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**The Impact of Justice and Development Party's Governance  
Method on Turkey's Democratization Process**

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**ABSTRACT**

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Over the past century, Turkey has experienced various and dissimilar governance methods, such as constitutional, single-party, multi-party, fiduciary, participatory liberalism, conservative liberalism, delegative and quasi-authoritarian, each of which has influenced democratization process in either positive or negative way. This issue raises numerous doubts about the why and how of the impact of governance method on democratization process, a subject that has not received adequate attention by researchers (background) so far. The main question in this study involves the explanation and elaboration of such positive or negative effects. This is fulfilled via process tracing method, expression of the causal mechanism (mechanism finding), and the use of library and digital resources. Justice and Development Party, as the leading sovereignty of Turkey for the last two decades, has employed three governance methods of "conservative liberalism", "delegative" and "quasi-authoritarian" with positive, positive-negative and negative impacts, respectively on democratization process. The main finding of this study, therefore, is that the type of governance method can act as either a barrier or a facilitator on the path to democratization process.

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**1. Introduction**

**B**asically, the issue of democratization and the consolidation of democracy have been the main concern of humanity, especially intellectuals and philosophers throughout history. This is due to the fact that first,

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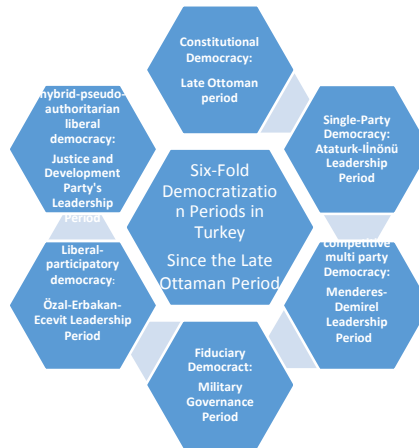
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democracy is the most effective system for achieving equilibrium, and the only order ensuring the least evil, and second, according to Alfred Smith, “the cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy”. Nevertheless, the rate and percentage of such evils and deficiencies are not the same in all countries. One must, therefore, analytically distinguish systems that have largely fulfilled each of the conditions of democracy, the ones which have fulfilled certain conditions of democracy, and those systems that sometimes do not even meet the minimum requirements of democracy. Usually, systems with the features of the first group are called “democratic”, while the second and third groups are referred to as “hybrid” and “undemocratic”, respectively.

Roughly for the last century, several governments have ascended to power in Turkey under different titles, including “constitutional”, “single-party”, “multi-party”, “fiduciary”, “participatory liberalism”, “conservative liberalism”, “delegative”, and “quasi- authoritarian”. In each period, only a few conditions of democracy were fulfilled while the potential and actual evils and obstacles still remained. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this “issue/ problem” during the governance period of Justice and Development Party. It appears that during this period, despite the significant achievements in democratization, there were still major obstacles within the political structure, civil society and the international system which made it difficult or even impossible to consolidate democracy in Turkey. This article emphasizes the fact that these barriers have been most influenced by the type of “governance method” of Turkish government over the last two decades. Therefore, three periods and three types of governance methods are addressed, including: 1. Survival / political consideration: conservative liberalism–2007-2002; 2. Struggle period/ political settlement: delegative-2008-2012, and 3. Political authority/ suppression: quasi- authoritarian – 2013-2021.

The following diagram illustrates the process of democratization of Turkey in six periods:



**Figure 1.** Six-Fold Democratization Periods in Turkey

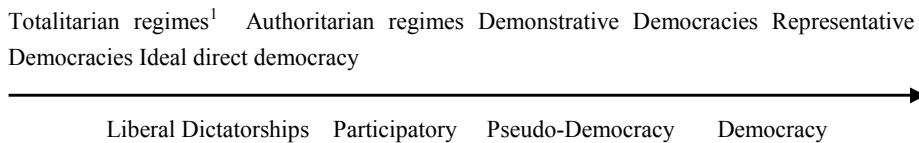
Source: Sadeghian& Ebadi, 1400:5)

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In examining the variety of governance methods, it is analytically necessary to distinguish between systems that have met all the requirements of democracy to a great extent, systems that have fulfilled certain democratic standards, and the ones that sometimes fail to meet even the minimum requirements of democracy. To this end, three types of governance methods can be extracted with their subdivisions as follows:

1. Democratic: 1-1: Maximal [direct, participatory, collaborative, consultative, etc.]; 1-2: Minimal [representation, liberal, majority, etc.].
2. Hybrid: [Quasi-authoritarian, delegative, quasi-democratic, competitive authoritarian, etc.].
3. Non-democratic: [Authoritarian, autocratic, totalitarian, fascist, etc.]

The range of political regimes in terms of transition to democracy are as follows: (Bashiriyyeh, 2007: 20).



**Figure 2.** The range of political regimes in terms of transition to democracy are as follows

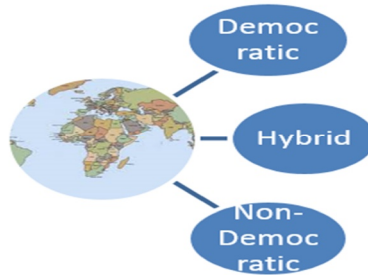
Of all types of regimes cited above, democracies of the first type are closest to the level of “consolidation”, while the second and third democracies fall into the categories of hybrid democracies and undemocratic regimes, respectively. Here, “consolidation” is defined as “a political situation in which political actors accept that democracy is “the only game in town”, and people should also believe that democracy is the most favorable governance method”, as defined by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan in their book “Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation” (1996). For this to happen, democratic governance needs to first be consolidated with regard to the three “behavioral”, “attitudinal” and “legal” aspects. Second, in consolidated democracies, the government must interact with five areas which interrelate and reinforce each other. These five areas are: 1. Free civil society, 2. Autonomous political society (in contrast with civil society and complementary to it), 3. Rule of law, 4. Efficient state bureaucracy, and 5. Economic community (in the sense of an “institutionalized market” and not merely a capitalist market) (Ghazi Moradi, 2018: 269-270).

Generally, democracy consolidation means stabilization, empowerment and immunity of democratic rules, procedures, institutions and values, especially long-term political participation and competition. In a consolidated democracy, all major political groups accept the political institutions, and follow democratic rules of the game (Bashiriye, 2007: 150). In the

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1. Linz and Stepan cite four types of regimes in their division of new undemocratic regimes: 1. authoritarianism, 2. totalitarianism, 3. post-totalitarianism (including three varieties of “early post-totalitarianism”, “static post-totalitarianism” and “mature post-totalitarianism”), and Sultanism (Kadivar, 2007: 110).

following tables, three governance models with their subdivisions as well as the governance models of Turkey in the period of Justice and Development Party and the relevant features are presented.



**Figure 3.** Three governance models

Source: Sadeghian, (1400: 50)

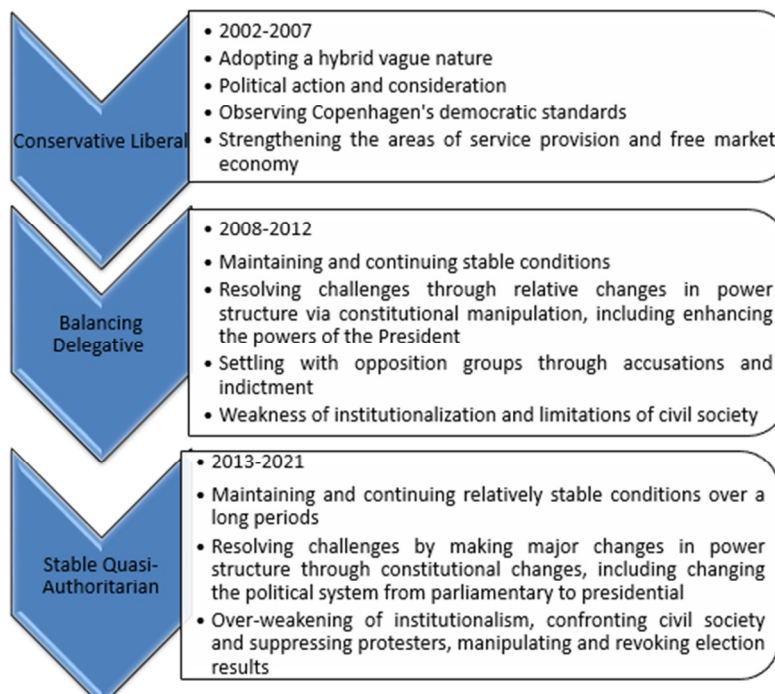
**Democratic:** Maximal [participatory, dialogical, consultative, sharing, etc.]; Minimal [representation, liberal, majority, elective, etc.].

**Hybrid:** Quasi-authoritarian, Delegative, Quasi-democratic, Competitive authoritarian, etc.,

**Non-democratic:** Authoritarian, Autocratic, Totalitarian, Fascist, etc.

According to the table 1., basically describes the characteristics of the ruling style of the AKP in three different periods, the main form of this party can be called a hybrid democracy, the most important features of which are considered below:

a) Contentious emergency, as a response to grave national crises of socioeconomic and political type;



**Figure 4.** The characteristics of the ruling style of the AKP in three different periods

Source: Sadeghian, (1400: 52)

According to the table above, which basically describes the characteristics of the ruling style of the AKP in three different periods, the main form of this party can be called a hybrid democracy, the most important features of which are considered below:

- a) Contentious emergency, as a response to grave national crises of socioeconomic and political type;
- b) (Widespread) democraticness of origin, via elections, with broad popular supports;
- c) (Restricted) democraticness of functioning, via the maintenance – even in conditions of conflict – of basic political freedoms, such as those of expression, assembly, press, association, and movement;

- d) Personalism based on the irreplaceable leader, who sets himself up as the principal interpreter and embodiment of the nation's interests, being above the diverse "parts" of society;
- e) The presence of populism, in its double condition as moment and movement, as characteristic of the nation's political history;
- f) Sustained, discursive polarization: the delegative leader is born in crisis and nurtures it, dichotomizing the political arena into "them" as anti-national, and "us" as popular; and
- g) Contingent alliances with minor and subordinate political forces and actors (Chaguaceda, 2019: 5-6).

Generally after the mid-1990s hybrid democracies emerged in countries like Turkey, where the qualitative leap from democracy to autocracy is produced; and consolidation of autocratic regimes (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019).

To change constitutions, control electoral arbiters, weaken the opposition, harass the civil society, and persecute the critical media: a menu for autocratization is replicated, irrespective of cultural and national substrates, on a global scale (Pérez-Liñán, Schmidt & Vairo, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

Methodologically, the content of the present article is based on documentary sources as well as "process tracing technique" which is one of the subcategories of "within-case" analysis. Within-case analysis examines the features, structures, and processes that exist in a single case only. It is also a method of causal inference in which researchers test research hypotheses in the light of specific case characteristics and features. In fact, researchers use within-case analysis to find the mediating mechanisms that link a hypothetical explanatory variable to an outcome or effect (Mahony & James, 2003: 124-125).

There are generally three types of techniques used in within-case analysis: 1. Pattern matching that constitutes a technique in which the researcher examines and evaluates within-case and theoretical relationships

following within-case evidence; 2. Process tracing in which the researcher attempts to identify causal mechanisms that link the explanatory variable to an outcome, and 3. Causal narrative that combines within-case analysis by comparing several cases in terms of the sequence of event or events that have led to the outcome or implication under investigation (Kafi, 2016: 155).

Process tracing is a technique in which the analyst attempts to identify causal mechanisms that link the explanatory variable to an outcome. In other words, it is a technique that helps the researcher examine specific mechanisms through which an independent variable is linked to a dependent variable. Basically, process tracing pays serious attention to the sequence of independent, dependent and moderator variables (Collier, 2011: 1), and is often based on the premise that explaining a single particular phenomenon requires understanding the occurrence process or tracing the causal sequence of events that follow. Therefore, to explain a particular event, it must be placed in a causal continuum and the various stages of its occurrence must become clear.

Process tracing inherently examines the paths of change and transformation. At the same time, it can be used for hypothesis testing or displaying the compatibility of theoretical predictions and empirical facts in a particular case (Taleban, 2009: 6). Process tracing can also play a decisive role in describing social and political phenomena as well as evaluating causality claims (Collier, 2011: 2). It performs two essential tasks in both socio-political history research and historical sociology as follows:

1. Expression of causal mechanism
2. Hypothesis testing

In this study, the term “causal mechanism expression” is used which elaborates three issues for the political history and sociology researcher in his studies:

1. Causal mechanism, by opening the black box, reveals the intermediary and mediating causes for the researcher.



2. Causal mechanism determines the direction of the relationship between the phenomena, specifying the cause and the effect, and
3. Causal mechanism tells us whether a given relationship is a true causal relationship or a false one (Kafi, Former: 152-155).

Several scientists have argued that given the causal mechanisms, “mechanism revelation” that links independent variables to dependent variables as a black box is required for a causal research or scientific explanation. According to this view, a satisfying explanatory research in the social sciences does not merely involve the fulfilment of a regular covariance among the variables; rather, one must be able to go inside the black box, delve into the interrelated socio-political variables, and identify the social and political wheels and gears which are the results of this relationship or covariance (Elster, 1989: 3).

In correlations, we have information about the input (independent variables) and the output (dependent variable), together with an accurate estimate of the extent of the variance of the two. If, however, we are asked “why this covariance exists between the input and output?”, we have no information. “Black box” refers to the ignorance of a process that connects input to output.

In relation to the subject of the present study, for example, if the question “why has the process of democratization and consolidation of democracy in different periods of Turkey been so uneven and different?”, one might resort to an answer that “this is because governance methods were different in various periods”. This explanation, too, has a black box, because the next question is “why does governance method affect the process of democratization and its consolidation?”. This second “why” which refers to the black box between input/ independent variable (governance method) and output/ dependent variable (democratization process) derives its answer from “how”, i.e. the mechanism linking the independent variable to the dependent variable. In other words, the second question is “how and through what mechanism does governance method affect the democratization process”.

The answer is that governance method exerts its impact on democratization process and democracy consolidation by influencing the nature of the political structure, the attitude of the political leadership, the nature of the constitution, the functioning of civil society, and the procedure of the international system. The impact of governance method of Justice and Development Party on the democratization process of Turkey in three successive periods is examined and evaluated below:

**A. The Survival / Political Consideration Period (2002-2007): The Conservative Liberalism Method**

Numerous writers and analysts have referred to this period as the “Golden Age” thanks to the positive performance of Justice and Development Party in political, economic, and regional-international relations. In the course of this period, many democratic measures were taken, such as “establishing close relations with the European Union”, “imposing restriction on the military front”, “revolutionizing educational and research affairs”, “starting the Kurdish peace process”, and “expanding the sphere of civil liberties”. The Justice and Development Party took bold and admirable steps, specifically in the debate on “Turkey’s EU membership” regarding the reduction and control of military power. Some of these steps are as follows:

- Removing the extraordinary powers of the National Security Council members, and turning the Council into a military advisory center
- Declining military members of the council, and increasing the number of civil-legal members
- Reducing the powers of the Secretary-General of the National Security Council and his appointment as instructed by the Prime Minister and approved by the President
- Decreasing the number of members under the authority of the Secretary General of the National Security Council from 11 to 7
- Increasing the number of National Security Council meetings from one month to twice a month

- Cutting the budget of the National Security Council by 60% (Cizre, 2008: 137), and
- Removing the military members of Higher Education Council and Radio and Television Supreme Council from National Security Council (Aknur, 2013: 136).

Another major democratic and reformist measure by the Justice and Development Party during this period was to “increase the scope of Kurdish society’s freedoms in the framework of peace process”. In the meantime, freedom of instruction and publication in Kurdish language, as well as the annulment of the article “propaganda against the ruling structure is tantamount to terrorist act” which was one of the terms of anti-terrorism law are considered as a milestone in the political history of Turkey, in terms of both democratization process and undermining the fiduciary hegemony of the military (Cizre, *ibid*: 138). Mr. Erdoğan’s visit to Diyarbakir in 2005, the acceptance of the “Kurdish issue” in Turkey, and his emphasis on the mistakes of past governments, all comprise a turning point in the political history of Turkey and Kurdish society.

**Table 1.** Turkey’s political structure’s changes 2001, 2003 and 2004

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Significant changes</b>
October 2001	First constitutional reform	34 amendments to the 1982 constitution
November 2001	New Civil Code	New Civil Code on Gender Equality in Marriage
February / March 2002	Second reform	Second reform of constitutional amendments
August 2002	Third constitutional reform	abolishing the death penalty / amending the anti-terrorism law and authorizing In languages other than Turkish
December 2002	Fourth Constitutional Reform	Implementing Previous Amendments / Amending the Penal Code
December 2002	Fifth reform of the constitution	Fifth reform of the constitution for the retrial of all cases in the national security courts

May 2003	Sixth Constitutional Reform	Accepts Protocol 6 to ECHR, commutation of death sentences to life imprisonment, / Repeal of Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law
July 2003	The seventh reform	The seventh reform of constitutional revisions in the National Security Council
May 2004	Eighth Constitutional Reform	Ten Amendments to the Constitution, Freedom of the Press, Prioritization Transnational treaties on domestic law, abolition of national security courts
June 2004	Ninth Constitutional Amendment	Ninth Constitutional Amendment to Article 46 of the Penal Code, Review of the Board of Higher Education and Board of Trustees
September 2004	New Turkish Penal Code	Revises Law on Violence Against Women and Children / Change in punishment for different crimes and redefining the crime

Source: Shokouhi et al. (2022: 10)

In general, it can be argued that the Justice and Development Party, after its ascent to power, fulfilled its principle objective which was “survival in hostile situation” by means of implementing the requirements of the Copenhagen political norms as well as the amendment of the constitution, including abolishing death penalty, reducing the role of the army in the National Security Council, assigning the military budget under civilian control, authorizing the dissemination of Zaza and Kurmanji Kurdish dialects, supporting the UN program to unite the divided island of Cyprus, and finally improving relations with Greece. In summary, the Justice and Development Party sought to extend its socio-political base by adapting its policies to EU policy and language, which in turn guaranteed its survival.

What was significant in this regard, however, and constituted a major achievement for the Justice and Development Party was “strengthening democratization process and the growth of democracy”. It is believed that

this success was influenced by the type of governance method, i.e. conservative liberalism that dominated the first period (2002-2008) of the Justice and Development Party governance.

**B. Struggle/ Political Settlement Period (2008-2012): Delegative Democracy Method**

During this period, the ruling political structure, led by Gülen Movement (the Shadow Government), launched an operation with the apparent intention to strengthen democracy under the title “Ergenekon” which was essentially a series of treacherous and repressive activities against all opposition bloc groups. Settlement with senior military forces, well-known academics and professors of universities and scientific institutions, journalists and political analysts, independent and experienced judges and prosecutors, and finally religious minority leaders, especially the Alawites were among the measures taken in the period 2008-2009.

In fact, the “Ergenekon” case became one of the bases of authoritarian politics and a feature of the Justice and Development Party’s political discourse during this period (Jenkins, 2009: 47). The evidence presented before the court in Ergenekon case was over 8,000 pages (Çağaptay, 2018: 146), and the intensity of pressures and repressions led to the accusation of this party with the charge of “civil administration/ fiduciary” or “civilian dictatorship”. In essence, the Justice and Development Party’s efforts to demilitarize society through “Ergenekon” trials were literally at odds with the process of “democratizing” the society.

Other highlights of this period include the “Action Against Petrification” plan, which as claimed by “Taraf<sup>1</sup>” newspaper was organized by the chief of staff of the army.

Although the case was investigated in the Special Military Tribunal and the defendant was eventually acquitted, it facilitated the change in the law on

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1. The referendum was successful with 58% of the votes for and 42% of the votes against.

“Examination and Investigation of Military Crimes”. According to the amendment, military personnel files were also to be processed in civil courts. In other words, this change, too, undermined the power and legitimacy of the military by enabling the court to punish the interventionist and the coup-maker military forces (Bianet Haber Merkezi, 09.07.2009).

Another issue raised during this period was the publication of news regarding “planning different projects in the framework of Ergenekon project” in “Nokta” magazine, according to which projects under the titles of “Ay Işığı”, “Yakamoz”, “Sarıkız”, “Eldiven”, “Kafes” and Balyoz/Sledgehammer were to be launched in various centers, including mosques, and senior political officials were supposed to be assassinated in a terrorist act. This continued in Turkey from 2007 to 2012, during which the Justice and Development Party arrested and sent to court the majority of opponents and senior military groups (emirs and army generals) on the basis of unsubstantiated charges. As such, power of the military against the power of civil and political institutions greatly diminished (Aknur, *ibid*: 10).

Holding the “constitution” referendum on the 2010 to revise 26 amendments in the constitution adopted after the army’s coup of 1980 was another important development in this period. According to Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party, the principle goal of the constitutional amendment referendum was to make it more in line with the constitution of EU member states and in the meantime, facilitate Turkey’s joining to the EU. Supporters of the referendum pointed to the reforms that addressed inequalities in women and men’s rights, increasing citizens’ rights in personal life, and empowering elected officials compared to officials appointed by the government. Opponents (rival political parties, including secularists) believed that no progressive reforms would be made. They also believed that the referendum, if approved, would provide the government with more authority to interfere with their courts and verdicts. Furthermore, voters had to answer all 26 questions with yes or no response, rather than

each of them individually. The referendum, hence, was a vote of confidence to Erdoğan, and had nothing to do with the value of reforms.

“Confronting the Power of the Courts” was another outcome of the referendum victory. In fact, after winning the referendum, Erdoğan decided to confront the courts that played a key role in the soft coup of 1997. One of the proposed reforms authorized the government to increase the number of judges in the constitutional court from 11 to 17. President Abdullah Gul appointed two of these judges without parliamentary approval. Through this change, Erdoğan took control of Turkey’s most powerful court. Another amendment was to increase the number of High Council of Judges and Prosecutors from 12 to 34. Therefore, four new members of this council were appointed by President Gul. This council, too, was managed by the Minister of Justice (Çağaptay, 2018: 149-154). Furthermore, the scope of the duties of the military judges were also envisaged, according to which all criminal offenses related to state security, constitutional order and its function were supposed to be investigated in fair courts (Özbudun, 2015: 45).

Such changes granted Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party the authority to dominate the third most powerful force of the country, in addition to their previous authority to control the parliament and the executive power. Besides the Supreme Courts, Erdoğan sought to struggle with and weaken the secular media and business associations that supported the army during the soft coup. Therefore, large and anti-government newspapers such as Sabah, Akşam, Star, Nationality, Homeland and television channels were restricted and controlled. In 2002, when the Justice and Development Party gained power, pro-government businesses owned less than a quarter of the media while in 2011, such businesses took the control of approximately 50 percent of the media. Today, the vast majority of pro-government media is in the hands of Erdoğan’s business units. “Sabah” newspaper, for example, which was considered the New York Times of

Turkey before it was banned because of its liberal writing style, is now in complete control of Erdoğan.

More importantly, Turkish newspapers cannot criticize Erdoğan today as they used to criticize Turkish political leaders in the past, including Demirel, Ecevit, Özal, Yılmaz, and others (Çağaptay, Former: 149-154). In fact, Mr. Erdoğan, in the light of this referendum, was fully empowered to purge the mass media of “anti-democracy” elements (see Justice and Development Party Critic) (Tugal, 2016: 58).

In general, with this referendum, Erdoğan was able to take the control of one undemocratic organization (the army) and two democratic organizations (the courts and the media), thereby increasing his disregard for democracy. Overall during this period, although the current ruling structure’s measures and policies seemed to be in line with the process of democratization, the policy of “struggle and settlement” was implemented which was fulfilled through the cooperation of Gülen Movement and the European Union.

### **3. The Authority / Political Suppression Period (2013-2021): Quasi-Authoritarian**

The third period of the Justice and Development Party differs from the previous ones due to the escalation of conflicts, the emergence of unexpected crises, and numerous trials. Despite the discussion on Turkey’s democratic or institutional backsliding, the underlying causes of this regression have not been comprehensively analyzed. This book aims to decipher the historical, political and geopolitical background of the unwinding of Turkey’s reform process and to analyze the resultant state crisis and conflictual foreign and security policy. Trying to offset the hegemonic power of the military-civilian bureaucracy, the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) consolidated its alliance with certain segments of liberal and secular groups, as well as the Gülenists, following the Constitutional Court’s unsuccessful attempt to close the AKP in 2008.



This haphazard attempt to fill in—or more precisely, crowd out—the gargantuan role of the bureaucracy in the Turkish state system created a void that has been aggravated by growing polarization, zero-sum logic, and political infighting across Turkey in the later period of AKP rule (2010–20). (Aras, 2022: 1).

The following are the most important events of this period:

### **3.1. Litigation against Iraqi Kurdistan region, and cessation of the Kurdish peace process**

Although in 2010 communications between Kurdistan Workers' Party leaders and the Turkish government occurred under the title of “Oslo [Norway]” meetings, and new openings were discussed, these relations diminished for unknown reasons after the 2011 parliamentary elections. As a result, during the years 2011 and 2012, a great number of leaders and members of the “Democracy and Peace” Party were arrested and imprisoned on the pretext of associating with terrorist forces of the Kurdistan region.

According to Democratic Peace Party's report, from 2009 to 2011, 7748 party members and officials of this party were prosecuted and 3895 arrested, among whom were 10 mayors of this party, 8 deputy mayors, and 29 parliamentarians (Bianet Haber Merkezi, 15.06.2011). In fact, the root cause of failure to resolve the Kurd's problem was the rigid “anti-terror” law (Özbudun, 2014: 161) which made it impossible to reach any understanding and peace.

### **3. 2. Constitution Change Referendum**

Although the Justice and Development Party had held two divisionary and directed constitutional referendums in 2008 and 2010, another referendum on the amendment of 18 articles of the constitution was held in 2017 which focused on changing the political system and increasing the power of the president. This referendum is in fact the most important, most radical and

most deviant referendum in the history of Turkey. The following are some of the most important amended provisions in the constitution:

- The parliamentary system was changed into presidency; the post of Prime Minister was removed, and the posts of vice presidents were added instead.
- The Cabinet was no longer formally accountable to the Parliament; the President would have the power to dissolve the Turkish National Assembly, and the Parliament's right to impeach the President or his Cabinet would be revoked.
- The President is appointed or dismissed by the Cabinet Ministers, dismissals and the installation of top state leaders are directed by the President, and he can be the Party Chairman simultaneously. Furthermore, the President is given the power to declare a state of emergency in country instead of the Parliament.
- Military courts were annulled, and military force's candidacy in parliamentary elections was banned. If we take Mr. Michels' remark seriously to a great extent, according to which "any presidency system is incompatible with the most fundamental principles of democracy" (Michels, 2013: 227), given the change introduced by referendum (2017),

Also, in the new reforms, the conditions required for the removal of the president and his government through the vote of no confidence of the Parliament have been limited. In other words, if the majority of parliament calls for the impeachment of the president, only the constitutional court comprising 12 members appointed by him out of the 15 members will have the right to trial the president.

According to the amendment made to Article 98 of the Constitution, there are five ways and methods of parliamentary scrutiny and supervision, including: 1. Questioning, 2. Parliamentary inquiry, 3. General expediency, 4. Impeachment, and 5. Parliamentary investigation, of which only two cases of "parliamentary inquiry and general expediency" were retained. The case of "question" was addressed only in writing and just in the case of the vice

presidents and ministers. The impossibility of oral questioning of the ministers and the vice presidents, therefore, is a major flaw in the new law

In a sense, in the new political system, the president is granted “full” authority, such as determining and deciding on budgeting, drafting and developing programs and cabinet ministers policies, appointing members of the Supreme Court, chairing the Intelligence Agency and the General Staff of the Armed Forces, and finally the licensing of journalists and communicative organizations, etc. The new system can, therefore, be described as a “conditional monarchy system”. In the Ottoman period, there appeared two constitutional periods against the ruling monarchy which defended republicanism and the constitution. Today, however, the third constitutional period is witnessed which is in sharp contrast with the two, and opposes republicanism and the constitution through a monarchy movement.

In summary, it can be said that in the history of the last-century Turkey, not only one can find certain deficiencies and limitations in the text of the constitution, but also the carried out amendments have been basically in line with the desires of the ruling political movements, all of which are obstacles to completing the process of democratization and democracy consolidation.

The present Turkish political crisis under the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) has elevated the crisis to a whole new level. While Turkey saw its first-ever civilian electoral transition to a new constitutional order through the referendum on presidential rule on April 16, 2017, both the means and ends through which the ruling party achieved this transition have been far from democratic. Rather, the ruling party used electoral processes to minimize checks and balances in the system and sought to gain hegemony over the political system. The idea of democratic political transition slowly evaporated as the ruling party continuously overstepped the legal limits on political power. Thus the elected president rose to a unique position, with overwhelming control over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The

transformation from a parliamentary system to presidential rule also turned the parliament, the constituent organ of the secular Republican regime, into a virtual nonplayer in the political system (Aras, 2022: 6).

### **3.3. Gezi Park Event**

Gezi Park event started in May 2013, when people opposed to the cutting down of the Gezi Park trees in Istanbul and the establishment of a “split artillery garrison”. As the protests continued, Gezi Park event turned into a discourse against the authoritarian policies of the ruling system to such an extent that on June 1, 2013, more than 90 protest demonstrations were held in 48 Turkish provinces, and 939 people were arrested. This event has been evaluated by several analysts and writers. Nilüfar Göle, for example, refers to Gezi Park as “the symbol of the rebellion of the surrounding and marginalized Turkish society along with the forces opposing capitalism”. She also describes the incident as “the struggle of Istanbul’s city-dwellers to protect their spaces of identity”. Ergun Özbudun does not consider this as a simple protest movement of the surroundings, but interprets it as “a sudden explosion of public dissatisfaction with government interventions in the area of their personal preferences and secular and free lifestyles” (Özbudun, 2014: 157). The majority of Gezi Park protestors comprised the middle class, educated, and most importantly young men and women who had no membership experience in any political party or movement. Among these people were the Kemalists, left party proponents, anti-capitalists, the Muslims, the country dwellers, the feminists, the Kurds, the Alawites, and the occupational groups, and workers (Arat, 2013: 87-88). In fact, demands of Gezi Park protesters had their roots in the change of the political language and the governance approach of the Justice and Development Party, especially since 2007.

Since 2007, along with Justice and Development Party’s efforts to undermine military power, the mechanisms of “balance and control” were weakened and, the main opposition party, too, (Republican People’s Party)

failed to carry out counteractive policies against the political party. Therefore, the citizens who could not voice their protests through political groups and foundations streamed into the streets (Ete, 2013: 17). In fact, inattention to political institutionalization to address the diverse demands of different social strata as well as inadequate attention to political development and economic growth and development engenders no outcome other than imbalance and crisis in the political system (Kalemi Ozjan, 2013: 5).

The May and June 2013 protests, generally referred to as “Gezi Park Event” revealed that the Justice and Development Party did not stay committed to its democratic pacts as expected (Hiro, 2013: 3). Much of the content of the protestors’ slogans was political, undermining the Justice and Development Party’s authoritarianism and its democratic inflexibility (Darabzadeh, Movasseghi, Ghorbani, 2013: 17). In other words, these protests manifested anger at the arrogance of power as well as ambiguity and lack of transparency of the Justice and Development Party. This rage of anger actually revived the notion of mass civil disobedience for the first time since the 1980 coup. There was an immediate and prominent change in the political arena, and once again, resistance was sanctified as a good, beautiful and righteous event.

The term “resistance” itself (*direnış* in Turkish), which had been removed from public space since 1980, re-entered the common vocabulary, and the Justice and Development Party’s propaganda machine was challenged by the eruption of a sense of political humor. Tugal argues that the style of the protests, as well as their multi-class and multi-disciplinary character, were significant. “Social movements in Turkey had become lighter and more vibrant from the mid 1990s, but this was the first time that a mass uprising with distinctly carnival tendencies had taken place” (Tugal, 2016: 10).

### **3. 4. Clash between Gülen Movement- Justice and Development Party, and the Failed 2016 Coup**

Prior to the 1970 coup, Gülen Movement had always been the target of relentless attacks by Islamists as in the Islamists' view, this society was an ally of the Turkish governments (the secular-laic-liberal Turkish system) and the US. In the 2000s, this community was required not only as an ally in the face of ruthless secularism, but also as a respected member of the conservative bloc of widespread Islamists. By joining Gülen Movement to Justice and Development Party, the party gained more credibility in presenting a liberal image of itself (Tugal, 2016: 55). Furthermore, since the 1980s, the common objective of Gülen Movement and the Justice and Development Party has been freedom from the military guardianship. In other words, what brought the two movements together was "their common goal in the fight against the secular / laic structure and military authority".

Although the unity of the two movements undermined and perhaps even diminished the secular and military guardianship of the power, over the last 30 years, especially in the first decade of Justice and Development Party's rule, Gülen Movement managed to penetrate all governmental organs, such as the military, judicial, and security agencies through implementing "penetration policy" to such an extent that the general policies of the system were planned and implemented with suggestions and certain orders from the leaders of this society! In other words, it can be argued that the "hidden power" of this society was greater than that of the Justice and Development Party.

Nevertheless, with the involvement and penetration of the Justice and Development Party in Gülen Movement's power centers (from 2012 onwards), the coalition of these two movements was disrupted, with two coups happening in 2013 and 15 July, 2016. While the earlier was a quasi-coup operation (Gezi Park event), the latter one was an abortive yet real coup against the Justice and Development Party.

The truth is that while both movements claim to be “proponents of democracy and civil and citizen forces”, the fight between them is nothing but a “power struggle”. By 2011, Erdoğan had granted Gülen Movement everything it did not have, i.e. a political party with which to oppress the opposition. Gülen Movement, in return, offered Erdoğan what he was deprived of, i.e. police powers to suppress the opponents”, and when both Erdoğan and Gülen felt that Turkey was under their control, neither of them were willing to make concession. As a result, a power struggle was secretly fought between them (Çağaptay, Former, p. 165).

Following the failed July 15, 2016 coup, the Turkish government called the Fethullah Gülen Movement as “FETÖ: the Terrorist Organization of Fethullah”, and arrested and deported personnel from various departments, expelling or suspending approximately 200 thousand people from political, educational and judicial organs. Erdoğan also declared a “state of emergency” in the government pursuant to Article 120 of the constitution, and this situation continued until 2018. Hence, the government settled the majority of the opposing forces under governmental order, and seized the criticizing organs and institutions. This process still continues.

### **3. 5. Annulment of March 31, 2019 Municipal Election Results**

The last incident that occurred in the Justice and Development Party's governance context, and largely undermined the party's democratic record was the annulment of the March 31, 2019, municipal election results. In this election, although Ekrem İmamoğlu, representative of opposition bloc, was the winner, the government of Turkey forced the Supreme Electoral Foundation to annul the election. Although the opposition bloc won the re-election on June 23, 2019, with even greater votes, the impact of the Turkish government's action to annul the election still remains. Its most important impact was to “increase the hope of different groups and parties in the opposition bloc to the fruitfulness of unity in political behavior”. Nevertheless, the growing conflicts and divisions between the Justice and

Development Party's sectors and sub-sectors gained publicity. Today, people like Ahmet Davutoğlu and Abdullah Gül are trying to establish a new party. Overall, the third period of Justice and Development Party's governance underwent a fundamental change, i.e. the "relative and gradual transition from delegative democracy to quasi-authoritarianism". The five influential factors in the recursive trend include: 1.1. Cessation of the Kurdish Peace Process and intensification of the conflicts, 2. Referendum of the 2017 constitution, 3. Gezi Park Event, 4. Conflict between Gülen Movement and the Justice and Development Party and the failed 2016 coup, and 5. Annulment of municipal election results of March 31, 2019.

#### **4. Conclusion**

It appears that the conservative-liberal party of Turkey in 2002 is now inflicted by an "internal pain", but has not yet been given the opportunity to manifest itself as it will be tantamount to crossing the line. This is because firstly, the process of elite circulation and change in government is viewed as a threat, and secondly, Turkey has not yet reached the stage of democracy consolidation. The truth is that the Justice and Development Party, despite its admirable and bold actions in politics, economics, culture, society, religion, and ethnicity in the early years of its power, failed to maintain its political discourse since 2008, and consequently, the party's "democratic order capacity" declined sharply.

Since at least 2008, Turkey has undergone a dual process of democratic backsliding amid the emergence of a new, authoritarian regime under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. An interesting component of this process of authoritarian turn has been the lack of serious opposition on the part of the opposition parties CHP and İYİP parties to the growing political repression, curtailment of civil liberties and growing consolidation of power in the hands of Erdoğan (Yılmaz, Caman and Bashirov, 2019: 1).

One must not forget, however, that the the Justice and Development Party's strategy in governance is "change in continuity and continuity in



change”, meaning that the Justice and Development Party is always seeking to change and play with new elements that are created by these changes<sup>1</sup>.

Sigmund Newman who divided the parties into “programmatic” and “expediency” groups for the first time believes that the expediency party has shifted its program and policy in line with political and social changes in society, and adapts itself to time conditions. Such a party has no adherence to any particular political agenda and seeks to match its goals with the needs of society at a particular time. The nature of the Justice and Development Party also corresponds in part to these characteristics, because despite the ambiguous nature of the party’s ideology, the governance plans for the party have so far failed to prevent the deepening of the gaps and crises, and ultimately their becoming political and security-oriented. Some analysts even believe that Turkey’s changes under Erdoğan’s leadership are so rapid and unpredictable that Turkish people have called him “force majeure” while journalists have referred to him as the “trouble-maker president.”

At any rate, this article mainly attempted to focus on “governance method” as the most important variable in the process of democratization and the consolidation of democracy because the type of governance method influences the nature and function of political structure, the nature and attitude of political leadership, the nature of the constitution, the performance of civil society, especially political parties, and finally the procedure and approach of the international system.

The Justice and Development Party government, in the first period and due to the adoption of liberal-conservative governance method, gained the nature of political leadership and constitution, and shaped the performance of the civil society and the practice of the international system, especially the

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1. It is worth mentioning that one of the important reasons for the intensification of the authoritarian process of the Justice and Development Party is influenced by the coalitions that it sometimes forms with some radical movements and personalities. For example, the proposal to change the political system from parliamentary to presidential one, was essentially made by the leader of the National Action Party (MHP), which a large number of political experts believe would pose a major obstacle to Turkey's democratization process.

European Union, in a democratic form. As a result, all of these variables became effective in the democratization process, and Turkish democracy grew substantially. Nevertheless, as the governance method of Turkey changed from liberal-conservative to “delegative democracy” and “quasi-authoritarian”, respectively, almost all of these variables became undemocratic in shape and form, and turned into barriers to the democratization process.

Delegative and quasi-authoritarian methods of governance (which are in fact subcategories of hybrid political systems) are essentially governance methods that destroy the democratic (anti-institutional) structure of the regime by abolishing the institutional, civil, and party mechanisms. They remove political competitions (anti-political), establish an interest distribution system and guarantee loyalty (guardianship). By comparing the first period of Justice and Development Party’s rule with the third and fourth periods, one realizes that these characteristics are less common in the first period, which was the liberal-conservative governance method. The next periods, however, clearly display such characteristics. It is, therefore, believed that the characteristics and framework of the type of governance method exert an impact on the functioning of the political structure, the nature of leadership, the nature of the constitution, the functioning of civil society, and the international system in democratization, either positively or negatively.

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