

Riding the Electoral Roller Coaster in Turkey: How to Read the Results of the June and November 2015 Elections?

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The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AK Party) won three consecutive elections in 2002, 2007 and 2011 by continuously increasing its vote share from about 34 percent to nearly 50 percent. As such the AK Party forms an exceptional illustration of a predominant party in competitive democracies.¹ In March and August 2014, first local elections and then presidential elections were held. Next came the parliamentary elections in June 2015 in which the AK Party incurred a significant electoral loss, leading to a parliamentary outlook that did not allow the formation of any government. Eventually President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan decided to hold early or “repeat” elections on November 1, 2015. The campaign period for the November election saw rising militarised conflict in east and southeastern Anatolia with the Kurdish PKK as well as ISIS-linked terror attacks.

The “repeat” elections in November 2015 turned out to be a true victory for the AK Party, which was able to raise its share amongst the valid votes to 49,5 percent – an all-time high of almost 23,7 million total votes. Turnout in November rose to 85,2 percent from 83,9 percent in June. The number of invalid votes, which had risen in June primarily to a ballot design issue in Istanbul constituencies,

declined in November. As a result, the AK Party’s support peaked with a new record.

To see the significance of the November 2015 results, we need to contextualise these results in comparison to earlier AK Party election performances. In the 2002 general elections the AK Party got a respectable 34 percent of the vote, which grew in 2004 to reach nearly 42 percent in the local elections. In 2007, the political crisis around the presidential election led to remarkable electoral gain for the AK Party, which won 47 percent. With the global economic crisis reaching Turkey by the time of the 2009 local elections, the AK Party lost about eight percentage points of electoral support but managed to recover by continuously improving economic conditions for the mass electorate. By the 2011 parliamentary elections the recovery was more than complete, and the AK Party won record-breaking support with almost 50 percent of valid votes (which totaled about 21.4 million votes). As a general rule support for the AK Party rose when the mass public was content with the economy’s performance.² Likewise, deteriorating economic performance before the 2014 local elections caused the level of support to drop to about 43 percent. Nevertheless, even at times of economic crisis the AK Party’s support still remained higher than its original 34 percent by about nine percentage points. Even in one of the worst electoral contexts the

¹ On the predominant party system in Turkey see Ali Çarkoğlu, “Turkey’s 2011 General Elections: Towards a Dominant Party System?”, in *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (July-September 2011), p. 43-62, http://file.insightturkey.com/Files/Pdf/20120903122353_insight-turkey_volume_11_number_3_-ali_carkoglu_towards-a-dominant.pdf; Şebnem Gümüşcü, “The Emerging Predominant Party System in Turkey”, in *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2013), p. 223-244.

² On the influence of the economic evaluations upon voter decisions during the 2002-2011 period, see Ali Çarkoğlu, “Economic Evaluations vs. Ideology: Diagnosing the Sources of Electoral Change in Turkey, 2002-2011”, in *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (September 2012), p. 513-521.

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AK Party's votes in provincial council elections was about 17,8 million, up by more than 4,4 million votes compared to the 2004 local elections.

Background to the November Election

In the first-ever popular elections for the presidency, the AK Party candidate Recep Tayyip Erdoğan outperformed the joint opposition candidate, a devout Muslim intellectual of high caliber, Ekmelettin İhsanoğlu. Erdoğan received 21 million votes or 51,8 percent of the valid votes, securing the presidency in the first round of elections. The pro-Kurdish, democratic socialist People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) candidate Selahattin Demirtaş received 9,8 percent of the valid votes in the August 2014 presidential election. This strong showing signaled that the military-imposed 10 percent threshold may be surpassed by the HDP in the next election. In fact, the HDP obtained about 13 percent of the vote in June 2015.

The campaign period before the June elections was hit by terror attacks and mass violence. Two days before the elections, two bombs attributed to ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) exploded at the HDP's rally at its Diyarbakır meeting, killing four civilians. There were also numerous small-scale attacks against all parties. According to the Human Rights Association of Turkey (İHD), there were 187 attacks against parties. 168 of them were against the HDP, 12 against the AKP, 5 against the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) and 2 against the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP). According to the same statement, 97 party activists were wounded, 10 attackers were detained and only one attacker was imprisoned because of these 187 attacks.³

The June 7, 2015 elections led to a nearly nine-percentage-point loss for the ruling AK Party compared to the 2011 general elections. As such, no party had the necessary majority in the Parliament to single-handedly form the government – a first since 1999. The AK Party nevertheless remained the largest group with nearly 41 percent, followed by the main opposition CHP with about 25 percent (down by about 1 percentage point from 2011) of the valid votes. The opposing Turkish and Kurdish ethnic nationalist parties, the MHP and the HDP, scored 3,3 and 6,6 percentage points increases respectively. The ideological incongruence and polarisation in the party system did not allow for constructive coalition negotiations. As a result, President Erdoğan called for a "repeat" election in November 1, 2015 which led to AK Party recovery at the polls. Although the HDP and MHP had significant losses they both managed to remain above the 10 percent threshold, securing representation in the



An election official holds a ballot during a count at a polling station in Diyarbakır, 1 November 2015.
(Photo Reuters/Sertac Kayar)

parliament. The CHP remained more or less at the same level of support compared to the June elections and continued to be the main opposition party.

The nearly five months between the June and November elections witnessed paralysed coalition negotiations and a virtual end to the Kurdish peace process. Then came intensified military action against the PKK and many losses of life, with terror attacks in Şanlıurfa Suruç in the southeast and in the capitol city Ankara killing tens of civilians. Among those killed were some HDP politicians and youth branch members of the CHP. The CHP and the HDP announced afterwards that they would not hold rallies or large campaign meetings because of the threats. An intriguing development following the Ankara bombing was that the responsibility for the event was not clearly attributed either to the interim government or to the AK Party that the majority of the ministers were from. The Prime Minister and leader of the AK Party, Ahmet Davutoğlu, successfully shifted the blame to the electoral context that did not allow a single party government. Between the attacks on October 10 and the elections on November 1, there were no serious clashes between the armed forces and the PKK or any other terror plot against civilians that captured mass attention.

The terror attacks and military action against the PKK created a new political agenda in the country that benefitted the AK Party considerably. During the months preceding the June election more than half of the voting age respondents saw economic problems as the most important.⁴ Terror and national security was the primary concern of slightly less than one in ten respondents, and only about one in twenty saw the Kurdish question or peace process as the primary issue on the agenda. However, as of mid-September the political agenda has completely shifted, with more emphasis put upon security issues. Terror more than tripled its presence on the agenda. Together with the Kurdish question or peace

³ "Emek ve Demokrasi Platformu üyeleri, Diyarbakır'da yaşanan patlamayı kinadı", in *Milliyet*, 6 June 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/d/t1.aspx?ID=826431>.

⁴ See the presentation of pre-election survey results by Ali Çarkoğlu and Erdem Aytaç: *Public Opinion Dynamics ahead of the June 2015 Elections in Turkey*, 5 May 2015, <https://csr.ku.edu.tr/public-opinion>.

process, terror was the answer of nearly one in every three people to the question of the most important problem. While ISIS, foreign policy issues and the Syrian conflict did not gain ground, we observe that political instability was the answer of nearly one in ten people.

The big drop among the other issues came in the importance of economic issues, together with a decline in the emphasis on social problems such as education and health issues. Nevertheless, as of September 2015, economic issues were still high on the agenda, as the answer of slightly more than one-third of respondents, and as such still occupied as large a place in the mind of the people as did terror and national security. However, as the country moved closer towards the November 1st Election Day and terror attacks influenced the feeling of insecurity among mass voters, the prominence of terror and national security and political instability is expected to have continuously risen at the expense of economic and social issues.

Looking more attentively into the economic evaluations, we notice that the past economic performance of the AK Party provides a solid foundation of credibility. As the feeling of insecurity has grown, uncertainty surrounding the economic policy area is expected to have increased as well. Given the reliable past economic performance of the AK Party, rising insecurity is likely to have boosted its credibility, compared to opposition parties that do not have a tangible performance record.

More emphasis upon security inevitably led to increased emphasis upon stability in the political arena. Given the poor cooperative performance of the opposition parties during the coalition negotiations, it became clear that unless a significant shift in the parliamentary seat distribution were to occur, a stable coalition was not likely to result in a parliamentary setting similar to the aftermath of the June elections. As a result of this likely interpretation, a significant shift did take place amongst primarily the right-wing voters. From June to November, the conservative constituencies of both the MHP as well as the HDP appear to have shifted to the AK Party.

The November 2015 Election

Before going into the details of the vote shifts from June to November we need to emphasise two important developments that shaped the AK Party victory. First, turnout increased from 83,9 percent in June to 85,2 in November. This corresponds to about one million more people casting their votes in November, with the total number of voters reaching about 48,5 million. The second issue concerns the significant drop in the number of invalid votes from June to November. This issue is also linked to a deep-running lack of trust between the opposition and the AK Party constituencies, which manifested itself in clear polarisation concerning fraud

allegations in June elections. While the opposition party supporters overwhelmingly expected some fraud and claimed overall that the election would not be fair, the supporters of the AK Party remained confident about the free and fair nature of the elections.⁵ However, a civil initiative called *Oy ve Ötesi* monitored various provinces during both elections and according to their reports, there were no serious electoral frauds or irregularities in the ballot boxes.⁶

A total of 1,3 million votes, or 2.8 percent of all the votes, were invalid in June. In November the figure was about half of that, approximately 680,000 votes. Most of this difference stems from İstanbul's three electoral districts, in which the ballot design in June was confusing for most voters. The ballot was divided into two parts; in the upper part parties were written and in the lower part candidates were written. Reportedly, this confused many voters and the percentage of invalid votes increased in İstanbul as a consequence.⁷ When the ballot design changed to eliminate this confusion, the percentage of invalid votes decreased 5 points in İstanbul.

A geographic analysis of the election results reveals that a significant share of these votes in November came from the conservative constituencies of the MHP and HDP voters in June. Nevertheless, votes from the SP/BBP constituencies as well as those who did not vote or whose votes (especially in İstanbul) were counted as invalid in June also appear to have significantly contributed to the AK Party victory in November.

Summarised in the figure below is provincial level data for AK Party support in June compared to November results. The vote share of the AK Party in the June election is shown on the horizontal axis and the November results are shown on the vertical axis. Any point lying above the main diagonal shows an increase in AK Party support from June to November. Only in Tunceli do we see no change in AK Party support from June to November. In all other provinces we observe a positive change.

Two provincial groups are shown on this figure. One is the east and southeastern Anatolia provinces and the other is mostly the western provinces. The east and southeastern provinces exhibit positive shifts in the AK Party vote that range between 28 percent and 62 percent from June

⁵ See Daniel Pipes, "On Turkey's Fraudulent Elections Tomorrow", in *Middle East Forum Blog*, 6 June 2015, <http://www.meforum.org/blog/2015/06/on-turkey-fraudulent-election-tomorrow>.

⁶ For the June election, see: *Oy ve Ötesi*, 7 Haziran 2015 *Seçim Değerlendirmesi*, October 2015, p. 44, <http://oyveotesi.org/?p=8247>. For November, see: "Oy ve Ötesi 1 Kasım seçim değerlendirmesini açıkladı: '776 sandıkta uyumsuzluk var'", in *Sendika.org*, 4 November 2015, <http://sendika8.org/?p=306446>.

⁷ "Tricky ballot tickets main cause for half a million invalid votes in İstanbul", in *The Daily Sabah*, 8 June 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/elections/2015/06/08/tricky-ballot-tickets-main-cause-for-half-a-million-invalid-votes-in-istanbul>.

to November. One exception is the case of Iğdır, where the AK Party vote was more than 2,6 times higher in November (with about 31 percent) than in June (with about 12 percent). Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kilis and Bingöl had 47-49 percent support for the AK Party in the June elections. In November this range shifted upwards to 61-65 percent support.

In Rize, Konya, Kahramanmaraş and Bayburt, the AK Party obtained more than 60 percent of the vote in November. Although a ceiling effect is in effect in these provinces that limits the vote increases in the November elections, still AK Party support rose between 14 and 21 percent, reaching 72-76 percent overall.

The second group of provinces in figure 1 brings together most of the Western Anatolian provinces, where the range of vote share for the AK Party in the June elections was between 23 and 48 percent. In November the vote distribution ranged between 27 and 57 percent. When we look into this linkage between the range of support in June and vote increase in November we observe an expected negative relationship. As the range of support for the AK Party in June increases, the average percentage of increase in its vote share in November declines. In provinces where the AK Party obtained 10-20 percent support in June, the average gain is about 51 percent. Among the four provinces where the vote share is above 60 percent, the average gain in November is only 17 percent over the June vote share.

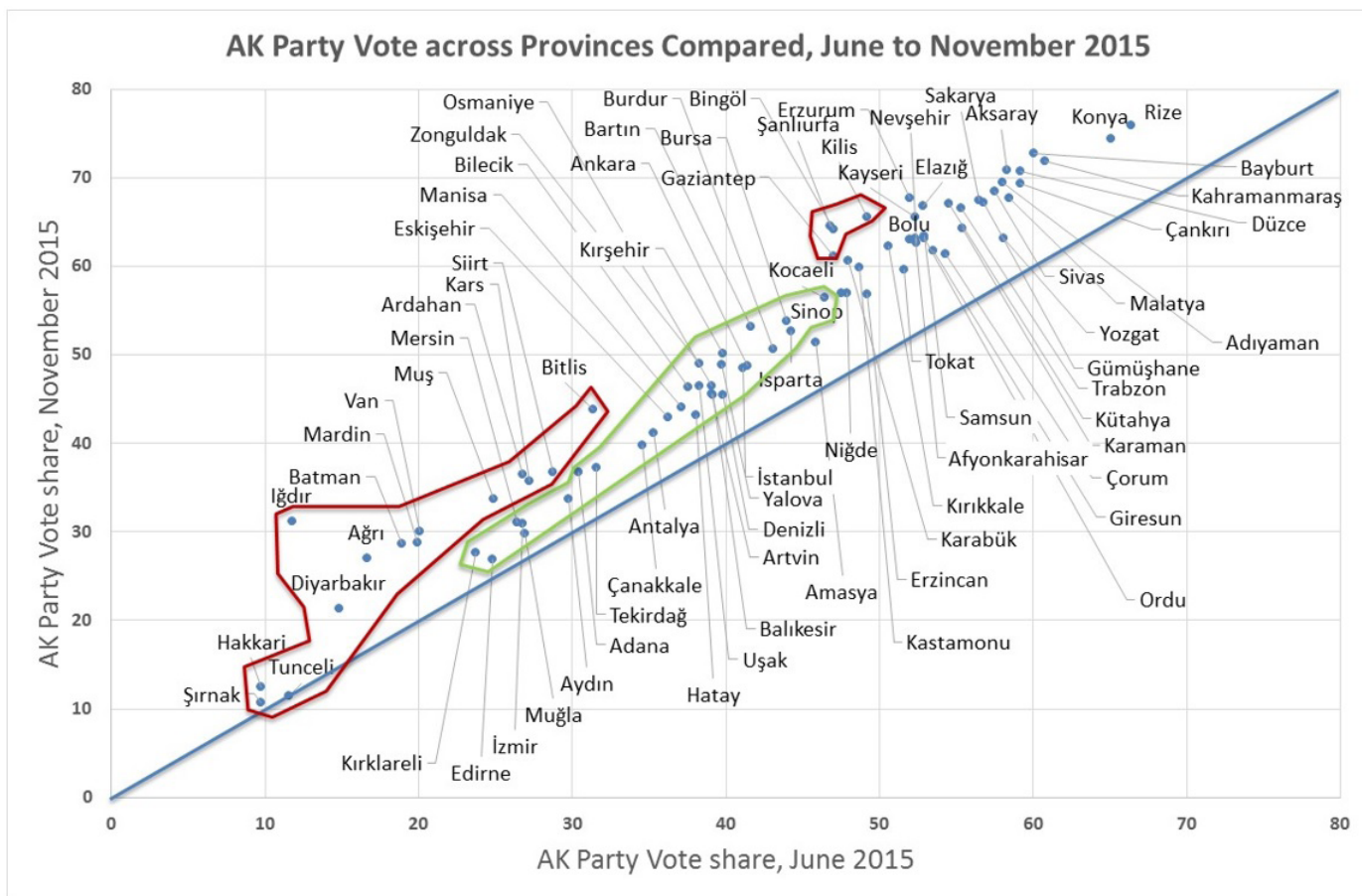
The table below shows a cluster analysis of June and November election results. In such an analysis the provinces are grouped into clusters so that observations within each cluster are similar to each other while variance across clusters is maximised. By having June and November election results across provinces as the basis for these clusters, we see the provincial regions as defined by election outcomes in these two elections.

The first cluster in figure 2 shows a total of 25 provinces that includes large metropolitan cities such as İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa and Adana. It spans a corridor of provinces with İstanbul at the northern end and covering Bursa and Balıkesir on the southern Marmara Sea coast. From the inner Aegean provinces this region reaches the Mediterranean coast from Antalya to Hatay. It also includes Erzincan in Eastern Central Anatolia and Ardahan and Artvin in the East and Eastern Black Sea region. Moving into the central and western Black Sea, Amasya, Sinop, Bartın and Zonguldak are also part of this cluster of provinces. The average vote share for the AK Party was about 39 percent in June and increased to about 47 percent in November. While the CHP vote remained about 30 percent in both elections, the MHP and HDP votes declined respectively from 19,8 to 14,7 percent and from 6,7 to 4,9 percent. In this cluster of provinces the average gain for the AK Party and the CHP is about 7,8 and 1,1 percentage points respectively, while the MHP lost 5,2 percentage points and the HDP lost 1,8.

• **Table 1 | Province Clusters for June and November 2015 Election Results**

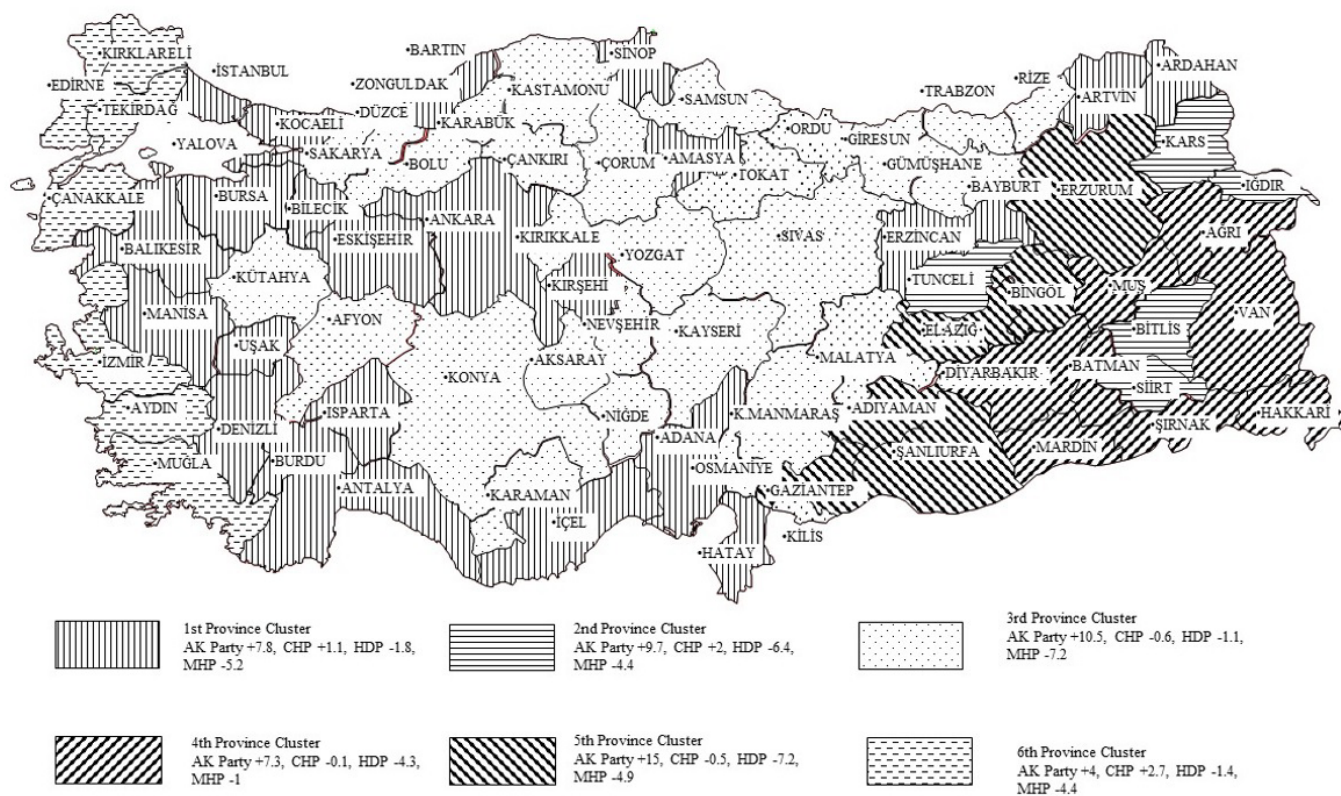
Mean Vote Shares across Clusters						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
AK Party June	39,5	22,1	54,6	16,8	50,6	28,3
CHP June	29,1	8,0	15,2	1,3	7,3	45,0
MHP June	19,9	10,6	23,1	2,1	12,4	17,4
HDP June	6,7	56,7	2,3	76,3	25,0	5,7
Other June	4,8	2,6	4,7	3,4	4,7	3,6
AK Party November	47,3	31,8	65,1	24,1	65,6	32,3
CHP November	30,2	10,0	14,6	1,3	6,8	47,8
MHP November	14,7	6,2	15,9	1,0	7,5	13,0
HDP November	4,9	50,4	1,2	72,0	17,8	4,3
Other November	2,8	1,6	3,2	1,6	2,3	2,6
No. of cases in each cluster	25	5	30	8	6	7
Changes from June to November						
AK Party	7,8	9,7	10,5	7,3	15,0	4,0
CHP	1,1	2,0	-0,6	-0,1	-0,5	2,7
MHP	-5,2	-4,4	-7,2	-1,0	-4,9	-4,4
HDP	-1,8	-6,4	-1,1	-4,3	-7,2	-1,4

• Figure 1



• Figure 2

Province Clusters for June and November 2015 Election Results



The third cluster contains a total of 30 provinces spanning all of the Black Sea and Central Anatolian regions with noted exceptions in the first cluster. In these provinces the AK Party had on average about 54 percent in June and 65 percent in November and an increase of about 11 percentage points. All other parties have on average lost votes in this region. The vote share for the MHP declined from 23 to 16 percent, while the CHP lost slightly but remained as the third party with around 15 percent. The HDP is a distant fourth party with a declining marginal vote share of about 1-2 percent. In other words this third cluster is where the AK Party appears to have converted the conservative constituencies of the MHP into AK Party supporters.

In Cluster 6 we still see the AK Party increasing its vote share from about 28-32 percent. However, in this cluster covering western Marmara and the coastal Aegean provinces the CHP is the largest party, with rising vote share from 45 to 48 percent. The MHP is again losing about 4-5 percentage points of support.

The remaining three clusters are all in the east and southeastern Anatolia. In the largest cluster with eight provinces (Cluster 4) covering Ağrı, Van, Hakkari, Muş, Batman, Siirt, Şırnak, Mardin and Diyarbakır, we see that the HDP on average had 76,3 percent in June, which declined down to 72 percent in November. In the same period the AK Party vote share increased from 16,8 to 24 percent, while the CHP and MHP remained around 1-2 percent. In cluster 2 we see five provinces (Tunceli, Bitlis, Siirt, Iğdır and Kars) where the HDP lost about 6 percentage points, from 56 to 50 percent, from June to November, while the AK Party raised its vote share from 22 to 32 percent. In these five provinces the average vote share of the CHP rose from about 8 to 10 percent while the MHP lost more than 4 percentage points.

The largest average shift in the AK Party support was realised in the six-province cluster that spans from the Syrian border provinces of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa to Adıyaman, Elazığ, Bingöl and Erzurum. In this region the AK Party gain is about 15 percentage points, while both the HDP as well as the MHP lost about 7 and 5 percentage points respectively.

Conclusions and Future Prospects

In short, the geographic pattern that emerges from June to November shifts in provincial election outcomes shows that while the AK Party scored gains everywhere, in several geographical pockets its performance was much more significant. In terms of the number of new votes for the AK Party, clusters 1 and 6 contain the largest population provinces and hence bring the largest numbers of new votes. However, in terms of increases in the percentage share we see provinces in cluster 3, which spans a large region of provinces in between east

and southeastern Turkey as well as the inner Aegean provinces. This region is the heart of AK Party support. This differential electoral performance is likely to be attributable to effective candidate selection and voter mobilisation by the AK Party. We have to note that from June to November it undertook a significant overhaul of its candidate list as well as its campaign manifesto, while the opposition was almost paralysed in its response. The positive upward swing across all geographic regions is likely to be attributable to the shifting political agenda in the country that was noted above.

The agenda of the country changed dramatically from June to November due primarily to rising tensions on the Kurdish and Syrian front, with terror attacks on civilian as well as military targets. These developments, together with intensifying threats and attacks on political parties, impeded an effective campaign by the opposition. The opposition was effectively paralysed and was stuck with an ineffective economic policy discourse (in the case of the CHP) or ethnic identity discourse (for the MHP and HDP). Yet these positions projected an uncooperative image so that they continued to be seen as responsible for rising political instability in the country.

What appears to be the most striking development going into November was the waning of performance evaluation in the bread-and-butter policy areas that cover the economy and social policies, as well as a twisted attribution of responsibility concerning the rising insecurity in the country. Restoration of some stability in the country gained salience, and this gave the advantage to the largest party in the system, the AK Party. Voters also appear to be motivated by punishment of the opposition parties, which are seen as responsible for the failure of coalition negotiations (in the case of the MHP) and rising conflict in the Kurdish front (in the case of the HDP). Both of these parties lost considerable electoral support as a consequence. However, the AK Party appears to have incurred no cost for its role in and responsibility for the failing coalition negotiations and the rising insecurity in the country.

The CHP appears to have been untouched by these massive shifts. Since the shift basically took place at the right-end of the ideological spectrum, influencing the conservative constituencies of the MHP and HDP, this is rather unsurprising. These two constituencies could not have been captured by the CHP. However, the other major source of support for the AK Party was the new voters who did not vote in June or the invalid-vote-casting constituencies in primarily Istanbul during the June election. This latter group is also likely to be a constituency with conservative leanings that is positively predisposed towards the AK Party. That leaves only the option of new voters who did not turn out in June as a new source of support, and the CHP organisation appears to be ineffective in mobilising these voters.

Perhaps more important was the wrong assumption on the part of the CHP campaign that the large, dormant centrist constituency within the AK Party that has in the past voted for the centrist right-wing parties, such as the Motherland and True Path parties or the Young Party back in 2002 and 2007, could be mobilised solely by an economic policy package while the agenda was under the influence of security issues. This strategy could perhaps have worked, but only if the security agenda were not on the rise.

Despite all their losses both the MHP as well as the HDP managed to survive and remained above the critical 10 percent threshold. Their passing the threshold could be seen as important for curbing the AK Party's legislative power. However, the parliamentary seat distribution after the November elections leaves the AK Party only 13 seats short of a constitutional referendum. This is already a huge legislative power and leaves the decision to the AK Party to either pursue cooperative consensus-building or unilateral policy to implement its plans for a new constitution. It is not inconceivable that the AK Party persuades several individual legislators to support the party's revived constitutional ambitions and take the constitution to a referendum, which is likely to be popularly supported by at least a slight margin if not huge support. This strategic choice by AK Party means a lot for the future of Turkish democracy. A majoritarian approach that would unilaterally push a new constitution or critical amendments that would be taken to a referendum is likely to further polarise the country.

AK Party elites are already committed to a presidential system with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the helm. However, both the CHP and MHP have been zealously opposing such a central shift in the Turkish political system. Only HDP leadership has sent mixed signs of support. However, even for the HDP, many concessions from the AK Party would be sought concerning a local government reform and more local freedoms for Kurds in the country. Given the new flow of conservative MHP voters tipping the electoral balance in favor of the AK Party, such concessions may be unaffordable. Hence, such a deal with the HDP may again prove to be impossible.

The dramatic finale of the election storm in the country came in an unexpected way. We have yet to understand the details of the conservative shift that brought the AK Party to power one more time. What is at this stage more of a concern at a speculative level is the potential impact of mass security concerns for Turkish democracy. As Turkey continues to have tense international conflict at its southern Syrian border, the saliency of security concerns fueled by the Kurdish conflict as well provides ample ground for limitations and constraints imposed upon Turkish democracy. These security concerns are likely to be coupled with a waning importance of performance politics. In November, rather than focusing

on punishment for the incumbent party for worsening security and continuing economic uncertainty, voters appeared to be concerned about a more ontological issue: their personal safety and the public order. The AK Party appears to have been perceived as competent in these policy areas and has benefitted from the voters' confidence in the party to solve security issues. Shifts from the HDP to the AKP might be attributable partly to some segment of the voters (those who voted for the HDP in the previous election) who observed during the inter-election period that the HDP had little power over the PKK, which appeared to be running a separate campaign without any influence of the HDP upon their choices. Hence the ability of the HDP to influence a suspension of the armed conflict came to be questioned. With the HDP unable to restrain the PKK and limit the rise of armed action against the Turkish state, significant groups of Kurdish voters might have defected back to the AK Party line. This appears to be a reasonable hypothesis yet to be tested with micro-level data. However, it is more credible to observe that with the rising security environment and polarisation the AK Party government, with its solid electoral base, finds opportunities to remain irresponsive to democratic demands.

The declining importance of performance politics in favor of rising identity-based ontological concerns is likely to be harmful to democratisation in Turkey. As a rule, without acceptable performance in meeting the demands and expectations of the masses, especially on the economic front, a government could not stay in power. The last experience in the November elections however, could be taken as evidence of electoral success without noticeable performance advantage. The AK Party's electoral success appears to be driven not by performance evaluations but rather by its successful management of the changing agenda, by ontological polarisation as a basis for credibility while facing an uncertain future, and by a *de facto* constrained campaign effort on the part of the opposition.

As the agenda of the campaign debate shifted from the performance evaluations concerning the economy to a polarised debate around security concerns, the importance of the media coverage of the campaign naturally grew. The divided nature of the Turkish media sector is already a well-documented fact. The AK Party effectively controlled the media coverage of the campaign. Although the specific extent of the AK Party's control is yet to be obtained from the content analysis of the media outlets, our earlier analysis of the 2011 campaign clearly shows rising polarisation in a media setting that favors the incumbent party. In the June as well as the November elections the opposition parties' access to media coverage was severely limited even in the public outlets. The favorable incumbent-party bias was also evident among the private channels. Given this biased access to media coverage, it is difficult to claim that

the elections were fair even if one grants they were free.⁸ Such constraints upon the opposition and the media at large can only mean deteriorating democratic standards in the country.

Turkey already has among the lowest interpersonal trust levels in the world.⁹ Tolerance concerning minorities, unconstrained freedoms of expression and social progress is already very low. In a polarised political setting such a background creates a deep mistrust between groups and especially between the government and its opposition. The rising tide of self-imposed conservatism in the country, along with ontological security concerns and declining attention to basic economic policy performance, may mean the end of democracy as we know it. From an optimistic perspective, the AK Party government now has a renewed mandate for economic and democratic reforms. However, whether the international and domestic security environment allows the AK Party leadership to pursue an inclusive, cooperative consensus-building reform process remains to be seen.

⁸ On biased coverage of the media favouring the incumbent AK Party, see: "TRT'nin 25 günlük yayın tablosu: AKP 30, CHP 5, MHP 1 saat; HDP 18 dakika", in *Mynet.com*, 27 October 2015, <http://www.mynet.com/haber/guncel/share-2156446-1>.

⁹ See World Values Survey data for international comparisons: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>.