On November 3, 2002, Turkey held general elections that brought the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi: AKP) into power. The electoral results showed a clear sign of popular discontent against the incumbent political parties: none of them which had been represented in the parliament before the elections succeeded in winning votes enough to pass the 10 percent electoral threshold. Instead, the AKP emerged as an undisputable majority by receiving about 34 percent of the valid votes and gaining 363 seats in Turkey’s 550-member parliament. The only other party elected to the parliament was the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi: CHP) which had failed to cross electoral barriers in the 1999 elections.

The November elections soon sparked a scholarly debate as to how to explain and understand the AKP’s electoral victory, its ideological predisposition, policy orientation, and its continuity and/or discontinuity with its predecessor which formed the coalition government under the premiership of Necmettin Erbakan in 1996. More broadly speaking, it was wondered to what extent the November 2002 elections marked a new moment in terms of voting patterns in Turkey, which factors drove Turkish voters to choose a party at the polls, and how we can best explain their voting decision-making.

In this book under review, Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu present a broad analysis
of how Turks participate in politics and how their participation patterns have, if any, changed over time. They examine the 2002 general elections both at regional and individual levels of analysis in order to understand its peculiarities as well as regularities within the context of Turkish competitive electoral politics.

The book starts with an introduction inspecting historical development of mass political participation in Turkey. The mid-19th century was a watershed in the changing relationship between the government and the Ottoman subjects. As modernization reforms began to erode the *gemeinschaftlich* structure of religious communities, the "individual" emerged as a relatively autonomous entity. Also, political associations based on political ideology, ethnicity, and religion were established. The establishment of the Imperial Assembly and the introduction of elections resulted in the institutionalization of political representation, although only distinguished male members of society could vote. The expansion of popular political participation was further developed after the transition to the Republican era. Concomitantly, non-electoral political participation such as protest and demonstration made inroads in Turkey. This historical overview of political participation in Turkey suggests that institutional frameworks of political system and socio-economic change are the root causes of shifting patterns of the interaction between elites and citizens.

Chapter 2 and 3 analyze in what sense the November elections showed continuities and discontinuities in the overall patterns of voting behavior among Turkish electorates. Turkish politics during the last decade has been characterized by the gradual decline of centrist parties. Electoral support for center-left and center-right parties has dropped in favor of extreme left and right parties. The electoral collapse of centrist parties in Turkey was clearly repeated in the 2002 general elections. Persistent electoral volatility and fragmentation of Turkey's party system were also observed in 2002. Voters frequently changed their electoral preferences from one party to another at the polls. Fragmentation in the party system also continued as more and more parties were represented in the parliament and able to gain votes in successive elections since the 1980s. Although the 2002 elections produced a less fragmented party system, it was still more fragmentated than the results of elections before 1991. One major cause of fragmentation can be due to geographical regionalization of national politics in Turkey—another persistent pattern of Turkish party politics. Regional cleavages influencing voters' electoral preferences prevent political parties from winning votes from all around the country. Alongside these continuities, two important events shaped the particular political context for the November election: the two-year long financial crisis prior to the election and EU
adjustment reforms. Drawing on pre- and post-election surveys, the authors report that economic issues including unemployment, economic crisis, and inflation constituted the most important problems for Turkish voters. On the other hand, the politics of EU adjustment seemed to play a minor role in the elections in spite of a series of reforms introduced right before the elections.

Chapter 4 inquires into the nature of electoral participation from a macro perspective. It is hypothesized that a center-periphery cleavage proposed by Serif Mardin more than 30 years ago is still an important determinant of voting behavior. The authors assume that this center-periphery framework is relevant not only in citizens' value orientations but in voting patterns. Statistical analysis of provincial electoral turnout rates in general elections between 1950 and 2002 demonstrates that this geographical divide is important in elections.

In chapter 5, the authors purport to determine factors that may drive people into political action. One significant aspect of this chapter is that they include unconventional political participation forms such as protest potential and repression potential, to which little attention has been paid so far by researchers. Political motives (political efficacy, knowledge, and interest) and political resources (place of residence, age, gender, religiosity, and formal education) are inserted into their causal model of political participation. Their path analyses find that conventional participation and protest potential are well explained by the interaction of political motives and political resources. The most interesting finding is that religiosity of Islam has a sizable impact on protest potential, but it discourages citizens to participate in disruptive political actions. Thus, it challenges the view that Islam has an inherent proclivity to violence and fosters recent acts of dissents. While this study of protest potential is a significant contribution to our understanding on why Turkish citizens are interested in taking contentious actions to influence decisions that political authorities take, we should not assume that people with high protest potential actually carry out protest actions. As the social movement literature suggests, people, even those with sufficient motivations such as grievance, do not necessarily participate in protest if political opportunities are absent, issues at stake are not strategically framed, and collective identity is not constructed among potential participants. Therefore, how protest potential materializes into actual protest actions is an empirical question.

Chapter 6 explores continuity and change in Turkey's electoral scene by using data from the November 2002 pre-election survey. Four important findings come out. First, the authors report evidence of the collapse of ideological center in a traditional
left-right spectrum and the voters’ ideological shift from the centrist position to the rightist one. Second, attitudinal factors toward religiosity, especially concerns about oppression of religious freedom, seem to mold voters’ party preferences. Third, voters’ trust in the incumbent parties collapsed due to the economic crisis prior to the 2002 elections. Fourth, it was found that voters clearly distinguished issue areas in which political parties were expected to own relative advantages of problem-solving. For instance, the AKP was believed to be the most effective party to handle the headscarf issue, while the Democratic Left Party was seen as the most effective one in dealing with the Cyprus dispute. In other words, expected effectiveness to problem-solving of parties is not fungible: a party may be seen as very effective in one issue area, but may be seen as not effective in other issue areas. Thus, the combination of parties and issue areas does matter for understanding voting behavior and party choice.

Chapter 7 produces sophisticated and nuanced results on the impact of various variables such as ideology, religiosity, demographic differences, and economic evaluations upon voters’ party choices by using a pre-election survey. A multinominal framework that allows researchers to make an analysis of party-to-party comparisons finds a variety of determinants of voters’ intention of party choice with a varying impact in different sets of party comparisons. This chapter is important not only because of its empirical findings that challenge some hypotheses previously claimed by other researchers, but also because of its methodological discussion crucial for electoral studies. First, data from survey research enable the authors to overcome the ecological fallacy, a problem of statistical inference that we can not solely rely on the aggregate data to predict the nature of individual levels of behavioral patterns. Second, despite the fact that Turkish party system is multipartism, a great deal of a previous work used a binary regression model. In a multiparty system, voters have more than two parties to choose. Thus, the authors decide to use a multinominal regression, which is more suitable to deal with the case of the dependent variables with multiple classes, to study voters’ preferences in multiparty politics in Turkey. Consequently, their multinominal framework turns out some different results of the determinants of party choice among individuals in comparison with the previous literature. This reminds researchers to be more aware of methodological impact on research outcome.

The authors wrote a timely book on issues relating to the AKP’s support base, ideology, and voters’ expectation to it. It might be a surprise for us that their analysis indicates that the impact of religiosity is more limited than expected. Religiosity is
important only for distinguishing the AKP and the CHP, but insignificant in differentiating the AKP constituency from the rest of the other parties. Also, their findings that voters who were expected to vote for the AKP were closer to the right-end of the left-right ideological spectrum and that the AKP appealed to those who were skeptical toward EU membership go against what we have witnessed since the inauguration of the AKP government after the 2002 election because many argue that the AKP has become a new centrist party in Turkish politics and the AKP leaders have energetically worked for EU bid.

While this book provides an empirical contribution for our understanding on the AKP in elections, it does not touch upon other aspects of the party, including its relationship with the military, its ideology, leadership, and political and economic policies. Thus, readers may want to read two edited volumes, [Yavuz 2006] and [Cizre 2007], which focus on both electoral and non-electoral features of the AKP politics.

Unfortunately, the book suffers small editing errors. One small shortcoming is that political parties' names appear in Turkish in principle, but they are sometimes spelled in English. This might be confusing for readers who are not familiar with Turkish party politics. The authors used English abbreviations (the RPP and the JP) to refer to the CHP and the AP (Adalet Partisi) respectively (pp. 167-8). Yılmaz Esmer's "At the Ballot Box: Determinants of Voting Behavior in Turkey" was published in 2002, not in 2001 as appeared in references. Kalaycıoğlu (1997), which the authors frequently mention throughout the book, is missing in references.

Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest, and Stability in an Islamic Society not only explains the outcome of the Turkish general election of 2002, but also reveals persistent and dynamic aspects of Turkish voting behavior since 1950. Also, the book discusses some other important topics outside of the narrow confines of electoral studies by analyzing unconventional modes of political participation such as strikes, demonstrations, and so on. More importantly for students of Turkish politics, their quantitative analysis based on survey research addresses several assumptions that the conventional literature on Turkish politics has believed to have strong impact on Turkish electorates such as a cultural center-periphery relation, a functional left-right ideological framework, and retrospective and prospective economic voting behaviors. Overall, this book is a must for anyone seeking to understand elections, voting behavior, and political participation in Turkey.
References


Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of Utah