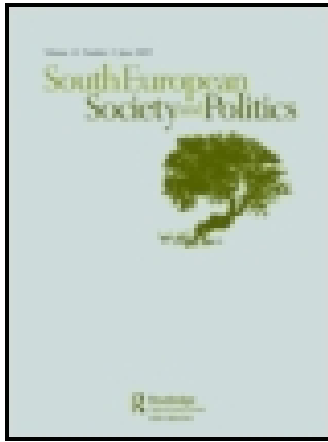


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Emergence of a Dominant Party System After Multipartyism: Theoretical Implications from the Case of the AKP in Turkey

Pelin Ayan Musil

This study aims to provide insights into how and why a dominant party system emerges after an era of multipartyism. Conceptualising the emergence phase of a dominant party system within the framework of Sartori's 'predominant party system', it elaborates the causal weight of different theories within the Turkish context through a comparative-historical analysis. Comparing the case of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) with the Justice Party (AP), it argues that perceptions of an incumbent's good economic performance and lack of centrifugal intra-party conflicts are two crucial factors that lead to the emergence of a dominant party system after multipartyism. Restrictive electoral rules and existing social cleavages, however, create a favourable setting for this outcome.

Keywords: Dominant Party System; Multiparty System; Political Parties; Turkey; AKP; AP

A dominant party system is different from both a competitive democracy and a fully authoritarian one-party regime. It is a hybrid, in which the incumbent has maintained continuous executive and legislative rule for some long period of time. In these systems, opposition parties compete but lose in open elections for such extended periods of time that a 'dominant party equilibrium' is established (Greene 2007, p. 1). Many case studies of dominant party systems emphasise why and how the dominance of single parties persists or falls (i.e. Greene 2007; Magaloni 2006; Morlino 1996; Rakner & Svåsand 2004).

This study's main emphasis is to distinguish the emergence phase of dominant party systems from the phases of persistence and downfall. It does so by acknowledging that a dominant party system can emerge in two different ways. First, it may emerge following the declaration of a state's independence or a breakdown in an authoritarian regime. For instance, the Congress Party in India was such a case: the dominant party system lasted

for about 35 years after the state became independent in 1947. The single-party dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan (1955–2009) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI - Partido Revolucionario Institucional) in Mexico (1929–1997) is also illustrative of this process. The dominant party system emerged in the post-war period in Japan and in the aftermath of a revolution in Mexico, persisting until an opposition party managed to challenge the power of the dominant party in both cases. Another example is the ongoing dominant party system in South Africa under the rule of the African National Congress (ANC), which has existed since the transition to multi-racial democracy in 1994.

These examples show that the emergence of a dominant party system as well as its subsequent persistence signal a continuing process of transition to democracy. After a major period of nation-building (i.e. independence, revolution, reconstruction after defeat in war), it emerges in the form of a hybrid regime in which a single party constantly wins in elections. Only when the opposition somehow manages to weaken the dominance of this single party does a competitive democracy appear.

Yet, the emergence phase of a dominant party system may follow a completely opposite path. It may arise right after a competitive multiparty or two-party system. For instance, the level of competitiveness in the British party system went through a decline from 1979 until 1997. The Conservative Party controlled the government for four consecutive terms until Labour was able to regain power in the 1997 elections. The fact that the Labour Party then controlled government from 1997 to 2010 even led some scholars to rename the United Kingdom (UK) system as an alternating-predominant system, which is a hybrid of single-party predominance and classical two-partyism (Quinn 2013, p. 396). Another example is the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV - Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela) in Venezuela, which served in government as a single party for 14 years following a period of multiparty politics. After the death of the charismatic party leader, Hugo Chavez, the PSUV had a new leader, yet managed to form a single-party government again in 2013.

The UK (1979–97) and Venezuela (1998 to present) cases represent *democratic regression* as opposed to the experience of Mexico's PRI, Japan's LDP, South Africa's ANC and India's Congress Party because the Schumpeterian notion of competitive elections experiences a *downward trend*. This study aims to understand exactly this process through the case of the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) in Turkey. Following a multiparty era in the 1990s, the AKP has established itself as a single party that has dominated the legislature and the executive for three consecutive parliamentary terms following the 2002, 2007 and 2011 elections. Moreover, the victories that the AKP won in local and presidential elections in 2014 indicate the continuing power of this party as opposed to others. So, why and how did this happen?

Conceptualisation

Starting from Duverger (1954), all definitions of dominant party systems emphasise the electoral supremacy of the ruling party. Underlying most definitions are the following three features.

- (1) The supremacy of the main party comes through winning enough parliamentary seats – not necessarily votes – to control government on its own (Coleman 1960, p. 29; Greene 2007, p. 15; Pempel 1990, p. 3; Sartori 2005, p. 173; Ware 1996, p. 159).
- (2) Even though no alternation in office actually occurs, alternation is not ruled out and the political system provides ample opportunities for open and effective dissent (Greene 2007, p. 13; Sartori 2005, p. 173, p. 177).
- (3) The main party is faced by a divided opposition and even the second- largest party in the system faces great difficulties in increasing the size of its electoral coalition to become a rival to the dominant party (Greene 2007; Ware 1996, p. 159).

Despite acknowledgement of these three features, there is less agreement on what constitutes the longevity threshold of dominant party systems. While some studies restrict the threshold too much to one single election (Coleman 1960; van de Walle & Butler 1999), some others raise it to some 50 years (Cox 1997, p. 238). As pointed out in an earlier study, such thresholds either dramatically widen or reduce the universe of cases in a way that *decreases* the usefulness of the concept via attributing either too many or almost no empirical referents (Greene 2007, pp. 15–16). Thus, a useful approach towards this longevity problem is to distinguish the emergence phase of a dominant party system from its persistence phase, via treating the former as a ‘predominant party system’, as operationalised by Sartori (2005). In his discussion of the concept, Sartori notes that ‘predominance is less strong semantically than domination’ and that predominance stands ‘in contradistinction to hegemony’ (2005, p. 173). He therefore argues that

For a predominant party to establish a predominant party system, it should take three consecutive absolute majorities, provided that the electorate appears stabilised, that the absolute majority threshold is clearly surpassed, and/or that the interval is wide. Conversely, to the extent that one or more of these conditions do not obtain, a judgment will have to await a longer period of time to pass. Doubtlessly, this leaves the duration requirement fairly loose. (Sartori 2005, p. 177)

While distinguishing the emergence of a dominant party system from its persistence phase, Sartori’s threshold of three consecutive periods proves to be useful. The emergence phase must also imply the persistence of a party’s incumbency period, but to a lower degree than, for instance, a duration of 50 years, which would rather indicate a ‘hegemonic’ party system in which the party in power does not allow real competition and the ‘other parties are permitted to exist but as second class, licensed parties’ (Sartori 2005, p. 230). On the contrary, the emergence phase or a predominant party system should indicate the establishment of a stable pattern of inter-party competition under the ascendancy of one party rather than its hegemony and the period of three consecutive terms is sufficient to qualify for that.

Case Selection and Methodology

As of 1950, Turkey made its transition to democracy in which the political system provides opportunities for open and effective mobilisation of opposition parties.

In subsequent Turkish political history, it is possible to observe two cases of a predominant party system where the incumbent party controlled the government on its own for three consecutive periods: the DP (*Demokrat Parti* – Democratic Party) from 1950 to 1961; and the AKP from 2002 to the present. Table 1 presents the different types of party systems in different time periods in Turkey.

The period 1950–61 in Turkey is considered by some scholars of Turkish politics either as a two-party system (Özbudun 2000, p. 74) or as one that falls between a two-party and a predominant party system (Sayari 2002, p. 12). Yet, as noted by Sartori (2005, p. 176), it is closer to being a predominant party system because the second largest party – CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – Republican People’s Party) and other smaller parties all received only fractional support in elections and had no influence over the policy outputs or even the political agenda of the country for three consecutive periods when the DP formed a single-party government. However, the analysis of the DP period is eliminated from this study because it follows the period of state formation and nation-building (1923–46). After all, the predominant party system under DP rule emerged only after the first electoral law (No. 5545) in which the principle of ‘secret ballot – open count’ was enacted. The DP’s ascendancy ended by force through the military coup in 1961.

The AKP’s single-party government for three consecutive periods (2002 to present), on the other hand, follows the multiparty system period of 1987–2002, which makes it therefore a relevant case for the aim of this study. The 1990s are known for an extremely fragmented party system with electoral volatility and coalition or minority

Table 1 Types of Party Systems in Turkey, 1923–2011

Election Year	Parties in Government*	Type of Party System
2011	AKP	predominant party system
2007	AKP	
2002	AKP	
1999	DSP + MHP + ANAP	multiparty system
1995	RP + DYP	
1991	DYP + SHP	
1987	ANAP	
1983	ANAP	<i>political bans</i>
1977	AP + MSP + MHP + CGP	between a multiparty and two-party system
1973	CHP + MSP	
1969	AP	
1965	AP	
1961	CHP + AP	
1957	DP	predominant party system
1954	DP	
1950	DP	
1923–46	CHP	one-party system

Note: *This column represents the outcomes after each election, not the changes that took place between two electoral terms.

governments (Özbudun 2000, p. 79; Sayari 2002; 2007, pp. 17–200). Despite the political instability of this decade, elections were conducted in a highly competitive atmosphere where the centre-right, centre-left and right-of-centre were divided across numerous parties in parliament. Following this period, a dominant party system emerged in 2002, based on the ascendancy of the newly founded AKP, a religious conservative party (Aslan-Akman 2012; Gümüüşçü 2013).

While the AKP represents a positive case of a predominant party system, it is useful to enhance the study with a comparative-historical analysis through adding a negative case from Turkish political history. A negative case is defined as one where the outcome of interest was a possibility but did not occur (Goertz and Mahoney 2004, p. 653). In other words, the outcome is present in the positive case and absent in the negative case. Adding negative cases to a research design helps the researcher to identify the main explanatory variables for the outcome in question and to make possible causal statements. A comparative-historical analysis offers a good strategy to analyse the variables in such a probabilistic fashion (Mahoney 2004).

Sartori's conceptualisation based on a detailed examination of previous cases should enlighten the choice of a negative case. Since Sartori defines a 'predominant party system' as the absence of an alternation of governmental power in three consecutive periods and thereby as exhibiting low levels of competition, it is useful to analyse the levels of competitiveness in the history of the Turkish party system. As shown in Figure 1, in 2007 competitiveness in the Turkish party system reached the lowest point since 1957, thus highlighting the existence of two predominant party systems under the rule of the DP and the AKP. Yet, the figure also shows a decline in the level of competitiveness in 1983 and in 1965. Considering the military coup in 1980 and the following interim military government, the reason for the decline in 1983 seems obvious. All previous parties and their leaders were banned from politics due to

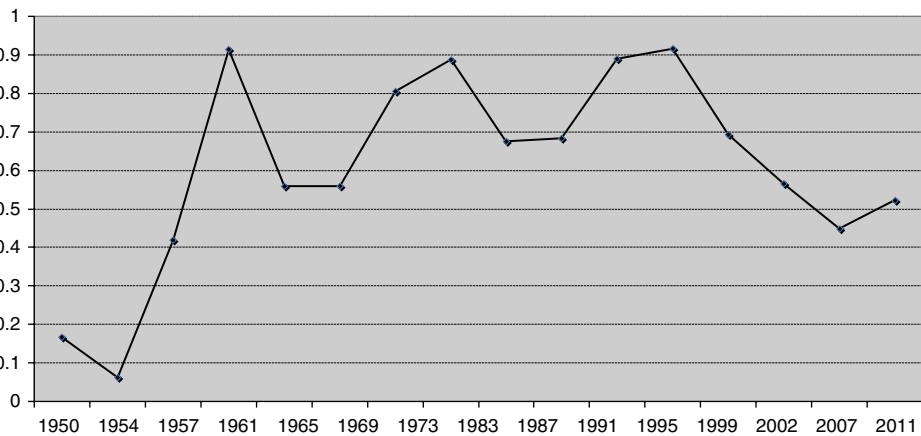


Figure 1 Competitiveness in the Turkish Party System

Note: The measure is produced by dividing the number of seats of the second-largest party list by those of the largest party list after each election.

the coup. This meant that the democratic arena was completely left in the hands of a limited number of new actors, at least until 1987 when the bans on previous party leaders were removed.

On the other hand, the decline in competitiveness in the year 1965 deserves careful attention. Compared with the previous 1961 election, the incumbent party, AP (*Adalet Partisi* – Justice Party) increased its distance from its main opponent, establishing a single-party government in 1965 and maintaining sole power in government in the 1969 elections. Yet, in 1973 the main opposition, CHP, managed to undermine the power of the AP by winning a plurality of seats in the parliament and establishing a coalition government with the MSP (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – National Salvation Party). Considering the longevity of the power of the AP in the 1960s and the fact that it held government power alone for two consecutive periods, a predominant party system was possible but did not emerge because the opponent party caught up with the incumbent's power in the next election. Then it is plausible to treat the AP as a negative case. Why did a dominant party system emerge under AKP rule but not under AP rule?

The next section elaborates the existing theories in order to shed light on this puzzle. The findings show that social cleavages and restrictive institutional rules create a favourable setting for the emergence of dominant party systems after a democratic era of multipartyism. Yet, voters' perceptions of good economic performance, on the one hand, and lack of centrifugal intra-party conflicts, on the other, are the two crucial factors without which a dominant party system can hardly emerge in such contexts.

Assessing the Causal Weight of Theories: A Comparison of the AKP and the AP

This article treats a dominant party system as a *process* in which distinct causal paths may explain its different phases. A classificatory analysis of the theories in this way is synthesised in Table 2. The emergence phase of a dominant party system has the same meaning as the concept of the predominant party system and may require a different explanation than the persistence and downfall phases.

Institutional Approaches

Studies that use institutional approaches in analysing the types of party systems focus on the effect of electoral systems and electoral rules. A hypothesis appealing to the survival of dominant party systems foresees that legal barriers to entry and control of the electoral process by the single-party government make it impossible for the opposition to effectively challenge the regime (Magaloni 2006). Among the most common electoral rules that can pose a challenge to the power of the opposition are the *district magnitude* and the *electoral threshold* (Anckar 1997). 'District magnitude' refers to the number of representatives elected from an electoral district and has a strong impact on certain party system characteristics such as disproportionality (Cox & Niou 1994; Lijphart 1994). For instance, district magnitudes used in Japan have been smaller than those used in most other polities (except those that use single-member districts),

Table 2 Existing Theories: Emergence, Persistence and Downfall of Dominant Party Systems

Theory	Emergence Phase (predominant party system)	Persistence Phase (towards a hegemonic party system)	Downfall Phase
Institutional Approach	<i>It is more likely that a dominant party system emerges ...</i> ... if electoral rules are drawn up in a way which restricts party competition	<i>It is more likely that a dominant party system persists ...</i> ... if electoral rules continue to restrict party competition	<i>It is more likely that the dominant party system falls ...</i> ... if electoral rules change in a way to enhance party competition
Social Cleavage	... if one social cleavage becomes particularly large compared to others	... if one social cleavage remains significantly larger than others	... if main social cleavage becomes smaller
Decision-theoretic Models	... if only one party achieves a centrist position in the spectrum	... if only one party has a centrist position in the spectrum while the others are split between right and left	... if opposition parties can become catch-all competitors
Realignment and Dealignment Theories	... if the voters expect economic satisfaction from the incumbent in the next term	... if voters are satisfied with incumbent policies	... if voters are dissatisfied with incumbent policies
Resource Theory	... if the incumbent distributes material benefits to its supporters through a clientelistic network	... if the clientelistic network linking the incumbent and its supporters continues and/or enlarges	... if the clientelistic network linking the incumbent and its supporters becomes weaker
Intra-Party Conflict	... if factional conflicts within the incumbent party are weak	... if factional conflicts within the incumbent party continue to be weak	... if factional conflicts within the incumbent party become deeper

which was one of the main reasons why the LDP's ascendancy in parliament persisted (Cox & Niou 1994, p. 231). The electoral threshold, which may exist at the national, regional or district level, is the percentage of votes or, alternatively, the number of votes that a party must receive to be represented in the parliament (Lijphart 1994, pp. 11–12). Naturally, electoral thresholds are an extremely effective weapon against the multiplication of small parties (Anckar 1997, p. 505). In order to see the extent of the overrepresentation of a party in parliament due to the electoral rules – electoral threshold or district magnitude – it is reasonable to look at the difference between vote shares and seat shares after each national election (Cox & Niou 1994, p. 232).

The electoral rules that shaped the seat shares in parliament were quite different for the AKP and AP cases. The 1980 constitution introduced the ten per cent national threshold, which has led to a high proportion of wasted votes (Anckar 1997) as well as disproportionality and the weakening of small parties. Even though the ten per cent threshold did not prevent the fragmentation of the party system during the 1990s, it has played an important role in the maintenance of the AKP's power since 2002. It has had a strongly reductive effect on the number of parties in the 2002 elections. With 34.3 per cent of the votes cast, the AKP won 66 per cent of parliamentary seats (see Table 3), while the official opposition, the CHP, received a 19.4 per cent vote share and 32.3 per cent of seats. Many parties with vote shares of 5–10 per cent, i.e. ANAP (Anavatan Partisi - Motherland Party), DYP (Dogru Yol Partisi – True Path Party), DEHAP (Demokratik Halk Partisi - Democratic People's Party), MHP (Milliyetci Hareket Partisi – Nationalist Action Party), GP (Genc Parti – Young Party), were not represented in the 2002 parliament. As a result of these elections, Turkish voters have learned not to waste their votes on parties that do not have a chance of clearing the threshold.

In contrast, the national elections of 1965 were conducted in a much more representative context. The military intervention in 1961 provided the opportunity to craft an electoral system that would introduce fairness of representation based on proportional representation with the D'Hondt formula, which was slightly amended in the 1965 elections: The electoral districts were divided into two broad categories of provincial electoral districts and a single 'national electoral district'. The votes obtained

Table 3 The Extent of Overrepresentation in Parliament: AKP and AP Compared

	Year	Seat Share (%)	Vote Share (%)	Difference (%)
<i>AP</i>	1961	35.1	34.8	0.3
	1965	53.3	52.9	0.4
	1969	56.9	46.6	10.3
	1973	33.1	29.8	3.3
<i>AKP</i>	1999*	20.2	15.4	4.8
	2002	66.0	34.3	31.7
	2007	62.0	46.6	15.4
	2011	59.5	49.8	9.7

Note: The 1999 election was contested by the AKP's predecessor, the FP. At that time, the subsequent AKP elite constituted the reformist faction in FP.

by a political party that would not meet the parliamentary threshold would no longer be wasted (Alkan 2006, p. 159). As indicated in Table 3, the degree of proportionality was very high in 1965.

Yet, both the AKP and the AP sought ways to maximise their influence in parliament through re-districting and gerrymandering. In 1969, seven months before the national elections, the AP-dominated parliament amended the electoral laws (Kalaycioğlu 2002, p. 60). The final version of the election law favoured the AP, which received a plurality of votes in the 1969 elections. As for the AKP, there has been a clear reluctance to allow the national threshold to be abolished or reduced (Milliyet 2005). In April 2014, the AKP started a public discussion about the need to design new electoral districts based on the minimisation of their size. This was interpreted by some former politicians as an attempt to continue holding onto a parliamentary majority (Cumhuriyet 2014).

To sum up, the elections during the AP and the AKP periods were based on different electoral rules. During the ascendancy of the AKP, the ten per cent national threshold has acted as an influential institutional barrier against other parties, whereas there was no such rule in the elections contested by the AP. Yet, both parties engaged in an effort to manipulate the electoral rules to their own advantage. Despite these rules and changes, in 1973 the AP's seat share declined in parliament *together with its vote share* as indicated in Table 3. This contrasts with the AKP, which increased its vote share from 46.6 per cent to 49.3 per cent in the third consecutive election. Therefore, a restrictive national threshold provided a favourable setting for the continuation of the AKP's power but this alone is not sufficient to shed light on the puzzle.

Social Cleavage Theory

This theory explains the emergence of parties with respect to the political demands of groups that appear in response to the existing social divisions in a society (Lipset & Rokkan 1967). Multiparty systems emerge in societies with several major social divisions (such as ethnic, religious, urban/rural or class divisions), while milder social divisions produce two-party systems (Cox 1997, p. 15). In his interpretation of social cleavage theory on dominant party systems, Greene (2007, p. 18) asserts that, 'if this argument makes sense for dominant party systems, then they must have less of the "raw materials" that motivate citizens to form political parties compared to multiparty systems'. It would be reasonable to expect that the larger a social cleavage becomes over time, the more likely that a predominant party system will follow the multiparty system because of the lack of 'raw materials' that sustain other parties.

Party development and voting behaviour have for long been subject to what Mardin (1973) calls the 'centre-periphery cleavage' in Turkey. The *centre*, composed of a strong and coherent state apparatus run primarily by the military and bureaucracy, has been confronted by a heterogeneous and often hostile *periphery* composed mainly of the peasantry, small farmers and artisans. The *centre* is built around Kemalist secular principles while the *periphery* includes regional, religious and ethnic groups reflecting hostile sentiments towards the centre's hierarchical and almost coercive modernisation

project. Mardin's centre–periphery framework has also been a significant predictor of party preferences. The centre traditionally voted for liberal or centre-left parties while the periphery preferred religious or right-wing parties (Esmer 1995; Kalaycıoğlu 1994). Yet, both centrist and peripheral electoral forces became quite heterogeneous in the 1990s. In peripheral constituencies the pro-Islamist, nationalist and the ethnic Kurdish vote appeared to have distinct regions of support whereas centrist parties were typically dominant in the socio-economically developed western and coastal provinces (Çarkoğlu & Avcı 2002). Later on, a two-dimensional ideological spectrum became prevalent in Turkey: the left–right dimension that overlaps with the secularist (*left*) vs. the pro-Islamist cleavage (*right*), on the one hand, and the pro-reform vs. status-quo dimension that overlaps with Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms, on the other

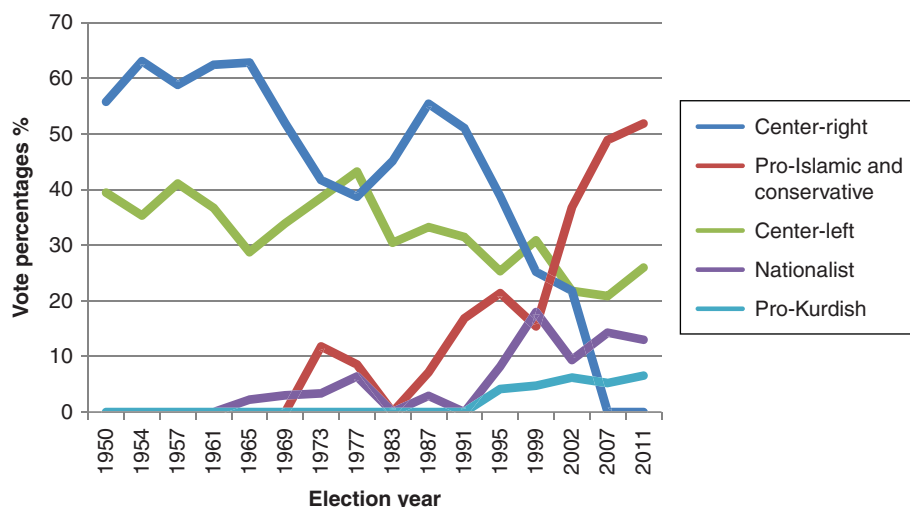


Figure 2 Electoral Support (per cent) of the Main Ideological Blocs in Turkey, 1950–2011

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, www.tuik.gov.tr.

Note: *Centre-right*: ANAP, DYP, GP, AP, DP, YTP (Yeni Türkiye Partisi - New Turkey Party in 1960s), CKMP (Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi - Republican Peasants' Nation Party), MP (Millet Partisi - Nation Party), DkP (Demokratik Parti - Democratic Party) *Pro-Islamic and conservative*: MSP (Millî Selâmet Partisi - National Salvation Party), RP (Refah Partisi - Welfare Party) / FP (Fazilet Partisi - Virtue Party) / SP (Saadet Partisi - Felicity Party), AKP, HAS (Halkın Sesi Partisi - People's Voice Party); *Centre-left*: SHP (Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti - Social Democratic People's Party), CHP, DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti - Democratic Left Party), CGP (Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi - Republican Trust Party), YTP (Yeni Türkiye Partisi - New Turkey Party) (2002); *Nationalist*: MCP (Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi - Nationalist Labour Party), MHP, BBP (Büyük Birlik Partisi - Great Union Party); *Pro-Kurdish*: HADEP (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi - People's Democracy Party) / DEHAP / DTP (Demokratik Toplum Partisi - Democratic Society Party) / BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi - Peace and Democracy Party) / Independents.

(Çarkoğlu & Hinich 2006). Figure 2 shows the vote shares of these main blocs in national parliamentary elections from the 1950s to the present.

It would not be inaccurate to state that both the AKP and the AP appealed to conservative, religious voters during the period of their own ascendancy, even though the former belonged more to the centre-right and the latter to the pro-Islamist bloc. With regard to the AP period, the centre–periphery distinction was largely observable because religious voters from rural parts of the country typically supported the AP, while their secular counterparts favoured the centre-left CHP (Ergüder 1980, p. 1; Nye 1977, p. 212). As can be observed in Figure 2, since the ascendancy of the AKP in the 2002 elections the centre-right has clearly diminished while the pro-Islamist bloc has grown stronger. It should, however, be noted that the AKP has differed from its predecessor pro-Islamist parties such as the RP (*Refah Partisi* – Welfare Party) and the FP (*Fazilet Partisi* – Virtue Party) by representing a much more moderate brand of political Islamism (Tezcür 2010; Gümüşü 2010). Yet, religiosity has proved to be associated with a preference for the AKP in the 2002, 2007 and 2011 elections. In the case of 2002, Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu (2007, p. 185) found that the distinction between CHP and the AKP voters was primarily built upon differences of opinion about religiosity. In the 2007 elections, Çarkoğlu (2010) found that the frequency of religious practice was still a significant factor in the choice between the AKP and every other party. For the 2011 elections, Gidengil and Karakoç (2014) drew on data from a nationwide survey conducted by GENAR, an Istanbul polling agency specialising in election studies, and found that the AKP's Islamist roots were clearly an important component of its appeal.

In sum, the social cleavages in Turkey have mainly favoured the religious and right-wing parties over the left-wing ones. It is hard to expect the same level of success from centre-left parties in Turkey. Along with the institutional framework, social cleavages also create a favourable setting for the emergence of a dominant party system after multipartyism. Yet, the theory itself is not sufficient to explain the success of the AKP vis-à-vis the AP. It is silent on the constraints of new party formation and development (Sartori 1968). The rise of the pro-Islamist MSP to government power in coalition with the CHP in 1973 coincides with the failure of the AP to win a third outright parliamentary majority. Yet, this can hardly be explained by a change in the social cleavage structure, which would require the sudden emergence of more religious voters.

Decision-Theoretic Models

Decision-theoretic models explore when it is rational to form a new party under certain constraints imposed by institutions and voter demand. Two prominent works by Downs (1957) and Riker (1976) emphasise that parties should locate centrally with respect to voters' preferences in order to pursue supremacy in elections. Most popular policy positions – typically centrist – therefore are attractive for parties seeking vote maximisation, including the dominant parties. Riker's (1976) analysis of the Indian Congress Party shows that the incumbent maintains its dominance when it can divide and conquer by bonding towards the centre and splitting the opposition parties to the

left and the right. This, in turn, undermines possible cooperation between opposition supporters, since a coalition of 'ends-against-the-centre' will not eventually form.

As elaborated in the discussion of social cleavage theory, the 2000s in Turkey witnessed the collapse of the centre in favour of more extremist parties (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycioğlu 2007, p. 41). According to previous literature based on the analysis of public opinion data from the election years 2002, 2007 and 2011, AKP is not centrist but a party belonging to the right-of-centre, conservative, pro-Islamist bloc (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycioğlu 2007, pp. 113–120). The rank-and-file members as well as the front bench are relatively pious members of Turkish society, some of whom also have a long attachment to the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement, which is well established in political Islam (Kalaycioğlu 2010, p. 43). In spite of this, the AKP was able to maintain a coalition of centre-right and Islamic constituencies because it skilfully conveyed to the centre-right voter that its primary concern was service and good governance (Gümüşçü 2013, p. 238).

The AP, on the other hand, was more a party of the centre-right accommodating to the religious practices of Turkish society. The party leader, Demirel, was originally the head of the liberal faction and gave a more progressive face to the party when he was elected to the leadership in 1964. The appeal of this party and its predecessor, the DP, was not ideological but rooted in Turkey's social structure, with its greatest support coming from an alliance of smallholder peasants and small, industrial urban labour groups (Sherwood 1967, p. 55).

Thus, according to the Downsian model, one would expect both the AP and the AKP to be successful, which is not the case. Besides, in both the 1973 and 2007 elections, it was almost impossible to imagine opposition coordination against the incumbent, since the elections were held in a polarised atmosphere (Balkir 2007; Özbudun 2000, p. 74). Thus, the decision-theoretic models fall short in explaining why a predominant party system was achieved by the AKP and not by the AP.

Dealignment and Realignment Approach

The dealignment and realignment approach, which explains voters' partisan dealignment from the incumbent due to economic dissatisfaction, has received major attention in Turkish scholarship. As noted by Kalaycioğlu (2010, p. 31), 'after ideological screening of potential parties, the voter seems to shift emphasis from ideology to *realpolitik* and thus considers the economic prospects that his or her party selection over other ideologically similar parties would bring to the country, his family or himself'.

The AKP came to power in 2002, very soon after its establishment, in the context of a major national economic crisis. It has been argued that economic voting for the AKP in 2002 was a reaction to personal suffering caused by the recent economic crisis (Başlevent, Kırmanoğlu & Şenatarlar 2005, p. 558). In this sense, the emergence of a single-party government under the AKP rule was similar to the success of the LDP in Japan, Christian Democrats in Italy and Mapai in Israel (Gümüşçü 2013, p. 231). It has

also been noted by some Turkish scholars that the perception of the past and prospective performance of the government in managing the economy has emerged as a critical factor that, determined the party preferences of the Turkish voters at the polls from 2007 on (Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu, & Şenatalar 2009; Kalaycioğlu 2010). For the 2011 elections, a study found that voters' positive economic evaluations helped the AKP, though the impact was weaker than it had been in 2007 (Çarkoğlu 2012). Gidengil and Karakoç's analysis (2014) also found no evidence of any widespread dissatisfaction with the management of the economy.

On the other hand, the case of the AP shows that its governmental power declined at a time when a global economic recession started to take its toll in Turkey (Kalaycioğlu 2002, p. 60). Together with the polarising political atmosphere, the economy lost its stability after 1965. One week before the national elections in 1973, a popular national newspaper, *Milliyet*, conducted a public opinion survey across the country. In 1969, AP voters did not appear satisfied with the AP's economic performance. According to the survey, the most negative characteristics of the party were cited, such as 'the AP has become a party of the rich, but not of the poor', 'it has not been successful' and 'it did not keep its promises' (Milliyet 1973).

Thus, the performance of the AKP in the 2000s is not similar to that of the AP in the early 1970s. For the AKP case, voter satisfaction with the incumbent weakened the possibility of voters' dealignment from the AKP. This approach seems to identify a crucial factor for the emergence phase of a dominant party system while it is probably not very explanatory for the persistence and downfall phases. An example is Mexico in the 1980s, when 76 per cent of voters evaluated the dominant party's economic performance negatively during the persistence phase. Yet, the party remained in power for more than another decade (Greene 2007, p. 19).

Resource Theory

The resource theory suggests that the state-owned enterprises prone to politicisation provide dramatic resource advantages to the incumbent, including outspending on campaigns, deploying legions of canvassers and, most importantly, supplementing policy appeals with patronage goods that bias voters in favour of the incumbent (Greene 2007). In Turkish politics, patronage has often been observed as the 'efforts of political parties to offer individual or collective benefits to voters in exchange for support in electoral contest' (Sayari 2011, p. 82). In the multiparty democracy of the post 1950s, political parties increasingly resembled ventures established solely to promote their members' economic interests (Heper & Keyman 1998, p. 262).

During the AP period, the state economic enterprises – a major means of political patronage – continued to flourish. The AP leader Demirel tried to please all his supporters, including both business and labour (Arat 2002, pp. 93–94; Heper & Keyman 1998, p. 265). Those years witnessed rapid urbanisation, migrants from the rural areas creating a large pool of urban poor that needed assistance in finding jobs,

medical help and access to municipal services. The AP was very good at building patronage networks among such people. As aptly described by a scholar in the 1960s:

Much of its [AP's] success is due to its strong local organisations, which function as service organisations for the squatters. A typical villager arriving in Ankara or Istanbul goes immediately to that district populated by people from his home village. The local Justice Party [AP] man helps him settle, aids him in problems with the authorities, and functions as an employment agency or a marriage bureau, as the case may be. (Sherwood 1967, p. 57)

In short, the AP controlled the local right-wing-dominated professional, business, family and/or neighbourhood networks, which benefited from the AP leaders' business relations with the centre while these networks guaranteed the AP's power at the local level (Ayata 1996, p. 44; Gencel Sezgin 2012, p. 79).

Several studies and media reports highlight the patronage networks of the AKP as well. In its patronage practice, the AKP follows more the technique of its pro-Islamist predecessor, the RP, in creating horizontal relationships with its voters, involving face-to-face interaction between party workers (most of whom are women) and their neighbours who live in the same neighbourhood (Kemahlioğlu 2012, p. 48). Another technique is to transfer national government funds to decentralised government agencies in the provinces for the benefit of the party (Kemahlioğlu 2012, p. 57). For instance, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund established under the prime ministry in 1986 has been widely utilised by the AKP through local governorships. It has been argued that this has served the party's political purposes, affecting the vote preferences of the urban poor in the 2014 local elections (Aksiyon 2014). A recent study (Aytaç 2013) analysing the expenditures of this fund in 878 sub-provincial districts (*ilçe*) of Turkey in 2005–08, has shown that the number of applications to the fund's programmes is higher in districts where the AKP already has a strong presence. In short, there is no clear evidence that the intensity of patronage reached a higher level in the AKP period than under the AP, even though the former started adopting more diverse techniques in distributing material benefits to its voters.

Another noteworthy point is to what extent military or judicial interventions isolated these parties from state sources. In 1971, the military, by issuing a written ultimatum, ousted the Demirel government on the grounds of what it saw as Turkey's slide towards anarchy. While this act could definitely have undermined the AP's access to state resources, it is plausible to assume that, having won two elections consecutively in 1965 and 1969, the AP should already have accumulated sufficient resources by 1971 to succeed in the 1973 elections. After all, the 1971 memorandum only led to the replacement of the AP government by what the military termed a 'neutral' successor; it did not result in a party closure. In contrast, the AKP faced a closure trial at the Constitutional Court in 2008 following a request by the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeal. While this petition failed by one vote, the court decided to reduce the AKP's state funding by 50 per cent. Thus, both parties confronted exogenous interventions that aimed to prevent their access to state resources.

Briefly, one should be careful in assigning causality to resource theory when explaining the emergence of a dominant party system under AKP rule. Patronage may prove to be an effective tool in helping a party persist in power *once* it becomes dominant within the system (Magaloni 2006, p. 17). But during the emergence phase it is probable that other factors play a more important role. Otherwise, one would expect any party such as the AP, which formed a single-party government after one or two elections, to establish a dominant party system using state resources.

Intra-Party Conflicts

Intra-party conflicts among the elites can have a major effect, especially on the downfall phase of a dominant party system. Magaloni (2006, p. 17) explains that a hegemonic party is vulnerable to elite divisions because the elections provide a vehicle through which disaffected ruling party politicians can legally challenge the regime. Based on these arguments, it may be useful to assess the causal weight of intra-party conflicts on the emergence phase of a dominant party system, hypothesising that the existence of intra-party conflicts may endanger the party's endeavour to establish its ascendancy vis-à-vis challengers even in the short term.

The parties in Turkey are known for highly oligarchic, authoritarian structures with a dominant leader tradition (Özbudun 2000, p. 83; Ayan Musil 2011). Oppositional factions due to their non-democratic features, mostly create centrifugal conflicts within parties. Under centrifugal forces, the parties run the risk of splits – in contrast to centripetal forces that foster intra-party harmony (Boucek 2009, p. 455). Emerging oppositional factions, thus, first try to remove the leader of the dominant faction; if they fail, they split and establish a new party (Ayan Musil & Dikici Bilgin 2014). Many new parties have been established in Turkey through factional splits.

In both the AP and AKP cases, the party leaders, Süleyman Demirel and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, are known to have had authoritarian styles of leadership and to have attempted to marginalise opposing voices within their parties (Arat 2002; Ayan Musil 2011, p. 100). Yet, the experience of the AP shows that this party did suffer from severe ideological factionalism which resulted in two factional splits in 1970. In the mid-1960s, the AP was already divided into two main camps: conservative nationalists and liberals. The latter, who had acquired control of the party organisation, were called *Yeminliler* (those who have been sworn in) by their opponents in reference to their unmitigated support for party leader, Demirel (Gencel Sezgin 2012, p. 83). Following Ragıp Gümüşpala's death in 1964, Demirel, representing the liberal faction won the leadership contest against Sadettin Bilgiç, who was the candidate of the conservative nationalists supported by the right-wing associations as well as the pro-Islamists within the AP (Gencel Sezgin 2012, p. 84). Yet, perceiving themselves increasingly marginalised from the decision-making processes of both factions, the pro-Islamists separated from the AP and established the MNP (*Milli Nizam Partisi* – National Order Party) in January 1970 (Gencel Sezgin 2012, p. 84).

Meanwhile, the tension between the Bilgic and Demirel factions escalated on 11 February 1970 when 41 parliamentarians broke party discipline during legislative voting (Tachau 2002, p. 35). Some of these parliamentarians were later expelled or resigned from the party. Declaring themselves heirs of the DP, they established the DkP (*Demokratik Parti* – Democratic Party) in 1970 (Milliyet 1970). In the 1973 elections, the DkP received 11.9 per cent of votes and acquired 45 seats in parliament. On the other hand, the MSP (successor of the MNP which had been closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1971) managed to gain 11.8 per cent of votes and 48 seats in parliament. Thus, the factional splits cost the AP a lot of votes. Indeed a public opinion survey conducted prior to the 1973 elections revealed that voters who had supported the AP in 1969 perceived the party as quite worn-out in 1973 as a result of these internal divisions (Milliyet 1973).

As for the AKP, one of the main splits occurred in July 2008 with the withdrawal from the party of Abdüllatif Şener, a former deputy prime minister and founder member of the party. In public interviews, Şener cited the reason for his withdrawal as disagreement with the AKP administration on economic policies and the way that decisions on these policies were made in the party (Aruoba 2008). He established the TP (*Türkiye Partisi* – Turkey Party) in 2009 and pursued centre-right politics mostly based on criticism of AKP policies that, he stated, ‘led to the widening of the gap between the rich and poor’ (Radikal 2010). Yet, in 2012, the party was officially closed down. Şener explained in an interview that ‘it is impossible for a newly established party to compete in elections because there are not enough resources to mobilise the masses’ (Hürriyet 2012).

Another intra-party conflict within the AKP concerns the tension with the Gülen faction which became strongly apparent in December 2013. The Gülen faction can be regarded as a dimension of the large and powerful transnational religious movement led by Fethullah Gülen, which has established newspapers, radio channels and schools and cooperated with major media channels in Turkey, thus becoming an influential pressure group. The movement’s outreach has expanded globally, focusing on issues such as interfaith dialogue, multiculturalism and democracy (Bilici 2006, p. 12). With its tolerant normative framework and pro-globalisation outlook, Gülen deviated from the ideology of pro-Islamic parties such as the MSP and the RP (Kuru 2005, p. 269). Yet, Erdoğan and his colleagues who had already constituted the *reformist* faction within these parties, had gained the recognition of the Gülen movement when they split and established the AKP in 2001 (Kuru 2005, p. 272).

On 17 December 2013, Istanbul Security Directorate initiated a corruption-related investigation, detaining government officials accused of bribery, money-laundering and smuggling gold. Four cabinet ministers resigned as a result of the corruption allegations. The event was interpreted as the outcome of an ongoing intra-party conflict between the governing elite and Gülen supporters, since it broke out right after the closure of private Gülen schools by the Turkish government (Milliyet 2013). Indeed, Erdoğan publicly accused Fethullah Gülen of ‘trying to grab state power by orchestrating a specious corruption investigation’ (The Independent 2014).

On the other hand, Gülen declared that the alleged investigations were not linked to his religious community (BBC 2014a; 2014b). Yet, he implied his disapproval of the AKP government, saying that ‘people should vote for those who are respectful to democracy, rule of law, who get on well with people . . . Everybody very clearly sees what is going on’ (BBC 2014a; 2014b). Despite the conflict between the supporters of Gülen and Erdoğan, the AKP scored another victory in local elections on 30 March 2014, receiving about 45 per cent of votes. A few months later, Erdoğan was elected as the president of Turkey in the country’s first direct presidential elections, beating Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the candidate who had the support of several opposition parties including the CHP. These election results signalled that if there were to be an upcoming parliamentary election the AKP could still be ahead of its challengers.

The main distinction between the intra-party conflicts observed in the AKP and AP cases is that the conflicts within the AP had a concretely centrifugal and ideological character, which led to the establishment of new parties such as the MSP and the DkP. The failure of Şener’s TP, in contrast with the MSP and the DkP, which both received about 11 per cent of votes in the 1973 elections, can plausibly be explained by Şener’s one-man effort to divide the AKP, albeit with limited effect. On the other hand, the Gülen faction characterises itself more as part of a global social movement than as a future political party. This partially explains how the AKP remained a united party under the leadership of Erdoğan, yet the future will show whether the Gülen movement will create a centrifugal conflict among the AKP elites. Thus, lack of centrifugal intra-party conflicts play an important role in the emergence phase of dominant party systems.

Conclusion

This study, based on a comparative historical analysis of two Turkish political parties, has explored the causal weight of various theories on the emergence phase of a dominant party system. Attention has been paid to distinguishing the emergence phase from the persistence and downfall phases of dominant party systems, arguing that each phase may require a different theoretical framework.

The analysis shows that social cleavages and institutional barriers against potential challengers provide a favourable macro-level setting for the emergence of dominant party systems. In other words, they are factors enabling this outcome. Indeed, a predominant party system in Turkey has been possible only under the ascendancy of a right-wing party appealing to religious, conservative values. Meanwhile, the strong national electoral threshold has prevented the possible participation of new parties in electoral competition during the AKP period. On the other hand, voters’ satisfaction with the incumbent’s economic policies as well as lack of centrifugal, ideological intra-party conflicts have been noted as two crucial factors affecting the success of an incumbent party for at least three consecutive periods. Another point concerns resource theory. It may be quite powerful in explaining the persistence of dominant

party systems (Greene 2007; Magaloni 2006), but one should be careful in assigning causal weight to this theory when explaining the emergence phase. Every party has an advantage with access to state resources once it achieves control over the government in one election, especially in a context like Turkey where clientelism is a well-established phenomenon. But a dominant party system does not emerge in all possible circumstances.

Finally, one may want to question whether the role of military tutelage in Turkey challenges the arguments of this study or not. Indeed, both the AP and the AKP have had to cope with the possibility of a military intervention during their periods of governmental power. The military had antipathy towards the AP as the immediate successor to the DP, which the army had ousted in 1960. From 1965 to 1970 there was a broad consensus on both sides. While not radically departing from the periphery-oriented traditional discourse of the DP, the AP sought a more secular–liberal identity in a way that would increase its legitimacy within the secular–bureaucratic elite (Sakallıoğlu 1996, pp. 239–40). Yet, on 12 March 1971, the military issued a stern memorandum to the government, on the grounds that the latter could not deal with the severe domestic instability.

Similarly, during the AKP government, on 27 April 2007 an e-memorandum was published on the General Staff website, stating that the military would openly reveal its position when it became necessary. While the 1971 memorandum led to the resignation of Prime Minister Demirel, the AKP government was able to react strongly against the e-memorandum in 2007, asserting that ‘in a democratic country governed by the rule of law, it is unimaginable for the General Staff ... to make a statement against the government’ (Today’s Zaman 2009).

The AKP was in a stronger position than the AP in coping with the military, since the power of the MGK (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* – National Security Council) had gradually decreased since the 2000s as part of the European Union (EU) harmonisation process (Güney & Karatekelioğlu 2005). Yet the memorandum cannot really be considered the cause of the AP’s declining power because the AP’s support base was already composed of the peripheral constituencies that were opposed to military influence. According to a survey in 1973, AP voters did not find the party responsible for provoking the 1971 memorandum (Milliyet 1973).

So, in what sense may the emergence of a dominant party system lead to further democratic regression in Turkey? Alongside the reduction of military influence in politics, the AKP government has started pursuing more conservative policies that do not appeal to those outside the party. As Freedom House (2013) indicates, Turkey’s civil liberties rating declined from three to four between the years 2012 and 2013 due to the custody of thousands of individuals – including Kurdish activists, journalists, union leaders, students, and military officers. The same report indicates that the independence of the judiciary is at high risk. It seems likely that Turkey may enter the persistence phase of a dominant party system, particularly because patronage is a common feature of party politics in Turkey and the AKP is in favour of amending the election laws to sustain its power. This opens the prospect that

Turkey may in future fall into the classification that Levitsky and Way (2002) call ‘competitive authoritarianism’.

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