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Presidential Elections in Turkey

Erdogan's "New Turkey" and "New Challenges"

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What are the implications of Turkey's historic 2014 elections for the future of the country?

How will Erdogan's political style and leadership shape the role of the presidency?

Turkey's election on 10 August 2014 was historic. After victories in three general elections (2002, 2007, 2011), three local elections (2004, 2009, 2014), and two referenda (2007, 2010), Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), won the country's first direct presidential election, receiving 51.79 percent of the vote in the first round. After twelve years as prime minister, Erdogan will spend the next five years as the president of Turkey. Combining the prestige of being elected by popular vote and his political style, Erdogan's presidency is expected to exceed the symbolic borders of the classical parliamentary system and usher in a de facto presidential/semi-presidential system. Thus, the election was not simply a presidential election but, rather, a selection of the regime that eventually will have a significant impact on both domestic and foreign policies in Turkey.

A direct presidential election is unusual in parliamentary democracies. In Turkey, however, the election is the result of democratic resistance to the political control exercised by the military-civilian bureaucracy established in the 1960s. The natural consequence of this was to control democracy via the state; in other words, the establishment of political tutelage. The Turkish constitution grants the president symbolic and limited authority and the position acts as the "protector of the republic and secularism." The office was long controlled by the military bureaucrats until 2007, when the majority AKP proposed Abdullah Gul as its candidate for the presidency. Gul, along with Erdogan and Bülent Arinc, was one of the most prominent founders of the AKP and widely recognized for his calm political temperament. However, Gul was opposed by the military in part because his wife wore a headscarf; it has since become a political issue.

The success of the Justice and Development Party—and Erdogan—is in large part due to its resistance to the military's reaction to Gul. On 27 April 2007, with only a few days until the election, the Turkish General Staff declared its desire for a fully secular president and threatened ramifications if this went unfulfilled. The Constitutional Court weighed the declaration and, four days later, made the contentious decision to block Gul's selection. The AKP, under the leadership of Erdogan, immediately condemned the declaration and the Court's decision and pushed for an early general election, in which the AKP would go on to gain an additional 13 percent of the vote (34 percent in 2002 to 47 percent in 2007). Following the AKP's victory,

Gul was appointed president and the AKP proposed a constitutional amendment to allow for the direct election of the president, thereby limiting the influence of military-civilian bureaucrats and judicial elites. The amendment passed in a 2007 referendum and became law. The directly-elected president, whose office would have the same authority as before, would be eligible for two five-year terms. At the time, Erdogan and the AKP praised the referendum for having finally allowed

the will of the people to emerge. In his victory speech on 10 August 2014, Erdogan tied the party's victory in 2002 to the democratic gains made in 2014, saying that "now the strains between Çankaya [the presidential office in Ankara] and the people are lifted."¹ The real question for now and for the future is: how will Erdogan's political style and leadership shape the role of the presidency?

Twelve Years of AKP Leadership: From "Political Tutelage" to "Majority Democracy"

During the twelve years in which Erdogan has lead the AKP while having an absolute majority in parliament, the party's policies have differed between two specific time periods. Between 2002 and 2009, the AKP performed well on topics such as economic development and integration, cooperation with the EU and its neighbors, and ethnic and regional differences within the country; it enacted reforms; and it supported liberal democracy and human rights. Following the 2010 constitutional amendment and the AKP's third victory in the 2011 elections, we can see a notable change in the agenda. After this time, the AKP eliminated all institutions that might rival it, allowing it to conduct a policy that gives priority to the Islamic-conservative identity in domestic and foreign affairs rather than a policy of coalitions. The AKP's shift toward identity politics instead of pragmatic policies had a negative impact on relations with the EU. Additionally, the discourse on the economy changed—which was the main strength of the AKP—such that, for instance, "interest-rate" policy was often treated through a religious lens.

There is no doubt that the AKP fought for the establishment of democracy in Turkey, but it was not alone in this struggle. Democrats, leftists, liberals, and young people have supported the AKP in the struggle for a Turkey both pluralist and democratic. The AKP argued that it reflects the national will: that the people's choice should have priority in a democracy, not an elitist state and tutelage regime. However, as it gained more power and other obstructions to democratic rule have been removed, the AKP's grasp of democracy took the form of obedience to the rule of the majority. Particularly after 2010, the AKP's understanding of democracy shifted from one of populism (i.e., claiming to represent the people) to one of entrenched interests that opponents say only respects majority rule. Minorities and opponents are increasingly sidelined. This was a period in which ideological-identity politics were often emphasized vis-à-vis the pragmatic-pluralist democratic approach. From there on, the AKP began to talk about an era of "construction" and began a project of social engineering characterized by religious references. This "identity-based" policy of the AKP with references to "Sunni Islam" had an effect on foreign policy as well.²

This debate is reminiscent of earlier reactions to military rule—

and its accompanying restrictions on citizens—in Turkish democratic history. Indeed, ignorance and arrogance on the part of military leaders led to the AKP's original success. The AKP, therefore, emphasized the legitimacy of the 2004 election and rejected accusations of nondemocratic interference. However, the opposition parties are increasingly restless on the issue of pluralism.

The moves of "reconstructing society," which has a natural religious-Muslim "identity," in both domestic and foreign policies gave rise to the polarization within that society. Rhetoric intended to appeal to religious-conservative voters isolated many groups that had no link to the AKP's "identity" policies but, rather, admired its pragmatism and social policies. Among all governments that have been in power in Turkey, the AKP is the one that developed and successfully implemented the most social policies on health, education, poverty, and disabilities. Putting aside the emphasis on religion and conservatism, it is even possible to define the AKP as a "Social Democrat-Leftist Party" in a universal sense. In a country where large income inequalities are evident, the AKP won widespread acclaim as a party that directly supported larger masses of poor people (with food, coal, clothes, etc.); put women with children or involved in elder care on salary; provided free health care and medication; and made education almost free of charge at all levels, including higher education. It is obvious that these policies played a part in the AKP growing to 9.5 million members since 2001.

Still, the AKP's religious-conservative and occasionally populist rhetoric appealed to many. The absence of a viable opposition—one with the capability to put forward either a leader or a policy in a time of crisis—further helped Erdogan to gain the support of those frightened by instability and disorder. In May-June 2013, the "Gezi Park" protests demonstrated the ongoing social, rather than political, unrest. Millions of young people who saw the AKP's regulations on issues such as alcohol, abortion, single sex dormitories, or religious education as "identity politics"—and as an intervention in their lives—took to the streets. This is an important factor that causes polarization and disintegration within the society. It was an unexpected challenge to the AKP government, originating as it did from society rather than from the weak opposition parties. The situation was

difficult for the government to control. Thus, the AKP preferred to call the Gezi protests a “rebellion” or an “attempt at a coup d’etat” led by domestic enemies and foreign interests. Ultimately, the opposition from urban and “partyless” Turkish youth gave rise to a longer-term “Gezophobia” within the AKP.³

On 17 and 24 December 2013, an investigation was launched into the possibly corrupt actions of the AKP—another important crisis in the twelve years of AKP governance. Erdogan, who labelled the operation as an attempted coup d’etat and blamed the Fethullah Gülen Movement (“Cemaat”)⁴ for it, denied all charges and the operation ended soon thereafter. Had the operation succeeded, the accused ministers and friends would have been brought to court, the government may

Challenging Erdogan

Opposition parties struggled to put candidates up against Erdogan, whose victory in the presidential election was assumed after his party’s victories in March. This election increased Erdogan’s chances in the presidential elections. The main priority of the once-again-defeated leaders of the opposition (Kemal Kilicdaroglu of the CHP and Devlet Bahceli of the MHP) was not to lose their leadership positions in their parties—rather than trying to win the presidential election. They did not stand as candidates due to the risk of losing prestige and they did not put up any candidates from their own parties, as those candidates could be rivals if successful. Therefore, they had a different preference. In a rare move, the left-leaning secularist Republican People’s Party (CHP) and the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) cooperated to put forward a joint candidate, allowing leaders from both parties to retain their positions after the election.

After long negotiations, the CHP and the MHP together nominated Professor Ekmelettin Ihsanoglu, former Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation from 2004 to 2010. Perceived as the candidate who could balance the conservative-Islamist discourse, the conservative Ihsanoglu, who was born in Cairo, was rather unenthusiastically received by both parties’ voters, and especially by party elites. Ihsanoglu was a suitable candidate only for those who would support “anyone but Erdogan,” and thus was an anti-Erdogan candidate with a blank framework.

Defeating Erdogan, a charismatic and effective incumbent, would prove difficult for any challenger. Ihsanoglu personified the “anyone but Erdogan” approach, and was unknown to the public until his candidacy. Both the CHP and the MHP, whose local candidates received a combined 43.3 percent in the March 2014 elections, did relatively little to support their candidate during the election. Nonetheless, Ihsanoglu performed better than expected, taking 15.5 million votes.

The Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) nominated Selahattin Demirtas to challenge Erdogan. Although the BDP

have fallen, and Erdogan himself could have been accused. Despite the investigation, the love of and satisfaction with Erdogan was apparent immediately after this scandal, when local election results in March 2014 demonstrated that the pictures, documents, and allegations did not influence over half of the country’s population. Erdogan had turned the March 2014 election into a referendum on himself and the results showed that he had the open support of society. These election results were also telling for the August presidential election. During the campaign, Erdogan concentrated on the progress made over his twelve years of leadership with the slogan “not in words but in actions” and got the results of his politics of service.

received only 4.5 percent—2 million votes—in the last local elections, Demirtas won 9.76 percent—3.9 million votes—in the presidential election, demonstrating his appeal to both Kurds and Turks. The votes he received will most likely have an effect on Kurdish politics, because he competed with the brave policies of Erdogan, who took actions to solve the ongoing Kurdish problem despite the nationalist pressure from the public and from his party. However, Erdogan thought that he could compensate for the reactions from AKP voters with the Kurdish votes he would acquire; votes for Demirtas could have been a disappointment for Erdogan, who was barely able to win the election in the first session by 1.7 percent.

Observers note that, despite the election being carried out lawfully and without questions of legitimacy, there were some imbalances. In particular, the candidates were clearly imbalanced in terms of access to public resources, opportunities, and donations. Erdogan, as the prime minister, had an advantage over other candidates in money and publicity. For example, the state television network TRT gave Erdogan 31,980 seconds of screen time, whereas Ihsanoglu received only 205 seconds and Demirtas a mere 45 seconds. Differences in campaign spending are equally glaring: Erdogan built an account of \$25 million from 1.3 million people compared to Ihsanoglu with \$4 million from 2,172 people and Demirtas with \$500,000 from just over 7,000 people.

Given his success in March 2014—despite the corruption scandal—Erdogan’s victory in August did not come as a surprise. Erdogan’s greatest advantage is his leadership, which was reaffirmed in nine successive election victories. His success is further strengthened by the changes that occurred under Erdogan’s visionary leadership: substantial development over the last twelve years, infrastructure investments impacting people’s daily lives, implementation of social policies, and efficient and stable government. Erdogan succeeded in taking 21 million votes in the August 2014 elections, despite a 15 percent lower participation rate compared to March. Furthermore, in the direct election, Erdogan received 2 million

more votes than the 19 million the AKP received in the March 2014 election. Despite the fact that the current constitution describes the presidency as a symbolic authority in a parliamentary system, there is no doubt that Erdogan, the first elected president of Turkey, will implement a de facto semi-presidential system. In this context, there may exist a risk in terms of democracy. Since the current parliamentary system in Turkey does not grant any responsibility to the president, a checks and balances system does not exist as it does in a presidential system. As long as the constitution remains the same, Erdogan's power will be much more limitless. Of course, it depends on the permanent victory of the AKP. With any other party's government, Erdogan would have big problems.

Elsewhere in the government, the foreign ministry is the most-watched cabinet position. Mevlut Cavusoglu, former president of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, was selected as foreign minister by Erdogan and his prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu. Cavusoglu is a promising, successful, and respected politician. He also represents a position that signifies the importance of Turkey's relationship with the West, especially Turkey-EU relations. In this context, his election as foreign minister can be interpreted as a new tendency of Turkish foreign policy to prioritize the country's relations with the West rather than continuing to prioritize relations with the Middle East and Islamic world, as it has done for the past three years. In addition, the appointment of Volkan Bozkir, a former diplomat, as Minister for EU Affairs can be seen as an improvement for Turkish-Western relations. Erdogan and Davutoglu have stated that "the EU is our strategic target." Beyond a doubt, Erdogan and Davutoglu will both be involved in foreign policy. Their concern and emphasis on the Islamic world, together with the emphasis on improving relationships with the Western world by Cavusoglu-Bozkir, indicates an extensive and decisive opening in Turkish foreign policy, and suggests that Erdogan is revising his policies.

Turks Abroad and the 2014 Presidential Election: The Great Disappointment for Absentee Votes

Not only was the presidential election on 10 August 2014 the first direct election for the office, it was also the first time that over 6 million Turks living abroad could vote. Of these, 5 million live in Europe (with 3 million in Germany alone); the rest reside in other countries, the U.S. in particular. The expat Turkish community has gained importance politically and become a strong instrument of foreign policy. The efforts that have been made by Turkey for twenty years to involve the expat community in Turkish politics—including establishing institutions—point out a serious diasporas policy.

Until the 2014 presidential election, Turks living or travelling abroad could vote only in polling places located at customs gates, a situation that was highly criticized for being undemocratic. The Supreme Election Board (SEB), the institution in

charge of elections, announced 2,734,429 voters abroad participated in the August election; 103 election centers were spread across 54 countries with 500 or more Turkish voters. One remarkable feature of this election was that it had the lowest participation rate of any election in the last twelve years—despite allowing citizens living abroad to vote. Whereas the local elections held in March 2014 had a participation rate of 89.48 percent (44.8 million voters), for the presidential election that number decreased to 74.13 percent (40.1 million voters). In all, 13 million people did not vote in the presidential election. According to researchers, a large portion of this non-voter number is composed of the regular supporters of the opposition parties (CHP and MHP). This occasion has worked in Erdogan's favor. Erdogan's party further benefitted by gaining votes from members of other parties (primarily from the MHP): the AKP received 43 percent of the vote (19.4 million) in March but Erdogan (and the AKP) received 51.5 percent (20.8 million) in August. The Peace and Democracy Party also increased its votes from 2 million to 3.9 million with Demirtas as candidate. On the other hand, the CHP and the MHP decreased their votes from 20 million to 15.4 million by backing a joint candidate. Demirtas' candidacy brought a broader perspective to ethnic Kurdish politics, turning it into a policy that concerns all of Turkey. Additionally, Demirtas was able to take votes away from Erdogan, who thought he would win the Kurdish vote with his policy toward the so-called "Kurdish problem." Although Erdogan still won the largely Kurdish south-eastern region, Demirtas did divert some votes away from Erdogan, and his strong performance will have an influence on Kurdish politics. Erdogan, who took the risk of directly negotiating with the PKK after estimating this would gain him the Kurdish vote, may seriously review his "opening policy," which is opposed by many critics inside his party. Parallel to this, a peaceful and democratic solution of the Kurdish problem has also come to almost a turning point. The Kurdish issue will be a cornerstone of the 2015 general election.

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Voter turnout in the 2014 presidential election was 52.8 million domestically and 2.7 million internationally (4.8 percent). "Absentee votes" were expected to be high in the 2014 presidential election and are also expected to be high for the 2015 general election. Thus, acknowledging the popularity of Erdogan among Turks abroad, the AKP spent two years running a strong campaign for Erdogan in the 2014 election and for the party in 2015. The result of the presidential election in terms of absentee vote shares matched the expected numbers, with Erdogan taking the lead (62.52 percent), followed by Ihsanoglu (29.2 percent) and Demirtas (8.46

percent). However, the number of votes cast in foreign countries and at custom gates reached only 18.94 percent of the absentee votes, a disappointment. Furthermore, the share of votes cast abroad in total number is a mere 1.2 percent and this low turnout is likely to spur new regulations regarding the absentee voting system.

Low participation in the elections can be attributed to a number of factors:

- Voters could only vote at a polling place and lacked easier alternatives, such as mail-in ballots.
- Absentee voters could vote on only four days: Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and only during working hours.
- Voters were required to go online and make an appointment to vote, or were assigned one that they must still look up online.
- Many voters had to travel quite a distance to reach the 103 available voting centers.
- Voters often vacation in the summer months.

In addition to these problems with the voting process, Turks were also disillusioned because:

- Eighty percent of Turks living abroad have not lived in Turkey for twenty years and feel disengaged from Turkish politics. The most important reason here is “indifference” rather than the technical problems. Even when the hardships in the appointment system are eliminated, those who vote in Turkish elections still seem to stay below 30 percent.
- NGOs may play a part in the elections. However, Turks abroad display little to no interest in their NGOs. Thus, there were no policies developed to persuade people to vote. Instead, Erdogan and some AKP-sponsored NGOs held huge political rallies with high levels of participation. For instance, 15,000 to 20,000 people attended the rally in Austria, whereas only 8,000 people voted in the election.
- They believed Erdogan would definitely win and that Ihsanoglu would not cause a stir.

Erdogan’s Presidential Agenda

Domestic Policy

Erdogan’s presidency will eventually bring about a transformation process for both the AKP and Turkey. While it was not hard for Erdogan to win the presidential election, it is a challenge for his party to win without his strong leadership. Serious problems exist that Erdogan will have to face in the short and long term. At the top of the list is the future of his party and the

Despite their lower-than-expected turn out, Erdogan is a clear winner among voters outside of Turkey, due largely to their eagerness to see leadership, charisma, stability, and conservative values take hold in the country. When we observe the eleven countries surveyed in the Euro-Turks Barometer, which make up 85.8 percent of the votes from abroad, Erdogan, Ihsanoglu, and Demirtas received 67, 22, and 10.1 percent, respectively. It should be noted that Erdogan’s success abroad (at 67 percent) was much higher than at home (at 51.7 percent). The same may occur in the 2015 elections.

Regionally, Erdogan dominated in continental Europe, but floundered in non-European countries. In five European countries, which constitute 77 percent of total votes abroad and host large numbers of Turkish citizens (namely Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Austria), Erdogan took 80 to 85 percent of votes. Only in the UK, which hosts more than 80,000 voters, were opponents able to surpass Erdogan: Ihsanoglu with 49.72 percent and Demirtas with 26.74 percent (his strongest performance), versus Erdogan with 25.53 percent.

In comparison to his success in Europe, Erdogan did not show the same superiority in the U.S. (15 percent), Canada (33 percent), or New Zealand (15 percent). Only in Australia did he pass the halfway mark (56 percent). Indeed, CHP and Kemalist elite are more powerful in these countries and the rivalry between Erdogan and Fethullah Gülen was reflected in the votes. Until 2013, most of the AKP initiatives in the U.S. were carried out by associates of the Gülen Movement. Conflict between the Movement and the AKP caused Gülen’s followers to not campaign for the AKP, to vote for Ihsanoglu, or to take the “anyone but Erdogan” approach.

The 2014 presidential election clearly showed a difference in the attitude and tendencies of Turks abroad toward political engagement in their host countries and in Turkey. Most of those who are labeled as “migrant” or “of migrant origin” show great interest in the politics of their country of residence—a sign of comprehensive integration. Yet this has also resulted in a growing distance to Turkey.

2015 elections. Because Erdogan does not wish to be a president in a classical parliamentary system, he insists on an active role for the president—even though the current constitution contains many challenges for Erdogan’s model. It seems impossible to convert a classical parliamentary system into a presidential system through a constitutional amendment with the existing parliament. With this intention to be an active rather than symbolic president, Erdogan may end up choosing a

person who would be chair of the cabinet rather than prime minister for the government.

Following Erdogan's election as president, a leadership crisis may occur within the AKP and prevent the party from voting as it did during Erdogan's leadership. If the AKP does not gather enough power to amend the constitution in support of the presidential/semi-presidential system or fails at the 2015 general elections, Erdogan's whole strategy may be damaged. Thus, it is important that Davutoglu, as the new "prime minister and leader" of the AKP, does not struggle with Erdogan and instead leads the party to another victory in 2015.

Turkey's future will be shaped to a great extent in the next year. Erdogan's 2023 goal foresees Turkey becoming one of the ten largest economies in the world. To achieve this, Turkey needs a strong, smooth, and effective leadership and an economic policy that does not contain any identity politics or emotional choices. Moreover, discussions about the economy also carry significant risks. Erdogan's economic policies, as implemented by Kemal Dervis and Ali Babacan,⁵ brought stability and economic development beginning in 2002, and were one of the most important factors that led people to vote for Erdogan. Decisions made now to shape the new government will also, to a great extent, shape the economy. Retaining Babacan as Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy shows the connection between the AKP's economic and political successes—and an economic success that cannot be risked. To this point, Erdogan has even excluded some party members who are opposed to Babacan and who have contradictory policies toward the West. With Erdogan no longer serving as prime minister, Babacan's absence from the cabinet could have decreased support for fiscal and economic policies. Instead, Erdogan preferred to ensure stability and continuity in the economy.

The Erdogan-Davutoglu government's "opening (peace) policy" regarding the Kurdish problem is one of the most important domestic topics. Another important topic is the 1.6 million Syrian refugees who have been living in Turkey for the last 3.5 years. The Syrian crisis will be a pressing matter in both the domestic and foreign policy of Turkey in the upcoming years. Activity by the Islamic State (ISIS) in the region is a particularly destabilizing factor.

Younger generations value justice, democracy, cultural differences, environmental values, respect for lifestyles, and integration with the world rather than development or service. Erdogan and his government have done much to give this young cohort more power, but they must be taken more seriously, as hopeless and humiliated youth could start an unexpected brain drain in Turkey. Of course, the opposition parties, too, must take into account the reaction of the youth, although the parties have not yet offered an alternative for them.

The circumstances under which Erdogan was elected to the

presidency are also linked to the renewal of the opposition parties, since Erdogan both benefits and suffers from having a weak opposition. To clarify, if the criticism and demands on human rights, democracy, and rule of law do not—or cannot—come from the opposition parties, that criticism will be driven from the streets, social media, or other platforms. A strong alternative political movement is not expected to happen.

Over the past two to three years, Erdogan's policies of tension and polarization in order to mobilize his voters have been successful in the short term; this type of policy and leadership, however, is not beneficial for Turkey in the long term. Time will tell whether Erdogan—as president—will be inclusive and pragmatic or if he will direct his attention to his supporters and be a president who utilizes identity politics. However, the "securitization" discourse engaged in by the AKP and Erdogan increases the perception of domestic and foreign "enemies." After the December 2013 corruption investigation was cancelled by Erdogan, all criticism of the government is now defined as an attempt at a "coup d'etat" and is suppressed. A foreign policy approach based on identity politics has rendered ineffective the previous cooperative "zero problem" policy developed by Davutoglu.

Erdogan's political career began in the most difficult period. He could serve as president until 2023 if the AKP wins the 2015 elections with an absolute majority in the Turkish Parliament. But for the AKP, without Erdogan, it will not be easy.

Foreign Policy

The foreign policy agenda, led by Erdogan, incorporates the ideas of the new prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu. Thus, Erdogan and Davutoglu will shape politics together in the new term. Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Cavusoglu and EU Minister Volkan Bozkir will play important roles, especially in relations with the West. Indeed, all four actors can now be seen leading Turkish foreign policy. Disappointment following the "Arab Spring" and the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are important factors for Erdogan-Davutoglu declaring the EU as a strategic target. It will not be a surprise to see the AKP act in favor of the EU—despite the party's long neglect of the EU issue. Davutoglu's government agenda promises EU membership within nine years.

Regional developments leave no shortage of crises requiring more initiative from Turkey regionally, globally, and economically. Syria, Iraq, Gaza, Ukraine, and the Islamic State play significant roles in Turkey's relations with United States. The crisis in Syria and Iraq and the existence of ISIS in the region are a concern for both domestic and foreign politics. The last three years have witnessed over 1 million Syrians fleeing their country to Turkey. Helping these refugees plan their future is an important and delicate topic. Due to the existing crises in the region and the need for a strong ally, it will not be surprising to see the U.S. work in close partnership with Erdogan and

even decrease its criticisms of human rights violations or democracy. In 2015, debates on the issue of the “Armenian Genocide” will more likely be the main trouble with the U.S. Turkey may react harshly if the U.S. recognizes the incidents as genocide.

Germany’s attitude will again be the cornerstone of Turkey-EU relations. Although both the new prime minister and foreign minister can speak German, speaking the same language and getting along are two different notions.

A positive EU policy for Turkey is possible only with German support; however, Germany’s recent criticism of Turkish democracy, freedom, and human rights suggest this will not be easy. Over 3 million Turks live in Germany (more than 1.5 million

of which are German citizens), and they play a very important role in the relationship. The emerging scandal in Germany resulting from activities of the German Intelligence Organization (BND) against Turkey since 2009, can negatively affect the relationship between the two countries. The distrust following the surveillance and the statement that “Turkey is not a friend but a partner [...] we listen for the sake of German interest” will remain for a long time.⁶ Nevertheless, it can be expected that German politicians will try to have rational relations with the new Turkish government, which will shape Turkey’s future. In fact, there exists a serious platform to initiate cooperation between Germany and Turkey. A new administration may bring them new opportunities to create win-win joint policies. Revelations that the U.S. and United Kingdom are also listening in on Turkey may soften the reaction against Germany.

Erdogan’s “New Turkey”: What’s Next?

Erdogan’s ambitious “New Turkey” is a challenge. Its success will be largely determined in the lead-up to the June 2015 elections, in the performance of Davutoglu’s government, and by Erdogan’s role within the party as the president. Global and regional developments will continue to affect Turkish domestic politics, but if the AKP wins the June 2015 election, it will remain in power for the next ten years.

Erdogan has lifted the regime of bureaucratic control in Turkey—a regime that is unacceptable in any democracy as it discredits elections and ignores the will of the people. However, Erdogan, the first directly-elected president of Turkey, is also responsible for understanding and embracing the concerns of the people as the “guardian of the elected.” As such, he wants to change the system from parliamentary to presidential. This alone is not a problem, and could even be better for Turkey, but to establish a true liberal democracy in

Turkey, we need to change not only the system, but also the mentality. Turks have to realize the two most important principles of liberal democracy: respect for majority rule and pluralism. The expectation is for Erdogan not to create “the society,” but to establish “the state” in which free, prosperous, peaceful, and respectful society exists—as he has done before. There is no doubt: a Turkey that is stable, liberal-democratic, powerful, and peaceful is valuable both for himself and for the region. Erdogan is the one and only candidate who might create this Turkey.

NOTES

1 See: 12. President of Turkey Erdogan’s speech (Full Text in Turkish) Cumhurbaskani Erdogan’in ‘Cumhurbaskanligi Balkon Konusmasi’nin tam metni: <<http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/12.-cumhurbaskani-erdoganin-cumhurbaskanligi-balkon-konusmasinin-tam-metni/66015#1>> (10 August 2014).

2 See Cansu Camlibel, “Research expert: Turkey led by ‘identity politics,’” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 11 August 2014, <<http://www.hurriyetsdailynews.com/research-expert-turkey-led-by-identity-politics-.aspx?pagelD=238&nID=70237&NewsCatID=338>>; Ihsan Dagı, “From ‘Turkish model’ to ‘Tunisian model,’” *Today’s Zaman*, 2 February 2014, <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/ihsan-dagi/from-turkish-model-to-tunisian-model_338297.html>; Ihsan Dagı, “The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics, and Discourse of Human Rights in the Search for Security and Legitimacy,” in *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*, ed. H. Yavuz (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2006), pp.88-106, <<http://www.policy.hu/dagi/leftmenu/files/AKPyavuz2005.pdf>>. For another perspective, see Burhanettein Duran, “Understanding the AK Party’s Identity Politics: A Civilizational Discourse and its Limitations,” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2013), <<http://www.insightturkey.com/understanding-the-ak-partys-identity-politics-a-civilizational-discourse-and-its-limitations/posts/280>>.

3 See M.Murat Erdogan, “‘Gezophobia’ and EU Progress Report,” *Today’s Zaman*, 23 October 2013, <<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-329590-gezophobia-and-eu-progress-report-by-m-murat-erdogan-.html>>.

4 Fethullah Gülen, a former preacher, is one of the most prominent leaders of the “Nur” movement, which has a notable standing among religious and conservative people in

Turkey. Fearing persecution in Turkey, and in an attempt to make the movement known on a global scale, he has lived in the U.S. since 1999. The Gülen Movement, which founded schools in order to introduce Islam and Turkey, particularly in the poor regions of the world, through allocating resources from philanthropists, is accused of desiring to take over the state and establish a state under Sharia law by secular-statists. It is argued that the movement had a deep sphere of influence in the judiciary and security apparatus until late 2013. It has been perceived as “too pro-Western” by other religious-conservatives as it engages in close dialogue with all other religions. Secular-statist powers, however, accused the Gülen Movement of taking part in the U.S.’ project to “establish a moderate-Islam zone in the Middle East.” After the 17 December corruption operations, the AKP, which had been supporting and cooperating with Gülen Cemaat until then, has accused the Cemaat of establishing a parallel state and working for Israel and the U.S.

5 Kemal Dervis, a state minister in charge of the economy, came to Turkey in 2001 after quitting his post in the World Bank as Vice President. He was suggested by the IMF as someone to address Turkey’s severe financial and economic crisis. Dervis carried out the successful economic transformation and his policies yielded results as Turkey managed its way out of the crisis and toward rapid growth after 2002. When the AKP came to power, Dervis was succeeded by Ali Babacan. Babacan continued Dervis’ policies and contributed to developing the Turkish economy and ameliorating the banking sector as he served as deputy prime minister.

6 Hasnain Kazim, “BND-Spionage: Türken werfen Deutschland Heuchelei vor,” *Spiegel Online*, 17 August 2014, <<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/bnd-spionage-in-der-tuerkei-ankara-veraergert-ueber-deutschland-a-986528.html>>; “Darum spioniert der BND die Türkei aus,” *BILD*, 18 August 2014, <<http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/bnd/spioniert-tuerkei-aus-37287472.bild.html>>.

More than ten years after talks began, Turkey is still seeking membership in the European Union. The two actors remain locked in negotiations, with economic concerns, human rights, and the Cyprus issue looming large. Turkey is an essential country in the West's relations with the Middle East and is a key NATO ally, and its importance has only grown as conflict on its eastern border demands attention. Germany, as a leader in the EU with a sizeable population of Turkish decent, is an integral player in the EU's enlargement policy toward Turkey and the two countries share deep ties. AICGS' project, a "Trilateral Dialogue between Germany, the U.S., and Turkey: Turkey's EU Accession – Endless Negotiations?" seeks to assess the future of Turkey's relations with the EU and Germany in light of developments in the EU, security concerns in the Middle East, and domestic politics in Turkey.

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