

# INTRA-PARTY AUTOCRACY OF TURKEY'S PARTY SYSTEM

Ödül Celep\*

## Abstract

Democratic systems are unthinkable without political parties. Since its transition to multi-party politics in 1950, Turkey has enjoyed a stable yet limited level of stability in its multi-party system. Despite all the democratic experience in electoral politics for more than half a century, democracy exists only between, not within political parties in Turkey. The political culture of Turkey still tolerates one man-driven, charismatic leader parties administered with excessively centralized and authoritarian leadership structures. Turkey's parties are still controlled mostly by men. What they differ is not the presence or absence of intra-party democracy, but their type of intra-party autocracy. This study explains the roots of party autocracy culture in Turkey's parties. In doing so, it also develops a theoretical framework for comprehending and explaining intra-party democracy in democratic systems in general and in Turkey. It also specifies sociological, institutional and competitive criteria of intra-party democracy such as political culture, legal framework, preferences of individual actors as well as many others including gender quota, tolerance for dissent and the degree of power centralization.

**Keywords:** Intra-Party Democracy; Turkey; Political Parties

## INTRODUCTION

Political parties are the sine qua non of democratic systems. A political system without a competitive party system cannot be referred to as a genuine democracy. One of the major institutional actors that paved the way to contemporary democratic systems is political parties. For this reason, democracies are unthinkable without political parties.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, if the word 'democracy' denotes systems in which people rule itself and where the people elect their own decision-makers with their free will, the bridging role political parties play between the electorates (citizens) and the elected (political elites) is to be acknowledged.

One-party regimes are not considered democratic as the political monopoly of a single actor is far from presenting political and ideological options to the electorates at large. Therefore, what

---

\*Ödül Celep (PhD: Political Science, State University of New York at Binghamton) is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the International Relations Department of Işık University, Istanbul. His research interests include political parties and voting behavior in Turkey and Western Europe. His dissertation 'The Extreme Right and Democracy' (2006) was published in 2009, in both Turkish (Istanbul, Turkey) and in English (Saarbrücken, Germany). Celep also published articles on the politics and political parties of Turkey on various social science journals.

Address: Department of International Relations, Işık University, Şile/Istanbul, 34980,Turkey; Email: odul@isikun.edu.tr

makes contemporary democracies truly democratic is a competitive party system with multiple parties in the electoral/political market. Of course, the concept of 'democracy' should never be regarded as perfection, and the conditions of democracy are far more than just the existence of competitive party systems.

Scholars have debated the ways in which political parties have contributed to democracy and democratization of political systems. One of the long-standing competitive party models has come from Anthony Downs (1957), who applied the rational actor and rationality of decision-making assumptions of the neo-classical economics into the political market. Downs put forth that political parties are egoistic, selfish institutions with the sole purpose of maximizing their votes in elections. Voters are smart and sophisticated agencies, who are well aware of themselves and their ideological standings. Ideology is not an end for parties, but only an instrument for the ultimate purpose of vote maximization. In the Downsian (also known as spatial or competitive) context of electoral democracy, political parties contribute to democracy by providing sets of public policy options to the public and electorates at large.<sup>ii</sup> Parties collectively comprise the political market, ranging from the right-most nationalist, conservative, authoritarian and free-market stances to the left-most internationalist, liberal, libertarian and socialist positions. As a result of the instrumentality of ideology, political parties construct, shape and modify their political discourses with regard to the ideological, left-right composition of the electorate, particularly the median voter. The winning position for parties for maximizing votes is always as close to the median voter as possible. As the median voter moves closer to the political center, parties move to the center too. Similarly, as the median voter moves to the right or the left, so do the parties accordingly. A similar argument says parties contribute to democracy by encouraging electorates into making preferences among leadership groups, instead of political parties as institutions, in regular elections.<sup>iii</sup>

Purposes of political parties cannot, however, be limited to vote maximization, office participation or policy advocacy only. Some of the recently emerging party families are observed to prioritize a new set of purposes quite novel and different from typical party goals, such as promotion of intra-party democracy.<sup>iv</sup> These are mostly parties of the new left, which promote themselves as distinct from and independent of social democrats, socialists, communists, labour and other traditional parties of the left. New left parties are generally known as left-libertarian, green, 'libertarian socialist' parties that combine ecologism (green economy and politics) with a left-wing economic agenda of social justice and resource redistribution, as well as identity politics and multiculturalism on social policy. Therefore, it would be naïve and reductionist to comprehend such parties as single-issue movements that talk about the environment only. These parties are rather organizations that bring together a variety of traditional and new progressive themes including egalitarianism, anti-globalism, feminism, gender equality/liberation, freedom of expression, minority rights, welfare state, labor rights as well as standing against traditional morality and all types of nationalisms. Nevertheless, the fact that some party families as ecological greens embrace 'intra-party democracy' in principle or in practice does not suffice to

justify this concept universally for all democratic regimes. In other words, scholars of politics are to develop more convincing and justifying theoretical arguments in favor of intra-party democracy as a condition for democratization of democracies.

Some fringe parties still do their best to survive in politics even if they cannot participate in government or win parliamentary seats in their electoral lives. Some scholars argue that the major purpose of political parties is more policy advocacy more than vote- or seat-maximization. This approach emphasizes ideological purity and policy idealism from the perspective of political parties. Indeed, political parties have their institutional history and identity because today's parties have their roots of existence with particular causes of their own. Parties with strong political identities are devoted to focusing on the requirements of their identities (i.e., socialism, ecologism, liberalism, conservatism), and it is their past that restricts their present. In other words, parties cannot change altogether all of a sudden as they are bound by their history.<sup>v</sup>

It is not surprising to see some parties that never mention 'democracy' in their platforms. Some parties with particular ideologies almost never cite democracy as a purpose or an instrument in their political agenda. For instance, parties that are known to be contemporary 'radical right-wing' or 'right-wing authoritarian' are hardly inclined towards intra-party democracy as they are often led by charismatic leaders with unquestionable powers, where decision-making mechanisms are centralized. For instance, France's radical right-wing Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front (*Front National*) is far enough from intra-party democracy basically as an outcome its very ideology: authoritarian, exclusionist and monoculturalist. Similarly, other radical right-wing parties of Europe are internally oligarchic, authoritarian and anti-democratic where dissenting opinions and criticism of leadership is hardly appreciated. Examples of radical right-wing parties include Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*), Belgium's Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*), Germany's National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*), Norway's Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), Britain's British National Party, Hungary's Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*), and many others.

Contrary to such parties, intra-party democracy is an indispensable asset for libertarian parties of the new left. For this reason, the logical opposite parties of the radical right generally tend to emphasize tolerance, recognition of difference, multiculturalism, and therefore developing the democracy culture at every domain of social-political life in principle. Even though such parties have themes in common, they are not identical on all aspects across democratic countries. All in all, it is fair to argue that the concept of intra-party democracy is a push from the left, or 'contagion from the left.' New left-libertarian parties of European democracies serve as examples of intra-party democracy to several other party families including liberals, Christian Democrats and traditional social democrats/socialists. The recent scholarly work on intra-party democracy in Europe generally has generally used survey research with party members and remained mostly country-specific.<sup>vi</sup>

## DEFENDING INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY

The existence of a competitive party system *per se* does not guarantee a healthy functioning of, or institutional setup of a democratic regime. In addition to a variety of conditions as a healthy civil society, freedom of assembly and expression, separation of powers, checks and balances, and civil rights and individual freedoms, democracy also requires free and fair competition *among* political parties (inter-party democracy). However, does democracy also require democracy *within* political parties (intra-party democracy)? Scholarly debates have gone both ways: in defense of, and in opposition to intra-party democracy. For instance, one of the most pessimistic views of party democracy has come from Michels (1962), who posited that the idea that democratic institutions can be ruled democratically is only a myth. Michels's pessimism comes from his theoretical debate summarized as the 'iron law of oligarchy', according to which oligarchic rule by a small group of political elites is the inevitable 'destiny' (ending story) of all representative institutions including political parties. Therefore, what is called 'representative democracy' is only a façade to legitimize elite rule rather than rule by people.<sup>vii</sup>

Is intra-party democracy a requirement of a democratic culture? In the context, Duverger's (1954) historical argument on the trade-off between intra-party democracy and electoral efficiency should be emphasized, as it also relates to the party culture in Turkey. According to Duverger, the more political parties achieve intra-party democracy, the more likely they would be risking their electoral chances in elections. Decision-making within parties would require a more egalitarian and collective decision-making, which would work against top-down, Jacobin party rule by a single leader or oligarchy. Advanced intra-party democracy in a party is expected to slow down decision-making and cause gridlock, as collective and egalitarian decisions cannot be executed as efficiently as monarchic or oligarchic decisions. In cases that require fast decision-making, internally democratic parties would have harder time defining strategy and behavior. On the contrary, parties with autocratic rule are more likely to make efficient and rapid decisions when conditions require fast action. Thus, intra-party democratization might slow down the electoral efficiency of a political party during elections.<sup>viii</sup> Duverger's argument has later been supported by other scholars of party politics on the grounds that only centralization of power within parties can provide strength in the electoral competition with other parties, and decentralization risks the possibility of internal schisms and fragmentation.<sup>ix</sup>

This study relies on the assumption that intra-party democracy is not only a must but also an inevitable condition for all parties of democratic systems. From an evolutionary perspective to party democracy, it is fair to speculate that political parties of the future's prospective democracies will have to get more internally-democratic inevitably, as citizens will become more educated; therefore more informed, more sophisticated and more intelligent. The counter arguments to intra-party democracy have generally come up with insufficient arguments in favor of party monarchy, oligarchy and hierarchy. Opponents of intra-party democracy have mostly given two major reasons for opposing. One, they argue intra-party democracy undermines party

organizational efficiency causing inertia and divisions within. Secondly, they put forth the idea that there is a trade-off between responding to party members' demands and responding to citizens' interests.<sup>x</sup> This second argument relies on the assumption that party members, especially activists, are far more radical in their ideology and political demands than ordinary citizens and non-members are. Therefore, there is no way to satisfy all of them and siding with party members means sacrificing citizens' interests.

The argument on the relative radicalism of party activists relies on May's (1973) 'law of curvilinear disparity', according to which both party top elites and ordinary voters, supporters and sympathizers (party non-elites) are moderate, centrist in their ideological predispositions. Party activists are conceptualized as 'middle elites', different from both top elites and non-elites. Party leaders are expected to take more pragmatic decisions and thus more moderate, centrist stances on public policy issues as a result of their desire to maintain their power and ranks in their party offices, which curbs their policy idealism. Ordinary supporters are expected to be similarly centrist and pragmatist as a result of their loose connections with their parties as simply voters rather than party ideologues. Nevertheless, party activists (middle elites) are expected to be far more idealistic in their politics and more radical and extremist in their political demands as they are neither loose party-voters nor practical party elites.<sup>xi</sup>

In addition to practical benefits of intra-party democracy, this study takes intra-party democracy as an ideal, which cannot be attained perfectly but should still be targeted by democratic actors. In fact, even before the concept of party democracy, the term 'democracy' should be elaborated on. Several people mistakenly take the concept of democracy as an end in itself, as if there is a perfectly democratic system as such. During the whole Cold War period, several people including scholars and academics believed in a dualistic categorization of regimes classified into black-and-white, discrete categories of 'democratic' versus 'totalitarian' systems. Currently, we are more aware of the magnitude of continuum between several types of autocratic and democratic systems.

Today, we are more aware of the fact that the so-called democracy can never be treated as an end or perfection. On the contrary, democracy is always a process and even the most democratic system can get more democratized; and intra-party democratization can be only one component of that process. As Giddens put it, current crises of democracies can be overcome through 'democratization of democracy' with direct local processes, public and electronic referenda as well as all micro and macro forces of society.<sup>xii</sup> Democratic regimes can further democratize with the help of democratic institutions being administered democratically from within. Institutions that are administered internally-democratically serve as examples to society as they contribute to the strengthening of a democratic socio-political culture in society. On the contrary, institutions administered autocratically would remain far from doing so.

In his defense of intra-party democracy, Teorell (1999) reviews three alternative constructive frameworks of party democracy: Competitive, Participatory and Deliberative. The competitive approach lays emphasis on the parties' function of interest/preference aggregation in society. Translation of individual preferences into collective public policy is mostly the task of political parties in the executive office. From this perspective, a perfect match between members, activists and ordinary supporters of political parties is utopia; therefore political parties have to make a choice between the political and policy demands of their activists in the party or supporters on the street. As a result, intra-party democracy is not a necessity but a burden. The participatory framework emphasizes the need for a representative institutional setup at the national level, with the equal right to self-development as a must for any democracy. The concept of participation is conceived as a pyramidal system in which direct democracy constitutes the base and above that, only delegatory democracy.<sup>xiii</sup>

Teorell criticizes both frameworks and lays out the strengths of the deliberative defense of intra-party democracy. He mentions that the real virtue of democracy is not providing equal right to participation in politics but equal right to make up minds. However, construction of independent minds is not possibly in private sphere only. Deliberation requires communications and sharing in public space. Therefore, intra-party democracy should be conceptualized as an instrument for connecting the legislative institutions sensitive to electoral/public opinion in general elections. It is true that pressure groups of civil society perform similar functions, but pressure groups can represent or articulate quite restricted, specific or singular interests. In contrast, political parties are superior arenas for democratic deliberation because they consider collective interests and whole ranges of a variety of issues simultaneously.<sup>xiv</sup>

The extent of intra-party democracy relies on a number of factors, including (i) the extent to which parties are charismatic, leader-driven parties, (ii) the extent to which parties are administered 'from the top', that is: the degree of power centralization, (iii) the distribution of power and authority in the party, (iv) demographic distribution of party members with regards to social class, gender, education, age, etc., (v) the power of local party branches and caucuses, (vi) the supervision of party bureaucracy, (vii) the extensiveness of party membership and many more others.<sup>xv</sup> Charismatic leader-driven and excessively centralized parties are hardly democratic within. The role of party chairs and the ways in which they are elected are crucial in the analysis of power centralization within a party. The distribution of power within a party has a lot to do with the legal and procedural authorizations of party leader and leadership cadres. Especially in Turkey, party chairs are excessively empowered at the expense almost all local party branches and organizations. It is true that leaders come even before parties in Turkey. This fact is explainable with social reality of Turkey's political culture. Turkey has been close to a one-man culture in its politics, a political culture of strong charismatic leaders for quite a long time, since the late Ottoman and the early Republican years. For this reason, today's political parties are generally secondary behind their strong leaders, and they remain giant yet inert organizations under the shadows of their leaders.<sup>xvi</sup>

There are a variety of universalizable criteria of intra-party democracy within the context of contemporary European and Anglo-American democracies. Some of these criteria are about the distribution of authority and resources within the party, while some are related to the sociology and demographics of party membership. In principle, parties where decision-making mechanisms work with bottom-up are more internally democratic than those with Jacobin, top-down decision-making. After all, bottom-up processes are indicators of effective local party organizations. Therefore, one major dimension of intra-party democracy is the extent of centralization/decentralization of power within a party. In the Turkish context, all major parties are administered from Ankara, the center. The more a political party embraces a degree of decentralization of power, the more likely the central administration would be delegating some of its power and authority to the party's local branches and organizations. In other words, decentralization means parties' provincial, district and sub-district branches having some leverage over the party center. In this context, decentralization of power is definitely one major, but not the only criterion of intra-party democracy Turkey's parties.

Another criterion of intra-party democracy has to do with the extent to which a party embraces social masses and connects with people. Parties that are dominated or controlled by only a cohort (sub-section) of society (i.e., whites, men, the wealthy, Turks) are hardly democratic in the first place. Considering the fact that parties that embrace democracy would be willing to appeal to a huge variety of social segments in elections, those with extensive demographic membership can be said to be more democratic than parties with restricted membership. In a similar vein, parties that represent a variety of social classes or cohorts are naturally more democratic than those that open their doors to only a restricted social class or cohort. For instance, especially in the context of a highly conservative and male-dominant, patriarchal society like Turkey, gender matters. A party with a membership closer to a 50%-50% gender distribution would be more democratic than a predominantly male party. In practice, however, there is no party with an equal gender distribution in Turkey.

Another criterion of intra-party democracy is about participation, that is, participatory democracy. Contemporary democracies are systems where ordinary citizens have a say on the system itself. Political participation becomes possible only when people can express their dissenting opinions freely. For instance, it is quite difficult to talk about intra-party democracy in hierarchical party platforms where leaders cannot be criticized and the rank-and-file members are expected to show full obedience to party elites. In a democratic party, differentiation and even confrontation of ideas should be considered natural and 'normal'. The bottomline in this context is the borderlines of freedom of expression in a political party. Party democracy is possible when dissent and criticism are possible and when party members can agree to disagree. Democratic parties are expected to have mechanisms for compromise, consensus, crisis management as well as conflict resolution. In contrast, parties where dissent is unwelcome and monolithic hierarchy is the norm are autocracies only.

Duverger's argument is quite applicable to the case of political parties in Turkey. In general, lack of intra-party democracy is a common problem of all political parties in Turkey. Ergo, the lower branches and local organizations of political parties do not meddle with the affairs of the top party administrations, as this is not a widely embraced practice in Turkey's party politics and culture.<sup>xvii</sup> As of today, neither the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) nor the oppositionary Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) has intra-party democracy. In contrast, both parties are heavily driven by their charismatic leaders, Tayyip Erdoğan and Devlet Bahçeli respectively. With a similar logic, it is quite difficult to talk about democracy within the center-left Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP). Especially during the leadership years of Deniz Baykal (CHP's former chair before Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the current CHP chair), any criticism of Baykal or dissent from his rule was harshly suppressed in the party. Challenging Baykal's chair seat in regular or extraordinary party caucuses turned to be almost impossible due to series of changes in the party charter made by the Baykal leadership cadres.<sup>xviii</sup>

In a similar vein, Bülent Ecevit's 'democratic left' Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP) suffered a lot from charismatic leadership to the extent of party monarchy by the Ecevit couple. The DSP's organs and local branches exercised almost no influence on the party's directions and strategies. The sole power of the DSP rested on its very leader and his wife, Bülent and Raşan Ecevits.<sup>xix</sup> Sema Pişkinsüt, the only woman who dared to challenge Ecevit's chair in the DSP was seriously assaulted in the party congress for her courage to do so. Another example is the MHP, which experienced schism and violence after the death of its historical leader Alparslan Türkeş. After his son Tuğrul Türkeş was not elected chair by the party delegates, the MHP party caucus witnessed a harsh confrontation between Türkeş supporters and Bahçeli supporters, and the party youth-wing leader Azmi Karamahmutoğlu said "long live illegality for the traitors" ("yaşasın hainler için illegalite"). The Kurdish left, represented by a series of parties and lately Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP) seems to be the most internally democratic only when compared to the other three parliamentary actors. All in all, it is obvious that all parliamentary parties of Turkey have a lot to go in their way to democratization. When members of major parties are asked directly, they generally tend to say "yes, we have party democracy in our party",<sup>xx</sup> but what party members say is hardly an evidence of the reality within political parties in Turkey.

## **THE ROOTS OF INTRA-PARTY AUTOCRACY IN TURKEY'S POLITICAL PARTY CULTURE**

Considering the rapid speed of change the party system in Turkey has shown over the years, it is fair to argue that the Turkish party system is quite dynamic. The early Republican years, from 1923 to the late 1940s, are characterized as the one-party period led by the Republican People's Party (CHP), the party that founded modern Turkey. Two attempts to form a second opposition party failed with the formation and the subsequent closures of Progressive Republican Party

(*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, TCF) and Free Republican Party (*Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, SCF) during this early Republican period. The transition would come with the foundation of Demokrat Parti (DP) by the teams of Adnan Menderes and Celal Bayar in 1946 and the 1950 elections, which broke the domination of the CHP radically for the first time in history with the DP's overwhelming electoral victory, which Kalaycıoğlu refers to as a 'White Revolution'.<sup>xxi</sup> The electoral politics of the 1950s transformed Turkey from a one-party to a two-party system with the CHP on the center left and the DP on the center right. However, the young officers' coup against the DP government in 1960 and the subsequent making of the 1961 Constitution changed the party system in Turkey forever, once more.

The purpose of the 1960 coup was not only to overthrow the DP's parliamentary tyranny of majority but also to provide a new institutional setup for a real system of checks and balances among the three branches of government. For this purpose, a series of higher legal and judicial institutions were created such as the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*), a bicameral legislature with the upper chamber Republican Senate (*Cumhuriyet Senatosu*), State Planning Institution (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*) and the like. More importantly for the party system, however, the subsequent 1961 Constitution aimed to expand the limits of political freedoms and freedom of expression and assembly in Turkey. Even though it did not allow formation of radical parties on the right and the left, it was because of the libertarian content of the constitution that a new series of unorthodox parties were formed in Turkey for the first time to the left of CHP and to the right of the DP. After the 1961 Constitution, Turkey's party system changed from a two-party to a multi-party type once and forever. For the first time during the 1960s, the electorate of Turkey got acquainted with a variety of new ideas and ideologies ranging from National Socialism, racism and Turkish ultra-nationalism on the radical right to all varieties of socialism, Marxism and anarchism on the very left, together with new types of conservatism and Islamic revivalism. With this acquaintance and transition, Turkey's party system truly got inter-party democracy. However, what has been going on *among* parties hitherto has been quite different from what has been going on *within* them so far.

Among societies of the Middle East, especially after the most recent waves of the so-called Arab Spring with people's collective protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria, the importance of competitive party systems and democracy is to be appreciated once again in a 'torn' country like Turkey, stuck somewhere between 'the West' and 'the East', a part of neither Europe and the Middle East or both. Competitive party system is a process that is 'learned' by societies with trials and errors in their electoral and political history. By 'learning', what is meant is not an individual exposure to some teaching but a process of collective adjustment by society, absorbing past experiences and not repeating the errors. Thanks to the White Revolution of the 1950 as well as the post-1960 transitions in Turkey, the society got acquainted the idea of the 'political market' and the practice of a free electoral market well enough. Even though the military interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980, as well as the post-modern military aggressions of the 1990s caused disturbance in the political market, the competitive party system remained a

strong norm in the society's political culture. As a result of Turkey's electoral multi-party experience, there is no real problem of inter-party democracy in Turkey today. The major problem is intra-party democracy within parties rather than inter-party democracy among parties.

When we look at the major political parties of Turkey, we observe not identical but similar kinds of authoritarianisms with similar types of charismatic leaders, similar rhetorics, similar cheering crowds of supporters, and similar 'leader-worshipping's. There are exceptional parties on the fringe parties of radical or libertarian left, but first fringe parties are exceptions, and second, even progressive actors are influenced by the authoritarian party culture in Turkey. Even though parties show particular differences between them and uniqueness of their own lack of democracy, we can talk about some general factors that collectively comprise the causes of intra-party autocracy in the political parties of Turkey. These general factors can be categorized as (1) Sociological, (2) Institutional and (3) Competitive. Sociological factors are directly related to the wrongs and rights of the society and culture; institutional factors are about the cause and history of political parties as political actors; and finally, competitive factors are mostly about individuals, that is, people who run parties, those who work in/for parties, and those who vote for parties.

Sociological factors have to do the political culture of Turkey's society. Intra-party autocracy has been largely constructed by the authoritarian political culture in Turkey. The state-founding CHP was controlled by Kemalist elites aggressive towards both 'foreign enemies' and the internal enemies of the new, secular regime. The CHP's single-party years during the early Republican period was characterized by an unresponsive, non-competitive, Jacobin and centralized one-party regime, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and then İsmet İnönü, the two most powerful 'founding fathers'. The institutional structure the DP inherited from the CHP back in the 1950s was still authoritarian. In fact, the DP's White Revolution erased the one-man regime of CHP with İsmet İnönü and brought a new one-man regime of DP this time with Adnan Menderes as the DP's prime minister. With this transition, the DP also initiated a clientelistic interest representation system of its own, by which the DP's political elites established patron-client relations with the local elites (i.e., landlords, local bourgeoisie). In this type of central-local leaders' relationships, central leaders have perceived locals as 'clients' more than civic citizens and engaged in short-term vote-maximizing deals instead of long-term policy advocacy. The DP's clientelistic tradition was later embraced by other conservative and nationalist parties of the right in later decades, such as the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP) and the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP).<sup>xxii</sup>

Another factor that maintains this autocratic party culture in Turkey is the institutional context, also related to the legacy of the military interventions in recent history. The political context in the late 1970s was extremely polarized both on the elite and street levels, with non-cooperating party leaders in national politics and reports of assassinations and street gang violence on news sources almost every day. As a result, the military forces of Turkey carried though the most

destructive military coup to civilian democracy in modern Turkey's entire history in 1980. The military interim junta government (1980-83) also dissolved the national legislature, banned all the existing parties, barred all party elites from politics altogether and drafted a new 1982 Constitution that restricted many of the previously existing political liberties and labor rights. It was this 1980 military takeover and the subsequent 1982 Constitution that paved the way for increasing authoritarianism on almost every domain of social life and political culture in the following years, including new legislations that restricted the existing freedoms.

The legal-institutional framework that has been justifying and maintaining party autocracy in Turkey has been the Law on Political Parties (*Siyasi Partiler Kanunu*), which was initially devised after the 1982 Constitution. This law has justified a hierarchical model for all parties as it has led to the cartelization of parties that are dependent on state revenues, made it possible for candidate selection by directly party leadership and chairs in Ankara (instead of local branches), and homogenized the internal structure and functions of all legal parties on paper.<sup>xxiii</sup> As of today, the intra-party autocracy in Turkey's political culture continues to be directly nourished by the legal-institutional framework of the same law. No elected leader or powerful party comes close to changing it as it works for the interests of the already powerful parties with already powerful leadership structures. Democratizing the system may not work the best for the interests of the existing power structures in the existing parties in Turkey.

A third, yet very important factor behind authoritarian party culture has to do with the individual actors, the political leaders themselves as well as their surrounding circles. Leader-worshipping and leader-idolization are inherent components of Turkey's political culture also stemming from not only the early Republican years led by Mustafa Kemal but also the late Ottoman years of late padishahs. Well before party supporters and activists, all party leaders have tendency to consolidate their personal leadership power within their party organizations.<sup>xxiv</sup> Individual power relations matter largely in this context. Parties with relatively vertical (hierarchical) relations are generally autocratic, while those with horizontal (egalitarian) relations are expected to be more democratic. Leadership charisma is an individual-level factor that shapes all party members' incentives and behavior in Turkey politico-cultural environment. Leadership cadres tend to distribute positive and negative incentives (rewards and punishments) in order to achieve their political and power-related purposes. These incentives include material, solidary and purposive incentives. Material incentives are individual-based, tangible and exclusive such as money, jobs and government contracts. Solidary incentives are collective-based and intangible such as satisfaction of social belonging and having a party identity as a civic duty. Purposive incentives are more ideology and issue-based. For instance, some people join socialist parties for the sake of enhancing labor rights, social welfare and income redistribution in the country. Or some join Christian Democrats for expanding religious freedoms in the country.<sup>xxv</sup> In Turkey, leaders and leadership oligarchies are so powerful that they often monopolize all the power to distribute all material benefits, which are quite effective in shaping the quality and intensity of solidary and purposive incentives as well.

## **DISCUSSION**

Political parties are the inherent components of all democratic regimes. Inter-party competition has mostly been strengthened as a result of democratic electoral politics in democratic regimes over time. Nevertheless, what happens within parties is still an ongoing debate. The causes and consequences of intra-party democracy is still a debated issue. Some scholars argue against intra-party democracy on the grounds that democratization from within a party declines its chances of electoral success. This study rests of the normative argument that intra-party democracy is the next step of democratic regimes after the consolidation of inter-party democracy in competitive elections.

Turkey is a democratizing country. Several scholarly works and databases take Turkey as a semi-democracy rather than a full democracy or a full autocracy. With the recent debates about police brutality and the authoritarian political culture of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the debates on Turkey's democratization have intensified. For this reason, what happens within Turkey's parties is as important as what happens between them in Turkey's elections. Democratization is a process, and all democratic regimes have a lot more to further democratize. In this context, Turkey's political parties are no exceptions. Among the four parliamentary actors of the national legislature, both right-wingers AKP and MHP lack intra-party democracy also because of their long-standing leader-worshipping cultures. The center-left CHP is not all that different from the two right-wingers. The party that stands relatively closer to an intra-party democracy ideal is the Kurdish left represented by the BDP.

The BDP has had qualities that put the party two steps ahead of the other three including co-presidency, distinctively high participation of women as well as an egalitarian membership structure. Nevertheless, the BDP is the most internally democratic only when compared to the other three major parties. All in all, Turkey's political parties have a lot to go in terms of democratization, which will probably take more than one or two generations in the future. The contribution of political science to intra-party democracy in Turkey could be realized by benefiting from the historical experiences of more internally democratic parties elsewhere or countries with more Democratic Party systems.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Ayan, P. (2010), "Authoritarian Party Structures in Turkey: A Comparison of the Republican People's Party and the Justice and Development Party," *Turkish Studies*, 11 (2), 197-215.

Celep, Ö. (2010), "Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP: What Lies Ahead?" SETA Policy Brief, No: 44.

Cizre, Ü. (2002), "From Ruler to Pariah: The Life and Times of the True Path Party," *Turkish*

*Studies*, 3 (1), 82-101.

Downs, A. (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York: Harper and Row).

Duverger, M. (1954), *Political Parties*, (London: Methuen).

Giddens, A. (1998), *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, (Malden: Blackwell).

Güney, A. (2002), "The People's Democracy Party" *Turkish Studies*, 3 (1), 122-137.

Harmel, R. and K. Janda (1994), "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 6 (3), 259-287.

Kabasakal, M. (1995), *Restrictions on Political Party Organizations in Turkey [Türkiye'de Siyasal Parti Örgütlenmesindeki Kısıtlamalar]*, Symposium on Political Parties and Democracy, TESAV (Social, Economic and Political Researches Foundation), No:8, Ankara.

Kalaycıoğlu, E. (2005), *Turkish Dynamics: Bridge across Troubled Lands*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

Kınıklıoğlu, S. (2002), "The Democratic Left Party: Kapikulu Politics Par Excellence," *Turkish Studies*, 3 (1), 4-24.

Macpherson, C. B. (1977), *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

May, J. (1973), "Opinion Structure of Political Parties: The Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity," *Political Studies*, 21 (2), 135-151.

Michels, R. (1962), *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, (New York: Free Press).

Önal, S. M. (2007), "Intra-party Democracy in Turkey: Examples of JDP and RPP" ["Türkiye'de Parti İçi Demokrasi: AKP ve CHP Örneği"], Master's Thesis, Dokuz Eylül University.

Panbianco, A. (1988), *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Saglie J. and K. Heidar (2004), "Democracy within Norwegian Political Parties: Complacency or Pressure for Change?" *Party Politics*, 10 (4), 385-405.

Schattschneider, E.E. (1942), *Party Government*, (New York: Rinehart).

Schumpeter, J. A. (1942), *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, (London: Unwin).

Teorell, J. (1999), "A Deliberative Defence of Intra-Party Democracy," *Party Politics*, 5 (3), 363-382.

Von Beyme, K. (1985), *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (Gower, Wales: Aldershot).

Ware, A. (1996). *Political Parties and Party Systems*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Wright, W. E. (1971), "Party Processes: Leaders and Followers", in W. E. Wright (ed.), *A Comparative Study of Party Organization*, (Columbus: Chales Merrill).

Vural, A. M. (2010), "Parti İçi Demokrasi ve Siyasal İletişime Katkıları," *İletişim*, 13, 147-162.

Yanık, M. (2007), "From the Standpoint of Intraparty Democracy, Local Organizations of Political Parties in Turkey," *Journal of Qafqaz University*, 20, 15-25.

---