

Teim



TEIM Election Watch Analysis

ELECTORAL REPORT:

TURKEY/Parliamentary elections

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Background of the election:

This was a critical election year for Turkey. The parliamentary elections were held well before their planned date, due to the political crisis resulting from the failure to elect a new President a few months earlier.¹ The relative calm in which the elections took place was shattered when one candidate, the independent Tuncay Seyranlioglu, was shot to death while riding in his car in a district of Istanbul.

Quantitative indices of democracy:

Turkey was classified in the following democratic performance rankings just before these elections:

Measurement	Name and year of report or database	Institution	Index	Points, ranking and classification
Political rights and freedom	Freedom House Report 2007	Freedom House (FH)	PR: political rights CL: civil liberties	PR: 3, CL: 3 (Scale of 1, free to 7, not free) Classification: Partly free
Degree of democracy in earlier elections	Polyarchy 2.0 2004	Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) and Tatu Vanhanen	ID: Synthetic democracy index, Part: participation, Comp: competition	ID: 33.1, max. 49 Part: 47.3, max. 70 Comp: 70.0, max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30) Classification: Democratic
Consolidation of authoritarian and democratic institutions	Polity IV 2004	Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Univ. of Maryland	Democracy: consolidation of democratic institutions Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation Polity: synthesis of both	Democracy: 8 Autocracy: 1 Polity: +7 (Scale of +10, very democratic to -10, very authoritarian) Classification: Democratic
Perception of corruption	Transparency International Corruption Perception Index Nov. 2006	Transparency International (TI)	TICPI: corruption perceptions index	TCPI: 3.8 points out of 10, (Scale of 1, very corrupt to 10, not at all corrupt) Rank: 60 out of 163 countries
Management of political and economic change	Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2006	Bertelsmann Foundation	MI: Management Index, quality of transformation management	MI: 6.52 points out of 10, Rank: 20 out of 119 countries Classification: Successful management with weaknesses
Democracy, including press status and corruption	World Democracy Audit May 2007	World Audit	World Democracy Rank: political freedom (FH) + press and corruption (TI)	World Democracy Ranking: 58 out of 150 countries, division 3 out of 4

¹ See earlier news reports on the TEIM webpage.

Quantitative analysis of electoral democracy:

The elections analysed in this profile produced the following electoral democracy quantitative results:

Degree of democracy in these elections	Measurement of democracy in these elections according to the Polyarchy 2.0 2007 index, calculated by TEIM Election Watch	ID: 19.4, max. 49 Part: 51 ² max. 70 Comp: 38 ³ max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30)	Classification of the elections: democratic
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Definition of the electoral system and parties:

Party-list proportional electoral system (List PR⁴) with the D'Hondt method for parliamentary elections. The electoral threshold is set at 10% on a national level. This threshold has been a formidable barrier for small parties and has even brought about the collapse of the traditional Turkish centre-right. The entry of pro-Kurdish parties into the Assembly has been blocked since the 1995 elections, so that they now run as independent candidates, which allows them to obtain seats. It is expected that once they are in Parliament, of the 27 independents, the 23 from the DTP (pro-Kurdish party), will form their own political group. The Turkish party system is arranged on a left-right continuum. The current Assembly is divided into the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* or DTP) (if the pro-Kurdish independents form their own political group), the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* or CHP), the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or AKP) and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* or MHP). In the traditional centre-right, an ill-advised pre-electoral alliance between the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* or ANAP) and the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* or DYP) resulted in the formation of the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti* or DP) led by Mehmet Ağar. This party obtained little more than 5% of the votes. Ağar resigned as leader of the DP before 20% of the votes had been counted.

Impact of the electoral process and size of the constituency on the elections:

Despite using the D'Hondt method, the electoral threshold of 10% produced a strong distortion in the results. The number of seats per constituency ranges between 2 and 25. The mode for Turkish constituencies is 3 seats, with the median being 5, although there are also smaller constituencies. Thus, the size of the constituency produces majority effects, limiting even more the proportional nature of the electoral process.

² Participation was calculated out of an estimated population of 70,586,256 in 2007 (Source: 2007 Census, Turkey State Institute of Statistics) and the participation of 35,983,801 voters.

³ Competition was calculated using the percentage of seats of the losing parties.

⁴ The names of the electoral systems are those used by IDEA, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. For details, see the Electoral System Design on their webpage: <http://www.idea.int/esd/world.cfm>

Elections results:

Participation: Registered voters 42,628,359
Number of voters: 35,983,801
Valid votes: 35,017,315

	Party or list	% valid votes	No. seats	% seats
Majority party	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)	46.54%	341	62%
Opposition	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP)	20.8%	112	20.36%
	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)	14.3%	70	12.72%
	Independents	5.2%	27	4.9%
	Other (11 parties and 672 independents)	13.16%	0	0
Total		100%	550	100%

Source: Milliyet and Hürriyet, 23-07-2007 and author's own data processing

Qualitative analysis of the elections:⁵

Participation:

Participation was remarkably high, surpassing 84%. In earlier elections, the percentage of voters was also high, with 79.14% participation. Vacation spots were empty for a few days because as the voters travelled to their usual residences to vote. Furthermore, some notable incidents took place. In one city in Diyarbakır, Sinan, there was a boycott of the election and the inhabitants abstained from voting as a sign of protest against the family that controls that area, which have been accused of stealing their land. There was also the case of temporary workers, especially those from Adana and Mersin, who were working in the centre of Anatolia and could not exercise their right to vote because they lacked the means to return home.

Competition:

In the end, 14 parties and 699 independents ran in the elections. The independents ran as such in reaction to the exclusion of pro-Kurdish parties from the Assembly while in some districts they served as a social-democratic alternative to Deniz Baykal's failed CHP.

Transparency:

Generally speaking, the elections were considered to be transparent. The Council of Europe supervised the elections, along with thousands of volunteers and members of the different parties. Theodoros Pangalos, a member of the Greek PASOK and part of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council delegation, made assurances that that public had observed the campaign proceedings calmly, leaving the nerves for the candidates. There were no special incidents, although as expected, in certain isolated regions controlled by the *ağa* (a type of

⁵This section uses TEIM's 6 election criteria which are: Participation, Competition, Transparency, Representation and Debate, Openness and Significance. See the home page for an explanation of each of these criteria.

local political boss), irregularities occurred when it came time to vote, when certain candidates were pressed upon the voters.

Party representation and debate during the election:

There were numerous debates on television during the campaign, which included the participation of not only politicians but also journalists and academics, and the press covered the candidates extensively. The most important parties started with an advantage since they had more economic support from the State for their campaigns. In Istanbul, posters for the AKP were predominant and it was also common to see some for the CHP, MHP, DP and Saadet Partisi. Leyla Zana, did not run for office on behalf of the DTP, and was going to be investigated, because according to a public prosecutor, she may have been inciting separatism when she said during a political rally that it was time for Turkey to be divided into states and that a State of Kurdistan should be formed. At least, this is how her words were cited in the press, after the rally held on the Friday before the elections in Iğdır. Although the plurality in the election was marked and broad, it was limited by the issues discussed briefly above, like the Kurdish question.

Openness:

The pre-election polls got the results right. The Thursday before the election, Radikal Gazetesi published a poll that almost matched the data on Sunday. It is true, however, that it was expected that the MHP would receive between 11% and 12% of the votes and not the 14% it won in the end. The victory of the AKP, although expected, made an impact. Although they were predictable, the elections were open and free.

Significance:

The AKP ensured its position as the only party in the government. After the general elections, the presidential elections were finally held. The party ran its candidate, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, again. He competed against two other candidates in an election that was carried out within the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. In terms of the future, there are two questions about the AKP that especially concern its opponents: one is the privatisation of Turkish companies, which is being carried out without much openness, and the second concerns issues relating to possible religious advances in the public sphere. Furthermore, the party has promised to continue negotiations with Brussels to join the EU, now even more decidedly.

Consequences and impact on the political system:

The high participation rate in the election revealed the high interest among Turks in these elections. The AKP has the majority it needs to govern alone, but it has to be sufficiently flexible to make agreements with other political forces, however weak they may be; if it does not, the party runs the risk of increasing the social fissures that are clearly growing between the supporters of the AKP and their detractors, something that is closely related to the questions of secularisation and laicism.

Furthermore, Deniz Baykal has shown himself to be incapable of leading all of the political discontent that was expressed in the streets against the AKP presidential election, positioning himself in favour of a republic that is clearly

secular and modern. Baykal has preferred to solidify his territory with a strongly laicist discourse with nationalist undertones. The poor results obtained by the CHP, despite the existence of a potential pool of voters revealed by the demonstrations against the AKP, have branded the results for the party a catastrophe. In fact, on election night, Baykal did not go to the CHP's main headquarters to celebrate what he insisted on calling a victory.

The MHP, however, obtained more votes than expected, although their political limit was revealed. Their arguments focused on questions of terrorism, and the party accompanied the families of soldiers who had died in the army's fight against the PKK. This effort resulted in important electoral returns. Despite the importance of the results, it is clear that Bahçeli, the group's leader, was surprised that the AKP achieved such a clear victory, despite everything.

Additionally, the independents served as an escape route for voters seeking social-democratic candidates or wanting to promote the entry of pro-Kurdish candidates in Parliament, although there were also centre-right independents. This part of the political spectrum suffered a strong blow with the disappearance of the ANAP and the DYP and the formation of the failed DP.

It is also important to point out that the number of parliamentarians increased to 50 in these elections, assigned as follows: CHP - 10, AKP - 30, MHP - 2 and supported by the DTP as independents - 8.

International political reaction:

Turkey received important coverage from the main European and North American media. The EU sent favourable messages concerning the results, because it was thought that the voters had defied the military and that the AKP would continue its reform process in terms of joining the group. This was affirmed by different declarations from the vice-chair of the Party of European Socialists group Jan Marinus Wiersma and Joost Lagendijk, chair of the Joint Parliamentary Committee between the EU and Turkey. The United States sent the message that the elections had been a great success. This was affirmed by Matt Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

Implications for Spain:

During the campaign, the AKP was successful when it came to focusing the debate on economic issues, shifting attention away from the conflict in northern Iraq between the army and the PKK. The army was moving its troops towards the east, in what appeared to be not only a call for attention from the United States, but also a way of putting the government between a rock and a hard place, making it understood that it could not act fully against the PKK because the government's anti-terrorism policies were weak. The CHP and MHP parties took on this position, supporting the intervention of the Turkish army in northern Iraq. The AKP, however, managed to dodge this issue, preventing it from dominating the debate and managing to make the economy and the image of stability that the party presents the determining factors for voters when it came time to seek their support. During the election, therefore, the conflict with the PKK did not reveal an imminent crisis on an international level.

In other areas, the AKP's victory made it possible to continue previously established relationships with Spain that were becoming more solid.

In the economic sector, trade between the two countries is increasingly vibrant, with the establishment of Turkish companies in Spain and vice-versa. Without a doubt, a stable and prosperous Turkey is a very attractive market for Spanish capital. The adoption of the Community *acquis* in the negotiation process is expected to contribute greater clarity and certainty to all types of investments in Turkey. Furthermore, every sign seems to indicate that in the future, Turkey will be more interesting as a consumer market than as a low-cost producer, since it is increasingly difficult to compete with Asian production. However, for this consumer market to prosper, it will be important to encourage the development of the most disadvantaged classes, as well as the stability and growth of a very damaged middle class.

However, the situation of conflict that has broken out between Turkey and the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq as a result of the PKK attacks could endanger the normal evolution of the bilateral relationships which have been fruitful up to now. In the economic sphere, this could remove incentives from future investors. In the political sphere, there are two issues that could be affected in a very important way: first, the work begun on the Alliance of the Civilisations Project under the auspices of the United Nations and second, negotiations for Turkey to join the EU.

Under normal circumstances, Spain could contribute positively to the transformations needed for Turkey to join the European Union in the future. In fact, the two countries have already worked together on the Twinning Projects, which are designed to foster close collaboration between candidate countries and member countries within the Community framework, with the latter advising the former on tasks relating to administrative, economic and democratic renewal. The Spanish experience in joining the Community is highly appreciated by the sector of Turkish elites and without a doubt, an active role by Spain could encourage changes in the country and promote a more European attitude among the elites and in the society. In fact, the Turkish press recently announced that it is possible that the Turkish Constitution will consider the model of the Spanish Constitution. It has been recommended, therefore, that as long as Turkey maintains political volunteerism and puts the reforms needed to join the EU into practice, Spain will support this process inside the EU.

Additionally, it would be advisable to make full use of every type of network of contacts, not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in the social sphere. Turkish society feels a special bond with Spain; one example is that the number of students of Spanish continues to grow and the language is being introduced as a subject in primary and secondary school. Spain could serve as an anchor, contributing to deepening and developing reforms in Turkey as it seeks to join the EU.

However, the context of the conflict with the PKK against the backdrop of northern Iraq makes it imperative to consider a series of possible scenarios that could create a deadlock for some of Turkey's achievements at home and in its relations with Spain and the European Union.

Conclusions:

The 2007 elections in Turkey renewed confidence in the AKP as the government party. At the time, the results gave the impression that the military

had lost part of the catalysing power that it had shown on other occasions. In fact, the subsequent election of Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül as President of the republic contributed to strengthening this perception, since the AKP had clearly defied the military and managed to win the match. The October crisis resulting from a latent situation on the frontier with Iraq poses new questions in this respect. For now, there seems to be a convergence of positions between the Army and the government, which has positioned itself in favour of future incursions into northern Iraq.

Despite the fears and doubts that the AKP generated, it has been a party that knows how to transmit stability and is capable of putting its programme into practice. The traditional Turkish centre-right is looking for a leader and a period of reflection has begun within the CHP, since this party has not known how to adapt itself to new times or how to offer an alternative to power, apparently feeling more comfortable as an opposition based on two permanent arguments: laicism and nationalism, a slogan that is mere window dressing and behind which there does not appear to be any real content. On the other hand, the AKP increased its percentage of the vote in the east of the country where a majority Kurdish population lives, surpassing the votes for the DTP in important areas. This is a party that has attracted very different sectors of the population for very different reasons. It will be interesting to see in the future if the AKP contributes to encouraging consensus and democratic processes or if more fissures open up around the cleavage between laicism and secularism, ethnicity and economic inequality. The AKP has the chance to govern alone and the responsibility to do so without making impositions and by reaching out.

Reference to two other Internet analyses of this election:

1 – William Chislett “Elecciones turcas: los islamistas asestan un duro golpe al establishment laico”, ARI N° 86/2007 (traducido del inglés) – 3/08/07
http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/Elcano_es/Zonas_es/ARI+86-2007

2 – Erdogan’s ruling AKP wins Turkish election
<http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/erdogan-ruling-akp-wins-turkish-election/article-165762>