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THE IMPACTS OF THE “YSK” REGULATIONS ON “FAIRNESS” AND “COMPOSITION OF THE PARLIAMENT”

One reason for the disproportionality in an election system based on proportional representation is that the value of a vote differs among regions. The value of one vote can be measured on the basis of the number of the members of parliament (MP) corresponding to one vote (or size of the population or voter per one MP). It is already known that a significant disparity in this respect in Turkey. It is such that, the value of one vote in Tunceli is 3.5 times higher than that in Izmir election zone 1 or in Balıkesir.

However, in the ideal case where the principle of fairness applies completely, the value of one vote must be the same in all regions. Though it is mathematically almost impossible to assure such equality, relevant laws and the regulations introduced by the authorized election councils can ensure a convergence in the value of votes in different election zones, that is, to improve the fairness of the election system.

The topic of this note is to examine the impact of the election laws and the regulations by the Higher Election Council on the number of MPs per election zone on the notion of “fairness” and on seat arithmetic on the basis of an up-to-dated and probable scenario analysis.

Since 2007, new regulations on the number of MPs per election region have been introduced. On February 26, 2011, upon the cancellation of the articles that foresees two MPs for each province by the Constitutional Court on grounds that the mentioned article “fails to promote/disturbs equality”, the Higher Election Council (YSK) recalculated the number of MPs for each region, applicable for the next elections. With the new calculation, number of MPs changed for some cities.

In order to see, under a probable scenario, the repercussions of this regulation on the composition of seats at the parliament, the note makes an analysis on the basis of the estimates given in the election survey conducted by the A&G research company in February 2011 and the latest status of the regional compositions of MPs. Such analysis foresees the composition of the seats as follows:

Table 1. Votes (%) and Number of MP by Political Parties

Party	Votes (%)	Number of MPs
AKP	47.2	325
CHP	27.3	148
MHP	12.1	50
INDEPENDENT/BDP	6.0	27
OTHER	7.4	-

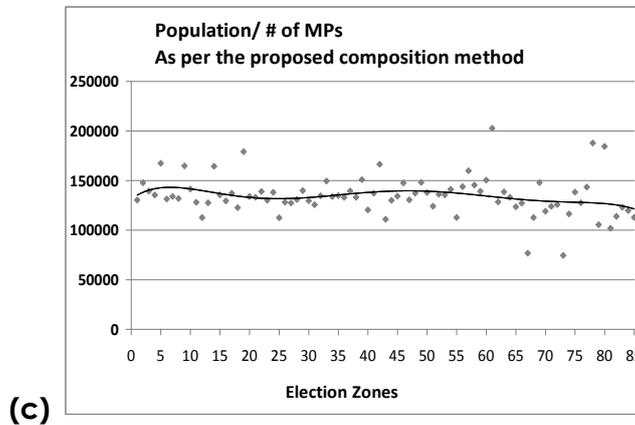
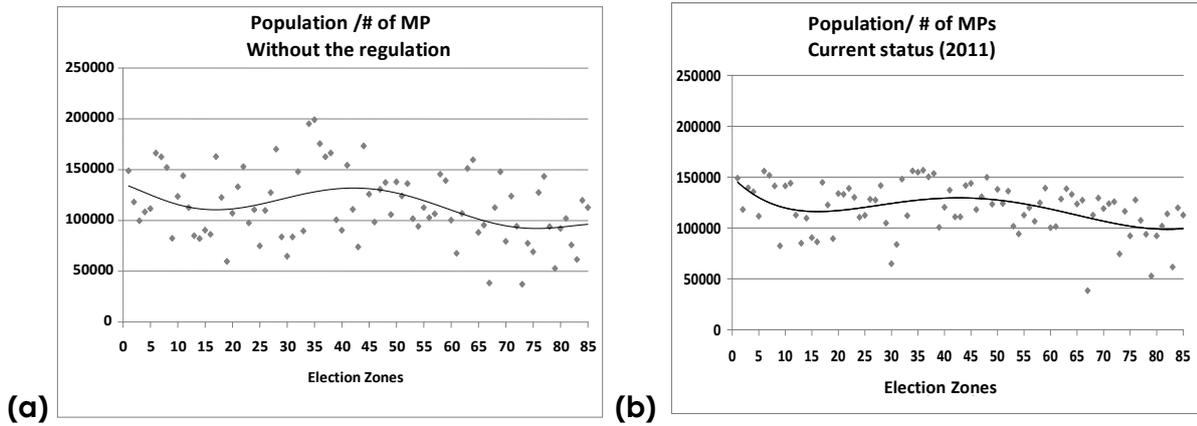
The regulations improved fairness considering the “value of one vote”; but there is room for furthering the improvement.

Figure 1 below shows the value of one vote and the size of population per one MP in 85 election zones. Figure 1 (a) gives the picture with the assumption that no new regulation had been made since the 2007 elections and (b) gives the new composition on the basis of the current regulation. Lastly, figure 1 (c) shows the composition if the proposed regulation is introduced.¹

Closer the dots are, fairer the elections will be considering the value of one vote. In the extreme case of fairness, all dots would be on the same horizontal curve.

¹ In the proposed method, the “regional weight” was calculated by dividing the population of a particular election zone to the total population; the weights calculated for each region were multiplied by 550 MPs and the results were rounded up to roughly calculate the number of MPs per election zone. For the details of this analysis, objective criteria and the details of the proposed regulation, please see Göksel and Çınar (2011).

Figure 1 Population / Number of MP Ratio by Election Zones



The results of the analysis suggest that the latest regulations introduced by the YSK made positive contributions to fairness as the dots are closer in the figure (b) compared to figure (a). But, as the figure 1 (c) reveals, with the proposed composition method, it is possible to further the fairness among regions.

As per the results on the regional basis, the most striking amendment is that Bayburt will have only one MP, thus the only one of the 85 election zones with one MP.

In short, it is seen that the regulation attempted by the YSK to improve “fairness” is appropriate but insufficient. It is possible to ensure a convergence in the value of votes (with respect to electing a MP) in different regions by increasing the number of election zones with one MP and initiating regulatory changes for other election zones. This issue is of significant importance considering “fair representation” and equality in the value of votes (voting equality).

The recent regulation by the YSK had no significant impact on the “parliament arithmetic”.

Another interesting finding of the analysis and comparisons is that the recent regulation by the YSK had no important impact on the parliament arithmetic. The table below gives the comparison of the composition of seats at the parliament under the old and the new regulation:

Table 2. Composition of Seats by the New and the Old Regulations

Party	Old Regulation (applied in 2007)	New Regulation (As of February 26, 2011)
AKP	326	325
CHP	143	148
MHP	52	50
INDEPENDENT/BDP	29	27
OTHER	-	-

As per the new regulation, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) loses one seat and the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) and Independent/BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) lose 2 seats each while the CHP (Republican People’s Party) wins 5 seats.

Finally, Table 3 shows the impact of new regulation and the proposed regulation on the composition of the seats at the parliament.

Table 3. Composition of Seats by the New and the Proposed Regulation

Party	New Regulation (As of February 26, 2011)	Proposed Regulation
AKP	325	325
CHP	148	150
MHP	50	50
INDEPENDENT/BDP	27	25
OTHER	-	-

Under the proposed regulation, Independent/BDP loses 2 MPs to the CHP. One remarkable point is that the executed and the proposed regulation are to the benefit of the CHP only. In other words, the existing unfairness – in negative terms – exclusively affects the CHP.

The issue to bear in mind is not that the YSK carries out the regulations that will ex-ante maximize the fairness of elections. It should be emphasized that the fact that the regulations in question caused no significant difference in parliament arithmetic on the basis of the estimates for the 2011 elections does not imply that the regulation will prove futile under different circumstances (that is, different scenarios and shares in votes).

The parliament arithmetic with the proposed regulation in the 2007 elections.

Table 4 represents how the parliament arithmetic would have been if the proposed mechanism had been employed in the 2007 elections.

Table 4. Composition of Seats in 2007: Realization and Proposed Regulation

Party	Realization	Proposed Regulation
AKP	341	339
CHP	112	121
MHP	71	68
INDEPENDENT/BDP	26	22
OTHER	-	-

If a fairer regulation with respect to the “value of one vote” had been introduced before 2007 elections, the CHP would have won 9 seats while the AKP, MP and Independent/BDP would have lost 2, 3 and 4 seats, respectively.

Bibliography:

Göksel, T. & Çınar, Y. (forthcoming, 2011). *Türkiye’de Seçim Barajına ve Seçim Sistemi Değişikliklerine Yönelik Analizler ve Politika Önerileri*, TEPAV.