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How New Is Erdoğan's "New Turkey"?

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On August 10, 2014, Turkish citizens voted in the first presidential elections ever held in the history of the Turkish Republic. Following the 2007 constitutional referendum on electoral reform, the existing system—which mandated that the president be elected by the members of the Turkish parliament—was replaced by direct election by popular vote. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had served as prime minister between 2003 and 2014, won the election with 51.79 percent of the vote and took over Turkey's presidency from his predecessor, Abdullah Gül, his comrade and a co-founder of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP).

In his inauguration speech, Erdoğan declared that his election signaled the triumph of the "New Turkey" ("Yeni Türkiye"). During his visit to the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, Erdoğan declared, "With the first popularly elected president taking office, today is the day that Turkey rises from its ashes. It is the day the process to build the New Turkey gains strength."[1] For the past couple of years, Erdoğan and other AKP politicians have been using the slogan "New Turkey" in most of their public rallies and TV interviews to describe the changes introduced during the twelve-year rule of the incumbent AKP government.

The rhetoric of "New Turkey" is invoked in a framework that divides the political history of the Turkish Republic into two eras: the Kemalist period (that is, the old Turkey) and the post-Kemalist period (the AKP era). Kemalism refers to the ideological principles as well as the sweeping political,

social, cultural, and secular reforms that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk implemented in order to forge a homogeneous nation and a secular, centralized, and autarchic state from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Until quite recently, the Kemalist oligarchy—consisting of the members of the bureaucracy, the military, and the judiciary who saw themselves as the vanguards of the secular republic—dominated the Turkish state apparatus. Within the binary framework of the old versus new Turkey, the Kemalist period, which comprised around ninety years, is reduced to a single uninterrupted epoch defined by authoritarianism, oppression, military coups, and an extreme form of secularism antagonistic to the public expression and visibility of religion. The AKP era, on the other hand, is presented as the antithesis of the Kemalist period, with the "New Turkey" conceptualized as marking the demise of the reign of the arch-secularist, statist, centralist, and authoritarian-leaning Kemalist oligarchy and lauded as the harbinger of pluralist democracy.

But how successful has the AKP really been in bringing the country closer to the promise of a "New Turkey" characterized by an inversion of the centralist and authoritarian Kemalist legacy? This Brief argues that, although the AKP initially garnered widespread support because of its espousal of secular-liberal principles as well as its promise to end the authoritarian Kemalist legacy by undertaking democratic reforms, it has fallen short of fulfilling its promises of democratization and instead regressed into the old ways of the Kemalist *ancien régime* as it has deepened its hold on Turkey in the course of consecutive election victories. Though the AKP government fought against and ultimately overcame the domination of the Kemalist oligarchy, the old system's centralist and illiberal spirit is still alive after twelve years of unchallenged rule under the continuing leadership of Erdoğan.

In what follows, this Brief first provides an overview of the transformations that Turkey has undergone in twelve years of AKP rule. It then elaborates on the continuities between the Kemalist regime and AKP governance in terms of the tendency and attempts of both governments to: 1) centralize political power under the rule of one party; 2) govern the country under the leadership of a charismatic individual with authoritarian tendencies; and 3) represent dissenting views and opposition protests as emanating from the "enemies of the nation," in order to delegitimize and discredit adversaries.

The Transformation of Turkey under the AKP

In 2001, the reformist, liberal faction of the larger Islamist movement formed the AKP, which absorbed the Islamists into the global neoliberal regime of economic governance and into the framework of secular national state power.[2] Under AKP rule, Turkey has experienced unprecedented economic growth, nearly tripling its economic output in the past decade and subsequently joining the ranks of the G-20 club. While the country's per capita GDP is still low as measured by OECD standards, large segments of the population have gained easier access to health care and social services. The Islamic bourgeoisie, which used to be located at the margins, now dominates the center of political power.

Thanks to the democratization requirements for membership in the European Union (EU), the AKP undertook several reforms between 2002 and 2006 so

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that Turkey's judicial system, civil-military relations, and human rights practices would accord with EU norms. With the support of the EU, the AKP found the impetus it needed to place the military, which had carried out multiple coups and other interventions into politics, under civilian control.[3] Human rights violations, including torture and extrajudicial killings in police stations, have become far less common. There have since been freer public discussion and enhanced scrutiny regarding certain Kemalist taboos, including ethnic and religious minority rights as well as the dark secrets of Turkish history, such as the Armenian genocide and the massacre of Kurdish Alevis in Dersim in 1937 and 1938. The AKP has also undertaken democratization initiatives aimed at extending the cultural rights of the Kurds, the Roma (gypsies), and religious minorities.

But the AKP has taken an authoritarian turn as the party has deepened its hold on power, especially since its third consecutive election victory in 2011.[4] The Kemalist military was effectively defanged through a series of court trials, referred to as the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer (Balyoz) cases, which led to the imprisonment of hundreds of high-ranking officers accused of plotting a military coup. In July 2011, the chief of the general staff as well as other high-ranking commanders were effectively forced to resign en masse and replaced by officers more amenable to the AKP. As the threat of a future military coup has been eliminated and the AKP has solidified its voter base, the party has gained full ascendancy over the state apparatus. But rather than continuing on the path of liberalization and democratization, the AKP leadership has become increasingly autocratic and intolerant of opposition and turned into a mirror image of the very system it criticized and sought to supersede.

Centralization of Political Power under One-Party Rule

In order to legitimize their party as the true representative of democracy and the genuine voice of the people, Erdoğan and other AKP leaders have sought to discredit the Kemalist Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), the main opposition party in the parliament, by frequently invoking the CHP's legacy as the state party that ruled over the country under an undemocratic single-party regime for a quarter century. Such criticism conveniently overlooks, however, how the AKP itself has recently turned into a state party akin to the CHP.

The AKP, under the leadership of Erdoğan, has now been in power uninterruptedly for the past twelve years, which is almost as long as the CHP's rule under Atatürk. Since the AKP's supporters—comprising a coalition of diverse ideological positions, ranging from center-right voters and Islamists to nationalists and liberal leftists[5]—make up Turkey's largest voting bloc (40 to 50 percent according to different polls),[6] it is likely that the party will keep winning elections in the foreseeable future. During his presidential election campaign, Erdoğan released a document entitled the "2023 Vision," which outlines the goals to be achieved by the AKP government by the centennial anniversary of the Turkish Republic. On other occasions, party leaders unveiled their ambitions to stay in power until 2053, the six hundredth anniversary of the Turkish conquest of Istanbul, or 2071, the millennial anniversary of the Turkish conquest of Anatolia. Critics fear that such grandiose ambitions might reflect the AKP's wish to tighten its grip on power[7] and establish a de facto one-party system.[8]

There have been several examples of hegemonic political parties in the world, such as the Social Democrats in Sweden, the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, or the Labor Party in Israel, where parties have stayed in power for long periods of time without undermining the foundations of liberal democracy. And the AKP, unlike the Kemalist CHP in its era of single-party rule (1923-1945), has remained in power as a result of democratic elections. But the AKP's notion of democracy could be considered "illiberal democracy" at best, since it is based solely on majoritarianism and ignores any need for checks and balances. Since the AKP has won three consecutive elections with landslide victories, its leaders consider their party as representing the "national will." According to this rationale, everything the government does is permissible, since it is expressing the true desires of the majority of the population. Yet, such majoritarianism comes at the expense both of individual rights and liberties, and of the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers.

Political power has increasingly become centralized under AKP rule. Rather than bolstering the autonomy of independent institutions, the AKP government has strived to take control of the state bureaucracy, the police, and the judiciary, and attempted to use these institutions in service of the party's interests. Most significantly, the independence of the judiciary, which is a key component of constraints on centralized state power, has been stifled under government control and intervention. According to the World Economic Forum's international ranking of

judicial independence, between 2007 and 2014, Turkey's global ranking with reference to judicial independence fell from 56th to 85th place out of 148 countries.[9]

One reason for this dramatic decline in judicial independence in recent years is the government's attempts to bring the police, prosecutors, and judges under greater executive control for the sake of reducing the influence of the Islamist Gülen movement[10] in the justice system. It is widely believed that since the 1990s, the members of the Gülen movement have been infiltrating the judiciary, which had historically been the stronghold of secularist elites. When the AKP came to power, it cooperated with Gülenist judges and prosecutors in quashing the interference of the military in politics, since the party did not have its own cadres to replace the secular groups that then dominated the judiciary. But since the recent rift between the Gülen movement and the AKP, which peaked with the corruption probe initiated in December 2013 by Gülenists to investigate AKP ministers as well as Erdoğan's family, the government has intensified its heavy-handed intervention vis-à-vis the judiciary in order to quell the threat from its erstwhile ally.

On October 12, 2014, the parliament passed a law aimed at strengthening the government's powers over the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (abbreviated as HSYK in Turkish), the independent body responsible for promotions of and disciplinary actions taken against judges and prosecutors. As a result of this law, the minister of justice has assumed control over this once independent institution, which in turn has tied the judiciary closer to the executive branch. Under the pretense of limiting the Gülenist influence in the judiciary, several judges and prosecutors involved in the December 2013 anti-corruption investigations were either reassigned or demoted by the HSYK.[11]

In its 2014 annual progress report, the EU warned Turkey about the frequent changes to the justice system made by the AKP government without properly consulting other stakeholders.[12] The EU also criticized the new law governing the National Intelligence Organization, which allows wiretappings and surveillance to be conducted by Turkish intelligence services without any need for judicial oversight. Such judiciary interventions have bolstered the illiberal nature of the AKP's de facto one-party rule by eliminating checks and balances that are necessary for limiting the unrestrained use of power.

Government under an Authoritarian Leader

One of the most significant continuities between Turkey's early republican regime and AKP rule has been the cult of personality built around its leaders. Soon after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the cult of Atatürk as a selfless hero was cultivated to unify the new nation under a charismatic leader. Now, Erdoğan is similarly represented as the embodiment of the national will and hailed as the country's savior. But whereas Atatürk was seen as a hero for having liberated the nation from foreign occupation, Erdoğan is idolized for removing the country from the yoke of the arch-secularist oligarchy.

As Mustafa Kemal was addressed with such honorific titles as "the Father of the Turks" (Atatürk), "the Great Leader" (Ulu Önder), and "the Eternal Commander" (Ebedi Başkomutan), so Erdoğan is referred to by his supporters as "the Master" (Usta), "the Chieftain" (Reis), and "World Leader" (Dünya Lideri). Indeed, a recently published biography of Erdoğan is entitled *The Sun of Our Era*, which was one of the epithets used to describe Atatürk. And just as numerous buildings and other public works in the country are named after Atatürk—such as Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, Atatürk Bridge, and Atatürk Olympic Stadium as well as the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates river—so Erdoğan's name is given to several facilities in Turkey, including a university in Rize (a city in the Black Sea region and Erdoğan's birthplace) and a soccer stadium in the Kasımpaşa neighborhood of Istanbul, where he grew up. There is also a proposal to name the third biggest bridge in Turkey, built over the Euphrates River, after Erdoğan.[13]

Desecrating Atatürk's legacy is a crime punishable by law. Turkish Law No 5816, named "The Law Concerning Crimes Committed against Atatürk," states that insulting Atatürk's memory is punishable by up to three years in jail. Many Islamists and liberals who have publicly criticized Atatürk for being an authoritarian leader have been tried, and some have been convicted for "insulting Atatürk." But although AKP leaders have spoken of the need to eliminate the taboo against criticizing Atatürk, public criticism of Erdoğan has likewise been effectively criminalized. Only two years into his term as prime minister, Erdoğan sued fifty-seven people, including journalists, authors, cartoonists, and even ordinary citizens, for slander and won twenty-one of these cases, for which he was paid a total of $440,000 in compensation.[14] A student theater troupe that mocked Erdoğan in comedy skits, a British activist who made

a collage placing Erdoğan's head on a dog's body, several cartoonists who depicted him in animal form, and members of a musical band who were charged with writing a song in which Erdoğan was likened to a street vendor were among the alleged offenders. In February 2011, twenty-two people were charged with insulting Erdoğan during a workers' strike, and seven of them were sentenced to 11 months and 20 days each in prison.[15]

Although critics blame the AKP for attempting to do away with Atatürk's legacy, Erdoğan in fact consciously taps into Kemalist symbolism in order to legitimize and broaden public support for his presidency. He initiated his presidential election campaign by organizing a rally in Samsun, a city on the coast of the Black Sea, and then headed to Erzurum, a city in eastern Turkey, as his next stop—a seemingly random itinerary that actually duplicated the route that Atatürk took in 1919 to initiate Turkey's War of Independence against occupying forces. In several political rallies before the 2014 local elections, Erdoğan referred to himself as the leader of the country's "second war of independence." Although Turkey is not at war, Erdoğan exploits such nationalistic rhetoric to discredit his opponents as "enemies of the nation" and represent himself as the second savior of the country after Atatürk.

Erdoğan's ambition to become the new Atatürk is also apparent in his desire to stay in power as president: If he completes this five-year term, he will have ruled Turkey two years longer than Atatürk. Erdoğan is not content with the current parliamentary system, however, whereby the presidency remains largely a ceremonial post. As things stand, the president does not have much executive authority other than sending legislation back to Parliament, calling a cabinet meeting under exceptional circumstances, and approving the appointment of certain administrative personnel (such as university presidents, members of the Constitutional Court, and the chief public prosecutor). Erdoğan desires an "active" presidency like Atatürk's, with greater and more far-reaching powers, so he has been proposing to transform Turkey's parliamentary system into a presidential one through a constitutional amendment. This new presidential system would entail a unification of powers whereby the president would be actively involved in all three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. Under the new system, the bureaucracy would be attached exclusively to the president, who would issue decrees independently of any judicial control or oversight. If one takes into account the already existing powers of the Turkish presidency, it becomes clear that Erdoğan's presidential system would amount to one-man rule reminiscent of the presidency of Atatürk.

Turkey's current constitution mandates that the president not be a member of a political party and be impartial toward all parties. Nonetheless, Erdoğan has been campaigning on behalf of the AKP, which he wants to see emerge stronger from the general elections on June 7, 2015, so that it would have enough of a majority in Parliament to be able to amend the constitution and enact a presidential system. When Erdoğan's critics charged him with breaching his constitutional duties by being affiliated with a political party, his aide Beşir Bozdağ compared the current situation to the presidency of Atatürk and other early republican leaders. "A president who is an active member of a political party is nothing new in Turkish history," he contended. "The 1924 constitution does not involve any clause that mandates that a newly elected president's ties be cut off from his party. Atatürk, İnönü, and Bayar, who acted as presidents under the 1924 constitution, were all affiliated with a political party."[16] So even as AKP leaders declare that the New Turkey will be dramatically different from the old one dominated by the Kemalist oligarchy, they are inspired by Atatürk's legacy to accumulate and consolidate power under one-man rule.

Discrediting Opponents as Enemies of the Nation

Erdoğan's New Turkey is also analogous to the old one in terms of accusing political rivals, opponents, and dissenters of being "enemies of the nation," and deploying the law to criminalize resistance and opposition. During both the early republican era and the current AKP rule, adversaries have been characterized as reactionaries or traitors, and suppressing opposition has been legitimized on the grounds of maintaining the integrity of the state and the status quo.

Atatürk's new republican regime faced resistance from sympathizers of the Ottoman sultanate and the Islamic Caliphate who opposed the authoritarian secularism and ethnic nationalism of the new state. After abolishing the Caliphate in 1924, the republican government extended the High Treason Law to include any activity that exploited religion for political purposes. Following the outbreak of a Kurdish rebellion in 1925—organized under the leadership of Sheikh Said, who aimed to revive the Islamic Caliphate—the early republican rulers also passed the Law for the Maintenance of Public Order, which gave the government special powers to suppress

any form of dissent. The enforcement of this law resulted in the creation of special courts called Independence Tribunals, which were led by deputies instead of judges and were furnished with substantial powers, including the power to dispense summary justice.[17] These courts were instrumental in arresting around 7,400 people and executing 660 dissidents, including Sheikh Said and 47 of his followers.[18] In similar fashion, AKP leaders have labeled any dissenting views as treasonous and manipulated the police and the judiciary to penalize those who are critical of the government. In the early republican context, criminalizing dissidents was presented as essential for preserving the newly established state from the threats of those who wanted to dismantle it. In contemporary Turkey, however, such a threat is no longer pertinent, since the sovereignty of the Turkish state has long been established. Accordingly, AKP leaders have opted to extend the discourse of "enemies of the nation" and apply it to all dissidents they deem to be roadblocks on the path toward the so-called New Turkey. Police raids before sunrise, lengthy trials that take years, and arbitrary arrests of citizens have frequently been deployed to spread fear amongst critics and opponents of the government and to silence public dissent. Excessive use of police force and heavy-handed response to peaceful anti-government demonstrations have become commonplace.

One of the groups criminalized as "enemies of the nation" has been pro-Kurdish politicians, publishers, journalists, and academics who are critical of the AKP's policies on the Kurdish issue. It is true that, as part of the EU integration process, the AKP government has initiated a series of reforms to improve Kurdish rights,[19] and it agreed to engage in peace talks with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has engaged in armed conflict with the Turkish military since the 1980s and has been classified as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the U.S., and the EU. Yet, the government has also undertaken a large-scale police operation against Kurdish and pro-Kurdish dissidents since 2009 on the grounds of alleged links to the outlawed Union of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), the urban branch of the PKK. Between 2009 and 2011, 7,748 people considered to be associated with the KCK were taken into custody.[20] People who have been arrested so far include elected mayors and deputies, public intellectuals and academics, members of civic associations, journalists, university students, researchers, and activists.[21] But according to a report by Human Rights Watch, "there is scant evidence to suggest the defendants engaged in any acts that could be defined as terrorism as it is understood in international law: namely, violent activities such as bombings and hostage-taking targeting civilians, or the plotting of such activities."[22] Moreover, the KCK court cases have raised concerns regarding fair trial issues, including failure to give substantial justification regarding detention decisions, prolonged pre-trial detention, and limiting defendants and their lawyers' access to the evidence used against them.[23]

Considering the long and complicated history of Turkey's attitude toward the Kurdish issue, the continuation of the use of such labels as "terrorists" and "enemies of the nation" for Kurdish and pro-Kurdish dissidents is not surprising. But Erdoğan and other AKP politicians have extended such rhetoric to discredit any form of political opposition. For instance, those who participated in the nationwide anti-government protests that took place in the summer of 2013, known as the Gezi Park protests, have been vilified by Erdoğan as marauders, thugs, and even terrorists.[24] Egemen Bağış, the minister for EU affairs at the time, proclaimed that whoever entered Taksim Square during police raids would be considered a terrorist and handled accordingly.[25] In the eyes of AKP politicians, the disproportionate use of police force in the form of inordinate amounts of pressurized water, tear gas, and rubber bullets was necessary to suppress the protesters, who were allegedly causing chaos and anarchy on the streets.

AKP politicians have tended to depict the Gezi Park and ensuing protests as conspiracies against the nation or attempted coups aimed at toppling the Erdoğan government. To them, Turkey has progressed to such an extent under their rule that protesters cannot possibly have legitimate reasons for wreaking havoc; therefore, they should be considered traitors engaged in an evil plot to hinder Turkey's progress and disrupt the country's political and economic stability. Insulting Erdoğan and other state officials has reportedly been listed among the evidence used to make allegations of terrorism against some of the protesters.[26]

Recently, there was a court case against some fans of the Beşiktaş soccer club, known as the Çarşı group, who took an active role in the Gezi Park protests. The members of the fan club were tried for attempting to overthrow the government, acting as a criminal gang, and resisting the police. But the evidence in the Istanbul prosecutor's September 2014 indictment against these protesters included only intercepted telephone calls and text messages in which they expressed opposition to the government and sentiments of support for the demonstrations rather than any substantial proof of the defendants' involvement in any violent activity or criminal conduct.[27]

Conclusions

Most liberal pundits in Turkey have characterized the elimination of the Kemalist oligarchy by the AKP as a necessary stepping-stone on Turkey's path toward democratization. Since the beginning of its third term in government, however, it has become clear that the AKP's New Turkey signifies hardly anything more substantial than a shift in power from one group of autocratic rulers to another. Although the AKP leadership has done away with the domination by Kemalist members of the military and judiciary over government affairs, they have opted to follow the same path as the early republican Kemalist elite in terms of securing their ascendancy over the state apparatus. Thus, rather than constituting a dramatic break with the legacy of the preceding Kemalist era, the AKP's New Turkey shares significant similarities with the *ancien régime* that it purportedly sought to supplant.

Erdoğan's New Turkey had initially been seen as exemplary by political commentators in Europe, the U.S., and the Arab world because the apparently successful "marriage" of political Islam with secular-liberal democracy achieved by the AKP seemed quite desirable in a region dominated by fear of radical Islamism. Yet, Turkey's recent turn toward authoritarianism under the continuing leadership of Erdoğan has led to feelings of anxiety and dismay among outside observers, who tend to put the blame on the Islamist credentials of AKP leaders and their deviation from the secular republican legacy of their Kemalist predecessors. But as has been demonstrated in this Brief, labels such as Islamic democracy or divisions such as Islamism vs. secularism fall short of explaining contemporary Turkish politics.

Erdoğan's New Turkey is neither an Islamic autocracy nor a beacon of Muslim democracy. What we are witnessing is, instead, the resurgence of the centralist, paternalistic, and authoritarian legacy of the Kemalist regime. Understanding this continuity is significant in terms of gaining insight into the dominant political culture in Turkey. As anthropologist Jenny White argues, Turkish political culture has been characterized by "a recurrent cycle of conceptual patterns and associated roles—those of the 'bigman,' selfless hero, and traitor."[28] This Brief has shown that both the early republican era and the era of AKP rule have been characterized by the consolidation of political power by a charismatic leader who is venerated as a national hero and who discredits dissenters and opponents as "enemies of the nation."

This does not mean, however, that this dominant paradigm is inevitable or invincible. In fact, what brought Erdoğan and the AKP to power in the first place was their anti–status quo stance. Not only Islamists and conservative Muslims but also center-right voters, nationalists, and liberal leftists supported the AKP because of its promise to do away with the centralist and paternalist state tradition. What has been causing widespread discontent with AKP rule among the Turkish public in recent years is the party's backsliding from its commitment to pluralist, liberal democracy and its move toward heavy-handed paternalistic governance akin to its Kemalist predecessors.

As illustrated by the nationwide protests that took place in the summer of 2013, a new generation of Turks from diverse political backgrounds (liberals, ultra-nationalists, secularists, Islamists, communists, anarchists, feminists) is unhappy with the status quo and is demanding change. It is tempting to consider these protests as a secular, Kemalist backlash against the pro-Islamic AKP. But millions of Turks from diverse backgrounds took to the streets in protest not because Erdoğan has brought about a New Turkey that is anti-secular and anti-Kemalist but because he has perpetuated the illiberal and authoritarian state tradition from the Kemalist era. As these nationwide protests and the government's heavy-handed response to them have illustrated, there is an ever-increasing dissonance between the aspirations of the members of this new generation, who are unhappy with the AKP for not fulfilling its promise to bring about a newer and more democratic Turkey, and the AKP leadership, which insists on equating democracy with majoritarianism.

If the AKP manages to bring the country closer to the promise of a New Turkey one day, it will do so not because of its success in replacing the Kemalist oligarchy with its own but because it institutionalizes a participatory and pluralistic democracy that preserves the rule of law and the separation of powers. For the time being, the AKP's conservative constituency seems to be at ease with Erdoğan's increasingly tightened grip on power since they view him as a savior who has freed the nation from the proverbial siege of the supposed enemies of Islam (that is, the arch-secularists) and from traitors (such as the Gülenists and Kurdish dissidents). Whether the AKP leadership will continue relying on the support of its conservative constituency or start to be responsive to the demands of the rest of the population remains to be seen.

Endnotes

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2 Cihan Tuğal. *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

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5 Gönül Tol, "Why Turkey Is Not Turning Islamist," *Foreign Policy*, December 21, 2010.*

6 According to polls conducted by the Gezici Polling Company, 39.8 percent of voters are likely to vote for the AKP in the 2015 parliamentary elections. Polls conducted by ORC Araştırma Şirketi, however, indicate that the AKP is likely to win around 50 percent of the total votes.

7 One symbolic indicator of the AKP government's desire to hold onto power is the naming of the newly built presidential palace that replaced the Çankaya Palace, which had served as the presidential residence since Atatürk's presidency. The new residence, a Versailles-like palace, with more than a thousand rooms, built in the middle of the Atatürk Forest Farm, was named the "Ak Saray," which literally translates as the "White Palace." Yet, "ak" is also part of the designation AK Party—the "White" Party—which is how AKP leaders refer to their party so as to suggest integrity, trustworthiness, and good conduct. Naming the presidential palace in this fashion conveys the impression that the AKP intends to remain the de facto state party for a long time.

8 A one-party-dominant regime is a political system where there is "a category of parties/political organizations that have successively won election victories and whose future defeat cannot be envisaged or is unlikely for the foreseeable future." R. Suttner, "Party Dominance `Theory': Of What Value?" *Politikon* 33, 3 (2006), pp. 277–97.

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21 Professor Büşra Ersanlı of Marmara University; Ragıp Zarakolu, who is a founding member of the Human Rights Association; and Ayşe Berktay, who is a well-known translator and researcher, were among those arrested for having engaged in acts of terrorism.

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24 Tulin Daloglu, "Erdogan Shows His Softer Side," *Al-Monitor*, August 23, 2013.*

25 "Police to Consider Protesters in Istanbul's Taksim Square Terror Organization Members: Minister," *Hurriyet Daily News*, June 16, 2013.*

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Middle East Brief

How New Is Erdoğan's "New Turkey"?

Hikmet Kocamaner

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