



# **Police, protest and democracy in Turkey: From Gazi to Gezi**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is about the police and the control of public protests in Turkey. Despite its centrality to state power, the police have never become a mainstream subject of political sociology. Particularly on a stage where governments perform state power in the face of societal dissent, the police are not bit players but lead actors who demystify curiously about the political foundations of a regime. My dissertation focuses on contemporary manifestations of protest policing in a geography where democratization incorporated previously discredited actors into the political centre while the strong hand of the state advanced in modern technologies of law enforcement. I specifically interrogate how the transformation of the police after 1980 and more precisely since the end of the 1990s reflects on the policing of public protests. I am also empirically interested in the application of this process on contentious gatherings of different origin; namely on syndical, student, and pro-Kurdish protests. In order to address my research question, I resort to methodological pluralism, and use multiple sources. The descriptively quantitative data on the protest events provide me with preliminary yet illustrative information, which I substantiate with the analysis of official and unofficial documents, semi-structured interviews, archival and visual material in qualitative fashion. I further benefit from secondary literature to yield a comparative knowledge on the subject. Throughout the thesis, I argue that the empowerment of the police in Turkey translated into the interactive dynamics with protester groups. While the police's differential strategies resonate with divergent protest strategies, the political fabrication of "threats" is a means to justify police empowerment through increased para-militarization and legal instruments.

**Jury:**



Prof László Bruszt (EUI), Prof John McCarthy (Penn State University), Kivanc Atak (candidate), Prof Donatella della Porta (supervisor), Prof Ziya Onis (Koc University – by videolink)

**Bio**

Kivanc Atak studied political science and international relations at Bogazici University, Istanbul. He earned his Master's degree in political science at Central European University in Budapest. In 2009, he enrolled in the PhD program in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at European University Institute, Florence. His research interests include the politics of the police, policing of protests, social movements, and state theory.