



Deciphering Turkey's Elections

The Making of a Revolution

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Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) scored an impressive victory in July of historic consequence. Despite concerted pressure from the military and its hard-line allies, the AKP substantially increased its share of the vote and managed to transform itself into the dominant party of Turkey's political center, without formidable mainstream rivals from the left or right. It capped this success with the selection of its former foreign minister, Abdullah Gül, as president of the republic despite objections from senior military officers. The implications of these elections are wide-reaching not only for Turkey's domestic politics but its foreign policy as well.

These elections portend dramatic transformations in Turkish civil-military and state-society relations and in Ankara's approach to the long-standing Kurdish question. Although Turkey is likely to become more democratic and better able to resolve the complex problems it faces, this will depend on how the AKP—formed in 2001 by moderate elements that rebelled against the original, firebrand Turkish Islamic movement created by Necmettin Erbakan—performs in office and how the opposition restructures itself. Similarly, AKP's victory can help solidify the already growing Turkish self-confidence in foreign affairs, as the country assumes a less defensive and more active, and in many ways a more constructive role regionally and internationally.

From Washington's perspective, this is a welcome development. A party that has resolutely moved to the political center from its Islamist origins, a government willing to

take on the ossified aspects of the country's domestic and foreign policies, and a continued commitment to deepening ties with the European Union are what the United States has long hoped for. This vote provides America and Europe with a unique opportunity to help Turkey institutionalize the reforms and transformation begun in 2001. To do so, the West needs to keep the pressure on Turkey to make sure opponents at home do not sidetrack the AKP and waver from its commitment to a new constitution, domestic peace, and the rule of law.

Ironically, Washington's record to date is unimpressive. It equivocated when Turkish generals issued an ultimatum to the government in the form of an online memorandum to prevent Gül's elevation to the presidency. Instead of supporting democratic processes, the United States said that it would not take sides between the politicians and officers and, therefore, is now faced with rebuilding an already much damaged relationship.

Prelude to the Vote

To begin with, it is essential to note that the Turkish Republic does not follow the Anglo-Saxon model of secularism in which church and state are separated and the latter is equidistant from all religions. In Turkey, the state directly controls all mosques and clergy. Governmental supervision of religion is clearly associated with Sunni Islam—the majority faith—at the expense of all other religions.

Public schools, for example, provide Sunni instruction. Secularism in the Turkish

context is about the continuation of the state's control over religion while seeing to it that religious symbols such as the Islamic headscarf are banned from public buildings. The term "laicism" is often used to describe Turkey's unique state-mosque relationship. To defend the principles of secularism and the unity of the state, the Turkish military directly intervened four times since 1960, and the threat of an armed ejection of elected governments is a constant factor in Turkish politics.

The July 22 vote was one of the most important in modern Turkish history and occurred during one of the worst periods of civil-military tensions. The elections took place some three months earlier than planned following a crisis over the parliamentary selection of a president to replace the outgoing Ahmet Necdet Sezer. The AKP came under incessant pressure for months not to nominate its leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, because he was seen as "far too radical" and not conciliatory by arch secularists and the military because of his past association with Islamists and views on state-religion issues. On the eve of the party's announcement of its presidential candidate, the Turkish chief of staff of the armed forces told reporters that the armed forces expected that the new president should be someone faithful to the principles of the Turkish Republic, including its secular character, "not just in words but also in his/her core."¹ This was generally interpreted as a warning against electing a president whose wife wears an Islamic headscarf, but nevertheless the AKP nominated Gül, the highly respected foreign minister and deputy prime minister, thereby ignoring that implicit warning. Although Gül's nomination was meant to be a compromise and was initially applauded by Turkey's business leadership and foreign investors, the military and its political allies did not take the news well.

A series of legal and political maneuvers ensued in an effort to prevent Gül's election.

First, the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) boycotted the vote and insisted that two thirds of the members of Parliament had to be present for a presidential vote—a hitherto unapplied interpretation of the relevant constitutional provisions. Then it turned to the Constitutional Court (a central institution of the Kemalist state) to annul the presidential election process.² Although the court was expected to vote in favor of the opposition motion, the generals did not wait, and took a leading role in the anti-Gül campaign by issuing a midnight memorandum on the chief of staff's official website. Incoherent and meandering, "the memorandum" in effect declared Gül unacceptable. A few days later the Constitutional Court, as expected, put an end to the presidential selection process.

The AKP was taken aback by the ultimatum, but its initial shock abated as it proceeded to call for early elections as required by the Constitution in the event parliament deadlocked on a presidential selection. Anxious to demonstrate its transformation from an Islam-oriented party into one with a Western outlook and a serious claim on the political center, it took the bold step of purging close to 160 parliamentary members and replacing them with newcomers who appealed to different segments of society such as women, social democrats, liberals, Alevis,³ Kurds, and non-Muslims.

In addition to the legal and military maneuverings, AKP opponents staged rallies in favor of laicism in the main cities of Turkey. Starting in Ankara, and followed by gatherings in Istanbul and in Izmir (where an estimated one million people participated), vast numbers of people demonstrated. As impressive as these rallies were, they lulled the opposition into a false expectation of victory. Moreover, their thinly veiled pro-military message turned the upcoming elections into a referendum⁴ of sorts between democracy and military tutelage.

In the end, the rallies galvanized the AKP and welded a coalition of voters opposed to military interference.

The Elections in a Snapshot

In addition to the AKP's historic victory, the vote also gave rise to a qualitatively different parliament. Whereas in 2002, only two parties managed to pass the 10 percent national threshold to be represented in parliament, this time three parties succeeded outright and at least two more were constituted from an amalgam of others. Independent MPs from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP),⁵ organized themselves under one umbrella; the Democratic Left Party, whose members were included in the Republican People's Party, broke away to form their own faction. Even more significant was the shift in the level of popular representation. In 2002, the two parties in parliament represented 54 percent of the electorate; this time deputies speak for 87 percent of the voters. Unlike its predecessor, this new parliament will therefore be less vulnerable to charges that it fails to represent almost 50 percent of the populace.

As for the AKP, it increased its share of the vote from 34 percent in 2002 to almost 47 percent in 2007. Only once since the advent of competitive elections in 1950 has a ruling party managed to increase its percentage. (In the 1954 elections, the Democrat Party managed to increase its share by almost five percentage points, considerably short of Justice's 13 percent increase.) The AKP's victory was still more significant in that it elected deputies from all of Turkey's 81 provinces, save one: Tunceli (Turkey's only predominantly Alevi province). Moreover, an analysis shows that the party dominated its rivals in all but 14 provinces. In other words, broad support for the AKP makes it more formidable than the 341 seats it won.⁶ Finally, it also managed to make serious inroads among Kurdish voters. In 2002, it won most of the representation in the Kurdish provinces because the Kur-

dish party failed to cross the 10 percent threshold, but the DTP still received the lion's share of Kurdish vote. This time around, the Kurdish party fielded independent candidates to get around the 10 percent limitation. Although it will have a parliamentary group of 20 members, its share of the vote has declined considerably because of the AKP's surge. This provides the government with considerable legitimacy as well as a pressing responsibility with which to start tackling the Kurdish issue.

Explaining the Results

What accounts for AKP's success? Most important has been Turkey's improving economy. Inflation, which hovered above 60 percent, is down to single digits as the government hewed to the economic reforms introduced after the devastating 2001 financial crisis, during which Turkey's gross national product (GNP) plunged by 9.5 percent. Thanks to sound economic and fiscal policies, and supported by an International Monetary Fund stand-by agreement, Turkey's economy during the AKP's tenure has grown at an annual average of 7.5 percent.⁷

A high level of sustainable growth—one of the highest in the world—the curtailment of inflation, and lower interest rates have boosted business and consumer confidence and opened new vistas to Turkey's middle class. Lower and more predictable inflation rates aid investments and home buying. Foreign investments have flowed into Turkey, especially as the AKP's European Union-oriented reform agenda took hold and Brussels gave the go-ahead for the beginning accession negotiations in 2005.

Whatever qualms the business community may have had about the AKP in 2002 dissipated relatively quickly; this was after all a government that, with its commanding parliamentary majority could, unlike preceding coalition governments, exhibit a great deal of policy coherence. In fact, the business community discovered the party to be far friendlier to private enterprise than its

rivals. For the first time since former President Turgut Ozal's demise, a pro-private sector party was at the helm of the government. AKP's roots are anchored in the emerging conservative and pious business elites in the provinces rather than the traditional centers of financial and economic power, namely, Istanbul and Izmir. Following Ozal's reforms in the 1980s, this new business elite took advantage of the economic liberalization to internationalize itself. In the process, Anatolian-based businesses gained self-confidence, lessening fear of the outside world. As more flexible and adaptive newcomers, this new class tacitly endorsed the EU process and demonstrated very little, if any, opposition to privatization efforts.

It is this socially conservative but economically liberal business elite that forms the backbone of the AKP's support. While they may not evidence the sophistication of Istanbul-based capital, the Anatolian tigers, as they are also known, have extensive networks and can help finance political parties and related activities. While piety is an important element of their identity, this does not interfere with their ability to participate in that most secular of institutions, the market.

Ironically, the AKP was also helped by the military's online memorandum. Its leaders were already under pressure from nationalist and military elements for their inability to persuade Washington to take action against PKK militants operating from northern Iraq. As a result of America's Iraq war, the country's Kurdish regions acquired substantial autonomy. More worrisome than the PKK, the militant Kurdish movement in Turkey, it is the potential independence of Iraqi Kurdistan that unnerves Ankara because of the latter's potentially destabilizing effect on Turkey's Kurdish minority.

The military memorandum transformed the political scene; it brought the army out of the shadows and directly into politics. The Turkish public, however respectful of

the armed forces, has always reacted negatively to its involvement in politics. After the 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 military interventions, voters in each case refused to endorse the generals' preferred choices. The day after the memorandum, the government responded publicly, and in no uncertain terms, that the military's pronouncement was out of line in a democratic society. This response, in and of itself, was a first in modern Turkish history. In retrospect, the military miscalculated, as the public's conservative values and religious sensibilities helped shape the reaction to the memorandum. Women, whom the military and secularists assumed would be their allies, turned out to be more supportive of the AKP, providing it with 51 percent of the vote, opposed to 45 percent for men.⁸

The military was not alone in helping Justice succeed. The main opposition party, CHP, led by Deniz Baykal, a stalwart of the so-called center-left or social-democratic movement in Turkey, failed to provide an alternative vision. Instead of challenging AKP along social-democratic lines, his party embraced the defense of secularism and state ideology as its only platform. It eschewed such issues as championing the EU process, pushing for further democratization or an opening towards the Kurdish minority. In effect, it abandoned the traditional center-left political issues to the ruling party.⁹ The left in Turkey has never managed to win a free and fair election on its own; the electorate has historically leaned towards the center-right. Whereas the center-left has never scored higher than 41 percent (even that was under extraordinary circumstances), the right and center-right can always count on roughly 65 percent of the electorate.

With the odds against it already long, the main opposition CHP aligned itself with the military and the arch-laicist elements of the state apparatus; it campaigned for a Kemalist Turkey of yesteryear and catered to the fears of those in the urban middle class who believed the AKP was an agent of

Islamization. It failed to attract the working class vote, which was won by the AKP. Ironically, the center-left did best in wealthy areas of the country. Yet it also lost the support of the small but influential segment of secular democrats and liberals—and ceased to exist altogether in the Kurdish provinces.

Implications for Domestic Politics

The AKP's dramatic win has created an opportunity to radically change the character of Turkey's legal and political structure. The elections clearly represent a defeat for the generals, who vainly fired another salvo across the ruling party's bow on the eve of Gül's election with another memorandum. The victors in their election platform promised that they would seek a new constitution to replace the 1982 military-imposed one. Under the banner of a "civilian" constitution, the government had already given the go-ahead to academics to start thinking of alternative formulations.

One such group, led by Ergun Ozbudun, a well-respected and non-partisan academic, has already completed a working draft. Though not public, the draft purportedly strives to move away from the ideological underpinnings that hark back to the 1930s. Specifically, the new constitution would remove references to Kemal Ataturk's revolutionary principles and adopt a far more dynamic interpretation of his vision.¹⁰ These are enshrined in the form of six arrows that constitute the emblem of the Republican People's Party, formed by Ataturk himself during the one-party era. The arrows represent principles such as nationalism, laicism, republicanism, and statism (to be interpreted as the primacy of the state in all realms but especially economics). Interestingly, democracy is not one of these arrows.

Turkish constitutions have typically subordinated the individual to the state, instead of protecting individual from the state, as is the case in most democratic societies. Judges have had a great deal of

leeway in interpreting Ataturk's principles and acting along their ideological preferences. As Ozbudun points out, some members of the Constitutional Court invented an "Ataturkist economic system" in order to disallow privatization efforts.¹¹ While a new civilian constitution would be a major step forward in Turkey's European Union accession process, its adoption is also likely to come at the end of a contentious, if not antagonistic, and protracted process. Besides the military, vested interests in the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the opposition parties, the media, and even in the universities all regard the AKP's motives for change as suspicious at best.

However, other segments of the society demand political change, and the AKP faces in the short term growing expectations from a number of constituencies. The headscarf controversy is unlikely to disappear. Although significant numbers of women are forced to choose between university attendance and their convictions because of the headscarf ban, the party's conservative base has so far not pressed the leadership to tackle this sensitive issue. But the second Erdogan government might find itself under growing public pressure to relax the ban, even if symbolically.

More important will be the AKP's response to the expectations of Turkish Kurds. Their show of support for the AKP, especially in the southeast, eclipsing the overtly pro-Kurdish DTP, means that the government will be hard pressed to start responding to their demands for greater cultural freedom and state investments designed to lift up a region wounded by the PKK insurgency. Kurdish deputies are likely to agitate for an amnesty of sorts to allow PKK fighters in Iraq and in Turkey to return home. This is a widely shared goal: many families in the region remain distraught over the fate of relatives who are either fighting or have been imprisoned.

It will undoubtedly be tempting for the new AKP government to argue that the new

constitution will answer many of the country's ills as it strengthens the role and rights of the individual. While some problems are likely to remain unresolved for some time, none is more urgent than the Kurdish issue. It dovetails with developments in northern Iraq and coincides with the intensification of Turkish threats to intervene militarily against PKK militant bases there. The answer to the Kurdish problem in Turkey will entail domestic reforms coordinated with an overture towards Iraqi Kurds. This said, Erdogan attempted, at least rhetorically, to appeal to Kurds when during a visit to Diyarbakir, the largest city in the southeast, he recognized the existence of a "Kurdish question" in Turkey. As well received as these comments were among Kurds and democrats of all backgrounds, he was severely faulted by nationalist forces. His opening remained largely symbolic, partly because the PKK has resumed its armed activity and the military has been implicated in extrajudicial actions, undercutting Erdogan.

The Kurds are divided among themselves. Those who wanted to participate in elections as independents (generally reformers and not associated with the PKK) challenged a leadership intent on running as a party (the conventional wisdom was that imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan wanted them to run as a party, which would deny them any representation because of ten percent national threshold). The resulting compromise allowed many hardliners to run. Still, AKP has the opportunity to co-opt DTP members should it choose to pursue significant reforms. DTP's relatively poor record in the municipalities it controlled can be attributed to its inability to offer a realistic vision for the future of Turkey's Kurds¹² and thus for the country as a whole. The AKP's current strength makes it uniquely capable of fashioning new measures and convincing the skeptical Turkish public to give it a chance.

Another crucial item on the new government's agenda is the fight against organ-

ized crime. Before the elections, Erdogan vowed to "launch a clean-hands operation, as has been done in Italy,"¹³ against gangs with alleged ties to the military, the judiciary, and the police. Several such networks were unearthed in the past few years, until now it has been politically impossible to bring out into the open gangs linked to the upper echelons of the state apparatus. Turkey remains a country where mystery killings and assassinations abound—such as the January 19, 2007, murder of the prominent Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink—and gangs persist as a threat to democratic norms.¹⁴

Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the difficulties facing the AKP in furthering a reform agenda. For one, despite its unprecedented victory, the party confronts a determined opposition which views it as illegitimate. Enjoying a much wider representation in the media than their relatively small size would suggest, this group accuses the government and its allies of treasonably¹⁵ wanting to dismantle the Atatürkist edifice. How far their opposition will go is uncertain at this stage. As uncertain is the relationship between retired generals who have been actively aided the opposition to the generals still on active duty. In Turkey, the pronouncements of senior generals routinely make front-page headlines and where many civil society leaders see nothing wrong in encouraging the military to intervene.

A New Foreign Policy?

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey's foreign policy simply shrunk. Whereas the Cold War superstructure provided Turkey with a global role as a critical member of the Western alliance, post-Cold War foreign policy concerns have been relegated to the immediate neighborhood. This was not simply a change in geographical scope however; it implied a more profound transformation in the way Turkey was perceived in the West. A staunch ally on NATO's southern flank for four decades, Turkey's traditional

strategic value had been first and foremost geo-political.

The collapse of communism moved the frontier of the Western Alliance eastwards to the Balkans, Middle East, Caucasus, and Central Asia, i.e. Ankara's immediate neighborhood. Turkey was declared the "new front line state"¹⁶ and in this "upgraded" role, it not only mattered as a Western ally, but also in its capacity as a Muslim-majority nation with a—if not perfect, still functioning—democratic system. Washington's post-September 11 approach has been to point to Turkey as proof of the viability of a "secular democratic system" in the Muslim world. Turkey, in other words, is now important not only for its place on the map, but also for its identity.

This shift, combined with a growing sense of introspection and willingness to discuss historical, ethnic, and religious matters, has transformed foreign policy concerns into extensions of domestic problems. More than ever in the nation's nearly 85-year-history, questions of identity are linked to foreign policy. Consequently, whether it is on the EU accession process or Iraq, domestic forces and balances condition the Turkish approach. The result is a feedback loop to domestic constellations.

For instance, Turkey's most important foreign policy challenge in recent decades has been Iraq. Yet its perception of Iraq since the first Gulf War has been shaped by its internal difficulties with its own Kurdish population. This transcends the PKK and the latter's use of northern Iraq as a rear base for operations. In fact, Turkey fears Iraqi Kurdish progress towards a robust federal structure in Iraq, or worse, independence, more than it fears the PKK. Developments in Iraq influence Turkish domestic politics as different actors make use of them for their own tactical or, in some cases, strategic advantage.

The most telling example is the post-U.S. invasion situation, which put the AKP government in an impossible position, lim-

ited by domestic politics in its ability to engage imaginatively in Iraq and simultaneously put on the defensive by those same forces for its inability to influence events in the Kurdish north. This reached an apex in late 2006 and early 2007 as the country geared itself first for presidential and then parliamentary elections. Iraq policy emerged as the AKP's Achilles' heel, as the military and hard-line secularist forces used the issue to undermine the Erdogan government.

Similarly, the EU accession debate has been ensnared in domestic political considerations as the opponents interpreted the government's desire for rapid reforms as a surreptitious vehicle for diminishing the military's role as guardian of secularism. Cyprus too was affected by these calculations, although this is one area where the government managed to chart an independent and alternative course of action.¹⁷

Relations with Washington traversed a difficult period. During Operation Northern Watch, Turkey was a lynchpin for the U.S. policy of containment of Saddam Hussein. American planes based at the Turkish air force base of Incirlik patrolled the skies over northern Iraq to deter Iraqi forces from reentering the Kurdish enclave. Yet growing unease and suspicions of Washington's policy intentions in Iraq began to dominate the political scene.

This was aggravated by the decision to invade Iraq and the Turkish parliament's vote on March 1, 2003, to turn down the government's request to allow American forces to transit Turkish territory to establish a northern front against Saddam Hussein. There followed an incident on July 4, in which Turkish special forces were captured by U.S. Army units allegedly while planning an assassination of a high-ranking Iraqi government official. What transpired later would make an indelible impact on Turkish-American relations. The Turks were dispatched to Baghdad, hooded and shackled, deeply humiliating the Turkish military. Treating Turkish soldiers as if they

were al Qaeda terrorists became a defining moment in the relationship for many in Turkey. Ironically, the public was not told of the circumstances of the arrest, even though, in an admission that this was a rogue operation, the Turkish General Staff sidelined and retired three ranking generals immediately involved in the incident.¹⁸

The anti-Americanism now evident in the Turkish public—with only some nine percent of those polled having a positive opinion of the United States¹⁹—is mostly the result of September 11 and the Iraq war (and its collateral impact on Kurdish ambitions in the North), but is also the consequence of a combination of xenophobia and a curious turnabout in Turkish politics. In reaction to AKP rule, the Turkish social democratic party, CHP, chose to remake itself into even more of a hard-core nationalist and statist party. The nationalist right and left joined forces in accusing AKP government leaders of being Washington's stooges. The AKP's traditional base, unhappy at the U.S. invasion of Iraq and already steeped in anti-Americanism dating to the earlier years of party formation, was not about to resist this downward drift in public support for Washington. Similarly, the military establishment, in part because of the July 4th incident, also turned on the United States. The AKP government has found itself alone, striving to manage its relationship with Washington while minding its own supporters, its own misgivings of the U.S. politics in the post-September 11 era, and the mood of the general public.

This is not to say that the AKP intended to pursue a pro-American policy. In fact, far more than any other political party in Turkey, it had elaborated a new foreign policy that somewhat challenged previously prescribed limits. It sought to deepen relations with the Middle East and Asia without forsaking its ties to the West. In fact, it sought to use its pursuit of European Union membership to improve its bargaining position with others. In the Middle East, AKP

understood that unless it had good relations with Israel, its influence with Arab countries would not amount to much.

The AKP government's policy resembled Ozal's except for two important distinctions. Ozal, while interested in other parts of the world as markets for Turkey, was much more careful about staying within what was generally perceived as Western alliance norms. In other words, he did not see a major political role for Turkey outside the West, whereas Justice is far more ambitious, in that it also wants to make use of some of its natural assets and cultural affinity to become a more important player on the world stage. Its leaders have always thought that Turkey punched far below its weight in international matters.²⁰

During its first administration, AKP attempted to implement—sometimes amateurishly—this new policy. It succeeded in getting its candidate selected to the Islamic Conference Organization leadership, sought an active role in Middle East diplomacy and signaled that as an economically dynamic emerging market it would be more active in international institutions. The 2007 elections will soon increase AKP's self-confidence as well as alter existing perceptions of the party as a passing phenomenon in many neighboring countries. As a result, one should expect a far more forward policy although it will likely start close to home.

If this new Turkish foreign policy is to have a new and more confident dimension to it, it will also be due in large measure to the new combination of personalities in charge of foreign policy. A Gül presidency is likely to result—especially in comparison to his predecessor Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who shied away from the international scene—in a far more visible foreign policy posture. Given his limited room to maneuver in domestic policy and in a division of labor with Erdogan, Gül will likely elect to be more active in foreign policy. As a known and respected politician outside Turkey, Gül will want to continue to elevate Turkey's status

in the world. In the past, he challenged the Islamic Conference Organization membership on the issue of democracy, a role he is personally proud of.²¹ Whereas the EU process is still very much a policy with a strong legislative component, and thus will remain exclusive to the government, in other matters, especially high profile diplomacy, Gül will want to be supportive and even take the lead.

Implications for the United States

Some years ago, it would have been counter-intuitive to predict that Washington would be better off with a party in power whose roots are in an Islamist tradition. Yet, in the 2007 elections, if the United States were allowed to pick sides, it would have chosen AKP. The reason is simple; considering some of the difficulties the party was confronted with, ranging from the Iraq war (which was assumed to have devastating consequences for Turkey's economy) to tense civil-military relations, to taking risks on Cyprus without any payback, and dealing with the aftermath of a parliamentary vote that upset its most important ally, it managed to steward its portfolios with considerable skill. It has proven itself far more willing and capable in the EU process.

The EU accession process is perhaps the single most important U.S. strategic policy goal for Turkey. Washington views the EU process—as distinct from accession—as one which will institutionalize democracy, the rule of law, and an open market economy. In other words, the closer Turkey gets to the EU, the more democratic and prosperous it will be and, therefore, the more stable. For a country that borders on some the world's most volatile regions, Turkish stability is a cardinal value insofar as it can help anchor them.

Yet despite all the bipartisan agreement on Turkey's future, Washington faltered when the military issued its April 27 online memorandum. The State Department's initial response suggested that this was an in-

ternal Turkish matter in which it would not take sides. More confusion followed this initial announcement until Secretary Rice argued that America, just like the EU, was on the side of democracy.²² Nonetheless, the damage was done. AKP leaders were furious with Washington for seeming to side with the military.

Despite the bruised feelings in Ankara, the new government is likely to work with Washington. On Iraq, the EU, Iran, Armenia, and Cyprus, Ankara needs American cooperation. However, it is also likely that Turkey will wait for the next administration to take power in Washington before it fully embraces the United States once again. Ankara will continue pushing the Bush administration toward decisive action against the PKK in northern Iraq, while at the same time the new government is likely to pursue a far more conciliatory role towards Iraqi Kurds. In fact, the Kurdish regional government's prime minister, Nechirvan Barzani, had been scheduled to see then-Foreign Minister Gül for an informal meeting, but was forced to cancel it when the Turkish military publicly condemned the very idea of a meeting with Iraqi Kurdish officials. In 2006, in another conciliatory move, the government sent its national intelligence chief, Emre Taner, to test the waters with the Iraqi Kurdish government. If the new government can bring itself to follow up these initiatives with a new comprehensive approach towards northern Iraq, that will help reduce tensions between Ankara and Washington, as it will make it easier for the Iraqi Kurds to buy into a robust anti-PKK campaign. The closer Iraq gets to dissolution, the more important the need for coordination between the United States, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurds will become.

On other issues, especially apropos of Iran's nuclear ambitions, the two countries will continue to diverge on method if not policy. Turkey wants to become an energy corridor that will transfer natural gas and oil from Asia to Europe and will continue to

cooperate with Iran to achieve this goal. While this does not mean that Turkey wants to help bolster the clerical regime in Tehran, it demonstrates Ankara's unwillingness to go along with a unilateral policy of isolating Iran. Turkey is likely to remain more conciliatory towards the Iranian government than Washington would like to see.

Relations with Cyprus and Armenia, or the lack thereof, will also remain a problem for Turkey. Although Cyprus is a member of the European Union, Turkey still does not recognize the Cypriot government and thus is unable to fulfill its commitment to Brussels by extending to Nicosia Customs Union provisions, such as the use of ports. The Cypriot government, for its part, has not done much to help create an atmosphere which would enable the Turkish Cypriots in the North—and Ankara—to follow up their bold step toward an internationally recognized solution in 2004. The new government is likely to wait for the February 2008 elections in Cyprus, and if the results signal a constructive approach towards a solution, both Brussels and Ankara would be wise to seize the opportunity and resurrect the peace process. Washington has a critical role to play in pushing the process forward and in helping end the economic and political isolation of Northern Cyprus.

The Armenian issue is made more complicated by domestic politics in the United States. If and when the U.S. Congress passes an Armenian Genocide resolution, its repercussions will be felt in Ankara's relations with Yerevan. Whereas the new Turkish government may be willing to make overtures to Yerevan with an eye to intensifying high-level political dialogue, opening the bilateral border to traffic and trade, and eventually establishing full diplomatic ties, Washington has emerged as an actor on its own right and will need to strategize to avoid deepening the antagonisms between the two sides.

In conclusion, there is much positive that can be said about the AKP's second victory. More is riding on the party's second term than ever before. In an ironic way, the AKP raised expectations by performing better during its first term than most optimistic assessments would have suggested. Therefore, the public and its interlocutors at home and abroad will expect an even better performance to come. ●

Notes

1. *Radikal*, "Büyükanıt'ın 'Kösk' sorusuna yanıtı: Görüşüm geçerliğini koruyor," July 31, 2007.

2. Hitherto all presidential elections since the adoption of the 1982 Constitution followed the same pattern: for the future president to be elected in the first two rounds, the candidate had to meet a two-thirds requirement. If Parliament failed to elect someone in these two rounds, then the president was elected on a simple majority rule.

3. Alevi are a heterodox offshoot of Shiites particular to Turkey who have been shunned by the Sunni establishment. They represent roughly 12 percent of the population.

4. Etyen Mahçupyan, "Seçim değil referandum," *Zaman*, July 19, 2007. Mahçupyan argued in this pre-election column that ideological leanings of voters would prevail over their preference for particular policies at the ballot box, thereby turning the vote into a referendum between democracy and authoritarianism. While we think that AKP's success in stabilizing the economy and providing affordable healthcare contributed to the election outcome, we agree with Mahçupyan in that ideology had become the centerpiece of the campaign and voters were left with a choice between statism and politics rather than specific alternative policies promoted by respective parties. In fact, CHP presented almost no concrete policy proposals, but simply asked the voters to cast a ballot to protect Atatürk's legacy and the Republic.

5. DTP, while legal, has close ties to the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has mounted an insurgency against the Turkish state since the mid 1980s. After a hiatus of five years following the capture of its leader in 1999, the PKK resumed military action in 2004. As a result,

Turkey's other parties and elites regard DTP with great mistrust.

6. Of a maximum of 550 seats, the AKP won 341 seats compared to 363 in 2002 despite its higher share of the vote; the 10 percent threshold that the electoral laws mandate a party has to win in order to enter parliament can explain this anomaly. In 2002, MHP (or DTP's predecessors) did not manage to cross this threshold.

7. AKP deserves credit for sticking to an existing economic plan and not introducing one. The previous government's economic minister, Kemal Dervis, a World Bank official, who was called back as part of a desperate effort to save the economy, originally conceived the plan.

8. Bekir Agirdir, "Sandigin içindekini ne belirledi?" *Radikal*, July 25–28, 2007.

9. Even the Socialist International has been considering expelling CHP from its ranks.

10. Özbudun outlined some of the general principles of the draft in an interview with Nese Düzel in *Radikal*, August 6, 2007.

11. Ibid.

12. In addition, a last minute change to the electoral law made it much harder for DTP voters to vote for their candidates who were running as independents. This opportunistic measure was introduced by AKP and supported by the opposition and the president, Sezer, who saw a chance to reduce the number of DTP potential parliamentarians.

13. Erdogan first said this on June 19, 2007, in an interview on Kanal A television. He reiterated and expanded his commitment to an Italy-style "clean hands" operation in an interview with Fehmi Kuru and Ali Bayramoglu in *Yeni Safak* on July 5, 2007.

14. In the weeks leading to the July 22 elections, operations intensified, and Ankara Police took 19 members of the Patriotic Forces Union (VKGB) into custody on July 3. Large quantities of ammunition and weapons were found in lodgings that belonged to retired military officers with alleged ties to gang members.

15. Ismet Berkan, "Düşman kim?" *Radikal*, August 8, 2007. Berkan discusses a recent message sent by the president of Atatürkist Thought Associa-

tions, General (ret.) Sener Eruygur, where he not only accuses the winners of treason and being the enemy but also calls for a mobilization of all forces against them.

16. Richard Holbrooke told Yasemin Çongar in an interview, published in *Milliyet* on March 17, 1996, that he, in his capacity as the assistant secretary of state, had developed the concept that "Turkey was the new front state for the West, and in that sense, she had taken up the role of Germany during the Cold War."

17. Some generals were so incensed at the "concessions" offered on Cyprus that they seriously deliberated the possibility of a military coup. The political weekly *Nokta* published extensive documents in March 2007, including excerpts from one general's diary that revealed the coup plans. Soon after, security forces raided *Nokta's* offices and its publisher decided to stop publishing the magazine.

18. Henri J. Barkey, "Kurdistanoff," *National Interest* (summer 2007). See also Murat Yetkin, "Süleymaniye'de gerçekte neler oldu?" *Radikal*, February 20, 2007.

19. The 47-Nation Survey released by Pew Research Center on June 27, 2007. See <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256>.

20. Ahmet Davutoglu, who has served as the foreign policy advisor to both the prime and foreign ministers has articulated much of this thinking in his book, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (Istanbul: Küre Yayinlari, 2001).

21. Personal communication, n.d.

22. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried, in an interview with Reuters on April 28, 2007, was the first to say that the United States did not take sides. Later, one of his assistants was quoted in *Milliyet* on May 13, 2007, saying that constitutionally the Turkish military had a duty to intervene. In fact, there is no constitutional mandate for such a posture. In August, the same assistant in a statement published in the Greek press suggested that Gül would not make a good candidate for the presidency and implied that there were others who were more suitable. After his words caused a fury in the Turkish media, the diplomat said he had been misquoted.