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TURKEY'S POST-ELECTION POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The November 3 parliamentary elections in Turkey proved to be the political earthquake predicted by the last *CSIS Turkey Update*. Nearly 500 of the 550 members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), along with the three coalition parties in government since April 1999, failed to make it back into parliament, prompting outgoing Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit to observe that the government had "committed suicide" by going to elections. The clear winner in the elections was the Justice and Development Party (JDP), which had led throughout the electoral campaign and gained a massive overall majority of 363 seats. The Republican People's Party (RPP) is the only other party to gain representation in the TGNA with 178 seats. The remaining 9 seats were won by independents. The JDP is now preparing to form a new government that will be headed by someone other than its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was banned from running for the TGNA and cannot therefore become prime minister. The losers, on the other hand-Deputy Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party (MP); Deputy Prime Minister Devlet Bahçeli of the National Action Party (NAP); Tansu Ciller, the leader of the main opposition party, the True Path Party (TPP); as well as Bulent Ecevit of the Democratic Left Party (DLP)-are preparing to hand over their posts to successors after announcing their resignations.

ANATOMY OF AN EARTHQUAKE

The percentage of the vote received by the parties, which has yet to be formally confirmed by the High Electoral Court, are as follows:

JDP	34.3	DEHAP	6.2
RPP	19.4	MP	5.1
TPP	9.6	CP	2.5
NAP	8.3	DLP	1.2
YP	7.2	NTP	1.1

The results fully confirm the preelection expectations that the JDP would be able to take advantage of the economic crisis. The economic difficulties not only reduced the votes of the three parties in the coalition government that were held accountable—from a combined 54 percent in the April 1999 elections to 15 percent -but also kept them below the 10 percent threshold for parliamentary representation. It is an axiom in politics that you do not have elections in an economic downturn, and the coalition, which apparently forgot this principle in the course of its disarray and infighting during Ecevit's illness in the summer, paid the ultimate political price.

The JDP also benefited from the collapse of the center right. The two center right parties, which were dominant for so long in Turkish politics, the TPP and the MP, saw their vote reduced to below 15 percent. According to the Turkish polling company Verso, which accurately predicted the election results, the TPP lost 25.6 percent of its 1999 vote to the JDP, while the MP lost 24.4 percent. As a result, pending the much-delayed reorganization of the center right, the JDP can now claim to represent this section of the electorate. At the same time, the JDP has been able to move into electoral ground previously occupied by the NAP. As the NAP vote collapsed to less than half of its total in 1999, the JDP picked up 33.1 percent of its 1999 votes. Consequently, the JDP will also be able to argue that it is the standard-bearer for nationalist views in the TGNA. It is ironic that elections held at the insistence of the NAP have permitted a party with Islamic roots to legitimately claim to be a center right party with nationalist backing.

The JDP's dominance was also helped by the rise of Cem Uzan's Young Party (YP), which in just over three months of its existence picked up an impressive 7 percent, as well as by the strong showing of the mainly Kurdish party, DEHAP, which picked up over 6 percent. These two parties clearly took votes away from the previously dominant mainstream parties. Last but not least, the JDP benefited from the decline of the center left. In the last elections, the center left picked up over 30 percent through the DLP, which led the polls with 22 percent, and the RPP, which failed to get into the TGNA. Although the RPP was able to more than double its vote this time, the dismal 1 percent of votes which were cast for Ecevit's DLP and the New Turkey Party (NTP), its still-born offshoot headed by former foreign minister Ismail Cem, helped reduce the social democratic vote to just over 21 percent. Consequently, the elections have raised serious questions over the future course of social democratic parties in Turkish politics, including in particular over the role of Kemal Dervis. Dervis, who was once promoted as the would-be savior of Turkish social democracy when he joined the RPP in August, may actually have depressed the RPP vote because of his association with the previous government's implementation of the harsh measures of the IMF-backed economic program.

While the lack of electoral appeal of the other parties may have cleared the way for the JDP, its success was also a product of its ability to persuade Turkey's have-nots, who wanted to punish the government, to choose it as the vehicle for their response. The JDP ran a classic opposition campaign under the charismatic leadership of Erdogan, who channeled the wave of economic resentment to his party while apparently taking advantage of sympathy engendered by his ban and the Constitutional Court's initiation of a case to ban the JDP a few days before the vote.

Equally importantly, the JDP was successful in defusing the potentially explosive issue relating to its Islamist origins. Although Erdogan and his colleagues trace their lineage back to the Islamist movement, which found political expression in the National Order Party (NOP), banned in 1971, the National Salvation Party (NSP), banned in 1980, the Welfare Party (WP), banned in 1998, and the Virtue Party (VP), banned in 2001, they were able to successfully reject the definition of the JDP as an Islamist party. In this way the JDP reached well beyond the Islamist base, which had previously never exceeded 21 percent. In this effort, it was assisted to a considerable extent by the presence in the race of the Contentment Party (CP), guided by the veteran Islamist leader Necmeddin Erbakan, which received the core 2 percent Islamist vote.

LOOKING AHEAD

During the campaign the JDP was fortunate in avoiding serious challenges by its opponents to provide specific answers to the serious problems it will face in government. The post-election period has been dominated inevitably by the question of who will become prime minister in the absence of Erdogan-and the possibility of a constitutional amendment to clear the way for Erdogan to eventually take office-rather than the issues. However, once the immediate question of the choice of prime minister is out of the way, the JDP has to focus on governing. Its main priority will be to balance the needs and aspirations of its voters, with its stated desire to reach out to the majority of Turkish voters who did not back the JDP. The JDP has

certainly made a good start to what is likely to be a long and difficult process of mutual adjustment by underlining its desire for compromise, as well as its unwillingness to challenge the founding principles of the Turkish state. However, the political accommodation sought by the JDP is certain to be tested by the moves it will make in office. The headscarf issue, for example, which is symbolically very important to the defenders of the secular state, including the military establishment that helped push the WP out of government in 1997, is one that immediately comes to mind.

The precarious state of the Turkish economy will make the task of the JDP government more complicated. The JDP now has to deal with the economic crisis that propelled it to power. The IMF-backed program, which the JDP has promised to maintain, makes it very difficult to quickly reduce unemployment or to alleviate the pain of the masses below the poverty line. For his part, Erdogan said after the elections that the JDP will seek to review the current program with the IMF. However, it remains to be seen whether the IMF will be more accommodating to requests for revision from the new government than it was during the last review in Ankara in October, which led to the postponement of a \$1.6-billion IMF tranche. In the meantime, the Istanbul stock market has been booming since the elections, and Standard and Poors has upgraded Turkey's credit rating. There is clearly optimism that the JDP's new economic team will be able to balance the need to work with the IMF with the political imperative of helping the real economy neglected by the previous government.

The JDP will also face early challenges in foreign affairs. The first test will come with the Copenhagen summit of the European Union (EU) in mid-December, which will demonstrate the success of JDP's brand of diplomacy, as well as the limits of the EU's post-election goodwill. Although Turkey's large population and troubled economy make it difficult for the EU to proceed to accession negotiations with Turkey in the near future, it is nevertheless likely that the JDP government will be given tangible encouragement with respect to eventual accession. However, such a compromise will almost certainly require rapid movement on the Cyprus issue, which has been looming over Turkish-EU negotiations.

The other immediate foreign policy issue is the possibility of war in Iraq. As Erdogan confirmed after the elections, the JDP does not want conflict in Iraq. However, Erdogan also said that Turkey would support military action if it were sanctioned by the UN. Consequently, the JDP position is not very different from that of the outgoing government, which reiterated its opposition to war on a virtually daily basis while stressing its fears of a division of Iraq and the establishment of an Iraqi Kurdish state. In any case, according to opinion polls, over 80 percent of Turks share these views. Given the fact that the Turkish military establishment is also opposed to war, the issue is likely to be dealt with relatively smoothly when the time comes in the context of the National Security Council meetings, which bring Turkey's civilian and military leadership together on a monthly basis. Moreover, the likely delay in possible military action by the United States following the adoption of a UN resolution opening the way to renewed inspections is likely to give the new government leeway on this question.

As the JDP grapples with these issues, it will have some political breathing room. Although the RPP will naturally exercise its role as the opposition in the TGNA, as the RPP leader Deniz Baykal indicated in his post-election meeting with Erdogan, it will do so in a constructive spirit reflecting the mood of the country. The nonparliamentary opposition could be sharper and will probably be spearheaded by the YP, which can draw upon the power of its leader's media empire, while the other parties are preoccupied by the difficult process of redefining themselves as they choose new leaders. For its part, the influential military establishment appears willing to give the JDP a chance to prove itself in government. Having supported the elections, which led to the JDP victory, the military has declared that it respects the verdict of the people. "We had a very democratic, incident-free election. The outcome is the will of our people, and I can only respect it," Chief of Staff Hilmi Ozkok, told reporters during his post-election Washington trip. It is clear that the military, which is no doubt mindful of its difficult relations with the JDP's Islamist predecessors, wishes to indicate its desire to avoid a confrontation.

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