



The Aftermath of Turkey's Gezi Protests

How Political Parties Respond to Social Movements

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Turkey's political parties responded to the Gezi Park protests in 2012. I assess how four political parties framed the protests, whether the latter were accompanied by changes in the parties' platforms and priorities, and whether politicians in office adjusted practical policies to accommodate protest demands. In this research I draw on original data of parliamentary interventions, budget allocations, semi-structured interviews, and secondary sources, to answer these questions.

The Gezi protests received a great deal of attention from politicians, especially from the two opposition parties closest to the protests, the CHP and the BDP. However, both parties responded to the demands that aligned best with their pre-existing agendas, and with different loci of attention. The protests were also met with practical concessions on a few specific demands. Yet these policy responses were narrowly targeted at the object and symbol of the initial protests rather than at their underlying grievances. Consequently, I argue that the responses from the CHP and the BDP were supportive, but limited. There was a policy response, but it did not go very deep. There was a platform response, but it framed the demands in the direction of pre-existing platforms. There was an organisational response and a response in terms of electoral strategies, but many of these were symbolic, and not accompanied by major changes in party platforms.

In this sense, it may be useful to talk about the institutional response to the Gezi protest as a creative process for these two political parties. When party representatives spoke about the protests, they highlighted those issues where their party already had ownership. Furthermore, while the BDP supported several of the protesters' demands, the CHP was more supportive of the protest actors themselves. I use this finding to suggest an extension of the concept of the protest paradigm in the social movement literature. Until now the protest paradigm has mainly been used to describe how antagonists of protests delegitimize protests, whereas I suggest that it is also a possible strategy for supportive actors. This novel use of the protest paradigm is a main contribution of this thesis.



Jury: Prof Ali Çarkoğlu (Koc University), Prof Donatella della Porta (EUI/SNS, supervisor), Jonas B. Draege (candidate), Prof Hanspeter Kriesi (EUI), Prof Katrin Uba (Uppsala University – by videoconference)

Bio

Jonas Bergan Draege is a PhD researcher in the Department of Social and Political Science at the European University Institute. Bergan Draege earned his Mphil with distinction in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at St. Antony's College, the University of Oxford, in 2013. During the academic year 2017-2018, Draege will be a postdoctoral research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. His working languages are English, Norwegian, Arabic, Turkish, and Italian.