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Examining the impact of Turkey's Islamist party spectrum on processes of democratic consolidation through strengthening the Turkish party system

Marc Herzog
mabrukh@gmail.com
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Introduction

As the chaotic recent events in Turkey just over one month ago highlighted, the country's democratic consolidation is an ongoing process that is still being hampered and obstructed by significant institutional deficiencies and shortcomings within the political system. Following weeks of protest and unrest from the secular establishment, the opposition parties and the Turkish armed forces, Turkey's ruling party, the Justice and Development Party nominated Abdullah Gül, the current foreign minister, to be its presidential candidate. However, in protest against Gül's supposedly Islamist character, the political opposition vowed to boycott the parliamentary vote that should have elected the president by insisting that 367 of the National Assembly's 550 parliamentarians needed to be present to validate the process. Since the ruling party only holds 358 seats and the opposition parties boycotted the election, the Constitutional Court was asked to review the legitimacy of the vote. On the same day, April 27th, the military posted a statement on its website expressing grave concerns regarding the current state of affairs and warned that it was willing to undertake any measures necessary to preserve the secular heritage of the Turkish state.

5 days later the Constitutional court declared the presidential elections null and void. In addition, massive demonstrations against the supposed Islamist agenda of the current government have shaken Turkey's biggest cities resulting in the arrest of over 600 people in one case. In the face of institutional deadlock, the government decided to call early elections moving them from November to July 22nd and tabled a constitutional amendment to elect the president through popular vote rather than by the parliament. This sequence of events is somewhat reminiscent of the events surrounding the so-called February 28th process in 1997 when an erstwhile Islamist government was forced to abdicate following months of civil demonstrations, political gridlock and threatening comments and demands from the military. Thus, this episode highlights that although Turkey's political system has attained the most basic features of liberal democracy, electoral competition and division of powers within the state, there remain significant 'authoritarian enclaves' (Garretón 2003: 47), institutional legacies of the ancien regime, which distort the functioning of the main political system and impede democratic consolidation resulting in what Merkel (2004: 48) calls 'defective democracy'. In Turkey's context, these vestigial legacies have been summed up as 'devlet

baba', the deep state, a collection of military-bureaucratic institutional networks deeply unfavourable towards the further democratization of the political regime.

This paper is part of a wider research project positing that Turkey's Islamist party spectrum has had a positive impact in advancing processes of democratic consolidation within the national polity by strengthening the institutionalization of the Turkish party system, especially in its linkages with civil society. Several explanatory factors will be outlined for this development. Firstly, unlike all the other main parties in Turkey, Islamist political parties maintain strong grassroots links with Turkish civil society and adopts organizational mass-party models based on the strength of such links, thus helping to uphold the vital relation between civil society, the electorate and the party political sphere. Secondly, the emergence of socially inclusive Islamist parties in the 1990s as an electoral force in Turkish politics widened the range of electoral choices. Islamist political parties have been essential in incorporating and adapting the increasing religiosity amongst the general population within the political process of democratic political systems by offering an avenue of expression for a significant section of the electorate (Çarkoglu 2005; 311; Özdalga 2002: 144). Thirdly, the Islamist party spectrum has recognised a strategic interest in furthering the consolidation of Turkey's democratic political system in order to shift the political balance of powers away from the arbitrary powers of the military and towards the choice of the electorate at the ballot box.

In this sense, this research will also attempt to shed new light on the debate regarding the compatibility of Islamic cultures and liberal democracy as a political regime in attempting to demonstrate that it is possible for Islamist parties or an Islamist political spectrum, particularly when adopting a moderate format, to have a constructive effect in advancing processes of democratic consolidation within a national polity. Democratization in the Middle Eastern region is sometimes regarded as an improvident undertaking, interpreted as giving rise to what Fareed Zakaria regards as 'theocratic politics' which result in the 'erosion of long-standing traditions of secularism and tolerance' (1997: 28). The political efforts of Islamist parties then have been equated with a negative causality for the democratic development of political systems. However, in Turkey, the 2002 election of the Justice and Development party (AKP) has provided an example of a moderate Islamist party that has

managed to exert a stabilizing and strengthening force on the country's democratic political institutions. It is noteworthy that Zakaria (2007) recently described the AKP government as the 'the most open, modern and liberal political movement in Turkey's history.' This research plan chooses the analytical framework conceptualized by Mainwaring and Scully in the 1990s in the context of new Latin American democracies to examine the impact of the Turkish Islamist spectrum on party system institutionalization that is the health and quality of Turkey's party system. It was decided to use party system institutionalization as the main conceptual measure for this work. This choice was informed by the body of academic literature on party systems in third wave democracies which identified party system institutionalization as perhaps one of the most relevant factors in examining the stability and health of democratic systems in new democracies (Wallis 2003; Randall and Svasand 2002a; Schedler 2002; Mainwaring and Scully 1995).

In the following chapters, the theoretical bases for the study will be examine in more depth. This will then be contextualised within the ambit of Turkey's political system.

Democratic consolidation, political parties and party systems

The next section will attempt to provide a brief summary of democratic transition and consolidation especially those areas relevant to studies of processes of democratic consolidation. This will then lead over to a discussion of the relation of political parties and party system institutionalization to democratic consolidation. Lastly, Mainwaring and Scully's framework of party system institutionalization will be presented.

In this research proposal, the terms 'democracy' or 'liberal democracy' will be understood as 'a purely political conception of the term' (Diamond 2002: 8), in the way that they have been employed within democracy studies and comparative politics, rather than the contested philosophical or moral meanings that they may hold. Therefore, democracy will be read as 'a method or, rather, as a set of rules that allow all citizens to compete and participate'

(Morlino 1995: 572). There has been some criticism within the field of democratization studies for its narrow focus on political and state elites (Gill 2000: 241), and its limited interpretation of democracy as 'the establishment of a set of governing institutions' (Grugel 2000: 61). While the broad thrust of this criticism is undeniable, it does not weaken the case for studying the roles of political elites and institutions as they play a quintessential part on the structure of new democratic regimes.

The recent tensions between the AK party and the main opposition party, the staunchly kemalist CHP, as well as the military reinforce this point although one should not neglect the massive social upheaval that have occurred throughout Turkey in the form of mass demonstration over this issue. The decision to keep the central analytical focus on political parties in this study of democratic consolidation stemmed from the essential nature of the party as an intermediate institution between the state and civil society (Corrales 2001). The relatively weak position that civil society holds as a political agent in Turkey, despite the recent mass demonstrations, seemed to support this choice. According Kalaycioglu (2001: 62), Turkish society is traditionally characterized 'by the deep-rooted lack of interpersonal trust and associability, on one hand, and by the strength of primordial bond'.

Democratic Installation, Transition and Consolidation

Conventional democratization studies of the predominant transitology school have established a two-stage frame through which a country's political system will pass during its shift from a previously non-democratic regime to a democratic one. The initial stage of installation and transition witnesses the actual transformative processes in which the old non-democratic political structures and institutions are abandoned or altered in favour of new, democratic ones. This phase is succeeded by the consolidation phase in which the exact political system and its norms are cemented and legitimated through their acknowledgment and acceptance by the main actors in the formal political sphere and all the other main social actors. The main challenge affecting democratic consolidation lies in securing the continuation, of the newly entrenched democratic decision-making rules and procedures, what Rustow termed the 'process of habituation' (Norton 2004: 146). The exact point at which processes of democratic transition are successfully completed and shift into

democratic consolidation is unclear and disputed as there are no universally accepted criteria for determining a transition's endpoints. Hague et al describe (2004: 163) this first electoral process as 'a referendum on, and a celebration of, democracy' although the following elections are seen as the more 'convincing test for democratic consolidation'.

It has been even more difficult to determine the endpoint for democratic consolidation. Morlino (1995: 577) argues that processes of democratic consolidation have no definite time limits as 'successful consolidation flows into stable persistence' of the adapted democratic political processes and practices. Norgaard (2001: 15) supports this by stating that democratic consolidation is 'open-ended' but also 'reversible'. Linz made the famous comment that a democratic political regime has fully consolidated when all actors recognise that it is 'the only game in town' (Linz and Stepan 1998: 49). For Schedler (2001: 2), there is no specific moment of truth at which democratic consolidation successfully terminates, rather it can be perceived when all political actors 'manage to establish reasonable certainty about the continuity of the new democratic regime, abating expectations of authoritarian regression'. In equal spirit, Beetham (1999: 71) states that a political system has been completely consolidated when the legitimacy of the 'electoral process or the political freedom on which it depends' can manage to survive a series of deep and fundamental crises that test the strength of its democratic character.

Political Parties, Party Systems and Party System Institutionalization

When political parties initially start playing a role after a democratic transition, it is their organizational assets in terms of mobilizational resources that benefit political parties as institutional agents in this phase (Gill 2000: 61). Randall and Svasand (2002a: 7) highlight three main ways in which political parties contribute to processes of democratic consolidation; 'conflict resolution', 'institutionalization of democracy' and by providing 'regime legitimacy'. As 'intermediate-level political institutions' that are positioned 'in both state and civil society' (Potter 1998: 27), political parties perform a dual representative function. They aggregate, crystallize and compress the demands of wider civil society in a coherent political discourse within the political system (Peters 1999: 123). According to Sartori, political parties are 'channeling agencies' (cited in Tachau 1994: xiv), they constitute

an 'instrument for representing the people by expressing their demands' (cited in Randall and Svasand 2002a: 5). Thus, parties perform the indispensable role of operating between 'the bottom-up and top-down domains of action' and are 'efficient conduits of democratization' (Corrales 2001).

It is instructive to outline the changing nature of political parties throughout history as it has important implications regarding the relation between state, political parties and civil society especially during democratic consolidation. During the industrial period, cadre parties, groupings of similar minded elites, became increasingly incapable to express the demands and needs of new social groups (Calvert 2002: 162). This heralded the advent of the mass party, which established close social and cultural bonds between themselves and their constituencies. The mass party integrated its members by involving them in a series of networks and organisations all linked to the party. Roberts (2001: 23) describes them as 'mass bureaucratic organizations with active grass-roots structures'. In the post-war era, this party model became outdated as the demands of their main constituent groups were increasingly met by the growth of the welfare state (Katz and Mair 1995: 12-13). Additionally, as parties were pressured into looking beyond their traditional constituents for survival, the emerging mass media enabled them to address large audiences on a national basis (Özbudun 2001: 247). Rather than being specifically loyal to any particular constituent community, the sole objective of this 'professional electoral party' (Roberts 2001: 23) was 'not to represent but to govern' (Hague et al 2004: 187). Consequently, relations to civil society were completely redefined within this model and usually this resulted in 'an erosion of the party-civil society linkage' while institutional relations to the state grew (Katz and Mair 1995: 7).

Party Systems

Party systems are the constitutive entities made up of the totality of political parties within a national polity. However, as Janda (1993: 180) stresses, a party system 'is more than the sum of its parts' as it presents an interactive frame whose characteristics are shaped by the interaction of the parties an individual as well as a collective basis. Sartori (1976: 230) defines a party system as 'the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition'.

Furthermore, the concept of the party system also integrates the manner in which the party political sphere interacts with the state and civil society. Hence, party systems constitute the 'traffic rules that plug the society into the state' (Sartori cited in Tachau 1994: xiv). Political parties have to construct their modes interaction and competition for electoral office within the party system. Thus, the party system 'tends to define the limits of behaviour of the individual members of the system (Peters 1999: 115). The nature of the party system and its structural characteristics are influential in determining how this political space relates to processes of democratic consolidation among the main political actors and civil society in general (Penner-Angrist 2004: 115). Conventional studies of classifying and evaluating party systems have focused on a variety of different features and characteristics and compared how they have affected the individual development of political systems on a cross-national basis. The main classificatory indicators that have been established according to this measure have distinguished between two-party systems, multi-party systems and extreme multi-party systems (Peters 1999: 116). Thus, some of the more commonly established though not universally accepted measures involve assessing the levels of fragmentation or ideological polarization within a party system or analysing the cleavage structures that define it.

In examining party systems, one critical factor that tends to be neglected by all these means is 'the quality of democratic practice and accountability' (Mainwaring cited in Wallis 2003: 12), namely the level of institutionalization that party systems have undergone and their degree of grounding in wider civil society which is of particular importance for newly democratized countries. Moreover, it has been argued that the extent to which the insights from studies on North America and Western Europe can be applied to non-western contexts is restricted, especially regarding young democratic regimes that experience continuous internal instability as well as waves of authoritarian reversals (Hague et al 2004: 200; Karvonen and Anckar 2002: 28; Grugel 2002: 74; Randall and Svasand 2002b: 6; Mainwaring 1998: 21). For instance, Mainwaring (1999: 22) argues that the left-right divide does not match the socio-economic realities of new democracies that have not undergone periods of mass industrialization. In Turkey's case, it has been claimed that analysing Islamist parties along the left-right divide is impractical as their policies can be simultaneously left-wing, in terms of social redistribution, and right-wing, in their economic liberalism (Hicks 2003: 377; Önis 1997: 748).

Through the scholarship of Mainwaring and Scully in the 1990s, party system institutionalization became recognised as a significant factor in determining the legitimacy and health of a democratic political regime. Grugel (2002: 74) summarises the implications of low levels of institutionalization as consisting of absence of legitimacy of the party system, poor intra-party organisation, weak links to society and 'few opportunities for structured interaction between parties'. Mainwaring and Scully discern between three types of party systems (Wallis 2003: 20). 'Hegemonic party system' are dominated by one political party. 'Institutionalised party systems' are characterised as systems 'where parties significantly structure the political process'. The third type, 'inchoate party systems', distinguishes itself by revealing weak patterns of stability in party interaction and an absent consensus on the normative and procedural parameters and rules of democratic process. This prevents a proper absorption of democratic values and norms in the political sphere and society, thus impeding democratic consolidation (Mainwaring 1998: 78). As will be shown later in examining the problems of Turkey's political system, the country's political system can be seen as falling into this third category.

Mainwaring and Scully's Framework of party system institutionalization

Mainwaring and Scully's framework on party system institutionalization is widely used in evaluating the 'durability' of democratic party systems in developing countries. Their model on party system institutionalization accords special attention to 4 particular factors; regularity in inter-party competition; 'rootedness' in society; legitimacy given to the electoral process and the party political sphere; autonomy of political organisation from external organisations (Wallis 2003: 20-21). These 4 factors will now be briefly analysed in order to explore them further.

Regularity in inter-party competition

The first principal criterion that Mainwaring and Scully establish relating to the level of institutionalization of national party system is 'stability in the rules and the nature of inter-

party competition' (Mainwaring 1998: 69). In an environment dominated by fly-by-night political parties, it will be difficult for the electoral base to develop any authentic links to the party system (Wallis 2003: 20-21). Heywood (2002: 7) states that patterns of party interaction can only be defined themselves as a party system when they achieve a certain measure of 'stability and a degree of orderliness'. In this sense, Randall and Svasand (2002b: 13) argue that regularity means a form of 'routinization' and the framing of a system of norms and conventions regulating interaction. Crotty argues that democratic polities cannot function without stable inter-party competition (Randall and Svasand 2002a: 3).

Social rootedness of political parties

The second criterion that Mainwaring and Scully raise concerns the degree to which the key parties are entrenched in the social landscapes whose interests they aggregate and articulate. 'Strong party roots', as Mainwaring (1998: 70-71) states, 'help provide the regularity that institutionalization implies'. Simultaneously, a strong social grounding enables parties to remain electorally sustainable for longer (Esteban Montes et al 2000: 803). This relates to the legitimization role of political parties within broader society in so far as 'rootedness' or 'party penetration' (Ware 1996 150) is intended to measure the extent to which citizens feel that political parties are linked to them collectively and can therefore relate to their everyday needs. Wallis (2003: 21) links the term to the incidence of electoral volatility present within a political system, as a lack of rootedness will result in 'limited regularity in how people vote'. Kenneth Janda relates the institutionalization of political parties to the extent to which they are embedded in the social settings of their electorates (cited in Randall and Svasand 2002b: 11). As was stated, in the era of the mass party model, political parties maintained strong and durable links to their main constituent groups, attempting to integrate the private lives of their activists, members and voters into a network of organizations and bodies connected to them. Mainwaring (1999: 6) argues that political parties which 'develop allegiances among citizen, organized groups, and politicians' are invaluable for the functioning of democratic system. The decline of this party model has led to a corresponding decline in the social rootedness of political parties. One indicator of this is the waning public trust in political parties across the world (Mainwaring 1999: 35; Randall and Svasand 2002b: 8).

Legitimation of electoral process by major political actors

This relates to the degree to which the electoral competition and the party system are seen as legitimate by the major actors. One has to distinguish here between the legitimacy that these institutions enjoy amongst actors in the political sphere and the legitimacy that they receive in society (Morlino 1995: 582). In consensualist political systems, there is a much greater likelihood that actors in the party system will respect the 'uncertainty of democracy competition' (Corrales 2001). Leftwich argues (1999: 528) as well that the principle of electoral competition will remain acknowledged and respected if the elected parties exhibit 'policy restraint' and adhere to the ideological consenses that exist in the party system. In terms of social legitimacy amongst the greater public, Mainwaring (1999: 39) states that where political parties are part of the functioning of basic democracy, 'system stability' overall increases. As seen, Morlino (1995: 575) sees one of the principal targets of democratic consolidation as establishing 'democratic structures and norms' which are recognised and integrated by civil society.

Independent and autonomous status of party organisations

The last criterion which Mainwaring and Scully posit stipulates that political parties should have internal structures that have an 'independent status and value of their own' without merely being vehicles for their leaders or other facades for other movements and organisations (Wallis 2003: 21). According to La Palombara and Weiner, parties should have enough structural cohesion to survive its political leaders (Tachau 1994: xiii). Therefore, parties must develop proper, independent channels of internal consultation and problem resolution linking the various levels of membership rather than just the party leadership. In the context of Turkey's Islamist party spectrum for instance, the rupture of the Islamist Refah party in the 1990s with the powerful religious orders that have always had a strong influence on Turkish Islamist parties was a positive step in delinking the determination of party policies from external influences (Hermann 2003: 271). In this regard, it is significant for a party organisation itself to undergo 'value infusion', that is that the norms and practices of the party itself become meaningful to members and activists beyond the technical

requirement of the task in hand' (Randall and Svasand 2002b: 11-12). This is more significant in third wave party systems where party leaders often exercise a near totalitarian control on the rest of the party.

This section outlined how political parties and party systems play an indispensable role in processes of democratic transition and democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the historical evolution of party models was brought into relation with the declining relation between parties and civil society. This was then linked with the conceptual frame of party systems and different manners of analysing their health. Finally, the factor of party system institutionalization was briefly outlined as well as the Mainwaring and Scully's model of untangling this concept and subdividing it into different criteria. The next section will attempt to contextualise these issues within the ambit of Turkey's political system.

Flaws and Failings of Turkey's political system and party system

The failings of the Turkish political system in terms of its democratic credentials derive to a large extent from the institutional legacies of the military coups and periods of military rule, 1960-1961, 1970-1971, 1980-1983, its period of one-party rule by the Republican People's Party (CHP) from 1924 until 1946 and the preceding Ottoman imperial state structure. These have led to a series of institutional configurations that have grossly disfigured the democratic political culture of Turkey to retain a deeply patrimonial and authoritarian character therefore approximating Mainwaring and Scully's notion of the 'inchoate party system'. The way religion is interpreted in Turkish society and politics has developed into a principal dimension of social and political contention. The Kemalist separation of state and religion in all main socio-political levels is based on the French laicist model (Hakan Yavuz 2004: 390; Davison 2003: 337). This laicist orientation of the polity was to anchor its adoption of a Western nation-state's features. However, the state-prescribed ostracism of overt religious identification from all public dimensions of life met with heavy resistance from the outset in the 1920s. The Kemalist model of state-enforced secularism placed heavy regulation on all religious movements in society. Despite the overtly non-religious character of Turkey's Kemalist state culture, there was a lot of correspondence between the dominance of the main Islamic confessional belief among the population, Sunni Islam, and the religious biases of the secular state (Shankland 2002: 83).

However, the overt state regulation of religious affairs in the social and public sphere has in many ways moderated the public format of religious expression in Turkish. Lesser (2004: 183) has termed this as a 'recessed Islam', forming an 'an implicit rather than an explicit part of political discourse'. However, it is debatable to what extent the state's efforts of secularizing Turkish society succeeded as large parts of Eastern Turkey remained religiously traditional. The next section will examine the main institutional failings of Turkey's political system. Turkey can be characterised as suffering from an 'inchoate party system' affecting the unfolding of its democratic consolidation. As such, it can still be described as a defective or illiberal democracy because of the superficiality of its political democracy and the low rootedness that the official political sphere has in the wider social structures.

Civil – military relations

A foundational principle of the liberal democratic model of governance is that problems are solved within the frame of the political regime by its legitimate actors and not by the actual powers present in the polity (Garretón 2001: 49-50). The relationship between the government and the military forces should be structured with the military as an impartial and subservient instrument that is 'subordinate to democratic control' (Cizre 2004, 107). In Turkey, civil-military relations diverge widely from this institutional norm. Overall the military has forcibly intervened 3 times in Turkey's political sphere by overthrowing democratically elected governments and suspending democratic politics due to 'perceived civilian misgovernance' (Reiter 2001: 49). As seen, it contributed significantly to the downfall of Turkey's Islamist government in 1997 and also intervened via internet during the recent aborted presidential elections. The high public esteem in which the military is held is closely linked to its role in Turkey's republican history. Since the founding of the republic, Turkey's armed forces have always been seen as a stern but incorruptible caretaker of the country's moral and politico-cultural heritage (Dodd 2002, 253).

Highly personalist format of Turkish inter-party politics

One of the Turkish party system's key features is its high degree of personalised politics. According to Heper (2002: 217), it was mostly political leaders that led the drive towards Turkey's democratic transition and played a crucial part in its breakdowns. The survival of specific individuals as key figures in the political world for decades is a common phenomenon. In some case entire parties became equated in the public eye with certain politicians, even when they did not lead them officially. To a certain degree, this was one of the failings of the political system that the military wanted to 'correct' through its 1980 coup and the constitutional re-engineering of Turkey's political system. Their decision to ban an entire class of politicians from the 1970s from re-entering politics was unsuccessful as all principal figures of that era, Erbakan, Ecevit and Demirel, eventually resurfaced in the 1980s or 1990s.

This personal is interlinked with the autocratic format in which leadership is traditionally exercised in most political parties (Heper 2002: 224). Kalaycioglu (2002: 52) terms this format 'democratic centralist leadership' in which a small elite decide on all the key issues and transform their decision into party policies. This personalization has resulted in voters increasingly focusing more on the qualities of the parties' candidates rather than the party manifestos (Özbudun 2001: 249). According to Hale (2002: 185), this format leads to an 'extremely low frequency of leadership changes', 'immobilism', and impedes the flow of new ideas and individuals into the political arena. As Özbudun (2001: 247) notes, candidate selection processes in Turkish parties use some of the 'most centralized and oligarchical methods' amongst democratic countries. This personalist nature was also seen in the AK party's election in 2002 as the party's leader Erdogan was seen by many people as a 'saviour' to the country's many problems, benefiting from his 'honest and charismatic image' and his good record as mayor of Ankara (Mango 2004: 111; Ahmad 2003: 181; Çaha 2003: 102). To a certain degree, institutional biases towards personalistic politics in party systems and public perceptions of politics are present in most countries. In the contemporary age of mass media, especially visual media, where the use of public relations can help market the image of political parties across the entire country, the trend towards the personalization of politics has been an inevitable consequence (Hague et al 2004: 187; Günes-Ayata and Ayata 2001: 105; Katz and Mair 1995: 7).

Lack of public legitimacy

Due to prominent public memories of the political chaos in the 1970s and the 1990s, political parties tend to be regarded with mistrust and even revulsion in Turkish society. Opinion surveys and polls have consistently shown the most trusted institution in Turkey to be the military forces (Kaya and Kentel 2005: 35). Kalaycioglu (2001: 62) emphasises that Turkish society is traditionally characterised by a 'high level of inter-personal distrust' and the importance of familial patronage networks as well as ethnic relations. Political parties do not enjoy widespread bottom-up legitimacy in Turkey and are often rated as one of the political institutions most susceptible to corruption as well as being thought of as being ineffective and untrustworthy (Abramowitz 2003: 6). Large-scale disillusionment exists regarding the impact of party politics on the major social and economic problems within the

country, especially amongst young people (Özbudun 2001: 143). This disillusionment has affected the established centrist parties the most as political power increasingly shifted away from them in 1990s with fringe parties increasing their electoral share (Çarkoglu 2005: 311; Ayata-Günes and Ayata 2001: 96-97). To a certain extent, the 2002 landslide election of the AK party was seen as proof for the complete distrust and disgust with which the public holds most parties.

Lack of civil society linkages

Frey wrote in the 1950s that politics in Turkey was mainly 'party politics' (cited in Özbudun 2001: 238). The genealogy of the Turkey's democratization and the party system finds its roots in the top-down priorities of the state rather than arising from a mixture of social and political pressures as was the historical norm across Western Europe. Therefore, a veritable organic connection between the party system and civil society never actually developed and one could apply the term 'feckless pluralist system' to Turkey's political system, that is a parliamentary regime in which electoral power is circulated amongst 'competing elites who are largely isolated from the citizenry but willing to play by widely accepted rules' (Carothers 2004b: 175). As Rubin (2002: 1) argues, the origins of the Turkish party system created a strong gravitational pull towards the interests and elites of the state while effective links with civil society were never explored as there was no perception from the party system that this would benefit it. As a result, as most Turkish parties 'lack substantive organic ties with their voting base' (Quinn Mecham 2004: 343). At the same though, there did not really exist 'a robust and independent civil society' that could have been engaged with (Robins 2003: 30).

Patron-client networks

On a whole, the organisational relationship between political parties and the public in Turkey's history developed along the 'well-nigh universal political structure of the patron-client network' (Almond et al 1993: 109). In this sense, as Kalaycioglu (2001: 63) notes, political parties have become the 'penultimate political institution of populist patronage'. Hale (2002: 184) compares the nature of voting instinct in individual Turkish constituencies

to consumer shopping. On a local level, voters and politicians have a strategic rather than normative conception of each other and their roles in a democratic society. Votes are traded in exchange for material benefits such as employment opportunities and infrastructural investment. Özbudun (2001: 244, 246) argues that the strength of the political clientelism hindered the developments of more authentic relations between political parties and their constituents as a whole. Roberts (2001: 24) reinforces this view in stating that adopting electoral mobilization strategies based on clientelistic loyalties can ultimately result in 'blatant forms of corruption and political favouritism, alienating voters and leaving party systems vulnerable to the rise of antiestablishment political outsiders.' The increasing share of votes that marginal parties were getting in Turkey is a good indication of this outcome. In a democratic polity where clientelistic relations become the primary norm of engagement between society and the political sphere there is no normative legitimation of democratic governance. In its place, the materialistic and strategic exchange between the political sphere and electoral society leads to the 'emergence of a political culture that belittles democratic norms and institutions, and even rejects them' (Akçam 2004: 17). In this way, the institutional deficiencies of an 'inchoate party system' can impede or delay 'a positive acceptance of certain beliefs and norms' of democracy as a political system (Mainwaring 1998: 78), thus distorting the consolidation process. Furthermore, the absence of organic interconnections contributes to the classical rupture between the dynamics of the political sphere and society in general as the former constantly lags behind the latter in terms of its development (Steinbach 2003: 48).

Lack of social rootedness

As mentioned, the legitimacy of political parties in the public sphere is associated with the extent to which they are seen as being anchored within the social structures whose interests they are supposed to represent. However, Turkish politics is based on patrimonial rather than authentic links with society. Tachau (1994: xx) states political parties across the Middle East 'have often incorporated within their structures and functions pre-existing patron-client relationships'. Thus, again it is helpful to examine the genealogy of the Turkish party system. The political model of democracy in which Turkey's party system developed was in many

ways completely isolated from the rest of society. Kubicek (2002: 763) argues that Turkish parties have a gatekeeping function in 'limiting who could enter and participate in mainstream political processes'. During the twenty-year gestation period until Turkey's democratic transition in 1946, many of the patrimonial traditions, values and beliefs of the Ottoman Empire did not just survive but evolved under the guise of authoritarian republicanism. In most cases, according to Özbudun (2001: 250), parties in the Turkish political system went from being a cadre party to a cartel party without experiencing a mass party format in between, although as later seen the Refah party is named as a 'possible exception'. Therefore, as argued, the relationship of most political parties to the state was always prioritised above that to their own constituents, except in a clientelistic fashion.

Electoral volatility

Since the reintroduction of the multi-party democracy in 1983, Turkey has had 6 national elections. According to Hale (2002: 172), since the 1950s, Turkey has had '7 years of military rule, 20-21 yrs of single party rule and 20-21 of coalition governments' with periods of high instability in 1961-5, 1973-80 and 1995-99. Çarkoglu (2002) states 23% of the electorate shifted their voting patterns in Turkey from one party to another at every election. The complete rejection of all main parties at the 2002 national elections in favour of the AK party was the most drastic manifestation of Turkey's electoral volatility. Despite the military's aim to prevent a return to the political instability of the 1970s with the 1982 constitution, high electoral volatility characterised Turkey's party-system again in the 1990s, resulting in very unstable coalition governments and complete sea-changes in the composition of governments from one election to another. The re-entry of Turkey's old class of politicians into the political system in the 1980s and 1990s, the return of political instability and electoral volatility and the high fragmentation in the party system all testified to the ineffectiveness of the military's intervention and its reforms of the political system. In fact, Özbudun (2001: 242) and Çarkoglu (1998: 551) argue that the interventions of the Turkish military played an essential part in furthering political volatility, polarization and fragmentation of the party system.

As seen, many of the institutional deficiencies and flaws of Turkey's political system concern the isolation of the political sphere from general society and the lack of legitimacy with which it is consequently associated in civil society. This lack of trust in the political system has contributed greatly to its fragility. In the next section, a series of properties that are predominantly found within the Islamist party spectrum will be outlined that can counteract these failings and bridge the divide between the party system and civil society.

Turkey's Islamist Party spectrum

Yesilada (2002: 79) states that the history of Turkey's Islamist politics is one of consistent adaptation to new circumstances as 'they keep returning to politics, albeit under new names'. This section will anchor the history of the Islamist party spectrum within the wider narrative of Turkish politics and examine the manner in which their emergence and participation in mainstream, electoral politics addresses some the key failings of the Turkish party system. If one examines most parties in this party spectrum historically since the 1960s, their most prominent characteristic is the continuity in terms of programmatic themes, party principles and perhaps more noticeably key figures in the leadership structure from one party to the next.

The Islamist party spectrum since the 1960s until the 1990s

The first significant Turkish Islamist party, the National Order Party (NOP) was founded by Necmettin Erbakan in 1970 (Taniyici 2003: 470). This party was dissolved after the 1971 military coup. A facsimile party, the National Salvation Party (NSP) was founded in 1972 and banned after the 1980 military coup. The Refah party (RP), successor to these Islamist parties, was founded after the first post-coup elections in 1983. Amongst the diverse links of continuity with those parties is the longevity of key political individuals in retaining vital leadership positions within the new Party, especially Erbakan, head of NOP, NSP and eventually also the RP. Erbakan's ability to survive as the doyen of Turkish Islamist politics decade after decade, party after party has continued until the present day as he is thought to have significant influence in the operations of the Saadet party despite being officially banned from engaging in politics (Hermann 2003: 272). After the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in 1983, the charismatic presence of conservative-democrat prime minister Turgut Özal, the Motherland Party and the success of Özal's neo-liberal reforms since the, dominated Turkey's political scene until Özal's death in 1993. His mixture of moderate Islamic religious beliefs and social conservatism meant that Islamist parties had no significant successes in that decade.

Rise of Refah party in the 1990s

The RP first achieved widespread success in the 1994 local elections when it was elected in 29 of Turkey's major cities including Istanbul and Ankara (Hermann 2003: 271; Hakan Yavuz 1997: 72). In the 1995 national elections, the RP won 21% of the national vote, consequently receiving the most seats in the Turkish national assembly, which was unprecedented in Turkey's democratic history (Keppel 2002: 350). Through continued negotiation with the incumbent party, DYP, the RP then entered a coalition government in 1995 through which Erbakan became the prime minister in Turkey's history whose personal philosophy was based on Islam (Hakan Yavuz 2003: 214; Hicks 2002: 377).

Factors behind rise of the Refah party

Önis (1997: 751) highlights the poor standing of the rest of the Turkish parties and overall party system. Keppel (2002: 391) argues that the loss of the charismatic Özal made the RP electable as the Motherland Party seemed unable to maintain its political standing without him (Kalaycioglu 2002: 58-59) and the RP's conservative Islamic image seemed to overlap with Özal's own moderate Islamic identity and his conservative politics. The political re-emergence of the veteran politician Erbakan as Refah's head also shifted the conservative Islamic vote towards RP (Yesilada 2002: 67). Lesser (2004: 181) argues that the steady migratory influxes into Turkey's western cities from the more traditional and rural Anatolia were also a big factor in the success of Islamist parties in those regions as the growth of the neighbourhoods in which these migrants lived (Hale 1981: 223), altered the political balance of Islamist parties in those cities. The gradual emergence of a religiously conscious business elite, the so-called 'Anatolian tigers' (Fuller 2004: 53), partially created by Özal's economic reforms in the 1980s, was also seen as an important factor in the RP's success. This aspect of their self-identity translated into a political affiliation with conservative or Islamist political parties. Therefore, this 'counter-elite' provided the Islamist party spectrum with an invaluable source of social, cultural and economic capital (Keppel 2002: 349).

This phenomenon was paralleled by the growth of a religiously conscious, upwardly-mobile middle class constituency. Though Islamic and conservative in its orientation, this group was also part of a modern consumer society, another product of the neo-liberal 1980s (Ahmad 2003: 161). Thus, the image of Islam managed to merge with that of the 'new consumerist culture' (Özbudun and Fuat Keyman 2002: 317), allowing it to sell itself more easily to a mainstream middle-class audience. The social and economic nature of this new group also had a conditioning effect on Islamist political parties, in favouring a less militant and more pro-systemic political Islam in form and substance (Hakan Yavuz and Khan 2004: 391; Keppel 2002: 343). As a result, the RP moderated the tone and substance of its political programme to suit this new electoral constituency and make itself more electable. Lastly, the RP also received heavy support from Turkey's most significant tarikats, religious orders, such as the Nakshibendi order which had access to a large array of resources like television and radio stations, networks of economic contacts and social welfare services (Hakan Yavuz 1999: 138-139). Simultaneously, as seen, the influence of these orders over the RP weakened throughout the decade.

Organisational properties of Refah

In terms of its party organisation, electoral campaigning methods and party format, the electoral success of the Refah party' must be attributed to its voter mobilization strategies and tactics, its party model and its extensive links to a large and diverse variety of civil societal organisation (Hakan Yavuz 1997: 77). The RP's status as a halfway mass party can be described to have contributed significantly to its electoral successes in the 1990s. Taniyici (2003: 469) and Özbudun (2001: 244) single out the RP as the only major party to resemble the characteristics of a mass party. In this sense one could speculate that the sudden evolutionary emergence of a mass party in Turkey's party system may have accelerated the decline of other system parties in the same manner that the failure of traditional European cadre parties to articulate and represent the popular sentiments of the electorate influenced their demise when mass parties emerged (Calvert 2002: 162).

Instead of using mass media methods of electoral campaigning, the RP placed major emphasis on its grassroots campaigning structures, face-to-face contact with the electorate and 'building interpersonal trust' on a communal level (Özel 2003: 86; Hakan Yavuz 1997: 78; Önis 1997: 755). Electoral committees are formed at the level of local districts involving local members which canvass on a house-to-house basis throughout the entire neighbourhoods ensuring direct contact between the public and the political party. In its abandonment of politics based on patron-client relations, Roy (2005: 61) defined the RP as Turkey's 'only modern political party'. Once again, most Turkish political parties have failed to inadequately develop such campaigning methods (Taniyici 2003: 469), focusing instead solely on using the mass media to spread its message. Furthermore, the RP was also involved as an organisational umbrella in running social service programmes, hospitals, and its own media (Esposito 1998: 168). This enabled Refah to develop 'an extensive organisational level' at a grassroots level and kept 'voters together' (Quinn Mecham 2004: 343; Hakan Yavuz 1997: 77). Thus the party was deeply rooted within the communities from which it received its electoral support.

February 28 process

The decade of the 1990s was pivotal for political mainstream Islam in Turkey, not just for the unprecedentedly widespread electoral success of an Islamist party but also due to the counter-reaction that the emergence of this political force provoked from the Kemalist state establishment. Despite a strategy of attempting to harmonise their ideological setting with the precepts of Kemalist state culture, the RP in government quickly began to anger state elites and the political establishment. Several of the key policies that the RP sought to enact in domestic politics seemed to threaten the secularity of Turkey's state culture. As Keppel (2002: 357) highlights however, the hostility to Erbakan's pronouncedly Islamist tone stretched beyond the military-bureaucratic establishment into large parts of civil society as large scale gestures of protest were regularly held (Cagaptay 2002), which were partially orchestrated by the military forces (Hakan Yavuz 2003: 246; Taniyici 2003: 464). Simultaneously this clash between Erbakan, the RP and the secular forces deepened mass capital flight (Ahmad 2003: 170). The steady stream of perceived antagonism culminated in the so-called 'post-modern coup' of 1997 when a speech by an Islamist politician incited the army into sending tanks through the streets of a major city. Subsequently, the military forces released a harsh statement calling on Erbakan to act against the rising forces of Islamic fundamentalism across the country. Amidst this social and political pressure Erbakan resigned. Finally, to complete the systematic expulsion of the RP from Turkish politics, it was dissolved by a constitutional court on February 28 1997 (Hakan Yavuz 2003: 247). Hence, this significant chapter in the evolution of Turkey's Islamist parties became known as the 'February 28 process' (Larrabee and Lesser 2003: 61).

The feud between modernists and traditionalists and the founding of the AKP

In the wake of the Refah party's constitutional abolition another Islamist party, the Fazilet party (FP), which seen as a facsimile party to the RP, was founded in 1998. What became quickly noticeable was the growing rivalry within the FP between two groups that held diverging views on political organisation and orientation. One group, headed by Recai Kutan, the leader of the Fazilet party remained loyal to Erbakan's traditionalist, militant and anti-western view of political Islam. Its counterpart, lead by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül, comprised those who disagreed with Erbakan's format of politics and disliked

his continuing dominance over the party (Atacan 2005: 193; Hakan Yavuz 2003: 249). This group had already formed in the Refah party (Hakan Yavuz 2003: 242; Hermann 2003: 271; Taniyici 2003: 469). The military's 'soft coup' against the RP was seen as confirmation by this reformist faction that political Islam in Turkey needed to undergo drastic change and modernization in order to widen its electoral appeal and safeguard its political survival (Larrabee and Lesser 2003: 61). It advocated a more modern and moderate style of political Islam that also reached out to other social groups in the population. This included a normative paradigm shift towards the liberal democratic model of governance as its pluralistic nature would be more sympathetic to their identity and ensure their political survival (Findley 2005: 218; Fuller 2004: 56). Furthermore, in this model the role of the armed forces, the main institutional opponent of political Islam in Turkey, was relegated to issues of 'external defence' (Cizre 2003: 218). To a large extent, this explains the shift to an overzealous commitment towards EU membership in the Erdogan administration (Shankland 2005: 55; Robins 2003: 112).

The conflict between both sides broke out in 2000 with Kutan's leadership being openly challenged by the modernist camp which advocated 'the need for a system-orient political party' (Çaha 2003: 105, Yesilada 2002: 68). Dalacoura (2006: 521) suggests that the poor results of the Fazilet party in the 1999 elections played a part in triggering this outbreak. Unnerved by the events of 1997, most voters avoided the Fazilet party at the ballot box. In June 2001 (Quinn Mecham 2004: 349), the constitutional court outlawed the Fazilet party on the wishes of the armed forces as it was seen as resembling the RP too much in style and programme. Subsequently, the rival wings went their separate ways. The old traditionalist wing founded the Saadet party (SP), while the modernist wing established the Justice and Development party (AKP).

AKP and the 2002 national elections and 2004 local elections

The election of the Justice and Development party in the 2002 national elections with 34% was interpreted as a public protest vote against the volatile and fragmented nature of Turkish politics and the unstable coalition governments which had resumed in the 1990s whose incompetence were seen to have caused the catastrophic 2000 and 2001 economic crises

(Lesser 2004: 176; Özel 2003: 82). Apart from the CHP, with 19.3%, no other party was elected into parliament (Çaha 2003: 95). In the 2004 local elections, the AKP followed up its previous electoral success by increasing its share of the vote to 41.6%, an indication perhaps that the party had attracted the loyalty of a large electoral constituency and was bucking the electoral trend in Turkey to evict the incumbent party from office after one voting cycle. It would appear that the AKP managed to attract its target share of the electorate, the Islamist constituency groups which had voted for the RP in the 1990s, an estimated 7–10% of the electorate (Hermann 2003: 273; Çarkoğlu 2002). The unexpectedly large electoral share that the AKP attracted in the 2002 and 2004 elections indicates that the majority of voters fell outside the traditional constituency of Turkish Islamist parties (Brown 2006: 116; Cagaptay 2002). In contrast to the electoral fortunes of the AKP, the Saadet party only polled 2.5% of voters at the 2002 elections. This was seen as an indication that Erbakan's strident and traditionalist style of Islamist politics had lost its electoral appeal (Hermann 2003: 272).

Organisational properties of AKP

Çarkoğlu (2005: 311) has asserted that the February 28 process, the 2001 dissolution of the FP and the 'painful decade of metamorphosis' which the Islamist party spectrum underwent, especially its reformist wing, influenced the shape of the AKP, enabled it to replenish its leadership with fresh faces, appeal to a wider electorate and alter the manner in which it espoused terms like religion within its programme and rhetoric and (Atacan 2005: 194). Roy (2004: 61) defined the rise of the AKP as the 'culmination of the process of 'normalisation' and democratisation of an Islamist party'. In terms of its internal organisations, the AKP has followed in the footsteps of Turkey's preceding Islamist parties. Meham Quinn (2004: 340) states that like the Refah party, the AKP has a 'formidable grassroots organisational strength'. This became very evident in the 2002 elections, where no other party had such an overwhelming 'grassroots structure' (Önis and Fuat Keyman 2003: 102). Therefore, the tradition of strong grassroots campaigning that characterised the electoral style of Refah, has continued through into the AKP. Önis and Fuat Keyman (2003: 100) state that another crucial difference between the AKP and the other main Turkish parties was that it maintained links with civil society organisation.

Benefits of the Islamist party spectrum's features to party system institutionalization

Based on the focus on the Refah party and the Justice and Development party as the two most significant members in the recent history of Turkey's Islamist party spectrum, it is possible to identify a range of organisational properties that are conducive to the institutionalization of the party system and the advance of democratic consolidation in addressing the lack of public legitimacy and the absence of civil society linkages of Turkey's political system.

Mass party model

While having undergone considerable adaptation to conform to new political and socio-economic circumstances within the Turkish polity, the Islamist party spectrum maintained its structural and thematic coherence and its parties always recycled figures familiar to the wider electorate since the late 1960s. While this has not necessarily led to the democratic development of the party, as shown by the damaging effect of Erbakan's political longevity, it signalled an enduring continuity within the cycle of the Islamist party spectrum. Many figures within the AKP had been members of the RP for example (Cagaptay 2002). This continuity extended into the strong linkages between civil society and Islamist parties and its electoral campaigning style.

Strong linkages to civil society

As was seen, both in terms of the electoral campaigning style and in the diversity and strength of its links to civil society, the Islamist party spectrum has shown itself to be grounded in the social settings of its main electoral constituents. As such, Turkey's Islamist parties are the party system's only spectrum, which have attempted to fulfil Mainwaring and Scully's criterion of 'rootedness'. As Coskun (2003: 70) notes, the members and activists of Islamic parties have an established tradition in performing badly needed social work in poor urban ghettos and rural areas. Meanwhile the local organisations of most other Turkish parties, like their links to civil society, are weak and underdeveloped.

Grassroots structures

As seen, both examples of the Islamist party spectrum that were examined, the RP and the AK party, had formidable grassroots structures of members and activists which enabled to transmit its electoral message on a much wider basis. While most main parties in Turkey increasingly resort to mass media methods of electoral communication, the Islamist party spectrum still retain voter-mobilization capacity at local level, involving local communities and establishing contact on a direct, face-to-face basis. In this sense, Tepe (2005: 286) states that religious parties are in 'consolidating electoral participation by mobilizing masses', thus strengthening the overall legitimacy of the political regime.

The final section of this paper will briefly examine the prospects for wider comparative research involving other Muslim democracies.

Wider comparisons among Muslim Democracies

Mainwaring and Scully's framework has already been applied to cross-regional studies of party system institutionalization in South America and Africa (Kuenzi and Lambrighi 2001). The focus of a comparison involving the influence of Islamist religious parties would go beyond regional focuses by concentrate on countries that possess an authentic democratic political process and a Muslim majority population. One difficulty in operationalizing this comparison concerns the relatively low number of cases that can satisfy those criteria thus making large N research improbable. In his comparison of Muslim Democrat forces, Nasr mentions Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia as case studies. Other countries such as Senegal, Morocco or Lebanon could also be included in this category. Furthermore, the research would concentrate on Islamist parties that can be seen as moderate and pro-systemic in the manner in which the religious character of these parties affects their tone and policies. It is important to draw a line between moderate and hardline parties as the latter can help entrench 'procedural democracy', despite having religious agendas that may run counter to strengthening the norms of a liberal democratic political culture (Tepe 2005: 284). In Turkey, the Islamist party spectrum underwent a considerable reform process following the political intervention of the military in 1997 due to the latter's highly authoritarian secularist character and its opposition to the Islamist character of the main party in the contemporary coalition government. In this sense the term 'Muslim democrats', as used by Nasr, could be an alternative operative label for moderate Islamists. In this sense, unlike Turkey's AK party, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood would probably be classed as militantly Islamist. In this sense, it would also be difficult to include Iran in this comparative exercise.

This paper set out to demonstrate three main points. Firstly, it sought to establish the main institutional failings of the political system and how they demonstrate the low levels of institutionalization of the party system. Secondly, it examined the evolution of Turkey's Islamist party spectrum in the 1990s until now and how this has benefited for the institutionalization of the countries' party system as well as its democratic consolidation. Lastly, the the prospects for wider comparative research branching out to other Muslim democracies such as Indonesia, Senegal or Bangladesh were briefly examined. The current troubles in Turkish politics which have been reported so widely in the media highlight the defects of what Mainwaring and Scully have referred to as an 'inchoate party system' and the way that this prevents further consolidation of its democratic political culture. When indeed the workings and processes of a democratic political system become accepted as 'the only game in town' remains an open-ended story in which the Islamist party spectrum will indubitably play a crucial role.

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