



National Security Program

Foreign Policy Project

Turkey Initiative White Paper: Shadows and Doubts

An Overview

WHO



Amb. Morton Abramowitz, Co-Chair has served as Ambassador to Turkey, as well as Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, Ambassador to Thailand, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense.



Amb. Eric Edelman, Co-Chair has served as U.S. Ambassador to the Republics of Finland and Turkey, Principal Deputy Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs, Chief of Staff to Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, and special assistant to Secretary of State George Shultz.

The co-chairs are joined by: **Henri Barkey**, Bernard L. and Bertha F. Cohen Professor of Internal Relations, Lehigh University; **Svante Cornell**, Research Director, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program; **Ambassador Paula Dobriansky**, Former Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs; **John Hannah**, Former Assistant for National Security Affairs to the Vice President; **Halil Karaveli**, Senior Fellow, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program; **David Kramer**, Executive Director, Freedom House; **Aaron Lobel**, Founder and President, America Abroad Media; **Admiral (ret.) Gregory Johnson**, Former Commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Europe and Senior Advisor, BPC; **General (ret.) Charles Wald**, Former Deputy Commander, U.S. European Command and BPC Board Member. BPC's Turkey Initiative is directed by Blaise Misztal.

WHY

As political uncertainty and conflict continue to plague the Middle East, the United States has looked to its historic partner and ally, Turkey, to play as constructive role in stabilizing the region. The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) created its Turkey Initiative because, as its inaugural report notes, “the United States and Turkey need a

strong, cooperative partnership. But challenges to such a partnership have steadily mounted.” In a critically important and unstable period for both Turkey and the region, BPC continues to analyze Turkey’s political situation and provide recommendations for policymakers on how to strengthen the U.S.-Turkish partnership.



Shadows and Doubts: The Turkish Local Elections of March 30, 2014

The Turkish local elections on March 30, 2014, were the most controversial in recent history, triggering an unprecedented number of accusations of irregularities and vote-rigging. The overall victor in the elections is not in doubt. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won. The controversies—and the doubts—are in the details:

1. CLAIMS OF IRREGULARITIES DURING THE VOTING PROCESS

- Polling station volunteers complained that the election officials on duty in the polling stations **were unaware of the election rules and legally required procedures**. There were numerous reports of voters being poorly informed about how to stamp the ballot papers and put them in envelopes.
- In urban areas, most of the reports of politically-motivated irregularities involved claims of **political party officials—mostly members of the AKP—attempting to intimidate voters and election officials**.

2. CLAIMS OF IRREGULARITIES DURING THE COUNTING PROCESS

- During the counting process, there were **44 reports of power cuts in polling stations in 21 provinces** across the country. In several districts, opposition parties had growing leads before the outages, only for them to be first caught and then overtaken by the AKP when counting resumed.
- Ankara Mayoral Race:
 1. At 254 polling stations in Ankara, the **turnout was registered as more than 100 percent**—a statistical impossibility. The AKP won the majority of these overrepresented precincts.

2. An examination of the official tallies of the votes in the ballot boxes from the polling stations in Ankara showed that **more than one-fifth lacked the required stamps and signatures** confirming that they are an accurate record of the count.

- After years of declining proportion of votes declared invalid, this election saw an **abnormally high number of invalid votes**. In known AKP strongholds, the proportion of invalid votes was relatively low. But the rate rose steeply in districts that were expected to be tightly contested but that the AKP eventually won by a narrow margin.
- There were **more than 1,400 allegations of irregularities** in the local elections, the overwhelmingly majority of them made by opposition parties against results in which AKP candidates were victorious. But the **vast majority were dismissed**. The **Supreme Electoral Board ordered only two reruns** in provincial capitals, both of them in response to appeals by the AKP against narrow losses to opposition parties

3. RECOMMENDATION

- With historic elections—the first direct, popular voting for president—set to take place in August 2014 against a backdrop of tension and political uncertainty, **we recommend that the Turkish government invite international observers to assess the fairness and security of the vote**.

WANT MORE?

Read the full report at <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/report/shadows-and-doubts-turkish-local-elections-march-30-2014>
Learn more at <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/projects/turkey-initiative>