

# Turkey's Opposition vs. the AKP: Measuring Messaging

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Challengers to Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are proliferating, with two breakaway parties drawing particular notice. In December 2019, Ahmet Davutoglu, who served under Erdogan as foreign minister and then prime minister, formed Gelecek (Future) in an attempt to resurrect a gentler version of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). And this past March, former finance minister Ali Babacan, credited with masterminding the country's "economic miracle" in the early Erdogan years, established the Democracy and Progress Party as another right-leaning alternative to the AKP. The remaining aspirants include the Peoples' Democratic Party, whose capable leader remains imprisoned for allegedly supporting Kurdish militants.

This Policy Note, by Soner Cagaptay and Reilly Barry, examines the political identities of Turkey's opposition parties as compared to the AKP and allied Nationalist Action Party. It does so through an unconventional method: analyzing voter outreach through Twitter, a medium widely used by Turks. The results reveal striking trends in how these parties view Turkey's republican (and imperial) past, and what these views suggest about the country's political future.

## THE AUTHORS

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family Fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute. Reilly Barry is an Institute research assistant and a master's degree candidate at Harvard. ❖

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