

The 2011 Elections and the Kurdish Question¹

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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that the 2011 election results point to a number of important conclusions concerning the Kurdish question in Turkey. First, the Kurdish party will continue to be the main actor in “Kurdish question politics.” Second, the AK Party has been unable to halt the rise of the Kurdish party in a number of provinces with large Kurdish populations. Third, political parties, other than the Kurdish party and the AK Party, have been eliminated from “Kurdish question politics.” This essay will demonstrate that the support for the Kurdish party is gradually acquiring a territorial dimension. Thus, this essay argues that the notion of democratic autonomy proposed today for the whole of Turkey by the Kurdish party may over time give way to the political objective of “autonomy for Kurdistan” or even “federal Kurdistan.” It is also argued that the same trend may foster a political agenda of “Kurds to Kurdistan” to take hold in Turkish politics.

The 2011 election results point to a number of important conclusions concerning the general direction of the Kurdish question in Turkey. The first important conclusion concerns the recent political and electoral trajectory of the Kurdish party that has been marked by ups and downs.² The legal Kurdish party, which has been an effective actor in Turkish politics since the 1991 elections, has come back from the electoral losses that it suffered in the 2007 elections, as compared to its successful performance in the 2002 elections. It now appears to have carved out a permanent place within Turkish politics. The second important conclusion has to do with the ruling party. The AK Party (Justice and Development Party), which in the 2007 elections enjoyed a great deal of support among the Kurdish electorate, appears to have been unable to replicate the same level of success in provinces with a large Kurdish population. This is in contrast with the AK Party’s trend of seeing its share of the pan-Turkish vote steadily rise

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over the 2002, 2007, and 2011 elections. While increasing its vote in Turkey as a whole, the AK Party was overtaken by the Kurdish party in a good number of provinces in South-Eastern and Eastern Anatolia with large Kurdish populations.

The third important conclusion relates to Turkey’s political electoral process over the past ten years. The trend that first manifested itself in the 2002 general elections, whereby Kurdish voters either voted for the Kurdish party or the AK Party, peaked in the 2011 elections. Indeed, the last election saw that voter support for parties, apart from these two parties, fell dramatically in provinces where Kurdish citizens make up a substantial proportion of the population. This paper discuss in greater detail below these three important conclusions triggered by the June 12, 2001 elections.

The Kurds and the Kurdish Party

The 2011 election results show that the Kurdish party will continue to be the main actor in “Kurdish question politics.” Essentially, while all of the elections held since 1991 have to a greater or lesser extent supported this conclusion, the 2007 elections stood out when the Kurdish electorate favoured the AK Party, while the Kurdish party’s future looked at risk. However, the subsequent elections of 2009 (local elections), the constitutional change referendum of 2010, and the general elections of June 12, 2011 demonstrated that the fall in support for the Kurdish party in 2007 was not permanent. In fact, during these last elections, the Kurdish party won more than half of the vote in provinces with high Kurdish populations, demonstrating that it is still a primary actor in Kurdish question politics.

The Kurdish party, with the roughly two million votes (6.2%) that it obtained in the 2002 elections, became the dominant actor in Kurdish question politics but because of the ten per cent threshold, it was unable to send deputies to parliament.⁴ Contesting the 2007 elections with independent candidates in a bid to circumvent the threshold, the Kurdish party obtained 1,329,544 votes (3.8%) and was unsuccessful by the benchmark of the 2002 elections. Underlying this ‘failure’ were three basic reasons. The first reason was, without a doubt, the difficulties inherent in contesting the elections with independent candidates. Where more than one independent candidate was fielded in a constituency, it was necessary to ensure that voters cast their votes for these different candidates. Indeed, this logistical difficulty cost the Kurdish party deputies in a number of places, such as Ağrı and Hakkari. Secondly, the impossibility of fielding independent candidates

Table 1. The Kurdish Party and Elections³

| | 2002 (%) | 2007 (%) | 2009 (%) | 2011 (%) |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 st Group | | | | |
| Ağrı | 35.1 | 22.9 | 37.2 | 41.2 |
| Batman | 47.1 | 38.9 | 53.2 | 51.5 |
| Diyarbakır | 56.1 | 42.7 | 43.5 | 58.2 |
| Hakkari | 45.1 | 49 | 73.7 | 79.8 |
| Mardin | 39.6 | 34.3 | 44.2 | 51.8 |
| Muş | 38.1 | 33.6 | 42.5 | 44.3 |
| Siirt | 32.2 | 25.3 | 3.3 | 42.5 |
| Şırnak | 45.9 | 47.7 | 60.8 | 72.3 |
| Van | 40.9 | 30.4 | 48.3 | 48.5 |
| 2 nd Group | | | | |
| Adıyaman | 12 | 5.9 | 5.7 | 6.5 |
| Bingöl | 22.2 | 14.1 | 20.6 | 23.9 |
| Bitlis | 29.5 | 15.7 | 27.3 | 26 |
| Iğdır | 32.6 | 26.8 | 32.4 | 31.5 |
| Kars | 19.6 | 12.9 | 17.7 | 19.2 |
| Şanlıurfa | 19.3 | 11.8 | 19.6 | 17.6 |
| Tunceli | 32.5 | 27.3 | 19.8 | 22.2 |
| Turkey | 6.2 (1,960,660) | 3.8 (1,329,544) | 5.7 (2,277,777) | 5.8 (2,497,093) |

in all constituencies cost votes, leading to a fall in the total vote obtained by the Kurdish party. However, an equally important reason was undoubtedly the AK Party's general rise. Both the fight that it had waged against the "tutelage regime" and the signs that it had given of distancing itself from the Republic's classical

The constitutional amendment referendum held in 2010 demonstrated that the electoral results of 2009 were not temporary

policy of assimilation plus repression on the Kurdish question enhanced the AK Party's appeal to the Kurdish electorate.

The results obtained in the 2009 local elections pointed to the transient nature of the drop in electoral support for the

Kurdish party. The Prime Minister's ostracism of the Kurdish party increased the appeal of the latter for the Kurdish electorate.⁵ In the 2009 local elections, the Kurdish party, in obtaining 2,277,777 votes (5.7%), increased its support compared to 2007. More significantly, by winning the elections for mayor of one metropolitan city (Diyarbakır), 7 provinces (Iğdır, Van, Hakkari, Şırnak, Tunceli, Siirt and Batman), 50 sub-provinces and up to forty urban districts, it gained control of 98 municipalities. The share of the vote that it obtained in some of these provinces (Diyarbakır 59.5%, Hakkari 73.7%, Şırnak 60.8%, and Batman 53.2%) pointed to the unrivalled status that the Kurdish party had acquired in a number of Kurdish provinces.

The constitutional amendment referendum held in 2010 demonstrated that the electoral results of 2009 were not temporary. The Kurdish party, coming out in favour of a boycott of the referendum, succeeded in persuading its electorate to take a tougher option as opposed to opting for either 'yes' or 'no' and in a large number of Kurdish provinces the participation rate in the referendum was well below the average for Turkey (77 %).

The difference between participation rates in the 2009 referendum and participation rates in the 2007 general elections showed that the Kurdish party was able to persuade its electorate to opt for the boycott. In relatively large provinces, such as Diyarbakır and Van, the participation rate in the referendum fell to half of that of the 2007 elections, while in certain provinces, such as Hakkari and Şırnak, it fell by even more.

Even more definitive results were obtained during the June 12 elections, exhibiting the Kurdish party's permanence and its status as the basic actor in Kurdish question politics. Although the Kurdish party employed independent candidates to be able to be represented in parliament because of the ten per cent threshold, it still obtained 2,497,093 votes and a total of 5.8 per cent of the total vote in 43 provinces where it was represented. These results showed the Kurdish party to be firmly on the rise again, as compared to both the 2009 local elections and the 2002 elections, in which the party obtained the best results in terms of percentage. A

Table 2. 2010 Constitutional Amendment Referendum Participation Rates⁶

| | 2007 General Elections (%) | 2010 Constitutional Referendum (%) | Difference (-) (%) |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 st Group | | | |
| Ağrı | 75.8 | 56.4 | 19.4 |
| Batman | 75.7 | 40.3 | 35.4 |
| Diyarbakır | 71 | 35.2 | 35.8 |
| Hakkari | 87 | 9.1 | 77.9 |
| Mardin | 78.2 | 43.0 | 35.2 |
| Muş | 79.1 | 54.0 | 25.1 |
| Siirt | 79.8 | 50.9 | 28.9 |
| Şırnak | 83 | 22.5 | 60.5 |
| Van | 75.5 | 43.6 | 31.9 |
| 2 nd Group | | | |
| Adıyaman | 82.7 | 81.7 | 1 |
| Bingöl | 84 | 77.7 | 6.3 |
| Bitlis | 85.3 | 70.2 | 15.1 |
| Iğdır | 72.7 | 51.1 | 21.6 |
| Kars | 73.3 | 68.8 | 4.5 |
| Şanlıurfa | 81.9 | 69.7 | 12.2 |
| Tunceli | 77.7 | 66.7 | 10 |

comparison on a province by province basis bears even more dramatic witness to the extent of this increase. The Kurdish party obtained more than 70% of the vote in two provinces (Hakkari and Şırnak) with a high concentration of the Kurdish population, more than 50% in 5 provinces (Hakkari, Şırnak, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Batman) and more than 40% in 9 provinces (Hakkari, Şırnak, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Muş, Siirt, Van and Ağrı). In six of the seven remaining provinces, it obtained the support of above or around 20% of the voters.

The Kurdish party in these elections charted a course, which in an unprecedented manner took account of Kurdish societal structure and took into consideration political compromise with rival Kurdish political movements and parties

Several reasons underlie the increase in the Kurdish party's vote. The majority of these reasons have to do with the behaviour of the Kurdish party's dominant rival, the AK Party. The first such reason is, without doubt, the slowing down of the "Kurdish initiative" launched by the AK Party government.⁷ With the Kurdish initiative having fostered for the first time a strong sense among Kurdish citizens that the armed aspect of the Kurdish question could be solved, the stagnation

of the process caused disappointment. The intensification of conflict between the PKK and Turkish security forces that accompanied the cessation of the "Kurdish initiative" rocked the confidence many Kurds had in the AK Party. The disappointment felt against the AK Party was not confined to this issue alone. The AK Party, having given the impression that it would follow a liberal line with respect to the Kurdish question since 2007, had in the intervening time failed even to accomplish the most basic of reforms. Far from achieving fundamental measures, such as lowering the electoral threshold, the AK Party did not even prove capable of taking symbolic steps like restoring former Kurdish names to places that had been renamed. Another reason was without doubt the nationalist and threatening language that the Prime Minister had adopted prior to the elections. It is likely that this language offended Kurdish citizens and warmed their sentiment towards the Kurdish party.

Not all of the reasons underpinning this success by the Kurdish party were directly or indirectly attributable to the AK Party. The Kurdish party in these elections charted a course, which in an unprecedented manner took account of Kurdish societal structure and took into consideration political compromise with rival Kurdish political movements and parties. Of its civil disobedience actions that had taken place prior to the elections, the organization of civilian Friday prayers attracted the most attention. The Kurdish party, criticised by conservative circles for having an excessively secular leadership profile, which thus differentiated it from the traditional Kurdish electorate, took pains in the run up to the election to employ a jargon heavy with religious and traditional motifs. Moreover, it wove a lot of this type of language into its political discourse of criticism against the AK party.⁸ As mentioned above, the Kurdish party started to embrace greater inclusiveness towards rival Kurdish political parties and movements. A large number



Even if Kurdish parties in Turkey have always nurtured the idea of an autonomous Kurdistan, the ideal of an independent or federal Kurdistan has always been weak among Turkey's Kurds.

of Kurdish political parties, NGOs, and representatives of non-Muslim minorities living alongside Kurds were invited into the initiative called the “Democratic Society Congress,” which emerged as an umbrella organisation in which the Kurdish party was involved. The most important step in this direction was undoubtedly taken in the selection of parliamentary candidates. The chairpersons of rival Kurdish organisations were invited to stand as candidates. One such name was that of known conservative, Şerafettin Elçi, who was fielded as a candidate in Diyarbakır. Similarly, the conservative Altan Tan, who like the Prime Minister hails from the National View tradition, was placed as a candidate in Diyarbakır.⁹ The Kurdish population saw all of these initiatives as an indication that the Kurdish party would adopt a more inclusive approach than it had previously. Undoubtedly, this can only have increased support for the Kurdish party.

The Kurdish Party and the Kurds

There has been no let-up in the stock criticism that the Kurdish party does not represent the vast majority of Kurdish citizens, even though in the June 12 elections it obtained more than forty per cent of the vote in quite a few provinces with

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high concentrations of Kurdish population. The reason behind the critique is that the Kurdish party has obtained only around 5 % of the vote in the last few elections. However, recent research conducted into the size of the Kurdish population in Turkey reveals that the Kurdish party is not at all unrepresentative.

Before moving on to the results obtained in this research, it is first worth noting that until recently it has not been possible to give a 'reliable' answer to the question of what makes up the Kurdish population of Turkey. Even though we know from the question "What is your native language?" asked in the censuses conducted by the Republic in 1927 and 1965 that Kurdish citizens constituted 8.7% and 7.6% of the total population, the lack of any recent censuses to back up this data and the difficulties inherent in research into the Kurds has made it near to impossible to know what proportion of the total population is constituted by Kurds. However, research conducted in the past few years has altered this situation.

The first important study of this kind was the Turkish Population and Health Study conducted by the Hacettepe University Population Studies Institute. The research, which was first undertaken in 1993, is repeated every five years. It outlined the distribution of population in Turkey by native language in 2003 as follows: 83% Turkish, 14% Kurdish, 2% Arabic and 1% other.¹⁰ There are now other reliable studies showing the proportion of the Kurdish population in Turkey, such as the KONDA research company. In the first such study performed in 2006, KONDA put the proportion of native speakers of Kurdish (Kurdish and Zazaki¹¹) at 15.7%.¹² In a similar piece of research published in 2011, KONDA put the proportion of native speakers of Kurdish (Kurdish and Zazaki) at 18.3%.¹³ The KONDA research published in 2006, while determining through questionnaires conducted with citizens aged 18 and above that the proportion of native Kurdish speakers was 13.4%, revised this figure to 15.7 % given that among the Kurds the size of the under-18 population was greater in proportion to the rest of the Turkish population.¹⁴ While in Turkey, overall, there are 33 children for every 66 adults, the KONDA research showed that among Kurds there were 47 children for every 53 adults. Thus, the number of Turks in the total population of Turkey was calculated to be 55,484,000 (76.03 %) and the number of Kurds 11,445,000 (15.68 %).¹⁵ In its study of 2011, KONDA for the same reason adjusted the finding for the 18-plus population of 14.7% to 18.3%.

Research of this kind that may be deemed reliable reveals that Turkey's Kurdish population is in the region of 15-18 per cent. As such, with the vote for the Kurdish party having settled in the region of 6 % despite the barrier of the 10 % threshold, it would appear to be the preferred party of at least one-third of Kurdish citizens.

However, the considerable number of young Kurds under 18 indicates that the proportion of Kurds represented by the Kurdish party is larger. According to Faruk Ekmekçi, who has pointed out that the lower proportion of adult population among Kurds than the Turkish average must be taken into account in calculating the proportion of Kurds represented by the Kurdish party, such a recalculation demonstrates that the Kurdish party is the preferred party of around 45 % of Kurds.¹⁶ According to data presented by Ekmekçi, "In the 2011 elections, while voters constituted 53,9 % of the population in the 12 provinces in which Kurds are in the majority (Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkâri, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Tunceli and Van), the proportion in Turkey's remaining provinces averaged at 69,6 %." If this difference is taken into account when considering the representativeness of the votes obtained by the Kurdish party, according to Ekmekçi, it is the preferred party of around half of all Kurds. Ekmekçi's calculation is as follows:

We may recalculate the degree to which the [Kurdish party] represents Turkey's Kurds in two different ways [...] Commencing with the simple calculation, by dividing the proportion of Kurds within Turkey's adult population (13,5 %) by the proportion of the votes obtained by the [independent candidates supported by the Kurdish party] (5,8 %) in the elections – in which only adults voted – we may obtain a proportion in the region of 43%. The more intricate second calculation is as follows: The 12 provinces with a high concentration of Kurdish population have a total population of 6,410,832 and the number of valid votes was 2,770,678, constituting a mere 43% of this total. That is to say that in these 12 provinces each 100 valid votes represent 231 people (in the remainder of Turkey each 100 votes represent 167 people). Assuming that the demographic structure in these 12 provinces in which Kurds are in the majority is replicated among the Kurdish population in other provinces, we may conclude that the roughly 2,500,000 votes obtained by the [Kurdish party] independents represent around 5,730,000 people (7,8% of the Turkish population). When the total Kurdish population of Turkey (13,200,000) is divided by this figure, the proportion of 43% is once again obtained. As such, both calculations lead to the conclusion that the [Kurdish party] independents obtained the votes of 43% of Turkey's Kurds.

However, as Ekmekçi has stated, this calculation overlooks potential BDP votes:

The [Kurdish party] contested the 2011 elections not as a party, but with independent candidates and fielded no candidates in 43 provinces. As such, in these 43 provinc-

es the [Kurdish party] electorate had no opportunity to cast their votes for [Kurdish party] candidates. In the 2002 elections, the [Kurdish party] obtained around 140,000 votes in the 43 provinces in which it was unable to field candidates in these elections. If we add these votes to the total number of votes obtained in the 2011 elections by the [Kurdish party] independents and repeat our calculation, the [Kurdish party] independents' representation rate of Turkey's Kurds rises to about 45-46%.

In support of the claim that the Kurdish party was unable to obtain the support of the majority of Kurds, reference is made to the proportion of the votes obtained by this party in the Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia regions. According to this oft-repeated claim, especially by AK Party politicians and the conservative media, support for the Kurdish party lags well behind that for the AK Party even in these two regions with heavy Kurdish populations. For example, AK Party vice president, Hüseyin Çelik, alleged in a statement he made after the June 12 elections that his party had established a lead of 30 points over the BDP in the Eastern Anatolia region and of 15 points in the South-Eastern Anatolia region.¹⁷ In the same vein, it was pointed out in a report in the pro-government *Yeni Şafak* newspaper that in the East and South East, where Kurds are concentrated, 47 per cent of voters supported the AK Party and 34 per cent the Kurdish party.¹⁸

While it is true that the Kurdish party obtained fewer votes than the AK Party in the Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia regions, this does not automatically demonstrate that the share of Kurdish citizens' votes obtained by the Kurdish party was less than the vote obtained by the AK Party from Kurdish citizens. This is for two reasons that conservative members of the political and media classes prefer to forget. First, the provinces within the Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia regions are not all provinces with high concentrations of Kurdish population. Second, not all of the inhabitants of provinces with high concentrations of Kurdish population are Kurdish. Consequently, if we wish to find out the amount of support obtained by the Kurdish party from Kurdish citizens, we have to take these two facts into account in our calculations. Thankfully, data are at least partially available that permits us to make this kind of calculation.

Three different sources of data were used in this table created for the purpose of calculating the vote obtained by the Kurdish party in regions with a high concentration of Kurdish population: the KONDA study into the Kurdish population living in Turkey,¹⁹ the 2011 election results,²⁰ and the 2010 Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) address-based civil registry records.²¹ The KONDA study has established that 64.1% of the inhabitants of the region that it defines as the South-

Table 3. Kurds and the Kurdish Party

| Region | Provinces | Population | Proportion of Kurdish Population % | Valid Votes | Kurdish Party Votes |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| South-Eastern Anatolia Region | Mardin | 744,606 | 64.1 | 321,391 | 166,463 |
| | Şırnak | 430,109 | | 173,257 | 125,281 |
| | Urfa | 1,663,371 | | 678,286 | 119,321 |
| | Kilis | 122,104 | | 65,452 | 0 |
| | Antep | 1,700,763 | | 828,241 | 43,119 |
| | Diyarbakır | 1,528,958 | | 679,364 | 394,411 |
| | Adıyaman | 590,935 | | 306,062 | 19,917 |
| | Batman | 510,200 | | 220,234 | 113,378 |
| | Siirt | 300,695 | | 122,045 | 51,809 |
| Mid-Eastern Anatolia Region | Hakkari | 251,302 | 79.1 | 118,593 | 94,660 |
| | Van | 1,035,418 | | 426,767 | 207,173 |
| | Bingöl | 255,170 | | 126,560 | 30,245 |
| | Bitlis | 328,767 | | 146,078 | 37,916 |
| | Muş | 406,886 | | 171,446 | 75,885 |
| | Elazığ | 552,646 | | 316,733 | 0 |
| | Tunceli | 76,699 | | 46,588 | 10,354 |
| North-Eastern Anatolia Region | Kars | 301,766 | 32 | 143,791 | 27,629 |
| | Iğdır | 184,418 | | 80,816 | 25,437 |
| | Ağrı | 542,022 | | 202,890 | 83,555 |
| | Ardahan | 105,454 | | 56,772 | 6,961 |
| | Erzurum | 769,085 | | 409,745 | 33,373 |
| | Erzincan | 224,949 | | 128,263 | 0 |
| | Bayburt | 74,412 | | 43,098 | 0 |
| Total | | | 62 % | 5.812.472 100 % | 1.666.888 28,7 % |

What has made the AK Party the one of the two dominant actors in the Kurdish question is without doubt the ‘revisionist’ policy followed by this party with respect to the Kurdish question

Eastern Anatolia region comprising the provinces of Şırnak, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep Kilis, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Batman and Siirt; 79.1% of the population of the region that it defines as the Mid-Eastern Anatolia region comprising the provinces of Hakkari, Van, Bitlis, Muş, Bingöl, Tunceli, Elazığ and Malatya; and 32% of the population of the region that it defines as the North-Eastern Ana-

tolia region comprising the provinces of Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, Ardahan, Erzurum, Bayburt and Erzincan are Kurdish. The KONDA study does not provide a specific Kurdish component for each member province of these regions, nor does it give the total Kurdish component of these three regions. Under these circumstances, in order to find the total Kurdish component of these three regions, what needs to be done is to total the populations on a regional basis of the provinces making up the regions in question from the TUIK address-based civil registry records and to determine the Kurdish population in numeric terms with reference to the proportion of Kurdish population provided by KONDA for these regions, and then to total these to obtain the proportion of Kurds within the total population of these three regions. A calculation of this nature reveals that 62% of the total population making up these three regions is Kurdish.

The number of valid votes cast in these provinces in the 2011 elections was 5,812,472, while the number of votes garnered by the Kurdish party in these provinces was 1,666,888. This means that the Kurdish party obtained 28.7% of the valid vote in the provinces making up these three regions. However, given that the Kurdish component of the population of these three regions is 62%, it can be construed from the 28.7% of the vote obtained by the Kurdish party, on the assumption that non-Kurds living in these regions did not vote for this party, that 46.3% of Kurds living in the region voted for the Kurdish party. This shows that approximately every second Kurd living in the region cast their preference for the Kurdish party.

On the other hand, it is known that provinces such as Bayburt, Erzincan and Kilis, included within KONDA’s categorisation, do not have much in the way of Kurdish populations. Indeed, the Kurdish party opted not to field candidates in these provinces.²² Recalculation in which such provinces are not taken into account will reveal an increasingly higher rate of support for the Kurdish party by Kurds living in the region where the Kurdish population is concentrated.²³

The Kurds and the AK Party

In the attempt to draw pointers from the June 12 elections as to the general direction of the Kurdish question, the basic point that must be noted with reference to the AK Party is that the latter is the other important actor, next to the Kurdish party in Kurdish question politics. What has made the AK Party the one of

Table 4. The Kurds and the AK Party

| AK Party | 2002 (%) | 2007 (%) | 2009 (%) | 2011 (%) |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 st Group | | | | |
| Ağrı | 17.7 | 63 | 28.9 | 47.5 |
| Batman | 20.6 | 46.4 | 35.4 | 36.9 |
| Diyarbakır | 16 | 40.9 | 31.5 | 32.9 |
| Hakkari | 6.8 | 33.5 | 20.6 | 16.4 |
| Mardin | 15.4 | 44 | 27.2 | 32 |
| Muş | 16.9 | 38.5 | 28.7 | 42.8 |
| Siirt | 17.6 | 48.7 | 35 | 48.1 |
| Şırnak | 14 | 26.9 | 30.8 | 20.1 |
| Van | 25.9 | 53.2 | 34.3 | 40.2 |
| 2 nd Group | | | | |
| Adıyaman | 41.4 | 65.3 | 49.2 | 67.3 |
| Bingöl | 31.7 | 71.1 | 43 | 67 |
| Bitlis | 17.7 | 58.8 | 31.9 | 50.6 |
| Iğdır | 6.5 | 28.9 | 22.5 | 28.2 |
| Kars | 17.2 | 41.1 | 36.6 | 42.5 |
| Şanlıurfa | 22.9 | 59.8 | 19.6 | 64.8 |
| Tunceli | 6.7 | 12.3 | 27 | 16.2 |

In the 2007 elections, the AK Party, which saw an explosive increase in its pan-Turkish vote, also recorded a sharp increase in Kurdish provinces to become the party most favoured by Kurds

the two dominant actors in the Kurdish question is without doubt the 'revisionist' policy followed by this party with respect to the Kurdish question. It is no secret that the policy pursued in the Kurdish question for the previous eighty years of the Republic was based on two tenets: repression and assimilation. The Republican policy based on non-recognition of

Kurds' cultural rights and, if objection was raised against this non-recognition, recourse to repression lasted until the 1990s. The policy of non-recognition, which began to crack at the beginning of the 1990s and was partially superseded by the reforms that were undertaken at the beginning of the 2000s in connection with Turkey's EU candidacy, was furthered under AK Party rule. In the intervening ten years, it was repeatedly expressed by both the Prime Minister and the AK Party that the recognition of ethnic identities, based on citizenship to the Republic of Turkey was not a contradiction. Along with this attitude of recognition towards Kurdish identity, the way that the AK Party has shown virtually no inclination towards returning to a policy of repression and promised to show Kurds the compassionate and service rendering face of the state enhanced the AK Party's appeal to Kurds. Its conservatism with an Islamic axis has made it easy for the AK Party to mesh with the Kurds, who lean towards religious conservatism.

However, there is an important truth about the AK Party that the results of the June 12 elections illustrate. The AK Party has been unable to replicate when it comes to the Kurdish electorate the trend, which the pan-Turkish vote has exhibited by steadily rising over the 2002, 2007, and 2011 elections. It has been unable to halt the rise of the Kurdish party in quite a few provinces with large Kurdish populations, where the AK Party was relegated to second place.

As the table shows, while in the 2002 elections the AK Party's performance in most Kurdish provinces was well below its average for Turkey (34.3%), it was the party with the second highest vote after the Kurdish party. In the 2007 elections, the AK Party, which saw an explosive increase in its pan-Turkish vote, also recorded a sharp increase in Kurdish provinces to become the party most favoured by Kurds. The AK Party, which in many provinces with high Kurdish populations managed to topple the Kurdish party from the first place that it had occupied in the previous election, in almost all of these provinces, apart from a few exceptions (Diyarbakır, Hakkari and Şırnak), replicated its Turkish average (46.7%) or even far exceeded it (Bingöl 71.5% and Şanlıurfa 59.8 %).

However, because of the failure of the AK Party's revisionist policy on the Kurdish question to inspire the expected levels of enthusiasm among Kurds, after 2009 the AK Party started to harden its tone towards the Kurdish party and the

Kurdish sentiment towards the AK Party soured considerably in the Kurdish provinces in the 2011 elections

Kurdish opposition in general. This had an impact on the AK Party's popularity among Kurdish voters in 2011, and it was unable to replicate the success that it had scored in the 2007 elections. The 2009 election scorecard also shows that the AK Party lost votes compared to the 2007 elections in 15 out of the 16 provinces with high Kurdish populations. As the 2009 elections were local elections, it may not be correct to compare them to general elections. However, the 2011 election results show that the decline experienced was no exception and was not related to the nature of the election. In the 2011 elections, the AK Party vote was seen to fall in comparison to 2007 in 11 out of the said 16 provinces. Moreover, this decline came in an election in which the AK Party increased its pan-Turkish vote of 46% in 2007 to 49.9% in 2011. The AK Party, which increased its vote in virtually every province of Turkey, only lost votes in 14 provinces: Ağrı (15.5%), Ardahan (0.4%), Batman (9.5%), Bingöl (4.7%), Bitlis (8.2%), Diyarbakır (8%), Eskişehir (0.4%), Hakkari (17%), Iğdır (0.7%), Kayseri (0.8%), Mardin (12%), Siirt (0.7%), Şırnak (6.1%) and Van (13%). If a drop in the vote of less than 1% is ignored, the nine provinces in which the AK Party lost votes as against the previous elections were Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Şırnak and Van. Similarly, there were only 15 provinces in which the AK Party was not the first party in the June 12 elections. Nine of these 15 provinces are provinces with large Kurdish populations. In seven (Diyarbakır, Muş, Hakkari, Şırnak, Mardin, Van and Batman) of these nine provinces, the Kurdish party was first, in one (Tunceli) the CHP, and in one (Iğdır) the MHP.

The picture is clear. Kurdish sentiment towards the AK Party soured considerably in the Kurdish provinces in the 2011 elections. That the nine provinces in which the AK Party vote fell by more than 1 % compared to the 2007 elections are all provinces with high Kurdish populations clearly shows that the slide of votes from the Kurdish party to the AK Party witnessed in the 2007 elections was reversed in the 2011 elections. I have touched above on the reasons for this electoral slide or the AK Party's relative failure. To underline the argument, it was the stagnation of the AK Party's revisionist policy, the use of nationalist and threatening language by the Prime Minister when discussing the Kurdish question, and the perceived change of the liberal face the AK Party had shown earlier that were the main reasons for this slide. In addition, the parliamentary candidates selected

The electoral support of Kurdish citizens for the nationalist-left CHP and nationalist-right MHP decreased to a minimum

by the AK Party in the Kurdish provinces also had an impact on the decrease in popularity of the AK Party. When the lists of candidates were announced, the names of those at least partially engaged in the Kurdish question politics and en-

joyed great popularity among conservative Kurds were replaced by those candidates with a strong degree of attachment to the party and Prime Minister. This must also have aggravated the trend of turning away from the AK Party and back to the Kurdish party.

The Kurds and the ‘Others’

The low intensity conflict of the 1990s, which caused the death of tens of thousands of people and the uprooting of more than a million Kurds, and the economic crises of 1994 and 2001 led to the step by step eradication from Turkish politics of the centre right parties. They had formed coalition governments throughout these years. The collapse of the DYP and ANAP that began with the 2002 elections appeared to have run its course by the 2011 elections. Following the collapse of the two centre right parties, Turkish politics now hosts four main actors: the conservative-democratic AK Party that has replaced the centre right, the nationalist-left CHP, the nationalist-right MHP, and the Kurdish party. However, the elections of June 12 show that two of these four actors in Turkish politics, the CHP and MHP, do not find favour among Kurdish citizens. The preferences of the Kurdish electorate have since 2002 concentrated around the Kurdish party and the AK Party. This trend peaked in the 2011 elections. While the centre-right DYP and ANAP have been eliminated from Turkish politics, in the meantime, the electoral support of Kurdish citizens for the nationalist-left CHP and nationalist-right MHP decreased to a minimum.

The 2011 election results show that the tendency, which first manifested itself in 2002 for Kurdish citizens’ electoral preferences to concentrate around the PKK-aligned Kurdish Party and the conservative-democratic AK Party, has firmly taken root. Kurdish citizens inhabiting the Eastern and South-Eastern regions, in particular, vote almost exclusively for these two parties. As the table shows, in five of the sixteen provinces with high Kurdish populations, the AK Party and the Kurdish Party obtained more than 90% of the vote, and more than 80% in eleven of these. On the flip side of the coin, in nine of the above-mentioned sixteen provinces the CHP and the MHP garnered less than 5% of the vote, and less than 10% in twelve. Only three of these sixteen provinces bucked the general trend. In Iğdır

Table 5. The Kurds and the 'Others'

| | AK Party (%) | Kurdish Party (KP) (%) | CHP (%) | MHP (%) | AKP+KP (%) | CHP+MHP (%) |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|---------|---------|------------|-------------|
| 1 st Group | | | | | | |
| Ağrı | 47.5 | 41.2 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 88.7 | 4.4 |
| Batman | 36.9 | 51.5 | 6.6 | 0.6 | 88.4 | 7.2 |
| Diyarbakır | 32.9 | 58.2 | 2 | 0.6 | 92.1 | 2.6 |
| Hakkari | 16.4 | 79.8 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 96.2 | 1.9 |
| Mardin | 32 | 51.8 | 3.7 | 0.6 | 83.8 | 4.3 |
| Muş | 42.8 | 44.3 | 4.1 | 4.4 | 87.1 | 8.5 |
| Siirt | 48.1 | 42.5 | 2.8 | 1.1 | 90.6 | 3.9 |
| Şırnak | 20.1 | 72.3 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 92.4 | 3.6 |
| Van | 40.2 | 48.5 | 3.7 | 3 | 88.7 | 6.3 |
| 2 nd Group | | | | | | |
| Adıyaman | 67.3 | 6.5 | 16.5 | 4.6 | 73.8 | 21.1 |
| Bingöl | 67 | 23.9 | 3.1 | 1.3 | 93.9 | 4.4 |
| Bitlis | 50.6 | 26 | 1.7 | 3.1 | 76.6 | 4.8 |
| Iğdır | 28.2 | 31.5 | 1.8 | 34 | 59.7 | 35.8 |
| Kars | 42.5 | 19.2 | 16.6 | 17.3 | 61.7 | 33.9 |
| Şanlıurfa | 64.8 | 17.6 | 3 | 3 | 82.4 | 6 |
| Tunceli | 16.2 | 22.2 | 56.2 | 2.1 | 38.4 | 58.3 |

and Kars, also home to many Kurds, the MHP received 34% and 17.3 % of the vote, respectively, while in Tunceli, the CHP obtained 56.2% of the vote. In Iğdır and Kars, it would appear that the influence of the Jafari sect led non-Kurdish citizens to favour the MHP to the AK Party, and, in Tunceli, that Alevism directed Kurdish citizens to favour the CHP over the Kurdish party. Despite these exceptions, the trend is clear: Kurdish citizens are steering clear of these two large actors of Turkish politics, the CHP and MHP.

Kurdish citizens, at least those inhabiting the “region,” are turning towards parties that object to the notion of the nation “proposed” by the Republic and steer clear of parties that wish to perpetuate this notion

The fact is that the MHP has never been particularly strong in provinces with large Kurdish populations. However, the scorecard for the 2011 elections shows that the MHP is at an all-time low in terms of its prestige in the eyes of the Kurds.²⁴ The MHP, which ostracises the Kurds, would itself appear to have been rejected by the Kurds. But, of course what is interesting with reference to the discussion of the Kurds and the others is

not the MHP’s situation, but the CHP’s lack of support by Kurds. The CHP and the parties formed to replace it after its closure in 1981, having enjoyed the mass support of the Kurdish electorate from the 1960s until the mid-1990s, now finds itself marginalised in provinces with large Kurdish electorates.²⁵ What makes the CHP’s predicament more interesting was the failure of the party to inspire interest among the Kurdish electorate despite the change of leadership that had taken place before the June 12 elections and the liberal stance that it was suggested it would adopt on the Kurdish question.²⁶ The continued status of the CHP as a marginal party in Kurdish provinces, in spite of the above-mentioned changes, shows that the bond between Kurdish citizens and the CHP has been severely ruptured.

The situation of the ‘Others,’ or the way that the Kurdish electorate has turned its back on two of the four large actors in Turkish politics, points to an important state of affairs. Kurdish citizens are objecting to the Republic’s notion of citizenship of eighty years, based on the “Turkification of the country’s Muslim citizens.” The CHP and MHP, the vindicators and implementers of this notion of citizenship of eighty years, no longer find favour with Kurdish citizens. In their place, Kurdish citizens are flocking towards two parties, which oppose the notion of a Republic that reduces the nation to a community of citizens who speak the same language (Turkish) and are culturally assimilated.

On the other hand, the Kurdish party and the AK Party do not oppose the above-mentioned conception of the nation in exactly the same terms and to the same degree. While the Kurdish party rejects this conception of the nation in a fundamental manner, the AK Party’s opposition is far less clear. While the Kurdish party calls for an overhaul of the Republic’s conception of the nation through the granting of collective cultural rights, such as the right to be educated in one’s mother tongue and administrative rights such as autonomy, the AK Party, although not standing up for the Republic’s monolingual conception of a nation, its

objection still seems to be frail. The AK Party does not conceive of the nation in terms of being a community “categorically at one in language and culture,” as do the CHP and MHP. Even at times when they boldly speak of a “single state, single people, single homeland” they refrain from talking of a “single language.” As such, electoral preferences and political behaviour must surely convey the message that Kurdish citizens, at least those inhabiting the “region,” are turning towards parties that object to the notion of the nation “proposed” by the Republic and steer clear of parties that wish to perpetuate this notion.

Concluding Remarks

Before moving on to reflecting on the probable consequences of the results of the June 12 elections that have an important bearing on the direction of the Kurdish question, it will be beneficial to simplify the reporting of these results. The elections of June 12 have confirmed that the Kurdish party and the AK Party are the two main actors in Kurdish question politics, the former being on the rise and the latter somewhat in decline. With allegiances fluctuating between Kurdish party and AK Party, some of the probable consequences of the election results are as follows.

The first such consequence is that it is far less likely that there will be a return in the Kurdish question politics to a policy of repression and assimilation. Kurdish electoral preferences in favour of the Kurdish party, which proposes to solve the Kurdish question with a radical policy of recognition, and the AK Party, which proposes to solve the Kurdish question with a lighter policy of recognition, demonstrate that the policy of crude integration based on assimilating the Kurds has come to an end. A policy of integration of this nature will most probably not be the most popular in Turkey’s near future, either.

The equal strength at the same time of both of these proposals points to another probable consequence of the 2011 elections. Because the proponents of these two opposing proposals have their own powerful political basis and their respective positions on the Kurdish question, the existence of fluctuating allegiance between them means that the existing polarisation in Kurdish question politics will probably solidify. In fact, this trend towards polarisation between these two parties has existed since 2009. Developments in the wake of the June 12 elections also show that the proponents of these proposals are distancing themselves from one another rather than coming closer together.²⁷ As much as the stagnation of the Kurdish initiative, the abandoning of clandestine negotiations between advocates of these two policies shows that there is not much chance of reversing the polarisation between the two parties. Until an environment or actor capable of bro-

In certain provinces with a high Kurdish population the Kurdish party is not particularly favoured

When a compromise emerges, the relationship between these two actors could deteriorate into interactions that involve non-political means, such as violence or conspiracy.

While these probable consequences are quite significant, the most important consequence of the June 12 election scorecard is the cementing of a particular trend, where two distinct socio-political clusters form supporting the Kurdish party in the provinces of South-Eastern and Eastern Anatolia with high Kurdish populations. This trend, which has been consolidated in every election since the 2002 elections, manifests itself through the clustering of provinces with a high Kurdish population into a first group in which the Kurdish party obtains between 40% and 60% of the vote, and a second group in which it receives around 20% of the vote. The first group is constituted by Hakkari, Şırnak, Batman, Diyarbakır, Van, Siirt, Muş, Mardin and Ağrı, and the second by Adıyaman, Şanlıurfa, Bitlis, Bingöl, Kars, Iğdır and Tunceli.

This clustering has important implications. First of all, it is clear that in provinces with high Kurdish populations support for the Kurdish party is gradually rising. The above-mentioned clustering, on one level, distinguishes those provinces in which Kurds are represented in high numbers from those in which their number is lower. Iğdır, Kars and Adıyaman are known to be provinces in which the Kurdish proportion of the population is low. However, it is clear that the proportion of Kurds is not the sole reason for this clustering, because Şanlıurfa, Tunceli, Bitlis and Bingöl are different from the other three provinces in terms of the Kurdish proportion of their populations. Kurds constitute a considerable number of the inhabitants of all of these provinces. This state of affairs shows that in certain provinces with a high Kurdish population the Kurdish party is not particularly favoured.

If one were to engage in a little 'speculation' as to the reasons for this, it may be said that the factors of being Zaza, Alevi, conservative and from a province neighbouring provinces with low Kurdish populations have the effect of reducing support for the Kurdish party in provinces with high Kurdish populations.²⁸ Bingöl and, in part, Tunceli show that Zazas and Tunceli Alevis are not as enthusiastic as Sunni Kurmanji speakers in their support for the Kurdish party. On the other hand, Bitlis (and partially Bingöl, Adıyaman and Şanlıurfa) show that conservatism and Şanlıurfa (and partially Adıyaman) that neighbouring provinces with low Kurdish populations lead to a reduction in support for the Kurdish party.

Leaving this speculation about causality aside, the most significant probable development implied by the above-mentioned clustering is that support for the Kurdish party is gradually acquiring a territorial dimension. Thus, a territorial segregation is taking shape between (with the exception of Bitlis and Bingöl) those Kurdish provinces lacking contact with provinces with a Turkish majority and the Kurdish provinces having such a contact. This state of affairs, which tends towards greater consolidation, may lay the ground for a transformation in the language and demands of the Kurdish party.

It is no secret that, even if Kurdish parties in Turkey have always nurtured the idea of an autonomous Kurdistan, the ideal of an independent or federal Kurdistan has always been weak among Turkey's Kurds. However, the trend that has begun to emerge after the June 12 elections may lead to a change in this situation. This new wave in Kurdish question politics may seek to lay the groundwork for developing the policy of democratic autonomy proposed for the whole of Turkey by the Kurdish party. This new political goal will transform over time into a concrete political platform for "an autonomous Kurdistan" or even a "federal Kurdistan." Similarly, the political renewal may cause a "Kurds to Kurdistan" political agenda to take hold in Turkish politics. The most probable consequence of the June 12 elections may be the rise of two mottos in Kurdish/Turkish politics: "Autonomous Kurdistan" vs. "Kurds to Kurdistan".

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank Faruk Ekmekçi and Ahmet Kardam who read a draft of this essay and provided thoughtful criticisms. Also, I would like to thank Ahmet Yıldırım and Ahmet Kardam for providing the data that I could not readily obtain myself.

2. A legal party, whose main principle has been the defence of Kurds' cultural and political rights and which has had a 'kind of closeness' to the armed PKK, has existed in Turkey since 1990. However, this existence has not been consistently in the form of the same party, but has been possible by establishing new parties, replacing previous ones that have been closed. From 1990 until today, six legal Kurdish parties established to replace one another have been closed by the Constitutional Court. Since 1990, the list of the parties is as follows: HEP (People's Labour Party), established in 1990 and closed in 1993; the Democracy Party (DEP), established in 1993 and closed in 1994; HA-DEP (People's Democracy Party), established in 1994 and closed in 2003; and the DTP (Democratic Society Party), established in 2003 and closed in 2005. DEHAP (Democratic People's Party), was formed as a reserve party in 1997, but in 2005 was turned into the DTP. In order to circumvent the confusion that would be created by referring to all of these names in the course of this study, I have chosen to refer to all of these parties, which were established to replace one another by the common name of "Kurdish party."

3. I thought that it would be beneficial to examine the vote obtained in the elections by the Kurdish party on a comparative basis using two groups of provinces. I placed those provinces with a high Kurdish population in which the Kurdish party obtained more than 40% of the vote in the 12 June elections in the first group and the remainder in the second group. The data used in the entire article,

with a few exceptions, are all data that was promulgated by the Higher Electoral Board and can be found on the Higher Electoral Board's (YSK) website <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/index.html>. Since the votes obtained by independents supported by the Kurdish party were not collated by the YSK, data provided by Ahmet Kardam and Ahmet Yıldırım was used for the level of votes in the 2007 and 2011 elections in which it supported independent candidates.

4. In the 2002 elections, only the AK Party and the CHP (Republican People's Party) were able to surmount the ten per cent threshold. Despite obtaining more than five per cent of the vote, the DYP (True Path Party), the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), the DEHAP, the ANAP (Motherland Party) and the GP (Young Party) were unable to send representatives to parliament. Consequently, with parties to which the electorate gave 45 % of the vote unable to send deputies to parliament, the AKP and CHP, recipients of 55 % of the vote, shared the 550 seats.

5. Since there was no threshold in the local elections, these elections were contested as the DTP (replacing the DEHAP) was itself closed in 2009.

6. YSK data. <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/docs/2010Referandum/KesinSonuc/IIsonuclari.pdf>

7. For more comprehensive information about the Kurdish initiative see Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden and Nic Walker "Fruitless Attempts? The Kurdish Initiative and Containment of the Kurdish Movement in Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No.44, (Spring 2011), pp. 103-128.

8. The slogan "Munafik Erdoğan" was shouted by the Kurdish masses in many demonstrations organised by the Kurdish party. Munafik is an Islamic-Arabic term, which is used to denote hypocrisy.

9. The National View is the name given to the Islamic political program/ideology endorsed by the political parties headed mostly by Necmettin Erbakan, who died in February 2011.

10. İsmet Koç, Attila Hancıoğlu and Alanur Çavlin, "Demographic Differentials and Demographic Integration of Turkish and Kurdish Populations in Turkey," *Population Research Policy Review*, Vol.27, No.4, (2008), pp. 447-457.

11. Zazaki is, like Kurdish, another Indo-European language spoken by some Turkish citizens living in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia. There is, however, a dispute among intellectuals and politicians as to whether Zazaki is a dialect of Kurdish or a different language other than Kurdish.

12. KONDA, *Toplumsal Yapı Araştırması Biz Kimiz*, <http://www.konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar.php?tb=3>

13. KONDA, *Kürt Meselesinde Algı ve Beklentiler*, <http://www.konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar.php?tb=3>

14. KONDA *Toplumsal Yapı Araştırması Biz Kimiz*, s. 21.

15. KONDA, *Toplumsal Yapı Araştırması Biz Kimiz*, s. 21.

16. Faruk Ekmekçi, "Seçimler, Sonuçlar ve Yanıltıcı Yorumlar II", <http://fekmekci.wordpress.com/2011/06/30/secimler-sonuclar-ve-yaniltici-yorumlar-ii/>

17. <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/74-milyonun-anayasas-olacak/9346>

18. <http://yenisafak.com.tr/Politika/?t=15.06.2011&i=324630>

19. KONDA *Kürt Meselesinde Algı ve Beklentiler*, <http://www.konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar.php?tb=3>, s.16.

20. For valid votes YSK data were used, while for the votes obtained by the Kurdish party data supplied by Ahmet Yıldırım from the Kurdish party (Peace and Democracy Party –BDP) were used.

21. http://media.samanyoluhaber.com/media/fotogaleri/2011/01/28/1/nufus_tablo3.jpg

22. Although there is a certain Kurdish population in Elazığ, the reason for the failure of the Kurdish party to obtain any votes in this province was that the candidacy of the independent candidate fielded by the Kurdish party in this province was disqualified by the YSK.

23. Indeed, the calculation of Faruk Ekmekçi, who recommends looking at the twelve provinces in which Kurds make up on average 80% of the population (Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Tunceli and Van) in order to calculate how many Kurds the Kurdish party obtained the support of, produces a result of this kind. Ekmekçi's calculation shows that the BDP took more than half of the vote (51%) in these twelve provinces. According to Ekmekçi, if the "20% Turkish, Zaza and Arab population, which at best remains distant from the Kurdish party," is taken into account, "The BDP, which has a roughly 45% representation rate of Turkey's Kurds overall, rises to 60-65%." <http://fekmekci.wordpress.com/2011/06/30/secimler-sonuclar-ve-yaniltici-yorumlar-ii/>.

24. That the Kurds' electoral support for MHP decreased to this level may be due to the latter's move in the past few years from a nationalist-conservative standpoint to a more nationalist, less conservative one. MHP's moving away from Islam-inspired conservatism in the last few years might have led Kurds, who formerly voted for the MHP, to vote for the AK Party in the 2011 elections. I owe this point to Faruk Ekmekçi.

25. A comparison of the vote obtained by the CHP and its continuation parties in Diyarbakır is more than adequate to comprehend this party's fate among the Kurds. The CHP (and its continuation parties) in Diyarbakır obtained 34.8% of the vote in 1977 and 25.5% of the vote in 1987 to become the first party; following which it took 5.9% in 2002 and 2.0% in 2007 and 2.0% of the vote in 2011. http://www.belgenet.net/ayrinti.php?yil_id=10&il_id=254

26. At the June 12 elections there was a change of the general secretary and leadership in the CHP and the new leadership gave the impression that it would follow a more liberal line, starting with the Kurdish question. In the section with the heading *Full Democracy in the East and South-East* of the CHP's election manifesto, the following policy goals were stated: "to end pressure and establish social peace," "to overcome with a pluralist and liberalistic democracy the barriers to our Kurdish citizens' living out their identity," "to establish a commission for murders by unknown perpetrators," and "to provide the possibility for native language education to citizens who apply for it." In the *Local Administration* section, it declared that the reservations made concerning the European Charter of Local Self-Government would be lifted.

27. Even though, following the June 12 elections the Kurdish party in winning 36 seats scored an unprecedented victory it has refused to participate in the work of parliament owing to the failure to release five elected deputies from prison and the disqualification of one deputy by the YSK. In another factor contributing towards this polarisation the AKP government is indicating that a major military campaign against PKK militants is being planned.

28. Kurds in Turkey are not homogenous in terms of their 'dialect-language' and religious sects. If Zazaki is considered a dialect of Kurdish, while most Kurds are Kırmancı speaking Sunnis, there are Zazaki speaking 'Kurds' and Kurds from the Alevi sect too. While Zazaki speaking 'Kurds' mostly live in Bingöl, Tunceli, and Diyarbakır, Alevi Kurds live mostly in Tunceli, Maraş, and Malatya. As there is almost no reliable survey about the number and the electoral behaviour of Zazaki speaking and Alevi people, there is room only for some speculation about the electoral behaviour of these two groups.