

# Whom shall I vote for?

Thursday 26 July 2007, by [Sahin Alpay](#)

In this election I am going to vote for independent candidate Baskin Oran, because I want to see a member of the Turkish Parliament who will defend human rights and the rule of law resolutely and unswervingly.

Professor Oran is a former schoolmate, and a friend of mine of 40 years' standing. I trust that he will fully represent my views and preferences. I must, however, also declare that if I had the slightest doubt about the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) winning enough seats in Parliament to form a single-party government, and if I were to vote in any election district other than İstanbul's second, I would without the slightest hesitation vote for the AK Party. Why?

The main reason for this is my conviction that democracy (especially in Turkey) works best with single-party governments, that single-party governments are more successful in adopting and implementing reforms than coalition governments. The second reason is that, despite all of my objections to and criticisms of it, I find the performance of the AK Party government on the whole successful, and favor its continuation. It has indeed accomplished a "Quiet Revolution" in Turkey during its five-year rule since the elections of 2002. The Turkish economy is not without problems, particularly in view of the growing current account deficit, but it has never in my generation's lifetime been in as good a shape as it is today. Inflation is down almost to single digits; exports and per capita income have doubled; and the amount of incoming foreign direct investment (FDI) during the last two years is equal to that received in the prior 50 years.

The AK Party government has achieved important improvements in the field of democracy. These explain how Turkey "sufficiently" fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria, and started accession negotiations with the European Union. Blaming the continued problems concerning human rights, and basic rights and freedoms solely on the failures of the AK Party government would be unfair. I regard the AK Party as an important guarantee for consolidation of both democracy and secularism, and also for the domestic peace and unity of the country. It is true that the Kurdish problem has not been solved, but because of improvements achieved, most citizens of Kurdish origin are going to vote for the AK Party.

I also find the AK Party government's foreign policy on the whole successful. It has pursued a multi-dimensional foreign policy aimed primarily at EU accession, while improving relations in all directions. Turkey today has much better relations with most of its neighbors compared to five years ago. Turkey has greater esteem and respectability in the world today as compared to five years ago. If the accession negotiations with the EU are not, unfortunately, progressing smoothly today, the blame surely does not lie solely with the AK Party government. It is true that Turkey avoided getting involved in the horrible war in Iraq thanks not to the AK Party leadership but to Parliament members who displayed the courage and wisdom to say "No!" on March 1, 2003, to the governmental bill that would have allowed US soldiers to invade Iraq using Turkish territory. It can still be argued, however, that if despite all provocations Turkey has so far avoided any military involvement in Iraq it is thanks to the AK Party government's restraint. I really see no party other than the AK Party that one could consider voting for.

I voted for Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (ANAVATAN, then ANAP) in the elections held right after the end of military rule in 1983. I have ever since (and regrettably even in the elections of 2002) voted consistently for the Republican People's Party (CHP), the so-called social democratic party, in all parliamentary elections. I would, however, never again consider voting for the CHP while its currently prevailing character as a party of the state, of bureaucratic guardianship and as a "Deniz Baykal party" remains unchanged. I would, of course, never ever vote for parties that advocate ethnic nationalism, which incite hatred, conflict, violence and war. I regard every single vote in favor of the party led by a

person who is currently being tried in a series of cases on charges of serious corruption, and who is trying to deceive the voters by making incredible promises a blow to the common sense of the Turkish people. I was hoping that the Democrat Party (DP) would play a positive role in Turkish politics in view of leader Mehmet Ağar's discourse promising policies to enhance domestic peace and democracy. His behavior during the aborted presidential election, however, has seriously damaged his credibility. I still hope that the DP manages to overcome the 10 percent threshold and is represented in the coming Parliament. The rest of the parties do not concern me at all.

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## **Sources**

Source : TdZ, 16.07.2007