

# Putting Turkey's June and November 2015 Election Outcomes in Perspective

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**ABSTRACT** *The results of Turkey's June and November 2015 parliamentary elections are put in perspective in light of economic voting literature and observed historical patterns. Usual and unusual factors that played roles in these elections are identified and their relative importance is assessed. It appears that a higher than usual number of strategic votes cast due to special circumstances were essentially behind the outcomes of both of these elections. The results also show that voters have consolidated in four camps more firmly than ever before and that the AK Party once more came close to a fifty percent vote share, which is the long run potential for conservative parties.*

## Introduction

**T**he vote share of a party over time can be viewed as having a level around which it generally fluctuates. Long run factors, such as the cultural, socio-economic, and demographic characteristics of voters and the history and geography of the country determine the level. However, military coups, political bans, and the institutional changes they bring can have long lasting effects on the level of vote share as well. Short run factors, such as an electorate's desire to check and balance the power of the ruling party, to express their pleasure or displeasure with its decisions and promises, and to reward or punish it for its economic performance, cause temporary deviations from the level. When the impacts of temporary and persistent shocks overlap, as was the case in Turkey during the 13-year tenure of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), it becomes difficult to interpret election outcomes properly. That is why the party's performance in almost every election was considered surprising at least to some extent and many firsts were realized in each.

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## **The demographic, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics of voters, their habits, geographical location, ethnicity, and religious sect determine their interests and worldview**

The AK Party came to power in 2002, only a year after it was established, and has ruled Turkey ever since in single-party governments, longer than any other party since the first fairly contested election took place in 1950. In 2004, it became the second party since 1963 to raise its vote share in a local administrations election relative to the previous parliamentary election.<sup>1</sup> Then in 2007, by raising its vote share after ruling for a full legislative term, the party matched the record established by the Democrat Party (DP) in 1954. Its vote share declined in the 2009 local administrations election, but in the 2011 parliamentary election, it broke one and matched another DP record. The AK Party became the first party to be elected to a third consecutive term since 1957, and the first party ever to continue raising its

vote share after remaining in power for two consecutive terms. In the same election, it also became the first party to reach a fifty percent vote share since 1965, when the Justice Party (AP) did it, and the second party since 1950 and 1954 when the DP did it. Furthermore, in 2011 the AK Party became the first incumbent party to recover from a nosedive since the AP did in 1975. Then in the November 2015 snap parliamentary election, by bouncing back to its 2011 peak after experiencing declines in the 2014 local administrations and June 2015 parliamentary elections, the AK Party became the first incumbent party to accomplish the latter feat twice. This also marked the beginning of the party's unprecedented fourth term.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the above events have occurred only once in about half a century, and were spread over several elections, indicates that they cannot be explained by routine factors alone or by factors specific only to one election. Furthermore, their concentration in about a decade of time now, and when they first occurred, suggests the existence of similar equilibriums, which will be the subject matter of the next section. On the other hand, the fact that the vote shares of the incumbent parties fluctuated points to the existence of short-run factors, which cause temporary deviations from such equilibriums. These will be discussed in section three, in light of the economic voting literature developed over the last half a century or so. Lewis-Beck and Paldam<sup>3</sup> define economic voting as “a field that mixes economics and political science and does so by means of econometrics.” It considers the credit or blame the government gets due to economic conditions, the advantages and disadvantages of incumbency, political inertia, and strategic voting by the electorate to balance the power of the government and to avoid wasting their vote on a party that is not likely to get representation in the parliament. Lewis-Beck and Paldam, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, and Stegmaier and Lewis-Beck provide detailed surveys of this

literature.<sup>4</sup> Akarca and Tansel show that Turkish voters behave in ways that are very similar to the patterns described in the economic voting literature.<sup>5</sup>

In some elections, factors specific to those contests can make the effects mentioned above larger or smaller than typical. That this was the case with the June 7 and November 1 elections will be explained in section four. When an event is unique, we cannot estimate the magnitude of its effect from past data, even though we may be able to guess its direction. For such instances, Box and Tiao propose a procedure which has become part of a broader methodology named intervention analysis.<sup>6</sup> To measure the impact of an extraordinary event (or events) on a particular variable, they recommend comparing the prediction obtained for that variable from a model, which captures patterns prevailing until that event, with actuality. Following their approach, we will build a vote equation to capture the effects of routine factors mentioned in section 3 on Turkish election outcomes. This model, which will be presented in the Appendix, is an updated and revised version of a vote equation developed by Akarca and Tansel and later used by Akarca to predict outcomes of various Turkish elections.<sup>7</sup> In section 4, outcomes of the June 7 and November 1 elections will be compared to their respective forecasts obtained from that equation. Any differences observed will be taken as measures of the impacts of special circumstances prevailing prior to these elections.

Understanding the forces that have determined election outcomes in Turkey in general, and the outcomes of the last two elections in particular, will let us understand why the AK Party vote share dipped in June 2015, only to return to its 2011 peak in just five months, and will also allow us to assess whether and to what extent this was unusual. Finally, in the last section, the conclusions reached will be summarized.

## Long-run Determinants of Election Outcomes

Most voters align themselves with a party that they identify as representing their economic interests and ideology. The demographic, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics of voters, their habits, geographical location, ethnicity, and religious sect determine their interests and worldview. Since these factors change very gradually or not at all, holding other factors constant, voters tend to choose the same party they voted for in the previous election. This creates a great amount of inertia in the political system and determines the level of support for a party in the long run. Thus, in predicting a party's vote share, it makes sense to take its share in the previous election as the starting point. That is why many researchers, such as Martins and Veiga, Akarca, Akarca and Tansel, Fair, Chappell and Veiga, Whitten and Palmer, Alesina and Rosenthal, and Erikson include a lagged vote share variable in their vote equations.<sup>8</sup>

**In the short run, a party's vote share can deviate from its long run level due to the electorate's desires to balance the power of the ruling party, or to express their approval or disapproval with its decisions and its economic performance**

Until 1995, the Turkish electorate tended to gather in three camps: right-conservative, left-statist, and Turkish-nationalist parties. At present, the AK Party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) represent these groups.<sup>9</sup> Since 1995, a Kurdish-nationalist party was added to the three. Under normal conditions, the largest of these, the right-conservative movement, gets

the support of about half of the Turkish electorate. However, due to interruptions from outside the political system, such as military coups and threats of coups, and party closures by the judiciary, this movement was frequently fragmented. Each time that happened, it pulled itself back together, but each time this required a longer time due to extra handicaps placed in its way. The DP surpassed the 50 percent vote share in 1950 and 1954 and came very close to doing so again in 1957. After it was toppled by the military on 27 May 1960, with its leader executed, members of parliament imprisoned and the party banned, the party's votes split in the 1961 election. However, in the Senate election held in 1964 and in the parliamentary general election held in 1965, the vote share of the AP, the party that emerged as the successor to the DP, exceeded 50 percent. The party's vote share was only a little less than 50 percent in 1969 but following the military intervention of 12 March 1971, the right wing vote was split once again. This time it took until the 1979 Senate election for the AP to come close to a 50 percent vote share. Then, another military coup on 12 September 1980 fragmented the conservative vote even more. Because the major left party was closed too in the latter episode, that wing was divided as well. Although the right-wing Motherland Party (ANAP) received 45 percent of the vote in 1983, after the ban on other parties and political leaders was lifted in 1987, the fragmentation which resulted was even greater than the ones experienced before. Interventions by the military in 28 February 1997 and 27 April 2007, which fell short of a takeover and were dubbed a postmodern coup and e-coup by the media, prolonged the fragmentation. It took until 2011 for right-conservative voters to gather around a single party. In short, although from a short-run perspective the AK Party may appear as an anomaly, it is really a reincarnation of the broad coalition represented by the DP in the 1950s and the AP in the second half of the 1960s and the end of the 1970s. However, the realignment which began immediately and took three and six years respectively, after the 1960 and 1971 coups, was delayed for almost two decades and took nine years to complete after the 1980 coup. For example, just as the AK Party did in 2002, the AP received slightly less than 35 percent of the votes in 1961, in the first election it entered. However, unlike the AK

Party, the AP was able to reach 50 percent in 1964 Senate elections and exceed 50 percent in the next parliamentary general election held in 1965. For the AK Party, it took not the next general election but the one after that, held in 2011, to reach the 50 percent level. This constant flow of votes towards the party from decaying right-wing parties was one of the reasons why the AK Party was able to keep its vote share rising.<sup>10</sup>

The entry of the Kurdish-nationalist movement into the picture in 1995 had major repercussions. First, it siphoned off votes, mostly from the second largest political segment, the leftist-statist group, rendering their representative, the Republican People's Party (CHP), virtually non-existent in central-eastern and southeastern Anatolia. Second, it stimulated the Turkish-nationalist movement, causing the vote share of its representative the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) to nearly double, mostly at the expense of the CHP in western Anatolia. In other words, the emergence of a Kurdish-nationalist party resulted in a reduction in the long run equilibrium vote share of the statist-leftist movement and a rise in that of the Turkish-nationalist one. Akarca and Başlevent suggest that this forced the latter two movements to become more nationalistic as well.<sup>11</sup> Until recently, the vote share of the right-conservative segment was unaffected by Kurdish nationalism. However, in the June 2015 election, a large portion of ethnic Kurds who had supported the AK Party shifted to the Kurdish-nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), not all of whom returned in the November 2015 election. Thus, now the long-run level of the right-conservative movement may have decreased by a couple of points as well. On the other hand, this may be an artificial situation created by the election threshold. If the threshold is lowered, probably more of the conservative Kurds will return to the AK Party. In a poll conducted by IPSOS<sup>12</sup> immediately after the November 1 election, fifteen percent of the respondents who cast their ballot for the HDP characterized their support as temporary (*emanet*).

### Short-run Determinants of Election Outcomes

In the short run, a party's vote share can deviate from its long run level due to the electorate's desires to balance the power of the ruling party, or to express their approval or disapproval with its decisions and its economic performance.

In every election, a portion of the electorate vote strategically, or cast their ballots for a party other than their first choice. Checking the power of the incumbent party is the most cited reason for this. Analyzing international data, Chappell and Veiga and Whitten and Palmer, and U.S. data, Fair, Alesina and Rosenthal, and Erikson, for example, find the coefficient of lagged vote share in incumbent party vote equations to be significantly higher than zero but less than unity.<sup>13</sup> This is consistent with vote losses for the ruling parties due to

## **The voters reward incumbents for a good economic performance, and punish them for a bad one. However, in making their economic evaluations, they tend to be retrospective and myopic**

strategic voting. Akarca, and Akarca and Tansel obtain the same result in the Turkish case.<sup>14</sup> In elections such as midterm congressional elections (those which fall in the middle of a presidential term) in the U.S., European Parliamentary elections in European Union countries, and local administrations elections in Turkey, supporters of the incumbent party get a chance to check the power of the central government, without toppling it. Then, even more of them vote with the intention of diluting the power of the government. Alesina and Rosenthal note that in America, the president's party experienced a drop in its vote share in every one of the nineteen midterm-elections between 1918 and 1990, and attribute this to the balancing effort on the part of the electorate.<sup>15</sup> We should note that this pattern continued in the six midterm-elections held since then, with only one exception.<sup>16</sup>

The existence of threshold regulations in parliamentary general elections, such as the minimum 10 percent nationwide vote share requirement to gain representation in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, encourages strategic voting as well. Some of Turkey's small party supporters, who had voted strategically for one of the major parties in the previous parliamentary election, so as not to waste their vote, return to their first choices in elections where no such handicaps apply, such as local administrations and parliamentary by elections. In a parliamentary general election, with the control of government at stake, the incumbent party experiences fewer deserters. Furthermore, the party attracts some supporters from its smaller ideological cousins as well, who fear wasting their vote if they vote for their first choice. This can be seen from the raw data presented in Table B1, even without the use of advanced techniques. The major incumbent party lost vote share in nine of the eleven local administrations and by elections relative to the previous parliamentary general election. On the other hand, the major incumbent party's vote share increased in eight of ten parliamentary general elections that followed local or by elections. The regression equation presented in the appendix shows that, holding the effects of other factors constant, the major incumbent party typically loses 11.4 percent of its vote between two parliamentary elections, 16.8 percent between parliamentary and local administrations elections, 24.4 percent between parliamentary general and by elections, and 6.0 percent between local administrations and parliamentary elections. For example, had the June 2015 election been for local administrations, the AK Party vote share in that election would have been 2.3



points lower, or about the same as its 2009 share. Thus, the swing in the party's vote share between the June 7 and November 1 elections is comparable to the one between the 2009 and 2011 elections.

Although not as common, some other reasons for voting for a party other than the one that is most preferred include helping a party so that it can resist a coup threat, surpass an election threshold, form a single party government, or be able to enter a coalition government. Akarca explains that when the AK Party faced threats of a coup by the military and closure by the Constitutional Court before the 2007 and 2011 parliamentary elections, fewer of its supporters left the party to balance its power.<sup>17</sup> Strategically-minded supporters of the party felt that it was the power of the military and the judiciary, and not that of the government, that needed checking. In addition, supporters of other parties came to the aid of the AK Party to counter the undemocratic interventions against it. Consequently, the party's losses due to strategic voting in those elections were much fewer than usual. Meffert and Gschwend discuss how major party supporters may vote for a small party perceived as uncertain to pass a minimum vote threshold.<sup>18</sup> Meffert and Gschwend, Bowler, Karp and Donovan, and Hobolt and Karp provide evidence on the use of strategic voting to shape a post-election coalition government when a single party government is not a likely outcome.<sup>19</sup> In the next section, we will provide some evidence in the Turkish case for strategic voting with the intension of helping a small party gain representation in the parliament and helping the formation of a single party government.

In November 1<sup>st</sup> elections, the ruling AK Party got 49.49 percent of the votes and won the majority in the parliament.

AA PHOTO / MUSTAFA ÜNAL UYSAL

## By refusing to participate in any coalition, even in a caretaker election government during a difficult time for the country, the MHP disappointed many of its supporters

Ruling a country involves making some unpopular compromises and bad decisions, and shelving some promises. These cost incumbent parties votes. The “cost of ruling,” as Paldam refers to it, rises with the time spent in power, as disappointments with the incumbent party accumulate.<sup>20</sup> Chappell and Veiga,

and Whitten and Palmer provide evidence on this phenomenon using international data, and Akarca and Tansel do so using Turkish data.<sup>21</sup> According to the equation estimated in the Appendix, holding other factors constant, Turkish incumbent parties lose 5.7 percent of their previous vote shares each year they remain in office.

Incumbency has its advantages too, which can offset the losses due to strategic-voting and the cost of ruling partially, but not completely.<sup>22</sup> Besides things like access to the media and recognition, the incumbency advantage involves the ability to indulge in transfer activities such as providing services, subsidies and patronage, and picking locations for government investment and public work projects to attract supporters of other parties. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence of all Turkish incumbent parties, especially those in coalition governments, engaging in such activities. Financial support, interest-free loans and tax advantages promised to women and young entrepreneurs, and reductions in the social security and health insurance premiums promised to small business owners and their elimination for new university graduates, increases in the scholarships given to university students by the AK Party before the November 2015 election are some examples of these. Distribution of consumer durables, coal and food to the poor, free of charge by previous AK Party governments, and substantial agricultural subsidies given by pre-AK Party governments, are some others. Akarca and Tansel, and Toros provide statistical evidence on the incumbency advantage in Turkish elections.<sup>23</sup> According to the model presented in the Appendix, this advantage in Turkey is typically 6.9 percent of the vote.

The voters reward incumbents for a good economic performance, and punish them for a bad one. However, in making their economic evaluations, they tend to be retrospective and myopic. They look back no more than a year or so and they tend to give more weight to economic growth than inflation.<sup>24</sup> According to our vote equation presented in the Appendix, a percentage point increase in the growth rate of per capita real GDP, during the one-year period before an election, raises the share of the major incumbent party by about 0.81 percentage points. Each percentage point increase in the inflation rate during the same period on the other hand, lowers this share by 0.12 percentage points or

by about one-seventh of that of the growth rate. For example, had economic conditions in June 2015 been the same as in March 2014, the AK Party's vote share would have been about 1.5 percentage points higher. If the 2011 economic conditions were prevailing, then it would have been about 4.6 points higher. In the previous section, we mentioned that the constant flow of votes towards the party from the decaying right-wing parties was one of the reasons why the AK Party was able to keep its vote share rising until 2011. Now we can mention that the other key reason was the excellent economic performance under the party prior to each election until 2011, except the one in 2009. The latter election coincided with the 2008-2009 global crisis, which created the worst economic conditions before an election ever, as can be observed from Table B1. Thus, it was not surprising that the AK Party vote share dropped to its lowest level in that election, which was predicted by Akarca in advance.<sup>25</sup> However, the Turkish economy began recovering from that crisis sooner and faster than the rest of the world. Consequently, economic growth during the year preceding the 2011 election was higher than the growth prevailing before any of the previous elections since 1951, which allowed the AK Party to reach a fifty percent vote share. Interestingly, the party's second lowest vote share was in the June 7 election, which took place while second worst economic conditions during AK Party tenure were prevailing.

The fact that voters weigh the recent past more than the distant past and growth more than inflation is of great significance. This kind of behavior gives incentives to the governments to conduct populist economic policies before an election and then switch to restrictive ones after the election to counter their inflationary effects. It also induces governments to postpone painful adjustments needed for the economy at least until after elections. In short, voter behavior is at the root of the political business cycles observed in so many countries. However, parties whose chance of remaining in power are high may not indulge in such policies, known in Turkey as "election economics" (*seçim ekonomisi*). The AK Party did not do so until November 2015, while its chances of forming a single-party government was not perceived as being at stake. Fiscal policy was loosened a bit, compared to previous elections under the AK Party incumbency, after the party lost its parliamentary majority on June 7. More generous than usual raises granted to public employees and retirees, and the increase in the minimum wage are some indications of this.

## Special Determinants of 2015 Elections

Special circumstances played crucial roles in the June and November 2015 election as well. By largely dismantling the military-judiciary tutelage system, managing to remain in power more than thirteen consecutive years, and receiving in every election about the same or more votes than its closest two



Presiding officer in Erzurum, counting the votes in front of observers.

AA PHOTO / AHMET OKATALI

rivals combined, the AK Party generated an image of invincibility prior to the June 7 election. When it also began acting cocky or was at least perceived as such, the party gave many of its supporters a sense that they should check its power and that they could do it without risking the formation of a single-party government. It also made some of them feel that they could stay home or cast their ballots to accomplish their secondary goals such as helping another party pass the minimum election threshold, without creating any instability. By trying to present itself as very close to achieving a constitution-amending majority and the HDP as not making the ten percent threshold, the AK Party reinforced such attitudes. Although the party's aim was to galvanize its supporters, this was clearly a tactical mistake, as it caused many of its supporters either not to turn out or to vote for another party on June 7, and resulted in the party losing its parliamentary majority for the first time.

For most AK Party supporters who deserted the party strategically on June 7, especially the ethnic Kurdish ones, helping the HDP gain representation in the parliament was the main reason. Rather than fielding independent candidates, as it and its predecessors had done in the past to circumvent the ten percent threshold, the HDP decided to participate in the June 2015 election officially. Many voters who felt that the presence of a party voicing Kurdish grievances in the parliament would be good for democracy, and for the solution of the Kurdish problem, voted strategically for the HDP. In addition, a portion of ethnic Kurdish supporters of the party shifted to the HDP to express their displeasure with the government's initial refusal to help the Syrian Kurds in the border

town of Kobani defend themselves against DAESH (aka ISIL) militants who are waging war to take over Iraq and Syria.

Post-election polls support the above assertions. An IPSOS<sup>26</sup> poll conducted immediately after the last election finds that 12 percent of the AK Party's vote on November 1 came from those who did not turn out on June 7. Fifteen percent of the respondents in a poll conducted by MAK a few days after the June 7 election confessed to voting for a party different from the one they support, due to non-ideological reasons.<sup>27</sup> 55 percent of that group gave as a reason, helping a party surpass the election threshold, and 35 percent sending a warning signal to a particular party. A fourth of those who had voted for the AK Party at least once in the past indicated that the conceitedness of the AK Party officials held them back from voting for the party again on June 7. An IPSOS poll conducted on June 8 shows that twenty-eight percent of those who voted for the MHP and twenty-two percent of those who voted for the HDP on June 7 were AKP supporters in 2011.<sup>28</sup> About a fifth of the MHP and a fifth of the HDP voters on June 7 characterized their support as temporary. These findings confirm that an unusual number of strategic votes were cast on June 7 to balance the AK Party, to register complaints against it, and to help HDP pass the threshold.

Altunoğlu draws attention to the fact that the ten provinces in which the AK Party suffered the highest losses on June 7 are all in the east and southeast, where ethnic Kurds are concentrated and the HDP's strength is highest.<sup>29</sup> He also points out that nine of these ten provinces are also the ones in which the HDP losses on November 1 were highest. Since the MHP and the CHP have a negligible presence in these provinces, these facts suggest clearly that a portion of ethnic Kurds living in the east and southeast shifted from the AK Party to the HDP on June 7 and from the HDP back to the AK Party on November 1.

The HDP's decision to enter the 2015 election officially affected not only voters in the east and southeast but also in the west. The threshold issue made it meaningful for HDP sympathizers residing in Turkey's western provinces to vote for the party, even though the candidates of the party had no chance of winning there. In previous elections, either the party did not field candidates in most of these provinces or its supporters voted for their second choices or did not vote at all. In the June 7 election however, they faced a situation in which they were unable to elect a member of parliament for their party from their provinces, but, by helping the party surpass the threshold, they could effectively bring it dozens of deputies from other provinces. Consequently, this time many of them turned out and voted for their first choice, instead of for the AK Party or the CHP. According to KONDA, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the HDP's predecessor, fielded candidates in 2011 in only 41 provinces.<sup>30</sup> On June 7, the HDP's vote share exceeded the BDP's in all of them.

In eighteen of these, all outside the east and southeast, the jump was more than three-fold. In the remaining 39 provinces in which the BDP fielded no candidates, the HDP's vote share varied between 0.7 and 15.4 percent. The votes the HDP received in these 39 provinces collectively amounted to five percent of the party's votes on June 7.

Had the HDP failed to surpass the ten percent threshold, the AK Party was likely to get a parliamentary majority sufficient to amend the constitution. Indeed, the AK Party made no secret of its intention to achieve such a majority so that it could change the constitution to institute a presidential system in place of the current parliamentary one. Consequently, some other party supporters shifted to the HDP as well, to deny the AK Party a constitution-amending parliamentary majority. In that regard, the HDP's presentation of itself before June 7 as being very close to but slightly below the threshold was very astute. It motivated its base and encouraged other party supporters to come to its aid. Furthermore, by presenting itself as undergoing transformation to become a party embracing the entire country rather than only a region, the HDP made it easier for other party supporters to side with it strategically. Contrary to common belief however, the HDP's additional support came mostly from small parties rather than from the CHP. From Table A1, one can see that all parties other than the HDP lost votes between March 2014 and June 2015, but the drop in the vote shares of the CHP and the MHP were negligible. As explained in the previous section, a large portion of small party supporters vote for their first choices in local elections in which no threshold requirements apply, but switch to one of the large parties in parliamentary elections, so as not to waste their vote. It appears that on June 7 close to half of them switched to the HDP.

We can measure the impact of the special events discussed above, following the procedure suggested by Box and Tiao mentioned in the "Introduction."<sup>31</sup> Inputting the information given for June 2015 in Table B1 into our vote equation estimated from data covering 1950-2014, the vote share of the AK Party in the June 2015 election is obtained as 44.9.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it appears that 4.0 percent more of the electorate than usual voted strategically to check the "too powerful" incumbent party without toppling it, while contributing to the reconciliation process and democracy by keeping the "powerless" HDP in the parliament. However, immediately after the election, it became apparent to most of these voters that the AK Party was not as strong and the HDP was not as weak as they thought. They had not anticipated creating a need for a coalition government either. Indeed, the IPSOS poll conducted a day after the election concurs with this estimate.<sup>33</sup> The poll found that had voters been given another chance to vote after seeing the June 7 results, the AK Party's vote share would have been about 4 points higher, the CHP's the same, and the MHP's, HDP's and other parties' two, one and two points lower, respectively.

The rise in the AK Party's vote share between the June 7 and November 1 elections was far more than four percentage points, however. This was due to two crucial events that caused further strategic vote shifts towards the AK Party. First, when the other parties refused to form a coalition government with the AK Party, voters found themselves in an even worse situation than having a dreaded coalition government: not having a government at all. Fourteen percent of those polled by MAK (2015) during the week following the June 7 election indicated that they would change their votes if a snap election were called, and sixty percent of those gave return to the stability accomplished under a single party government as their reason.<sup>34</sup> Normally, PKK violence and rises in the vote shares of Kurdish-nationalist parties benefit the Turkish-nationalist MHP. This time however, by refusing to participate in any coalition, even in a caretaker election government during a difficult time for the country, the MHP disappointed many of its supporters. According to the IPSOS poll, the preference of nearly 60 percent of the MHP supporters was the formation of an AKP-MHP coalition or an AK Party minority government supported by the MHP.<sup>35</sup> When neither of these materialized, some of the MHP's supporters voted for the AK Party in protest. The other crucial event, which caused a large strategic vote shift towards the AK Party, was the PKK's return to violence. When the HDP failed to take a stand against it, this caused the conservative Kurds and small party supporters who had supported the HDP on June 7 with the hopes of keeping the reconciliation process on track, to regret their earlier choices. Many of them, but not all, switched back to the AK Party on November 1.



**It would not be wrong to say that the HDP's failure to distance itself from the PKK terror and the MHP's refusal to participate in a coalition government allowed the AK Party to receive about 2.2 percent more of the votes than it would have otherwise**

Table A2, in which the vote shares are all given as a proportion of the valid ballots cast in the November 1 election, can be a better guide on the party sources of the AK Party's gain between June 7 and November 1 than Table A1. There we can see that the AK Party is the only party which really raised its vote between the two 2015 elections. The CHP votes increased too but only marginally. It would not be too unreasonable to assume that the losses of the MHP, HDP, other parties and independents, and those that did not participate in the June 7 election were distributed between the AK Party and the CHP, approximately in proportion to the gains by the latter two. Then, 3.4 of the 10-point rise in the AK Party vote can be attributed to voters who deserted the MHP, 1.7 the HDP, 1.0 the other parties, and 0.8 the independents. 3.1 points of the gain can be thought of as coming from those who did not vote on June 7 but did on November 1. The CHP gain from each of these categories is very

**The November 1 election marked the second time the AK Party managed to raise its vote share after a nosedive, becoming the only party to do so twice. This shows that the party has reached a certain maturity and is able to learn and recover from its mistakes**

small (between 0.1 and 0.4 points). Of course, this type of a calculation aims to capture net flows only and ignores the traffic in between losing parties and flows from winning to losing parties. However, it can give us a good idea about the relative importance of various sources for the AK Party's vote gain in the last election.

The impacts of the two critical events discussed above can be estimated using the Box and Tiao approach once more.<sup>36</sup> Again utilizing our vote equation, but this time inputting the data given in Table B1 for November 1, the prediction for the election on that day is obtained as 43.3 percent. This assumes that the extraordinary part of the party's vote loss on June 7 was permanent. The prediction becomes 47.3 if this loss is taken as temporary, as our computations above, supported by the IPSOS poll, suggest.<sup>37</sup> Thus, it would not be wrong to say that the HDP's failure to distance itself from the PKK terror and the MHP's refusal to participate in a coalition government allowed the AK Party to receive about 2.2 percent more of the votes than it would have otherwise.

In short, between June and November 2015, the AK Party's vote share increased by 8.6 percentage points. Only 2.4 (43.3 minus 40.9) of this can be attributed to routine factors.<sup>38</sup> The remaining 6.2 (49.5 minus 43.3) points resulted from an extraordinary amount of strategic voting. Unexpectedly facing political and economic instability and the threat of terror, most of the conservative voters who had switched to other parties to balance the incumbent party, and to signal their displeasure with the slowdown in the economy, returned to the AKP. Consequently, the AK Party raised its votes on November 1 by an amount more than it lost on June 7. 4.0 points of the 6.2 shift seems to have occurred right after the June 7 election. The additional 2.2 came after the beginning of hostilities with the PKK and the realization that a coalition government was not going to be formed.

Some analysts discuss the Gezi Park protests during the summer of 2013, the 17-25 December 2013 corruption allegations against some cabinet members, and the government's feud with the Gülen movement since the beginning of 2012, as events affecting the outcome of the elections in 2015. However, these all occurred before the 2014 election, the outcome of which is supposed to have already incorporated the impacts of these events, had there been any. Actually, the outcome of that election turned out to be not significantly dif-

ferent from the prediction made by following a similar procedure to the one employed here. Thus, we can safely state that these events had no noticeable effect on the outcome of the 2014 election and there are no reasons for them to have influenced the outcomes of the later elections.

## Conclusions

The AK Party's vote share dropped to 40.9 percent from 49.8 percent in June 2011 and 43.4 percent in March 2014 but jumped back to 49.5 percent in November 2015. Although the slowing of the economy was an important factor in the decline between 2011 and 2014, its role in the swings between March 2014 and June 2015 and between the June and November 2015 elections was much less. A higher-than-usual amount of strategic voting essentially determined the outcomes of the last two elections. On June 7, about four percent of the electorate voted strategically to keep the HDP in the parliament while checking the power of the incumbent party in the process. A day after however, they realized that they had clipped the wings of the AK Party too much and given the HDP far more support than the party needed to pass the election threshold. Many of them also regretted creating the need for a coalition government, which they dreaded. Actually, their regret multiplied when they ended up not even getting a coalition government. Probably half of the close to nine percent vote shift between the June 7 and November 1 elections occurred on June 8. The rest came over the course of the five months from routine factors, the HDP's backpedaling from its stated goal of becoming a party for the entire country, and the MHP's exacerbation of the country's political and economic instability by refusing to join any coalition government.

The November 1 election marked the second time the AK Party managed to raise its vote share after a nosedive, becoming the only party to do so twice. This shows that the party has reached a certain maturity and is able to learn and recover from its mistakes. It is remarkable that the party managed to attract simultaneously both Turkish and Kurdish nationalist voters, which are diametrically opposed to each other. This demonstrates further the political skills of the AK Party, and the lack of these skills in the MHP and the HDP. It is also remarkable that during the last four elections, the vote share of the CHP hardly changed, even though the vote share of the ruling party fluctuated up and down nine percentage points. During the same period, the vote shares of the opposition parties MHP and HDP first increased by 5 and 7 points, and later decreased by 6 and 2 points, respectively. The aggregate vote share of the other opposition parties and independents dropped 3 points. This indicates that the CHP is now restricted to its ideological core and is not seen by the rest of the electorate as an alternative to the incumbent or opposition parties.

In the last election, the aggregate vote share of independent candidates and the parties that failed to surpass the election threshold was 2.6 percent. This is the lowest since 2002. It appears that voters have consolidated into four camps now, represented by the AK Party, the CHP, the MHP and the HDP. In that regard, it is worth emphasizing that with the disappearance of the Felicity Party (SP) from the political scene for all practical purposes, the old style political Islam (“National Outlook” movement) appears to have come to an end. Whatever is left of it has been incorporated into the AK Party. The near 50 percent vote share received by the AK Party in the June 2011 and November 2015 elections represents a return to the long-run equilibrium for the conservative parties. The DP reached this potential in the fifties, and the AP in the second half of the sixties and the end of the seventies, before they were fragmented by coups. ■

## APPENDIX A

**Table A1: Vote Shares of Major Political Parties in Turkey**

POLITICAL PARTIES	NOV. 2002	MAR. 2004	JULY 2007	MAR. 2009	JUNE 2011	MAR. 2014	JUNE 2015	NOV. 2015
Justice & Development Party (AK Party)	34.28	41.67	46.58	38.39	49.83	43.40	40.87	49.50
Republican People’s Party (CHP)	19.39	18.23	20.88	23.08	25.98	25.62	24.95	25.32
Nationalist Action Party (MHP)	8.36	10.45	14.27	15.97	13.01	17.62	16.29	11.90
Democratic People’s Party (DEHAP) Social Democratic People’s Party (SHP) Democratic Society Party (DTP) Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) People’s Democratic Party (HDP)+BDP People’s Democratic Party (HDP)	6.22	5.15	3.84	5.70	5.67	6.53	13.12	10.76
Other Parties	30.75	23.77	13.03	16.43	4.61	6.65	3.71	2.41
Independents	1.00	0.73	1.40	0.43	0.90	0.18	1.06	0.11

**Table notes:**

In parenthesis are the Turkish acronyms of political parties. The parties, which are successors or predecessors of each other, are put in the same cell to facilitate comparisons. The Democratic Society Party (DTP), and its successor party, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), did not enter, respectively, the 2007 and the 2011 elections officially. Instead, their candidates ran as independents to escape the nationwide 10 percent threshold that political parties are required to exceed in order to be represented in the parliament. The 2007 and 2011 figures shown for these parties are the vote shares of the independent candidates supported by them. The Republican People’s Party entered the 2007 election in partnership with the Democratic Left Party (DSP). The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and People’s Democratic Party (HDP) participated in the 2014 election as partners. The 2002, 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections are for members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The 2004 and 2009 elections are for members of the Provincial General Councils. The figures given for the 2014 election are the sum of the votes cast for District Municipal Councils in 30 provinces, which are officially classified as Metropolises and for Provincial General Councils in the remaining 51 provinces.

**Table A2:** Breakdown of November 2015 Voters According to the Party They Voted for in June and November 2015

POLITICAL PARTIES	JUNE 2015	NOVEMBER 2015	DIFFERENCE
Justice & Development Party (AK Party)	39.44	49.50	+ 10.06
Republican People's Party (CHP)	24.08	25.32	+ 1.24
Nationalist Action Party (MHP)	15.72	11.90	- 3.82
People's Democratic Party (HDP)	12.66	10.76	- 1.90
Other Parties	3.57	2.41	- 1.16
Independents	1.02	0.11	- 0.90
Not voted in June 2015 election	3.51	–	- 3.51

**Table notes:**

In parenthesis are the Turkish acronyms of political parties. Figures given are percentage of valid votes cast on 1 November 2015.

## APPENDIX B

Various effects cited in sections 3 and 4 are based on the following regression, fitted to nationwide time-series data covering the 1950-2014 period, using Ordinary Least Squares method:

$$V_t = 6.851 + 0.886 V_{t-k} - 0.054 \Delta L_t \cdot V_{t-k} - 0.130 \Delta B_t \cdot V_{t-k} - 0.144 D73_t \cdot V_{t-k} + 0.485 D75_t \cdot Q_{t-k} - 0.664 D02_t \cdot V_{t-k} + 0.181 D04-11_t \cdot S_{t-k} - 0.057 r_t \cdot V_{t-k} + 0.813 g_t - 0.122 p_t + e_t$$

where  $\Delta$  is the differencing operator ( $\Delta X_t = X_t - X_{t-k}$ ), and the variables are defined as follows:

$V_t$ : vote share of the major incumbent party in election held at time  $t$ ,

$V_{t-k}$ : vote share of the major incumbent party in the previous election held  $k$  years earlier,

$L_t$ : a dummy variable, which takes on the value of one if the election involved is for local administrations, and zero otherwise,

$B_t$ : a dummy variable, which takes on the value of one if the election involved is a National Assembly by-election only (that is, not held simultaneously with a Senate election), and zero otherwise,

$D02_t$ : a dummy variable, which takes on the value of one in 2002, and zero in all other years,

$D04-11_t$ : a dummy variable, which takes on the value of one between 2004 and 2011, and zero in all other years,

$D73_t$ : a dummy variable, which takes on the value of one in 1973, and zero in all other years,

$D75_t$ : a dummy variable, which takes on the value of one in 1975, and zero in all other years,

$S_{t-k}$ : the aggregate vote share of the independent candidates and the right-wing parties other than the AK Party, in the previous election (or 100 minus aggregate vote share of CHP, DSP and the ethnic Kurdish party, in the previous election),

$Q_{t-k}$ : the aggregate vote share of the Democratic Party (DP2) and the Republican Reliance Party (CGP) in the previous election,

$r_t$ : the number of years the major incumbent party was in power since the previous election,

$g_t$ : the growth rate of the per capita real GDP during the four quarters preceding the election held at time t (henceforth referred to as the growth rate),

$p_t$ : the inflation rate in GDP implicit price deflator during the four quarters preceding the election held at time t (henceforth referred to as the inflation rate).

$e_t$ : error term.

The data used is presented in Table B1 below. The notes give the sources of the data and explains in detail how the variables are measured. The equation fits the data very well as can be observed from its R-square value of 0.98. Durbin's (1970) h and White's (1980) chi-square statistics come out as -1.09 and 25.80, with probability values 0.14 and 0.77, respectively. Thus, no model misspecification is indicated whatsoever. All of the parameters in the equation are significant at 1 percent level (in one-tail tests) except two. The constant is significant at 5 percent and the coefficient of  $D73_t.V_{t-k}$  at 2 percent level.

The estimates obtained imply the following effects:

INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGE

Percent of total vote: 6.9

STRATEGIC VOTE LOSS

Percentage of incumbent party's previous vote share between Parliamentary elections:	$[1 - (0.886)] \times 100 = 11.4$
Parliamentary and local administrations elections:	$[1 - (0.886 - 0.054)] \times 100 = 16.8$
Local administrations and parliamentary elections:	$[1 - (0.886 + 0.054)] \times 100 = 6.0$
Parliamentary general and by elections:	$[1 - (0.886 - 0.130)] \times 100 = 24.4$

COST OF RULING

Percentage of incumbent party's previous vote share per year in power:  $0.057 \times 100 = 5.7$

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

Percentage of total vote for each point change in Growth rate of per capita real GDP during four quarters preceding the election:	0.81
Inflation rate in GDP deflator during four quarters preceding the election:	-0.12

POLITICAL REALIGNMENTS:

In 2002, the major incumbent party lost 66.4 percent more of its vote share than would be expected under usual circumstances.

During 2004-2011, the AKP received on average 18.1 percent of the remaining votes of other right-wing parties in each election between.

In 1973, due to the split of DP2, the incumbent party (AP) lost 14.4 percent more of its vote share than would be expected under usual circumstances.

In 1975, the incumbent party (AP) captured 48.5 percent of the votes received by the DP2 and CGP in 1973.

Table B1: Political and Economic Conditions, and Electoral Outcomes: 1950-2015

Election Date	Election Type <sup>a</sup>	Provinces covered by the election	Incumbent Parties <sup>b</sup>	Vote Share (%)		Previous Vote Share (%)		Time in Power since last election (years)		Growth Rate <sup>e</sup> (%)	Inflation Rate <sup>f</sup> (%)
				Major Party	All Parties	Major Party	All Parties	Major Incumbent <sup>c</sup>	All Incumbents <sup>d</sup>		
May 14, 1950	A	63 of 63	39.59	39.59	55.22	55.22	3.75	3.75	-3.5	-0.2	
Sep 16, 1951	B	17 of 63	52.73	52.73	55.22	55.22	1.25	1.25	9.2	4.3	
May 2, 1954	A	64 of 64	58.42	58.42	52.73	52.73	2.50	2.50	4.8	4.9	
Oct 27, 1957	A	67 of 67	48.62	48.62	58.42	58.42	3.50	3.50	3.6	20.3	
Oct 15, 1961	A	67 of 67									
Nov 17, 1963	L	67 of 67	36.20	45.80	36.74	64.43	2.25	1.50	6.8	5.7	
June 7, 1964	S	26 of 67	40.85	40.85	36.20	36.20	0.50	0.50	4.2	4.1	
Oct 10, 1965	A	67 of 67	52.87	65.10	50.28	56.81 <sup>h</sup>	0.50	0.50	4.2	4.2	
June 7, 1966	S + B	24 of 67	56.49	56.49	52.87	52.87	0.75	0.75	4.6	5.2	
June 2, 1968	L	67 of 67	49.06	49.06	56.49	56.49	2.00	2.00	3.7	5.3	
Oct 12, 1969	A	67 of 67	46.53	46.53	49.06	49.06	1.25	1.25	2.5	6.5	
Oct 14, 1973	A	67 of 67	29.82	35.08	46.53	53.11	4.00	2.50 <sup>i</sup>	1.7	19.2	
Oct 12, 1975	S + B	27 of 67	41.34	52.98 <sup>j</sup>	29.82	50.26	0.75	0.50	4.4	21.0	
June 5, 1977	A	67 of 67	36.88	53.73	41.34	52.98 <sup>j</sup>	1.75	1.75	4.7	19.4	
Dec 11, 1977	L	67 of 67	37.08	50.59	36.88	51.86	0.50	0.50	1.3	23.7	
Oct 14, 1979	S + B	29 of 67	29.22	31.59 <sup>k</sup>	41.81	43.42	1.75	1.75	-2.2	68.4	
Nov 6, 1983	A	67 of 67									
Mar 25, 1984	L	67 of 67	41.48	41.48	45.14	45.14	0.25	0.25	4.1	48.2	
Sep 28, 1986	B	10 of 67	32.12	32.12	41.48	41.48	2.50	2.50	3.9	40.3	
Nov 29, 1987	A	67 of 67	36.31	36.31	32.12	32.12	1.25	1.25	7.1	33.6	
Mar 26, 1989	L	71 of 71	21.80	21.80	36.31	36.31	1.25	1.25	-2.5	69.2	
Oct 20, 1991	A	74 of 74	24.01	24.01	21.80	21.80	2.50	2.50	1.5	55.2	
Mar 27, 1994	L	76 of 76	21.44	35.01	27.03	47.78	2.25	2.25	6.4	66.1	
Dec 24, 1995	A	79 of 79	19.18	29.89	21.44	39.64 <sup>l</sup>	1.75	1.75	5.6	87.2	
Apr 18, 1999	A	80 of 80	13.22	35.99	19.65	34.29 <sup>n</sup>	2.00	1.75	-1.8	68.4	
Nov 3, 2002	A	81 of 81	1.22	14.71	22.19	53.39	3.50	3.25	-0.6	46.4	
Mar 28, 2004	L	81 of 81	41.67	41.67	34.28	34.28	1.25	1.25	4.5	18.8	
July 22, 2007	A	81 of 81	46.58	46.58	41.67	41.67	3.25	3.25	4.6	9.0	
Mar 29, 2009	L	81 of 81	38.39	38.39	46.58	46.58	1.75	1.75	-5.6	13.3	
June 12, 2011	A	81 of 81	49.83	49.83	38.39	38.39	2.25	2.25	7.3	7.6	
Mar 30, 2014	L	81 of 81	43.40	43.40	49.83	49.83	2.75	2.75	3.4	7.2	
June 7, 2015	A	81 of 81	40.87	40.87	43.40	43.40	1.25	1.25	1.6	7.5	
Nov 1, 2015	A	81 of 81	49.50	49.50	40.87	40.87	0.25	0.25	2.1	7.3	

**Notes:**

- a. A: National Assembly general election.  
 B: National Assembly by election.  
 S: Senate election  
 L: Local administrations election (election for Provincial Councils until 2014, and for metropolitan mayors in provinces, which have metropolitan status, and for Provincial councils in other provinces, since 2014).  
 S+B: Senate election plus National Assembly by election (only in provinces where no Senate election was held simultaneously).

In instances when different types of elections are held simultaneously or almost simultaneously, the priority for inclusion in the sample was given first to National Assembly general elections, next to local elections, then to Senate elections, and last to by elections. The Senate and by elections were given lower priorities because, unlike the National Assembly general elections and local elections, they did not cover the whole country. The Senate elections involved only a third of the provinces and only a third of the seats in the Senate that were subject to election. The coverage of by elections was even lower, about 15-27 percent of the provinces when they did not coincide with a Senate election. When the Senate and by elections were held simultaneously, their results were aggregated to increase the coverage of the country. In such aggregation, for provinces where the two elections overlapped, the outcome of the Senate election is considered.

- b. The party listed first in the table is the major incumbent party. The Turkish acronyms used in the table and the parties they represent are as follows:

CHP:	Republican People's Party
DP1:	Democrat Party
YTP:	New Turkey Party
CKMP:	Republican Peasant's Nation Party
AP:	Justice Party
MP:	Nation Party
CGP:	Republican Reliance Party
MSP:	National Salvation Party
MHP:	Nationalist Action Party
DP2:	Democratic Party
ANAP:	Motherland Party
DYP:	True Path Party
SHP:	Social Democratic People's Party
DSP:	Democratic Left Party
DTP:	Democrat Turkey Party
AKP:	Justice and Development Party

- c. 0.25 times the number of quarters since last election during which the major incumbent party was in power majority of time, either alone or with other parties.

- d. 0.25 times the number of quarters since last election during which all incumbent parties were in power simultaneously majority of time, with or without other parties.

- e. The growth rate,  $g_t$ , is taken as the growth rate of per capita real GDP during the four-quarter period preceding the election. The latter is obtained by adjusting the growth rate of real GDP during the four-quarter period before the election with the annual growth rate of the population during the year of the election if the election was held in the second half of the year and during the year before if the election was held in the first half of the year. The quarter of the election is included in the four-quarter period if the election was held in the second half of the quarter and not, if otherwise.

For elections prior to 1989 when quarterly data was not available,  $g_t$  is computed as follows:

$$g = m G_t + (1-m) G_{t-1}$$

where  $G_t$  and  $G_{t-1}$  are the annual growth rates for the year in which the election was held, and the one prior to that.

$m = 0.00$  if the election is held between January 1 and February 14,

$m = 0.25$  if the election is held between February 15 and May 15,

$m = 0.50$  if the election is held between May 16 and August 15,

$m = 0.75$  if the election is held between August 16 and November 15,

$m = 1.00$  if the election is held between November 16 and December 31,

except for elections in 1965, 1975 and 1984, when  $m$  is taken as unity because the governments then were either not in power during the year preceding the election or were in power for less than half a quarter.

For the year 1968, the growth rate of per capita real GNP is substituted for the missing growth rate for per capita real GDP.

f. The inflation rate,  $p_t$ , is taken as the growth rate of the GDP implicit price deflator during the four-quarter period preceding the election. The quarter of the election is included in the four-quarter period if the election was held in the second half of the quarter and not if otherwise. For the elections prior to 1989, when quarterly data was not available,  $p_t$  is computed as weighted average of the annual inflation rates during the election year and the one before it, in a similar way the  $g_t$  was computed as explained above.

For the year 1968, rate of change in GNP deflator is substituted for the missing rate of change in GDP deflator.

g. To increase the number of observations, Republican People's Party (CHP) was treated as the incumbent party in 1961 by Akarca and Tansel<sup>39</sup> and Akarca,<sup>40</sup> even though the military was in power. This party was allied with the military regime at the time and supported it or was at least perceived by the public as supporting it. Now that there are sufficient data points at hand, 1961 election is dropped from the sample.

h. Vote share of only AP, CKMP and YTP. MP did not enter the 1964 election.

i. The CGP was formed by the merger of National Reliance Party (MGP) with the Republican Party (CP). In computing the CGP's time in power, the CGP and MGP are treated as if they were the same party.

j. Vote share of only the AP, MSP and MHP. The CGP did not enter the 1975 election.

k. Vote share of only the CHP and CGP. The DP2 did not enter the 1979 election.

l. Vote share of the DYP, CHP and SHP in 1994. The SHP merged with the CHP in 1995. So the SHP and CHP are treated as one party.

m. A minority government formed by the DSP was in power during the four months preceding the election but it was just a caretaker government. For that reason, the coalition government in power prior to that for over eighteen months is taken as the incumbent.

n. Vote share of only the ANAP and DSP. The DTP was formed in 1997 and thus did not enter the 1995 election.

o. The figure is for the four quarters of 2013. At the time of this paper was written, the data for the first quarter of 2014 was not yet released.

## Endnotes

1. In fact, if the 1977 local administrations election held only a few months after a parliamentary one is set aside, 2004 was the first time this has happened since 1963. Local elections have been held simultaneously across the country since 1963.
2. In saying this, we are treating the June and November 2015 elections as a single election with two rounds. This can be justified by the fact that during the five-month period between these two elections, the AK Party was essentially in power in a single-party government.
3. Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Martin Paldam, "Economic Voting: An Introduction," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 19, (2000), pp. 113-121.
4. Lewis-Beck and Paldam, "Economic Voting: An Introduction," pp. 113-121; Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Mary Stegmaier, "Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 3, (2000), pp. 183-219; Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Mary Stegmaier, "The Economic Vote in Transitional Democracies," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, Vol. 18, pp. 303-323; Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Mary Stegmaier, "American Voter to Economic Voter: Evolution of an Idea," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 28, (2009), pp. 625-631; Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Mary Stegmaier, "Economic Evaluations and Electoral Consequences," in James D. Wright (ed.), "International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition," (Elsevier: Oxford, 2015), pp. 26-32; Mary Stegmaier and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, "Economic Voting," in R. Valeyly (ed.), "Oxford Bibliographies in Political Science," (Oxford University Press: New York, 2013), pp. 1-25.
5. Ali T. Akarca and Aysit Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," *Public Choice*, Vol. 129, (2006), pp. 77-105; Ali T. Akarca and Aysit Tansel, "Social and Economic Determinants of Turkish Voter Choice in the 1995 Parliamentary Election," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 26, (2007), pp. 633-647.
6. George E. P. Box and George C. Tiao, "Comparison of Forecast and Actuality," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series C (Applied Statistics)*, Vol. 25, (1976), pp. 195-200.
7. Akarca and Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," pp. 77-105; Ali T. Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 29 March 2009 Turkish Local Elections," *İktisat İşletme ve Finans*, Vol. 24, No. 276 (2009), pp. 7-22; Ali T. Akarca, "Analysis of the 2009 Turkish Election Results from an Economic Voting Perspective," *European Research Studies Journal*, Vol. 13, (2010), pp. 3-38; Ali T. Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 12 June 2011 Turkish Parliamentary Election," *İktisat İşletme ve Finans*, Vol. 26, No. 302 (2011), pp. 53-74; Ali T. Akarca, "Inter-election Vote Swings for the Turkish Ruling Party: The Impact of Economic Performance and Other Factors," *Equilibrium*, Vol. 6, (2011), pp. 7-25; Ali T. Akarca, "30 Mart'ta Nasıl Bir Sonuç Beklenmeli ve Sonuç Nasıl Yorumlanmalı?" Presented at Turkish Economic Association Workshop: Seçimler ve Politik Devreler, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, (27 March, 2014).
8. Rodrigo Caldeira de Almeida Martins and Francisco J. Veiga, "Economic Voting in Portuguese Municipal Elections," *Public Choice*, Vol. 155, (2013), pp. 317-334; Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 29 March 2009 Turkish Local Elections," pp. 7-22; Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 12 June 2011 Turkish Parliamentary Election," pp. 53-74; Akarca, "Inter-election Vote Swings for the Turkish Ruling Party: The Impact of Economic Performance and Other Factors," pp. 7-25; Akarca and Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," pp. 77-105; Ray C. Fair, "Presidential and Congressional Vote-Share Equations," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 53, (2009), pp. 55-72; Henry W. Chappell and Linda G. Veiga, "Economics and Elections in Western Europe: 1960-1997," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 19, (2000), pp. 183-197; Guy D. Whitten and Harvey D. Palmer, "Cross-National Analyses of Economic Voting," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 18, (1999), pp. 49-67; Alberto Alesina and Howard Rosenthal, *Partisan Politics, Divided Government, and the Economy* (Cambridge University Press: New York, USA, 1995); Robert S. Erikson, "Economic Conditions and the Congressional Vote: A Review of the Macro Level Evidence," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 34, (1990), pp. 373-399.
9. In many studies, the Turkish nationalist and conservative parties are grouped together, and analyzed as the Turkish right wing. However, since a distinct Turkish nationalist party has existed constantly since

1950, except for brief periods when it was banned by military juntas, it is more appropriate to treat it as a separate movement. Although the rest of the right wing occasionally fragmented into several parties, they always regrouped, as will be explained below.

**10.** Several factors coalesced over time to make the AK Party, rather than another right-wing party, the new home of the conservatives. The party's disavowal of political Islam and other right wing parties' desertion of their traditional anti-establishment positions and their involvement in chronic corruption and incompetence were the main reasons behind this. Akarca (2015) discusses these in detail.

**11.** Ali T. Akarca and Cem Başlevent, "Persistence in Regional Voting Patterns in Turkey During a Period of Major Political Realignment," *European Urban and Regional Studies*, Vol. 18, (2011), pp. 184-202.

**12.** IPSOS, "1 Kasım 2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması," (IPSOS Sosyal Araştırmalar Enstitüsü: İstanbul, Turkey, 2015).

**13.** Chappell and Veiga, "Economics and Elections in Western Europe: 1960-1997," pp. 183-197; Whitten and Palmer, "Cross-National Analyses of Economic Voting," pp. 49-67; Fair, "Presidential and Congressional Vote-Share Equations," pp. 55-72; Alesina and Rosenthal, Partisan Politics, Divided Government, and the Economy; Erikson, "Economic Conditions and the Congressional Vote: A Review of the Macro Level Evidence," pp. 373-399.

**14.** Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 29 March 2009 Turkish Local Elections," pp. 7-22; Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 12 June 2011 Turkish Parliamentary Election," pp. 53-74; Akarca, "Inter-election Vote Swings for the Turkish Ruling Party: The Impact of Economic Performance and Other Factors," pp. 7-25; Akarca and Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," pp. 77-105; Akarca and Tansel, "Social and Economic Determinants of Turkish Voter Choice in the 1995 Parliamentary Election," pp. 633-647.

**15.** Alesina and Rosenthal, Partisan Politics, Divided Government, and the Economy.

**16.** The exception was the election held just after the September 11 terror attack on twin towers in New York.

**17.** Ali Akarca, "Modeling Political Performance of Islamist and Islamist-rooted Parties in Turkey," *Middle East Development Journal*, Vol. 7, (2015), pp. 49-69.

**18.** Michael F. Meffert, and Thomas Gschwend, "Strategic Coalition Voting: Evidence from Austria," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 29, (2010), pp. 339-349.

**19.** Meffert and Gschwend, "Strategic Coalition Voting: Evidence from Austria," pp. 339-349; Shaun Bowler, Jeffrey A. Karp and Todd Donovan, "Strategic Coalition Voting: Evidence from New Zealand," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 29, (2010), pp. 350-357; Sara B. Hobolt and Jeffrey A. Karp, "Voters and Coalition Governments," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 29, (2010), pp. 299-307.

**20.** Martin Paldam, "The Distribution of Electoral Results and the Two Explanations of the Cost of Ruling," *European Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 2, (1986), pp. 5-24.

**21.** Chappell and Veiga, "Economics and Elections in Western Europe: 1960-1997," pp. 183-197; Whitten and Palmer, "Cross-National Analyses of Economic Voting," pp. 49-67; Akarca and Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," pp. 77-105.

**22.** Here we are talking about party incumbency and not the incumbency of individual representatives. There are many studies on the latter but not as many on the former.

**23.** Akarca and Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," pp. 77-105; Emre Toros, "Forecasting Turkish Local Elections," *International Journal of Forecasting*, Vol. 28, (2012), pp. 813-821.

**24.** Studies which investigate the link between the economy and electoral outcomes are too numerous to list here. However it will be worthwhile to mention some of the recent ones on Turkey: Ali Çarkoğlu, "Economic Evaluations vs. Ideology: Diagnosing the Sources of Electoral Change in Turkey, 2002-2011," *Electoral Studies*, No. 31, pp. 513-521; Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 12 June 2011 Turkish Parliamentary Election," pp. 53-74; Akarca, "Inter-election Vote Swings for the Turk-

ish Ruling Party: The Impact of Economic Performance and Other Factors," pp. 7-25; Akarca, "30 Mart'ta Nasıl Bir Sonuç Beklenmeli ve Sonuç Nasıl Yorumlanmalı?"; Akarca, "Modeling Political Performance of Islamist and Islamist-rooted Parties in Turkey," pp. 49-69; Emre Toros, "Forecasting Elections in Turkey," *International Journal of Forecasting*, No. 27 (2011), pp. 1248-1258; Emre Toros, "Forecasting Turkish Local Elections," pp. 813-821; Cengiz Yılmaz, Oğuzhan Aygören, and Özlem Özdemir, "Türkiye'de Siyasi Kutuplaşmayı Oluşturan Unsurlar: Seçmen Tercihlerinde Ekonomik Oy Verme Davranışından Toplumsal Trauma Kuramına Kadar Bir Dizi Etkenin Görece Etkileri," *İktisat İşletme ve Finans*, Vol. 27, No. 311 (2012), pp. 9-39; Harun Yüksel and Abdulkadir Civan, "The Impact of Economic Factors on the 2011 Turkish General Election," *Boğaziçi Journal Review of Social, Economic and Administrative Studies*, No. 27 (2013), pp. 53-67; Cem Başlevent and Hasan Kirmanoğlu, "Economic Voting in Turkey: Perceptions, Expectations, and the Party Choice." *Research and Policy on Turkey*, No. 1, forthcoming (2016).

25. Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 29 March 2009 Turkish Local Elections," pp. 7-22.

26. IPSOS, "1 Kasım 2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması".

27. MAK, "7 Haziran 2015 Türkiye Genel Seçim Sonrası Siyasi Ölçüm," *MAK Danışmanlık*, (11-14 June 2015).

28. IPSOS, "2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması," IPSOS Sosyal Araştırmalar Enstitüsü: İstanbul, Turkey, (8 June 2015).

29. Mustafa Altunoğlu, "2015 Seçimleri ve Türkiye'de Hakim Parti Dönemi," (2015 Elections and Dominant Party era in Turkey.) *SETA*, No. 145, (December 2015).

30. KONDA, "7 Haziran Sandık ve Seçmen Analizi," KONDA Araştırma ve Danışmanlık: İstanbul, Turkey, (18 June 2015).

31. Box and Tiao, "Comparison of Forecast and Actuality," pp. 195-200.

32. As mentioned in the previous section, this prediction would be 4.6 percentage points higher if the economic conditions before June 2015 were the same as in 2011, and 1.5 points higher if they were the same as in 2014.

33. IPSOS, "2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması".

34. According to the same poll, 60 percent of Turkish voters think that coalition governments are less successful than single party governments. Only 25 percent believe that a coalition government can be more successful than a single party government. Indeed, during 1950-2015, the average growth rate of real GDP in Turkey under coalitions was 1.1 points less than under single-party governments and the inflation rate was 27.1 points higher.

35. IPSOS, "1 Kasım 2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması".

36. Box and Tiao, "Comparison of Forecast and Actuality," pp. 195-200.

37. IPSOS, "2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması".

38. Only 0.4 of the 2.4 points can be attributed to improvement in the economic conditions between the June 7 and November 1 elections.

39. Akarca and Tansel, "Economic Performance and Political Outcomes: An Analysis of the Turkish Parliamentary and Local Election Results Between 1950 and 2004," pp. 77-105.

40. Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 29 March 2009 Turkish Local Elections," pp. 7-22; Akarca, "Analysis of the 2009 Turkish Election Results from an Economic Voting Perspective," pp. 3-38; Akarca, "A Prediction for AKP's Nationwide Vote Share in the 12 June 2011 Turkish Parliamentary Election," pp. 53-74.