacing at public venues.

In the past year, this led the CHP administration to offer two competing discourses with regard to every issue that represented an opportunity for the party to put forward a new political platform. Having criticized the government and emphasized the need for democratization following the infamous Uludere incident, the party presented a 10-item roadmap for peaceful resolution amidst a peak in violence in June 2012.<sup>13</sup> Kılıçdaroğlu's statement that the government "can talk to anyone to stop terrorism" showed support for negotiations between the government and the PKK and contributed to the party's

messages.<sup>14</sup> However, the party administration issued strongly worded statements on various issues in order to not alienate the neo-nationalist electorate in the face of calls for democratization and dialogue. Following the PKK's Gaziantep attacks in August 2012, Emine Ülker Tarhan, deputy head of the CHP parliamentary group, attributed responsibility to the government for participating in the Oslo talks and the BDP.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, party speaker Haluk Koç presented the press with records of the Oslo talks as "Terms of Agreement between the AKP and the PKK" and allowed for the neo-nationalist position's representation to influence the CHP.<sup>16</sup> Another deputy head of the parliamentary group, neo-nationalist Muharrem İnce, contributed to this message by claiming that the Oslo talks resemble an electoral alliance between the negotiating parties.<sup>17</sup>

The PKK's kidnapping of controversial MP Hüseyin Aygün in Tunceli also led the party administration to engage in a public contestation among themselves. Having accused the government of failing to establish order in the country while Aygün was held hostage, the CHP leadership reacted in different ways when Aygün talked of the militants as "young fellas" in a press conference after his release.<sup>18</sup> While party assembly member Metin Feyzioğlu stated that it was unacceptable for PKK militants to be referred to as fighters for the people, Sezgin Tanrikulu and Adnan Keskin—known for their proximity to Kılıçdaroğlu—attributed Aygün's comments to stress and emotion.<sup>19</sup>

The CHP's multiplicity of positions regarding the Kurdish question carried over onto the party position on civil-military relations, a chronic issue for the movement. Throughout the year, the party legitimized its harsh criticism of the Joint Chief of Staff and the military with reference to civilian rule, democracy and human rights. Accusing the government and the military command of insufficiently investigating the Uludere incident, the CHP also criticized the Joint Chief of Staff's office for issuing a press release that implicitly challenged public figures such as columnist Bekir Coşkun and Ümit Kocasakal, head of the Istanbul Bar Association who complained about the military's inaction in keeping the AK Party government in check.<sup>20</sup> However, this rhetoric of civilian rule was in stark contrast with Silivri Prison Complex's continued influence over CHP policies. The party continued to discredit the Ergenekon trials by focusing on the continued detention of Mustafa Balbay and Mehmet Haberal, CHP MPs whose candidacy the party administration endorsed in the 2011 elections to strong arm the court into releasing them. Furthermore, the party's motion to intervene in the 1980 junta trials received criticism due to its opposition to the September 2010 constitutional referendum that amended the immunity clause for the coup's perpetrators.

The PKK's kidnapping of controversial MP Hüseyin Aygün in Tunceli also led the party administration to engage in a public contestation among themselves.

14. Kılıçdaroğlu: Terörü durdurmak için herkesle görüşülür, *Milliyet*, 21 Eylül 2012.

<http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/kilicdaroglu-teroru-durdurmak-icin-herkesle-gorusulur/siyaset/siyasetdetay/21.09.2012/1599984/default.htm>

15. Terörün hangi planlar için kan döktüğü anlaşıldı, *Aydınlık*, 26 Ağustos 2012.

<http://www.aydinlikgazete.com/mansetler/14740-teroruen-hangi-planlar-icin-kan-doektueue-anlald.html>

16. CHP publicizes Oslo protocol between PKK and government, *Today's Zaman*, 18 September 2012.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-292750-chp-publicizes-oslo-protocol-between-pkk-and-government.html>

17. Muharrem İnce'den sert suçlama, *CNN Türk*, 25 Eylül 2012.

<http://video.cnnturk.com/2012/haber/9/25/muharrem-ince-den-sert-suclama>

18. MP in Turkey released by Kurdish rebels, *BBC News Europe*, 14 August 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19258467>

19. Hüseyin Aygün'ün kendisini kaçırın teröristleri övmesi CHP'yi karıştırdı, *Zaman*, 16 Ağustos 2012.

[http://www.zaman.com.tr/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?haberno=1333944](http://www.zaman.com.tr/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?haberno=1333944)

20. Kılıçdaroğlu'ndan Genelkurmay'a tepki, *Sabah*, 8 Mayıs 2012.

<http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gundem/2012/05/08/kilicdaroglundan-genelkurmayaya-tepki>

The CHP's continued indecision on its future identity engendered notable fluctuations in its political platform throughout the year.

The CHP's dual position on secularism, too, showed how it tried to reach out to new voter blocs while securing support from its existing electorate. Having petitioned the Constitutional Court to overturn an education reform bill, the party also employed the commission drafting the new constitution as a channel to reassure its popular base. Konya MP Atilla Kart's accusations against the AK Party based on its alleged opposition to secularism showed the party's intention of representing secularist sensitivities at this level.<sup>21</sup> The CHP administration also took some of its most concrete steps to bridge the gap with religious voters over the past year. A notable attempt to increase the party's society-wide appeal was the hosting of a Ramadan dinner in August 2012 where Kılıçdaroğlu criticized the CHP's past exclusion of religious groups in his address to a crowd that included prominent Islamist public figures including Hüseyin Gülerce, Ahmet Hakan and Ali Bulaç.<sup>22</sup>

### Searching for a New Political Platform

The CHP's continued indecision on its future identity engendered notable fluctuations in its political platform throughout the year. Various factions attempted to attract public attention and, coupled with the administration's efforts to compensate for its failure to reform the party platform through populist rhetoric, this led the party to engage in risky and dynamic moves that raised questions about the CHP's center-left party credentials. Having protested the continued detention of its MP-elects with a short-lived parliamentary boycott following the 2011 elections, the party took similar steps in the past year. Unable to maintain a calm attitude at critical junctions, the CHP at times resembled a radical party that was more interested in sending a message to its electorate as opposed to appealing to the whole of society. In this sense, the party not only organized demonstrations in parliamentary bodies but also allied itself with radical neo-nationalist youth organizations to clash with security forces and participated in sectarian solidarity rallies that jeopardized social harmony.

Having relocated its weekly meeting away from the parliament to a public square in Ankara to protest the AK Party's-education reform bill in March, the CHP was quick to risk its center-left identity that the party administration had worked hard to establish since the 2010 leadership change. In September 2012, the party joined forces with the Labor Party and local left-wing groups at a pro-Assad rally in Hatay where it became a party to ongoing sectarian tensions at the local level, and presented itself as an ally to an internationally-discredited authoritarian regime. Similarly, the CHP administration, including Kılıçdaroğlu, attended an alternative Republic Day demonstration organized by the neo-nationalist Turkey Youth Union in Ankara, where they found themselves in the middle of clashes between demonstrators and the riot police. Finally, the party's participation in mass demonstrations at the Silivri Prison Complex to voice unconditional support for all defendants (as opposed to its MPs) alongside the aforementioned extremist groups cast a significant shadow over the CHP's center-left credentials.

21. Meclis Anayasa Uzlaşma Komisyonu'nda 'laiklik' tartışması, *Zaman*, 7 Ağustos 2012. [http://www.zaman.com.tr/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?haberno=1329296&title=meclis-anayasa-uzlasma-komisyonunda-laiklik-tartismasi](http://www.zaman.com.tr/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?haberno=1329296&title=meclis-anayasa-uzlasma-komisyonunda-laiklik-tartismasi)

22. CHP leader has iftar with religious figures in İstanbul, *Today's Zaman*, 16 August 2012. [http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=289704](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=289704)

In all three cases, the CHP's attendance at gatherings organized by other groups to serve their own agendas instead of hosting mass protests to criticize the government's policies and practices resulted in the perception that the party was a supporting actor as opposed to the main act. As such, the demonstrations not only damaged the popular perceptions that the party administration had worked hard to establish but also cast a shadow in the organization's center party identity. Praised by neo-nationalist commentators as the CHP's reconnection with the masses, these acts caused the party to associate itself with marginal neo-nationalist groups that even the old elite would be reluctant to approach.

## Conclusion

The primary outcome in 2012 for the Republican People's Party was that the party's long-lasting transformation process made it impossible for them to have a radical break with the old ways and allowed the agents of old and new politics to consolidate their positions within the party administration. This tense cooperation, where old and new possess near equal power, appears to have eliminated the possibility that party's agenda for change will lead anywhere in the foreseeable future. Today, the CHP is a political movement that is unable to leave behind its old identity, despite its shortcomings, and cannot display the kind of decisiveness needed to formulate a new identity. Having used the 2010 referendum and the 2011 elections as an excuse for its indecisiveness, the party is unlikely to take radical steps on its change agenda due to three upcoming elections in 2014-2015.

Keeping all these factors in mind, it is possible to conclude that the "transformation process" that represented a hope for the CHP's reinvention over the last two and a half years has come to symbolize a static condition that now constitutes the party's new political platform and identity. As such, change seems to designate a political platform by itself, not a process, for the Republican People's Party.

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CHRONOLOGY	
February 26-27, 2012	The CHP holds its 16th and 17th emergency congresses and makes radical changes to the party charter.
April 4, 2012	The CHP motions to intervene in the 1980 junta trial.
April 23, 2012	Muharrem İnce, deputy head of the parliamentary group, discredits the 1980 trial as "trying two old men."
May 3, 2012	Deputy Chairman Gürsel Tekin resigns from his position citing tensions over local party administrations.
June 6, 2012	CHP Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu meets Prime Minister Erdoğan to present his party's 10-item resolution plan for the Kurdish question.
June 17, 2012	Kılıçdaroğlu states that the CHP will support house arrest for imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan if all four parties agree.
July 17-18, 2012	The CHP holds its 34th Party Congress. Kılıçdaroğlu secures second term as Chairman, while capturing 57 out of 60 seats in the Party Assembly.
August 13-14, 2012	PKK militants kidnap Tunceli MP Hüseyin Aygün who receives criticism from some CHP executives and the broader public for referring to his kidnappers as "young fellas."
September 18, 2012	CHP speaker Haluk Koç releases records of the 2008 Oslo talks.
November 19, 2012	Turkish journalist Cüneyt Ünal was released by the Syrian government after 87 days in prison. Public debate follows as a picture of the nine-member CHP delegation's picture with Bashar Assad appears in the national press.



The MHP can no longer postpone much-needed efforts to come to terms with the referendum's outcome and reinvent its party platform accordingly.

## V. THE MHP AND A RETURN TO IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS

Throughout 2012, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) worked to compensate for its past shortcomings while running high costs. Having had minimal effect on the anti-tutelage efforts during its tenure in the parliament, the party opposed the constitutional referendum of 2010, either due to its inadequate understanding of the process and its repercussions, or as part of a conscious effort. Still, the MHP managed to shelter itself from most of the damage that stemmed from its take on the referendum, an act that contradicted both its *Zeitgeist* and party tradition, by emerging as a safe haven in the face of rising Kurdish nationalism. Last year's developments demonstrated that the MHP can no longer postpone much-needed efforts to come to terms with the referendum's outcome and reinvent its party platform accordingly.

The most critical item on the MHP's 2012 agenda was its 10<sup>th</sup> Congress that took place on November 4, 2012. The race between incumbent Devlet Bahçeli and his chief rival, Trabzon deputy Koray Aydın, received considerable attention, as it would directly affect the party's future. Without a doubt, the nationalist movement's disappointment over Bahçeli's attitude during the 2010 referendum boosted interest in an otherwise uneventful occasion. Furthermore, widespread changes to the MHP elite that followed the pre-election sex tape scandal and the party's near-failure in passing the national threshold in the 2011 elections proved as significant as the party's "no" campaign in the referendum. In addition, another important issue at the congress was the need for a strategy as the MHP constituency continued its harsh criticism of the party administration due to a lack of a comprehensive roadmap to make up for the party's opposition to constitutional amendments. The convention results (especially Koray Aydın's considerable appeal to party delegates) displayed the cost of the MHP administration's lack of a plan to compensate for its troubles. In this sense, it is necessary to focus on the Bahçeli administration's strategic efforts in analyzing the MHP's politics over the past year.

### Reclaiming the Alienated

It is possible to claim that the MHP has employed various political instruments to build bridges with its nationalist-conservative base. Prominent among these instruments was the party's support for civilian rule in the context of changing civil-military relations and the tutelage debate. Furthermore, the party administration sought a rapprochement with the MHP constituency with a "Turkish-Islamic synthesis".<sup>23</sup>

The MHP, however, rarely managed to follow its intended policy in a coherent and unchallenged manner. At least two main dynamics hindered the party's efforts. First, the MHP administration's changes in discourse and policies led to some tensions. In this sense, it was noteworthy that intra-party tensions arose out of the party's new pro-civilian stance on military coups and the tutelary system. Instead of opposing military-bureaucratic pressures on principle, the MHP seemed to maintain a dual position that favored attempted coups while condemning actual cases. In this context, Bahçeli

called for sanctions against the perpetrators of the 1980,<sup>24</sup> 1997,<sup>25</sup> and 2007<sup>26</sup> coups and coup attempts immediately after he endorsed the parliament's Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda, and while expressing discontent following the court's verdict on the Sledgehammer trial.

The second challenge to the MHP administration's consistent and systematic pursuit of its policies was its failure to develop a discourse that would simultaneously appeal to its two distinct voter blocs, the secular/neo-nationalists on the western shore, and the nationalist-conservatives in Anatolia. The party's emphasis on a "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" was an attempt to consolidate its conservative-nationalist base. However, employing this discourse risked the secular nationalist (or neo-nationalist) support that the MHP administration aimed to lure away from the Republican People's Party (CHP). Furthermore, Bahçeli's statements clearly favored a religiously-tinged discourse for the party: The MHP not only supported Prime Minister Erdoğan's February call to "raise religious youth" and endorsed the re-opening of religious vocational middle schools (*imam hatip*), but also played a leading role in the parliament's introduction of two elective courses "The Life of Prophet Muhammad" and "The Qur'an") into the secondary education curriculum. These developments led to tensions between the MHP's two electoral bases in the past year. Moreover, it was noteworthy that the party attempted to recover some of the credibility that it sacrificed in its referendum campaign by focusing its efforts on its nationalist-conservative supporters.<sup>27</sup>

### The Emergence of an Intra-Party Opposition

2012 was a "year of congresses" for all four political parties currently represented in the Turkish parliament. In the context of the MHP's intra-party politics, the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress was particularly important, not for Devlet Bahçeli's re-election as chairman, but for its recognition of an intra-party opposition within the MHP. Although Bahçeli secured 725 votes out of the total 1,214, his chief rival Koray Aydın received 441 votes, while Müsavat Dervişoğlu was left with 48 votes. The leadership race proved that at least 40 percent of MHP congressional delegates favored Bahçeli's opponents. Significantly, the opposition based their election campaign on leadership change and a return to the movement's ideological roots. Former Istanbul deputy Ahmet Çakar summarized the opposition's gathering on February 11 as "a congress to manifest the idealist [*ülkücü*] will", a clear challenge to the incumbent's authority.<sup>28</sup>

As the intra-party opposition emerged only nine months before the congress, public opinion noticed their presence only after the leadership race. It was therefore noteworthy that various commentators talked of the intra-party opposition's institutionaliza-

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24. The 1980 military coup, headed by Joint Chief of Staff General Kenan Evren, was the third coup (after the 1960 coup and the 1971 memorandum) in the Republic's history.

25. The 1997 "post-modern coup" refers to the National Security Council's February 28, 1997 resolution endorsed by the military command. The process led to then-Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's resignation and the coalition government's ousting from power.

26. The 2007 "e-memorandum" was a controversial press release on the Joint Chief of Staff's website that warned the Justice and Development Party to not endorse Abdullah Gül's candidacy for president, and reminded the public that the military was in charge of safeguarding Turkey's secular government.

27. Another nationalist party, the BBP (Grand Union Party), supported the 2010 referendum and therefore made it more difficult for the MHP to justify its own position.

28. It must be noted that the intra-party opposition within the MHP is far from monolithic.

What remains to be seen is whether the MHP will succeed in developing a new political platform to restructure itself in line with the post-referendum political environment.

tion within the MHP.<sup>29</sup> Still, these observations reflected hasty conclusions rather than a grand transformation in the short run. After all, the rising number of candidates in the leadership race may be attributed to Bahçeli's call to interested party members: "Whoever wishes to do so can apply for candidacy. I promise this."<sup>30</sup> This alone indicates that the chairman had given permission for MHP members to run for the position. Keeping this in mind, the intra-party opposition's current standing has remained far from full-fledged institutionalization.

Furthermore, the two challengers, Koray Aydın and Müsavat Dervişoğlu, chose to focus their criticism on the AK Party government and Turkey's broader problems rather than on Devlet Bahçeli and the party administration's shortcomings. Similarly, there was no mention in the challengers' congressional addresses of their motives for running for the position, their roadmaps or the current administration's shortcomings. In this regard, it would appear that despite an overall demand for change and reconstruction within the MHP, it remains to be seen which actor(s) shall embark on this project, and which agenda they will bring to the table. Neither the current administration nor the newly emerging opposition leaders succeeded in creating a precise plan for such change.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the MHP's 2012 activities reflected the party's efforts to recover the prestige that it had lost due to its stance on the 2010 constitutional referendum. In addition to popular-level discontent, the party's relatively unsuccessful performance in the 2011 elections (and its near failure to secure representation in the parliament) and the pre-election sex tape controversy that led to multiple resignations within the party administration manifested themselves in terms of a 40 percent congressional voting bloc against Bahçeli.

What remains to be seen is whether the MHP will succeed in developing a new political platform to restructure itself in line the post-referendum political environment. At a time when Turkey's political system is undergoing considerable change, hegemonic struggles are occurring over the ways in which politics will be conducted in the new Turkey, and domestic politics clearly reflects regional developments, holding onto the Kurdish question alone would fall short of getting the MHP over its crisis, even if this is a safe bet. If the party continues to tie its entire platform to Kurdish nationalism, this will inevitably leave the movement's fate in the hands of external conditions.

Another item on the MHP's future agenda is the question over whether the intra-party opposition will be able to convert numbers into political power. In its present form, the opposition has failed to offer a real alternative to the incumbents due to a lack of viable projects and solutions to the MHP's ongoing crisis. Much like the current administration, the opposition seems to view the party's role with reference to external circumstances, that is, the current administration's performance in local, general, and presidential elections scheduled to take place in 2014 and 2015. If Bahçeli fails to meet

29. For some of those comments, see: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/21859641.asp>, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/bahceli-ye-verilen-isaret/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/05.11.2012/1621936/default.htm>, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/21851980.asp>

30. MHP's Bahçeli elected for sixth time in congress of many firsts, *Today's Zaman*, 4 November 2012. [http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile\\_detailn.action?newsId=297144](http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=297144)

expectations in the upcoming elections, the intra-party opposition may use this to call for an emergency congress and they will no doubt have an opportunity to convert their numbers into political power.

CHRONOLOGY	
February 11, 2012	The intra-party opposition calls for "a democratic congress" to elect party leadership.
August 28, 2012	The MHP requests the AK Party and the CHP to help strip nine BPD deputies and one independent of their parliamentary immunity as footage of them embracing PKK militants during an illegal roadblock surfaces.
September 1, 2012	MHP Chairman Bahçeli calls for willing party members to run for chairman, stating "Whoever wishes to do so may apply for candidacy."
September 1, 2012	Koray Aydın declares his candidacy for chairman.
September 2, 2012	Masum Türker declares his candidacy for chairman.
September 15, 2012	Seyfi Şahin declares his candidacy for chairman.
September 21, 2012	Müsavat Dervişoğlu declares his candidacy for chairman.
September 24, 2012	Bahçeli visits MHP Istanbul deputy-elect Engin Alan, who was sentenced to 18 years in prison as part of the Sledgehammer trial, in Silivri Prison Complex.

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The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which has for a long time faced the dilemma of whether to function as a political party or to serve as a subsidiary of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), mostly resembled the political wing of the PKK in 2012.

## VI. THE BDP AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLITICAL AGENCY

The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which has for a long time faced the dilemma of whether to function as a political party or to serve as a subsidiary of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), mostly resembled the political wing of the PKK in 2012. This stance has been well demonstrated through two events: the embracing incident between PKK members and BDP deputies in August, and the BDP's positioning itself as the spokesperson of the hunger strikers rather than acting as a mediator. Whenever the BDP has been expected to develop a political initiative, the party, at the expense of eliminating its political *raison d'être*, has looked to Öcalan or the PKK as the main agent. As a result, in 2012 the BDP's credibility as a political party has suffered significantly as it has eschewed taking responsibility and being the main actor on matters that constitute the party's *raison d'être*.

### The KCK Operations

The first development of 2012 that influenced the BDP was the security services' KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union, the alleged urban wing of the PKK) operations conducted in 17 different cities and the detentions of party members in this operation. The search of the home of Leyla Zana, a prominent political figure in the Kurdish movement, by police coupled with the BDP's February 9, 2012 call for party members to take to the streets on February 15 to mark the anniversary of PKK leader Öcalan's capture further increased the political tension. Following these developments, the BDP started civil disobedience activities with a two-day hunger strike in order to create public awareness about the KCK operations—which they demanded be halted—and Öcalan's prison condition. Likewise, the PKK/KCK inmates started a hunger strike that lasted 67 days to demand the "termination of Öcalan's legal isolation", "recognition of the right for education in their mother tongue", and "recognition of the right to use their mother tongue in court appearances." This strike ushered in passionate debates.

Due to the detention and incarceration of a large number of party executives and management cadres, the BDP said on July 27 that it would hold its Second Extraordinary Convention on October 14, 2012. BDP Chairman Selahattin Demirtaş stated that even though the party had held a convention only a year ago, the incarceration of 56 out of the 120 members of the party assembly in the ongoing KCK case had paralyzed the party's activities and rendered the replacement of the incarcerated members urgent in order for the party to function properly.<sup>31</sup> At the convention, Selahattin Demirtaş was re-elected as party chairman<sup>32</sup> with 650 votes out of the 654 voting delegates. The demand for autonomy for the Kurds was the main agenda item for the convention. Demirtaş argued that Turkey could be divided into 15 to 20 different autonomous regional governments according to not ethnic affiliations but socio-economic and cul-

31. For more information on the party's Second Extraordinary Convention, see BDP olağanüstü kongreye gidiyor, *CNN Türk*, 27 July 2012.

<http://www.cnnturk.com/2012/turkiye/07/27/bdp.olaganustu.kongreye.gidiyor/670546.0/index.html>

32. For more information, see Demirtaş elected new leader of BDP, Kışanak named co-chair, *Today's Zaman*, 1 February 2010.

[http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?sessionId=26146D8C1F927B18BAEB6FDFC735CBED?newsId=239851](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?sessionId=26146D8C1F927B18BAEB6FDFC735CBED?newsId=239851)

tural affinities.<sup>33</sup> It is possible to say that the convention, which was motivated by mathematical considerations, only fulfilled its main mission. In this regard, unlike the other major parties' (the AK Party, the CHP and the MHP) conventions held in 2012, the BDP convention seems not to have had any significant effects on the identity and politics of the party.

### Calls for a Negotiated Settlement

In the last days of March, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that "we can seek a settlement for the Kurdish issue with BDP as long as they behave sincerely." Gülten Kışanak replied<sup>34</sup> that "If they opt for a negotiated settlement, all the parties in Kurdish politics are ready for that, including the BDP, Kandil [the PKK] and İmralı [Öcalan]." Kışanak's response illustrates that any settlement of the Kurdish issue requires the consent of these three actors. Likewise, the party's statements on different occasions, which have stressed the equality between these actors and the deficiency in pursuing a settlement with one actor while disregarding the others, are further testaments to this approach.<sup>35</sup> Despite repeated calls for a negotiated settlement by the BDP and government representatives throughout the year, the lack of common ground upon which negotiations could have taken place, rendered these calls fruitless.

### The Hunger Strikes

Another significant item on the agenda of the BDP in 2012 was the hunger strikes. However, it should be noted that the BDP, instead of mediating between the strikers and the government for a solution, regarded the strikes as an opportunity to emphasize and demonstrate the centrality of Öcalan's position in the Kurdish issue. Yet, this stance increased the risk of the strikes culminating in death with the passage of the time. The strikes, the goal of which were the end of the isolation of Öcalan, lasted 67 days. Initially, the BDP decided to actively support and show solidarity with the strikers by having its deputies and mayors alternate in joining. But towards the end, the BDP reversed its previous course and took part in finding a settlement. However, once the effort to find a solution reached an impasse, Öcalan stepped in by pleading with the strikers that their action had achieved its objectives, and thus they could terminate their strike. Strikers responded positively to his plea and ended the strikes.

All along, instead of promoting a more reasonable political position to its constituency, the BDP remained within the political parameters designated for it by others. Rather than being part of the solution and trying to find common ground between its constituency and the general public, the BDP opted to become part of the problem by taking part in the strikes. The BDP could have taken a more proactive political approach and strengthened its position during this crisis; however, it opted for a secondary role and gave primacy to Öcalan's political role and position. As such, it squandered an opportunity for a more prominent political role.

The BDP, instead of mediating between the strikers and the government for a solution, regarded the hunger strikes as an opportunity to emphasize and demonstrate the centrality of Öcalan's position in the Kurdish issue.

33. For more information, see Create 20 regions, says BDP, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 15 October 2012.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/create-20-regions-says-bdp-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=32402&NewsCatID=338>

34. For more information, see BDP says it is ready to facilitate PKK dialogue, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 28 March 2012.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/bdp-says-it-is-ready-to-facilitate-pkk-dialogue.aspx?pageID=238&nID=17052&NewsCatID=338>

35. For more information, see <https://www.economist.com/user/1749665/comments?page=5>

The need for a political initiative spearheaded by the BDP was needed more than ever. Yet the BDP, by adopting a passive and one-step-behind-the-PKK approach regarding the Kurdish issue, squandered this opportunity.

### The Embracing of PKK Members and the Immunity Debates

The deepest crisis for the BDP in 2012 occurred when nine BDP deputies and one pro-BDP independent deputy were videotaped embracing PKK members in Şemdinli, Bağlar village, on August 17. This cordial and friendly behavior exhibited by the BDP MPs towards the PKK members in front of cameras caused a wave of indignation, not only among government circles, but also in the general public. These images have caused various sections of society, which normally do not appreciate the ethnically focused policies of the BDP but consider its presence as part of democratic pluralism, to lose faith in the BDP's democratic credentials. It would not be wrong to claim that this event has had a "Second Habur effect"<sup>36</sup> on the political class and the general public. The Chief Prosecutor General of the Van district prepared a judicial decree and submitted it to the parliament for the removal of parliamentary immunity of the 10 MPs involved, which would thus enable him to launch a case against them. This immunity question was also kept on the public and political agenda due to Prime Minister Erdoğan's indications that the AK Party would (or might) support such a move.

### Conclusion

To sum up, at a time when regional developments have exerted a significant impact on the fate of the PKK, when a political/negotiated approach had been adopted by the government for the settlement of the Kurdish/PKK issue after the retreat of the tutelary system, when the PKK once again resorted to violence as the primary instrument for a settlement through the Silvan attack of July 2011 as a result of a misreading of the developments in the Arab world, the need for a political initiative spearheaded by the BDP was needed more than ever. Yet the BDP, by adopting a passive and one-step-behind-the-PKK approach regarding the Kurdish issue, squandered this opportunity. In short, at a time when national and regional developments made the solution of the Kurdish issue and the disarmament of the PKK more urgent, when conditions seemed to be ripe for the settlements of both issues, the BDP wasted all these chances by pursuing a passive politics and giving priority to the approaches, initiatives and agenda of the PKK/Öcalan.

#### CHRONOLOGY

January 13, 2012	Operations against the PKK's alleged urban wing, the KCK, took place in 17 provinces at 123 different locations.
February 20, 2012	BDP deputies decided to start a two-day hunger strike in order to protest the KCK operations.
July 27, 2012	The BDP decided to hold its Second Extraordinary Convention since the party assembly could not function properly due to the detention of 56 out of the 120 members during the KCK investigation.
August 17, 2012	Nine BDP MPs and one pro-BDP independent MP embraced PKK members in Şemdinli.
September 5, 2012	Prime Minister Erdoğan brought the embracing incident up and insinuated that the AK Party might support the removal of the parliamentary immunity of the concerned MPs.
September 12, 2012	Inmates affiliated with the PKK/KCK started a hunger strike lasting 67 days to demand an end to the legal isolation of imprisoned PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, the recognition of the usage of the mother tongue in education and in court appearances.
November 18, 2012	After Öcalan's intervention, the strikers ended their strike.
November 27, 2012	The judicial decree prepared by the Chief Prosecutor General of the Van district for the removal of the parliamentary immunity of nine BDP MPs and one independent MP was submitted to the office of the speaker of the parliament.

36. The Habur incident refers to the crossing of some PKK members from Iraq into Turkey, and their being tried by a makeshift court at the entrance gate, Habur, on September 19, 2009 as part of the Kurdish Opening. After the trial, the militants were set free. However, their subsequent triumphal touring of the southeastern cities caused public indignation. This in turn played a role in the breakdown of the Kurdish Opening.

## VII. THE PKK AND THE KURDISH ISSUE: BETWEEN SECURITY AND DIALOGUE

The PKK attack on Silvan, Diyarbakır, on July 14, 2011 cast its shadow on 2012. The conflict's escalation over the past year led to a rise in security measures and security discourse. This not only caused the government to spend its energy on strengthening security precautions, but also resulted in it shifting its emphasis from a political resolution to counter-terrorism.

In order to better understand the Silvan attack and its repercussions on Turkish politics, it will be useful to reconsider the "Kurdish Opening" of 2009 that marked a break in the government's traditional approach to resolving the Kurdish question by fighting the PKK. As the anti-tutelage campaign eroded the military's influence over the political system and emboldened civilian actors, the government wholeheartedly embraced the democratization agenda and reconsidered the securitization approach to Turkey's long-standing problems. This paradigm change manifested itself most clearly in the government's view of the Kurdish question and the fight against the PKK. The Turkish state's securitizing perspective had resulted in the Kurdish question misguidedly being paired with the PKK campaign and rendered counter-terror measures the only available option. However, as civilian actors gained power over the tutelary power-holders, they stopped considering the Kurdish question as a matter of security and order. Instead, they embarked on a fresh process of disarming the PKK through civil-political instruments. In other words, "democratization" became the new framework for resolving the Kurdish issue and ending the PKK's attacks.

The PKK's Silvan attack undermined this whole process. Although the democratization perspective did not come to a halt, the attack reinstated the previously abandoned security perspective and military solution. Expecting a "Kurdish Spring" in line with the Arab revolutions, the PKK sought to gain advantage by postponing dialogue with the Turkish government, thereby destroying all hope for dialogue. The government's frustration over the failed process, the PKK's ill-informed prediction, and the emergence of new regional dynamics led the parties to an impasse that resurrected the old security and conflict paradigm.

The emergence of a reciprocal strategy between the state and the PKK to assert their respective superiority through armed campaigns rendered 2012 one of the bloodiest years over the past decade. The year also gave rise to heated debates regarding agency in Kurdish politics (Öcalan, Kandil<sup>37</sup>, the Committee of People's Union of Kurdistan (the KCK), the Peace and Democracy Party, Democratic Society Congress (the DTK) and Europe) as the state's approach and instruments came under scrutiny and discussions emerged over the decisive role of changing regional and international dynamics.

### The Escalation of Violence and a Diversification of Actions

The PKK's attacks on Yüksekova and Çukurca in October 2011 and the 35 civilian deaths from a misinformed air strike in Uludere<sup>38</sup> led the country into a spiral of violence and conflict. The PKK's overall strategy during this period rested on three interrelated prem-

Expecting a "Kurdish Spring" in line with the Arab revolutions, the PKK sought to gain advantage by postponing dialogue with the Turkish government, thereby destroying all hope for dialogue.

37. Kandil refers to mountainous borderlands of northern Iraq where the Kurdistan Workers' Party operates.

38. For more detailed information on this event, see 35 killed in military operation: officials, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 29 December 2011.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/more-than-20-killed-in-military-operation.aspx?pageID=238&nid=10273>

To maximize the damage to the Turkish state and the AK Party government, the PKK committed violent attacks against civilians. The PKK also developed a new strategy for its field operations by replacing its traditional hit-and-run approach with new concepts such as hit-and-stay, area defense, and territorial control

ises: widening the scale of violence, diversifying its combat style, and making the AK Party its main target. Based on this three-step plan, the organization continued its intensive, violent and adamant campaign over the past year.

The PKK command's new combat strategy led to wide-scale violence. In an interview with the ANF news agency, Cemil Bayık stated:

"The war will spread to all areas, from the mountain to cities and metropolitans. Kurdish Freedom Movement will target the state's military powers, police and counter guerilla powers as well as the administrative and political powers standing at the center of this war. The war will continue differently from the previous period."<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the organization opted to exclusively resort to violence ("people's revolutionary war"), instead of looking for a political solution or a mixture of the two.<sup>40</sup> This strategy led to a significant rise in casualties on both sides as revealed in a report by the Ministry of Defense. While only six soldiers died in 2002, the figure rose to 56 in 2009, 88 in 2010 and peaked at 123 in 2012, as of October 31. PKK casualties amounted to 496 during the same period.<sup>41</sup>

The new spiral of violence did not only target military units in 2012. To maximize the damage to the Turkish state and the AK Party government, the PKK committed violent attacks against civilians, such as in Gaziantep. The organization acted on the premise that any initial mass outcry against the PKK would eventually turn against the government over its failure to prevent the PKK attacks. Recent developments in the Middle East further encouraged the PKK to follow this strategy. According to the organization, Turkey's continued failure to deal with the PKK and resolve the Kurdish question would serve to make the country vulnerable and as such prevent it from claiming regional power status.

The PKK also developed a new strategy for its field operations by replacing its traditional hit-and-run approach with new concepts such as hit-and-stay, area defense, and territorial control that added new elements to the organization's Arab-Spring-inspired "people's revolutionary war." The PKK tested this new approach in Şemdinli on July 14 where the objective was to capture territory and declare it a safe haven. BDP co-chairman Selahattin Demirtaş's statement that the PKK controlled a 300-400 km<sup>2</sup> area between Şemdinli and Çukurca for 45 days<sup>42</sup> was a manifestation of this new strategy.

### The Impact of the Arab Spring

Another case that attested to the Arab Spring's influence on the PKK was the organization's announcement of the exact location of its roadblock on Twitter while it assaulted

39. For the entire interview with Cemil Bayık, see KCK: New period to witness inevitable revolutionary resistance, *Firat News Agency*, 6 February 2012. <http://en.firatnews.eu/index.php?rupel=article&nucelID=4063>

40. See Yalçın Akdoğan, Öcalan'ı gömen strateji, BDP'yi de anlamsızlaştırıyor, *Star*, 9 August 2012.

<http://haber.stargazete.com/yazar/ocalani-gomen-strateji-bdpyi-de-anlamsizlastiriyor/yazi-660072>.

Akdoğan expresses similar views in another interview: Erdogan Adviser: Assad Provokes Turkey Through PKK and PYD, *Rudaw*, 17 August 2012. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/interview/5102.html>

41. Yılın ilk 10 ayında öldürülen PKK'lı sayısı, *Haber 7*, 8 November 2012.

<http://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/949357-yilin-ilk-10-ayinda-oldurulen-pkkli-sayisi>

Also see Turkish Interior Ministry: PKK Has 200 Children Among Its Members, *Haberler.com*, 30 November 2012. <http://en.haberler.com/turkish-interior-ministry-pkk-has-200-children-245763/>

42. PKK control of Şemdinli-Çukurca claims prove to be terror propaganda, *Today's Zaman*, 30 August 2012.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-290939-pkk-control-of-semdinli-cukurca-claims-prove-to-be-terror-propaganda.html>

Şemdinli. The fact that these new tactics emerged at the same time the Syrian Kurds (notably the PYD, the Syrian Kurdish organization) were trying to replace the Ba'ath regime as the leading political authority in northern Syria in July and August suggests that the PKK threatened to involve itself in the conflict in case of a Turkish intervention in Syria.<sup>43</sup>

A novel tactic that the PKK assumed over the past year was kidnapping politicians. Although it was the Republican People's Party deputy Hüseyin Ayygün's kidnapping that captured the media's attention the most, there were similar attempts against AK Party representatives in the region.<sup>44</sup> Comparing the PKK's strategy with their discourse on the kidnappings ("taken into custody," "questioning," and "will be released after the due process") over the year, it becomes clear that the organization worked hard to create the impression that they ruled over Turkey's east and southeast regions.

The final part of the PKK's new three-step strategy was, as expressed by Cemil Bayık early this year and endorsed later by Duran Kalkan in his ANF interview on July 1, in order to defeat the AK Party. Hinting at this stage of the PKK's new strategy, KCK Executive Committee member Duran Kalkan said:

"No doubt, the process we experience now is a solution process. However, it is not a political process as it was in the past; it is a military process. We made a strategic change two years ago. We have reached the conclusion that as long as the AKP [the ruling Justice and Development Party] government remains in power, there will not be a political solution."<sup>45</sup>

There are a number of reasons behind the PKK's direct targeting of the AK Party. First of all, unlike the rest of the country, a virtually two-party system runs in eastern and southeastern Turkey, and if the AK Party withdrew from the region the BDP and no one else would benefit. Furthermore, the disappearance of Turkey's once-almighty tutelary regime and the military's return to its constitutionally mandated domain led the PKK to perceive the AK Party as *the* repository of real power in the country. Therefore, the PKK views its fight against the AK Party as a fight against the Turkish state. Last but not least, although the state continues to suffer from a shortage of legitimacy in the region, the AK Party's success in appealing to a larger audience in these areas has rendered itself the sole target for the PKK. In short, the PKK deems the AK Party and its formidable regional following, as opposed to the discredited state, a far greater threat to its future goal of regional hegemony.

The PKK deems the AK Party and its formidable regional following, as opposed to the discredited state, a far greater threat to its future goal of regional hegemony.

43. Kurd militants threaten Turkey if it enters Syria, *Reuters*, 22 March 2012.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/22/us-syria-turkey-kurds-idUSBRE82L0UH20120322>

44. Kidnapped AK Party officials included Hakkari provincial chair Mecit Tarhan, Gürpınar-Van district chair Hayrullah Tanış, former head of the Sur-Diyarbakır branch Hamit Çelikkat and Veysel Çelik, district chair for Sur-Diyarbakır: PKK kidnaps AKP provincial head, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 3 September 2012.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pkk-kidnaps-akp-provincial-head.aspx?pageID=238&nID=29261&NewsCatID=341/>

AK Party Gürpınar branch head kidnapped by armed individuals, *Today's Zaman*, 5 July 2012.

[http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=285687/](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=285687/)

PKK kidnaps former AK Party local branch head, *Today's Zaman*, 21 August 2012.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-290066-pkk-kidnaps-former-ak-party-local-branch-head.html>

PKK continues to abduct civilians in the East, *Sabah English*, 22 August 2012.

<http://english.sabah.com.tr/National/2012/08/22/pkk-continues-to-abduct-civilians-in-the-east>

45. For this statement see: Zana's message: 'I am no different than you', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 3 July 2012.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/zanas-message-i-am-no-different-than-you.aspx?pageID=238&nID=24592&NewsCatID=396>

The Kurdish question's assumption of a regional character indicates that domestic initiatives alone can no longer bring about a peaceful resolution.

### New Regional Dynamics

In order to develop a better understanding of the PKK's new strategy, it is necessary to grasp the window of opportunity that regional developments represented for the organization. In this sense, it is no coincidence that the PKK leadership consistently referred to regional developments in public statements. As Cengiz Çandar points out, the PKK command expected changes to the map of the Middle Eastern similar to the post-Cold War developments in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, the emergence of sectarian politics in the Middle East as the leading source of state policies created the need to reorganize intergovernmental relations and state entities' dealings with non-state actors. The ongoing Syrian crisis exemplified this new trend as the Assad regime sought support from Iran and Iraq to maintain the status quo, while Turkey, Qatar and other countries pushed for regional change. However, this new environment led three of Turkey's neighbors to reconsider their previous support for the country's counter-terrorism campaign. The Iranian government's agreement with the PJAK on September 5, 2011, testified to this new situation.<sup>47</sup> The agreement stopped PJAK attacks against government targets while Tehran terminated its air operations against PJAK/PKK camps. With pressure from Iran, Iraq and Syria gone, the resulting window of opportunity paved the way for greater operational capacity and enhanced combat capabilities for the PKK.

At the same time, Syria's Kurdish population and the PYD (with its ties to the PKK) greatly benefited from the Ba'ath regime's withdrawal from parts of the country. The party filled the power vacuum that followed Assad's focus on maintaining power in Damascus, and the PYD established de facto autonomous rule in the predominantly Kurdish parts of Syria. The large number of Syrian militants within the PKK, coupled with the PYD's strong ties to the organization, signals that the Syrian conflict's future will inevitably have repercussions on Turkey's Kurdish question.

In other words, the Kurdish question's assumption of a regional character indicates that domestic initiatives alone can no longer bring about a peaceful resolution. Therefore, a radical change in Turkey's position on the PKK seems unlikely until the dust settles on regional developments. After all, the alleviation of regional pressures and favorable developments in Syria leave the PKK with little interest to negotiate and little ability to determine their set of demands.

### The Political Implications of the Hunger Strikes

The year's most notable event on the Kurdish question was the hunger strikes and their reverberations on Turkish politics. On September 12, imprisoned PKK, KCK and PJAK members went on a hunger strike to demand "an end to Abdullah Öcalan's isolation," "the right to use one's native language in courtrooms," and "the right to native-language education." Although the strikes began with only 64 prisoners, the number quickly escalated to 1,000 as the strike reached other prison facilities. While public

46. Cengiz Çandar: Ortadoğu'da sınırlar değişecek, Türkiye de buna dahil, *T24.com.tr*, 26 November 2012. <http://t24.com.tr/haber/cengiz-candar-ortadoguda-sinirlar-degisecek-turkiye-de-buna-dahil/218234>

47. For more information on this agreement see: PJAK offers 'ceasefire' to Iran, *Press TV*, 5 September 2012. <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/197496.html>

opinion was initially oblivious to the strikers, street protests, public statements from intellectuals and political commentators, and the BDP's emphasis on the issue led to a society-wide acknowledgement.

The government pursued a two-pronged strategy towards the hunger strikes. On the one hand, the Prime Minister dismissed the strikes as a means of conducting politics through tragedy and countered this move by stirring up public debate on reinstating the capital punishment. On the other hand, the government took steps to initiate dialogue in order to stop the hunger strikes before there were casualties. To this end, Justice Minister Ergin met with strikers and BDP co-chairman Selahattin Demirtaş, while Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç called for an end to the strikes. Following his meeting with Mehmet Öcalan at the İmralı Prison Complex, Abdullah Öcalan called an end to the strike on November 18, which the prisoners followed.

What conclusions may be derived from the strikers' alleged demands and the protest throughout its course? First, keeping in mind that the strike was called off even though the government took no steps to institute native-language education, and that the right to use one's native language in courtrooms was already included in the AK Party's 63-point "roadmap", it becomes clear that the strike was intended to end Öcalan's isolation and to reaffirm his position as the leading actor in Kurdish politics. Furthermore, the struggle over the right to use Kurdish in courtrooms demonstrates that those on strike intended to take credit for these and future achievements. Thus the PKK intends to create the impression that these rights stem from the organization's continued campaign and not the government's democratizing reforms.

## Conclusion

The government maintains its determination to employ democratic reforms to tackle the rights-based aspects of the Kurdish question while seeking a more effective counter-terrorism strategy for the PKK's escalation of violence. These complimentary but different strategies are interrelated in such a way that when the security perspective is at the forefront, democratic reforms are relegated to secondary place. Briefly, the spiral of violence that stems from the PKK's multi-faceted combat strategy left the prospects of a political solution vulnerable to advances from securitization perspectives.

This was not the case early in 2012. To recall, securitization policies and discourse went hand in hand with some democratic steps such as the introduction of Kurdish electives in the secondary school curriculum.<sup>48</sup> While the counter-terrorism discourse took the lead in the first half of 2012, pro-negotiation and pro-dialogue discourses dominated the rest.<sup>49</sup> Leyla Zana's statement that "he [Prime Minister Erdoğan] will be able to solve this issue" after her meeting with the Prime Minister signaled the partial softening of the discourse. The government's facilitating the "right to use Kurdish in courtrooms," "access to public services in one's native language," and "sorting out of all laws and reg-

The hunger strike was intended to end Öcalan's isolation and to reaffirm his position as the leading actor in Kurdish politics.

48. 'Roj baş!' Kurdish books set for class, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 13 October 2012.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/roj-bas-kurdish-books-set-for-class.aspx?pageID=238&nID=32335&NewsCatID=339>

49. For Erdoğan's statement on the BDP's role as political interlocutor and BDP chairman Selahattin Demirtaş's response see: 'Consensus on BDP's role as interlocutor finally reached', *Today's Zaman*, 22 May 2012.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-281176-consensus-on-bdps-role-as-interlocutor-finally-reached.html>

Turkey will retain its multilayered perspective of simultaneous negotiation and counter-terrorism measures, and of politics and security. Provided that the PKK does not yet want to disarm, the chances for successful negotiations remains slim.

ulations that leave a perception of ethnic discrimination,<sup>50</sup> coupled with statements by both the Prime Minister and other members of his cabinet that negotiations may begin anew<sup>51</sup> also pointed in the same direction.

In such a fragile period and environment, any ill-advised political move may unbalance the whole process. In this sense, the ongoing debate on “stripping BDP deputies of parliamentary immunity” may potentially spoil the positive atmosphere around dialogue and negotiations. What insight does our account of the latest developments regarding the Kurdish question and Turkey’s fight against the PKK offer for the near future? It seems that Turkey will retain its multilayered perspective of simultaneous negotiation and counter-terrorism measures, and of politics and security. While upholding its strategy to neutralize and disarm the PKK, the Turkish government will at the same time maintain a genuine interest in the reform process in accordance with the democratic rights approach. Provided that regional and national power-holders still possess some capacity to manipulate these issues, and that Kurdish activists under the flagship of the PKK does not yet want to disarm, the chances for successful negotiations remains slim—a fact that renders unlikely any prospective democratic reforms to moderate the political climate. Despite Turkey’s various avenues for political struggle, the fetish for armed conflict in Kurdish politics that downplays a peaceful resolution must bear the onus for the outcome above. Needless to say, this study’s presentation of the AK Party’s policies in a relatively positive light does not absolve the government of its responsibility to resolve the Kurdish issue.

To conclude, the AK Party must not succumb to the PKK’s strategy of imposing a securitization perspective over civil-political options in the face of the organization’s continued resort to violence, which have indicated that disarmament is not an option for the PKK leadership. Therefore, the PKK would prefer counter-terrorism measures to exclude democratic reforms and other political solutions from the government agenda. After all, increased media coverage of violence and counter-terrorism serves to trigger further societal segmentation and polarization in which the PKK has vested interests. In order to render the organization’s expectations impractical, the AK Party must stick to its democratization perspective that creates hope across society and promises to prevent the counter-terrorism discourse from dominating public debate and the political agenda.

50. To access the complete list of items in the roadmap see: The AK Party’s Democracy Manifesto, *Sabah English*, 1 October 2012. <http://www.sabahenglish.com/national/2012/10/01/the-ak-partys-democracy-manifesto>

51. PM Erdoğan: If Necessary, We May Hold Talks With Öcalan, *Sabah English*, 27 September 2012.

<http://english.sabah.com.tr/national/2012/09/27/pm-erdogan-if-necessary-we-may-hold-talks-with-ocalan>

CHRONOLOGY	
December 29, 2011	Images from UAVs lead Turkish fighter jets to bomb what is believed to be a PKK team near the Iraqi border, leading to the deaths of 35 civilians.
April 3, 2012	The BDP chairman announces that his party is ready to talk to the government to resolve the Kurdish question.
May 21, 2012	Reiterating that there will be no negotiations unless the PKK disarms, Prime Minister Erdoğan says that they still see the BDP as their political interlocutor.
June 14, 2012	Leyla Zana states that "he [Erdoğan] will be able to solve this issue. I never lost my faith in him. And I don't want to lose my faith in him."
June 30, 2012	Prime Minister Erdoğan meets independent Kurdish lawmaker Leyla Zana.
July 12, 2012	Massoud Barzani, president of the KRG, establishes unity among Syrian Kurds after four days of negotiations.
July 22, 2012	As Syrian troops withdraw from northern Syria, the PYD announces its control over major cities.
August 12, 2012	The PKK kidnaps Republican People's Party deputy Hüseyin Aygün, releasing him after 48 hours.
August 17, 2012	10 deputies, nine of whom from the BDP, visit Şemdinli and embrace PKK members during an illegal road check.
August 20, 2012	A remote-controlled car bomb explodes near a police station in Gaziantep that leaves nine dead and 66 injured.
September 01, 2012	Prime Minister Erdoğan signals that the deputies who embraced the PKK members may be stripped of parliamentary immunity.
September 12, 2012	Imprisoned PKK, KCK and PJAK members go on hunger strike to demand an end to Abdullah Öcalan's isolation, the right to use Kurdish in courtrooms, and the right to get education in their native language.
September 12, 2012	The Ministry of National Education finalizes the Kurdish language syllabus for secondary schools.
October 24, 2012	Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin meets prisoners and convicts in Sincan Prison on day 43 of the hunger strikes.
November 15, 2012	The Turkish parliament's Human Rights Commission passes a bill to allow the right to use Kurdish in courtrooms.
November 17, 2012	Abdullah Öcalan issues a call to end the hunger strikes.
November 27, 2012	The Prime Ministry petitions the parliament to strip Aysel Tuğluk, an independent deputy from Van, and nine BDP deputies of their parliamentary immunities.

To conclude, the AK Party must not succumb to the PKK's strategy of imposing a securitization perspective over civil-political options in the face of the organization's continued resort to violence, which have indicated that disarmament is not an option for the PKK leadership.



The upcoming local, presidential and parliamentary elections served as a crucial reference points for the country's ongoing political discussions in 2012. Political parties found it challenging to adapt their discourse and platforms to changing circumstances due to the impending elections.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Turkey experienced the political repercussions of the 2010 constitutional referendum and the 2011 parliamentary elections throughout the past year. These two important events shifted the ground for all actors, institutions and political groups by calling for the construction of a new democratic Turkey where the tutelage system no longer exerts any influence. However, upcoming local, presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015 have cast their shadow on the performance of political actors and parties on efforts to construct a new Turkey. This calls for a broader five-year perspective (2010-2015) to correctly assess last year's developments.

Briefly put, while pre-2012 developments mandated political actors to build a more democratic country, future calculations—most notably the upcoming elections—have motivated political parties to promote democratization with an eye on the electorate's potential resentment. In this sense, notwithstanding the democratization process' slow (but sure) progress in line with the *Zeitgeist*, it is possible to assert that the specter of upcoming elections in 2014-2015 have emerged as a prominent factor that influenced decision-makers throughout the year.

A considerable part of the items on Turkey's political agenda stemmed from the 2010 constitutional referendum. The public approval of the constitutional amendments made it possible for the perpetrators of the 1980 military coup to stand trial. This marked the first instance in the Republic's 89-year history where the judiciary held former junta members accountable. The legislative branch, too, involved itself in efforts to come to terms with the legacy of military coups by establishing a Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda. Another prominent issue that arose out of the 2010 referendum was the drafting of Turkey's new constitution. Although originally expected to produce a draft by the end of 2012, the all-party drafting committee failed to make enough progress. On the other hand, a look into the upcoming election cycle is necessary to correctly interpret disagreements over the contents of the new constitution at a time when all social groups acknowledge the need for a new text.

Without a doubt, the upcoming local, presidential and parliamentary elections served as a crucial reference points for the country's ongoing political discussions in 2012. It is also possible to assert that Turkey is locked down between the legacy of the past and the specter of future in light of political party performances. Political parties found it challenging to adapt their discourse and platforms to changing circumstances due to the impending elections. In this sense, it would not be misleading to assume that elections will continue to play a preventive role on the political parties' much needed structural changes.

While the AK Party is increasingly compelled to draw its post-Erdoğan roadmap due to the three-term limit in the party charter, the CHP administration sought to establish a balance of power between neo-nationalists and social democrats in the party in order to reach out to new voter blocs without alienating its existing supporters. In the meantime, the MHP worked to win back its traditional base that was disenchanted with the party's position on the 2010 referendum and its subsequent near-failure to secure parliamentary representation in the 2011 elections, while at the same time impressing voters across the country's western coast. The BDP, on the other hand, seemed to focus its efforts on the Kurdish question and the post-revolution regional transformation instead of political issues relevant to the general public.

There is no doubt that these pressures that manifested themselves in the attitudes and positions of actors across the political spectrum led to a slowdown of building a new Turkey. In this sense, it is possible to claim that democratization efforts will continue through partial and gradual steps that involve minimal costs for political parties until the end of the elections in 2015.





Turkey experienced the repercussions of the 2010 constitutional referendum that symbolized the loss of political power of the forces behind the tutelary system, and the 2011 elections that signified society's approval of a construction of a "new Turkey". However, while political parties could not remain indifferent to the message from the constitutional referendum and the parliamentary elections in support of democratic reforms, they were also reluctant to take any radical steps in 2012 prior to the upcoming election cycle. This situation allowed only minor steps to consolidate Turkey's democracy.

The process of eliminating tutelary influences over the political system continued in 2012. The nearing conclusion of coup plot cases, coupled with recent steps in bringing past junta members to justice signal a new direction in Turkey's coming to terms with military coups where the legislative is expected to assume a more dominant role at the expense of judicial instruments. As such, the work of the Parliamentary Commission on Military Coups and Memoranda represented the legislative's first demand for accountability.

At a time when regional developments became prominent on the Kurdish question and the PKK's future prospects, the government's intention to resolve the issue was met with violence. PKK attacks cast their shadow over the past year that witnessed clashes between security forces and PKK members, and the increasing adoption of security-oriented language and policy instruments. Widening the scale of violence, diversifying its combat-style and making the AK Party its main target formed the PKK's central strategy in 2012. In addition, the disparate and opposing stances taken by Turkey, Iran and Iraq on the Syrian crisis alleviated regional pressure on the PKK and enhanced its capabilities.

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