

Turkish elections: A breakthrough result for HDP

HDP, Peoples' Democratic Party, demolished the 10% threshold by getting 13.1% of the votes in the general elections of Turkey. HDP has 80 seats out of 550 according to the preliminary results. This indicates a huge shift in the society to radical left politics.

Besides the breakthrough result of HDP, governing party AKP lost its absolute majority in the parliament. Hence, its rule of the last 13 years came to an end. Former Prime Minister Davutoğlu will need a coalition partner in order to form a new government with 40.8% of the votes and 254 seats (9% decline compared to last general elections). Another strong option is that there will be a minority government of AKP with the condition of early elections.

Defeat of AKP

This was the first election defeat of AKP (Justice and Development Party) since its foundation in 2001. The prominent election promise of the ruling party was to provide a stronger executive position to President Erdoğan by changing the political system with a new constitution. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made it clear to his supporters that he will fight for more power whatever it costs, by holding election rallies throughout the country. That was a constitutional crime due to the fact that the President has to be unbiased and nonpartisan. The decline means that millions of AKP voters refused this policy. Opposition parties were able to convince people that the authoritarian tendencies of Erdoğan, which exposed increasingly in the last years, are damaging the democratic life in the country.

The politics of AKP government on Syria and Rojava had a notable impact on the results. Erdoğan was denouncing the resistance and calling Kurdish fighters of Kobane as terrorists. Many Kurds didn't forget what he said. While AKP votes reduced by half in many Kurdish cities, HDP got overwhelmingly good results compared to the previous elections.

The neoliberal agenda of AKP government was explicitly questioned in the last years. Economical development of the country was coupled with unfair wages, uneven distribution of wealth and worse working conditions. Soma mine disaster where 311 workers were killed last year was a result of flexible working conditions and subcontracting mechanisms promoted by AKP government. The decrease of the price of coal in Soma mines was presented as a success story of liberalisation of markets by AKP ministers, which turned into a scandal after the disaster. On average 5 workers die a day in Turkey in occupational accidents because of the lack of safety measures.

Tactic of polarisation

AKP needed to get more than 330 MPs in order to change the constitution. Despite the decline in the votes, there was the possibility of having more than that in the parliament. Thanks to the bizarre electoral system and the 10% hurdle, which is intended to diminish the left and Kurdish representation in the parliament by the 1980 military coup, the failure of HDP could work in favour ruling party AKP because it is the second party in most of the Kurdish provinces. Therefore, Erdoğan tried the tactic of polarisation in his election campaign by accusing HDP as being in line with terror.

He used hate speech against HDP members and non-Sunite religious categories that are represented in HDP. This policy cleared the way for more than 160 attacks against HDP offices by fascists and nationalists. None of the perpetrators were arrested or brought to trial. Lastly, Amed rally of HDP that gathered hundreds of thousands together was bombed. 5 people died and hundreds wounded in the attacks. Once again, perpetrators remained unknown.

There were many concerns in the opposition parties about the electoral fraud based on the scandalous acts of AKP in the former elections. Political parties, NGOs and international institutions observed the elections closely. Thanks to the careful observers, there was no big-scale fraud this time, except some small irregularities.

HDP achieved a tremendous victory

HDP had a successful election campaign. The candidate list reflected the plurality and diversity of the party. Alevis, Sunnites, Armenians, Ezidis, Arabs, ecologists, LGBT activists, socialists and many other ignored groups were represented in HDP lists.

Selahattin Demirtaş, co-chair of HDP, gathered a great attention with his humorous style, clear radical left political argumentation on tricky issues and his determination. He was enough patient on overcoming prejudices which was produced by nationalist circles often. Demirtaş told in his post-election speech, "As of this moment, the debate on the presidency, the debate about dictatorship, has come to an end in Turkey. Turkey has returned from the edge of a cliff."

In one-year time, HDP doubled its support from 6.29% to 13.1%. HDP got 2.6 million votes in the local elections in March 2014, which was the traditional support of Kurdish parties. In 5 months time in August 2014, Selahattin Demirtaş got 4 million votes in the presidential elections. HDP was able to continue this trend and increased its votes by half with the total of 6.1 million votes. This indicates a large-scale shift to radical left politics in the society.

HDP was established in 2012 as a broad coalition of Kurdish Liberation Movement, numerous left organisations and social movements. Its programme is inspired by democratic socialist values and anti-capitalism that demand economical and social rights for working class, equal treatment to religious and ethnical minorities, gender equality and environmental protection. The roots of HDP can be followed in Gezi protests and Kurdish Liberation Movement. Many people see HDP as the Turkish variant of SYRIZA and Podemos.

The increase of HDP votes occurred not just in Kurdish territories, but also in west of country, such as the Kemalism dominated city İzmir. Oppressed minorities and discriminated people of all regions voted for HDP. Demirtaş said in his post-election speech "It's the victory of workers, the unemployed, the villagers, the farmers. It's the victory of the left."

It can be allegedly said that there are three categories that explains the increase. First category is the former AKP voters from the Kurdish community who are fed up with

Erdoğan's nationalist tendencies, which disrupted the peace process with Öcalan. Second is left social democrat circles of Turkish working class and Alevites that vote traditionally for CHP. Third category is the concerned citizens who decided to vote 'tactically' for HDP in order to prevent another AKP rule. HDP leadership was able to convert the sympathy it had throughout the society into votes wisely.

Slightly increase for MHP, stagnation for CHP

The fascists of MHP, Nationalist Movement Party, slightly increased its votes, from 13.01% to 16.28%. It can be allegedly said that the increase came from the protest votes from conservative AKP supporters. CHP, Republican People's Party preserved its 25% base.

The participation to elections was 85%, which is the highest for a long while.

Possibilities and the way forward for HDP

The current political scene in the parliament indicates a deadlock for ruling class. None of the parties are willing to be the small coalition partner of AKP. An alternative of CHP-MHP government doesn't look realistic. It is likely to have a minority government of AKP with the condition of early elections.

HDP made its post-election strategy clear prior to elections. It will be in the opposition, reject going into coalition talks with AKP and push for early elections. The parliamentary group of HDP will be the voice of social movements, continue the peace negotiations and reflect the demands of oppressed communities. HDP has a great potential of showing a rising tendency.

It was the first time that Turkish citizens could vote abroad in consulates. HDP is the second party in abroad with 20.41% of the votes. In many cities of Europe, local HDP branches were founded in order to conduct the election campaign. They will continue to organise and recruit in order to get ready for possible early elections.

Now it is time for peace, democracy, freedom, justice, equality and solidarity in Turkey. It is time for left and for HDP.

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