

Turkish Studies Symposium 2014

Eighth Annual Turkish Studies Symposium After Gezi Park Protests – Rethinking Turkish Politics and Political Culture



Symposium Poster

Monday, April 28, 2014

1:30 – 5:30 PM

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Illini Union, General Lounge (Room 210)

1401 W. Green St.

Urbana, IL 61801 ([map](#))

Organized by:

European Union Center

Co-sponsored by:

Russian, East European and Eurasian Center (REEEC)

Center for Global Studies (CGS)

Center for South Asian & Middle Eastern Studies (CSAMES)

Department of Linguistics

Department of Political Science

School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

EUC, REEEC, and CGS are National Resource Centers funded by the US Department of Education Title VI grant. EUC is also an European Union Center of Excellence funded by the European Union. CSAMES is funded in part by the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program, International Studies Division of the U.S. Department of Education.

About the Symposium

The Eighth Annual Turkish Studies Symposium (TSS) will explore the theme *“After Gezi Park Protests — Rethinking Turkish Politics and Political Culture.”* A small protest against the destruction of Gezi Park in downtown Istanbul in late May 2013 has triggered



wide-ranging public demonstrations and an outpour of frustration with the authoritarian style of governance. This was *arguably the largest wave of protests in Turkey’s history, which have brought together an unusual coalition, a diverse profile of demonstrators that would not have come together before:* independents stood side-by-side with the nationalists, anticapitalist-Islamists, LGBT activists, soccer fans, Kurds, Alevis, and people from across the political spectrum. This most diverse, inclusive and democratic wave of protests that Turkey has ever seen turned into sites where the possibility of co-existence was proven as a viable model for Turkish society.


The mass protests and the unfolding events since May 2013, including the widespread corruption accusations leveled at the 11-year AKP government by followers of an Islamic movement, *Gulen Hareketi*, marked a turning point not only in Turkey’s domestic politics and political culture but also in its foreign policy. The domestic political stability as well as the AKP government’s hyperactive, assertive foreign policy began to crack and the image of Turkey in the international arena took a serious hit. More specifically, the protests and unfolding events have called into question the “Turkish model” —a template that “effectively integrates Islam, democracy and vibrant economics”, for the transitional regimes in the Middle East, on the one hand, and Turkey’s future with the European Union (EU), on the other.

The symposium will address key issues raised by the Gezi protests and the recent challenges faced by the AKP government: What are the new avenues opened up by this broad public mobilization and what is the direction of new social and political cultural developments in the aftermath of Gezi protests? How will these recent developments affect the local elections in March 2014? And, what does the future hold for Turkey’s role in its broader region in light of these milestone events? Some of the larger (domestic) issues we will address are the role of political Islam in Turkish democracy, changing contours of state-society relations, and new (non-traditional) actors of democratic participation. We will also situate the events within Turkey’s current regional

context (tensions in the Middle East, specifically the Syrian crisis, and Turkey-EU relations). We will specifically explore the question of whether the recent events imply a rejection of Turkish foreign policy under AKP rule that is increasingly defined by detachment from the European agenda on the one hand, and neo-imperial aspirations in the former Ottoman space, on the other.

Schedule

1:15 pm	<i>Coffee/tea and refreshments</i>
1:30 pm	Welcome and Introductory Remarks
1:45 pm Panel I	<div data-bbox="444 716 1040 1045" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1057 716 1357 1079">PANEL I – WHOSE TURKEY IS IT? <i>New Actors of Democratic Participation and Activism and Re-Thinking the Role of Political Islam and</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1094 935 1129"><i>State-Society Relations in Turkey</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1142 591 1178"><i>Panelists:</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1190 1373 1274">Fatma Müge Göçek, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, University of Michigan <i>“Contested Spaces in Contemporary Turkey”</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1333 1175 1369">Avital Livny, Political Science, Stanford University <i>“The Gezi Generation? Political Attitudes and Behavior in Contemporary Turkey”</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1476 1382 1608">Sinan Ciddi, Executive Director, Institute of Turkish Studies; Visiting Assistant Professor, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University <i>“Turkey’s Election Season: Emerging Patterns of Political Participation”</i></p> <p data-bbox="461 1715 1284 1799"><i>Moderator:</i> Ercan Balci, Linguistics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</p>
3:30 pm	<i>Break: Coffee/tea and refreshments</i>

<p>3:45 pm Panel II</p>	 <p>Panel II – WHITHER TURKEY’S SOFT POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND REIGNING EU-TURKEY RELATIONS? <i>Rethinking Turkish Foreign Policy</i> <i>Panelists:</i></p> <p>Güneş Murat Tezcür, Political Science, Loyola University Chicago <i>“Protesters as Democrats or Coup Plotters? Reflections on Turkish Foreign Policy in an Era of Popular Uprisings”</i></p> <p>Bill Park, Defense Studies, Kings College London <i>“Turkey’s Multiple Kurdish Dilemmas – Syria, Iraq and at Home: Threats and Opportunities”</i></p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mahir Şaul, Anthropology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</p>
<p>4:45 pm – 5:15 pm</p>	<p><i>Q & A and Wrap-Up</i></p>

Abstracts

Sinan Ciddi, “**Redefining Political Opposition in Turkey: From Political Parties to the Gezi Protests**”

Fatma Müge Göçek, “**Contested Spaces in Contemporary Turkey**”

Avital Livny, “**The Gezi Generation? Political Attitudes and Behavior in Contemporary Turkey**”

Bill Park, “**Turkey’s Multiple Kurdish Dilemmas – Syria, Iraq and at Home; Threats and Opportunities**”

Güneş Murat Tezcür, “**Protesters as Democrats or Coup Plotters? Reflections on Turkish Foreign Policy in an Era of Popular Uprisings**”

Sinan Ciddi, Institute of Turkish Studies; Visiting Assistant Professor, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

“Redefining Political Opposition in Turkey: From Political Parties to the Gezi Protests”

Since Turkey held general elections in June 2011, heightened scholarly discussion has focused on the country’s evolving party system. During the last decade since the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) took over the reins of government, scholars have increasingly commented on two observable trends: a reduction in voter volatility and realignment of votes to the AKP. Three successive electoral victories for the AKP have ignited debates regarding the existence of a dominant party system. The AKP effectively remains electorally unchallenged and is comfortably situated as a single party government with virtually unimpeded legislative and executive capabilities. Why is this the case? Since its first national victory in 2002, the AKP’s large parliamentary majority has allowed the party to implement a wide array of programmatic priorities. The AKP’s parliamentary majority is reinforced by its equally impressive performance in local government elections.

In brief, since 2002 the AKP’s governing mandate has seldom been challenged by opposition political parties in parliament. Both the main opposition Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP) lack the necessary parliamentary seats to block the passage of AKP legislative pursuits. Instead, predominant challenges to AKP rule have appeared in the form of extra-parliamentary and arguably undemocratic forces. The office of the President while occupied by Ahmet Necdet Sezer (2000-07), the Constitutional Court and the armed forces – to varying degrees and on different occasions – mounted individual challenges to undermine the government. President Sezer made history by vetoing more pieces of (AKP-passed) legislation than any of his predecessors. The country’s constitutional court mounted a nearly successful campaign to close down the AKP (2007), accusing it of being “a focus of anti-secular” activities. Finally, the armed forces, which for most of the multiparty era in Turkey (1946 onwards) considered itself as the ultimate guardian of the secular Kemalist state, issued a communiqué on April 27, 2007 highlighting their concerns regarding the government’s choice for president: Abdullah Gül.

In sum, the two main opposition parties are beleaguered by a significant problem: an entrenched inability to be perceived by electors as credible governing alternatives to the AKP. Although the CHP has held the title of “main” opposition party since 2002, its vote share is (presently) approximately half of the AKP’s. The MHP was not able to enter parliament in 2002 due to Turkey’s extraordinarily high 10 percent threshold, and its

electoral performance since 2007 has been even less impressive than that of the CHP (See Table 1). Voters who do not identify with the AKP have for the last decade complained about the lack of a credible alternative to the government. The purpose of this article is an attempt to answer the question of why in a competitive parliamentary democracy has the AKP not faced credible political opposition? Why have neither the CHP nor the MHP been perceived as credible governing alternatives in the eyes of voters? In other words if organised political opposition remains weak, can one cite or find any form of democratic opposition which may present the AKP with an electoral challenge?

Fatma Müge Göçek, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, University of Michigan
"Contested Spaces in Contemporary Turkey"

This talk analyzes the theories on the use of social space within the context of the last decade in turkey when neoliberalism made significant strides into social life in general and everyday interactions in particular. after presenting a brief history of the use of space in ottoman and republican history, it identifies the urban, secular, illegal and the environment

as the four spaces within which the negotiation appears most intense and conflictual.

Avital Livny, Political Science, Stanford University

"The Gezi Generation? Political Attitudes and Behavior in Contemporary Turkey"

Bill Park, Defense Studies, Kings College London

"Turkey's Multiple Kurdish Dilemmas – Syria, Iraq and at Home; Threats and Opportunities"

With the emergence of the Kurdistan Regional Government of northern Iraq to quasi-statehood, the growing political and economic relationship between it and Turkey, the turmoil in Syria that has led to the establishment of self-governing Kurdish zones in the country, and Turkey's continuing attempts to resolve its own Kurdish problem, Ankara is now grappling with a 'Kurdish issue' that is more transborder, complex, overlapping and interlinked than ever before. This address will trace the relationship between these various and fast-moving dimensions of Turkey's Kurdish dilemmas, and speculate about the range of possible outcomes. It will also seek to locate Turkey's Kurdish policies and problems within the context of wider regional and global dynamics, notably the 'Arab Spring'; Turkey's policies towards the wider Middle East region; and Turkey's domestic politics.

Güneş Murat Tezcür, Political Science, Loyola University Chicago

"Protesters as Democrats or Coup Plotters? Reflections on Turkish Foreign Policy in an Era of Popular Uprisings"

As Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan has consolidated his domestic power and achieved sustainable economic growth, activism in Turkish policy has been a defining element of his rule. Turkey, a regional power with global aspirations, has greatly involved in an increasingly polarized Middle East while its relations with the EU has stagnated. This presentation historicizes and contextualizes Turkish foreign policy and suggests how a realist approach continues to decisively inform its priorities and decisions.

Speaker Bios

Fatma Müge Göçek, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, University of Michigan
Fatma Müge Göçek is a Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies. Her research focuses on the comparative analysis of history, politics and gender in the first and third worlds. She critically analyzes the impact of processes such as development, nationalism, religious movements and collective violence on minorities. Her published works includes *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the 18th Century* (Oxford University Press, 1987), *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, Power* (Columbia University Press, 1994 co-edited with Shiva Balaghi), *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *Political Cartoons in the Middle East* (Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East* (SUNY Press, 2002), *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2011), and *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2011 co-edited with Ronald Grigor Suny and Norman Naimark).

Avital Livny, Political Science, Stanford University

Avital Livny is a Ph.D. Candidate in the **Department of Political Science** at **Stanford University**. She also holds an M.Phil. in **Modern Middle Eastern Studies** from **Oxford University**. Her research interests generally fall under the heading of comparative politics and include: the politics of religion and ethnicity, particularly the micro-foundations of identity-based mobilization; electoral dynamics in developing democracies; and variations in interpersonal trust, across space and time. Her region of interest is the Muslim World, particularly the Muslim Middle East, and she has conducted extensive research in Turkey.

Sinan Ciddi, Executive Director, Institute of Turkish Studies: Visiting Assistant Professor, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
Sinan Ciddi is an expert on Turkish domestic politics and foreign policy. He obtained his Ph.D. from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 2007 in

the field of Political Science. Ciddi continues to author scholarly articles, opinion pieces and book chapters on contemporary Turkish politics and foreign policy, as well as participate in media appearances

(see http://turkishstudies.org/about/sinan_ciddi/index.shtml). In addition to his teaching and research responsibilities at Georgetown, Ciddi also serves as the Executive Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies.

Ciddi was born in Turkey and educated in the United Kingdom. He was previously an instructor at Sabanci University between 2004-2008 and completed his Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the same institution between 2007-2008. Distinct from his articles and opinion editorials, Ciddi's book titled *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: The Republican People's Party: Secularism and Nationalism* (Routledge, January 2009) focuses on the electoral weakness of the Republican People's Party.

Between 2008-2011, he established the Turkish Studies program at the University of Florida's Center for European Studies.

Güneş Murat Tezcür, Political Science, Loyola University Chicago

Gunes Murat Tezcur (Ph.D. University of Michigan-2005) is an Associate Professor at the Political Science Department of Loyola University Chicago. His research focuses on themes such as political violence, politics of Islam, judicial activism, and electoral politics. He is the author of *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: The Paradox of Moderation*. His current main research project examines the motivations of ordinary people who take extraordinary risks and join armed groups with a focus on the Kurdish insurgency. His research has been supported by major grants from the National Science Foundation, the United States Institute of Peace, and currently the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. He teaches courses on the Middle East, political violence, democracy, globalization, and politics of energy.

Bill Park, Defense Studies, Kings College London

Bill Park is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Defence Studies, King's College, London University. He is the author of journal articles, book chapters, and monographs on a range of Turkish foreign policy issues, including its EU accession prospects, Turkey and ESDP, the Cyprus problem, Turkey's policies towards Northern Iraq, Turkey-US relations, the Fethullah Gulen movement, and the Ergenekon affair. Among his publications are 'Turkey's policy towards Northern Iraq: problems and prospects', Adelphi Paper No. 374, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and 'Turkey-KRG relations after the US withdrawal from Iraq: putting the Kurds on the map', published by the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, in March 2014 (available online). He is currently writing a book on Turkey's Kurdish predicaments. His

book, 'Modern Turkey: People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World', was published by Routledge in 2011. He is a frequent visitor to Turkey, and has given papers on Turkish affairs at various academic and official workshops and conferences around the world, and has appeared as a Turkey expert on British, Turkish, US, Russian, French, Iranian, Iraqi and Australian TV and radio, has given written and oral testimony on Turkish issues to both UK Houses of Parliament, and is used as a consultant on Turkish issues by various UK government agencies. He serves as a trustee and council member for the British Institute at Ankara, was until recently an Advisor to the Dialogue Society in London, and is an editorial board member for the journal *Mediterranean Politics*.