



türkiye ekonomi politikaları araştırma vakfı

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TENSION BETWEEN AKP-TSK, WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

Confronted by the earthshaking developments experienced in Turkish political life in recent months, everybody is asking the same question. When will Turkey emerge from this crisis and when will matters fall into shape? Actually the pace and complexity of events complicate efforts to forecast the future. What were these developments in brief? Republican demonstrations, e-intervention, failure of the Presidential elections, decisions of the Constitutional Court on the Presidential elections, the call for early general elections, the election alliance of the parties on the left, the rising number of PKK [Partiya Karkara Kurdistan—so called “Kurdistan Liberation Party”] attacks and failure of the central right parties to form an election alliance. How shall we forecast the future in this case?

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) are one of the parties involved in the Presidential elections of April 27. The first step in predicting the future is to make an analysis of the policies of the TSK. The TSK obtained the results it had aimed at in the Presidential elections process. The Army has blocked an "Islamist" member of the AKP [Justice and Development Party] from occupying the presidency, to which its institutional culture attaches "strategic" importance. The AKP was not able to install the planned name to the Presidential seat which it wished to occupy effortlessly. Looking at the political developments, it seems that AKP will not enjoy such an opportunity in the forthcoming process. Consequently, the probability of experiencing a crisis like the one on 27th April 2007 is quite low and TSK has already started to withdraw to its pre-crisis position.

There are several reasons for supposing that the AKP will not now be able to muster the numerical and intellectual power to elect the President on its own. These reasons include the decision of the Parliament to hold early elections, the decision of the Constitutional Court on Presidential elections, The judicial objections of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, to the constitutional amendments, the possible outcomes of the elections, the trauma caused by the e-intervention on the leader and the staff of AKP, and the revisions made by Mr Erdoğan in the outlook of the party and the candidate lists.

The call for early election made just after the crisis has temporarily reduced the tension between TSK and AKP over the agenda. The debate has been shifted to the political parties and the controversy has been

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transferred to a “legitimate platform”. In this regard, the tension between AKP and TSK has started to slow down.

The first reactions to the email-intervention of April 27th came from the media and the representatives of the parties. However, the reflections on the core of the Party will be rational. Because, the core staff of the Party have gained economic advantages, bureaucratic positions, and psychological vantages since AKP came to power. All these cannot be risked at once for the position of Presidency. They could all be lost at once, and the future plans may be lost altogether if tension goes on growing and the crisis deepens.

According to the public opinion polls, AKP may gain power single-handedly in the elections of 22 July 2007. Yet, the new government will be weaker than its predecessor. Apparently, the MHP [National Movement Party] will sit in the new Parliament and DTP [pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party) running independent candidates, will have approximately twenty members in the parliament to the disadvantage of AKP. As a result, the Parliament will contain four parties, the AKP, MHP, CHP [Republican Peoples Party], and the DTP.

The new distribution of seats in Parliament with four parties rather than two as in the parliament elected in 2002, will place limits on what the AKP can do. First of all, the Party will lose its overwhelming numerical in legislation. Secondly, while it was easy for it to cope with the CHP, the “representative of the left” in a bipolar Parliament on matters such as religious disputes, it will lose its prior advantage in the presence of the opposition of MHP.

Iraq has become a part of Turkish domestic politics due to the conduct of the North Iraqi Kurdish leaders and the controversies of the PKK. Important developments can be expected in the forthcoming period. AKP will experience difficulties in managing the issue because of the Islamist Kurds in the Party. The re-entry of the MHP into Parliament, and its ongoing criticism of Iraq policies, may disturb the AKP and exacerbate the ethnic fault lines within the Party.

The likely distribution of seats in the next parliament will probably mean that the AKP will not be able to elect \President by simply relying on its parliamentary majority. This condition is expected to compel some sort of entente. However, if the Parliament cannot agree on a name and is dissolved as a result, then a new name with the approval of a broader part of the anti-AKP community may emerge. This would mean a thorough release of the already-declining tension between the AKP and the TSK

The “Leftist” and “liberal” names that the AKP is allowing be elected on its lists may disturb the Party discipline briefly. In fact, these names will be under pressure from two directions at once. It is possible that they will speak with different voices from their new parties in order to show that they preserve their ideological identities and their personalities and

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so give way to pressure from their original ideological groups. Likewise, it will be difficult for these names to be accepted by the Party base or core coming from the National Vision [*Milli Görüş*, in Turkish] tradition of Mr Erbakan, the former leader of the Refah Partisi. For such reasons, the parliamentarians of liberal and leftist origins will face a serious dilemma and their loyalty to the party will be doubtful.

The estimated election results show us that the AKP will have to make up a relatively weaker government. The AKP will not receive the same understanding and support from the USA and the European Union that it did before. On the other hand, the costs of the process of EU membership have been growing each day, and the target of full membership has become doubtful. This condition will cause decay in EU-AKP relations. For example, the Cyprus issue will become a much fiercer process.

On economic policy, the AKP will not be as compliant as it was in the previous period; because, the main privatizations have now come to an end. In spite of economic stability, the most awkward problem, unemployment, cannot be eliminated and new jobs cannot be created. Agricultural policies have adversely affected rural areas and city suburbs.

One of the developments which may give rise to disputes in the next period is the position of the religious following of Fethullah Hoca within the AKP. This group supports the AKP in order boost its influence may cause trouble for the AKP into because of the independent policies it sometimes follows, with its media, and the devoted bureaucracy. In the forthcoming period, the Fettullah's followers congregation could cause a confrontation between the AKP and the TSK with a last move and so cause a further crisis. And this will reduce the power of the party.

The Chief of General Staff General, General Yaşar Büyükanıt, played an important role in this process. The general is now entering the second and final year of his term in office. The process in the Presidential elections has been unfolding as he wishes. He will not let the relations with the AKP become as tense again as they were on April 27; because, General Büyükanıt is content with developments during and since the world-famous e-mail. This has two reasons: Firstly, he has fulfilled the requirements of his image as a "Kemalist", "fierce" commander. The fierce commander did not allow Çankaya to pass to the Islamists. Secondly, he will occupy the post for a year and projects requiring longer time scales are traditionally left to successors. He may be expected to behave accordingly.

To conclude: the power of AKP and the new government will shrink in the period ahead of us. The Parliament will contain a larger number of parties. The controversies over the Presidency have shifted onto a different track, and will continue on a legitimate platform and in the Parliament. The tension of between the AKP and the Army will continue

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to ease, and issues will normalize according the standards familiar in Turkey.