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A PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC
BACKSLIDING: EVIDENCE FROM HUNGARY AND TURKEY

Bilkent University 2023

A PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING: EVIDENCE FROM HUNGARY AND TURKEY

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by

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Ankara

July 2023

Being a candle is not easy, in order to give light, one must first burn

Rumi

To my grandmother,

A PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC
BACKSLIDING: EVIDENCE FROM HUNGARY AND TURKEY

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

ECE ADVİYE İŞİK CANPOLAT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

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By Ece Advıye Işık Canpolat

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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ABSTRACT

A PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING: EVIDENCE FROM HUNGARY AND TURKEY

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July 2023

This thesis explores different factors affecting the democratic backsliding process in today's world, where a cult of personality is established by using populism as the essential tool for achieving their goals. Considering the importance of weakening the checks and balances system, it also sheds light on other factors as the structure of the internal party organization, personalization of politics, and the political culture. Conducting a comparative case study analysis on Turkey and Hungary, this research aims to take a step forward in the democratic backsliding literature. Taking one step forward from the argument that democratic backsliding takes place when the checks and balances system abolishes, the research asks, "what happens after supposing that such governments do not fit the doctrine of separation of powers?" Through examining Turkey and Hungary as examples of hybrid regimes taking steps toward democratic backsliding day by day under AKP's and Fidesz's rule, the research seeks an answer to the question of "after diminishing the checks and balances system, what takes place and affects the democratic backsliding process in such examples?"

Keywords: democratic backsliding, populism, personalization of politics, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Viktor Orbán, AKP, Fidesz

ÖZET

DEMOKRATİK GERİLEMEYE YÖNELİK SÜRECİN ODAKLI BİR YAKLAŞIM: MACARİSTAN VE TÜRKİYE'DEN BULGULAR

Işık Canpolat, Ece Advıye

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Ioannis N. Grigoriadis

Temmuz 2023

Bu tez, popülizmi hedeflerine ulaşmak için temel bir araç olarak kullanarak bir kişilik kültürünün yaratıldığı günümüz dünyasında demokratik gerileme sürecini etkileyen farklı faktörleri araştırmaktadır. Denge ve denetim mekanizmasının zayıflatılmasının önemi de dikkate alınarak, parti içi yapılanma, siyasetin kişiselleştirilmesi ve siyasi kültür gibi farklı faktörlerin de etkisi üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Türkiye ve Macaristan üzerine karşılaştırmalı bir vaka çalışması analizi yapan bu araştırma, demokratik gerileme literatürünü bir adım öteye taşımayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, denge ve denetleme mekanizmasının ortadan kalkmasıyla demokratik gerileme gerçekleşir tezinin bir adım ötesine geçen araştırma, “bu tür hükümetlerde kuvvetler ayrılığı doktrinine uyulmadığı varsayıldıktan sonra ne olur?” sorusunu sormaktadır. Araştırma, AKP ve Fidesz iktidarında günden güne demokratik gerilemeye doğru adım atan melez rejimlere örnek olarak Türkiye ve Macaristan’ı inceleyerek, bu tür örneklerde “denge ve denetim mekanizması zayıflatıldıktan sonra demokratik gerileme süreci için nelerin yaşandığı ve nasıl bir etkiye sahip

olduđu” sorusuna yanıt aramaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: demokratik gerileme, popülizm, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Viktor Orbán, AKP, Fidesz



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Considering the Ph.D. journey as one of the most challenging roads in my life, I would like to raise my greetings to a number of people. Firstly, I want to express my deepest thanks to my advisor Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, whose guidance and sage advice kept me grounded, ensured I supported whatever I asserted, and helped me bring out my best work. I could not see the finish line without his full support for all those years. I owe deep gratitude to my committee members, Meral Uğur Çınar and Kürşat Çınar. Without their valuable input during our thesis committee meetings, the whole thesis structure would not have been developed as such. Their patience and support in seeking knowledge also helped me become a more promising researcher. I am glad that I walked this road with them.

I would also like to warmly thank my committee members, Başak İnce and Selin Akyüz. I had the chance to meet with Başak İnce when I was a prospective student and she inspired me to be a member of our department. Her positive energy led me through all of my processes. I am grateful to meet her. My Ph.D. journey was an emotional roller coaster. I had good and bad times. In all those years, Selin Akyüz's support helped me overcome my deficits. Her cheerful character made me feel better and better in each of the tough spots I experienced. Her insightful comments during those years also helped me to find my strengths as a researcher.

I would also like to share my sincere gratitude to Tolga Bölükbaşı, Senem Yıldırım Özdem, and Berrak Burçak. Whenever I feel lonely, I felt their warm supervision and help beside me. They made me remember what I was looking forward to achieving through the years. Without their support, the struggles I witnessed would be more challenging.

My family has a special place on my journey since if I would not have their support all of the time, I would collapse emotionally. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved mother N. Canan Demirdamar, my dear sister İrem Işık, and my love Berz Canpolat.

Without friends, this journey would be more challenging. So, I would like to express thanks to my friends and colleagues too. Merve, Yasemin, and Batuhan thank you for always believing in me and being by my side. I would also like to thank Burcu Türkoğlu, Miyuki Konnai, Emina Hasanagic, Özlem Sefer, Ali Açıkgöz, Gökhan Şensönmez, Pınar Dilan Sönmez, Merve Akdemir, and Olgu Derviş for always being supportive of my research and being great friends whenever I need emotional support.

Lastly, I would also like to thank all the interviewees who accepted to participate in this research. In such a context, I am grateful that they believe in me and provide insightful knowledge on what is going on. Without their input, this research would not take its final version.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Motherland Party
AP	Justice Party
CEU	Central European University
CHP	Republican People's Party
DGM	State Security Court
DP	Democrat Party
DW	Deutsche Welle
DYP	True Path Party
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
EVS	European Value Survey
Fidesz	Hungarian Civic Party
FKgP	Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party
FP	Virtue Party
IETT	Istanbul Electric Tram and Tunnel Operations
ILO	Iron Law of Oligarchy
IPD	Intra-Party Democracy
İTÜ	Istanbul Technical University
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party
LoNE	Law on the Unification of Education
LSE	London School of Economics
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
MKP	National Development Party
MKYK	Central Decision and Executive Board
MNP	National Order Party
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	National Salvation Party
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party
MTTB	Turkish National Student Union

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSDAP	Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party
NSC	National Security Council
RP	Welfare Party
SoE	State of Emergency
SP	Felicity Party
SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TD	Triangular Dependency
TMSF	Savings Deposit Insurance Fund
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WVS	World Value Survey
YÖK	Council of Higher Education

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the reasons behind the autocratization process of unconsolidated democracies belonging to second or third-wave democracies. In the modern world, most established democracies, besides unconsolidated ones, are faced with pitfalls. The rise of populist flow all over the world, where leaders of certain parties positioned themselves as the representative of the people by benefiting from the polarized politics that globalized world order created through economic unfairness, constituted a ground for degrading liberal values of democracy. The Western world of established democracies could be distinguished from the rest of the democracies by their liberal values. Populist discourse by certain leaders is being used as an essential tool to attack the democratic principles of countries, bringing the discussion of the rise of hybrid regimes.

Following the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the tide of political regimes in the world turned their faces towards democratization. Scholars hallowed this new wave of democratization, which they regarded as the end-point. From then on, it is expected that the world would witness the democratization of countries where in the end, all of them would achieve the expected consolidated forms of their Western examples. However, developments showed that world history did not yet come to an end. A new regime type arose where democratic values, combined with autocratic ones, remained in the 'grey zone' (Bogaards 2009; Riaz 2019). Such regimes blend democratic values, such as elections, with autocratic practices. This brought the discussion on democratic backsliding to literature.

One of the essential aspects of democratic backsliding, today's world is witnessing, linked to the rise of populist flow, where certain leaders and parties gain immense

power, paving the way for autocratizing the system they are ruling. The election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States (US) and the vote for Brexit in the United Kingdom (UK) opened up the global rise of the debates on populism. The definition of populism includes a dichotomy between the elites, who are represented as holding political and economic power in their hands, and people, who are regarded as the ones excluded from the system. Populist leaders with their parties seek to take over the political power in their hands by arguing that they are one of the people. They also argue that they are the representative of people by bringing the idea of being nation's savior to the forefront.

The populist rhetoric brings forward two claims on how societies should be governed. On the one hand, populism could be regarded as a challenge to the legitimate authority of the 'establishment,' which is the elites in this circumstance. In this regard, populism questions the power and authority within the state (even the elected representatives). On the other hand, the populists claim that 'people' are the ones in a democracy representing the legitimate political authority. For example, Nigel Farage, who is the leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), on the night of the Brexit referendum, made a speech and said that "This will be a victory for 'real people,' a victory for 'ordinary people,' a victory for 'decent people.'" (CNN 2016) As seen from here, identity politics has taken as an essential indicator to understand populism by scholarship (Müller 2016; Fukuyama 2018; Inglehart 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). This is explained as the 'cultural backlash thesis,' where the populist uprising is regarded as people's reaction to the cultural change that world is experiencing. With the introduction of new values, such as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, particularly older and less educated people felt left behind by globalization.

This thesis aims to find the reasons behind the autocratic rift in the selected cases. In this regard, it starts with the question of why the selected cases, through populism as a tool, pull the regime into an in-between situation of democracy and autocracy. In this regard, it follows a process-oriented approach toward the democratic backsliding of the cases selected in the scope of the thesis. The thesis focuses on three themes while studying the democratic backsliding process in Turkey and Hungary: institutional structure (political institutions and intra-party structure), personalism,

and political culture. The literature mainly focuses on the importance of the changing institutional structure. The weakening of the checks and balances system is an essential indicator for marking the countries under the ‘democratic backsliding’ concept. However, the examples in today’s world show that the democratic backsliding process does not end when leaders weaken the checks and balances system. Through the personalization of politics, the hybrid regimes, which resulted from democratic backsliding, show more autocratic tendencies. The leader’s position within the intra-party organization is becoming vital for understanding the personalization of politics. However, the personalization of politics has different dimensions. The literature focuses on intra-party authoritarianism though this thesis focuses on the personalization of politics from a broader perspective. In addition to the institutional structure and personalism, political culture plays a vital role in the autocratization process of the regimes. How citizens construct the concept of democracy in their minds is becoming important to understand how the populist leaders preserve their power for this long.¹

1.2.Methodology

1.2.1. Research Question and Case Selection Procedure

The aim of this thesis is derived from the main research question: What factors play a catalytic role in the democratic backsliding process of a political regime? In particular, how do institutional structure, personalization of politics, and cultural premises, influence democratic backsliding? Small- N qualitative research method design with cross-case analysis is selected to answer this question. So, this research focuses on the causes of democratic backsliding in Turkey and Hungary by identifying the factors (including important milestone events and decisions) that brought the rise of hybrid regimes, showing more autocratic signs, with a particular cult of personality of a leader under the umbrella of populist politics in today’s world.

¹ All these themes were raised following establishing a codebook during the analysis of interview data. The process of establishing the codebook will be explained in length in the Interview section of this chapter.

If there exists small-sample research, which is the circumstance in this thesis, random case selection is not possible since such a like attempt would not represent what the main research question is seeking to find out. In this regard, Gerring's (2008: 645) technique of a 'purposive selection procedure' is used for selecting the cases. The research design of this thesis has developed after an extensive reading of Turkish politics literature. So, Turkey with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was the initial case of the research. By adopting the 'typical case model' in which the cases are being selected by representing a typical set of values that gives a general understanding of a phenomenon (Gerring 2008: 648), Hungary with Viktor Orbán and the Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz) has selected as the comparative case of the research.

Historically speaking, the democratization of the regime happened in different periods in Turkey and Hungary. Turkey was an example of a 'second-wave of democratization,' whereas Hungary was an example of a 'third-wave of democratization' (Huntington 1991). Besides their historical background on democratization, the recent developments that are taking place towards becoming examples of hybrid regimes are similar to a populist narrative and a personal cult of the leader through changing the system's institutional structure. As presented, the research's dependent variable is 'democratic backsliding,' and the independent variable is 'social and political factors.' Considering this, Turkey and Hungary are fitting to the most typical cases of the autocratization narrative of the populist discourse in the countries, which could not complete the consolidation process of their democracies and experiencing a democratic backsliding process.

1.2.2. Research Method

The 'human' factor is the main reason for the difference between the social and natural sciences. To explain the social phenomenon, the researchers need to evaluate the emotional and ideal state of humans, which are shaped by society's cultural norms, starting with the family, which can be considered the core of the society they were born and raised into. As George and Bennett (2005: 129) put it forward, "agent-centered change is not unique to human agents- living beings from microbes

to mammals can affect their environment- but intentional change is unique to human agents or nearly so.” In this respect, this research benefits from the ‘process-tracing method,’ which, in Bennett’s (2008: 704) words, “involves looking at evidence within an individual case, or a temporally and spatially bound instance of a specified phenomenon, to derive and/or test alternative explanations of that case.” So, process tracing helps the researcher decide which alternative explanation will be selected. The questions such as “how should we judge competing explanatory claims in social science research? How can we make inferences about which alternative explanations are more convincing, in what ways, and to what degree?” are also included in the scope of the method (Bennett 2010: 207).

Process tracing helps describe political and social phenomenon and evaluate causal claims (Collier 2011: 823). Process tracing helps the researcher with causal-process observation (Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2010), describing every step of the observation of a phenomenon and paying attention to the sequence of independent, dependent, and intervening variables. In the end, the process-tracing method helps the researcher examine the pieces of evidence within a case, contributing to supporting or turning toward alternative explanatory hypotheses.² As Bennett (2010: 208) pointed “the researcher looks for the observable implications of hypothesized explanations, often examining at a finer level of detail or a lower level of analysis than that initially posited in the relevant theory.” This helps the researcher to see whether the existing explanations are fulfilling in identifying the social or political phenomenon or if alternative explanations exist. As Tilly (2001: 21) pointed out in political science, “rarely can a single inquiry offer definitive proof or disproof for any particular social-scientific theory of nationalism, revolution, balance of power, or any other political phenomenon.” In this research, the researcher aims to show that literature examines democratic backsliding by referring to the weakening checks and balances system, whereas ‘democratic backsliding’ as a political phenomenon would

² As seen here, process tracing is used to understand the causal factors within a case study. In this thesis, the researcher provides evidence from Hungary and Turkey to examine that democratic backsliding process in each country resulting from several factors. The researcher is aware of Bennett’s argument of ‘within case study,’ though the process-tracing method is being used to understand two cases this thesis has selected to study.

be explained through different factors but not only by weakening of the checks and balances system.

As stated above, this research will be based on qualitative data collected from primary and secondary sources. As Lewis and Nicholls (2003: 50) stated, “the nature of comparison in qualitative research is very different from in quantitative research. The value of qualitative research is in understanding rather than measuring difference.” So, this research aims to understand the reasons behind democratic backsliding rather than measuring it. In this regard, the research benefited from primary sources and secondary sources. For this purpose, the public speeches of the leaders (video material + published material), published material encompassing official documents (the amendments for the law), reports, newspaper articles, biographies (both the leaders and the parties), data sets from World Value Survey (WVS) and European Value Survey (EVS), memoirs of the party members and published interviews are used. Specific questions have been selected from WVS and EVS’s joint data set since the thesis aims to understand what kind of meaning people assign to political life in their country, how they perceive democracy, and how much importance they assign to having a democratic political system.

In addition to these, documentaries by 140 journals and Deutsche Welle (DW) are used as essential sources of the research. Besides these, also semi-structured interviews are conducted.³ Since the researcher faced a particular limitation in achieving possible interviewees in the Hungarian case, multi-methods have adopted where secondary sources became important to understand this case. Through this, the researcher focused on whether the interview findings of the Turkish case would be applied to the Hungarian one too. Since silence became essential in both cases, the researcher decided to interpret what was going on in the field. For this purpose, a fieldwork notes section has been added to the interviews part of this chapter. The importance of interviews besides the archives and memoirs would be best described in the words of Rathbun (2008: 691) “interviewing is unique in that it allows the interviewer to ask the questions that he or she wants answered. Memoirs and secondary accounts force the researcher to answer his or her key questions based on what others wanted to write about.” Interviews in this research highlight the factors

³ Extensive information on interviews is provided in the following section.

behind the democratic backsliding process. While collecting the primary sources, the interpretivist approach has been used, one of the critical approaches to qualitative research. As Mason (2002: 56) puts it forward, “the interpretivist approach sees people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings, and understandings, as the primary data sources.” In this regard, this approach does not only see people as the primary source but also looks forward to understand their perceptions.

1.2.3. Interviews

As Mosley (2013: 2) pointed out, “interviews are an important, and often an essential tool for making sense of a political phenomenon.” Also, interviews help the researchers to theorize their study more accurately, which has been the case in this research. The interviews helped the researcher to theorize different causal mechanisms as crucial as controlling the institutional structure in a given context. So, the one-on-one interview technique, which means face-to-face interviews, has been selected as the data collection process of the research. This process helped the researcher to evaluate with a smaller sample of participants, which brought a chance to collect more profound responses to her questions by having the option to ask follow-up questions if the answers would open new areas to be discussed. In addition, the questions were formulated as semi-structured to provide flexibility for respondents to add missing parts in the questions that the researcher raised during the interview, in line with their experiences.⁴

In this research, it was preferred to generate a representative sample since it is formulated for the process tracing to see whether possible different reasons are causing a particular political phenomenon. In this respect, it could be stated that the sample of the interviews were selected through a mixture of the purposive and snowball sampling techniques of the non-random sampling method. As Lynch (2013: 41) clarified, the researcher selects a sample set acquiring specific characteristics corresponding to the analysis through purposive sampling. Regarding the aim of the thesis, the researcher has focused on the unit of analysis of the study, which could be

⁴ The interview questions are added as Appendix I at the end of the thesis.

described as the people who are working or worked in different institutions that have a direct connection with the ruling party of the country or the members of the given parties as the cases of the study, while gathering the sample. The interviews are conducted with people who are/were members of the AKP, are/were working in one of the public institutions, and are/were faculty members at a university. As a part of the research, 19 interviews have been conducted. The limitations researcher faced during the interview process will be explained in the below section. Though COVID-19 period and the 2023 general election in Turkey had an essential effect on the interviewee numbers. Silence became one of the most important aspects of the interviewing process, which will be explained in length in the below section.

In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling has been used in certain circumstances regarding the party members since, structurally, the party members are more open to talking with the person who has acquired the trust and reference of one of them. However, the interviews were not designed to achieve a sample only through the snowball technique since it has certain limitations. Snowball sampling has based on the recommendations of earlier interviews (J.F. Lynch 2013: 42), which would bring a group of people as the sample who have the same mindsets and would limit the possibility of oppositional ideals being represented within the scope of the research, which is an important issue that would be discussed in the framework of reliability of the interview data (Bleich and Pekannen 2013: 86).

“Interviewing is often important if one needs to know what a set of people think, or how they interpret event or series of events, or what they have done or are planning to do” (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 673). In this research, the interviews aimed to understand how people in different institutions situated at different levels of the system were actualizing and experiencing the authoritarianization of the regime. For this purpose, the following steps have been borrowed from Hsieh and Shannon (2005):

1. Formulating the research question to be answered,
2. Selecting the sample to be analyzed,
3. Defining the categories to be applied,
4. Determining trustworthiness,
5. Analyzing the results.

While following these steps, the conventional content analysis method has been used. In conventional content analysis, the study starts with observation. Codes are defined during data analysis and developed from the data. Also, conventional data analysis is a method that is used “when an existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited” (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1279). In this regard, the conventional content analysis seemed to be the most applicable for this research. In addition to content analysis, the discourse analysis method has been used since it has been described not only as analyzing the content of a text but also as analyzing in which conditions this text was written by post-structural and post-modern understanding. As Cheek stated, “discourse analysis is concerned with the way in which texts themselves have been constructed in terms of their social and historical ‘situatedness’” (2004: 1144). In this respect, by considering the points mentioned above, a codebook has established while analyzing the interview data. The literature does not provide a particular way for coding the interview data (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, and McCulloch 2011: 137; Saldaña 2009: 2). Codes represent phrases, sentences, or paragraphs connected to a specific context or setting. They would be developed through the existing theory (theory-driven), from the raw data (data-driven), or through the goals and questions of a research project (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, and McCulloch 2011: 138). This thesis has used a data-driven method for creating a codebook. The codebook includes the code name, definition, and example; and has represented in Appendix III at the end of the thesis.

1.2.3.1. Limitations

For the reliability of the study, which is one of the main areas of discussion on qualitative research methods, a researcher needs to follow a transparent path in reporting the interviews. So “reporting the sample is a vital first step, but it is equally important to report the number of the interviews sought within the sample frame, the number obtained, and the number declined or unavailable” (Bleich and Pekannen 2013: 90). This research has designed to conduct interviews in Turkey and Hungary with people who are/have been a party member of AKP and Fidesz, are working/have worked in public institutions, or are working/have worked as a faculty member at a university. In this regard, it could be presented as elite interviews. The

number of interviews designed by considering, as all of the experienced field researchers know, “the ideal list of interviewees can change dramatically in the field” (Bleich and Pekannen 2013: 91). That is why the saturation has been taken as one of the essential indicators while coming up with the end-number of the interviews. It has been decided that the political context of the countries and what the researcher learns from the participants, and where new knowledge starts not to be obtained anymore decide the number of participants at the end of the research.

The interviews took place between January 2022-June 2023.⁵ In the Turkish case, the researcher contacted 29 people via e-mail or through a middle person who knows the possible interviewee.⁶ Since many of the possible interviewees remained silent toward the researcher, she decided to include possible interviewees to the researcher that she met randomly in her daily life. This has been used since research of this thesis is designed to reveal the hidden meanings and symbols within the societies it is working on. 18 out of 29 approved to be a part of the research though three of them disappeared during the interview process. One of the possible interviewees declared her concern since she is working in a public institution and rejected to be a part of the interview. In addition to that, 10 of the possible interviewees did not respond to the researcher at all. In total 15 have approved to be a part of the research.

In the Hungarian case, the researcher contacted 17 people via e-mail. Four accepted to participate the research. To overcome being a stranger, the researcher asked for the help of a bureaucrat. She contacted to him by using someone who knows both of them, as named the middle person between the researcher and the possible interviewees. He declared that he would do his best but then disappeared. Two of the rest of the 13 people refused to participate in the research, and 11 of them did not

⁵ In normal conditions, interviews were completed in March 2023, though to overcome the limitation of silence, the researcher, after the 2023 elections in Turkey, decided to try her chance one more time and contact new interviewees, specifically party members in both of the cases, from May 2023 to June 2023.

⁶ Here, the middle person represents a phrase borrowed from Latin American literature. The interviewers used different techniques to reach interviewees. The third person, called the middle person, who would be the ones these people trust, is used to organize interviews. For example, lawyers or non-governmental organizations have been used as middle people to reach the victims of the Venezuelan government (Núñez and Broner 2017). Javier Auyero's studies represent the importance of a familiar face for the interviewees. In *Poor People's Politics* (2000) brokers of the Peronist Party as Matilde, play an essential role in finding interviewees from the inner circle. In *Contentious Lives* (2003) Laura, and *In Harm's Way* (2015) Fernanda played a vital role in finding interviewees.

respond to the researcher at all. This reflected to the representativeness of the sample but both the COVID-19 period and being a stranger in Hungarian case ended up with the silence of the majority of the possible interviewees. To overcome this deficit, the research used multiple methodologies for the findings of the research. For the Turkish case, interviews worked as an important source for the findings, whereas in the Hungarian case researcher benefited from the secondary sources to highlight the importance of the factors for the democratic backsliding in the country.

The silence became an essential point of interviews that should be studied in the scope of the limitations of the research. The researcher changed the way she introduced herself to possible interviewees to overcome this deficit. During the interview process, she realized that, especially for interviewing party members, she needed to gain the trust of these people by being one of them. The introduction of middle person aimed to overcome this deficit. She found personal contacts, who would be a middle person, and asked for their help. In addition, rather than saying that the researcher is aiming to understand the democratic nature of the party organization, the researcher explained the reason for conducting interviews as to achieve knowledge on the functioning of party organization.

Still, these efforts could not help her overcome the most significant limitation the research has faced. This can be explained by the party's introversion process, which has been raised by the interviewees too. The longer Erdoğan and AKP stayed in power, the longer it needed to dismiss fractions within the party. Ultimately, the party, with its leader, started looking at everybody suspiciously. In the beginning, when competing in the 1994 local elections, he visited everyone and adopted a tone where he declared that his party was embracing all of the people in Turkey. However, after splitting with the Gülen movement, with the 2015 elections and 2016 coup d'état attempt, trust and loyalty to the party became important. Following the transition to the presidential system in 2018, the ruling system became more personalized and autocratic (examples will be provided throughout the thesis). For example, when the interviews were being conducted, interviewees asked particular questions to the interviewer. The most common one was: "Where are you from?" In addition, questions regarding her family, like the job titles of her family members, have been asked. All of these would be considered to develop trust between the

interviewer and interviewee. The participants also mentioned that the introversion process of the party lasted because of the agents trying to topple Erdoğan's rule and AKP's success. The question they raised during the interview could be linked to this concern.⁷

In addition to these, since the checks and balances system were diminished in both cases, the researcher had to face some other limitations while conducting interviews. The risk for the participants of the study could be listed as losing their jobs, being faced with a trial, being excluded from the party and et cetera since the democratic backsliding process was structured around the idea of the 'fear' of being excluded from all of the areas of the society. Regarding this, it was essential to make the participants trust, that their personal information would not be shared with anyone else at the end of the research. For this purpose, the participants were informed from the beginning that there would not be a recording of the interview. Researcher was aware of the importance of recording, since it is being helpful for the research to capture all of the sentences of the participants. Still, during her Ph.D., the researcher had the chance to attend a Qualitative Research Methods course, where she learned to take notes by going to a field rather than recording it. This helped her a lot during the interview process of the research. So, notes were taken during the interviews to help her memorize what have been spoken during the meeting. Immediately after finishing the interviews, only taking a small break, she wrote the transcript of the interviews. Considering this limitation and the reliability issue of the interviews for gaining the readers' trust, "Appendix II: Interview Methods" is provided at the end of the thesis by excluding any personal information of the participants. In this regard, pseudonyms assigned to the participants.

⁷ Since interviews highlighted an essential aspect of the autocratization process in the two cases, the researcher adopted an ethnographic point of view. As a part of this, she visited the headquarter of AKP with one of the interviewees. Rather than posing questions to people there, she met with people, drank their tea, and observed what kind of an atmosphere existed within the party's headquarter.

1.2.3.2. Field Research

This part has been designed to provide participant observation field notes to the readers. During the interview process, the researcher realized that familiarity is essential for the interviewees (especially for the party members). The first question the interviewees asked the researcher when they met was, “Where are you from?” Since this was the case, this research took the interviewees as objects rather than as informants. For this purpose, a section on field research has been added. The interviews correspond to the importance of understanding the hidden meanings and symbols for the cases of the thesis. The way people interact with each other tells an important hidden story to the researcher. She realized that looking at what was happening in the everyday practices of people through interpreting the symbols they use was telling a story for why the selected cases experienced a democratic backsliding process rather than showing any signs of consolidating their democracies.

From here on researcher will use first-person singular to define herself: Bülent (AKP Youth Branch- MP Candidate) invited me to his café for the meeting. When I arrived, I called him, and he informed me that someone was going to pick me up from downstairs and take me to his office (which was upstairs in the café). The man introduced himself as the one who would lead me to the office, and the first question he asked was, “Where are you from?” When we arrived at Bülent’s office, approximately ten men were sitting. The office was big, and there were three different spots to sit. The office was smelling smoke. Although smoking is forbidden indoors, it was obvious that this café office did not fall into the forbidden zone.⁸ I felt like, in a coffee shop, which is a traditional place in Turkey, men gather and play okey and drink tea all day while smoking is also allowed in these places. None of the men make a move to leave the room. Bülent asked which corner I would prefer to interview him and whether I would prefer a one-to-one meeting. I said that it would be better if we had a one-to-one meeting. Thereupon, Bülent said, “Come on guys, wait for me downstairs; I will come to you soon.” This showed me that there is a ranking between the relationship these men developed. I did not ask Bülent, but it was obvious that these men were also party members. So, I realized that Bülent has a

⁸ Some cafes and clubs in Turkey do not obey the rule of smoking. This place was one of them.

higher position in this community. After these men left the office, Bülent asked me where I am from. He asked about my husband when he heard that I am from Ankara. Furthermore, he also asked my mother and father. His questions did not last with where they are from but also included the job titles of each of my family members. He asked me to drink tea or coffee. I took a tea, and he insisted on having something to eat. I did not want, but still, he requested nuts from the waiter. Afterward, we started the interview. During the interview process, our meeting was interrupted twice. On one of them, a man asked for a place to pray. At that point, I thought it was showing the religious side of these people, but afterward, thinking back about the café since it was a modern one, I thought that it would be a symbol that these people use to inform each other on something else.

Cüneyt (a member of the district branch of AKP) invited me to a tea garden for the meeting. When I arrived there, he was sitting with two other men. He introduced both of them, who are also AKP members. I sat at that table, and these three men started to talk. I realized that the party members of AKP prefer to meet as a commune rather than have a one-to-one connection. They talked about the party and politics in a general manner, but during the conversations, I realized that they preferred to use particular symbols. Since I was unfamiliar with the people and symbols they referred to, I could not understand what they were saying to each other. After twenty minutes, Cüneyt informed me that we would have our interview. Following the interview, he also took me to the provincial headquarter of the party. He informed me that meeting people is essential to understand the party. When we arrived at the building, I met with people. I did not ask to have an interview with these people since I wanted to observe how things were working at the party. I met with a man (I will call him Orhan), and he invited us to one of the rooms on the ground floor. After our teas arrived, Orhan explained his position within the party. He declared the importance of working for the party. He told me, "If you want to have a high-ranking position within the party, you need to work hard from the grassroots." In our meeting, Erol (former AKP member) also mentioned this point. He stated that the party members needed to work hard to be rewarded with certain positions. Only if the leader recommends the member, then s/he would be listed as an MP candidate more easily, especially from the big cities. We visited the headquarter on the weekend. So, Orhan was the guard for that weekend. While talking, the

security forces came to our room and informed Orhan that a woman was asking for a job for her child. After talking with this woman, whom he promised to look for jobs matching the skills of the woman's child, Orhan turned to us and explained that they are always witnessing such requests. He added that this is important for the party since the voters are requesting jobs, and if they would not fulfill their desires, they will lose these people's support. This was an essential experience since I saw how AKP builds clientelistic relationships with its voters.

When I met Gül (AKP member, women's branch) before the interview, she asked what I focused on in my thesis. Gül also obtained a political science degree at the university, and she was curious about what I was studying. During the interview, she also continued to ask questions regarding how I define democracy, what I am trying to understand about the party structure, and so on. I think she also wanted to understand the hidden meanings of my life and my research. She wanted to make sense of what I was trying to understand about the internal party organization. I could describe Gül as a dedicated member of the party. The way she explained the party showed that she developed a deep emotional link with the party and the leader. During the interview, she explained her story with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In one of the meetings where she worked as a member of the women's branch, she was responsible for assisting people attending the meeting. This is important since also Orhan and Erol mentioned that the party members work hard for the chores of the party. Besides her responsibilities, Gül also was an attendee of the meeting. Nevertheless, she needed to guide people, so she could not get to the conference room in time. When she entered, everyone was seated, and Erdoğan was on the podium to deliver his speech. Since she entered the silence all of a sudden, she also caught the attention of Erdoğan. Erdoğan, by pointing to an empty place in the front row, told her, "Come do not hesitate; sit here." Gül explained this experience as how she felt anxious for a second, and she expressed her love toward Erdoğan since he developed a personal relationship with her and helped her to be relieved. This is important to see how the leader's personal relationship is being effective on the members.

I selected the most representative examples among the interviewees to describe the field. Besides these, while reaching possible interviewees, I needed to face certain

limitations. For example, Bülent informed me that he would find other interviewees. However, he disappeared. I called him, and he said he was not feeling very well. He also added that he would return me but did not. Similarly, another possible interviewee, whom I found through Gül, promised to meet me but then sent me a message and informed me that her mother was hospitalized. I conveyed my best wishes; however, we did not communicate afterward. One of the possible interviewees requested me to send a message to her, and afterward, she did not respond. She disappeared of a sudden. All of these show that the relations AKP members are building corresponds to the absence of the civic virtue argument introduced by Putnam, which will be explained in length in the Culture chapter of this thesis.

Primordial ties became a vital aspect of the interviews with the party members. Rather than seeing me as an individual, they preferred developing community-level relationships. The question “Where are you from” corresponds to the importance of being a fellow townsman (*hemşehrilik*) with them. The field research notes show what kind of engagement AKP members build with people. These primordial ties people developed during the interview would be linked to Kalaycıoğlu’s (2000: 259-260) study on civil society. As he pointed out, the associations in Turkey are deeply influenced by blood ties, martial relations (*hısmılık*), and local and regional solidarity (i.e., *hemşehrilik*) bonds (Kalaycıoğlu 2000: 269).⁹ These are described as primordial or traditional ties. The interaction I developed with the interviewees of this research would be evaluated under the traditional relationship-building style of the people. AKP members are building primordial ties, which will be an essential indicator to show how the society paves the way for the democratic backsliding of the system. This will be explained in Chapter VI of the thesis. The absence of democratic minds plays a vital role in the autocratization process of the regimes. How people interact with others during the interviews nurtured the importance of culture. In this respect, how people develop a primordial tie would be explained as a cultural premise of the periphery among the cultural clash argument of the center-periphery paradigm.

⁹ Kalaycıoğlu mentions that these ties eroded with urbanization and social mobilization but still could be observed in political terms. The interviews of this research showed that these primordial and traditional ties are still being observed in political terms in 2023.

1.3.Road Map

This research aims to enhance our knowledge of the democratic backsliding process of unconsolidated democracies by examining the possible factors besides the institutional structure of the political system, by focusing on two typical examples of contemporary competitive authoritarian regimes. The economic factors are important to explain the reasons for such a shift, but the argument here is that these factors would not be enough to explain why such developments occur. Clientelistic politics could be observed in different settings, and the researcher regarded that it would not be degraded to the flow of populism at all. As a result, the researcher realized that she needed to find a new ground where she would position the populist discourse and the personalistic appeal of the leaders within his party and the political system as a whole to understand the democratic backsliding process of the regime. As explained earlier, populist uprisings today have the characteristics of a leader who shows strong personal appeals. The personalized leadership within such regimes and the weakening process of the checks and balances system are also important factors of the autocratization process, but it would not be enough to explain the whole of the conjecture and history of the cases that this thesis is working on. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Viktor Orbán, by acting like the inside outsiders of their countries' political systems, show how populist rhetoric is being used as a tool by modern autocrats. Especially by benefitting from identity politics, through creating two camps, us versus them, they are mobilizing their voter base to win elections and preserve their power. They mobilize their followers by visualizing themselves as the savior of the so-called 'losers' of the existing system, which paves the way for the autocratization process of the regimes they are ruling. In 2018 Freedom House declined Turkey from the 'partly free' to 'not free' category.¹⁰ One year later, in 2019, it declined Hungary from the 'free' to 'partly free' category.¹¹ According to the Democracy Index of Economic Intelligence, Turkey was named a hybrid regime, and Hungary a flawed democracy in 2022.¹² The 2023 V-Dem Report (2023: 24) argued that the autocratization process seems to be slowed down in Turkey and Hungary after turning into autocracies. As could be seen, it was openly argued that these two countries were examples of autocratic regimes.

¹⁰ Freedom House (2018), p. 7

¹¹ Freedom House (2019)

¹² Turkey scored 4.35 and Hungary scored 6.64 in overall (EconomistIntelligence 2022)

As a response to the scores of these two countries, Pappas (2022) positioned Recep Tayyip Erdoğan under ‘elected autocrats,’ referring to the dictators who were ruling corrupted states by suppressing the opposition and winning the elections with large margins as Vladimir Putin does in Russia, and Viktor Orbán under the ‘modern populists,’ referring to the leaders who rise in established liberal democracies and harm the liberal principles as Donald Trump.¹³ Considering these developments, this research, after extensive reading, especially on the Turkish case and through interviews, regarded that the literature should go beyond the economic explanations for understanding why unconsolidated democracies, with the rise of a populist leader and party, show signs of autocratization rather than consolidating their democracies.

Since this research aims to dig into the hidden meanings behind the democratic backsliding process in these two countries by adopting an ‘ethnographic point of view’ during the field work, a process-oriented approach to the democratic backsliding process is being followed.¹⁴ In this respect, different factors are being highlighted as the reasons for the autocratization process these countries are following. For this purpose, the focus has been given to different layers of society. So, this study is structured in the following order: *Chapter II* starts with a literature review, where political regimes and populism are being studied. *Chapter III* and *Chapter IV* review the institutional structure and factors as the reasons for democratic backsliding in Turkey and Hungary. The focus is given on the political institutions (*Chapter III*) and intra-party organization and its effect on the autocratization process (*Chapter IV*). Specifically, by focusing on how intra-party democracy paves the way for a democratic regime, it focuses on what affects intra-party democracy versus intra-party authoritarianism. In this regard, party organization is essential; still, all the layers within the system should be examined to understand the bigger picture. Besides the internal party organization, the focus also is given to how different state institutions, such as the judiciary, have been used as important institutional structures for following a democratic backsliding path.

¹³ The literature tends to describe Hungary with the adjectives of democracy rather than autocracy. Still, this dissertation takes cautious steps, and regarding the political history of the country, Pappas’ description of Hungary as an established liberal democracy does not fit into the discussion of the autocratizing country examples as Turkey and Hungary at all, who had an unconsolidated democracy before shifting towards autocratization.

¹⁴ From an ethnographic point of view, the thesis refers to the participant observation field notes that the researcher provided in the Introduction chapter.

Chapter V provides a theoretical framework on personalization of politics and the effect of patrimonialism on the democratic backsliding process of Turkey and Hungary. *Chapter VI* discusses the cultural dimension of the autocratization process, where political culture and its link to democracy are presented as essential for democratic backsliding. The chapter focuses on understanding the political behavior of citizens. The fundamental question is to answer the triggering factors for citizens to support the autocratization process rather than looking forward to hallowing liberal values of democracy. The autocratization in the selected countries starts within the basic unit of the society, family, and shows an upward trend. The autocratization process starting from family penetrates all of the institutional structures since people are the prominent figures of these institutions and have the capacity to build an autocratic mindset rather than a democratic one. These four chapters aim to show that beyond the works in the scholarship to understand this changing nature of the regimes, scholars need to focus on the societal organization, so the culture of the people, and the personalization of politics. Finally, *Chapter VII* outlines this study's general conclusions and implications; and ends with suggestions on how future studies would elaborate democratic backsliding process in different political contexts.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Political Regimes

2.1.1. Democratic Regimes

Scholars argue that to describe a country as a democracy; it should meet a certain number of conditions. Lipset (1959) defines democracy as a political system that provides regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and adds that to have a stable democracy, firstly, the elected officials should guarantee the well-being of the ones who did not vote for them in the elections and who do not share the same ideas with them. Secondly, the office should have a time limitation to avoid the government acting unstable and irresponsible. Lastly, there should be an opposition, and it should be adequate. In this regard, democracy could be stabilized through the existence of certain institutions and values (Schmitter and Karl 1991).

Literature regards democracy as the best form of government in the regime types because of the positive aspects of it as protecting rights, allowing a freer flow of information, more comprehensive deliberation, debate and transparency in policy-making, and like. There exist different definitions of democracy in the literature. In its minimal way, democracy is defined as the 'rule by many.' This definition also refers to electoral democracy, which has regular competitive elections to decide who will fill the chief legislative and executive offices (Diamond 1999).¹⁵ If one minimally defines democracy, many countries would be counted as democratic. So, the number of democracies in the world would increase. According to Linz and Stepan (1996) to call a regime a democracy, it should fulfill three minimal conditions. Firstly, there should be a state; secondly, free and fair elections; and lastly, the rulers should rule the country democratically.¹⁶ If the executive violates

¹⁵Multiparty elections, which means that parties have the right to compete in elections.

¹⁶Linz and Stepan (1996) make it clear that for the consolidation of democracy, the transition process should end, and to end the transition process, the system should provide free and fair elections.

the constitution and the rights of citizens, blurs the separation of powers between itself and the legislation; and if it would not rule within the boundaries of the state of law, then there would not exist democracy.

As can be seen from here, the transition from a regime to a democracy is not the end of the game. After transiting into a democracy, certain tasks should be done, conditions should be established, and attitudes and habits should be fostered to consolidate that regime. Essentially, consolidated democracy means a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become “the only game in the town” (Linz and Stepan 1996). Schmitter (1997) states that the consolidation of a democratic regime is composed of three layers, which are behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional.

Behaviorally, democracy becomes the only game in town when no significant political group seriously attempts to overthrow the democratic regime or to promote domestic or international violence to break up with the state. When behaviorally, democracy becomes the only game in town, then the behavior of the newly elected government that has emerged from the democratic transition is no longer dominated by the problem of how to avoid democratic breakdown. Attitudinally, democracy becomes the only game in town when, even in the face of severe political and economic crises, most people believe that any further political change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic procedures. Constitutionally, democracy becomes the only game in town when all of the actors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict within the state will be resolved according to the established norms and that violations of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly. In short, with consolidation, democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life. As well as it becomes essential for achieving success in political terms.

As seen from here, for the consolidation of democracy, all significant actors (especially the government and the state apparatus) should be held accountable to the rule of law. To achieve a representative democracy, it should become the ‘only game in the town’ by establishing a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives. So, none of the political groups could overthrow the

democratic regime. People should believe in the rules of democracy, and even in political and economic crises, they should believe that political change would occur within the democratic system. A consolidated democracy would have specific characteristics, such as a free and lively civil society and the rule of law. Also, there should be a relatively autonomous political society. For a liberal democracy, in addition to vertical accountability, there should exist horizontal accountability of officeholders to one another, which means that the executive power should be limited by the constitution and by the autonomous power of other government institutions. Secondly, there should not exist any tutelary powers, which means there should not be appointed officials that are not accountable to the elected ones. There should also exist pluralism, individual and group freedoms, freedom of conscience, the rule of law (constitutionality is the most important aspect), a free judiciary, and a constitution (Zakaria 1997; Diamond 1999; Coppedge et al. 2011).

However, in time, the definition of democracy has changed. For example, in his book *Politics*, Aristotle defined the basis of a democratic state as liberty. In this respect, until the third wave of democratization, which was coined by Huntington and started in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s, there were forty democracies worldwide. This third wave of democratization trend jumped from Southern Europe to military regimes of South America in the late 1970s and early 1980s and reached East, Southeast, and South Asia by the mid to late 1980s. The end of the 1980s also witnessed a surge of transitions from communist authoritarian rules in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and a trend toward democracy in Central America. Finally, the democratic trend spread to Africa in 1990, beginning in February of that year with the sovereign National Conference in Benin and the release of Nelson Mandela, and the unbanning of the African National Congress in South Africa. As a result of the spread of this trend, when the time came to the 1990s, the number of democracies increased to as many as 117 and as few as 76. With the increasing numbers of democracies, the scholarship introduced different methods to explain the democracies in the world. In this respect, since the defining attributes that one assigns started to affect the number of regimes counted as democratic.

2.1.2. Different Types of Democratic Regimes

As Collier and Levitsky (1997) stated, the third wave of democratization brought the challenge of dealing conceptually with a great diversity of post-authoritarian regimes. The characteristics of these new democracies differed from the advanced industrialized countries, and many could not be regarded as fully democratic. For these newly emerged democracies, new subtypes of democracy have emerged. To deal with these subtypes, specific strategies have been developed. In this respect, the first strategy belonged to Sartori. Sartori's strategy for achieving differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching is named the *ladder of generality*. The ladder of generality focused on the defining attributes and the cases in which they could be applied. So, if the defining attributes are few, they could be applied to more cases, and the ladder of generality would be high. However, Sartori's strategy was weak since it could not be applied to both of the goals at the same time. Another strategy for analytical differentiation and avoiding conceptual stretching was the creation of *diminished subtypes*. The diminished subtypes miss one or more of the attributes of democracy; the example for that would be 'tutelary democracy' or 'illiberal democracy.' Since the diminished subtypes have fewer attributes, they would increase the ladder of generality and, therefore, provide less differentiation. For example, the Polity2 Index defines the 20th century U.S. as fully democratic, though this would be possible if only one does not count women and blacks while defining democracy (Coppedge et al. 2011).

The third wave of democratization brought new democracies into the scene. These democracies meet the criteria of Robert Dahl's polyarchy though they could not be named representative democracies.¹⁷ Also, some presidential democracies with their tendency toward populist, plebiscitary, delegative characteristics, and together with a fixed term of office and a no-reelection rule that excludes accountability before the electorate, encourage non-constitutional or anti-constitutional behavior that threatens the rule of law (often democracy itself and undoubtedly democratic consolidation). O'Donnell (1994: 56) introduced the term delegative democracy, where he identified

¹⁷ By the polyarchy definition of Dahl, scholars came up with a 'procedural minimum' definition of democracy, which included four of the key attributes of Dahl's work: (1) free, fair, and competitive elections, (2) full adult suffrage, (3) broad protection of civil liberties, (4) the absence of nonelected 'tutelary' powers (Levitsky and Way 2010: 5-6).

such democracies as unconsolidated and not showing signs of ending up with the representative aspect of democracy. He suggests focusing on the long-term historical factors and the degree of seriousness of the socioeconomic problems that newly established democratic governments inherit rather than focusing on the characteristics of the previous authoritarian regime or the transition process (O'Donnell 1994: 55). In summary; he argues that in the functioning of contemporary, complex societies, democratic political institutions provide a crucial level of mediation and aggregation between, on one side, structural factors and, on the other, not only individuals but also the diverse groupings under which society organizes its multiple interests and identities. In his view, when compared with representative democracy, delegative democracies are more democratic but less liberal since they are strongly majoritarian (O'Donnell 1994: 60). Delegative democracy rests on the argument that the elected president, only by being restricted with a limited term in the office and with the reality of the existing power relations, has the right to rule the country according to his vision. Here, the president is being described as the pink of the nation, portrayed as the primary guardian and the definer of its interests (O'Donnell 1994: 60). In this regard, presidents present themselves by arguing that they are above the political parties and organized interests, saviors of the country (O'Donnell 1994: 65).

So, delegative democracies are unconsolidated democracies. They do not show any sign of autocratizing or becoming representative democracies. As explained earlier, presidents in delegative democracies have the right to rule the country according to their visualized best option. In this respect, there are strong executives and weak legislatures in such democracies. In delegative democracies, vertical accountability exists though horizontal accountability (a critical component of liberal democracies) does not. And vertical accountability is either too weak or absent regarding the majoritarian nature of the system. In delegative democracies, there is the madness of decision-making. Institutional democracies make decisions slowly though once the decision is made, it remains in power for a long time. However, this is not the case in delegative democracies. Besides decision-making madness, the decisions are less likely to be implemented. Another type of democracy could be named pseudo-democracy, which argues that some regimes would have certain features of electoral democracy as multiple parties though they would lack one of the key requirements to

be able to call a regime an ‘electoral democracy.’ Besides these types, also literature defines majoritarian democracy in which the idea is that the will of the majority should be sovereign. So, many should override the few. The essential characteristics of this type of democracy are plural rather than proportional electoral laws, unitary rather than the federal constitution, and solid and centralized parties. The literature also provides other conceptualizations of democracy as participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian in addition to the above-mentioned examples.

In recent years, with the rise of populist flow scholarship started to focus on the democratic backsliding, countries are experiencing. In this manner, they also focus on the rise of hybrid regimes. To understand what democratic backsliding literature is providing for the development taking place in today’s world and what this thesis is aiming to achieve, the next section will focus on the literature on democratic backsliding and how they conceptualized the reason(s) for such deficit that today’s democratic countries are experiencing.

2.1.3. Authoritarian Regimes

On the other end of the line, there exist authoritarian regimes. Linz’s definition could be regarded as the classical definition of authoritarian regimes since scholars widely accept it. In Linz’s (1964) definition, authoritarian regimes represent the power of a particular leader or a small group in a limited and nonresponsive way, which does not have a clearly defined ideology and lack of political mobilization. When it comes to the reason why authoritarian regimes took a glance in literature could be defined by the idea, which was coined after the end of the Cold War by Fukuyama (1989), of ‘the end of history.’ After the Soviet Union collapsed with Mikhail Gorbachev’s famous speech in 1988, which represented the last ideology standing in front of liberal democracy, history came to an end in which all of the countries’ ultimate end was going to be the embracement of democracy as their ideology. However, history has shown that it did not end yet. The regimes that flourished with the third wave of democratization adopted specific democratic values and preferred to combine them with autocracy rather than having a purified form of democracy (Karl 1995). As Freedom House reports show, each year in the last decade, history is experiencing a step forward in weakening democracy worldwide. The newly established regimes that combine democratic values with authoritarianism has named hybrid regimes by

the scholarship. To understand the rise of hybrid regimes, the thesis will also provide the literature on democratic backsliding.

2.1.4. Democratic Backsliding

Fukuyama's optimism, where he argued that the end of the Cold War brought an end to history, could not last very long. Today, alarm bells are ringing for democracies, where strong leaders are taking control of the system in their hands by eroding the liberal values, which is requested for the consolidated democracies in different places of the world (Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg 2017; Diamond 2008, 2015). Authoritarian or semi-authoritarian populist parties, with the appeal of their leaders, are threatening democratic values. In this regard, the democratic backsliding process is taking place to weaken democratic institutions to achieve a leader's personal and political goals (Schedler 2010; Bermeo 2016; Waldner and Lust 2018).

The scholarship defined the erosion in democracies in states where stable electoral politics was observed, such as Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Indonesia, India, and even for some observers, the US. This erosion has been named differently by scholars as a democratic recession (Diamond 2015), democratic disconnection (deconsolidation) (Foa and Mounk 2016), constitutional rot (Balkin 2018a, 2018b), and democratic backsliding (Bermeo 2016). The critical point of these examples resulted because they ended the third wave of the democratization process of the post-Cold War era by creating a new period of the autocratic reverse of the constitutional democracies (Haggard and Kaufman 2016; Lührmann and Lindberg 2019; Foa and Mounk 2022).

The literature overshot the characteristics of late-comers to democracy.¹⁸ Huq and Ginsburg (2018) pointed out that hybrid regimes and pseudo-democracies became more salient compared to autocracies from the 1980s onward. The most crucial aspect of such regimes is their ability to use constitutional structure in favor of their rule. The institutions, especially the electoral ones, became an essential apparatus to hide the autocratic nature of the rule. Levitsky and Way (2010: 3) also mentioned that the transition process at the end of the Cold War era did not always happen

¹⁸ This thesis includes the second wave of democracy while explaining this part since Turkey belongs to this group and is still grasped by an autocrat in the last decade, where the system is going toward an example of an autocratic regime day by day.

toward democracy. New regimes in much of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and former Soviet Union countries, including Eastern Europe, combined electoral competition with varying degrees of autocracy.

Here, citizens' conceptualization of democracy also become an important indicator to understand what this thesis is contributing to the literature on democratic backsliding. As Çınar and Bülbül (2022: 470) stated, the perception of people toward democracy varies, and this has an essential effect on how they politically behave.¹⁹ The authoritarian conceptualization of democracy, in this sense, considers the existence of different perceptions. So, the people living in younger democracies define democracy differently from the advanced Western democracies. Bermeo (2016: 5) argued that democratic backsliding is constantly used but rarely analyzed. The post-Communist world brought hope for democracy, but post-authoritarian states did not last with the flourishing of democracy in its liberal sense. In its basic form, the term democratic backsliding refers to “state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy” (Bermeo 2016: 5). As Levitsky and Way (2010: 5) mentioned, by observing the rise of hybrid regimes in the post-Cold War era, in addition to essential attributes of a democracy introduced by Dahl, there needs to be a level playing field between incumbents and opposition. The fundamental deficit of competitive authoritarian regimes is the uneven playing ground for oppositional forces where the incumbent abuses the state power.

Bermeo (2016) also mentions three varieties of backsliding in today's world; two have a significant weight in the scholarship while explaining what is happening in Hungary and Turkey. *Executive aggrandizement*, one of these two varieties, is regarded as a common form of backsliding where elected executives weaken the checks and balances system by remodeling the institutional structure in favor of its power against the opposition forces. In this manner, legal channels are used as constitutional assemblies or referenda to achieve these institutional arrangements.²⁰ Change is being framed through the vote of the people or a legal decree of a freely

¹⁹ The importance of people's perceptions will be revisited in the chapter on culture.

²⁰ Also, the executive would use existing courts or legislatures if he obtains majority control of the body.

elected official, and this provides an opportunity to declare the result as a democratic mandate by the executive (Bermeo 2016: 11). *Manipulating elections strategically*, the other one of the two varieties, is commonly followed with executive aggrandizement, is providing an unfair opportunity to incumbent party. Through the limitation of media access, using the state resources for the incumbent's campaign, distancing opposition candidates off the ballot, changing electoral rules in favor of incumbents, limiting voter registration, packing electoral commissions, and posing harassment toward opponents; the elections are being manipulated in favor of incumbent (Bermeo 2016: 13).²¹ The most important aspect of such action is that they are done in a certain way where they are not sound as having fraud in elections.

The rise of hybrid regimes could be regarded as the best way to observe democratic backsliding in the countries. For this thesis, competitive authoritarianism and illiberal democracy will be explained.²² Hybrid regimes in the post-Cold War era followed different trajectories where some managed to democratize, but most did not. Competitive authoritarianism could be regarded as one of the essential types of hybrid regimes since the number of countries falling into that trap and not being able to democratize then on is high. Levitsky and Way, while writing their books in 2010, counted 35 competitive authoritarian regimes in the 1990-95 period, where only fifteen of them democratized but the rest drafted into different phases of autocratization (Levitsky and Way 2020: 51). Also, while some of the countries managed to democratize, some other drafted into hybrid regimes in time. In this regard, they counted 32 competitive authoritarian regimes worldwide in 2019 (Levitsky and Way 2020: 52).

Multi-party elections spread worldwide following the end of the Cold War but did not bring favorable conditions for democracy. The conditions of the class structure, civil society, and state's role were not corresponding to a healthy democracy in these cases though the external pressure brought the elites of the given countries to allow a certain degree of pluralism and electoral competition (Levitsky and Way 2020: 52).

²¹ This corresponds to elections in competitive authoritarian regimes.

²² Literature regarded Hungary as an example of illiberal democracy after Orbán's famous speech, though in time, the scholarship positioned it as an example of competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2020: 51).

In this regard, defective democracy, which coined by Merkel (2004), represents a regime type in which free and fair elections are being held, could be regarded as the minimum requirement to call a regime democratic, though lacks horizontal accountability, political participation, and civil rights. Another approach first defines democracy in its minimal term as electoral democracy and then provides liberal democracies as representing the perfected subtype (Diamond 2002).²³ The idea of defective democracy evolved into the concept of ‘electoral autocracy’ in time (Levitsky and Way 2010, 2002; Schedler 2002, 2006, 2013). Electoral autocracies hold multiparty elections for both executive and legislative branches though they lack competition in the real meaning. As seen above, more than one definition exists for hybrid regimes.

Competitive authoritarianism as a hybrid regime type flourished with these developments. Most importantly, it should be distinguished from democracy and full-scale authoritarian regimes. The main characteristic of such a regime is that the elections take place regularly and are generally free from massive fraud. The post-Cold War era taught autocratic leaders that the international community was focused on the election, which brought room for maneuvering where governments realized that they did not need to democratize at all to maintain in the international arena (Levitsky and Way 2010: 19). Still, the competition is not equal between the ruling cadre and the opposition; the incumbents routinely abuse state resources, deny the opposition media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters, and in some cases manipulate the election results (B. Esen and Gumuscu 2016: 1582). The uneven playing ground limits the opposition in such a like game. Characteristically, critical media (specifically journalists), opposition politicians, and other government criticisms may be spied on, threatened, or arrested. In this regard, the opposition forces are regularly challenged in different arenas. Firstly, elections are being unfair and civil liberties are being violated. In addition, the state institutions are widely politicized where deployed by the incumbent, creating an unequal footing for the opposition’s ability to compete. For example, the government subordinate’s judiciary

²³Diamond (2002), Levitsky and Way (2002), and Schedler (2002) in their articles define hybrid regimes by the idea of ‘elections without democracy.’ In recent years, more countries started to adopt electoral democracy in which there exist regular, competitive, and multiparty elections though it lacks core elements of liberalism, which makes democracy as it should be in European terms.

through bribery. Besides these, uneven media access could be observed, where state-owned media is the primary source of news for much of the population and biased in favor of the incumbent, or a significant share of the private media is incumbent-friendly. The existence of independent media means it would be influential on society, and specific oppositional figures would rise among journalists as an example for the minds who do not have the mindset of the incumbent. So, in such regimes, the government acts toward suppressing independent media, putting harsh sanctions on the oppositional media outlets. Creating government-friendly media helps them control the news that citizens will have an access. In the bigger picture, this also harms the rights of citizens, where they need to have the freedom of access to information and freedom of expression in a democratic setting. Lastly, the uneven access to resources blocks the opposition's ability to compete in the same line with the incumbent.²⁴

Illiberal democracy is another example of a hybrid regime used to describe Hungary in its early democratic backsliding process. Liberal democracy, which means not only free and fair elections but also the rule of law, separation of powers, and the protection of fundamental rights, represented the Western world for more than a century. As mentioned above, since ancient Greece, democracy has been attached to the idea of 'rule by the people.' In time, democracy flourished all over the world, but the countries did not adopt constitutional liberalism next to democracy, which could be regarded as the main problem in political terms the world is face today. Zakaria (1997) in his paper, states that countries should provide certain social, political, economic, and religious rights to their citizens to be able to go beyond the ancient Greek definition of democracy. Countries, which provide these rights to their citizens, could be called liberal democracies since they do not only have democracy but also liberalism and constitutionalism through emphasizing individual liberty and the rule of law. Liberal democracies have been established to secure the fundamental rights of the citizens, which are freedom of life and freedom of conscience. Constitutional liberalism introduced a checks and balances system between the executive, legislative, and judiciary to secure these rights. As Zakaria (1997) put it forward, advanced industrial countries are being separated from the rest of the world

²⁴ These points are taken from Levitsky and Way's (2010) *Appendix I: Measuring Competitive Authoritarianism and Authoritarian Stability*.

since they have constitutional liberalism rather than only having democracies.²⁵ In the equilibrium between democracy and constitutional liberalism, constitutional liberalism brings democracy though democracy does not bring constitutional liberalism in all cases. Regarding this statement, countries democratized with the third wave of democratization became democracies, but in the end, they did not adopt constitutional liberalism. When it comes to the difference between democracy and liberalism, as Plattner states (2019: 7) “democracy answers the question of ‘who rules,’ whereas liberalism answers the question of ‘what the limits to their power are once they are in office?’”

As could be seen above, populist politics played an essential role in democratic backsliding literature as an outcome of globalization and also the existence of liberal democratic values.²⁶ Economic inequality has been regarded as a driving force of populist politics (Piketty 2020: 39; Rodrik 2018: 23; Stiglitz 2019: 27-30, 55-56).²⁷ In addition to economic inequality, at the macro level, explanations such as collusive agreement among political and economic elites (Mayer 2016), executive aggrandizement (Bermeo 2016), weakness of government (Gibson 2013; Giraudy, Moncada, and Snyder 2019), and effect of international organizations (Meyerrose 2020) are used to describe the reasons behind democratic backsliding. The micro-level explanations focus on citizen behaviors, including ideological polarization, which is an essential weapon of the populist discourse of strong leaders to gain and maintain power (Svolik 2020; McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018; McCoy and Somer 2019; Haggard and Kaufman 2021).²⁸

As discussed above, the scholarship provides different explanations for democratic backsliding in countries. Besides political and economic explanations; focusing on the relationship between populism and democratic backsliding and economic

²⁵ Zakaria here mentions the countries in the West and the U.S.

²⁶ Populism will be explained in length in upcoming pages, but when one looks at the populist flow in the European context, right-wing populism is reacting to migration flow, whereas left-wing populism is reacting to financial shocks.

²⁷ Recently scholarship also focused on the ‘economic unfairness’ of the system to describe the rise of populist discourse (Protzer and Summerville 2022: 3).

²⁸ The ideological polarization brings the importance of identity politics. People need to develop relationships with others since they are regarded as social species. The partisan identity has a similar background; therefore, scholars of polarization see partisanship as an example of social identity (L. Mason 2015).

inequality and unfairness; there also exists institutional explanations. The institutional explanations focus on the checks and balances system, electoral system, and the power of the institutions in given contexts. The checks and balances system on the executive is essential, especially for young democracies (Kapstein and Converse 2008). In such regimes, by having the majority of the seats in the government, executives are much more likely to degrade democracy. In such examples, one would observe a weak checks and balances system. This weakness also brings the weakness of institutions. Besides that, the electoral system is a crucial component of democratic regimes since it designates the inclusiveness level of parties and marginalized groups (Reynolds 2011).

2.2.Populism

2.2.1. Historical Evaluation of Populism as a Concept

We are witnessing a populist flow, which is being shaped by the people's anger toward the ones holding power in their hands. In this regard, the ones pointed as the reasons for today's problems range from bankers on Wall Street to the bureaucrats in Brussels and politicians who hold power in their hands (Moffitt 2016). While populism is gaining more and more importance, the literature could not agree on how to define it, and even in which domain, whether political, social, economic, or discursive, it should be positioned is not certain (Weyland 2001). Populism could be regarded as a buzzword since, as stated above, its usage is frequent in the scholarship though a particular and unified definition does not exist. Scholars studying different countries are naming the political leaders, political parties, and even the country's political setting as populist. However, one could not see a commonality among these leaders, parties, and political settings when examining the cases. Considering these issues, this section is designed to provide when and how the concept had raised as a study topic in the literature, which cycles it passed, and its position in today's scholarship. While providing the points mentioned above, it should not be forgotten that the history of conceptualizing the term was shaped by disagreement. Defining populism could not be regarded as an easy task considering this clash.

The scholarship agrees that historically, populism as a concept entered into the literature as a result of the political movements both in the US, which is referred to

as the establishment of *People's Party*, and Russia, which is referred to as *Narodsnichestvo*, in the 19th century (Allcock 1971; Mudde 2004; Müller 2016; Moffitt 2016; Kaltwasser et al. 2017).²⁹ Since the literature focused on these two historical phenomena, populism remained a matter of historians rather than political scientists or sociologists until the mid-1950s (Houwen 2013). Furthermore, since both were concerned with farmers and peasants, populism as a concept associated with agrarianism argued that an economically backward group revolted against the rapidly modernizing society. As can be seen from here, populism since then brought the idea of including the excluded ones into the political system.

Modern scholarship on populism developed in the mid-20th century. In this regard, Shils (1956) and Dahl (1956) could be marked as the scholars who used the concept in its current terms for the first time. Their studies were followed by Kornhauser (1959), Lipset (1960), and Germani's (1978) works. 1968 could be marked as an important year for the conceptualization of populism since Ionescu and Gellner organized a conference at the London School of Economics and Political Science, which provided an arena for scholars to switch their ideas on populism. At the end of the conference, Ionescu and Gellner's (1969) edited volume *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* was published.³⁰ Since this edited volume brought different disciplines into the same pot, it could not trace back the ownership of the concept by political science to that period. In this regard, Margaret Canovan's (1981) work, *Populism*, could be marked as an essential step for conceptualizing populism in political science.

²⁹ *People's Party* had established in 1862 due to a political movement that had struggled for political rights in the name of democracy. It had been established as a reaction to the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, which could not represent farmers and workers. People, who are members of the *People's Party*, had used populism to describe their political position. The party stood against the establishment of the railroads and banks and the politicians in Washington (Kaltwasser et al., 2017: 3).

Narodsnichestvo referred to a Russian movement called 'Narodniki,' referring to 'going to people.' This political movement arose in the 1860s and 1870s to force the countryside riots to overthrow the Tsarist regime. However, it could not be successful. Historically, populism referred to people regarded as good and the elites as bad and as the reason for poverty.

³⁰ The scholars, who participated in the conference, came from different disciplines, and therefore, the edited volume provided different points of view on the conceptualization of populism. This edited volume remained a significant work on populism, which provides a road map for the literature on approaching populism as a concept.

The first initial of defining populism, besides the political movements that took place in the US and Russia, came in the 1950s during the rise of McCarthyism in the US, and it continued till the end of the heydays of Latin American populism, which had lasted from 1930s to 1960s (Moffitt 2016). From the 1960s to the 1980s, the cumulative strategy was adopted by the literature while defining populism as a concept.³¹ Primarily, regarding Latin American politics in those days, the scholars focused on the development and underdevelopment theories such as modernization and dependency theories (Weyland 2001). Scholars, who embraced modernization theory, argued that the rapid advance of urbanization, industrialization, and education opened the way for exploiting mass participation, which undermined the traditional political authority (Kuznets 1955; D. Lerner 1958; Lipset 1959; Feldman and Hurn 1966; Smith and Inkeles 1966; Inkeles 1969; Rostow 1963, 1971, 1990; Przeworski and Limongi 1997). This ended up with the restriction of establishing institutionalized new regimes and resulted in the establishment of unstable regimes, and one of these unstable regimes was populism. Scholars, who embraced the dependency theory, argued that the center-periphery world order and economic and social distortion brought an obstacle to the rise of a hegemonic class capable of establishing a stable regime (Prebisch 1968; Santos 1970; Haq 1976; Frank 1978; Love 1980; Ferraro 2008). However, both of the theories were discredited in time. The primary failure of modernization theory resulted from being a Western model, which made it far from universal. Especially the expected results could not be produced in Third World countries. The poverty gap between the richest and poorest, remained in most of the world's population (Nabudere 1997: 203-204). The most critical failure of dependency theory was applied to less developed countries by arguing that they were poor since they were dependent. In this regard, Lall (1975: 809) argued that the theory took certain features of a broad phenomenon of international capitalist development. So, the theory would be applied to particular cases but was not providing a generalized understanding of the effect of dependence on development.³²

³¹ The cumulative strategy aimed at bringing attributes from different domains, which various scholars proposed, together to define a country/leader/party/political system as populist or not.

³² An example of this would be Ahiakpor (1985)'s study, where he explains the failure of dependency theory by studying Ghana.

Following these developments, populism experienced a revival in the 1980s and 1990s. As Mudde (2004) put it forward, with the rise of so-called 'populist parties,' more books, articles, and columns started to focus on populism. The revival of populism in the 1980s and 1990s happened in a new socio-economic setting, which brought personalistic leaders into the scene with the support of an unorganized mass of followers. This new type of populism was not representing the classical populist policies at all, which ended up with a conceptual challenge for the scholarship. The new leader's appeal did not correspond to the definition of populism, which was brought to literature through cumulative strategy. In this regard, new populist leaders did not correspond to all of the attributes introduced by the cumulative strategy. As a result, the attributes of populism were diminished, and scholars needed to find a way to define who would be regarded as an example of a populist leader and who would not.³³ Literature attempted to define populism as a radical concept regarding all of these developments. Roberts (1995: 88), in his study, came up with five features, which were the existence of "a personalistic and paternalistic leadership, a heterogeneous and multiclass political coalition, a top-down process of political mobilization that bypasses institutionalized forms of mediation or subordinates them to a more direct linkage between the leader and the masses, an amorphous or eclectic ideology, an economic project that utilizes widespread redistributive or clientelistic methods."³⁴ Following all of these developments in the mid-1990s, populism gained a new meaning for scholars since they were seeking to make sense of the rise of 'new populism' in Western Europe and 'neopopulism' in Latin American countries.³⁵

As stated at the beginning of this section, the literature on populism was shaped by disagreement. As seen above, this disagreement in the literature rose because there were no single way to study populism. Here, the question of how one should take populism into account comes into the light one more time. Should it be described as an ideology, a political movement, or a political style? To sum up what this section

³³ During this time, not only populism but also democracy needed to be redefined by taking political-institutional characteristics at the center. So, scholars focused on authoritarian regimes to agree on a minimal and procedural definition of democracy. As seen from here, cumulative strategy lost its spark as a whole, which opened the way for redefining attempts at central social science notions.

³⁴ Scholars described leaders/parties/political systems with all five features as examples of full populism. Leaders/parties/political systems with some of the features present but not others are regarded under the diminished subtypes of populism.

³⁵ Neopopulist leaders melt populism in the same pot as neoliberal policies.

has provided, one could state that populism had been raised as a historical phenomenon but spread to Latin American politics in time, which helped the concept to acknowledge a transformation in its defining future. With Latin American populism, charismatic leadership, mass support of the people, and nationalism became essential elements of populist politics. Also, populist politics in Latin American countries, such as Peron in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil in the 1940s and 1950s, brought authoritarian regimes into the region. While populism brought authoritarian regimes to Latin America, it took the shape of right-wing reactionary politics in Western Europe (Taggart 2002).

2.2.2. Defining Populism

In the previous section, it was mentioned that “since populism cannot claim a defining text or proto-typical case, academics and journalists use the term to denote very diverse phenomena” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 2). Scholars take different approaches while defining populism and populist politics worldwide. The first of these approaches could be named the *agency approach*, which describes populism as a force that helps to mobilize unorganized masses, which helps to open the way for democratic life.³⁶ This approach is generally used by historians in the US and writers focusing on North American populism. The second approach could be named as *discursive approach*, whose leading figures are Ernesto Laclau (2005) and Mouffe (2005). Scholars, who use this approach, argue that populism could not be regarded as an ideology but as a ‘discursive framing strategy’ (Bonikowski 2016: 14). This approach takes discourse as its unit of analysis. In this regard, it includes words, expressions, and speeches. The discursive approach defines populism as a division between the political society as the people on one hand and the elite on the other (de la Torre 2000; Panizza 2005; Aslanidis 2016). In this regard, populists are represented as the ones who understand the needs of the people and could be regarded as the best candidate to be selected when compared with the establishment. This approach dominated the critical studies in political philosophy and the studies of Latin American and Western European politics. The third approach could be named the *strategic approach*. The leading figures of this approach are Kurt Weyland

³⁶ Here, democratic life resonates with the communitarian model of democracy.

(1999, 2001, 2017), Robert Barr (2009), Kenneth M. Roberts (2006), and Nadia Urbinati (2019b). This approach regarded populism as a strategy that aims to achieve political power. The scholars who adopted this approach take party structures, policy preferences, and types of mobilization as their unit of analysis. In this respect, populism is defined as a political strategy (Weyland 2017), a mechanism for re-institutionalize politics (Barr 2009).³⁷ And it also defined as a political mass movement (Roberts 2006).³⁸ Lastly, the scholarship provided an *ideational approach* to define populism. As seen above, there is no single definition of populism in scholarship, although definitions share some common aspects. The leading scholars of this approach could be listed as Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) and Ben Stanley (2008), who defined populism as a thin-centered ideology.³⁹

Until this point, through giving a historical evaluation of the conceptualization of populism and the different approaches scholars used to describe populist politics in different political settings, the thesis has achieved a point where it would define populism in line with its argument. Before coming up with a definition of populism, one should remember that world is witnessing a populist flow, as scholars named this flow in different concepts as a ‘populist Zeitgeist’ (Mudde 2004), ‘age of populism’ (Krastev 2007), and ‘populist revival’ (Roberts 2007). In different continents, with different attributes, leaders and political parties are being labeled as examples of populism. As Müller (2015: 80) put it forward, “Donald Trump is seen as a populist, whereas Bernie Sanders is not and Syriza as sometimes.” Regarding all of these, it could be stated that defining a leader, a party, or a political setting as an example of populism is becoming more difficult since the question of “which attributes they should have?” becomes blurrier as the examples increase all over the world. Scholarship focuses on the differences between various examples of populism in the literature (Weyland 2001; Stanley 2008; Moffitt and Tormey 2014; Aslanidis 2016; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). First of all, to understand today’s flow of populism, one should distinguish it from its past since political and media communications

³⁷ In this point of view, populism is seen as a tool for bringing vertical accountability of a person with vertical ties before the horizontal accountability of the institutional framework.

³⁸ In this point of view, the unorganized masses are being regarded as mobilized by a ‘personalistic leader’ to challenge the establishment (in this circumstance, the elite).

³⁹ Cas Mudde could be regarded as the pioneer of this approach.

have changed rapidly meanwhile (Moffitt 2016). However, populism remained its core premise, which is still the fight between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite.’

One would see a certain number of definitions of populism when looking at the literature. In this regard, one widely accepted definition belongs to Cas Mudde. In Mudde’s words (2004: 543), “populism is an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” As seen from this definition, populists became the ‘voice of the people and their opinions,’ which the establishment has systematically ignored. So, populism refers to the power that rests in the hands of the ‘ordinary people’ but not the elites. So, one of the main features of populism is that both the populist leaders and the populist parties represent the ‘ordinary people.’ In this regard, they have an anti-elitist standing, which means they are critical of the elites. As seen from here and from the historical evaluation of populism section, ‘the people’ stands as one of the core assumptions of populism. Literature provides different definitions to describe ‘the people,’ which puts the assumption that ‘people are the true sovereign’ in the first place, as the silent majority⁴⁰ and the ones who identify themselves with a heartland.⁴¹ The people are a wide-ranging group affected by the problems created by the corrupted elites.

Populist leaders and populist parties also represent themselves as the only ones representing the people; literature names this as ‘anti-pluralist standing’ (Müller 2016; Aydın-Düzgit and Keyman 2017). The populist rhetoric brings forward two claims on how societies should be governed. On the one hand, populism could be regarded as a challenge to legitimate authority of the ‘establishment,’ which is the

⁴⁰ Richard Nixon, the then President of the US, called for the American people’s support in a televised address where he represented them as the ‘silent majority.’ Richard Nixon’s full speech is as follows: “So, tonight to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans, I ask for your support; I pledged in my campaign for the Presidency to end the war in a way that we could win the peace” (A.H. TV 2019)

⁴¹ The literature focuses on how to define ‘the people’ since the concept is too broad; it has different meanings in different settings of populist politics (Canovan 1984). For this reason, Taggart (2002) argues that people are produced due to the idea of a heartland. Taggart (2002: 95) defines the people as those who share a common notion of a heartland “where the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides.” Taggart’s definition of people helps us realize that the people in the populist discourse are “imagined,” referring to Benedict Anderson’s work *Imagined Communities* (2006).

elites in this circumstance. In this regard, populism questions the power and authority within the state, even the elected representatives. On the other hand, the populists claim that the ‘people’ are the ones in a democracy which could be regarded as the legitimate political authority. Many scholars describe populism as a Manichean worldview where the society is divided into two camps as the ‘good people’ and the ‘corrupted elites (Mudde 2004: 544; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014: 379-380).⁴² In the Manichean worldview, there do not exist grey zones; everything is crystal clear as black or white. So, in the populist discourse, one belongs to the ‘pure’ people or the ‘corrupted’ elites. One is either supporting the will of the people or the establishment. Here the will of the people corresponds to Rousseau’s general will, which argues that the ordinary people are the ‘true sovereign’ who will gather around their collective interest at a point, and because of this, the government should be shaped in a way which would serve for this collective interest. In a broader way to serve the will of the people.

Similar to Mudde’s definition, by using the ideational approach, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017: 6) defines populism as a thin-centered ideology, which refers to its ability to be combined with other ideologies such as “communism, nationalism, socialism, and ecologism” (Mudde 2004). One of the examples of this could be the neopopulism definitions that existed in the literature to define Latin American populism. Populist actors and populist discourse had combined neoliberal policies, which could be regarded as an ideology, with populism to develop a solution for the problems that the people had faced. Compared to the ideational approach, the problem with the discursive and ideology-centered definitions is two-fold: on the one hand, these definitions comprise cases that should not be classified as populist at all; and on the other, they assert that ordinary people will be empowered in populist discourse though, in reality, a particular person, the leader is being empowered.

As explained in this chapter, scholars with the rise of populist examples in different places of the world devoted their time to defining populism. Regarding this attempt, they adopted different strategies for conceptualizing the term. Different from his previous examples, Weyland (2001: 14) describes political strategy as the best way

⁴²In this regard, populism creates a narrative of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ Furthermore, while defining us, they exclude certain groups of people in society.

to conceptualize populism in which “a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers.” So, for populism, the type of political actor, who will be the ruler, is essential. Traditionally, the type of political actor would vary between a personalistic leadership, an organized political party, or a military organization. Furthermore, in modern democracies, the kind of ruler is decided by free and fair elections, in which the voters select among the well-organized political parties. However, as nowadays has shown for the populist discourse, there needs to be a rise of a particular person as the leader, who would claim that he will be the voice of the ordinary people in the political scene as an opposition to the established power of elites.

After providing an insight into the literature on populism, this thesis will use Mudde and Kaltwasser’s (2017) definition of populism while studying the transformation of the regimes in Turkey and Hungary towards a more authoritarian tone. In this regard, the political culture, the party organization, the leader’s role, and the presidentialization of the internal party structure will be examined. As Weyland (2001) put it forward, populism could be regarded as a political strategy though it could not be linked only to the leader but also to the organizational structure of the ruling party. So, this thesis will take populism as a fight between the pure people, who have been excluded from the political system for a long time, and corrupted elites, who have the power in their hands and rule the country regarding their desires by not giving any importance to what the people wanted at all.

2.2.3. Populism and Democracy

The previous sections of this chapter provided insight into populism and the importance of leadership in such a regime. As mentioned above, the re-emergence of populism in the 1990s, both in Europe and Latin America, nurtured the literature on populism, and lots of works started to focus on the relationship between populism and democracy. Regarding the relationship between populism and democracy, we should first understand the popularity of populism in today’s world. As Urbinati (2019a: 1) put it forward, "populist movements had appeared in almost every democracy from Caracas to Budapest, from Washington to Rome." Especially in the

last two decades, populists claimed they came to power as the people's representative, seeking to bring popular sovereignty and democracy back into town (Moffitt 2016). Many scholars argued that populism rose due to crises or discontentment (Taggart 2004; Rooduijn 2014; Spruyt, Keppens, and Van Droogenbroeck 2016). Regarding the crisis of modern politics, populism has been raised as "an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism in a world dominated by democracy and liberalism" (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 116).

Explaining the relationship between democracy and populism is a complex issue since both evoke the idea of popular sovereignty with equality. Populism, in addition to this, as Pappas (2021e) puts it forward, could be regarded as a novel political system that finds a voice where the existing system undergoes a political crisis and a leader with a political party comes into the picture as the savior of the people from the political deadlock, who does not give importance to liberal norms at all. In this respect, populism seeks to correspond to the desires of the pure people without considering constitutional legitimacy, the established procedural rules, the idea of consensus, and the norms of deliberation. In this sense, populism uses electoral politics of democracy with disregarding the established liberal institutions so that it could be defined as a 'democratic illiberalism' (Pappas 2016, 2019, 2021c).

The idea in the populist discourse is taking people as the sole legitimate sovereign and politics as the tool for expressing the general will (in this circumstance, the popular will). Regarding this point of view, populists accuse the country's ruling elites of failing to correspond to the people's interests. In this sense, they insist on bringing popular power into the practice and consolidating its importance (Canovan 2005). Here, populists are the correctors of democracy (Kaltwasser 2012). The metaphor of a drunken guest at dinner by Arditì (2007) explains this corrective role of populism splendidly. In Arditì's (2007: 78) words, "we can think of the discomfort caused by a guest who has had a drink too many. He can disrupt table manners and the unspoken rules of sociability by speaking loudly, interrupting the conversations of others, and perhaps flirting with them beyond what passes for acceptable cheekiness." As seen from this example, populists act as the breakers of taboos and established rules of communication by not hesitating to speak out loud the unpleasant

truths, which results in an unwelcoming attitude from the establishment (Castiglione and Pollak 2019).

The scholarship uses different approaches to define the relationship between populism and democracy. The first approach is the liberal approach, which seeks to find an answer to why in some countries, populist features are developing at a certain point in time. This approach does not take populism only as a movement or a party but as an output of socioeconomic changes (marked as a crisis in the above paragraph) as modernization, economic transformation, or even migration.⁴³ The voters' preferences would change with these developments, and they would prefer to follow the populist discourse, which prioritizes the popular sovereignty and interests of the people. In this respect, populism is being named a corrective of democratic rule, which is not functioning correctly (Hayward 1996; Taggart 2002; Kaltwasser 2012). Populism could be regarded as a reaction to representative politics. Representative politics gather around the idea of a vertical axis in which the demos are linked to the political elite (Taggart 2002).⁴⁴ In this respect, it focuses on the institutions of representation as elections and designing futures of associational politics as political parties. In addition to these, it also focuses on elite actions designed to secure the demos' support. As stated above, populism rises as a reaction to representative democracy since representative politics with liberal democracy would not always function well. It could be stated that when the link between the demos and the elites fails, it is most likely that populism will flourish in such a political setting.

Contrary to the liberal approach, a group of scholars argues that populism is an essential element of democracy, which the literature calls the 'radical approach' (Tännsjö 1992; Canovan 1999; Krastev 2007). Canovan (1999), in her study, proposes two faces of democracy, which are redemptive and pragmatic. The

⁴³ The effect of socioeconomic changes is being deeply studied under this chapter's 'Populism and Globalization' section.

⁴⁴ Here, we should not forget that constitutionalism does not equate with representative democracy. However, it could be stated that constitutional politics, because of its judiciary features, set the rules for the game in representative democracy. For example, constitutional politics design the electoral system and the relation between the center and periphery.

redemptive face of democracy refers to salvation by arguing that politics and popular sovereignty are the only legitimate power source. In contrast, the pragmatic face of democracy refers to the existence of institutions and a way of dealing with the problems of modern societies. Respectively, every democracy confronts these two faces, which revives the populist mobilization.

Lastly, the scholarship adopted the 'minimalist approach' while defining the relationship between populism and democracy. This approach prefers to propose a minimal definition of populism, which would gather different cases in the same pot. The relationship between populism and democracy for this approach could be described as an incident that depends on each case. In this regard, the minimalist approach, different from the previous two approaches⁴⁵, clearly defines populism as either a political strategy or an ideology, which has the advantage of analyzing the relationship of populism with democracy. In this respect, this approach analysis the minimal definition of populism's impact on different democratic settings.

As is seen above, the scholarship provides different approaches to studying the relationship between populism and democracy. On the one hand, some scholars argue that populism could not be regarded as a threat to democracy since it does not represent an ideology as is the case in socialism or liberalism (Tännsjö 1992; Krastev 2007), whereas some others argue that populism is one of the main threats for liberal democracy in nowadays (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012; Finchelstein and Urbinati 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Regarding the two cases that will be analyzed in the upcoming pages, this thesis will follow the latter argument on the relationship between populism and democracy. In this respect, the relationship of populism on democratic backsliding should be studied, and therefore, the next section is reserved to evaluate the literature on the relationship between populism and democratic backsliding.

⁴⁵ As seen above, in the liberal approach, *populism* defined as a 'pathology' of democracy, and in the 'radical approach, ' populism described as the 'purest form of democracy' (Kaltwasser 2012).

2.2.4. Populism and Democratic Backsliding

Nowadays, we are face to face with a global decline in democracy. In this regard, not only electoral democracies but even the most consolidated ones are faced with a threat of democratic backsliding, as the report of Freedom House (2021) shows that global freedom has been in decline since 2006, which is leading to democratic backsliding. Especially with the election of Donald Trump and the vote for Brexit in the UK, even the most established liberal democracies started to show democratic erosion. In traditional terms, democratic breakdowns were occurring due to specific events such as military coups and mass protests rapidly towards a change in the regime type. However, we are witnessing democratic backsliding gradually rather than rapidly breakdown the system. In this section, first of all, the focus will be given on *how* democracies break down rather than *why* they break down. Since this thesis focuses on the point that the democratic backsliding in a given country begins in the smaller units as family and as the organization of the party structure, which is in power, it also focuses on voters' preferences. This thesis will go in hand with Bermeo's (2016) argument on democratic backsliding. As explained earlier, she argues that the political science literature gave a tremendous amount of time to explain the democratic backsliding in the world by looking at economic and institutional correlates rather than voters' preferences. As Lust and Waldner (2015; 2018) stated, even democratic backsliding has consequences for many people worldwide; still, the understanding of the concept and its contribution is limited.

In its minimal terms, democratic backsliding could be defined as "state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy" (Bermeo 2016: 5). In this regard, since many political institutions maintain democracy, democratic backsliding refers to more than one continuum. So, democratic backsliding relates to more than one actor within the system, which is why it relates to more than one agent. To avoid confusion, the concept needs to be specified while being explained. As Lust and Waldner (2015) refer, democratic backsliding would not be attached directly to democratic breakdown. Though it is evident that democratic backsliding weakens the relationship of citizens with the state and harms their rights, from another perspective, democratic backsliding would be defined as the decline in the quality of democracy. All of the definitions in the

literature agree that democratic backsliding would not occur only in democratic regimes but also in autocratic ones because the definition of democracy changes according to the concepts one adds to it. In this regard, democratic backsliding in democratic regimes occurs as a decline in the quality of democracy, whereas in autocratic regimes, it occurs as a decline in democratic qualities of governance (Waldner and Lust 2018: 95).

As explained in the above section, calling a system a democracy should provide certain conditions. In this regard, first of all, the executive and legislative offices should be elected through free and fair elections in which multiple parties compete for the office; secondly, the rights and freedoms of citizens should be guaranteed; and thirdly, as Madison stated in Federalist Paper No.51 since men are not angels, there should exist a control mechanism on governments, which provides the accountability. Regarding these facts, democratic backsliding could be defined as a process in which the change within the system affects elections, rights and freedoms, and accountability negatively (Lust and Waldner 2015). However, it should not be forgotten that democratic backsliding is not being taken as a process that undermines the election process, rights and freedoms, and accountability. It is a process in which degradation occurs in the quality of the democracy in the system. As Mickey, Levitsky, and Way (2017: 21) argued, democratic backsliding nowadays occurs with “a series of little-notices, incremental steps, most of which are legal and many appear innocuous.” In this regard, to call a system experiencing democratic backsliding, harm should exist towards one of the three arenas explained above.

In a representative democracy, representatives are required to behave equally in political terms to all members of the society. Here, the idea is that the representatives are also the citizens of the society, which means that they are also equal to others, and therefore, there occurs a horizontal relationship between the representatives and voters. This horizontal relationship is equalized with the ‘mechanism of authorization,’ which helps develop a vertical relationship between the representatives and the voters (Castiglione and Pollak 2019). Through elections, the voters transfer their rights to the representatives surrounded by decision-making power. In this respect, the power of the representatives needs to be limited. If there is no limitation, then the representatives would act according to their desires, which

would not correspond with the desires and interests of the voters. To overcome this Hobbesian problem, the representatives need to be accountable to the citizens.⁴⁶ Populists reverse representation by revealing the shortcomings of the existing rule, as is the case in the drunken guest. Populists, by revealing the establishment's shortcomings, argue that the existing problems of the system would be changed, and the power could be given to people again. While developing this argument, populist leaders built horizontal relations with the people by prioritizing popular sovereignty. In addition to that, they also insist on their leadership. In this respect, populist leaders claim that they are on the one side, one of the people, and on the other side, the leader of the people, which is named as a twist of representation (Castiglione and Pollak 2019).

Considering this twist of representation and the idea of the rise of a personalistic leader in the political strategy approach towards populism, personalistic leadership in populist settings paves the way for democratic backsliding. As mentioned above, populist leaders came into the picture as outsiders criticizing the established rule of elites by arguing that they failed to represent the ordinary people's desires and expectations. Through using this discourse, the populist leaders claim that their rule will be on behalf of the common good. As Roberts (2019: 133) illustrates, when the institutional checks and balances system, which could be regarded as one of the backbones of a democratic regime, gets into the wrong hands, then the democratic institutions would become instruments of partisan advantage or authoritarian rule. So, when we look at the populist leaders of today, we see that the populist discourse gives power into the wrong hands, ending with the deterioration of democratic values. At this point, one should not forget that the populist leaders would harm direct-democratic institutions and the hindered institutional checks and balances system built within liberal democracies (Weyland 2019). So, when power gets into the wrong hands (in this circumstance, to a populist leader), it paves the way for the rise of competitive authoritarian systems or examples of illiberal democracies.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For accountability, the answerability and enforcement of the representatives are essential elements.

⁴⁷ In populist discourse, the populist leader directly builds a relationship with his supporters, described as non-organizational and non-institutional. This lack of institutional relationship allows the populist leader to attack the institutional structure of democracy.

Arato (2016: 1) points to the importance of constitutionalism as a safeguard from falling towards tyranny. This thesis also pointed out the importance of constitutionalism while discussing the doctrine of separation of powers. While explaining the constitutional change and democratic legitimacy of a system, one should be aware of the role and capability of the constituent power holders. The constituent power holders have the power to decide under which kind of governance system they would like to govern or live (O'Donoghue 2014: 54). To understand the modern notion of constituent power, Arato (2017a: 55) looks at the concepts of the social contract, sovereignty, 'the people,' and the separation of powers. Constitutional politics became an essential matter in the literature since constitution-making or constitution revision did not only take place in newly established democracies but also in countries that adopted liberal values (Arato 2016: 75).

Arato (2017b: 448) identifies four different democratic pathways for constitution-making, one of which is the post-sovereign. In this type, the constitution-making process takes place in a round table negotiation process, which could be linked to the post-communist period. As a response, Arato (2016) introduces a post-sovereign constitution-making argument with the aim of replacing the constituent power. In Arato's words (2016: 91) the most crucial advantage of post-sovereign constitution-making is to "reverse and conceive democratic, legal revision as the model for the very creating of constitutions" and also it is "de-dramatizing conceptions of the constituent power, linked to mythological and dangerous notions of total rupture and full embodiment of the will of the people." As can be seen from here, the post-sovereign constitution argument is being introduced as the best option to avoid authoritarianism covered by populism. Still, such a constitution-making process has a problem since it brings the actors of the old regime, the elites, into the scene where they turn the process into bargaining. This brings the problem of legitimacy to the picture. Still, Arato points to the strengths of such like constitution-making process. As seen from here, the constitution writing process is a paradoxical activity.⁴⁸

As Arato and Cohen (2018: 98) mention, populism reminds us that democratic dysfunction and voting are not the only legitimate political action; civil society also

⁴⁸Arato studies Latin American countries, Turkey, and Hungary as examples of the constitution-making processes' importance.

has an important place. In this regard, they give importance to religious associations as a part of civil society and argue that when populism merges with such associations, it will threaten constitutional democracy. Here, constitutionalism refers to the liberal values of democracy, which, as discussed earlier, is necessary for consolidated democracy.⁴⁹ Arato and Cohen (2018: 103) argue that besides being a discourse, style, and thin ideology, “populism is an artifact and recurring temptation of modern representative democracy and civil society insofar as it springs from the core legitimating principle of popular sovereignty and lives off the idea that ordinary people are the source of authority and are ultimately self-governing.” In this regard, populism is defined as a pathology of democratic constitutionalism. The populist tone of popular sovereignty describes people as a collective body, which makes it to be visualized as one. The way scholars visualize populism in the 21st century is essential since they show how populism is working towards the democratic backsliding of a system through positioning it under a single and unified terminology, where people who would not be included in the definition of ‘pure’ are left out. This is bringing the tendency towards autocratization of the system.

As explained above, democratic backsliding within a country happens gradually over time. Also, as explained in the above section, populist leaders claim that they represent society as a whole after coming to power. Here, their argument is being constructed by the idea that those who did not vote for them are not considered in the realm of the ‘people,’ so the society. With this argument and the gradual deterioration of democratic norms in the system, populist discourse with its leader and party becomes an example of authoritarian populism in time (Yabancı 2018). This thesis takes the notion of ‘authoritarian populism’ at the center while analyzing the two cases by focusing on how the structural factors and the position of the leader changed in time and how this affected the general picture in this circumstance, the regime.

⁴⁹ Here, religion is taken as a part of identifying oneself. So, it resonates with identity politics. Specifically, to religious identity politics.

CHAPTER III

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

This research focuses on the multiple angles for understanding the democratic backsliding process of Turkey and Hungary. This chapter focuses on the institutional structure, commonly discussed in the literature as the most crucial factor for drifting toward autocratization. As explained earlier, studies focus on the link between the weakening checks and balances system and democratic backsliding. Considering that, this chapter will focus on the checks and balances mechanism in different institutional layers of unconsolidated democracies. For this purpose, the chapter will start by defining how this research will use ‘institutions’ as a concept and continue with the literature on the separation of powers since it represents the basis of the checks and balances system. From there, it will discuss the importance of the judiciary as one of the three branches of government and how it is used as an essential apparatus in the selected two cases of this research.

3.1. Institutions

In its basic connotation, institutions would be defined as the structures organizing the social realm through overt or implicit rules. In Hodgson’s (2006: 2) words, institutions are "systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions.” As North (1991: 97) pointed out institutions consist informal constraints (as taboos, traditions, customs) and formal rules as constitutions and laws. This research focuses on political institutions. Distinguishing this, is, important since as Goodin (1996: 20) clarified, the kind of rules examining institutions varied among disciplines. Literature on political institutions differed on how they understand “the nature of institutions, as the organized setting within which modern political actors most typically act; the process that translates structures and rules into political impacts; and the processes that translate human behavior into

structures and rules and establish, sustain, transform, or eliminate institutions” (March and Olsen 2008: 4). People living together, sharing sources, in time one way or another need the existence of rules binding all of them to live in peace. Institutions come into the picture at this point. North (1991: 98) describes the constraint of human interaction through institutions as a process for wealth-maximizing individuals to reduce the transaction costs for the exchange and maximize the potential gain from the trade. By illustrating the society as a game, normally in which players need to develop cooperation, but since the size of the society is extensive, information of the other people would be missing, shows that without binding rules, players would not maximize their benefits. In this circumstance, to avoid confusion, institutions act as the game's regulator, where many players should obey the same rules. According to Rothstein (1998: 133-134) four political institutions become necessary for people living together a rule-making institution (requested for regulating common interest), rule-applying institutions (requested for implementing decisions), rule-adjudicating institutions (requested for interpreting the general laws in particular cases), and rule-enforcing institutions (requested for taking care of and punishing rule-breakers). In this sense, the definition of political institutions resonates with the three branches of government, providing a checks and balances mechanism among each other. As Holden (2008: 163) pointed out, institutions are irrevocable since “people cannot live together under complete randomness or Hobbesian disorder.”

Considering the definition of political institutions as rule-binding and implementing organizations, this chapter will focus on the importance of institutional structure in Turkey and Hungary while understanding the democratic backsliding process. For this purpose, it will start with a literature review section. The focus will be given on how the three branches of government have shaped both countries by shedding light on the literature. In this respect, special attention will pay to the judiciary since it is used as an essential populist tool to actualize the democratic backsliding process in both cases. The intra-party structure as one of the important political institutions of democracy will be examined in the next chapter.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

3.2.1. Origins of the Doctrine of Separation of Powers

The separation of powers is one of the most essential principles in constitutional theory. For a long while, political philosophers and constitutional lawyers mentioned the importance of the separation of powers to avoid the possibility of misusing power. In this regard, the root of the doctrine of separation of powers comes from the writings of Polybius (1998), Locke (1689), Montesquieu (1689), *The Federalist Papers* of Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (1671), and Alexis de Tocqueville (1981).⁵⁰

3.2.1.1. Polybius and The Histories

Polybius, a Greek historian, analyzed the Roman Republic's power in *The Histories*, which brought the origins of the separation of powers idea to the forefront. In this regard, Book VI is important for understanding the root of the separation powers argument. After Greece got under the control of the Roman Republic, Polybius wrote the 'mixed constitution' of Rome, which is presented as the Republic's success in bringing the entire world under its control. For this purpose, he studied six constitutions, where he benefited from the three branches of the Roman government (monarchy, aristocracy, democracy) and divided them as representing improved and unimproved or deviant types. While studying the constitutions, Polybius realized that the impairment of improved simple constitutions was bringing the possibility of instability and weakness in constitutional and national terms. He concluded that a mixed constitution is the best option to avoid these problems (Hahm 2009: 192-193). Also, he was aware of the fact that the power of the ruler needed to be limited to avoid such problems. Since this limitation was not possible in a simple constitution, he suggested having mixed constitutions, which could be regarded as the seeds of the separation of powers idea.

This mixed constitution resonated with the idea of a mixed regime, where the best features of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy were represented. From that point

⁵⁰ Polybius' book's first English translation was published in 1568; this dissertation uses the 1998 edition, and Tocqueville's book was initially published in 1835; this dissertation uses the 1981 edition. All references refer to these editions.

of view, the rule by one would have certain advantages, but the most crucial disadvantage is the possibility of drowning in tyranny. The rule by few would have the disadvantage of drowning in self-interest and corrupt oligarchs. Lastly, the rule of many would also bring the tyranny of the many at the end. Besides their advantages, these disadvantages made Polybius merge all of them by having advantageous parts. Since there would be more than one ruling type, a checks and balances mechanism would exist between them (Calabresi, Berghausen, and Albertson 2012: 530).⁵¹ In his study, Polybius regarded Sparta and Roman Republic as examples of mixed regimes, where power is limited by having three distinct regime characteristics under a single rule.

3.2.1.2. John Locke and Two Treatises of Government

John Locke's famous work, *Two Treatises of Government*, is regarded as a text constructing modern forms of democracy. Locke starts the second treatise by arguing that the power of a father over his son and the power of a master over his slavery should be distinguished from each other. In this regard, political power should be defined as "the right to make laws for the regulation and preservation of property" (Locke 1689: 101). In Locke's view, these laws only work as long as both all men accept them and it serves the public good. According to him, all men are initially in a state of nature where the laws of nature bound all of them, though as human beings, each has obligations since they are all equally children of God. So, they have an obligation to protect the interests of each other and also to punish the ones who come against God's will and attempt to harm another man threatening his life, liberty, or possession. At this point, he distinguishes *the state of nature* from *the state of war*. In a state of nature, people live together and govern by reason without a need for a common superior. Contrary, the state of war happens when people use power over other people by using their natural rights. The war in society and the war in nature also differ. In this regard, the war in society would end when the act of force ends. Both parties would apply to the common authorities for the final resolution. However, the war in nature would end only when the aggressive party decides to end it. According to Locke, this is one of the main reasons people enter society.

⁵¹ Here, it should not be forgotten that not only Polybius but also Aristotle, Cicero, and Machiavelli have pointed to the importance of a mixed constitution for a just rule. All of these proved to be the seeds of the separation of powers idea of modern democracies.

As seen above, Locke argues that people voluntarily create societies and governments because governments provide certain services, such as protection and stability, that the state of nature cannot. According to Locke, the primary duty of a good government is to maintain personal liberty, which should work for both the individuals' and the commonwealth's best interests. According to Locke, a legitimate government lies at the heart of the idea of *separation of powers*. Legislative power is defined as the first and foremost of these powers and is described as supreme at holding the ultimate authority over the question of how the force for the commonwealth should be employed (Locke 1689: 164). The ones, who hold the legislative power, have the power to make laws. Through the separation of powers, the people assigned to the legislative power are subject to the laws they have made, meaning they need to obey them. Executive power is responsible for enforcing the law made by the legislative. Unlike common use, Locke describes the third power as "federative power." By the federative power, Locke refers to the right to act internationally with the law of the state of nature since the countries still exist in the state of nature. In this framework, countries have the right to punish those violating the natural law to protect their citizens.

3.2.1.3.Montesquieu and The Spirit of Laws

Montesquieu starts his book *The Spirit of Laws* by defining liberty. According to him, the liberty of a human is the right to do everything as long as the laws permit it to be done. If a citizen acts against the law, then she or he would lose liberty since all of the other citizens would have the same power. Montesquieu adds that each state has its purpose. For example, Rome aimed to expand, whereas China aimed of public tranquility and Jews aimed of religion. From here on, he focuses on England, which he regards as a nation whose constitution has political liberty. While explaining the constitution of England, he mentions that "in each state there are three sorts of powers: legislative power, executive power over the things depending on the right of nations, and judiciary power over the things depending on civil right" (Montesquieu 1748: 288). The legislative power refers to the prince's power, who is responsible for making laws or correcting the ones already introduced. The executive power, which is explained as power over things depending on the right of nations, refers to the prince's power for making peace or war, sending or receiving embassies, establishing

security, and preventing invasions (Montesquieu 1748: 289). Last one, the judiciary power, refers to the power of judging.

After defining the separation of powers through the constitution of England, Montesquieu argues that if in a state the legislative and executive powers unite, then there would not be liberty since the same unit (in this circumstance, the same monarch or senate) will be the one who makes the laws and executes people by those laws. He also adds that there would not be liberty where the judiciary is not separated from the legislative or executive branches. According to Montesquieu, the judiciary branch should not be given to a permanent senate but should be formed by a group selected from the body of the people, which would last until the necessity ends.

Through this, the judiciary power would become 'invisible and null' since it would not be attached to a particular state or profession. Different from the judiciary branch, both the executive and legislative branches could be given to a permanent group since both of these branches do not have an exercise on individuals. In a state, there should exist written laws. In other words, there should be a constitution for functioning the separation of powers. The judges should make decisions according to those laws to avoid confusion among citizens, because if there would not exist written laws, then the citizens would not know which act would cause a problem at all.

Montesquieu, was born into a noble family in France and was an educated aristocrat. In his book, he based the separation of powers on his understanding of the English Constitution and singled out England as the 'political excellence.'⁵² He had the chance to travel around Europe for several years. He visited Vienna, Venice, and most cities in Italy, Germany, and Holland (Hazo 1968: 666). The last destination of Montesquieu in Europe was England. He spent a year and a half in England, which helped him to raise specific political questions in his mind. His book *The Spirit of Laws* could be regarded as a product of these questions and this experience. As seen from here, it is not surprising that he has developed the doctrine of separation of powers by focusing on the English Constitution. In his book, he rejected the classical

⁵²Montesquieu was born near Bordeaux and studied at College de Juilly, a school where children of the prominent families of the Bordeaux area prefer to go. After high school, he finished his law degree at Bordeaux University and became a lawyer.

distinction of the regimes as monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy; and offered a new classification as republics, monarchies, and despotisms. According to him, the principles or spirits of these regimes are the ones that distinguish them from each other. In this regard, the differentiating aspect of republics is a virtue, whereas for monarchies is an honor, and for despotisms is fear. In addition to this, he has introduced a new perspective to the doctrine of separation of powers. As explained above, he argued that the concentration of power is dangerous for liberty. At this point, we should remind ourselves that what Montesquieu offered with the doctrine of separation of powers is not new, though his contribution has been the driving force for leading it to spread worldwide. As Hazo (1968: 667) puts it forward, Montesquieu's doctrine of separation of powers has been one of the pillars of the US's constitution.

Locke and Montesquieu have been influential in political terms, still they are criticized by academic circles. They have questioned for their contribution to the doctrine of separation of powers. Firstly, both of these writers were criticized for their theories of separation of powers. So, it is argued that these writers had an inaccurate description of the English Constitution, which is accepted successfully by their critics. For example, as in Gough's words (1973: 104), Carl Ernst described Locke as the "creator of the false theory of the English State." The second criticism towards Locke resulted because he described the legislative power as the supreme one in which he argued that the rest are and should be subordinate to this power. In addition, Locke did not provide a clear distinction between the executive and legislative branches of the separation of powers. In this regard, Locke's three powers -legislative, executive, and federative power- do not represent the modern constitutional model.

3.2.1.4. The Federalist Papers

The Federalist Papers is a collection of essays written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay under a collective pen name called "Publius" for supporting the approval of the US Constitution. The initial seventy-seven of these essays were published serially in the *Independent Journal*, *New York Packet*, and *Daily Advertiser* from October 1787 to April 1788. These initial ones, with eight more essays published as a book in 1788. Afterward, the eight essays were published

in New York newspapers from June to August 1788. The doctrine of separation of powers is mentioned in Federalist Paper No. 47 and No.51. Therefore, from here on, the focus will be given to these essays. Madison, who is the writer of Federalist Papers No. 47, No.48, No.49, No. 50, and No. 51,⁵³ appeals to the people of the State of New York in the Federalist Paper No.47 and states that the ones, who are more respectable adversaries, objected to the constitution since it violates the ‘political maxim,’ which is the separation of executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. In Madison’s words: “The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny” (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay 1671: The Federalist Paper No. 47). According to Madison, to retain liberty the three branches, which are executive, legislative, and judiciary should be separated and should be detached from each other. By naming Montesquieu as the ‘oracle’ for the doctrine of separation of powers, he focuses on the importance of the independence of each branch from the other. As Montesquieu put it forward, if the executive and legislative branches are attached, which means that if the powers of these two branches are united, then there would not be liberty; and also, if the judiciary branch would not be independent of these two branches, then again there would not be liberty. At this point, Madison argues that by explaining the separation of powers as the independence of each branch from each other, Montesquieu did not mean that these branches should not have partial agency or no control over the activities of each other. The point one should focus on in the separation of powers doctrine is that the full power of two or more branches should not be gathered in a single person’s or authority’s hands.

Madison, after arguing that the three branches should be separated and detached from each other in Federalist Paper No.48, argues that to preserve the separation and detachment of three branches in practice, constitutional control should be exercised over each of them. In other words, he states that there should be constitutional restraints on each of the branches. In the last Federalist Paper, which focuses on the separation of powers, Madison and Hamilton wrap up the principles and structure of the government explained in the above papers. For separation and detachment of the

⁵³Madison wrote the Federalist Papers No.49, No. 50, and No. 51 with Alexander Hamilton.

branches from each other, on the one hand, each of them should have its own will, and on the other hand, it should be formed in such a way that the others have as little agency as possible over the appointment of the members of that specific branch. As seen above, the members of each branch should be independent as much as they can from the members of the other branches. Also, Madison and Hamilton focus on the need for a government since they argue that human nature needs to be controlled. In their words: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary” (The Federalist Paper No.51). In this regard, the government should first work as a controller of the governed, and secondly the men, who constitute the government, should control each other for the proper functioning of the government. As experienced in the past, if the checks and balances system would not develop over humankind, then a tyranny of a single person or a bunch of people would occur. For this purpose, the doctrine of separation of powers prevents the power of a particular person or a specific group of people.

3.2.1.5.Alexis de Tocqueville and Democracy in America

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat, historian, political scientist, and politician, visited the US for the first time in 1831, lasting nine months. After this experience, he revisited US and stayed there for eight years. This was the time when he wrote *Democracy in America*. He was a 26-year-old young man when he visited US, and the book he wrote had a significant effect on studies of democracy (Tocqueville 1981: xiii). The book addressed a particular time, audience, and purpose in this sense. Tocqueville as an outsider, interpreted American democracy through his observations and interviews.

When Tocqueville visited America, there was Jacksonian democracy with Andrew Jackson’s presidency and Democratic Party’s rule. This period was significant for expanding suffrage and restructuring federal institutions; it was still characterized by white supremacy and the subjugation of Native Americans (History 2012). Being aware of the problems of American democracy, Tocqueville regarded that self-interests would be limited. One of the reasons for his optimism was the existence of separation of powers with a federalized system and an independent judiciary. In his words, America is the country where the doctrine of the sovereignty of people would

be fairly appreciated, studied in its application to affairs of society, and judged according to its dangers and advantages (Tocqueville 1981: 46). The federal government structure has been constructed with the principle of sovereignty of people. Lastly, the federal government introduced, which was there with the Republican principles in the community. In this regard, “the Federal government is the exception; the government of the states is the rule” (Tocqueville 1981: 47).

As seen above, Tocqueville focused on the fact that to understand the laws and institutions of a regime, one should be able to look at the regime and the social order existing in the given country. As mentioned in the previous section, Federalist Papers’ writers regarded the American Constitution as a system of checks and balances, where the federal government's power is limited to securing the rights of individuals and property (Kraynak 1987: 1177). Constitutionalism, in this sense, refers to a ‘higher law,’ which is unwritten and would be discovered, articulated, and enforced by different authorities (Kraynak 1987: 1176), as a mechanism in institutional terms for limiting and balancing government power.

Tocqueville, while studying America, as explained earlier, by mentioning the doctrine of the sovereignty of people and the importance of equality, argued that the ruling group constructed all aspects of democratic life in America. He argued that customs play an essential role in the shape of democracy since they also affect laws. Here, he made a differentiation between customs and laws. Similar to this, he also distinguished the regime from the constitution. In this regard, he distinguished himself from ancient constitutionalism since he argued that social ethos shapes the form of government rather than vice versa (Kraynak 1987: 1179). As in his words:

“In great centralized nations, the legislator is obliged to give a character of uniformity to the laws, which does not always suit the diversity of customs and of districts; as he takes no cognizance of special cases, he can only proceed upon general principles; and the population are obliged to conform the requirements of the laws, since legislation cannot adapt itself to the exigencies and the customs of the population, which is a great cause of trouble and misery” (Tocqueville 1981: 82)

And also:

“It is incontestably true that the tastes and the habits of republican government in the United States were first created in the townships and the provincial assemblies... It is this same republican spirit, it is these manners and customs of a free people, which have been created and nurtured in the different states, that must be afterwards applied to the country at large. The public spirit of the Union is, so to speak, nothing more than an aggregate or summary of the patriotic zeal of the separate provinces. Every citizen of the United States transfers, so to speak, his attachment to his little republic into the common store of American patriotism. In defending the Union he defends the increasing prosperity of his own state or county, the right of conducting its affairs, and the hope of causing measures of improvement to be adopted in it which may be favorable to his own interests; and these are motives that are wont to stir men more than the general interests of the country and the glory of the nation” (Tocqueville 1981: 83)

While observing the American system, Tocqueville focused on power. He explained the tendency to centralize power in a democracy, the separation and division of power, the power role of the parties, press, lawyers, courts, and army, and the risks of despotic power (M. Lerner 1965: 544). He viewed America from its aspect of separation of powers and by the decentralized nature of administration, as explained earlier. The purpose of his study was to shed light on how the European system would be shaped.

3.2.2. The Doctrine of Separation of Powers in Modern Democratic Governments

This thesis will focus on ‘representative democracy’ while explaining the doctrine of separation of powers in modern democratic governments. As Alonso, Keane, and Merkel (2011) state, the creation of representative democracy could be regarded as a distinctive achievement of modern politics since it took a while to flourish such democracy. For example, it took seven centuries to consolidate the institutions of

representative democracy in Europe. These institutions needed to fight the resistance of the Church in the name of religion. In this regard, representative democracy should be divided from the ancient Greek meaning of democracy. For example, the citizens of Athens thought that their democracy was participatory and direct though it only represented a particular part of the population.⁵⁴ To arrive at its modern form, which is the rule of many, democracy has experienced several revolutions. On behalf of this, representative democracy singles out a type of government in which people, named as the voters, face a choice between at least two alternatives. Through their choices, these people delegate their rights to their representatives. Here, this choice does not guarantee elected politicians' acts. So, what would happen if the politicians would not act according to the voters' preferences? In this regard, the question of "how voters will be sure that the politicians they select will act in line with their preferences" comes into the picture.

A central paradigm in political economy for understanding the checks and balances system belongs to both Barro (1973) and Ferejohns (1986), who are named as the pioneers of the political agency model. Barro (1973) and Ferejohns (1986) claim that politicians are the agents of citizens, who are the voters of the political system. To end the question mark mentioned above, whether these politicians will act in line with the voters' desires, this paradigm argues that elections exist to avoid politicians acting on their will. So, elections exist to ensure that politicians act in line with the voters' preferences. However, the elections, by alone, would not be enough for this purpose. In this regard, the voters would also want to rely on other political institutions. These institutions include various forms of checks and balances. For example, in the Venezuelan example, after his first presidential election in 1998, Hugo Chavez brought a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution. The new constitution reallocated the legislative powers to the president, especially in the economic and financial spheres. This constitution was approved by an election in which 72% of the voters supported it. In 2000, Chavez gained the right to rule by decree for a year, for which he did not get approval from the legislature. The ruling by decree was reapproved in 2007 for eighteen months and extended again in 2010

⁵⁴Athenian democracy excluded foreigners, enslaved people, and women.

for another eighteen months. Most of these extensions occurred after a referendum in which the majority voted favorably.

As could be seen from the Venezuelan example, the well-accepted paradigm of Barro (1973) and Ferejohns (1986) would not represent reality in all circumstances. In other words, the voters would not favor controlling the ones they have elected at all times and places. As a response to this deficit in the literature, Acemoğlu, Robinson, and Torvik (2013) developed a new theory. In this theory, they focused on the reasons why in some cases the voters prefer fewer checks and balances. In their words:

At the center of our theory is the following observation: in weakly institutionalized polities, checks, and balances, by reducing politician rents, make them “cheaper to buy” or easier to influence by an organized rich elite through bribing, lobbying, or other non-electoral means. This makes checks and balances a double-edged sword: what makes them valuable to voters—limiting politician rents—also makes them potentially dangerous to the majority” (2013: 847).

As could be seen from their explanation, the key to this theory is ‘weakly institutionalized polities,’ which is the differentiating point of such examples from well-established democracies.

3.2.3. Constitutions and Constitutionalism

As Mény and Surel stated, “representation has helped to make democracy workable, whereas constitutionalism has guaranteed its survival” (2002: 7). Western political thought has been shaped by specific values like liberty, justice, and equality, which have been debated for centuries and which have turned to be the debates of the essential institutional structures and procedures for these values to exist. In this regard, the institutional theorists of the West argued that the power of the government should be controlled for the survival of these values. They believed that if governmental power would not be controlled, then it would turn out to be the destroyer of these values. The doctrine of separation of powers came to light as a

result of this reality. The constitutionalists argued that a separation of powers should exist for the survival of these values and the survival of the government.⁵⁵

Before going further deep inside the explanations of executive, legislative, and judiciary, this thesis will focus on constitutionalism. Modern constitutionalism has flourished with the British constitution, which is regarded as an *obscure constitution* by the literature since it was not representing a constitution at all.⁵⁶ The literature also criticized the British constitution because it was not a written one. Though, at this point, a criticism toward the literature came from Sartori (1962) for prioritizing the *letter* rather than the *spirit* of the law. Besides the British constitution, which has criticisms and followers, as seen above, the constitution, as a term, has had a general agreement over Europe and the US. Starting in 1830, people in these territories were aware of what they were expecting from the constitution, which was the existence of a constitutional system. A system, protecting the individual's freedom, should be in a written format.⁵⁷ Britain maybe did not have a single written document of Constitution, but it had several written documents, worked as a guideline for judicial decisions. The British constitution melded the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Act of Settlements, and the like. In reality, European, American, and British people shared the same portrayal of the Constitution in their minds for more than a century; it was meant to be a set of principles and a relevant institutional design built to limit the arbitrary power of the government. In this regard, constitutions aimed to secure democratic government in its nature, though in reality, there did not exist a clear institutional structure that could be regarded as the correct form for making democratic decisions.

Whittington (2008: 282) describes constitutionalism as “the constraining of government in order to better effectuate the fundamental principles of the political regime.” Constitutions serve as the representative of the governmental structure of the countries. However, one should not forget that constitutionalism should be distinguished from the constitutions. In this regard, constitutionalism is linked to

⁵⁵ The thesis mentioned the importance of constitutionalism while explaining Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation of American democracy.

⁵⁶The British constitution has not been seen as a constitution when regarded in American and French terms since the British system was based on the “fusion of powers” rather than their separation.

⁵⁷This written format expected to be a document, a charter, and the like.

liberalism since it protects the citizens over the state. As seen from here, constitutionalism looks after protecting the individual's rights rather than focusing on whether these protections would be provided through a written document or as a principle. In its most straightforward way, constitutionalism refers to a limited government, which would limit the arbitrary act of the government. So, in its nature, the constitutions aim at securing the democratic government.⁵⁸

In Hardin's words (2008: 290) "the whole point of a constitution is to organize politics and society in particular ways." As seen from this definition, a modern constitution would be designed by allocating certain rights to citizens through organizing a state apparatus to ensure representative democracy. In this regard, the constitutions should be evaluated within the framework they have been written in. In other words, the nature of the society decides how a constitution will be shaped. Therefore, normatively speaking, one should be careful in judging a constitution since it would be meaningful for a particular society, whereas catastrophic for another. The normative constitutional theory gained much attention in time by scholars, though it was not the only one in the literature. In addition to normative constitutional theory, the literature also provides conceptual constitutionalism, which focuses on what constitutions are, how they work, and how they serve in a political system rather than focusing on the legitimacy of the constitutions. While explaining constitutions, conceptual constitutionalism focuses on the relation between the societies and the constitutions, as mentioned above, to answer how a constitution would differ from one society to another. In this regard, one needs to regard constitutions as collective promises (Whittington 2008). Another line of literature regarded constitutions as pre-commitment devices, which help to create plans for citizens by providing a system where the current preferences of the citizens will be carried out in the future.

Another line of the literature focuses on constitutionalism from an empirical perspective, asking how constitutions manage in practice. As seen in real-life examples, constitutions became essential actors for political outcomes. Researchers focus on whether different constitutional designs of institutions bring different

⁵⁸ In this regard, it could be stated that the constitutional theory could be regarded as normative.

outcomes.⁵⁹ The constitutional design also matters for the consolidation of democracy within the given context since it will decide on the design of the representative institutions. This design of the representative institutions with a particular framework of electoral rules would decide on the government's shape and size, significantly affecting a regime's duration. This side of the literature brings into minds the question of “what do constitutions do?” As mentioned above, one of the values of Western political thought is justice, and to achieve a just order, institutions need to exist for bringing just resolutions into presence. In this equilibrium, just institutions would be possible with the existence of a constitution, where the power of these institutions would be checked and balanced with particular mechanisms.

Rawls (1955) in his paper, argues that the subject of punishment could be regarded as an institution. In his framework, he justifies punishment in two ways; by arguing that if people do not obey the rules, they pay the penalty for it, and also, paying the penalty for wrongdoing is better than not having any punishment for it. Utilitarians argue that punishment is a necessary institution for maintaining the social order within society. In Rawls's words (1955: 6) “we have the institution of punishment itself, and recommend and accept various changes in it, because it is thought by the (ideal) legislator and by those to whom the law applies that, as a part of a system of law impartially applied from case to case arising under it, it will have the consequence, in the long run, of furthering the interests of society.” In the big picture, in Rawls's argument, institutions are being created in such a way that they determine the roles of the citizens, which in the end, determines the behavior of the citizens. From this definition of institutions, their design process should be done in the best way to achieve a mutual advantage.

Hardin (2008) defines the design of the institutions for justice in two stages. In this regard, in the first stage, the citizens should act in line with their roles assigned through the institutional design; in the second stage, the institutions should bring welfare. These two stages are represented as the adhesive of the constitutional government. In this triangle, constitutions foresee the institutions, which are the ones that make and implement policies. So, in a constitutional government, the decisions

⁵⁹Examples include Persson and Tabellini (2003), Nielson (2003), and others.

should be given within the framework of the institutional structure of the government. As seen from here, if the best option for the mutual advantage would not fit into the institutional structure, that option could not be taken. If one acts according to what the majority of the citizens want would end up with an unlimited government, which would not be desired in a representative democracy. So, institutions and institutional settings limit the possibility of the best option for the sake of society in the future.

The main problem of the representative democracy results from the distributive justice idea, which aims to distribute what all citizens contribute as a whole. If the distribution would be made in an egalitarian way, the ones who worked more and those who worked less would take the same amount at the end. On the other hand, if the distribution of the contributions would take place according to the productivity of people, then the chance of equal distribution in its final stage would not be possible. To solve this dilemma, Rawls's theory of justice would be used in which he defines it with fairness in a liberal sense. Liberal constitutionalism is a crucial issue that should be mentioned at this point, since the literature that this thesis focuses on the concept of constitutional liberalism while defining democracy. The existence of liberal constitutionalism works as the checks and balances system in a democracy. People select politicians as their representatives, and through the constitutional limits, they avoid possible misuse of power by these people.

3.2.4. Explanations of Separation of Powers in the Literature

As Canovan puts it forward (2002: 26) “the idea behind the democratic system works through the inclusion of the entire population to the political arena. When everyone is involved in the political arena, it gets more crowded and dynamic, and more interests and opinions come into the picture, which would have a small influence on policies. Widening the spectrum of the political arena would bring the problem of not being able to picture the location of power or trace a clear path through the road by the voters.” As seen from here, inclusiveness is the basic idea behind democratic systems. From here on, this thesis will focus on the checks and balances system in democratic regimes. In this regard, the doctrine of separation of powers could be represented as one of the necessities of a modern democratic government.

Democracies with the rule of law provide effective parliaments. There exist different forms of democracies, though, in general terms, democracy has been attributed to the separation of powers between the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. For a long while, and as explained above, political philosophers and constitutional lawyers mentioned the importance of the separation of powers to avoid the possibility of misuse of power. The literature on the separation of powers could be divided into three: (1) constitutionalist view, (2) law and economics- public choice analysis, and (3) political economics model.

According to the constitutionalist view, the doctrine of separation of powers finds its roots in constitutional theory. The agents, who are selected to represent people, are being limited by creating different branches of government that could check and balance each other. “Both Hamilton and the founding fathers of America saw the judiciary as “the bulwarks of the limited constitution against legislative encroachments” (The Federalist Paper No.78). Thus, the constitutionalists viewed the members of the judiciary as the unique guardians of the public interest, wholly ignored by other political decision-making bodies” (Padovano, Sgarra, and Fiorino 2003: 49). In modern terms, this view is called the *demonopolization theory*. According to this theory, the judiciary is responsible for securing the integrity of the legal system to prevent interest group pressures and rent-seeking, which disturbs the activities of the executive and legislative.

The law and economics-public choice analysis view starts with the separation of powers doctrine and aims to explain judicial behavior and independence in a positive manner that is modest with the rational choice paradigm. In this regard, there are two views of this analysis. The first view focuses on the ideological preferences of judges and argues that these preferences are the driving forces for judges' decisions in some instances (Macey 1994; Posner 1998). In addition to the ideological preferences of judges, this view also focuses on the effect of material things on judges' decisions. According to this idea, judges decide by the money they get (for example, their salary) or the promotion they would have in the future for a higher position (Cohen 1989, 1991; Kimenyi, Shughart, and Tollison 1985). The second view focuses on the independence of the judiciary and sees this independence as a mechanism that serves

as a maximization machine for politicians and interest groups in terms of their gains from the legislation.

The political-economic models view argues that constitutions are essential tools to limit the possibility of abuse of power by the representatives. They bring electoral control, separation of power, and independence of the judicial branch into existence (Padovano, Sgarra, and Fiorino 2003). Through elections, voters have the power to change the government if they are unhappy with the existing one, but here the problem comes into the picture when the voters would not feel unhappy with their representatives' abuse of power. At this point, one should remind that the election process differs in presidential and parliamentary systems since, in the presidential system, voters directly select both the executive and legislative branches. In contrast, in a parliamentary system, the voters only select the legislative branch, that in turn appoints the executive branch. Through the separation of powers, the voters could clarify which branch is not working correctly and whom to blame.

As mentioned more than once in this chapter, the government should first be designed to control the governed, and then, in the second place, it should oblige to control itself. For this purpose, the power has been separated into different branches, each serving as a check mechanism for the other and, eventually, creating a checks and balances system. The separation of powers, since the writings of Locke and Montesquieu, serve to avoid the possibility of tyranny. As discussed earlier, these ideas also affected those who wrote the American Constitution. The separation of powers is seen as a necessity even for democracies, in which the rulers are elected periodically. The power structure of the executive and legislative branches differs in presidential and parliamentary systems, but also by the constitutional structures in how it describes the structure of the legislative process.

As Kesselman, Krieger, and Joseph (2016: 8) defines in their book, executive refers to “agencies of government that implement or execute policy,” and legislature to “a political institution in which elected or appointed members are charged with responsibility for making laws and usually for authorizing the expenditure of the financial resources for the state to carry out its functions,” and judiciary to “a political institution that is responsible for the administration of justice and in some

countries for determining the constitutionality of state decisions.” The executive could be regarded as one of the most important state institutions: the president or the prime minister and the cabinet. Besides the executive, the legislative and judiciary branches are important political institutions that constitute the summit of the state power.

The interest toward the separation of powers gained more importance with the third wave of democratization. As Samuels (2007) stated, Shugart and Carey’s (1992) work could be regarded as a milestone in literary terms since it is the first attempt to gather scholarly knowledge on the separation of powers. In this study, Shugart and Carey focused on the importance of institutional design on the survival of the democratic regime as well as on the consolidation of it. They also focused on whether the regime type affects the policy outcomes and the governing style. Scholars generally identify three types of separation of powers: parliamentarism, presidentialism, and semi-presidentialism. These three different types flourish through the selection process of the executive and legislative branches; and also according to how these two branches interact during the policy-making process and government administration. When one looks at the presidential system, s/he would see that the executive and legislative branches are fixed and do not have an accidental relation to confidence. In its simplistic way, this means that one of the branches is responsible for making the laws, whereas the other is responsible for implementing them. Unlike the presidential system, in the semi-presidential system, the head of the government, the prime minister, is responsible to the legislature. So, in semi-presidential systems, the president does not have direct control over the cabinet. Toe (1985, 1987, 1990) visualized how the presidency as an executive office uses its power to politicize the appointment process and centralize authority. In this regard, the presidents work to fill the administrative offices with advocates by creating policies by themselves. However, one should not forget that the executive branch in presidentialism is not being used as an office to build a loyal cadre of civil servants in all circumstances. It also builds separation of powers and surrounds the executive branch with responsive and loyal people.

3.2.5. Comparison of Parliamentary and Presidential Systems

The differences between parliamentary and presidential systems play an essential role in the democratic backsliding explanation of countries. The scope of the research also includes highlighting “how does the structure of the political system affect the democratic backsliding” in the selected cases. Turkey has been an example of a unique presidential system since 2018, and Hungary is an example of a parliamentary system. Different political systems affect the leader’s maneuverability toward autocratization.

Regarding the division between parliamentary and presidential systems, according to Linz (1990) most of the stable democracies in the world are parliamentary regimes. The only presidential democracy with a long history of constitutional continuity is the US. Parliamentary regimes are more likely to have stable democracies since they are more likely to be stable when compared with presidentialism. In parliamentary regimes, the government’s authority depends on parliamentary confidence. Parliament is the only democratically legitimate institution. Compared to parliamentary regimes, in presidential systems, an executive with considerable constitutional powers, generally including complete control of the composition of the cabinet and administration, is directly elected by the people for a fixed term and is independent of parliamentary votes of confidence. He is not only the holder of executive power but also the symbolic head of state and can be removed between elections only by the drastic step of impeachment.⁶⁰

Parliamentary and presidential systems are different since they have different institutional arrangements. In this regard, presidentialism is unavoidably problematic since it separates according to the role of ‘winner-take-all,’ which makes an arrangement that tends to make democratic politics a zero-sum game. Also, this would be the case in parliamentary regimes (if a single party gets the majority of the votes), though it is more likely to give representation to a number of parties. The danger of the zero-sum game arises because the president, after the elections, has a fixed term in office. So, winners and losers are sharply defined for the entire period

⁶⁰ This thesis is using the phrase he intentionally since the autocratization of democratic regimes is being experienced under influential male leaders.

of the presidential mandate. There is no hope for shifts in alliances, expansion of the government's base of support through national unity or emergency grand coalitions, new elections in response to significant news events, and the like. Instead, the losers must wait at least four or five years without access to executive power and patronage. Until this point, the negative sides of presidential systems have been portrayed though it also has positive sides. Presidential systems allow voters to select the chief executive openly and directly rather than giving this decision to the politicians, who would make maneuvers behind the scenes. Compared to parliamentary systems, in which the prime ministers are much closer to being on an equal footing with their fellow ministers, the cabinet members are less likely to have a solid and independent mind in presidential systems since their survival is linked to the president's term.

3.2.6. Three Branches of Government

3.2.6.1. The Executive

The Westminster approach to the executive government was used as the most common framework of analysis in the 20th century since it was shaped by the ideas of parliamentary sovereignty, unitary state, strong cabinet governments, accountability through elections, and the control of the executive by the majority party, and institutionalized opposition (Rhodes 2006). In this approach, the party or the parties who won the majority of the votes form the executive branch, which in the parliamentary democracy is the prime minister's office and the cabinet. By its nature, the cabinet is responsible for the decisions they make as a whole, and each cabinet member is responsible to the parliament. As Dunleavy and Rhodes (1990) put forward, the sole executive approach developed by the British government defined the executive branch in functional terms. They aimed to explain the executive branch by which functions define the government rather than which position is essential. In this regard, how the power will be shared between the actors becomes essential. In Rhodes' words (2006: 326) "power is contingent and relational in which ministers depend on the prime minister for support in getting funds from the Treasury and in turn, the prime minister depends on his ministers to deliver the party's electoral promises." In addition to power share, by explaining the division of labor, the question of who holds which resource in their hand is also essential.

3.2.6.2. The Legislative

In general terms, the literature uses legislature and parliament as interchangeable words. However, the legislature legislates, which means it passes the law, whereas parliament also legislates, but in its contemporary form, it has more workload than only passing laws. As Carey (2006: 431) defines, “legislatures are, at least according to the formal rules set out by constitutions, the principal policy-making institutions in modern democracies.” In parliamentary systems, the executive branch is constitutionally responsible to the legislature. In other words, the government stays in office as long as it gets the legislature's confidence. As can be seen from here, in parliamentary systems, the legislature (parliament) not only legislates but also has the role of constructing and ending governments. On the other side of the coin, in constitutional terms, the executive (government) has the power to dissolve the legislature directly or indirectly since the legislature does not have the option to dissolve by itself.

When it comes to what legislatures are expected to achieve in democratic systems, the answer would be the representation of differences, creating an atmosphere for negotiation, acting as a source of certainty, and working as a check mechanism for other branches, especially the executive. The legislatures could be regarded as plural bodies with a large membership than the executive body. This extensive membership helps them to represent the diversity of society more precisely. Secondly, legislatures could be regarded as debate sessions in which different ideas and points of view find a voice. In a democratic polity, legislatures make these sessions in open settings, which helps to trigger transparency and, in the end, which helps to make the representatives accountable for their actions towards the ones they represent. The idea of majority rule is regarded as a source of mistrust since it would abuse the rights of minorities. However, legislatures would serve as an arena for the oppositional forces to make their voices heard since the decision-making process depends on more than a bunch of people.⁶¹

⁶¹ As explained above, since legislatures are composed of multiple actors, the decision-making process takes place with the agreement of more than a group of people who think and act in similar ways.

As mentioned above, the existence of a government is attached to the confidence vote of the legislature. In practice, the no-confidence vote for a government by the legislature rarely happens. The vital point in this equilibrium is that parliament knows what it holds in its hands, the power to break down the government, and the government knows that it should act responsibly not to be dissolved by the legislature. The power of the legislature (parliament) to make and dissolve the government has an essential effect on politics in practical terms since the parliamentary systems created the idea of parliamentary elections in which governments are elected. As Laver states (2006: 124) “The prominent politicians campaigning in parliamentary elections are typically party leaders. Many of these people present themselves to voters as candidates for the prime minister (chief executive) position. Crucially, if citizens want to change their government in a parliamentary government system, they do this by voting in the parliamentary elections. Everything else about legislative politics in parliamentary government systems is ultimately an embellishment of this simple constitutional fact.” Since this is the case in the parliamentary systems, in practical terms, the government acts as the source of all parliamentary activities.⁶²

One should also focus on political parties to understand the functioning of politics in parliamentary systems. Even though parties do not represent one of the principles of the parliamentary government system explained in the constitutions, they are still essential to avoid chaos within the system. When one looks at modern parliaments, most members come from the political parties. Laver argues that (2006: 126) “the benefits to a legislator of party membership range from the electoral benefits of the party label, to practical benefits in the legislature that can range from office and research facilities to speaking privileges in debates, to rights to propose motions, to benefits that arise from the fact that, in most parliamentary government systems, parliamentary parties are the de facto gatekeepers to high political office.” When it comes to presidential systems, the legislative body still needs the executive to do what it desires, and also executives need legislatures since almost all constitutions require the legislative body's approval for the executive's annual budget.

⁶² This idea of acting like the source of all parliamentary activities does not exist in constitutions but comes from rules and conventions, which govern how parliamentary activities will happen.

3.2.6.3. The Judiciary

Regarding the idea of having an independent judiciary, one can argue that to talk about a democratic system, the judges within the system should have autonomy in their decisions from any other power within the state structure. In this regard, judicial independence could be linked to the independence of judicial decisions from the political interests of elected officials. The Positive Political Theory argues that, in reality, judges would make decisions according to the cost of it since Congress would reverse a judicial decision with the administrative law or statutory interpretation cases (McCubbins and Rodrigues 2006).⁶³ This theory argues that because of the power of Congress, judges' decisions could be situated in the middle of a political process, which means that they do not represent the endpoint. Since this is the case, judges would prefer to make decisions using a cost-benefit equilibrium in the long run.

Regarding this theory, one would ask the following questions: “how the judiciary could be independent?” and “what conditions would be necessary for judicial independence?” For judicial independence, the judges should be constrained only to the rule of law, which means that they should not be constrained to external factors. Some scholars argue that judicial independence could be defined by drawing on the doctrine of separation of powers⁶⁴, whereas others argue that judicial independence could be defined through institutional rules.⁶⁵ At this point, one should distinguish judicial independence from judicial accountability. Arguing that judges should have independence in decision-making does not mean that they should have the choice to make decisions by not having the responsibility to justify and be accountable for their decisions. As Vanberg stated (2008: 100-101) “independence is desirable precisely because it frees judges from inappropriate considerations, thereby allowing them to decide based on considerations judged to be relevant.” Independence and accountability should also be regarded within the institutional design context since the judges, who have life tenure, act more independently than those with a fixed term in office.

⁶³ This argument resonates with the US since it is mentioned to Congress but would be applied to other democratic systems too.

⁶⁴ For example, Landes and Posner (1975).

⁶⁵ For example, Segal and Spaeth (2002).

3.3. Political Institutions and Democratic Backsliding in Turkey and Hungary

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan knew from his early political career, where he had the chance to develop a master-apprentice relationship with Necmettin Erbakan, that political institutions were designed to favor the secularist side. Erdoğan, first, by appreciating his mentor, learned the rules of Turkish politics in an atmosphere where they were labeled as a threat to the democratic nature of the country. Following poetically expressing the conversation between Alparslan and Romanos Diogenes after the Battle of Manzikert in his famous Siirt trip in 1997, he was imprisoned (Çakır and Çalmuk 2001).⁶⁶ Following this, Diyarbakır State Security Court (*Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi*, DGM) opened an investigation. Regarding the political atmosphere of the time, the tutelary powers regarded Erdoğan's attempt as an attack towards secularism. According to Article 312, he prosecuted with the argument of inciting people to hatred and enmity by discriminating against religion and race. As a result of the trial, Erdoğan was sentenced to one-year imprisonment.⁶⁷ This experience taught Erdoğan that he should be more cautious about what he wants to achieve in the upcoming years of his political career.

Previous examples of parties representing political Islam, where each of them faced with closure with the decision of the secularist side by being seen as a threat to democracy in the country, and also, Erdoğan's imprisonment, taught AKP (and Erdoğan) to take cautious steps in their early years. The most crucial obstacle in front of their rule was the tutelage system, created with coup d'états and represented the protection of the democratic values of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. AKP government, after coming to power, took important reforming steps to reorganize the civil-military relations in Turkey. This change was started a bit earlier than AKP, in 2001, with the amendment to Article 118, the number of civilians in the National Security Council (NSC) has been increased; under the EU reform package in 2003, a decision has taken in which crimes committed by civilians cannot be tried in a military court

⁶⁶ The poet that Erdoğan read during his speech has expressed as a poet of Ziya Gökalp. However, after the Supreme Court upheld his conviction, it was understood that the poem did not belong to Ziya Gökalp. Following this development, Erdoğan defended himself by pointing to the writer of the book *Türk ve Türklük* prepared by the Turkish Standardization Institute (TSE) by arguing that he borrowed the poet from there.

⁶⁷ Considering his attitude in court, his imprisonment decreased to ten months. Erdoğan stayed in prison for four months and ten days.

and also in the same reform package, the meetings of NSC has reduced (Gürsoy 2013). However, these steps did not take the military's role and power from the picture of a sudden. Since the place of the military was preserved as the guardian of the Republic, under the umbrella of the clash between the center and periphery, AKP's steps towards reforming this relationship have witnessed resistance from the other side.

2007 has been a remarkable year for taking the judiciary under control when the AKP government and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan realized that the tutelary powers within the system were not going to allow them even if they won the majority in the elections and represented themselves as the representative of the 'national will.' From then on, important steps were taken to change the existing system. However, these changes did not take Turkey towards consolidating its democratic regime as expected by many but towards an autocratic one. The clash between secularists and conservative Muslims started when Ahmet Necdet Sezer's, the representative of the secularist side, term came to an end, and for the first time, a president whose wife was wearing a headscarf, a symbol of political Islam in secularists mind, was too close to becoming a reality. So, Abdullah Gül's candidacy did not welcome by the secularist side since a wife with a headscarf was regarded as a symbol showing the intention of AKP to bring Islamic rule into the country. An e-memorandum was released on the military website on the night of April 27, 2007, by the Presidency of General Staff as a notice named "Fundamentalist Activities and The Duties of Military" on the night of the second round of the election of the president, which coincided with the petition given to Constitutional Court on the same day for overriding votes on Gül's election in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM).⁶⁸ This became an important opportunity for AKP to end the tutelage system posed by secularists. In response to these developments, a referendum took place in October 2007, where the election of a president by the society was accepted with 69.1% yes votes (YeniŞafak 2007).

⁶⁸ Still, this could be regarded as an essential step for civil-military relations. When the previous experiences were interrogated, the military preferred directly intervening in politics. However, the European Union (EU) accession process helped the military change its style and avoid direct intervention.

The clash between the secularists and the conservative Muslims also had reflections on constitutional terms when a closure case opened in 2008 against AKP. These experiences helped Erdoğan and AKP government realize that to end the tutelage system, which was threatening their presence, the judiciary should be taken under control. In line with this, in 2010, a referendum took place for the constitutional amendment, designed and presented to the Turkish citizens with the idea of creating a civilian constitution. AKP legitimized this constitutional amendment and requested the support of the voters by arguing that this was an essential step toward the democratization process of the country since the road for the trial of the plotters of the 1980 coup d'état was going to be opened, the fundamental rights were going to be strengthened through opening the way for the individual application to the Constitutional Court, and also the high judiciary member profile was going to be more pluralistic (Sevinç and Demirkent 2021: 121). The referendum, which took place on the coup d'état day (September 12), resulted in 57,88% yes votes. The political scene of Turkey entered into the 2011 elections under the influence of creating a new constitution. Meanwhile, AKP opened the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer Cases, which were started in 2008 and 2010, were significant since they were the steps taken to end the tutelary powers of the military. In these trials, many retired or high-ranking military personnel were brought before the courts to answer whether they organized a coup to overthrow AKP. Through this process, their untouchable position has been decreased.

Viktor Orbán, after entering politics in 1988 with his friends from Bibó István Special College, a college for law students founded in 1983, remained in Hungarian politics until today. Since he has been an essential political actor in Hungarian politics for a long-time, tasted what it means to be in opposition and rule. After experiencing success in the elections and ruling the country for four years, from 1998 to 2002, Orbán returned to the opposition and remained an oppositional figure in politics for eight years. The unsuccessful policies of the Socialist government during this period paved the way for Orbán to mobilize the society, which brought electoral success in 2010. His experiences taught him that to stay in power, he needed to change the political game in favor of his rule.

In 2010, the alarm bells started to ring for the Hungarian democracy. By representing the center-right in the 2010 elections, Fidesz won 53% of the votes. However, because of the electoral system in the country, with a 5% threshold, it gained 68% of the seats in the parliament.⁶⁹ Fidesz broke new ground since any political party could not achieve such success in the history of democratic Hungary. The critical point was that the party had achieved the required majority for rewriting the Constitution. After the communist period, during the democratization process in 1989 and 1990, the constitutional drafters had two concerns in Hungary. One was the worry of the possible fractured parliament because of the minor parties' access to the parliament. To avoid this, the drafters introduced an election law, which helped larger parties have more seats in the parliament. The other worry was "the deeply entrenched constitution, which would be hard to change once the new democrats figured out how they wanted to design their political institutions" (Bánkuti, Halmai, and Scheppele 2012: 139). To solve this problem, the drafters added the following statement to the constitution: if a two-thirds majority would be achieved in the parliament, then the constitutional text would be changed. The draft of the constitution proposed by Orbán was voted on by the government in two weeks and entered into force in January 2012. The most crucial point of the new constitution was that it was accepted fastly without enabling any national, legal, or political debate.

Orbán started his new term by rewriting the constitution, which is regarded as the sign of the starting point of democratic backsliding in the Hungarian example. Many rules have been written in favor of preserving Orbán's power. As Kenes (2020: 9) pointed "parliament legislated 365 new laws (an average of one every 1.5 working days) through early 2012, among others the new constitution and all 25 constitutional laws," which he called as a 'legislative tsunami.' Orbán claimed that "the series of changes in the Hungarian political system was the 'revolution through the ballot box' while for others it amounted to a 'constitutional coup d'état'" (Bogaards 2018: 1481). The steps he took following his success showed that the new strongman of Europe would not hesitate to take necessary actions towards autocratization to preserve his power base. The pragmatist political style of Orbán, resonating with his populist

⁶⁹ This meant the two-thirds majority of the parliament, called supermajority by the literature.

premises, paved the way for him to make decisions according to a cost-benefit equilibrium where the benefit always won the cost even though it would mean changing the political system in the country in favor of his rule. As Kornai (2015) described, after the 2010 elections, a U-turn started in Hungary. In Scheppele's (2018) words, a charismatic leader rises on the political scene by arguing to change the malfunctioning system by empowering the people, as they carve, in different countries worldwide. By arguing that he will not play with the old rules, this savior figure hits liberal constitutionalism. By benefiting from the constitutionalism aspect of democracy, these charismatic leaders have the space to introduce legal reforms, consolidating their power and entrenching their position in the office, which helps them stay longer.

Following the elections, one of the first attacks he proposed was one of the veto players in the checks and balances system of liberal democracies, Constitutional Court, since it served as the most critical component of the separation of powers since 1989 by acting independently in all cases. So, his first institutional target was the judiciary. The first step of Orbán was to target the selection procedure for the court's justices. In the past, a parliamentary committee composed of the representation of all parties proposed candidates for the office, whereas, with the new arrangement, the parliament by itself started to decide who would be appointed to the office.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, to overcome the tenure barrier, Orbán increased the number of justices in the court from 11 to 15 (Lendvai 2017: 103).⁷¹ With this, he managed to build a majority at the court, which would prevent the opposing minds from finding a way to raise criticisms of his actions. Some other essential steps towards taking the judiciary under control were decreasing the retirement age of judges from 70 to 62. Through this, Orbán managed to fill the seats with Fidesz loyalists (Beauchamp 2018b). The following step was, abolishing the Supreme Court by naming it Kuria. With this, the president of the Supreme Court, who had 17 years of experience on the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) as a judge unqualified since the new law

⁷⁰ It should not be forgotten that the party loyalists have appointed the Office since the parliament is composed of a Fidesz majority. The appointed names showed that, even though they did not have sparkling political careers, their loyalty to the party and the leader allowed them to be selected for such important positions.

⁷¹ Also, the term duration expanded from 9 to 12 years, which was a step to ensure his power within the political system.

has set five years of judicial experience in Hungary as a prerequisite for the post (Bánkuti, Halmai, and Scheppele 2012: 239).⁷² The most important aspect of the new law was that after bringing Fidesz-loyalists to essential positions, Orbán increased the terms of the offices to six years for the head of the Budget Council, nine years for the president of the Supreme Court, the chief prosecutor, and the president of the National Judicial Office, and twelve years for the head of the State Audit Office and Constitutional Court judges (Bánkuti, Halmai, and Scheppele 2012: 239). This has been regarded as essential for narrowing the range of movement of institutions if the government falls into the hands of oppositional forces. As explained earlier, the 2002 defeat taught Orbán to take specific steps on behalf of the possibility of falling into the oppositional spectrum again.

Other independent institutions such as media, prosecutor's office, tax authority, and election commission were filled with Fidesz-loyalists, which were essential steps for controlling the judiciary (Scheppele 2018: 550). Scheppele (2018: 550) described this transformation as an autocratic revolution. After taking steps towards abolishing the core premise of liberal democracy, which is the separation of powers, the time came, at last, to make arrangements on the electoral procedure, which would grant Orbán and his party to stay in power by maintaining their supermajority even though they would not get the majority of the votes. As will be explained in upcoming chapters, Hungary was a polarized society, which affected the election results since the transition to democracy. That is why Hungary's electoral performance in the 2010 election was a novelty for the political system. However, Orbán, because of his previous experience with the elections, had the opportunity to foresee the upcoming elections would threaten his success and bring him one more time to the oppositional front. The changes in the electoral procedure have been taken as a result of this concern, which shows that it was fair since Fidesz only took the 45% of the votes in the next election. If the changes in the electoral procedure did not happen, then Fidesz could not preserve its supermajority in the parliament.⁷³ The new constitution granted citizenship to those living in the neighboring countries after the Treaty of Trianon. This has been a crucial electoral reserve for Orbán in the 2014 elections.

⁷² Following the abolishment, the president of the Court, András Baka, was dismissed from his position, and a pro-Fidesz justice has appointed.

⁷³ With the changes, Fidesz managed to preserve its two-thirds majority in the parliament.

Most Hungarians in the country preferred to vote for other parties, which has shown that they were not happy with the rule of Orbán and Fidesz. Nevertheless, as a clever and pragmatist leader, Orbán had the opportunity to toss people's expectations off.

As can be seen from here, Erdoğan, from very early days, knew that the way political institutions were designed in Turkey would threaten his power one day. He took significant steps to take control of the judiciary by having the argument that he and his party aimed to end the autocratic rule of the tutelage system created in the country. However, all his steps, combined with his third consecutive victory in the 2011 elections, led Turkey to drift into his autocratic rule. The literature started to mention Turkey with the adjectives of autocracy rather than democracy. In this regard, the famous explanation of one of the hybrid regime types, competitive authoritarianism, started to be used for describing the AKP rule under Erdoğan. While Erdoğan stepped into politics as promising hope for the future of the Middle Eastern region for democratization and turned to be an example for autocratic regimes in the world, Orbán, after remaining as an oppositional political actor in Hungary, at long last managed to win the elections in 2010. After being able to obtain power in his hand in the 1998 elections and unexpectedly falling to the opposition in the following two elections, the success in 2010 meant an important opportunity for Orbán to design Hungarian politics, which would serve him to stay in power more than one term and rule the country in his autocratic ideal. He, after obtaining power, restructured the constitution. This is a commonality among leaders showing autocratic tendencies, as explained in this chapter. By changing the rule of the game, by harming the rule of law and separation of powers, these leaders are putting more emphasis on executive power. They do this by harming the checks and balances system, and the judiciary is becoming a vital apparatus to be taken under control. As Scheppele (2018: 547) pointed these new autocrats “are attacking the basic principles of liberal and democratic constitutionalism because they want to consolidate power and entrench themselves in office for the long haul.”

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE:

PARTY AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION

By considering the importance of institutions started to be examined in *Chapter III*, this chapter will continue to focus on the institutional structure and its relationship to democratic backsliding. In this respect, after providing extensive knowledge on the intra-party structure literature, it will examine how the way AKP and Fidesz have constructed affects the autocratization process of Turkey and Hungary. Here, the research aims to find an answer to how different levels of society affect the autocratization process of the system.

4.1.Theoretical Framework

4.1.1. Defining Party and the Party System

The literature agreed on the importance of political parties for democratic governance. With their ‘open, participant-oriented, viable, and representative’ natures and through an environment of free and fair elections, they perform duties corresponding to democratic values (Katz and Crotty 2006). Here, the critical question of how democracy will be defined comes into the picture again, as mentioned in the above sections. In this respect, democracy could be considered representative politics in which parties are essential tools for representing the people. Here, another important question comes into the picture: why the party structures have changed in recent years and opened the way for the leaders with their parties to claim that the representative nature of the democratic system is not working correctly anymore? With this argument, populist politics gained momentum worldwide, which led to the rise of an authoritarian tone of the leaders and the parties in office. Before going further, we should examine the historical evaluation of party systems.

Historically, party-based politics could be traced back to the 19th century, when the parties became the central future of politics in many countries.⁷⁴ Not only parties but politics witnessed a changing flow during the 19th century, especially in Europe and North America, which led to the rise of mass electoral politics. So, these changes brought about the establishment of parliamentary groups, then expanded the electorate, and lastly, there developed a link between these two (Duverger 1954). In this respect, first of all, the power transferred to the legislatures, and following this, parties became essential actors, and then, the competition among parties brought the importance of voters' choices into the picture (Sartori 1976). Compared to these sequential definitions of the rise of the parties, the scholarship also provided some causal explanations in which they argued that the widening of suffrage brought the rise of parties (Epstein 1967). Different approaches to defining the rise of parties resulted because a single model could not be enough to explain the reasons behind this awakening of the parties since various legislative and electoral arenas exist in different countries. Also, the literature focused on the parties' evolutionary nature regarding liberal democracies while explaining the power structure of the party organization. According to the scholars, who followed this path, each party brought the reactionary one into presence, which helped evaluate different party types in the literature (Mair 1998).⁷⁵ The following paragraphs were reserved for explaining the historical evaluation of different party types from the 19th century onward.

Since the time of Ostrogorski (1982), parties have been classified into different types, being analyzed with their relationship to civil society (Duverger 1954; Neumann 1956; Panebianco 1988).⁷⁶ Modern parties were established in the US in the late 1820s and early 1830s.⁷⁷ Liberal parties, also named radical parties, were

⁷⁴ The party-based politics could be traced back to the 19th century, though there were parties before that time too. The difference was in the previous examples, parties were representing the leader or a political idea and was seen as dangerous for the national order.

⁷⁵ Here, Gunther and Diamond's (2003) study is an essential contribution to literature since they argued that the existing party typologies are based on Western examples and cannot correspond to new emerging party structures in different places of the world. This argument will be evaluated in upcoming pages.

⁷⁶ In addition to civil society, their relationship with the state is an essential indicator while dividing them into different types. Also, Ostrogorski's book was initially published in 1902. This thesis uses the 1982 edition. All references refer to this edition.

⁷⁷ As Duverger (1954: xxiii) puts it forward, the countries, except the US, was not knowing political parties in their current terms in the 1850s though after a hundred years, in the 1950s, parties were functioning in almost all of the civilized nations.

established in Belgium and Switzerland in the late 1840s, followed by the establishment of such a party (in the name of a parliamentary party) in Britain in the 1850s. When the time came to the 1880s, the Liberals and Conservatives gathered under the roof of a national organization. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Catholics and Social Democrats established highly centralized and mass-based party organizations (Boix 2009). Historically speaking, there was a pre-party system of representation at the very first phase of democratization. At that time, suffrage was limited to a small group of men, and the electoral rules were also limited to a single-member district and based on majoritarianism. Also, the electoral competition was decentralized since the candidates were leaning on their local clientelistic ties to obtain votes. These parties were named cadre parties since the networks of local notables characterized them.⁷⁸ In this respect, these parties would not be represented as national organizations but as local ones.⁷⁹

The above-mentioned historical conditions changed with the establishment of modern states. National politics did not have significance until the mid-19th century as it had afterward. Following the developments, national politics started to affect each citizen's life living in that sovereign territory, starting from the 19th century. This opened the way for the encouragement to represent all of the state's territories. These developments paved the way for increasing the number of parties within the political system and expanding the electoral machines. As explained in the previous paragraphs, until the introduction of these big-sized parties, party organization was gathered around the personal connections of the candidates. However, following these developments, the literature introduced a new party type called 'mass party' (Duverger 1954), regarded as a reaction to the cadre party (Katz and Mair 2002). With the establishment of such a party, the party's organizational structure broadened to grab the votes of the people who belong to different groups than the previous one. The mass party in its early phases corresponded to the idea that politics was all about competition, conflict, and cooperation among well-defined social groups. These social groups, which had been constructed by taking all aspects of an individual's life under a single roof, were represented by political parties. Here, political parties were

⁷⁸ They were also represented as 'elite parties' too.

⁷⁹ The literature described these parties as examples of individual representation since they functioned as an essential element of politics during the election (Neumann 1956).

regarded as the agents for these social groups, which served the members of these groups involved in politics.⁸⁰ The party program was designed to consider the groups' interests as essential inputs for the party. In this respect, the party required mass membership organizations to add the input of the masses into the policy-making process. In mass party organizations, the subcultural groups represented by the party were essential to capture the people's votes. In this respect, mass parties would be named the parties that aimed to include the excluded social groups, like the working-class voters, in the political arena. Here, the party's ability to mobilize the masses was vital in winning the elections. Through the inclusion process of the excluded ones, the party could mobilize in more practical terms, which would return as more vote shares in the elections.

Significant developments in the 1950s and 1960s made the ideological appeal lose importance. In other words, the traditional social boundaries forming the separate collective identities lost their importance. This weakening ended in a struggle to make a distinction between the voters. Also, with the rise of the idea of a welfare state with economic growth, the programs mentioned above of the parties lost their significance for the voters. Now, the voters started to seek programs gathering all of the people under its roof rather than dividing them in terms of partisan appeals. Also, the development in the media sector affected the relationship between the parties and voters (Ware 1987; Katz 1990; Gunther and Mughan 2000). The rise of electronic media, especially televisions, helped the leaders find more room to appeal their images in the eyes of the voters.⁸¹ These developments established a new party type called 'catch-all "people's" party' (Kirchheimer 1966). The idea of politics transformed itself from educating intellectually and morally, masses to reaching more people and having immediate electoral successes. In line with this idea, catch-all parties aimed to maximize the votes. Here, the relationship of voters with the parties transformed into a new era where the appeal of the persona of the party (in this circumstance, the party leadership) became more important than the party

⁸⁰ Through political parties, these groups had been able to demand on state and capture critical offices within the state by winning the elections.

⁸¹ This appeal helped voters feel like consumers rather than active participants (Kirchheimer 1966; Mair and Katz 1998).

program since, with the technological developments, the party leadership had the chance to reach to the voters directly.

The fourth party type came into presence with Mair and Katz's (1998) study in which they criticized the scholarship for taking the mass party system as the standard model (Lawson 1980; Sainsbury 1990).⁸² The emergence of new party types in the Western context brought the idea that the change did not occur only in the relationship between the party and the civil society but also in the relationship between the party and the state. In this respect, the previous party organizations worked as a step toward establishing a "cartel party," which focused on the party's relationship with the state. With social, cultural, and political developments, people started to feel the need to be a part of local organizations rather than a member of the parties. Since the citizens turned their faces towards local gatherings, the parties needed to find new resources for themselves, which resulted in their attempt to turn their faces towards the state. With this evolutionary nature of the parties, through the introduction of the cartel party, parties eluded from being simple brokers between civil society and the state to being a part of the state.

As a response to these typologies, Gunther and Diamond (2003: 167-168) argued that besides the richness of the literature, the existing political parties' models do not correspond to the full range of parties in the world. The most important reason for this deficit resulted because literature has leaned on the Western European party examples to develop a particular typology. One of the reasons for being unable to capture different party organizations worldwide resulted from the changing nature of communication between parties and voters. With televisions, the leaders started to reach voters directly. The most crucial deficit of existing typology is that it brings an excessive conceptual stretching into presence (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 168). The second deficit is that since the existing typologies were based on a wide variety of criteria, it did not provide an effort to make them more consistent and compatible with each other, crystallizing the cumulative theory-building problem (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 169). To overcome these deficits, Gunther and Diamond (2003: 171)

⁸² In this view, the mass party was regarded as an ideal social structure linked to democracy. However, Mair and Katz's (1998) argued that these characteristics were not corresponding to post-industrial societies.

introduced three criteria where they looked at the nature of the formal organization of the party, the nature of the party's programmatic commitments, and the strategy and behavioral norms of the party. In the end, they identified 15 different party types under genera of elite-based parties (traditional/local/notable and clientelistic parties), mass-based parties (divided as religion, nationalism, and socialism-based parties), ethnicity-based parties (ethnic and congress), electoralist parties (personalistic, catch-all, and programmatic), and movement parties (left-libertarian and post-industrial/extreme right).

Similarly, Wolinetz (2002: 137) by focusing on different parties of Canadian national parties (Liberals and Progressive Conservatives) and the Dutch Labour Party (also resembles the Christian Democrats of Liberals), argues that the existing party classifications and the existence of these two different kinds of parties point to a deficit in the literature. To overcome the deficit of the literature, as discussed earlier, new typologies were added to the literature. Catch-all parties were one of these. Jürgen-Puhle (2002) and Wolinetz (2002) by focusing on the catch-all party explanation, aim to show that introducing new categories to literature would end up with confusion rather than clarification. As Jürgen-Puhle (2002: 72) singled out, the catch-all parties witnessed a crisis in the 1970s and the 1980s. One of the reasons for the crisis happened earlier because of the inability of identifying the weakness of catch-all parties. They were weak in unifying capacities, policy disclosure, and leadership. Other reasons include economic factors and how voters and other political parties reacted to the changing environment. As could be seen from here, different types of parties are not able to describe the parties that rose around the world as a result of certain conditions, which shows the reality that the party typologies are open for being developed and would not be regarded as the de facto way to define different parties all around the world.

The literature argues that in almost all contemporary democracies, political parties work as the most important agents of political representation. Direct democracy is impossible nowadays since the countries' territories are too big to involve each citizen in decision-making. In addition, since the issues are various and they are too complex to be solved by a single mind, a citizen would not be able to master themselves, even if they would devote their whole time to politics. The obstacles of

modern-day politics mentioned above brought the reality that the citizens could not be directly involved in politics but needed to choose who would be going to govern and set policies on behalf of their names. So, they gave their rights to the representatives to make decisions and supervise those decisions for a certain period. In this respect, the electoral arena requires politicians to gather under a stable organization since a single individual's interests and desires would not be represented by them alone, which is called political parties. In its minimal definition, political parties could be described as people who share common political goals with a well-defined political agenda. Here, we should not forget that, unlike other social organizations, political parties aim to be effective in decision-making processes and obtain political power in their hands. As seen above, political parties are 'social organizations' which regulate the relationship between the state and the citizens. In this respect, voters need to be a part of the government, and political parties fulfill this desire. As long as parties build close relations with the voters, voters feel that they are being represented at the government level, and they are being convinced that their desires are finding voices at the state level.

Historically, the literature could not systematically evaluate the party systems (Kitschelt 2009). Two critical developments at the end of the 20th century highlighted the importance of studying party systems. These developments were the increasing power of the European Parliament and the development of party systems in newly emerging democracies in Eastern European countries and Russia. The scholars agreed that to understand the nature of the party systems, factors such as the number of parties, the size and nature of the parties, ideological distance, and their relationship with the social cleavages are important (Smith and Inkeles 1966). This thesis will use Sartori's definition, in which he defines a party system as "the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition" (1976, p. 44). On behalf of this definition, Maor and Smith (1993) argued that a party system should have more than one party in the system since the system depends on sharing between the parties. As seen from here, there needs to be more than one party for a party system within a country.

Lastly, recent developments that affected people's lives worldwide, such as globalization and the rise of new technologies, also affected the party systems.

Voters' preferences have also been evaluated with these new technologies and globalization. They seek different representatives to answer their desires in life. Also, the third wave of democratization had an essential effect on the evaluation of party politics. New democracies started to rise, and as mentioned above, the parties became vital tools in these newly emerged democracies. The literature, until very recently, focused on the party systems in democratic settings. However, the rise of radical right-wing movements, especially in Europe, and the decline of democratic values regarding the liberal nature of democracy brought the discussion of the rise of a new type of party structure in the world called "populist." This thesis will take the idea of a populist party as a starting point and, from then on, will evaluate the power structure of the party organization by referring to the 'presidentialization' argument, which is regarded as a recent phenomenon by the literature. Before going more profound, the next section will provide the literature on the relationship between democracy and party organization. To understand the party leader's role within the power structure of the party organization, first, we should identify the democratic and authoritarian internal party structures.

4.1.2. Internal Structure of the Party Organization

As explained in the above section, the literature on party politics mainly focused on party organizations in Western democracies. It found a meaningful relationship between the two concepts, political parties, and democracy. Scholars studying party organizations argued that political parties created the democratic system, and therefore, it would not be possible to think of such a system without political parties (Schattschneider 2004). However, the recent developments that took place and had an effect worldwide have shown that political parties are not present only in democratic environments but also in systems that remain in between democracy and autocracy. This thesis focuses on analyzing the internal structure of the party organization and its relationship with the regime type within the given context. When one looks at the literature would see a lack of a clear definition for 'party organization.' Still, in its minimal terms, party organization would be defined as the organizational structure of a party from bottom to top with its members, factions, currents, leadership, and how these different layers interact (Duverger 1954).

As mentioned above, even though it is law-like for today's democracies to gather politicians under a single roof, who share the same ideas and desires of a party for vote-seeking reasons, still the ways they are being organized vary over time across countries. In this regard, the political parties differ in two ways: on the one hand, their internal organizational structure differs from each other, and on the other hand, they differ in their appeals externally in electoral markets. So, they differ in their ideologies and what they promise to the voters, and secondly, they differ in their sizes according to their electoral support, parliamentary representation, and ability to hold their voters within their domain (Boix 2009).

Since the beginning of the 1980s, scholarship has treated parties as a whole while studying parties' strategies, tactics, and policies. So, these studies take the party as a unitary actor as the unit of analysis. Nevertheless, one should not forget that there was no agreement on the number and the type of units the party would be portioned. In this respect, Katz and Mair (1993), in their study, took the power structure of a party organization as constructed by different faces, which are interacting with each other, rather than dividing them according to parliamentary versus extra-parliamentary dichotomy or leader versus follower dichotomy. These three faces are the party's central office, the party in public office, and the party on the ground. The party in the central office corresponds to the national leadership of the party organization. In this regard, the central office is located in the capital and constructed by the national executive committee(s) on the one side and the central party staff/secretariat on the other (Katz and Mair 1993: 598-599). By definition, it has a domestic role in nurturing the well-being of the national executive, but with the resources, it could act more than that.⁸³ The party in public office corresponds to the party's role in parliament or government. This role of the party in public office, at least in democratic settings, is being obtained through electoral success. The party members in public office have different options to be rewarded as obtaining power or a certain status (which could be regarded as a physical reward) and a seat in the office. In addition to rewards, the party members in public office should have specific policy goals. These rewards and goals should appeal to the voters since they decide who will obtain a seat in public office with the rewards. The party's resources

⁸³ The primary resources that a party's central office has would be "centrality, expertise, and formal position at the apex of the party organization" (Katz and Mair 1993: 599).

in the public office would be listed as the decision-making power, patronage links, time, expertise, and information.⁸⁴ The party on the ground includes members and activists. Here, the members constitute the basis of financial supporters, loyal voters, and regular activists. The party on the ground would serve social functions to the members as a local leadership position, rewards of patronage, or nomination for the office (Katz and Mair 1993: 598). The party on the ground has its resources as the member labor, which would be necessary during electoral campaigning and other political propaganda. Also, we should not forget that the party on the ground by itself is an essential resource for other faces since it means money and votes simultaneously. Party on the ground could be described as a phase that provides local knowledge to the party, regarded as one of the most critical components for winning an election.

The scholarship, going further from the democratic settings of established democracies in a Western context, also came to a point where the power structure of a party organization is described as either democratic, authoritarian, or in between both of them, similar to the regime types (Ayan 2009). To understand the evaluation of the internal party organization towards a democratic or an authoritarian one, understanding the structure of the party organization by itself means a lot. The scholarship applied different methods to see whether the internal party structure is democratic, which will be explained in length in upcoming pages. Specifically, particular decision-making processes were interrogated, including the candidate selection process (Hazan 2002; Rahat 2009), the party leader selection process (Kenig 2009), and defining the policy positions. For the democratic system, the candidate selection process seen as a vital decision-making process of a party organization (Schattschneider 2004; Kirchheimer 1966).⁸⁵ As Rahat (2013) stated, the party's internal organization needs to be democratic to call a regime democratic too. Regarding the three faces introduced in the above paragraph, literature focused on the party on the ground for labeling the party's internal organization either as democratic or not. In this respect, if the party on the ground involves in the decision-

⁸⁴ Members of the party in public office are being paid for what they are doing and have the power to gather the expertise and information of the state bureaucracy.

⁸⁵ Here, some critical questions arise, like whether there needs to be an approval process by the leader for the candidates and whether all members are granted the right to be nominated for candidacy.

making processes more and more, then the party is being considered more and more democratic.

Furthermore, if its influence is lesser, then the party is described more authoritarian. As explained in the previous section, the literature, which had focused on liberal democracies and the power structure of parties in such regimes, focused on macro-level developments such as globalization, new media technologies, and the individualization of societies. While doing this, scholars focused on the level of influence of the party on the ground during the decision-making processes (Katz and Mair 1995; Koole 1996; Kitschelt 2000; Katz 2001; Bille 2001; Blyth and Katz 2005). With these developments, the parties in liberal democracies turned their faces more towards the state than civil society, affecting their democratic nature. Through this changing relationship, the democratic mass parties of the time had turned into a catch-all and cartel party.

The deficit of the literature comes from the fact that the scholars, while coming up with the definition of a party, party system, and the power structure of the internal party organization, focused on the cases of established liberal democracies. The lens the literature used brought a limitation in describing the power structure within the party organization when a researcher focused on emerging democratic cases or unconsolidated ones.⁸⁶ Here, we should remind ourselves that the primary duty of a party organization is to catch votes. In this respect, political parties are structured to make certain decisions about whom they will mobilize to win the elections and how they will mobilize these people. There exist several ways to achieve these two points. One of them is providing material goods to the voters, which is being named as the clientelistic relationship of the party with its voters.⁸⁷ The other options for bringing the voters under the party's roof include putting identity, program, or ideology as the basis. When liberal democratic cases are compared with emerging democracies regarding the party-voter relationship, they have similarities and differences. In this respect, parties construct strategies to appeal to the voters similarly. They develop

⁸⁶ The literature remarks these cases as a 'nascent' phase. So, the literature also calls them examples of nascent democracies.

⁸⁷ The patronage linkages between the parties and the voters will be explained in upcoming pages.

policy proposals on particular issues and represent themselves as pragmatic governors who share the identities and values of the voters.

Different from each other, parties in emerging democracies are likelier to have weak partisanship and lack a proper party system. In this respect, unlike the advanced democracies in which partisanship is being developed through sociological issues such as socioeconomic, religious, or regional sociological issues, in emerging democracies, patronage linkages are critical. The scholars introduced different examples of party authoritarianism while studying emerging democracies. As Van Biezen (2005: 149) put it forward, compared to the established liberal democratic examples, party authoritarianism started during the formation process in emerging democracies rather than during the processes of change. The transition to democratic settings had occurred with the intention of elites in the countries of the third wave of democratization, which resulted in the rise of centralized party organizations. Regarding this reality, scholars agree that the power structure of the party organizations in such examples is weak and leader-oriented (Van Biezen 2003). The main limitation that the party politics literature in emerging democracies resulted from because scholars explained the authoritarian power structure of the party organization by using macro-level reasons, which closed the road for the possibility of a change in these parties, which would be experienced in the upcoming years (Ayan 2009).

As explained above, a group of scholars within party politics is studying the power structure of the party organization, focusing on the relationship between democracy and party politics. These scholars argue that political parties are essential for democratic regimes, and even they take their argument a step forward and argue that their presence is an essential component for the consolidation process of such regimes (Özbudun 2000). The scholarship provides two approaches to internal party democracy. The first approach focuses on how power is distributed within the party between the leader and the members (Pedersen 2010; Cross and Katz 2013).⁸⁸ Regarding this relationship, the party on the ground should have an active and autonomous participant role in the decision-making processes to call the internal

⁸⁸ Here, the supporters would be added to this equation.

party structure an example of a democratic one.⁸⁹ The second approach takes the democratic power structure of the party organization as a process that is shaped by the country's political structure (Cross and Katz 2013). In addition to these, the scholarship agrees that the candidate selection and the policy-making processes are the most critical indicators that show whether the internal organization of a party is democratic or not. On the other spectrum of the literature, scholars focus on the reasons for party authoritarianism. These scholars argued that the party, which could not fulfill the points mentioned above, organizationally has authoritarian nature in its internal structure.⁹⁰

Regarding the scholarly works within the realm of the power structure in the party organization, we see that the literature provides us with the idea that the democratic values within the society would flourish through the party organization's power structure. As seen from here, the literature focuses on how the power structure within the party organization nurtures. This thesis starts from this and aims to provide an insight into the power structure within the party organization in emerging and unconsolidated democracies in the world, and aims to understand whether there is a correlation between the power structure of the party organization and the power structure of the hybrid regimes. While doing this, the linkage between the party and the voters, which is analyzed through the patron-client relationship, and the leader's role within the party, which is analyzed through the "presidentialization of politics" argument rather than focusing only on the "personalization of politics" argument is being studied. The following sections of this chapter will explain the points mentioned above.

4.1.2.1. Intra-Party Democracy

Political parties have been taken as vital institutions for democracy in modern terms. Schattschneider (2004: 1)⁹¹ clarified that political parties “play the major role as makers of democratic government’ and added that ‘the condition of the parties is the

⁸⁹ The party's constitution is essential in evenly distributing the power within a political party's hierarchical structure. In this respect, the constitution should include the power share between the actors within the party organization.

⁹⁰ Here, the idea is that if the power would be concentrated in the leader's hands, then the party would be named as having an authoritarian structure.

⁹¹ The book was initially published in 1942. This thesis uses the 2004 edition. All references refer to this edition.

best possible evidence of the nature of any regime.” Political parties in the 20th century turned from undesirable organizations to desired ones, which is taken as a distinguishing feature and a guardian of the representative government (Scarrow 2005: 21). Also, the intra-party democracy (IPD) has taken as crucial for overcoming the democratic deficit. It is argued that the democratic internal structure of a party strengthens the democratic culture (Amundsen 2016: 50). There exist different approaches toward IPD in the literature. On the one hand, it is argued that if a party would not internally democratic, then it would not be possible to imagine a democratically structured regime. The IPD plays an essential role in the consolidation of democracy. It could be stated that the structure of the institutions within the society at different levels works as educators for citizens. So, a party that has an internally democratic structure works as a role model for the citizens to show off how the procedures should be within a democratic regime. On the other hand, some other scholars argue that having a highly democratic internal structure would harm the power of the party’s inner leadership (Mimpen 2007: 1).

The works on the internal structure of political organizations could be traced back to early research on parties (Michels 1962; Ostrogorski 1982).⁹² While studying democratic regimes, scholars focus on the effect of institutions within the system on the level of democracy (Celep 2021: 768). Political parties are one of these sub-level institutions, which scholarship focuses on to understand the effect of the inner life of an institution within the system for the bigger picture. As Lancaster (2014: 1672) pointed “to call oneself a democrat implies a respect for democracy at all levels,” which takes the internally democratic organization of the political parties as a vital component for achieving an established democratic rule. Parties adopted the role of shaping the political identities of citizens and, through mobilizing the masses under a single roof, developed policies that helped the citizens live in better conditions (Laebens 2020: 342). So, in its primary connotation, IPD refers to the democratic setting of a party where the party members are included in intra-party deliberation and decision-making (Scarrow 2005: 3). In this regard, IPD means the same for a political party, what democracy means for a system (Celep 2021: 769).

⁹² Michels’s book was initially published in 1911. This thesis uses the 1962 edition. All references refer to this edition.

The scholarship focuses on IPD, especially in new and emerging democracies, since the formation of the party helps to explore whether the system will be going to manage to consolidate its democratic nature or going to shift towards an authoritarian drift. By focusing on specific indicators such as candidate, leader, and policy selection procedures and the coalition formation dimension, the literature focuses on a party's inclusiveness, centralization, and institutionalization aspects to understand the level of democracy within the organization.⁹³ As Lancaster (2014: 1674) pointed out, specific questions are essential in determining whether a party is genuinely internally democratic: "Who can join the party? Who can participate in decision-making? Is there a pre-selection of candidates or policy? Are there demographic quotas? Do some members have veto power? Who can nominate? Who can run?" These questions are aimed to be answered by the scholars of IPD on the inclusiveness and centralization dimensions. By taking IPD as a "characteristic of the distribution of decision-making power among members and leaders within a political party" (Croissant and Chambers 2010: 196), inclusiveness is referring to whether all members of the parties are being included in the decision-making process and centralization is referring whether the national party organization is in the hands of a small group of party members or whether the party has a decentralized structure.

Hazan and Rahat (2010) focus on the candidate selection method used by the literature for measuring IPD (Laebens 2020; Kabasakal 2014). There are four dimensions of the candidate selection procedure: candidacy, selectorate, decentralization, and appointment and voting systems. The fundamental question of candidacy is 'who can be selected?' which focuses on whether all party members are eligible to raise themselves as candidates or restrictions exist towards them. The selectorate asks, 'Who is selecting?' referring to the body within the organization that selects the candidates. Hazan and Rahat (2010: 35-6) distinguish the selection method through the selectorate in terms of inclusive and exclusive dimensions. In this regard, the most exclusive selection procedure happens when leader makes the decision by himself. In contrast, the highly exclusive method is regarded as the selection procedure by the group of party elites. In this equilibrium, the voters, as the deciders eligible to vote in the general election, are regarded as the most inclusive

⁹³ Literature on IPD takes the decentralization aspect as an essential indicator. Regarding the centralization dimension, this thesis refers to the decentralization aspect of the parties.

method, and the party members, as the deciders in the European party system, as the highly inclusive method. As seen from here, the candidate selection procedure becomes more democratic when participation in the process widens. Decentralization refers to the level where the candidates are selected, and the voting/appointment system dimension focuses on which procedure is taken into account during the candidate nomination process.

The selection procedure is vital since the candidates determine the parties' outlook during elections and in the office. Besides candidate selection, the policy selection procedure plays a vital role in IPD. As Scarrow (2005: 10) pointed "individual party members may be asked to vote on specific policy positions in the most inclusive parties." However, parties generally prefer less inclusive methods where they give this role to a committee. In general, the policy selection procedure asks, "What role do party elites, party members, and/or supporters play in setting party policies? At which levels do they participate in the drafting of party policies?" (Croissant and Chambers 2010: 197). As seen from here, participation and representation are essential for indicating the level of democracy within the party organization. Through opening the way for participation, the road for representation of the ideas and interests belonging to minorities and disadvantaged groups also is being opened. This could also be linked to the inclusiveness issue; the more a party has an inclusive nature, the more it would represent the whole of the society.

Lastly, the coalition formation aspect is considered another essential indicator for IPD. Whether the party leaders are obliged by party regulations to take the approval of other party members before entering into any coalitions is regarded as important for the democratic organizational structure of the party (Amundsen 2016: 51). In addition to inclusiveness and decentralization of a party to be regarded as essential indicators for IPD, the institutionalized structure of the party plays an important role. The more a party has an institutionalized organizational structure, the more it becomes to be internally democratic since it functions according to specific rules and procedures.

In the 'school of democracy' approach, IPD is regarded as necessary for not only creating a democratic culture within the party but also within the society (Amundsen

2016: 50). The idea here is that parties function as the educators of people in line with democratic values. So, by providing opportunities for participating in the decision-making process of the party organization, the citizens would be equipped with the civic skills necessary for a democratic regime. Democratic ethos becomes important when citizens realize they must act in common rather than individually in certain situations. So, political parties play an important role in gathering citizens for their involvement in the decision-making process by using democratic means (White and Ypi 2010: 810). In this respect, White and Ypi (2010) introduced three nourishing sources for democratic ethos: normative, motivational, and executive. Normative source realizes political goals. So, it focuses on the result of political actions and the principles behind them. The political goals should be pursued by realizing that they are, one way or another, cultivating the whole. Nurturing this source gives a political appeal to the complaints raised in society and brings the possibility of a better society into the picture. The normative source needs to have motivational support. Citizens should be disabused to collective political subjecthood, where it should be shown that the goals they want to achieve would be possible with collective action. The last important source for convincing the citizens for the worth of political agency is the existence of execution, which shows that political power and tools are needed to fight against them. White and Ypi (2010: 813) pointed out that if there is an erosion in these three sources, there would be democratic engagement and a loss of conviction of the worth of the political agency. By realizing these three sources as important for democratic engagement, they take political parties as an important tool to promote these sources. As Amundsen (2016: 50) pointed “the ‘school’ function of parties is to train, educate and coach people in democratic values, principles, and procedures” and “it should encompass not only party members and cadres but also sympathizers, voters, and the general public.”

Besides the positive side of the scholarship, there exist skeptics who consider the possibility that too much democracy would harm the power of the party's inner leadership (Scarrow 2005; Teorell 1999). Also, the democratic procedures of the internal organization of a party would bring the possibility of crises within the parties and also splits from the organization (Mimpen 2007: 1). As Demirkol (2018: 101) points party splitting process takes place, “by the formation of intra-party groups whose identities and interests conflict with those of the ruling leadership.” The

literature has named these intra-party groups the factions (*hizip*). Factionalism within the political parties is regarded as a problem by many and even as an obstacle to the effective functioning of the party. The fundamental reason for this is “factionalism in account provides a better understanding of the internal balance of power within parties by giving insights into the fragmentation of each party arena, and the existence of efficient, although informal, vertical links between them that run parallel to the official party hierarchy, and in fact often bypass it” (Massicard 2013: 74). So, analyzing factionalism helps us to see how party organization is functioning inside, which is shedding light to the intra-democracy level of the organization. Factionalism is regarded as a threat to party unity. So, denial or whitewashing is typical for the party leadership to deal with such developments (Massicard 2013: 55). Besides party leaderships efforts through disciplinary measures to work for party unity, intra-party factionalism is the common element for splinter parties (Demirkol 2018: 102).

4.1.2.2. Intra-Party Authoritarianism

At the beginning of the 20th century, Robert Michels, in his famous book on political parties, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, introduced the theory of the Iron Law of Oligarchy (ILO). From then on, social scientists supported the idea that organizations sooner or later turn their face from democratic to oligarchic control (Fisher 1994: 129). Michels realized that large-scale organizations such as nation-states, trade unions, churches, and political parties could not rule the country alone. That is why these organizations, sooner or later, would transfer power to a few. In this sense, oligarchy refers to “the control of a society or an organization by those at the top, is an intrinsic part of bureaucracy or large-scale organization” (Lipset 1962: 15).

In this equilibrium, Michels regarded oligarchy as a necessity. In his view, besides the good intention, the emergence of oligarchy is inevitable when one looks at it technically and practically (Michels 1962: 72). Seeing oligarchical shift as a necessity would be explained by referring to a natural organism: “an organization is a social organism where each part provides specialized functions useful for the whole” referred as the “functional foundations of the emergence of oligarchy” (Diefenbach 2019: 549). Michels, in his book, focuses on a particular organization,

political parties, and by taking the argument of “as a result of organization, every party or professional union becomes divided into a minority of directors and a majority of directed” (Michels 1962: 70) explains the necessity of oligarchical turn of the organization by analyzing the leaders’ and the masses’ role.

In Michels view (1962: 61), “democracy is inconceivable without organization” since he saw the organization as the only means for creating a collective will. Though in the end, by introducing ILO, he shows the impossibility of democracy in an organization. In this sense, he realizes that how democratic or spontaneous the election of leaders does not matter. Eventually, they would become irrevocable and take control of the organization because of the need for their professionalization or technical skills. He formulates the sociological law of political parties at the end of his work: “It is organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, or the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy” (Michels 1962: 365).

As discussed, the literature defines the power structure of a party with three faces: party in the central office, party in public office, and party on the ground. By arguing that the power structure of a party in the literature is derived from liberal democracies, Ayan-Musil (2011) introduced the intra-party authoritarianism concept by looking at the newly developing democracies. In these democracies, more overlapping features are observed between parties in public and central offices. Since the literature assumes that intra-party democracy promotes when the party on the ground gains more influence on the decision-making process, this overlap shows that when the party leaders gain more influence in central or public office, authoritarianization is extending (Ayan-Musil 2011: 13-4).

Intra-party democracy or authoritarianism would be observed through the decision-making process within a party organization. The central decision-making process of a party organization would be seen in the candidate selection, party leader selection, and policy position. So, the more the party on the ground is involved in these processes, the more party is regarded as democratic. In contrast, the more the party on the ground is excluded from these processes, the more the party is regarded as authoritarian. As seen from here, the party's position on the ground matters more

than the inclusiveness, decentralization, and institutionalization aspects of the party organization, as offered in the intra-party democracy. Ayan-Musil (2011: 16) argues that under certain conditions, each of the points mentioned above has the potential to hinder the influence of the party on the ground over the decision-making process.

The Inclusiveness of the selectorate, as long as it holds checks and balances in its hands, is regarded as the most critical indicator for intra-party democracy. As Ayan-Musil (2011: 17) states: “In internally democratic parties, the party on the ground (both members and activists) is included in the decision-making processes and able to oppose or remove the party leaders in central and public office when they deem it necessary. However, in authoritarian parties, the party on the ground is excluded from the decision-making processes and is subordinate to the power of the party leaders both in central and public office.” Unlike the established parties of Western countries, the newly developing democracies have weaker institutional premises. Especially the elite-driven nature of establishing democracy in these countries, the parties did not have the choice to be originated within the civil society but worked as top-down organizations. As Ayan-Musil (2011: 24) pointed “in the newer democracies the linkage with the state came immediately in the wake of democratization, leaving parties embedded in the state from the very beginning.” This paved the way for the central office to hold power in its hand and avoid possible conflicts within the party. So, the party leaders in central and public office hold the power resources in their hands and control all of the party structure, whereas they give less attention to demands and reactions to the party on the ground, representing intra-party authoritarianism (Ayan-Musil 2011: 24).

4.1.3. Party and Its Relation with Its Leader

The concentration of power in the hands of the party leader is a new theme for democratic political systems. In this regard, ‘presidentialization’ is a new phenomenon in party politics literature, which arose due to the centralization of politics in the executive hands regarding the established democracies since the 1970s and 1980s. With this centralization, the head of the government and party leader gained much more importance, and as a result, scholars started to refer to the centralization, personalization, and ‘presidentialization’ of politics. (Mughan and

Patterson 1992; Cole 1993; M. Foley 1993; Michael Foley 2000; Mughan 2000; D.J. Samuels 2002; Poguntke and Webb 2005; Karvonen 2010; Aarts, Blais, and Schmitt 2011; Bittner 2011; Passarelli 2015). As Poguntke and Webb (2005: 1) identified, "presidentialization denominates a process by which regimes are becoming more presidential in their actual practice without, in most cases, changing their formal structure, that is, their regime-type." At this point, the difference between the parliamentary and presidential systems came into the scene again.⁹⁴ In this respect, some scholars focused on the constitutional structure of the countries they are working with to understand the effect of the presidentialization of the organizational structure of a party (D.J. Samuels 2002; D.J. Samuels and Shugart 2010).⁹⁵

As explained in the historical part, the literature on party politics developed considering the Western world. In this respect, it is developed by the parliamentary systems of Europe and, to some extent, the presidential system of the U.S.⁹⁶ The scholars, who focused on the constitutional structure, argued that the presidential and parliamentary systems have specific effects on how the parties will be organized and behave. In this respect, the presidential system provides more executive power resources to the leader and more autonomy from the political parties compared with the party leaders within the parliamentary systems. As explained in the section on the historical evaluation of the political parties of this chapter, the Western world's political parties have experienced transformations with the changing societal balances. The changing nature of parties in Western terms did affect the ideological shifts and the internal party organization structure. The intra-party balances of power between the leader and the members have also experienced a transformation with these developments. Epstein (1967) and Panebianco (1988) argued that the changing intra-party balance of power was essential for the autonomy of leaders in strategic terms, which helped them to implement their preference for electoral strategies.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ In Chapter III, both systems were analyzed in detail. Therefore, they will not be explained here again.

⁹⁵ As Samuels and Shugart (2010) put it forward, the party behavior mimics the country's constitutional structure.

⁹⁶ In the U.S. example, presidentialism does not relate to party development from time to time.

⁹⁷ Panebianco builds his argument on Kirschheimer's intellectual foundation.

Poguntke and Webb (2005) introduced three effects of presidentialism: leadership power resources, leadership autonomy, and personalization of the electoral process. First, presidentialism provides the leader (head of the government) with superior executive power resources.⁹⁸ Second, the leader enjoys considerable autonomy vis-à-vis their party, whose power rests upon electoral success. Moreover, last, the election process is shaped by the candidates' personalistic appeal. After the introduction of the effects of presidentialism, Poguntke and Webb (2005: 5) restructure their definition of presidentialization of politics as "the development of (a) increasing leadership power resources and autonomy within the party and the political executive respectively, and (b) increasingly leadership-centered electoral processes. Essentially, three central arenas of democratic government are affected by these changes, which we may refer to as three faces of presidentialization, namely the executive face, the party face, and the electoral face, respectively."

The presidentialization of politics would occur in the executive office, party organization, or the electoral process. For the executive office, the increasing power of the leader would result from growing autonomy and enhancing the power resources. The power resources would include those gathered from formal powers, staff, and funding. Nevertheless, it could also depend on the agenda-setting capacity and defining alternatives at stake. Here, the leader's ability to communicate with the masses is essential. If the leader can influence the perception of the decision-makers or the public, then he would expand the power resources. The second place where the presidentialization of power would reveal itself is the political party, which would reason a shift in intra-party power to the leader's benefit. The leader gains autonomy through building personal relations with the party members. These personal relationships bring the candidate-centered electioneering in the party into the picture. As seen above, the leader's power and autonomy from his party are vital for executives and party faces. Lastly, in the electoral process, the shift towards a presidential one could occur differently. The first one is that the appeal of the leadership starts to have more emphasis in the election campaign. Secondly, the

⁹⁸Here, the structure of a presidential system could be taken into account. In presidentialism, the executive is not responsible for the parliament and can form a cabinet without interruption by other institutions.

media coverage would be more likely to focus on the leader; and thirdly, the leader would start to be more effective in voting behavior.⁹⁹

Regarding the presidentialization of governance in modern democracies, we could discuss different reasons. The first one is the internationalization of politics. Nowadays, the countries' challenges would be overcome through international cooperation. The second important factor is the growth of electronic media since the early 1960s. The type of mass communication experienced a critical evaluation with the rise of electronic media. The privatization of television nurtured these changes. In the early 1960s, the debate on the ideology ended, and the parties witnessed the transformation, which brought an erosion to the traditional linkages between the mass parties and their supporters. With these developments, the voters started to give more importance to the personal qualities. All of the points mentioned above opened the way for the literature to discuss the personalization of politics and the power structure within the party organization, then turned to the discussion of the presidentialization of politics and the power structure within the party organization. By considering the developments in the literature, this thesis focuses on how the presidentialization of the power structure within the party organization affects the presidentialization of politics and, in the end, turns the existing unconsolidated democratic systems into hybrid forms such as competitive authoritarianism and illiberal democracy.

4.1.4. Party and Its Relation with Voters

As mentioned in the above sections, the studies on emerging democracies focus on particular questions to how the cleavages within the party structure emerge, through which means a party can mobilize its voters, and the most important of them is how the party manages to make its voters stand by it for a long time when it gains power once. The examples from emerging democracies show that the patronage linkages that the party builds with its voters are the most crucial parameters for explaining the

⁹⁹ The scholarship studying the newer democracies argues that the leader's role in the election results is essential. In the cases that have more established democracies, the position of leadership within the party and its effect on the voters' preferences vary according to the institutional context as the leader's position becomes more critical in presidential and semi-presidential systems compared to parliamentary ones; and more critical in majoritarian electoral systems when compared with two-party systems.

above questions (Hagopian 2009).¹⁰⁰ Starting from this point of the literature, this thesis takes the importance of the patronage linkages for the party to obtain power into the cases of parties in competitive authoritarian regimes.

In the early studies of political parties, the focus was given to parties' contribution to the electoral process by focusing on how they helped to structure voters' choices at the election. In this regard, the parties are represented as informational organizations for the voters. In addition to this, parties played an essential role in organizational and legislative terms. The milestone study on the relationship between the political parties and the voters came from Lipset and Rokkan (1967), arguing that the party cleavages emerged due to the changing nature of the socio-economic structures. As a result of these socio-economic transformations, the societies would experience certain divisions as center-periphery and religious cleavages; or the cleavage between the working-class groups and the owners of the capital. While Lipset and Rokkan (1967) came up with their studies, the political context of the time was shaped by which parties' organizational strategies played an important role in developing close relationships between the parties and the voters. By bringing the voters under the roof of grass-root memberships and, if not under the roof of organized groups such as trade unions, nurtured the stability of the voters' voting behavior. This stability also resulted because they were gathering information from these organizations. At that time, the elections were gathered around the idea that the party with the highest support would be elected to government office. This was also meaningful for the established parties since their votes were stable. Different from these scholars, Sartori (1969) focused on the emergence of party cleavages from a different angle. He acknowledged that some cleavages did not turn into party cleavage examples and argued that parties were not the results of classes, but the classes were the ones that received their identities from the parties.

Since the late 1990s, scholars have focused on the changing circumstances and their effects on the party-voter relationship. Compared to the previous studies, which

¹⁰⁰ Besides the clientelistic relations within the party's power structure and with the voters as one of the crucial points for the authoritarianization of the system, there are also other reasons. In addition to clientelistic relations, the literature also focuses on the party leader's appeal to the voters and its effect on the power structure within the party. This party leader and the voter relationship will be explained below.

focused on the social cleavages that caused a conflict between the left and right, these scholars argued that the conflict between the left and the right would not be enough to explain the relationship between the party and the voters. With the changing nature of the societies, conflicts started to take the service production; and they became more focused on the international market economy. All of these opened the way for the rise of the importance of 'post-materialistic values' as increasing people's life quality.¹⁰¹ Considering these, certain studies found that the voters' preferences were not stable (Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2000).

Considering the literature, this thesis focuses on the populist parties from another angle. So, the charismatic and personal appeal of the leader and the party organization plays an essential role in populist political settings while understanding how a regime would turn its face from democracy to autocracy. In political terms, the representatives, who provide material goods, and citizens, who depend on these material goods, conduct the patron-client relationship by creating an exchange chain. As explained in the previous sections, elections are essential to democratic systems. The voters have the chance to choose who will be the political representative. This competitive environment paves the way for the representatives to benefit from different vote-catching strategies, including building a patron-client relationship with the voters.

The literature on clientelistic relationships focused on the linkage between politicians, parties, and citizens. The linkage between politicians and citizens is based on a material exchange in many political systems in the world. In Kitschelt and Wilkinson's (2007: 2) words, "clientelistic accountability represents a transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services." Studies on clientelism, which developed a framework in sociological and anthropological terms in the 1960s and 1970s, still make sense for understanding the relationship between politicians and voters. The most important future of those studies was to show that this patron-client phenomenon belonged to underdeveloped political systems, where institutionalism was in its first phase (Magaloni, Díaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007: 182) As Scott

¹⁰¹ Inglehart (1977; 1987; 1997) predicted the rise of post-materialistic values in his studies before they took place.

(1972) put it forward, the patron-client relationship is uneven since the client would not have an option since s/he would need that job opportunity for survival.

4.2. AKP and Fidesz

4.2.1. AKP and Erdoğan

4.2.1.1. National Outlook Movement and Necmettin Erbakan

National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş Hareketi) and Necmettin Erbakan had an undeniable effect on the establishment of AKP with the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. That is why this section will start by examining the development of Islamist parties under the shelter of the movement and Erbakan's effect on political Islam and Erdoğan. The relationship between Erbakan and Erdoğan was an example of a master-apprentice relationship.¹⁰² In years, after feeling confident as a politician, he felt powerful enough to criticize his master. His desire to be as successful as his master ended up in a clash between the two, which ended up with the split of Erdoğan from the party and the establishment of AKP with the reformist wing of the movement. However, after spending more than two decades in power, Erdoğan's leadership within the party resonated with his master's ruling style, which once he was criticized for having an authoritarian nature.¹⁰³

The radical transformative agenda of the Kemalist social engineering project started to be softened in the 1940s. In this regard, the 7th Congress of CHP had been an important step when the old guard wing of the party brought the softening of the secularism issue to the table. In this regard, they recommended relaxing how the party dealt with religion. This paved the way for changing the state's attitude towards Islam. So, publicized Islam had the chance to show itself in the political arena. The 1960 coup d'état and 1961 Constitution had an essential effect on how political Islam

¹⁰² This kind of relationship could be traced back culturally in the Turkish context.

¹⁰³ This point is beneficial for the argument of the thesis, which considers the importance of political culture to understand the autocratization process of the system. As Gabriel García Márquez mentioned in his famous book *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970), a person's life does not follow a linear line but has a circular motion of her/his ancestors. To understand Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, we should, first of all, understand the political discourse of his mentor, since no matter how far he wanted to get away from Erbakan's political style, today's Erdoğan is portraying a similar autocratic and leader-oriented image.

was shaped in the Turkish case. The liberal nature of the 1961 Constitution opened the way to establishing autonomous social organizations, which helped Islamist groups find a ground to flourish their organizations. So, regarding this, the roots of the National Outlook Movement would be traced back to the late 1960s. Also, Süleyman Demirel's increasing popularity with Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi, AP*) in 1965 substantially affected it. Demirel stated the importance of respecting Islam since it should be defined as an individualistic way of religiosity and a precaution for the leftist movements. In 1967, a group of deputies and a senator in AP decided to establish a new party with an Islamic outlook; Necmettin Erbakan was one of them. However, they realized their initiative would not catch up to the 1969 elections. So, they declared themselves independent candidates for the first time in this election.

Necmettin Erbakan was born in 1926 to a family who could be described as wealthy since his father was an assize judge, and they owned lands in Sinop (Erbakan 2016). After completing high school at Istanbul Boys High School (*İstanbul Erkek Lisesi*), he studied mechanical engineering at Istanbul Technical University (*İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, İTÜ*). After completing his bachelor's degree, he continued his academic study working as an assistant at his university and visited Germany. He returned to Turkey in 1956 and started to work at a factory. This factory experience had a significant effect on shaping his upcoming political agenda. Following the 1969 elections, in 1970, National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP*) had established under his leadership. Since MNP was Turkey's first party representing political Islam, it had many deficits. The most crucial problem that the party needed to deal with was the absence of a clear ideological stance. This resulted because of the inexperienced party cadre too. In addition to all of these, the existing constitutional structure of the state was also limiting the possibility of making independent Islamic politics. With all of the problems mentioned above, following the declaration of the military memorandum in March 1971, the party closed down in May 1971, and Erbakan left the country.¹⁰⁴

The First Islamist party experience was followed by establishing of the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP*) in 1972 and lasted until the 1980 coup

¹⁰⁴ During this period, Erbakan went to Switzerland.

d'état. The 1973 elections had been a victory for MSP since it managed to take 11.8% of the votes, which meant having 48 seats in the parliament. Also, it established a coalition government with Bülent Ecevit's CHP in 1974. It then had the chance to be a coalition partner of the first Nationalist Front Coalition under the leadership of AP in 1975. Here, it should not be forgotten that the Islamic movement of the 1970s carried traces of leftist patterns that were effective both in Turkey and in the world.¹⁰⁵ So, MSP's political agenda was shaped around the leftist social justice concepts. The 1977 election results regressed the success of MSP to 8.6%, which resulted in being unable to become a coalition partner of the second Nationalist Front Coalition. Radical Islam gained momentum at the end of the 1970s and had an essential effect on Turkey.¹⁰⁶ A public meeting in Konya prepared by MSP showed that the radicalization of Islam affected not only the younger strata of the Islamists in Turkey but also the elder ones. A little while after this meeting, the military took control through the coup d'état and managed the trial of MSP executives at the Martial Court. The military rule banned all existing parties and banned the leaders from politics.

After the closure of MSP, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi, RP*) was established in 1983 under the leadership of a lawyer, Ali Türkmen. However, because of the structure of the political system, in which the military had the role of deciding which party would be allowed to compete in the elections, RP could not enter into the elections. During this period, RP needed to deal with what was lost as a result of the junta¹⁰⁷ and also with the membership loss because of the establishment of the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi, ANAP*).¹⁰⁸ To return to where MSP left the political scene, RP needed to wait for the return of Erbakan as the party leader in

¹⁰⁵ During this period, the hadith "The one who sleeps while his/her neighbor is hungry is not one of us" was continuously repeated" (Çakır 1994: 546).

¹⁰⁶ The Islamic Revolution of Iran had a significant effect.

¹⁰⁷ As a result of the coup d'état, the assets of the MSP were confiscated, and the leading figures of the party were forbidden to engage in politics

¹⁰⁸ MSP lost lots of its members to ANAP during this period. Turgut Özal, the founder of ANAP, was the brother of former MSP member and minister of the interior Korkut Özal. Also, Turgut Özal had been raised close to the leader of the İskenderpaşa order, a strong branch of the Nakşibendi tariqa, Mehmed Zahid Kotku, who had been seen as the religious leader of the National Outlook Movement. This had a substantial effect on explaining why many MSP members decided to transfer to ANAP. In addition to that, after the death of Mehmed Zahid Korkut, his son-in-law Prof. Dr. Mahmud Esat, became the leader of the tariqa, and he did not have good relations with Erbakan (Çakır 2018b).

1987. Meanwhile, Erdoğan started stepping into the Turkish political scene as a popular political figure.

As explained earlier, in the post-1980 period, many MSP members became ANAP members. At that time, ANAP also offered Erdoğan to join the party though Erdoğan refused to be a member by arguing that he already had a leader, who was Erbakan. Since Erbakan was banned from politics in the early days of RP, Erdoğan, and Bülent Arınç by traveling all around the country aimed to expand the party membership, which helped them to become important figures within the party. At this time, Erdoğan read the political atmosphere very well and designed the party's propaganda by arguing that RP would not make the same mistakes as its ancestors, which was to be stuck in a narrow voter base. The electoral loss made Erdoğan more ambitious. He brought a new way of doing politics: he established a group of young people to knock all of the doors in Istanbul and explain the party program. He often told the people, who were close to him, that they should become the party of Turkey (T. Yılmaz 2001: 60). Erdoğan's new way of doing politics bore its fruit with the 1989 local elections. The 1989 local elections marked the first victory of the party in which it took the management of five municipalities, including Konya Metropolitan Municipality.¹⁰⁹ 1991 general elections had an essential mark on the party. Even though the National Outlook Movement's ideology was overshadowed, the road was cleared for RP. In addition to having the opportunity to be represented in the parliament, RP also benefited from the deficits of other parties. This opened the way for becoming the party of the masses rather than being stuck under a limited voter base of the National Outlook Movement.

The other party members realized that this new way of politics helped them increase their voter base. With these developments, Erdoğan's influence intensified in Istanbul. Erdoğan's rising popularity made the party's leading figures feel uncomfortable since they regarded this change as a threat to their power base. When Erdoğan wanted to be a candidate for the local elections in 1994 for Istanbul, Erbakan did not take this idea kindly. He started to search for possible candidates.

¹⁰⁹ RP entered into 1987 elections and won 7.7% of the votes. But because of the 10% threshold, it could not manage to be a part of the parliament. Still, this show, the party managed to reconstruct its National Outlook vote-base.

Meanwhile, the other parties, one by one, declared their candidates. Since the time was running out, he was tired of searching for a candidate, and also the surveys showed that the party organization was looking forward to seeing Erdoğan's candidacy. He announced Erdoğan as RP's candidate.¹¹⁰

By following the same tactic with the general elections, Erdoğan aimed to take all the votes in Istanbul. For this purpose, he visited everyone in Istanbul and asked for their votes. In addition, the media followed a smear campaign in which Erdoğan was blamed for living in an unlicensed construction. Following this, Prime Minister Tansu Çiller announced that she would start inspecting these constructions. Since many of the migrant families, a substantial majority, lived under the same conditions; this smear campaign threatened their lives in Istanbul and helped Erdoğan gain more votes. With all of these, Erdoğan managed to win the 1994 local elections and became the mayor of Istanbul.

Also, the local election victory in 1994 clarified the road to the success of RP. RP won the most prominent cities' municipalities in this local election, like Ankara and Istanbul. In the general elections in 1995, RP got 21.4% of the votes and came out as the first party in the election results. Respectively, it became a ruling partner in Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) and Nationalist Front Coalitions. Erbakan's political alliance with the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP) led by Tansu Çiller brought him the prime minister position for the first time. The success of RP and Erbakan brought discomfort to the circle of tutelary political actors, resulting in a 1997 soft coup in which the military managed the government to sign a decree including 18 items. Four months later of the coup, the government resigned.¹¹¹ While all of these developments were taking place, RP was split into two groups 'Reformers' (*Yenilikçiler*) and 'Old Guards' (*Gelenekçiler*) (S.K. Çınar 2019). The signature for the decree also became a virtual battlefield for these two groups.

¹¹⁰ Erbakan also thought there was no chance of winning the elections. In the previous congress of the party, Erdoğan had written some names to the list, which Erbakan and his followers did not approve. With this candidacy, Erbakan thought he would avenge Erdoğan by seeing his defeat in the elections.

¹¹¹ Unlike the previous interventions of the military, the intervention in 1997 took place at the public opinion-making level. The military preferred to warn the government. This resulted because a coup would decrease Turkey's credibility in the EU's eyes.

The forced resignation of RP from the government and the previous experience of a lawsuit filed by the Supreme Court Chief Public Prosecutor Vural Savaş taught the important actors of the National Outlook Movement to devise an alternative to the possibility of the party's closure again.¹¹² So, before the closure of RP, they decided to establish a new party in December 1997. With the leadership of İsmail Alptekin, who was the lawyer of Erbakan, the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi, FP*) was established. The struggle between the two groups mentioned above continued in this new party. Merve Safa Kavakçı, who came to the oath-taking ceremony in the parliament with her headscarf, gave substantial evidence to the judiciary for the party's closure in the aftermath of the 1999 general elections. The most critical development happened in the first Regular Grand Convention of the party in 2000 when for the first time, two candidates announced for the leadership: on one side, Recai Kutan and on the other side, Abdullah Gül. This had been an essential factor for the split of the National Outlook Movement into different parties rather than being gathered under a single roof with the leadership of Erbakan. At the end of the race, Kutan won the leadership position with 633 votes; however, this could not be seen as a success since Abdullah Gül took 521 votes (Çakır 2018b: 574). The results fueled the reformers' wing to start working on establishing a new party, which would take itself from the shadow of Erbakan's personality. While these were happening, the Constitutional Court decided on the closure of RP. As a result, the old guard wing of the party established itself under the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi, SP*) and reformers under the AKP.

Erdoğan became a popular political figure with all of these developments. His popularity took beyond the prison walls during his imprisonment period. The ward where he was going to stay renovated by one of his fans, and many people were coming for him on the visit day, which was ending up with disappointment for many since they were not being able to see him because of the overdraft of the maximum number of the visitors. As explained earlier, the power struggle severely damaged Erbakan and Erdoğan's relationship. The most important breaking point in their relations happened when Erbakan decided not to bring Erdoğan to the leadership position of the newly established FP. The conflict between the old guard and

¹¹² This was a wise decision since the Constitutional Court decided the closure of RP and banned Erbakan and his two close friends from politics, Şevket Kazan and Ahmet Tekdal.

reformers started to show itself within the party. The idea of establishing a new party came to reformers' minds during the closure of RP, but they did not have the courage regarding the political atmosphere of the time.¹¹³ The conflict had grown when Erbakan insisted on the candidacy of Ali Müfit Gürtuna for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. This conflict became more evident when two candidates emerged in the party general congress. It had been important for the reformers for Abdullah Gül's success in the party's elections, where he managed to take 521 votes despite Erbakan. The clash between Erdoğan and Erbakan heated in time. Erbakan's personalistic choices and authoritarian leadership style were giving harm to Erdoğan's popularity and the possibility of the place that he would achieve in his political career. As seen from here, authoritarian leadership characteristic was a heritage of the National Outlook Movement to AKP and Erdoğan. At the height of the conflict, Erdoğan accused Erbakan of his personalistic rule, which caused harm to everyone in the system. He clarified that a rule should limit the upper age for politics. As a concluding remark, Erdoğan, after being in power for two decades, showed the same personalistic and authoritarian tendencies as Erbakan.

As seen above, the Nationalist Outlook Movement decided to be organized under a party organization. The vital point is the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. He was the founder of the parties under the movement and did not give up his leadership to anyone else all over the road. The movement's description of modernity and its reaction to the 'modern' was equalized with the existing order. In line with this, the economic project of the party started with the critique of capitalism, which could be regarded as a populist one. So, the movement described itself as a third alternative to capitalism on one side and communism on the other side. Both capitalism and communism were criticized since they were adopted from the West, which did not correspond to Islamic culture. While creating its discourse on capitalism (here, it could also be regarded as liberalism) and communism, the movement criticized AP for representing the first and CHP for representing the second.

Furthermore, it declared itself as chasing to create an order that would fit into an Islamic lifestyle. The idea mentioned above shaped the party programs established

¹¹³ The leading figures of the reformers were Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç, Abdüllatif Şener, and Melih Gökçek.

under the National Outlook Movement. The most significant development took place in 1985 when Necmettin Erbakan adopted an interest-free, alternative economic system project named "Just Order" (*Adil Düzen*) (Çakır 2018b: 558). The Just Order criticized the economic order in the world in which a group of Zionists benefited from the rest of the world, which was constructed by poor living standards, hunger, misery, and unemployment. In this regard, this economic system adopted an etatist tone and looked forward to establishing an 'Islamic common market' (Çınar 2019: 24).

4.2.1.2. AKP

As Sayarı (2018) pointed out, military interventions had an essential effect on the evaluation of party politics in the Turkish context. By adding tutelary powers to the system, starting with introducing a new constitution in 1961, the military also banned the parties and their leading figures according to the level of threat they perceived and did not hesitate to change the rules of the game by introducing new electoral laws. So, the military intervened in the country's natural evolution of party competition. Also, after the two party experiments in the early days, the founders of the Republic realized that the society was not reached the point that the civilized world had, which meant that they were not able to decide what would be good for them at all. This paved the way for a single-party period in which only CHP had been seen as the party actor of the state until the introduction of a multi-party system.

Regarding this, the literature started to focus on party politics in Turkey from the 1950s onward. The scholars studying party politics in Turkey pointed out essential developments and trends changing over the years. The commonality of these studies regarding the characteristics of the Turkish parties could be described as: "the exceptionally long tenure of prominent politicians as party leaders, the constancy of internal party feuds and factional splits, the frequency of party-switching among parliamentarians, the strength of the centrist and moderate operations and attitudes among the voters, and the importance of political patronage and clientelism in winning votes and maintaining control over party organizations" (Sayarı 2002: 9). The party system introduced in the 1950s was a two-party system, which allowed a single party to have the parliamentary majority. This was changed in the 1990s,

when five parties managed to have seats in the parliament, with approximately obtaining 10 to 20 percent of the votes.¹¹⁴ Since none of the parties had superiority over the others, only coalition governments would be formed during this period, which brought unexpected alliances into the picture.

The clash between the reformers, whose leader was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan¹¹⁵, and the old guard started to show itself more in the post-1997 period. After the closure of RP, the reformers expected the newly established FP to take the necessary lessons from the previous mistakes and develop a reformatted party program. However, in time, they realized that the old guard could not go beyond the existing political style of the National Outlook Movement. This turning point paved the way for a split within the movement, which ended up with the establishment of a new party beyond Erbakan's influence, named the AKP. The internal dynamics and the developments in the world politics as the war in Iraq, the rise of anti-Western sentiment, and political Islam all over the Middle East, had an essential effect on the rise of AKP on the political scene in Turkey.¹¹⁶ Also, the soft coup of 1997 and the imprisonment of Erdoğan could be considered essential experiences for the founders of AKP to decide how to design their party program both to win the elections and stay in power by not taking the arrows of the tutelary powers on them. First of all, Erdoğan's political language changed. Before, he had an Islamist tone in which he did not hesitate to declare democracy as a tool to achieve what he desired; after being punished, he realized that he should redevelop his political discourse within the existing rules of politics, which meant not to touch upon issues that would alert the tutelary powers to take action.

In Ali Babacan's words, one of the charter members of AKP, the party was established with the shared vision of its founders.¹¹⁷ At the time, National Outlook Movement was under the control of Erbakan, which was criticized by the founders of AKP several times. Erbakan's invincible supremacy over the parties established

¹¹⁴ In all three general elections (1991,1995,1999), these five parties obtained seats in the parliament.

¹¹⁵ Actually, at that time this wing's leader was Abdullah Gül at the time since Erdoğan was banned from politics.

¹¹⁶ Regarding the internal dynamics, the 2001 economic crisis caused parties' inability, both on the right and left to adopt the changing nature of Turkish politics.

¹¹⁷ This was taken from Ali Babacan's commune in Bilkent University on March 28, 2022.

under the roof of the movement was seen as a lack of democracy within the movement. This leader-oriented understanding was regarded as harming the potential of the parties established within the movement to be successful in Turkish politics since they could not go beyond their voter bases.¹¹⁸ Regarding this, the founding charter of the party included essential indicators for how it was organized. From the first day of its establishment, AKP looked forward to taking all of the votes in the market and, for this purpose, developed a political discourse that would touch on all of the voters. In this regard, the main aims of the founding charter have both populist and democratic nature. As the first point, it clarifies that the party gives importance to the national will and then explains the importance of democratic norms. These aspects clarify how the party considered the norms of the rule of law and give importance to the pluralistic, inclusive, and competitive nature of 'representative democracy.' Significantly, after winning 34% of the seats in the parliament, the first term in office could be described as having the potential for the democratization process in Turkey. However, the upcoming years demonstrated the importance of being cautious with this newly invented discourse of democracy.¹¹⁹ While important points were taken towards the obstacles to the consolidation of democracy in the country, such as decreasing the power of the military-led secular establishment, the upcoming years showed how this turned into a tool for Erdoğan to reverse the country into an autocratic drift. From the very beginning, a group of people, who were close to him, argued that he was only acting like a leader seeking to take steps toward the consolidation of democracy in the country to achieve a power base that would bring an insurmountable position to him. After achieving such a like position, he would have the opportunity to show off his genuine desire.

An influential body of scholarship has focused on explaining how the relative radical position of parties is being turned into a moderate one when it comes to catching the votes.¹²⁰ As seen from here, not only a group in the close circle of Erdoğan but also

¹¹⁸ The party's voter base could be described as a narrow Islamist population. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his friends worked hard to take the party beyond this narrow base. The success in the local elections resulted because of this.

¹¹⁹ The dilemma 'conservative democracy' definition created for the attributes associated with democracy in AKP's vision will be explained in length in the upcoming pages of the thesis.

¹²⁰ This is the 'moderation theory.' It has been used to explain the socialist parties in Europe and also, used to explain the possible democratization of the Muslim majority countries. Çınar's (2018) study would be visited for the Turkish case.

literature has pointed to the extent of AKP's democratic rule. As explained in the earlier sections, with time, Erdoğan, with his party, started to take significant steps to pave the way for a condition that drifted the country's democratization process to an autocratic one. While studying Erdoğan's AKP, this thesis will benefit from the 'iron law of oligarchy' argument of Robert Michels.¹²¹

As Sayarı (2002) stated, Turkish politics has a leader-oriented perspective, where leaders play a significant role in the country's economic, social, and political changes. Leaders have been the defining future of their parties, that brought a voting trend in which leaders sparkled as more important than party programs. The founders of AKP established the party by criticizing this tradition regarding the indisputable advantage of Erbakan in the previous party examples of the Islamist wing. AKP was established under a particular organizational chart, which included many branches starting from the central office to the provincial organization, then to the district and town organizations. In addition, the organizational chart also included significant subsidiaries, such as the women and youth branches, and groups, such as the party group of TBMM and the local council group.

As could be seen here, the party organization and the leader's position in the party substantially affected how the institutional structure could be changed in the Turkish case. As interviews also showed, Erdoğan first succeeded in winning the elections through the party's organizational structure and then managed to make changes in favor of his autocratic rule in the game. Also, Çınar's (2019: 87) extensive fieldwork on the reasons behind AKP's hegemony in Turkish politics has shown that AKP achieved this omnipotent position through multiple mechanisms at multiple levels. First, when we look at the party organization, we can see a hierarchical structure. The central office sits at the top of the organization. Also, while studying the organizational structure and its effect on creating a certain kind of institutional structure, we should remember that AKP has been in power for two decades and experienced a change within its party organization. Initially, the central office comprised the party elites, including the founding members. After its first term in office, it met with how secularists responded to the candidacy of a president who did

¹²¹ Beforehand, Ayan-Musil's (2011) and Lancaster's (2014) works pointed to Robert Michels' (1962) study while explaining the authoritarianization of the internal party structure in the Turkish case.

not represent their expected vision. This brought a process where Erdoğan started to take significant steps to increase his maneuverability. The important names at the central office started to leave the party since they realized that the premise of the organization was not linked to what they wanted to achieve while establishing it. This is an important indicator for us to see that Erdoğan, when he could not match his friends within the party with the idea of concentrating power in his hands, brought disengagement from the party. This process ensured that those who obeyed him remained in the party, which opened the way for institutional changes since it was much easier to convince the members who would not criticize his rule.

AKP is a unique case for Turkish politics since, for the first time, a party managed to stay in power for more than two decades. Regarding Turkish democracy, political parties have been leading in understanding the country's democratization process (Laebens 2020: 341). In this respect, Celep (2021: 770) defined intra-party democracy as necessary for a democratic setting. The interviews that the researcher conducted helped her to question whether the same situation would be possible with another party by considering the country's cultural context.¹²² Almost all interviewees, involving people in the academy, agreed that democracy in Turkey has been problematic since the beginning, but none of the actors within the system managed to destroy the country's institutional context, as is the case for the period of AKP and Erdoğan. In Ali's (academician-private university) words:

When we look at the past, we see the existence of a tutelary democracy. However, we do not see a government or party that saw this incomplete democracy as a problem. Therefore, politics lacked the ability to produce legitimate democracy. As a result, intra-party structures also had a limited understanding of democracy.

Similarly, Fatma (academician-public university) mentioned to role of party leader in Turkish case with the following words:

Your position within the party determines your status. The party leader is the one who distributes positions within the party organization and, therefore, is the one who gives the status to you. In this context, I think

¹²² The researcher is aware that this is beyond the scope of this thesis, but this point would be helpful for the upcoming studies in Turkish politics.

there is a hierarchical structure starting from the internal party organization and extending to politics. Also, since people owe their status within the party to the leader, they are applying self-censorship. They do not bring their opinions to the forefront with the worry of losing their status.

As mentioned earlier and as it could be followed from the above statement, Turkish politics has a leader-oriented structure. This reflects in the intra-party structure where power concentrates in the hands of the leader. The leaders in the parties have a long-durable position. This is important while studying the autocratization process because party structure provides an autocratic style with personalized leadership. As Lancaster (2014: 1678) pointed “Turkey has never been home to a textbook case of intra-party democracy; its parties almost always suffer from authoritarian leadership.” The political culture of Turkey provides that the political parties are missing democratic elements, which is essential since this is not a unique future belonging to AKP. As discussed earlier in the founding charter of AKP, there existed promising democratic values. This should be examined within the scope of the political premises of the time. As discussed, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with the founders of AKP, wanted to rupture with Erbakan’s National Outlook Movement and the parties representing political Islam until then. The main argument behind this was to end the one-man power within the party organization; Erdoğan did not hesitate to accuse Necmettin Erbakan of remaining in power for very long. With this framework, the reformist wing within RP, after the decision of the Constitutional Court, split from the National Outlook Movement and established AKP.

The founding charter included democratic elements in itself. However, besides a moment for capturing democratic politics in Turkey after a turbulent and extended period of consolidation, AKP, with Erdoğan’s leadership, turned towards autocratization. As explained earlier, the dynamics within the party dramatically changed over time. The scholarship focused on AKP’s internal party structure from the intra-party authoritarianization perspective. In this respect, Gül (AKP member-women’s branch) mentioned the importance of unwritten rules within a party with the following words:

In addition to the party’s bylaws, we need to mention the existence of unwritten rules in the party's operation. We would not say that the party has

immutable rules. According to the needs of society, the party has the capacity to evaluate toward the expectations. If AKP would attempt to transform society, then it would not have stayed in power for more than two years.

Similarly, to this, Erol (ex-AKP member) mentioned the importance of adopting the needs of society with the following words:

In every meeting, I highlighted what I wanted to say. I was voicing my criticisms. Tayyip Bey told me not to mention those things in these meetings but instead write them as a report to him. He added that he would read them, but mentioning those things in the meetings would confuse the minds of the party members. Also, many of the members regarded me as crazy. They were saying that they knew all of the criticisms I was raising. However, they were arguing that the conditions were important. The desires of citizens were shaping their ideas. So, the desires of citizens were not corresponding to what I was arguing.

These statements show that besides the desire for democratic values of the individual party members, the importance of ‘winning elections’ is coming into the scene. Moreover, how Recep Tayyip Erdoğan responds to criticisms shows that the leader represents an authoritative figure within the party structure. The literature focuses on intra-party authoritarianization by focusing on the local organization structure. The interviews conducted on behalf of this research also pointed to the importance of the local branches and the organizational structure of the party. Additionally, in this regard, the importance of patronage linkage, being acquainted with the party members meant essential for obtaining job offerings, came into light. Still, besides these aspects, this research realized that to understand the autocratization process of the regimes, the intra-party democracy or authoritarianism should be studied two-folded: as a bottom-up and a top-down process.

Here, the personalization of politics is becoming critical. Regarding the personalization of the party organization, which also could be named as the presidentialization of the party organization, the leader is stepping into a position where rather than the collective mind of the party members, the importance of the

leader is being highlighted. As explained earlier, in Turkish political culture, parties tend to have personalized leadership. The early years of AKP have shaped with respect to the values of democracy, and there existed a checks and balances system among the governing body. In those years, as Lancaster (2014: 1679) pointed, Erdoğan shared power and decision-making process with his colleagues as Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç, and Abdüllatif Şener.¹²³ Thus this did not last very long. In time, Erdoğan's power resonated with the party list more. First, the party fell into the iron law of oligarchy and then to autocracy (Lancaster 2014: 1680). The party structure started to focus on the personalistic appeal of the leader with the second term in office. Abdullah Gül's presidency played an essential role since he had no option to participate in daily politics from then on. As explained earlier, Abdüllatif Şener left the party before the crack between Gül and Erdoğan started. There existed some other important figures within the party as the founding cadre.

Obtaining power for more than two decades also transformed AKP's social-class profile. The populist dichotomy Erdoğan used at the beginning, where he positioned secularists (elites) as them and the rest of the society as us, has evolved with changing business relations the party provided to its followers. As also Ayata has pointed the composition of AKP deputies today shows that it represents an elite group rather than the society (Kurtuluş 2023). Most MPs obtain a higher education degree; in this sense, they do not represent the peasant, workers, housewives, unemployed, craftsmen, and artisans. These groups are almost not represented in the parliament by the AKP group. AKP defined elites by connecting them to CHP. Using a particular elite definition, it has benefited from identity politics and created a duality between the system's losers and winners. However, changing business class with AKP's long-lasting rule proved that AKP turned into an elitist party, representing the interests of a particular group.¹²⁴ The new bourgeoisie would be

¹²³ Abdüllatif Şener was the first person who left the party. In his interview with Çiğdem Toker (2009), he raised that his ideas were not corresponding with Erdoğan's desires. In years familiar reasons were highlighted by the ruling cadre. For example, Ali Babacan explained his reason for leaving the party by stating that he could no longer respond to the decision-making process. His ideas were not finding a voice in Erdoğan's ruling style. Like these examples, Erol (ex-AKP member) also declared the reason for leaving the party: "I realized that I was not going to be able to give anything more to the party, and at that point, I decided to resign."

¹²⁴ Still, AKP managed to take votes from the group mentioned above. The critical point that should be considered is that both the owner and the minimum wage employee of a company vote for AKP. This would be explained by the absence of left-wing politics from the scene for very long. The coup d'états had a substantial impact on this development. Until this time, AKP managed to win the

traced back to the early 1990s. This group represented the conservative-religious sentiment and had a Turkish version of religious-economic nationalism. This group was represented as the one who would lead Turkey toward a global economic power (Taşkın 2013: 297).

To understand the features of a party, it is also essential to focus on how the party relates state and society to each other (Massicard 2021: 103). While AKP was ruling the country, it transformed the link between the state and society. The support base for the party has been provided easily through obtaining the state resources and through the patronage linkage it has established. The organizational structure of the party played an essential role in its success. The personalistic ruling style of the leader managed to make the party members obedient toward his power, which also meant toward the power he obtained in the elections. As discussed, starting from the municipal elections in 1994, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was aware of the importance of developing personal linkage with the voters. As Gül (AKP member- women's branch) stated:

Tayyip Bey has a policy of knocking on the door. The party is organized to the capillary. Each district has a representative, who is responsible for having close relationships with neighbors. This gives the party a knowledge of how many votes will be obtained from that neighborhood's ballot box.

Neighborhood-level representativeness was vital to success in the elections (Baykan 2018; Doğan 2019). The importance of clientelistic relationships comes into the picture at this point. This has a linkage with how AKP redesigned the relationship between the state and society. As Ocaklı (2016) mentioned, AKP politicians and party cadres have obtained the potential to have preferential treatment in public sector contracting. During the interviews, the researcher realized that 'knowing each other' is essential for finding jobs in the market. With the words of Ahmet (high-level civil servant), it would be seen that having an organic connection with the party has been a critical component to obtaining a place in the job market:

Especially after 2016, your closeness to the party has become important regardless of your educational background. As long as you are an AKP

elections by obtaining the votes of those groups Ayata mentioned above through using identity politics in the framework of populist discourse.

loyalist, you would still be hired, even if you are a shepherd. Also, if you want to rise in the profession, you always need to have a connection with the party.

In almost all of these occasions, the thesis has mentioned the importance of the party with the personalistic leadership of Erdoğan. The autocratization process within the party had a hierarchical relationship between the party leader and the organizational structure. The interviewees mentioned Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as ‘Tayyip Bey,’ which is an essential sign of respect in Turkish. In this context, the Turkish party structure leader is regarded as the person who knows best for the party and the country.¹²⁵

4.2.2. Fidesz and Viktor Orbán

Fidesz was founded by Viktor Orbán and thirty-six other students from his university as a movement in 1988. When Orbán appeared on the political scene as a fearless figure who was called for the withdrawal of the Soviets from the country; portrayed as a young liberal politician seeking to bring young people under the roof of a party organization.¹²⁶ The party was structured to fight communism and promote liberalism, which turned into a fight with liberalism and promoted conservatism ten years later. At that time, the party had a collective leadership and a strong appeal to the youth. The party's founding document clarified that the goal was to create a new independent youth organization, which had intended to gather politically active, radical, and reformist youth. Regarding this, it rejected the members aged above thirty-five. Another vital prerequisite to being a party member was not to be involved in the Hungarian Youth Communist League (Lendvai 2017).

The seeds of this collective movement could be traced back to Orbán's years in law faculty at the Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest. His university years had a substantial effect on shaping his political ideas and his political career in the

¹²⁵ This observation resonates with the leaders of the right-wing parties in Turkey.

¹²⁶ His first appearance on the political scene happened at the reburial of Imre Nagy in 1989, where he gave a speech to 250,000 people gathered at the Heroes' Square (Rupnik 2018). In this speech, he clarified that they were looking forward to Soviet troops leaving the country.

upcoming years.¹²⁷ He had the chance to share his room with Lajos Simicska, an admired figure by the faculty students, and Gábor Fodor while studying at the university. Above all, Bibó István Special College for law students, founded in 1983, had an essential effect on his intellectual development. Bibó College was going to witness the establishment of the Fidesz party by these young and ambitious law students in 1988. In this respect, the party was first established as a movement and decided to turn into a party in its second congress in 1989 to be able to participate in the upcoming elections. It distinguished itself from the other parties in the early years by supporting minority rights, secularism, and pragmatism in economic terms (Pappas 2014: 10). None of the law students at that time would have imagined that they were establishing a long-lasting successful party example in Hungarian politics. Fidesz was the only opposition party in Central Europe that survived for this long (Rupnik 2018). Liberalism was a fashionable political outlet then; therefore, embracing a liberal stance was unsurprising for these young men. They had their style of dressing and campaigns contrasting with the Kádár era.

After graduating from the university, Orbán started working part-time at George Soros' Open Society Foundation, where Soros discovered his ambition and granted a scholarship to him to visit Pembroke College in Oxford (Lendvai 2017: 23). He was going to stay there for nine months and complete a research project on civil society.¹²⁸ However, considering the political atmosphere in Hungary, he needed to return to his country and continue his political career. So, he only stayed at Oxford for four months. Immediately after returning to the country, Orbán started a campaign for the upcoming elections and showed leadership characteristics. This brought him the first place, which meant that he moved his close friend Fodor to second place.¹²⁹ His ambition to overcome Fodor's power in the party continued. Orbán managed to discourage Fodor from being a Fidesz member, resulting in his resignation.

¹²⁷ He became friends with Gábor Fodor and László Kövér, who were going to be his partner in his political journey as the founders of Fidesz and involvers in the round-table negotiations. In time, with the changing political agenda of Orbán, they split into different lines in politics.

¹²⁸ As will be explained in upcoming pages, after the failure of the elections, Orbán created 'civic communities,' which could be regarded as an essential step for gathering people's support. Being able to gather these people under a specific civil society organization can be connected with his study on civil society at Oxford.

¹²⁹ While Orbán was at Oxford, Fodor was the head of the party.

With the changing structure of the party organization, Orbán stepped in as the party leader in 1993, following the party congress (Pappas 2014). Orbán, during this time, realized that to gain the voters' support, the party needed to move toward the political mainstream. At that time, Hungarian politics experienced a change. Until 1994; rightists, leftists, and liberals formed the three competing poles though the liberal pole suddenly disappeared with the 1994 elections. Following this, the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SZDSZ) decided to continue the road with the leftist line of politics and became a coalition partner of the Socialists in power. This brought a dilemma since the party needed to decide whether to turn its face towards social democrats or to the right by giving up its liberal tone. The party congress held in 1993 brought the last decision where Orbán became the party's leader. By bringing the leadership to a single person, the party started to shape itself according to Orbán's political agenda. It had a more nationalist, conservative (in moral terms), and religious tone. As seen here, Fidesz could not stay as the party as it was founded and experienced a change in its ideological premise. The only legacy of the party from the beginning was its anti-communist standing (Enyedi 2005: 703).

Orbán also experienced a significant shift towards religiosity when the party evolved towards filling the vacuum of conservatism left by József Antall.¹³⁰ However, Orbán's conservatism differed from the previous one, constructed by a liberal democratic outlook. Orbán preferred a more traditionalist understanding of conservatism, where he built close relations with the church.¹³¹ Orbán's family was not religious; therefore, he did not receive religious guidance in his childhood. His marriage with Levai was an excellent example since they had a civil marriage rather than a church wedding at the time, even though Levai was a religious Catholic.¹³² Zoltán Balog played a vital role, who was a Calvinist bishop, in connecting Orbán to Catholic and Protestant churches. His pragmatist nature could explain Orbán's relation with religion. He had the potential to shift himself towards something that would not fit his previous living style as long as it would benefit his political career. In this situation, Fidesz turned its face towards religious and national values in mid-

¹³⁰ Antall was the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Hungary. He died in 1993, leaving the conservative right without a leader.

¹³¹ As could be seen from here, from then on, Orbán started to take steps toward rejecting liberal democratic values.

¹³² They had a church wedding in 1997.

1993; after experiencing an electoral defeat in 1994, it realized that a closer connection was needed for success, which turned the party to develop a political alliance with the church (Baer 2021).

With this changing nature, Orbán started to mention how religion guides his political road. Also, the party program evolved towards mentioning the importance of family more and more. So, the political language of the party shifted towards God, family, and fatherland in this period. As seen from here, Orbán, after taking a turn toward the right wing of politics, also embraced a populist tone. This populist tone became more visible after being re-elected in 2010, but still, it was there in the mid-1990s. In 1995, the party changed its name to Fidesz- Hungarian Civic Party.¹³³ One of the most important reasons for turning towards the right and adopting a nationalist tone was the effect of the Treaty of Trianon on society. The treaty was signed in 1920, in which two-thirds of the Hungarian historical territory was distributed among three neighboring countries: Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. This loss left a significant impact on the Hungarian people. Orbán, as a pragmatist politician, saw the effect of Trianon on society, which brought the opportunity for him to use this as a tool to gain support in the elections. When the time came in 1998, Fidesz became the dominant force on the right, and politics evolved towards a single cleavage between the left and right in Hungarian political terms. After coming to power by building a center-right coalition government with the Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt, FKgP*), first Orbán government gave importance to homeownership, economic stability, and transatlantic integration.¹³⁴ Although Fidesz became the dominant party on the right in the 1998 election, this did not prevent it from slightly losing the elections and power in the following two elections. However, the mismanagement of the economy opened the ground for Fidesz to mobilize people with its populist discourse toward the socialist government. The leaking speech of Gyurcsány, followed by the economic crisis of 2008, shrunk the Hungarian economy and brought Fidesz with

¹³³ Originally, FIDESZ was the abbreviation of the Alliance of Young Democrats, but since it had experienced a change in its meaning, Enyedi (2005) decided to refer to the party as Fidesz. Considering this shift, this thesis also uses Fidesz rather than FIDESZ as the abbreviation of the party name.

¹³⁴ <https://fidesz.hu/int/add-tovabb/our-history>

Orbán as an undefeatable figure in Hungarian politics. The steps taken following the 2010 elections were regarded as the rebuilding process of Hungary by the party.¹³⁵

Orbán, by tightly controlling his party, managed to create a personalistic party structure. The most crucial difference between Erdoğan and Orbán was that Erdoğan stepped into government immediately after establishing his party with his leadership. However, Orbán experienced a transformation in years starting from the transition to democracy in the early 1990s within his party. He started to show signs of his autocratic manner when he won the 1998 elections. Beforehand, obtaining the leadership in his hands transformed Fidesz in the early 1990s, which lasted with losing lots of its founders from the party membership. Szelényi (2022a) describes Orbán as one of the more radical members of Fidesz in the early days since he looked forward to taking the party towards the right spectrum of politics. Party experienced its first split by liberals due to this opportunistic point of view. In 1998, when Fidesz won and built a right-wing coalition government; thirty-five years old Orbán's position as the party chief turned out to be unquestionable (Z. Szelényi 2022a). People close to Orbán regarded 2002 as an essential turning point, where he lost his 'democrat' outlook (Z. Szelényi 2022b). He blamed the media and financial sector for his slight defeat in the 2002 elections. From then on, his speech turned to resonate with more nationalistic symbols. His famous argument, which paved the way for creating 'civic circles' as a social movement, was that the nation could not be in the opposition.¹³⁶

Fidesz's transformation in years has marked a significant turning point through the creation of the Civic Circles movement. It turned out to be a grass-roots mobilization for the party to develop a voter base for success in the upcoming elections. As Enyedi (2005: 700) pointed out, parties looking forward to capturing political power in their hands need to invent and destroy political identities, underplay social divisions, and shift group boundaries. Fidesz's party structure could be read under this argument from the beginning. Orbán did not hesitate to change the party's structure and its ideological stance to maximize the benefit of his power. He used

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ The patronage linkage Orbán built from 2002 onward will be explained in length in the upcoming pages.

populist discourse to create an outlook for the voters to feel that Fidesz represents their ideas. In line with this, Fidesz's party structure was reshaped in time. Initially, when liberalization wind was there, party members could affiliate according to interest-based or territorially—based units. This affiliation changed in 1990 when the party abolished interest-based groupings, resulting from the homogenized nature of the internal party organization. A decade later, 'sections' representing non-territorial units were re-established. In this regard, Enyedi and Linek (2008: 465) divided Fidesz's changing internal party structure into three phases bottom-up complexity, flat structure, and top-down complexity.

Besides the grass-root mobilization, as mentioned earlier, Orbán built a personalistic party structure in these years. As Eva (academician-private university) stated in the following words, he created a party that could be examined as showing signs of intra-party authoritarianism, as is the case in Turkey through using patronage linkage and a centralized party structure:

When we think of the party structure, I think it represents an authoritarian one. Since it is highly centralized and built upon patronage linkages. So, party members and loyalists are awarded seats, ministries, and advisory board memberships after the elections. When we combine parliamentary discipline, patronage, and centralized party structure, we can say that an authoritarian party structure exists.

While creating a personalistic party structure, where the leader gathered the power and managed to hold the decision-making process in his hands, Orbán, especially after coming to power with the 2010 elections, restructured the rules of the game on behalf of his benefit. Orbán in years also centralized the power in his party.

After coming to power in 2010, Fidesz managed to stay in power by winning the elections for four consecutive terms. As mentioned earlier, Fidesz structured itself differently in different periods to manage to win the elections. Compared to its opponents, the party managed to stay as a single unit by avoiding intra-party conflict, which could be linked to its leadership-oriented structure. When one looks at the organizational structure can see a hybrid form of party borrowed from the 'mass parties, personal parties, movement parties, and cartel parties' (Metz and Varnagy

2021: 318). After coming to power with a two-thirds majority, there was no necessity to cooperate with other parties. So, Fidesz worked as the state's sole agent and the clientelistic relations' creator by itself. The Civic Circles movement, which will be examined in the Political Economy section of the Personalism chapter, was created to be embodied in civil society; the party had the ultimate power over it and did not give any chance to develop its policy agendas. By taking into account the transformation of Fidesz in time, Metz and Varnagy (2021) divide the development of the party into three phases. The first phase, which was between 1988-1993, was characterized by collective leadership and a liberal ideology; the second phase, which was between 1993-2000, was characterized by the personalization of the leadership by turning to a conservative ideological stance with catch-all party characteristics. From 2002 onwards, the party entered its third phase, where it started to take steps to guarantee its electoral success. Following 2010, the anxiety of preserving electoral success turned into the anxiety of preserving political power but not adhering to the voters' support.

Szabó (2011: 50) separated Fidesz's development as a party into three. In the first phase, Fidesz represented a dissident movement, corresponding to the transition process until the first elections (1988-1990). It turned into a political party to be able to participate in the elections. From then on, it experienced an ideological transformation, which ended up with the changing membership composition within the party. Liberals left the party after Orbán's rise as the leading figure and his ambition to fill the gap in the right-spectrum of politics to gain power in the political arena. 2002 elections marked a shift in the style of Fidesz as a political party when it turned out to be an oppositional force. It adopted a populist tone combined with a nationalistic appeal. The symbols used to describe Orbán and Fidesz were sided on the society. Over the years, he managed to build his personalistic appeal. Fidesz's success in 2010 would be read through the development that took place until that moment on behalf of powering Orbán within his party.

Overall, Fidesz has the highest organizational network in Hungary (Metz and Varnagy 2021). Fidesz's election coordination commission consists of seven members. The commission is responsible for making the list of candidates in the

election. Not only at the national level but also at the local level, the candidate selection process of the municipalities takes place by a small circle of district administrations. As seen from here, Fidesz has a centralized party organization structure. The selection of the party's presidency with the selection of the Prime Minister and Presidential candidate does not happen as indicated in the charter. Generally, according to the charter, the national assembly is responsible for the selection procedure, but in reality, the decision belongs to the party's central organ (Krisztián 2013). This helps us to see how centralized the structure of the organization is. From the bottom to the top, the internal party organization has been organized as follows: electoral-district based units exist, which the loyal party members construct.¹³⁷ Above this, there exist regional committees which have the minimum responsibility. Following this, the National Board exists, responsible for coordinating the party's relationship with the party congress. The most critical central bodies of the party are Congress on the one side and National Presidium on the other. Fidesz has 38,000 members, which would not seem like a lot, but it has the highest membership among Hungarian parties (Metz and Varnagy 2021: 320). The candidate should obtain three recommendation letters from standing party members to become a member. In addition, new members are accepted to the local level branches or the youth branch (*Fidelitas*) at the beginning. This process helps potential politicians to be educated. Another line of education for becoming a politician, Fidesz grants scholarships or jobs (internships) to university students.

The literature explains Fidesz's internal party structure by focusing on the personalized nature of Orbán's ruling style. Still, there does not exist any study on intra-party democracy or intra-party authoritarianism for the Hungarian case. Regarding the transformations it experienced until 2010, this thesis takes the movement's early years as a capture of intra-party democracy. The movement started with a liberal stance against communist rule. The roots of this liberal desire could be traced back to 'goulash communism' in Hungarian history, also known as the Kádár period; since during this period some of the colleges, which were led by student councils, were allowed to have an atmosphere for critical thinking of the public life. In this respect, it would not be an exaggeration to call Fidesz an outcome of this

¹³⁷ These members are mostly the candidates for the single-member district at the national elections.

critical-thinking environment. That is why Hungary is mentioned as the earliest example of a successful democratization process in the Eastern European context. Besides the early years, the alarm bells for intra-party democracy started to ring when Orbán took the leadership in his hands in 1993. The intra-party authoritarianism could be traced back to those times. Especially with the 1998 election results and when Fidesz formed a coalition government, Orbán showed authoritarian tendencies. The most promising example of this was the shadow cabinet he established. When studying Fidesz's internal party structure, the focus on the personalized ruling style of Orbán has shown that the power within the party has gathered in the central office a lot. After witnessing a slight defeat in the 2002 elections, the party on the ground aspect also became vital for Fidesz to win the next elections. The local mobilization strategy of the party helped him to win the elections. The mass rallies were beneficial for Orbán's outlook in the eyes of the voters. As a last word, since Orbán remained the prominent figure representing Fidesz for a very long time, scholarship tended to define party structure by focusing on the leader's appeal. In this regard, taking into account the party organization as an example of intra-party authoritarianism helps the literature to understand the Hungarian case within the realm of the autocratic regimes existing in the world as Turkey and Russia.

CHAPTER V

PERSONALISM

The starting point of this thesis was to shed light on the reason(s) behind the democratic backsliding process of Hungary and Turkey. The literature mainly focused on the weakening checks and balances system and its effect on the democratic backsliding of the political system in given cases. The researcher's interviews helped her to realize that several factors are causing a democratic backsliding process in Hungary and Turkey. As explained in the above chapter, the personalization of the party structure plays an essential role in autocratization. The weight party's central office has become more important with the leadership-oriented organizational structure. However, the personalization of politics would not be regarded only as a matter within the party's organizational structure. A leader's personalistic appeal brings a personalized relationship that he develops with voters, affecting his success and, in the bigger picture, the autocratization process. Considering this, the chapter will start by focusing on the effect of populist politics on the personalization of politics.

Then, the focus will be on how two leaders make important personalistic decisions, how these affect the institutional structure, and how all of these help to obtain more power. Both are gaining more space for autocratizing the system by obtaining more power. As explained earlier, by the weakening checks and balance system, both of the leaders attacked the judiciary system. However, over the years this did not last only by harming the separation of powers, but they also started to attack some other institutions. Also, regarding the judiciary, personalistic decisions started to be taken. Media, in addition to the judiciary, became a vital apparatus for these leaders. The media's role will be discussed under the political economy section of the chapter, where patronage linkages will also be highlighted. In addition, not only the three branches of government but also other institutions are faced with an attack by these populist personalistic leaders to consolidate their power. In addition to that, they used different institutions as a reward and punishment mechanism for their rule. Through

this, they created a fear mechanism, pushing citizens toward an auto-censor mechanism. This is a crucial way to open a path for democratic backsliding within the system. The chapter will also focus on how these personalistic leaders capture the higher education system and certain elite academic institutions to consolidate their power. Central European University (CEU) and Boğaziçi will be provided as examples.

5.1. Theoretical Framework

5.1.1. Personalization of Politics

As explained in the previous chapter, the theoretical studies on parties focus on advanced industrial democracies. However, the literature on advanced democracies would not be enough to explain the party structures and party systems in newly emerging (or less-developed) democracies. To understand the difference between the structure of the party organization in developing democracies, institutionalization is the most important indicator to understand the issue (Mainwaring and Torcal 2005: 4). The institutionalized party systems have specific characteristics. The link between voters and parties is more stable in such systems since society has strong party roots. As mentioned earlier, political actors see parties as necessary elements for a democratic system and, therefore, legitimize the existence of such organizations. In addition, the control of the party in institutionalized ones does not gather in the hands of a small circle of party elites. Since the points mentioned above are missing in developing democracies, voters make more personalistic choices, and candidates have more personalistic appeals, bringing the personalism of politics into the picture.

Since the rise of catch-all parties into the scene, scholars have provided works on the growing importance of individual political actors. The focus has been on candidate/leader-centered politics, where leaders' popularity gained more importance on their parties' electoral success (Frantz et al. 2022: 919). More works focused on the leader-centered nature of politics, the individualization of campaigns, and the increasing authority of leaders, which are named as the trends coming out of a broader phenomenon of *personalization of politics* (Pruysers, Cross, and Katz 2018: 2). The primary reason for the personalization of politics resulted by the technological developments is; first the advancement of television and then, the

introduction of the internet and social media. These developments brought the appearance of leaders to the forefront rather than the institutional structure of the parties they belonged to.

In its primary connotation, *personalism* is defined as the “domination of the political realm by a single individual” (Frantz et al. 2021: 94). Personalization of the party structure is also studied in the literature. The definition of personalization is as crucial as personalism for this thesis since it focuses on the effect of personalized ruling style within the structure of a party organization. As Pruyssers, Cross, and Katz (2018: 5) define, “personalization refers to changing electoral, societal and political norms in which the centrality of individual actors has increased.” With the rise of populist leaders into the scene new developments, even in most established democracies, brought the idea that all of the political systems hold some degree of personalism (Frantz et al. 2021: 95). As could be seen, with the personalization of politics, leaders play a leading role. In modern political life, it could be observed that the role of the leader is gaining more importance with the rise of *personal authority*, resulting in specific implications for political parties.¹³⁸ Personal authority's rising importance and power open a path for leaders to develop direct relationships with voters, where trust and loyalty become essential. In this respect, rules lost their importance. As Malloy (2018: 170) points “personal authority is admittedly an elusive concept to measure because it focuses on the gap between de jure and de facto power- not what the law says leaders can do, but what they can actually do. Personal authority embodies both specific powers, such as the ability to set and time policies, priorities and decisions; to appoint and move around people; and to structure or restructure institutions and processes but also the broader sphere of the authorizing environment and powers of persuasion that allows them to exercise power with little or no resistance or perhaps even seeming notice.”

Some leaders have a neutral aura and charisma, while others are not. Still, this does not create a drawback for obtaining authority in their hands. Malloy (2018) represents several ways to obtain personal authority: power beyond the party, power

¹³⁸ Political authority leaders are gaining is not a new phenomenon, which could be traced back to Weber's classification. This classification will be presented in the upcoming pages of this section.

from the party, and power limited by the party.¹³⁹ Power beyond party refers to *presidentialization*, which this section will explain in length as a subtype of personalization of politics. In its primary connotation, this type refers to how the leader develops more independent authority from the party. Some leaders develop personal authority from the party. So, personal authority is rooted in party loyalty. Leaders of this type would gain power by being observed as ‘one of us’ by the party members, rather than being seen as having a charismatic appeal beyond the party.¹⁴⁰ Lastly, there existed examples where a leader could not develop power among the party since the party had limitations for raising the leader as the single power to the scene.

As Rhodes-Purdy and Madrid (2020: 321) stated, democracy refers to the rule of the people but not the rule of the person, whereas the personalized parties bring the leaders to the forefront as the actors for winning the elections and exercising power resulting in democratic backsliding. The power party leader gains abolish the checks and balances mechanism within the party since the leader obtains the role of the party’s ‘president.’ This shift is also explained as *party personalism*, described as “the extent to which parties are vehicles to advance leaders’ personal political careers such that the leader has more control and power over the party than do other senior party elites in advancing policy and making personal choices” (Frantz et al. 2022: 920-1). As mentioned earlier, the main reasons for the personalization of politics are the weakening of the traditional ties between voters and parties and the change in the media environment. Especially regarding the news coverage, which plays a crucial role in highlighting the leader, Van Aelst, Sheafer, and Stanyer (2012: 204) realized two forms of personalization exist: *individualization* and *privatization*. Media coverage of the leaders is more focused on personalistic characteristics rather than highlighting the characteristics of the party, which makes it more individualized. Secondly, through individualization, politicians are covered as private individuals, which harms their public role. At this point, the nature of parties, described by the

¹³⁹ Here it should not be forgotten that Malloy uses the Westminster Model to develop this typology of personal authority.

¹⁴⁰ This corresponds to the non-charismatic personalistic leadership argument of Baykan’s (2018) study.

three faces mentioned earlier, challenged how they were seen as hierarchical and unified organizations (Katz and Mair 1993).

By arguing that political personalization is a process where over time, the political weight of the individual actors increases, and the central role of political groups declines, Rahat and Sheafer (2007: 65) introduce three types of political personalization: *institutional*, *media*, and *behavioral*. As discussed so far, institutional personalization takes place when an institution changes in a certain way where the political power of an individual actor increases and the power of the political group (parties) declines. Media personalization refers to the personalization of the presentation and coverage of an individual political actor in the media, where the emphasis is given more on the individuals rather than the collective entity. Lastly, behavioral personalization refers to changing patterns of politicians' behavior. Rather than acting as a team, politicians start to act individually for their benefit. Conversely, voters also play an essential role in this type of personalization. Through a behavioral change, they would focus on more individual candidates rather than the party organizations as a whole. Considering these types, an alternative definition of personalization could be presented as "personalization not only as an expression of the decline of the political collective but also as a shift of focus from topics to persons" (Rahat and Kenig 2018: 122).

After the presentation of these three types of personalization, Rahat and Sheafer (2007) asked the question of the linkage between these three types, which was asking whether these were breeding each other or not. In this regard, it has been realized that institutional personalization is feeding media personalization, and media personalization is feeding the behavior of politicians. As Rahat and Kenig (2018: 131) pointed "it should not come as a surprise that the personalization of political institutions is supposed to generate other personalizations, since this notion touches on the core assumption of the institutional approach: institutions influence people by supplying incentives that encourage some types of behavior and discourage others." In this equilibrium, institutional and media personalization would be taken as independent variables affecting each other. On their behalf, behavioral personalization has not been considered the cause of other personalization types.

Based on Rahat and Sheaffer's typology, Balmas et al. (2014) added a distinction to the discussion where they introduced two opposite types of personalization: centralized and decentralized. In their definition, centralized personalization refers to "power flows upwards from the group (e.g., political party, cabinet) to a single leader (e.g., party leader, prime minister, president)" (Balmas et al. 2014: 37). The centralized personalization is a shared future of a political setting where the power gathers in the hands of a few leaders.¹⁴¹ On the other side, decentralized personalization refers to "power flows downwards from the group to individual politicians who are not party or executive leaders (e.g., candidates, members of parliament, ministers" (Balmas et al. 2014: 37). Besides seeing these two types as opposed to each other, they would not occur distinctively in all the times but also would be observed simultaneously. In both personalization types, political groups are on the losers' side. However, the focus in the literature is given more on the centralized personalization type. Regarding the cases of this thesis, the focus will also be given to centralized personalization. So, Turkey and Hungary will be examined through this lens.

As mentioned earlier, the scholarship observes that higher personalism scores of countries, compared with nonpersonalist ones, show more democratic deficit since the power in such systems is being grabbed by a particular person, which harms the checks and balances system in the big picture. Also, the study of Frantz et al. (2021: 99-100) shows that leaders who established their parties rather than taking power through a struggle within the party show more personalistic tendencies. Personalistic leaders harm the democratic setting in their countries by using political polarization as an essential tool, which also has a strong linkage with their populist discourse. The polarization occurs due to the personalistic character of the rule, which gathers the power in the hands of the leader. Since leaders make decisions through a smaller circle, this ends with the disillusionment of the oppositional groups and breeds polarization.

The presidentialization thesis raised at this point argues that "power in modern democracies has shifted from collective bodies to individual leaders (or very small

¹⁴¹ This links with the *presidentialization of politics* argument, which will be explained in length in upcoming pages.

inner circles of leaders) in coalition governments” (Poguntke and Webb 2018). As discussed earlier, Poguntke and Webb (2005) when first introduced this thesis, also introduced that presidentialization would occur in three major political arenas: leadership power resources, autonomy, and personalization of the electoral process. The first two are related respectively to the executive and the party. Especially with the technological developments mentioned earlier, voters started to focus more on the personalistic appeal of the candidates/leaders rather than what party programs offered to them. It could be observed that there is a connection between presidentialization and personalization. As provided earlier, personalization is defined as a process where individual actors’ importance increases over time and where the power and visibility of political group declines. Unlike personalization, the presidentialization thesis looks at the shifting position of the leader among collective bodies such as parties and parliaments (Poguntke and Webb 2018: 192). In this regard, personalization surrounds all of the political processes. So, it focuses on a more general picture when compared with presidentialization. In this equilibrium, as Poguntke and Webb (2018: 195) argue, “presidentialization needs personalization, but it is not synonymous. Personalization across the board may not lead to presidentialization, but presidentialization cannot occur without personalization.”

Weber’s political authority concept should also be introduced to understand the personalization of politics. Weber (1978) described legitimate authority as a particular type of power, the usage of that power on people is accepted. From there on, he defined three types of legitimate authority: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic. Traditional authority is rooted in traditional beliefs and practices (customs). This type of authority would be possible either by the family inheritance or by being regarded as the god(s) representative. Obedience to traditional authority is obliged to the ruler who obtained a traditional position of authority. So, obedience meant personal loyalty to the ruler. Rational-legal authority is rooted in laws and rules. The obedience to authority is linked to the legal office rather than personality. This type of authority represents modern democracy, where power and authority are given to certain people by the voters. Charismatic authority rests in “exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual” (Weber 1978: 215), referring to an individual's extraordinary personal qualities as charm.

The extraordinary qualifications of these leaders are the basis for obedience to their rules. Their charm would affect a part or the whole of society, and people would follow and admire their orders. On the other hand, Baykan (2018), in his study, pointed to the non-charismatic personalistic rule. Non-charismatic personalistic ruler's identity rests in the party organization. The ruler takes his authority from a group or segment within the party. The personalistic appeal of the leader comes to the front in this type of authority, where he lacks the charismatic features that Weber has introduced in his study. Rather than charismatic appeal, the personalistic style of the ruler becomes essential. The leader becomes the symbol of the party organization.

5.1.2. Populism and Personalization of Politics

5.1.2.1. Populism and the Leader

Since this thesis takes populism as a political style, the performance question comes to mind. The first of many questions arise from the fact that the performer of populism in a given context is essential to understand how populism has been evaluated. In this regard, many scholars argue that one of the defining futures of populism is the existence of a 'strong leader' who argues that he is the representative of the people (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014: 387; Selçuk 2016).¹⁴² As seen in the literature review chapter, populism shows itself in various structures. Historically, the first populist movements, Russian Narodniki and the United States People's Party, lacked the notion of leadership.¹⁴³ Though when the rise of populism worldwide was analyzed, it could be seen that Latin America has the wealthiest populist tradition among all of the other regions. Latin American politics have an essential effect on developing literature on populism in its current terms. When the focus is given to the populist tradition of Latin American countries, solid leaders are a commonality among the nations. The importance of a leader in the populist setting of a country is that the ruling party would be successful with the leader's existence.

¹⁴² The relationship between populism and strongman could be traced back to the president of Argentina, Juan Domingo Peron. Peron was a military official who had switched his career path toward politics. He ruled the country in both authoritarian and democratic settings.

¹⁴³ As explained earlier, the Russian populist movement was a small group of urban intellectuals. On the other hand, the People's Party of the United States gathered a group of peasants. The party leader was a joint leader of the People's Party and Democratic Party in the 1896 Presidential elections, who was Jennings Bryan.

So, when one looks at the modern examples of populism would see that populism finds its voice in a party setting, which has a prominent leader, who is generally one of the founders of the party and who is serving as the reason for electoral success.

The importance of the leader in a populist setting comes from the fact that they are the 'implementers' of populism in the country. However, the scholarship could not agree on whether the leader or the party/movement is the essential component of populism. One of the axes in the literature situates the leader as the central figure for populism. This axis regards the leader as the congregative figure of the unorganized masses (Weyland 2001; Laclau 2005; Roberts 2006). On the other axis of the literature, especially the scholars who see populism as an ideology or discourse, the political party is seen as necessary as the leader (Mudde 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011; de Lange and Art 2011; Pauwels 2011). In addition to this disagreement, the scholarship also could not agree on a prevalent figure to describe the characteristics of a populist leader in universal terms since each populist leader in the world rose within the country's 'political-cultural' context. Still, the common aspect of the existing populist leaders is their argument of representing themselves as the people's voice.

Regarding the contributions of scholars to the literature, this thesis argues that populist leaders stand at the center of many things. As mentioned above, they are the central figures in their parties, for their followers (in this context, the pure people), and their haters. As Urbinati (2019a: 117) stated, "All populist regimes take the name of their leader." From here on, the focus will be on how the leader mobilizes the masses to bring them under the populist umbrella. The populist leaders situate themselves as the representative of the pure people. While defining themselves as the representative of the pure people, who are excluded by the system, populist leaders should make their followers sure that they do not have any relation with the establishment. In this context, the leader defines himself as an outsider who does not link with the political establishment.¹⁴⁴ Since populist leaders see themselves as the

¹⁴⁴ Here, the outsider is not referring to not being a part of politics at all. The examples of populist leaders worldwide are a part of politics in their countries, though they were not members of the inner circle of political elites accused of being distant from people. The leaders studied in this thesis represent insider-outsider since they were a part of politics before they became the political power, but they were not included in the elites, who were the country's former rulers.

people's representative, they have an anti-pluralist point of view. After the elections, they argue that they represent 100% rather than 99%. Since this is the case, populist leaders claim that the existence of opposition is not needed anymore.¹⁴⁵

Regarding the leader in a populist setting, last but not least, the scholarship also could not agree on whether the leader is charismatic or whether he builds his power by designing a non-charismatic but personalistic leadership. Many studies focus on charismatic leadership while discussing populism (Taggart 1995; Weyland 2001). Weber (1968), in his essay *The Pure Types of Legitimate Rule*, introduced three different authorities as explained earlier: 'traditional authority,' 'rational-legal authority,' and 'charismatic authority.' The traditional authority rested in the holiness of heritage and tradition (people obey the authority because of the long-established norms or laws), the rational-legal authority rested in the belief of legal laws (authority rests in the current state administration, which is impersonal), and the charismatic authority rested in an influential and non-rational political figure. As Mudde (2004) has clarified, liberal democracies overcome traditional authority by bringing competition into the game. This competition helped people's emancipation in the system, which weakened the power of elites in people's eyes, and therefore, the legal authority of these elites also lost its importance. As a result of these developments, charismatic authority, referred to as charismatic leadership in the literature, found more room to flourish.

In Weberian understanding, a charismatic leader holds "specific gifts of the body and spirit, which is believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody"(Weber 1968: 19). In its pure definition, a charismatic leader is defined in a value-neutral sense.¹⁴⁶ In this respect, a charismatic leader holds supernatural, superhuman, or extraordinary powers/qualities. Charismatic leader rises during emergencies as crises

¹⁴⁵ This anti-pluralist standing also contributes to understanding the relationship between populism and democracy, which will be evaluated below.

¹⁴⁶ In this sense, charismatic leadership does not require a certain amount of money to be exercised, as in bureaucratic administration. As Weber (1968: 21) stated, "In general, charisma rejects all rational economic conduct In its 'pure' form, charisma is never a source of private gain for its holders in the sense of economic exploitation by making a deal. Nor is it a source of income in the form of pecuniary compensation, and just as little does it involve orderly taxation for the material requirements of its mission"

to find and provide solutions. Regarding populism, as Pappas (2021e) put it forward, there needs to be a charismatic leader for the survival of a populist political setting nowadays. In this regard, he defines a new concept, 'political charisma,' in which a leader should have a personalistic leadership combined with the aim of a radical transformation of the established institutional order.¹⁴⁷ The personalism of a leader marks his full authority over a party or a movement and also adds the opportunity to centralize the authority in the leader's hand by blurring the bureaucratic characteristics. In this circumstance, the institutional checks and balances mechanism and decentralized decision-making process of democratic leadership could not be traced. Secondly, the personalistic leader would build a specific relationship with his followers. Different from democratic leadership, which is constructed by the idea of indirect relationships mediated by impersonal institutions, in charismatic leadership, the relationship with the followers is developed directly, which helps the 'leader' as a person to develop an intimate relationship with the masses (Pappas 2020a).

On the other side of the literature, regarding the developments as the changing nature of politics (with the introduction of new communication technologies) and the rise of catch-all parties, since the ideologies and programs of parties started to lose their importance, a new style of leadership emerged that is called non-charismatic personalistic leadership (Baykan 2018). As mentioned above, a charismatic leader should obtain extraordinary qualities, whereas a non-charismatic personalistic leader obtains his identity from the party. Since these leaders take power from the party, they give more importance to party relations than political principles (Ansell and Fish 1999; Baykan 2018). The main distinction between charismatic and non-charismatic personalist leadership is that the former requires a transformational leader, whereas the latter seeks an organization-building leader.

5.1.2.2. Populism and Nativism

Since this thesis focuses on today's populist uprisings by focusing on Hungary and Turkey, it also involves the populist transformation of the postwar liberal

¹⁴⁷ Here, one should not forget that Pappas starts with the Weberian definition of charismatic authority and comes to a point for describing political charisma, corresponding to the rise of populist political settings in modern liberal democracies. In this regard, political charisma is the opposite of 'democratic leadership.'

democracies. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, as Fukuyama (1992) stated, the literature came to a point where it was argued that history had come to an end. In terms of ideologies, liberal democracy was going to be the ruling ideology of the world from then on. This idea argued that liberal democracy is the resilient political order which would not be defeated; regarding the West and predominantly European countries, the end of World War II marked the beginning of a new world order in which essential organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) established for bringing the states under specific international organizations. Also, the integration process of European countries started, which was the initial process of establishing the European Union. As discussed earlier, the vision of liberal democracy as a champion among the other ideologies lasted for a while, though the recent developments and especially the rise of populism in postwar liberal democracies, showed that history did not end yet. The rise of populist parties in Eastern and Central European countries brought ‘nationalism’ back into the picture. The scholarship is divided into two sides on studying the relationship between populism and nativism. On the one hand, the literature described ‘nativist populism’ (Bergmann 2020). On the other hand, the literature argued that nativist parties and discourse should be divided from the populist parties and discourse (Pappas 2020a, 2021d).

The idea behind nationalism was raised by the argument that every nation has the right to establish a sovereign state, which is regarded in the struggle for democracy since each sovereign state was going to be governed by the people. As explained in this chapter, populism also mentions the pure people and their right to decision-making. Regarding nationalism and populism, the idea of the people exists in both of them, though they construct their discourse differently. In the former one, ‘people’ refers to all members of the nation who could imagine their communities as a whole even though they would not meet with each other, though in the latter one, the people refer to a particular group that is described as the pure form of the citizens in the society.¹⁴⁸ When it comes to defining nativism, the literature provides various meanings ranging from reconfirmation of one’s own culture narrowly and offensive xenophobia (Rosenfeld 2011) to a combination of nationalism and xenophobia in a

¹⁴⁸ This idea highlighted by Arato and Cohen’s (2018) argument.

non-racist manner (Mudde 2007). In addition, a group of scholars described nationalism and populism together (Yarish 2018). Regarding populism, Bergmann (2020: 38) defined nativism as an opposition to the ‘others’ in the society where the native population is being protected against the influx of immigration. The nativist populism in this premise is regarded as a rise of populist politics as a reaction to the migration and external influences towards the ‘people,’ who are constructing the native population.

The changing nature of politics in the West also changed party types, which turned its face from liberal to nativist or populist ones. Besides Bergmann’s approach to nativism and populism, other scholars focus on the difference between nativist and populist politics (Pappas 2020a, 2021b, 2021a, 2021d; Newth 2023). The populist parties in the European continent would be traced back to the 1980s and the rise of nativist parties to the 1990s. As explained above in Pappas’ words, populist parties seek a charismatic leader, which flourished where liberal democracies were damaged and served an illiberal political agenda when they came to power. Unlike populist parties, nativist parties are led by a non-charismatic leader, which flourished in most developed European countries. The nativist parties oppose migration, European integration, and globalization (Pappas 2021a). As can be seen from here, populist and nativist parties differ in their leadership, the place where they flourished, and the agenda they are pursuing. To understand the relationship between populism and nativism for this thesis, it will be essential to describe the Hungarian case in the upcoming pages. Pappas (2020a) described Viktor Orbán as a populist leader.

5.1.2.3. Populism and Globalization

Regarding the historical evaluation of populism and the rise of its popularity in recent years worldwide, its relation with globalization is also an important matter discussed by the literature very recently. The rise of globalization brought the winners and losers into world politics both between and within the countries. The losers, excluded from the political system, felt alienated, which ended up with the rising popularity of populism. As studied earlier in this chapter, the populist discourse of parties and the leaders worldwide was shaped by the idea that they are

the true representatives of people, who are the losers. In this respect, the established elites represented the winners of globalization.

Two flows could identify globalization: the first from 1870 to 1914 and the second from 1960 to present (Bajo-Robio and Yan 2019). This thesis will focus on the second wave that started in the 1960s and lasted until today. In this respect, globalization could be defined as a market liberalization process in which it would become internationalized by losing its national characteristics. Regarding the reasons that led to the globalization flow for the two waves mentioned above, first comes the decreasing costs of transportation trade between countries become much more straightforward, helping the rise of global trade chains. Secondly, the decrease in communication and coordination costs helped the production process of goods in different places by being split into components. The first wave of globalization brought ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ into the scene, which did not lose its significance until today.

The literature provided several explanations of what globalization brought into the world scene: trade globalization, immigration, financial globalization, and economic insecurity (Rodrik 2021: 141). Like the first flow, the second one brought the increasing liberalization of trade exchanges, which could be named ‘trade globalization.’ Trade globalization refers to the idea that a country should export the good that it can produce more efficiently and import the good that it cannot (Bajo-Robio and Yan 2019: 234). This idea by itself brings the winners and the losers into the scene. While some of the members of the country win, the others lose since they cannot get bigger from the pie that is distributed in the nation by taking into account the global market economy. In addition to increasing trade exchanges, globalization also opened the way for the liberalization of capital movements, which could be named ‘financial globalization.’ In theory, financial globalization helps the national economies by providing a secure environment for the temporary shocks a nation would experience and also allows the nation to have domestic savings. Though in reality, financial globalization ended up with high volatility in the international financial market that ended with economic and financial crises in global terms (for example, the Great Depression of 1929, the 2008-2009 global financial crises, and the COVID-19 Pandemic), which had devastating effects on the national economies

too. In addition to these two points, immigration and refugees are an essential outcome of globalization, which the populists are using for vote-gaining purposes. The immigrants are being considered from a xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiment point of view. So, this outcome of globalization has a cultural effect on the populist discourse rather than an economic one since the argument towards these newcomers is being shaped by the idea that argues the foreigners that come to their country are not like 'them' and, therefore, they do not accept and like those people (Rodrik 2021). Nowadays, most European countries use this immigrant discourse to gain more votes since they have experienced a migration flow in recent years, especially from Muslim and African countries.

The economic and cultural outcomes of globalization, which are mentioned above, brought the feeling of insecurity to specific segments of the population. Especially in the last few years, people started to be concerned about wealth distribution, and a remarkable number of studies in the literature have focused on understanding income inequality and its effect on the nations (Piketty 2013; Ostry, Berg, and Tsangarides 2014; Kumhof, Rancière, and Winant 2015; Stockhammer 2013). When we look at the discussion on the recent rise of populism worldwide, the scholarship focuses on whether the frame of unhappiness within the society is cultural or economic (Rodrik 2019). This section on globalization and populism will consider the economic framework of globalization to explain the rise of populism worldwide.

As mentioned above, if the issue is taken from the economic point of view, the rise of popularity of populist politics and the gains that the populist leaders with their populist parties had in the elections resulted because of the economic globalization that had caused both insecurity and a sense of unfairness on people. As explained above, globalization brought a big economic pie into each country, and some people could benefit from this pie more than the others. This caused to winners and losers of the economy in every country. The losers, who could not get a big part of the economic pie, felt economically and politically excluded. This economic unhappiness brought populism into the scene and gathered the excluded ones under the roof of arguing that it would represent those people.

5.2. Populism in Turkey and Hungary

To understand the success of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and AKP in remaining in power for almost more than two decades as the most critical actors in Turkish politics since 2002 by using a populist discourse while causing harm to the democratic norms of the country; one should trace back to the developments (both in terms of social and political) that started at the late Ottoman Empire and continued at the early years of the Republic. As described in the seminal work of Şerif Mardin (1973), the social cleavage in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republican era was shaped by the center-periphery paradigm. In Ottoman times, the center represented the Sultan and his officers, whereas the periphery represented the rest of the society. As Grigoriadis and Grigoriadis (2018: 342) put it forward, finding a new role for religion in the public sphere and regulating its relation with the state, could be taken as a common concern for all of the modernizing states; but for the Turkish case, this process had happened as a *cultural war*, which could be marked as *Kulturkampf*. The Kemalist elites brought essential momentum to this cultural war after the establishment of the Republic by implementing a radical modernizing project. The argument behind this modernization project was shaped by the two party experiences and the failure to achieve a functioning democracy. The founders of the Republic realized that the citizens were not ready to make decisions on their behalf of themselves, and therefore, they needed to be educated as citizens of the civilized world to make the right choice for their lives. As could be seen from here, the modernization project was carried out as a top-down mission in which secularization was taken as a prerequisite, resulting in the alienation of the rest of the society.¹⁴⁹

Religion has been an essential component of this secularization process. It has taken under the control of the state by the abolishment of the Caliphate, by bringing religious education under the state control through introducing the Law on the Unification of Education (LoNE) and introducing the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). LoNE was vital since it introduced the schools that gave secular education as the core educational institutions. The articles of the law did not

¹⁴⁹ Here, the rest of the society alludes to the periphery in the center-periphery paradigm, who were not situated in the small circle of Kemalist elites. As Göle (1997) explained, secularism meant 'didactic secularism' in which Kemalist elites adopted a role of teaching and imposing a modern way of life that would bring society into a particular form.

include any information on the closure of madrasahs though following the law's introduction, a notice had been issued by the Ministry of National Education in which Madrasahs were announced for closure. Also, LoNE allowed Imam-Hatip schools to raise preachers and imams. Besides these developments, a divinity school was established at Darülfünun, the then university of the Republic inherited from Ottoman Empire. As seen above, the steps taken to develop centralized control over religion resulted from the desire to shape it into a proper position for the secularization program. This radical modernization project brought a conflict between the Kemalist elites and the rest of the society, which opened the way for the rise of the populist discourse and success in the political scene starting from the 1950s and remained an essential indicator for the success of the politicians until today.

The idea of a modernization project by the founders of the Republic was influenced by the modernization process that began in Ottoman times. However, the modernization project of the early Republican era was different from the modernization project of the Ottoman Empire. The modernization process in the Ottoman Empire happened to save it from collapsing. In contrast, the Kemalist elites aimed to bring society to equal footage with the European countries, to the level of rival civilizations (M. Çınar 2018; Mardin 1990). After the transition to multi-party politics, the Democrat Party (DP), by criticizing the Kemalist elites for being unable to develop an organic relationship with the people as the periphery's representative, succeeded in the first free and fair elections.¹⁵⁰ It should not be forgotten that from then on, in almost all of the free and fair elections, the parties representing the periphery won the elections. The only exception to this tradition was Bülent Ecevit. Also, the transition to a multi-party period redefined the social cleavages between the center and periphery in which the center represented the Kemalist elites- mostly the military assumed the role of being the guardian- and the periphery represented the conservatives.

¹⁵⁰ Here, it should not be forgotten that the founders of DP were former members of CHP: Celal Bayar, who had a Union and Progress Party background and who was the founder of İş Bankası; Refik Koraltan, who was a bureaucrat; Fuat Köprülü, who was a professor; and Adnan Menderes, who was a landowner. Three of them, except Celal Bayar, were expelled from the party due to calling the party to implement democracy and not violating the right to private property. This development paved the way for the establishment of DP (Ahmad 1995).

After DP came to power, almost all of the studies on Turkish politics took the rule of DP from 1950 to 1960 as the starting point for the rise of populism in Turkey. CHP, as the founding party of the Turkish Republic, adopted populism as one of its six pillars though this populist discourse remained limited because it was mainly shaped by an elitist, top-down, bureaucratic, anti-liberal, and anti-democratic nature (Karaömerlioğlu 2001: 283). Compared to the party slogan of CHP in the single-party period, which was 'For the people, despite the people,' DP adopted a slogan, 'Enough! It is the nation's turn to speak,' which empowered the rest of the society, believing they could make their voice heard. With the party's slogan and with Adnan Menderes' leadership, DP regarded elections as the core mechanism for democracy and pointed to the nation as the judge for making the last decision in politics. As Çınar pointed out in his piece, "one singular achievement of the Turkish experiment with democracy since 1950 has been the consolidation of electoral democracy, that is, a legitimate form of government has emerged only as a result of free and fair elections" (2008: 112). Menderes' populist discourse had shaped by the dilemma between a 'tyrant state' and an 'oppressed society' (Türk 2014: 47).

With the 1960 coup d'état, the center-periphery paradigm came to the scene again, in which the military stood as the center on the one side and DP as the periphery on the other. The most important result of 1960 was the introduction of a tutelary democracy through the 1961 Constitution, as mentioned above. This development became a vital fighting ground for right-wing populism since the conservative Muslims, aka periphery, felt more victimized by the system in the aftermath of the political developments of the coup d'état. However, this victimization also returned as a positive thing for the parties on the right, which helped them gain electoral power. Süleyman Demirel's success with AP in the 1965 elections could be read in line with this electoral power. So, following DP, AP was raised as the representative of the periphery in the political scene. However, besides the electoral power, tutelary bodies such as NSC, Senate, and Constitutional Court limited Demirel's ability to follow a proper populist agenda. Still, this did not retain him from adopting the populist heritage of DP and Adnan Menderes. In this respect, Demirel had a populist

discourse where he positioned the nation and national will at the center; and focused on the 'serving for the nation' argument of the populist discourse.¹⁵¹

In addition to the points mentioned above, since military interventions intended to suppress the left, they paved the way for Turkish politics to evolve towards the right. The military and CHP's inability to engage the left spectrum of politics nurtured the suppression of the left.¹⁵² These developments coincide with the urbanization process resulting from industrialization, which established a new class in cities. The members of this new class blended with right-wing ideologies, such as Islamist ideas, since the left was missing from the picture. This brought a new social cleavage line: secularists on one side and the Islamists on the other side. Since the left was missing from the picture, the populist discourse had the chance to be flourished with the right-wing movements.

The religious voters were essential for the center-right parties' voter base since DP. Political Islam found a space to be flourished in Turkish politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁵³ The liberal nature of the 1961 Constitution paved the way for the rise of religious groups, and they blossomed in the 1970s with the establishment of the MNP, which had followed by the MSP. Following the closure of MSP, the RP was established as the reformulation of its ancestor. As could be seen from here, the small circle of Kemalist elites took the establishment of these parties as a threat to the democratic values of the state and fought for the closure of the parties in each coup d'état. WP was the populist version of political Islam and sought to be a movement for mobilizing the votes of people who were feeling excluded by the 'White Turks'.¹⁵⁴ Besides military interventions' intention to respond to the fear of the rise of Islamic politics, the 1980 coup d'état allegedly took place as a response against communist and leftist ideologies. This military intervention helped political Islam to

¹⁵¹ As a result of the idea of serving the nation, Süleyman Demirel was named as 'King of Dams.' He built many dams that would benefit society during his tenure in the Office.

¹⁵² CHP declared itself as 'the left of center' in the 1965 elections but could not go beyond being a party of state elites.

¹⁵³ The rise of political Islam, Necmettin Erbakan, and the National Outlook movement were explained in detail earlier. However, to understand how the populist discourse and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with AKP came into the political scene, this section will also provide some information on the rise of political Islam in Turkey.

¹⁵⁴ The party defined the people as Muslims by excluding the class and ethnic divisions, focusing on their commonality in the Islamic faith and their practice of Islam as praying and fasting.

be more potent in the Turkish context since the military supported the strengthening of Islam to fight communist and leftist ideologies. For this purpose, the military followed a process of state-controlled Islamization from above by making religious education compulsory in schools, opening Quran classes, and promoting state-controlled religious education (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008: 37).¹⁵⁵ As could be seen from above, the electoral success of political Islam has a link with the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. In light of these, the religious parties, especially in the post-1980 period, could be regarded as critical populist movements in Turkish politics (Aytaç and Elçi 2019; Grigoriadis 2020).

The religious parties on the right spectrum of Turkish politics have been established under the National Outlook Movement with Necmettin Erbakan. The AKP was founded in 2002 as a reflection of these parties by a younger generation of the movement and won the elections as a single party, which has been a novelty for Turkish politics since 1987.¹⁵⁶ Importantly, AKP inherited the populist tone of the DP and National Outlook parties. As explained earlier, the social cleavage within the society affected the political culture in Turkey, which brought the opposition of seculars and pro-Islamist groups into presence. In the post-1980 period, the electoral success of RP, both in the local election of 1994 and the national election of 1995 that had followed by the 28 February 1997 process, brought one more time the opposition of two camps into the picture.¹⁵⁷ The AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, by inheriting the populist attitudes of its ancestors, built a populist political appeal in the eyes of the voters, which benefited from the struggle that the secular establishment is imposing. The inability of the coalition governments throughout the 1990s, which led to the economic crisis in 2001, opened the way for Erdoğan to build a populist discourse in which he criticized the establishment for its inability to represent people's desires. He clarified that his love for his society had shaped his political standing. In this respect, Erdoğan's populist discourse resonated with the narrative of the National Outlook Movement, which built its framework on the argument that the practicing Muslims, who were the real owners of the Homeland,

¹⁵⁵ This process could be described as 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis.'

¹⁵⁶ None of the parties could obtain a majority in the TBMM.

¹⁵⁷ The 28th February Process was one of the Kemalist elites' attempts to use the military to redesign the political sphere aligned with their understanding of modernization. In this respect, the RP-led coalition government was forced to resign.

were victimized and oppressed by the secular establishment under the control of Kemalist elites (I. Yılmaz 2021: 11).

As Mudde (2004) 's definition presented in the literature review part of the thesis, populism had three crucial aspects: 'establishment versus anti-establishment,' 'endorsing versus rejecting the leader,' and 'in-group versus out-group thinking' (Selçuk 2016). When one looks at the leadership style of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would see that by using 'us versus them' rhetoric, he built an image as the 'true' representative of the masses in the eyes of the people. For this purpose, he divided Turkish society into 'Black Turks,' who represent the ordinary people, and 'White Turks,' who represent the elites who governed the Republic (mainly the members of CHP). In addition, to reinforce the victimization rhetoric, which brought success in the elections; Erdoğan always created an image of an enemy posing threat to his power and rule and, therefore, to ordinary Turkish people. By winning the elections repeatedly, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan created a cult of personality constructed by the idea that he represented the voice of the 'ordinary people' in Turkey. In addition, he did not hesitate openly to show his anti-establishment attitude to the masses. These aspects helped him portray an image of a populist leader, constructed by the three dimensions of populism, anti-establishment standing, anti-elitist standing, and the Manichean worldview.

Considering the time Erdoğan spent as the head of the government, the 'them' rhetoric of his populist discourse also changed over time. As will be explained in Political Culture chapter of the thesis, Erdoğan's rule could be divided into phases. He started to adopt a more Islamist tone in his second phase and turned to be more nationalistic after not being able to obtain the majority of the votes for the first time in 2015. He started to gain an anti-imperialist tone more and more. In the early years of his rule, Erdoğan pointed to elites as the representative of 'them' in his populist dichotomy. Over the years, by obtaining more and more power, he overcame these elites and created his elites. Following these developments, with the experiences of the 2015 election and 2016 coup d'état, he needed to identify new enemies to his rule to protect his populist rhetoric alive, which played an essential role in obtaining a support base of the excluded ones from the system for all of the years in the republic.

The signs of the anti-imperialist standing of Erdoğan could be traced back to Davos Summit in 2009 when he made his famous hit ‘One Minute.’ Nuri Pakdil’s greeting in the first Necip Fazıl Kısakürek Awards ceremony is regarded as an essential point showing the anti-imperialist standing of Erdoğan (Erandaç 2017). As the pro-governmental media organizations highlighted, this greeting was requested by Erdoğan for the second award ceremony in 2015 too (Star 2015). He greeted people with “anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-socialist, anti-Zionist, anti-fascist, and most importantly anti-Pharaonist conscious” (Erandaç 2017). Erdoğan’s attitude toward imperialism has been regarded as an extension of the perception of a ‘fully independent’ and ‘great’ Turkish state. Since then, this has been used as an essential populist tool to gather voters' support. His 2023 election campaign also visualized his anti-imperialist standing. Besides the economic crisis and the concerns about his health, Erdoğan’s political campaign highlighted him as the only leader who would protect the Turkish people from foreign ‘imperialist’ threats (Yılmaz, Morieson, and Bliuc 2023). In this respect, Erdoğan even did not hesitate to target Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the most promising opposition politician in the election, as a trojan horse of imperialists (T24 2023). He also mentioned that they were the ones who fought imperialism on behalf of the tutelage system. For years, he pointed out his party's struggle with the imperialist order (Hürriyet 2023). Here, we should not forget that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the one who started an anti-imperialism argument. However, Erdoğan developed and used it as an essential populist tool to win the elections. Bülent (AKP member- youth branch) also mentioned the importance of this while explaining when and why the party’s internal structure started to change. This shows us that this anti-imperialism argument is finding a response in society. In the words of Bülent:

Think about Gezi Parkı Protest. It took place just after we ended IMF loans of Turkey. For the first time in years, Turkey was free from foreign influence. After experiencing this, when combined with the realization of FETÖ, the party started to turn itself more. In the early years of the party, every opinion was represented.... Anatolia has five hundred years of history. We are representing this history. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan worked a lot for this country. We need to see that what he did until now was focused on the country's well-being.

After becoming a democratic system, Hungary was led by moderate reformist governments that introduced liberal democratic institutions and enabled a multi-party system (Pappas 2014). These developments allowed the literature to focus on the Hungarian case as an excellent example of the democratization process of the post-communist Eastern European countries. In the early years of democratic rule, since the state controlled the economy during the Communist regime, economic factors did not affect party polarization. The party polarization happened at the cultural level, affected by the existing social cleavages inherited from the previous regime. In this respect, there existed three cleavages in Hungarian society: religious-secular cleavage, political class cleavage, and urban-rural cleavage (Körösenyi 1999; Palonen 2009). The religious-secular cleavage divided the society into groups according to their level of religiosity. Since the economy remained under the control of the state, the classical owner's and worker's distinction of the capitalist system could not be developed in the Hungarian example. The class structure was shaped by people's political and administrative positions since there was no economic class in the picture. As a result, *nomenklatura*, the political class of the communist system, rose to the scene.¹⁵⁸ Since the classical economic class struggle was absent in the Hungarian case, the Left-Right spectrum of politics did not resonate with its meaning in the West European political tradition.

Also, the legacy of the Communist regime brought the absence of civil society into the political picture, which affected the citizens' voting behavior. So, their voting behavior is weakly affected by the elites' concerns, and the personality makes the choices rather than the party's ideology (Evans and Whitefield 1995). Also, since post-communist parties adopted market capitalism as their economic agenda, economic issues could not shape the electoral competition. In addition to all of these, the Communist regime left an 'us versus them' rhetoric to the political scene by looking at the issues from a black-and-white lens, in which grey zones did not exist. The newly found democratic regime needed unity, though the system was introduced by round-table talks in which elites made decisions in society's name. All of these resulted in a chance for larger parties to dominate the political scene. However, this

¹⁵⁸ MSPZ, which was established to replace the party of the Communist regime in the democratic system, is composed of the *nomenklatura*.

did not end up with political polarization from the beginning of the system. Polarization through social cleavages emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁵⁹

Three political fields emerged following the transition: liberal, Christian-nationalist, and social-democratic. The first free and fair elections in 1990 brought success to Christian-nationalist parties: Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF), FKgP, and Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*, KDNP) (Pappas 2014). These parties established a coalition despite their various party programs (Szelényi and Szelényi 1991). Besides the success of these parties in which they managed to obtain the majority of the seats in the government, SZDSZ and Fidesz entered into parliament on the liberal side of politics as forming the opposition force towards the government. Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSZP), the representative of the social-democratic wing, entered the parliament as the last party, which showed a weak electoral performance and had few seats.¹⁶⁰ The election results were not surprising when one looked at the political culture of the elections in the country. From the beginning of the 20th century until the transition process, mostly the center-right parties won the elections in the socialist regime even though essential steps were taken to suppress it.¹⁶¹ So, it could be stated that Hungarian political culture carried a Christian-nationalist characteristic (Szelényi and Szelényi 1991).

The class structure of post-communist Hungary was inherited from the Communist regime and was composed of the distinction between professionals, proprietors, and workers. Since the state controlled the economy in the Communist regime, the Communist elites represented the top, and the working class represented the bottom. As explained earlier, Hungary adopted a market economy after introducing the democratic regime. However, it should not be forgotten that the economies of the Eastern European countries remained a 'socialist mix' at the beginning of the post-communist regimes since state control did not disappear suddenly. People's

¹⁵⁹ Political elites created two camps on the Left-Right axes during this time.

¹⁶⁰ The reason for this failure is linked to the ideological appeal of the party, which brought a narrow support base. The 1994 elections showed that with the change in the party program, the party reached more voters from different political parties and social groups (Evans and Whitefield 1995).

¹⁶¹ In 1906 the Independence Party (*Függetlenségi Párt*), in 1938, the Party of Hungarian Life (*Magyar Élet Pártja*); and in 1945, the Smallholders' Party (*Kisgazdapárt*) won the majority of the votes.

involvement in the economy took place gradually over time. The changing nature of the economy also re-shaped the existing class structure, where only the old elites, who managed to transform their political privileges into cultural assets or economic capital, had the chance to survive under this new regime structure. In the transition process, all of the classes mentioned above were fragmented. Following the transition, when three political fields emerged, these cleavages found a voice by them. In this regard liberal field represented the intellectual elites and entrepreneurial class, the Christian-Nationalist field represented most of the working-class members, and the Social-Democratic field represented the professionals in addition to the working class.

After transiting the political system in 1989, Hungarian politics needed to find a way to develop unity. The reference to nationalism became an essential tool to unite the people. After experiencing the 1956 Revolution and Kádár's steps towards controlling the political scene by excluding any mass mobilization, with the reburial of Imre Nagy, who was the failed leader of the 1956 Revolution; in 1989 the idea of the national fight for independence came into the picture. Also, all the parties referred to the nation, where they clarified the importance of a sense of unified community. However, this national unity could not last long. The first government did not regard Nagy and the revolution as a national value, which needed a new unifying force (Palonen 2009). This necessity ended up with the rise of two camps in the political system, which paved the way for polarization. It should not be forgotten that, as Enyedi (2016a) puts it forward, Hungary is an example of polarization combined with populism.¹⁶²

The same six parties managed to enter parliament in the 1990 and 1994 elections, which will be explained in length in the country's democratization process in the next chapter. However, we should also mention a significant development that took place with the 1994 elections, which resulted with a change in the political scene of Hungary. Until 1994 rightists, leftists, and liberals formed the three competing poles

¹⁶² Here, we should not forget that Hungary has the most institutionalized party system among the post-communist Eastern European countries, which made it be referred to as the success story of the democratization process. Having a combination of polarization and populism together is more dangerous than having a fragile or collapsed party system since it nurtures the democratic backsliding of the system.

though the liberal pole suddenly disappeared with the 1994 elections. Following this, SZDSZ decided to continue the road with the leftist line of politics and became a coalition partner of the Socialists in power, whereas Fidesz decided to continue operating in right-wing politics. The new outlook of Fidesz did not bring success immediately to the party. The 1994 elections showed that the party competition structure in the country was still a pre-industrial one in which the questions of church-state relations, a particular form of citizenship, ethnicity, and nation-building were important rather than the economic matters (Evans and Whitefield 1995: 1199).¹⁶³ When the time came to 1998, Fidesz emerged as the dominant force on the right, and Hungarian politics was divided according to a single cleavage, which was, on the one hand, the Left represented by MSZP and, on the other hand, the Right represented by Fidesz. Hungary had evaluated from a multi-party to a two-party system with this development. In the late 1990s, two camps emerged in Hungarian politics, constantly creating themselves as a political unit by declaring the other camp to the counterpart.

The most crucial polarization happened in the 2002 elections. In politics and everyday life, people needed to clarify their sides regarding the struggle between the two blocs of the competing parties (Palonen 2009).¹⁶⁴ Also, Fidesz adopted a populist tone with this election. It managed to monopolize the national symbols. It started to refer to the national values more and more. It adopted slogans such as "Forward Hungary" and "The future has started," which were essential examples of showing the party's populist tone (Palonen 2009: 324). In this regard, the government's electoral campaign was shaped positively compared with the opposition. The opposition criticized the government for having a clientelistic relationship with society and the corruption that this has caused (Ilonszki and Kurtán 2003). Even though it brought Fidesz as the largest party in the parliament, the election results ended with the coalition of MSZP and SZDSZ. The election result was a shock for Orbán, and so, he came to a point where he argued that the nation could not be in the opposition. So, he created *civic communities*, which will be

¹⁶³ Since Hungary was not a post-industrial society, it also lacked post-materialist cleavages, a product of a post-industrial society.

¹⁶⁴ This election is also crucial since, for the first time, 72% of the voters went to the polls (Lendvai 2017: 49).

explained in length in the below sections of the chapter. These civic communities aimed to mobilize civil society against the state. Orbán continued to mention the national symbols regarding his political agenda; it was essential for gathering the people's support under his party's roof.

Four years after the 2002 elections, the same government was re-elected for the first time in the 2006 elections. Also, it was the first election after joining EU.¹⁶⁵ The election took place in an environment with an economic and political crisis because of the lack of representation combined with the rising populist tone (Ilonszki and Kurtán 2007). After the election, people realized that the economic crisis was more profound than what the then Prime Minister and finance minister claimed in the pre-election period. Ferenc Gyurcsány, the Prime Minister of the time, admitted in a secret speech at his party meeting that he lied to the voters about the country's financial situation. This secret speech became public, ending with demonstrations in front of the parliament, where people called the Prime Minister to resign. However, Gyurcsány did not take any step forward to leave his position. Instead, he introduced harsh austerity measures to overcome the state deficit problem. However, this ended up with an unrest in a society where symbols are essential (Vegetti 2019). The demonstrations made it clear that people expected Gyurcsány to resign.

Meanwhile, the losers felt more alienated from politics since the same government was re-elected. With the patronage system, the government changed the leadership of the theaters, sports clubs, and museums (Enyedi 2016b: 214). This process lasted with street riots of the losers. The emotional breakdown, combined with the government's failure to deal with the economic problems that the country was experiencing, helped Orbán to take more support from people by using his populist tone where he situated the society as the victim of the government. At last, Gyurcsány could not resist staying in power and resigned in 2009, which paved the way for the rise of Orbán and Fidesz to the political scene one more time in which he managed to change the political system in favor of his rule by avoiding possible backlash of his figure and the party from the political scene again.

¹⁶⁵ Regarding the EU, a referendum took place on April 12, 2003, where 83.8% of the voters approved joining the union. Following this, Hungary joined the EU on May 1, 2004.

As explained earlier, the liberal pole in Hungarian politics could not find a ground to flourish when Fidesz shifted its political premise to first right and then to populism. The initial reason for Fidesz to decide to move right was that it did not want to join an alliance with the Communist legacy.¹⁶⁶ The shift from right to populism happened when it realized that the populist tone brought immediate electoral success. Liberalism was costly for building and running (democratically) a party organization, for the necessity of sustaining an ideological appeal, and for the narrow voter base because of its ideological premise (Pappas 2014: 9). Populism was easier to manage since it divided the population according to a single cleavage between the people and the establishment compared to the ideological baggage that liberalism needed to survive.

Orbán's populist tone started to shape in the late 1990s, which affected the success of his political career. However, his populist tone found its authentic voice when he was finally elected as Prime Minister in 2010. According to Enyedi (2016a), Orbán's populism is unique to the Hungarian case, which his rule had defined as 'Hungarian Populism' since it did not fit the stereotypical image of populism.¹⁶⁷ Mainstream media also provide different definitions as 'nationalist populist,' 'autocratic populist,' and 'authoritarian right-wing populist.' After coming to power in 2010, Orbán used the terms the people, the free Hungarians, and the Hungarians to describe people. His neutral language shifted to a nationalistic one when he started to fight the war of independence with the international organization, the IMF. With these developments, Orbán started to frame himself with people more and more; and started to call them 'we, Hungarians.'¹⁶⁸ While constructing his populist tone, Orbán also benefited from the enemy image, which nurtures the power of the populist agenda in the eyes of the voters, who feel victimized by the existing political system. In the Hungarian case, Orbán used George Soros as the most important enemy figure for the people. This enemy image shaped his anti-immigrant campaign.¹⁶⁹ The

¹⁶⁶ Fidesz from the beginning is an anti-communist party.

¹⁶⁷ Here, it had been defined as 'paternalistic populism.'

¹⁶⁸ This is an important indicator showing how Orbán constantly reconstructs himself with the people.

¹⁶⁹ Orbán and his government first used George Soros' photograph for a billboard campaign 2017 against migration and foreign influence. Through this campaign, he wanted George Soros to be perceived as the reason for the flow of immigrants from the Middle East and Africa by the Hungarians. Following this event, the government passed the so-called 'Stop Soros' law, which created a new crime category promoting and supporting illegal migration (Beauchamp 2018a).

migration crisis helped Orbán bring people out of the realm of Hungary, where he started to mention the European continent. His speech turned towards the European people and started to call them ‘we Europeans’ and ‘we, the people of Europe.’ When the tension between the European countries increased with the migration crisis, Orbán started to mention the people by using a regional language in which he called them ‘We Central Europeans,’ ‘We the sovereign nations,’ and ‘We the millions with national feelings’ (Csehi 2019: 1017).¹⁷⁰ His language and essential steps, such as introducing a new constitution, helped the literature situate him under populism. These important steps will be examined in the following sections of this chapter.

Orbán’s populist discourse has an anti-imperialist notion. He attacks the older men in Brussels and George Soros. He is targeting European Union and the US by pointing out these figures. For example, in one of his speeches in 2012, he declared that Hungarians would not be dictated by foreigners and would not give up their independence or their freedom (Taylor 2012). In this respect, he saw the EU as a colonizer of the country. As a right-wing politician with anti-immigrant sentiment, he declared that they would not correspond to Europe’s migrant crisis as Germany requested from them. Furthermore, he did not hesitate to call Merkel’s vision of an open EU as ‘moral imperialism’ (France24 2015). He declared that Germany would not impose its vision of dealing with the migrant crisis on other EU countries. Similarly, by supporting Donald Trump’s re-election in 2020, he declared that Democrats in the US represent ‘moral imperialism’ and added that illiberal leaders such as himself reject such imperialistic appeal (Reuters 2020). His standing toward Soros is also essential for showing off his anti-imperialist standing. The way he uses Soros as an image helps him to create a perception of the citizens where he positions himself as the savior of the nation from the influence of foreigners. Similar to Erdoğan, his anti-imperialistic appeal has a nationalist character. He aims to free Hungary from foreign influence. Bringing full independence to Hungary argument helps him to be the representative of the excluded ones from the system for a long time.

¹⁷⁰ By adopting his tone according to the changing political atmosphere of Europe, he wanted to achieve a stabilized political agenda.

5.3. Personalization of Institutional Structure: Evidence from Turkey and Hungary

5.3.1. Leader's Crust

As Alper (senior bureaucrat) mentioned, the close circle of the leader is an essential indicator of understanding what kind of a rule s/he will follow. In the words of the Alper, 'crust around the leader' is an important point one should take into account while studying Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and AKP:

You need to look at people who make up the bark forming around the leader. Over time, this crust is hardening and expanding. And do not forget that people in this shell decide how much and what type of information will be received by the leader. The longer the duration, the greater the thickness and effect of it on the leader.

As seen from here, for Erdoğan and Orbán, their close political circle tells a lot about their ruling style.

The tension Erdoğan got into with the party's founders during his long-lasting rule, as Abdullatif Şener, Abdullah Gül, and Ali Babacan, tell a lot about the autocratization process of the system in Turkey. The tension between Erdoğan and Gül in the first years of AKP's rule played an essential role in showing off how the following years would be shaped in this journey. As explained earlier, the 2007 constitutional amendment was enacted after Gül's presidency, and therefore, Gül had the right to stay in office for one term.¹⁷¹ After this development, the Constitutional Court gave an opinion on Gül's presidency, arguing that he would have one more term with five years.

The possibility of tension between these two old friends surfaced with the above-mentioned developments. The journalists on both ends of the spectrum wrote on this possibility. On one side, they supported; whereas on the other side they regarded it as impossible. This resulted because of the image of these two political figures portrayed for years. Gül, compared to Erdoğan, with his moderate and democratic attitude, has been visualized as a more acceptable figure. Ahmet Hakan (2007), who

¹⁷¹ With the amendment, the presidents were granted to have two terms of Office.

has a well-known reputation for his loyalty to Erdoğan, wrote a piece on Gül's portrait. In his words, people close to the center, open to the world, liberal, and tolerant were more likely to support Gül since an opinion settled that Gül represented these attitudes well than Erdoğan. Though in the remaining part of the article, Hakan, with a defensive tone, brought Erdoğan to the forefront and aimed to show Erdoğan's importance for all of the above values and the party's success. The tension between these two figures is visualized in the Gezi Park protests (Türk 2014a: 16-17). As explained earlier, Erdoğan started to consolidate his power with the 2007 Constitutional amendment that continued with the 2010 Constitutional amendment, which was important since essential steps were taken to end the tutelary system built by the military. 2011 elections paved the way for the autocratization of Erdoğan's rule since he obtained the power consecutively for the third time in his hands. AKP started to lose its democratic tone, and 2013 became a crucial breaking point on the road toward autocratization. Abdullah Gül criticized these steps. After reading the famous poem in his Siirt meeting, Gül called Erdoğan and asked why he read that poet. Erdoğan responded to him a week prior to this trip by saying, he also read the same poet in Osmaniye. Gül responded that he should not have done this in such a political atmosphere (Yılmaz 2001: 136). As seen here, Gül's weight over Erdoğan was an essential point in the friendship of these two political figures.

While these were happening on the Turkish side, when we looked at Viktor Orbán's road to success in 2010, he needed to come a long way since 1989. In those years, university students and intellectuals established Fidesz as a youth organization. At that time, Orbán, with his friends from Bibo College, had a liberal stance. Szelényi (2022b), one of the organization's early members, described those days as their fight towards liberal democratic principles and openly an opposition to the Soviet regime that had suppressed Hungary for decades. It could be seen that these young and ambitious people, who were mostly law school students, were hopeful for turning their countries into a democracy in the European sense. Besides being a youth organization, when they entered into elections in 1990 by becoming a political party, Orbán's popularity also visualized. As Kenes (2020: 7) pointed out, Orbán ranked as the third most popular politician in a 1991 poll. Things started to change when he became the party chairman in 1993. His influence in the organization turned into party domination (Z. Szelényi 2022b). By obtaining the power in his hands, he

changed the direction of his party from the liberal spectrum to right-wing politics. This was a pragmatist move for Orbán since there was a gap in Hungarian politics, and it proved to be a wise decision in the upcoming years regarding his political career until today. As seen from here, Orbán's turn towards illiberalism could be traced back to the transformation of the youth organization into a political organization in this sense.

Orbán, by stepping into the leadership position and becoming more authoritative in tone, lost many of his old friends since the young liberal law students of the time devoted their hopes to liberating their countries from the communist past, turning their faces towards Europe and becoming a liberal democracy as the case in other European countries. The period from 1989 to 1998 could be regarded as the initial years of Orbán, where he transformed his party's outlook towards the right and became the dominant force on the right wing of politics. Viktor Orbán, with his friend from Fidesz, especially László Kövér, took active participation in the round-table negotiation meetings of the opposition and the ruling party during the transition of the regime from communism to democracy (Lendvai 2017: 22). As mentioned earlier, Fidesz founded on 30 March 1988, and its seeds would be traced back to late Kádár period since some of the colleges, which was led by student councils, were allowed to have an atmosphere for critical thinking of the public life. In this respect, it would not be an exaggeration to call Fidesz an outcome of this critical-thinking environment. However, one of Szelényi's (2022b) memories of these years provides insight into how things started to be changed. After writing a piece on group thinking benefitting from Irving Janis' work on the critical characteristics of group thinking, she shared it with friends from Fidesz, István Hegedűs, and Lajos Kósa. The piece provided a roadmap for the organization in the future as becoming a party to avoid certain political mistakes by preserving its 'collective mind' nature. Besides, the intention of these three young members of Fidesz, Orbán, and Kövér take this as a threat to themselves. This was a critical breaking point within the party for those looking forward to achieving the liberal tone of democracy. Fidesz members realized that Orbán and Kövér acting towards their political careers rather than the promises Fidesz had provided during its early years.

Orbán also showed his intention to work on behalf of his political career rather than the country's democratization when he struggled for the leadership with Gábor Fodor. Fodor was his roommate at the university and his companion during the establishment of Fidesz. However, the two friends lost companionship when Orbán left the country to continue his education with Soros' scholarship and when Fodor became the party's chairman. After returning to the country, Orbán openly declared his ambition to become the leader of his party and managed to fight with Fodor to take his seat. This ended up with Fodor's resignation from the party. The above-mentioned examples showed how Fidesz started to change its political outlet to be an apparatus for Orbán to achieve his political goals rather than having a liberal stance towards turning Hungary into one of the European democracies of that time. As could be seen from here, both of the leaders in time with political maneuvers focused on maximizing their chances of success to rule the country and to become the omnipotent decision-maker regarding the faith of their countries. These steps are also reflected in transforming the close circle that they obtain.

5.3.2. Political Economy

In this section, the focus will be given to the patronage linkage Erdoğan and Orbán developed over the years. In this respect, the focus will be explicitly given to the role of media. Esen and Gumuscu (2021) focus on the effect of political-economic factors on the democratic backsliding process of Turkey. The importance of redistribution of resources in a partisan way in a corrupted manner from the former beneficiaries to pro-AKP businessmen and urban poor, AKP managed to create a 'triangular dependency' (TD) scheme to preserve its power. The liberalization process, in economic terms, which also had a significant effect on the design of media outlets, in the 1980s brought 'Anatolian Tigers' into the scene composed of small and medium enterprises located in certain provincial towns (Buğra 1999: 14-15). The Islamic parties benefitted from the changing economic relations during this period, pious Muslim businessmen flourished, and the urban poor mobilized against the ruling coalition of the secularist side of the country. Following the success in the local elections, these Islamist parties designed TD among the citizens at the local level. It was not surprising that AKP heired this scheme from those times since Erdoğan was one of the prominent figures in local politics. After coming to power by relocating the resources in a partisan manner, AKP created a clientelistic relationship, where it

had become both the patron and the client of this relationship. As Esen and Gumuscu (2021: 6) clarified, “pro-AKP business is dependent on the government for capital accumulation through public procurement, construction permits, cheap credit, and tax reliefs,” on the other hand, “AKP is dependent on the business for financial, material, and human resources in the form of campaign contributions, government-friendly media, donations to pro-AKP charities and foundations, and the provision goods to the urban poor.” On behalf of the party’s relationship with loyal businessmen, the urban poor, as the voters, provide electoral support to the party in return for receiving social welfare goods, job opportunities, and charitable goods. These are being provided to the party supporters through the resources of the government and the AKP-loyalist businessmen. This section will specifically focus on how media is being used as an essential tool to actualize the political economy AKP has developed over the years.

In 1994, since Orbán and his party's new brand, representing the right, was a novelty for politics, they could not win the elections. The success of the party and the leader arrived in 1998.¹⁷² After becoming the Prime Minister, Orbán started to show authoritarian characteristics.¹⁷³ As his biographer Debreczeni put it forward, different from the previous years, Orbán took his oath for office earlier than the other ministers. The debate for the proposals was absent since Orbán was discussing and deciding on the proposals with the small circle around him before the meetings (Lendvai 2017: 44). Also, he started to use patronage linkages by bringing supporters of himself to important positions.¹⁷⁴

On one side of the literature, as Fukuyama (2018) and Kaufmann (2018) described, the voters' choices in the electoral market define how the politicians will engage with the identity politics. As explained earlier, in the Hungarian example, Orbán obtains power by using an anti-EU and anti-immigrant discourse combined with changing the structure in favor of his rule, which the identity politics literature could explain. On the other side of the equilibrium, the literature on economic voting argues that

¹⁷² Orbán became the youngest Prime Minister of Hungary. He was 35 years old.

¹⁷³ Here, it should not be forgotten that there was a coalition government at the time, and therefore, he could not take steps further to entrench his power as he did after coming to power again in 2010.

¹⁷⁴ For example, the opposition in the next election built its campaign around this patronage linkage.

voters support parties that benefit them economically. However, this thesis does not fall short and considers the importance of identity politics and economic explanations to understand how clientelistic relationships are built in Hungary. Since the populist idea for the European right-wing populists found its voice by aligning with identity politics and nativism, where people are defined as the ones who share a common ethnic and cultural characteristic.

According to Greskovits (2020: 249), the empirical analysis provides evidence for the importance of civic activism in affecting the conservative middle class both for the rise and continuity of illiberalism's power in Hungary. In response to the electoral failure in the 2002 elections, by arguing that the nation would not be in the opposition, Orbán and Fidesz established the Civic Circles Movement.¹⁷⁵ The movement's activities peaked between 2002-2006 when the transformative strategies for civil society combined with a large number of memberships and militant nature for achieving its aim.¹⁷⁶ Orbán's speech following the electoral loss has been regarded as the movement's founding document. In this speech, he promised to avoid radicalization and inanimation (Greskovits 2020: 251). The movement used different tools to mobilize its followers. In this regard, it has reinvented everyday symbols and lifestyles; and reorganized through extending and connecting the grassroots networks of the right. In addition to this, the party benefited from the civic activism that the movement had created for the political outcomes. Embracing the Tocquevillian civic logic followed the idea of 'for conquering the state, first of all, the civil society should be conquered.' Besides the loss of the 2002 elections, it had been an important opportunity for Fidesz to gather the voters on the right spectrum of politics since many right-wing parties fell aside after the election. The Civic Circle movement also helped to catch the electorate's votes, who previously supported different parties. Membership in the movement did not require membership to a particular party, which resulted from the point mentioned above. As a pragmatist politician, Orbán did not want to scare the potential voters. As can be seen from here, most notably,

¹⁷⁵ This was a mass movement. As the data provided, there were eleven thousand registered civic circles with 163,000 active members (Greskovits 2020: 252), which meant that some of them were not registered, and therefore, the actual number is higher than this. It had disappeared from the political scene in time. So, there does not exist such like movement in today's Hungarian politics.

¹⁷⁶ The movement members were composed of the educated middle class. Mostly urban and metropolitan.

the movement was not representing the party but the ideals of Orbán as a leader. After the 2002 elections, taking control of civil society and bringing voters who previously had different voting behavior under its roof, Fidesz turned into a catch-all party. In this regard, it also changed its name to Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance (Hungarian Civic Party). This shift also affected the internal party organization, where Orbán's, as the leader, power weight within the party increased.

Besides mobilizing civil society as an oppositional force, Orbán also built a pro-Fidesz socio-economic elite by creating certain clientelistic relationships after coming to power. To achieve a patronage linkage while Fidesz was in power, Orbán created Civic Cooperation Forum indirectly. In this respect, the central premise of the forum was to create 'a real civil society, people, and nation who govern' (Metz 2015: 85). Actually, the Civic Cooperation Forum was created by the Civic Circles Movement in 2009, just before the elections.¹⁷⁷ The structure of the forum was shaped by its grassroots organizational structure in which it aimed to 'be' the civil society rather than only 'represent' the civil society. Regarding this, the demonstrations between 2010-2014 were mainly pro-governmental. For example, following the parliament's acceptance of the new constitution in 2011, the forum saluted the members of the parliament (Metz 2015: 87). The forum focused on the failure of the previous governments to rule the country and mentioned the foreign powers as the reason for the modern slavery that the people are faced in today's world, which could be regarded as a critical component of the populist discourse of today's illiberal and authoritarian leaders. Forum also has no tolerance toward internal enemies. In this regard, different opinions or rival action within the organization has not been welcomed (Metz 2015). Since it has a close relationship with Fidesz, the forum could not develop its policies and became an organization that only supported the government's decisions.

¹⁷⁷ While the researcher was writing the thesis, she tried to reach the forum's website. However, her access has been denied. This is an essential indicator for the research since this shows that the Hungarian political authority is closed to outsiders, which means that the system does not fulfill the transparency aspect of the liberal democratic political setting.

Media for cases of this thesis played an essential role in creating patronage linkage within the state and how leaders managed to control the everyday perception of citizens. Capturing media control was essential for Erdoğan and Orbán since, through this, they could design the citizens' perception in line with their desire to obtain and preserve power. The media allowed these populist leaders to control, use and manipulate information regarding their benefits. In this respect, a significant decline in these two cases is observed in Reporters Without Borders. Turkey ranked 149th, and Hungary ranked 85th in 2022.¹⁷⁸ This section will continue with how two leaders used media as an essential apparatus for personalizing their rules, bringing specific patronage linkages to the forefront, and how they legitimized their autocratic ruling styles in the eyes of the people.

The neoliberal wind of the post-1980 period has an undeniable effect on the media for the Turkish case. The economic policy applied following the coup d'état also covered the media sector. With the neoliberal ideal, the state subsidiaries granted previously to the media, have ended. Therefore, the media outlets started to depend on advertisement revenues, which led to a struggle for the ones who did not obtain significant amounts of money. The ones who have owned media outlets due to their family tradition in this market needed to face the reality of selling their media outlets. At that time, as a result of this trap, certain business groups dominated the market as Doğan, Doğuş, and Bilgin Holdings (Coşkun 2020: 641). Besides the patronage linkage the media provided between the owners and the political figures, also 1982 Constitution limited the freedom of the media. For example, at the time, censorship was applied to Kurdish issues. AKP, after coming to power, continued to use the previous style that politics adopted in the 1980s and 1990s towards the media.

The private media outlets, an outcome of the neoliberal policies, did not nationalize, though pressure on the owners resulted in a change of hands to AKP-friendly businesses to own them. As was the case for the judiciary, 2007 was an important year. AKP, besides media groups close to its ideology, realized that it needed to control the mainstream media. In respect of this, Savings Deposit Insurance Fund

¹⁷⁸ For Turkey visit: <https://rsf.org/en/country-t%C3%BCrkiye>; for Hungary visit: <https://rsf.org/en/country/hungary>

(*Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu- TMSF*) undertook a vital role. The media outlets which have belonged to the Uzan group, like *Star*, were confiscated by TMSF and were sold to Sancak Holding, known for its AKP-friendly manner, in 2007. Following this, *ATV* and *Sabah*, hired in 2002 and bought in 2005 from Bilgin Holding by Ciner Group, were disposed of by TMSF in 2007 when a confidential contract was realized between Dinç Bilgin and Turgay Ciner. In the tender, Turkuaz Media belonging to Çalık Group, known for its close relationship with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, bid 1.1 billion dollars. The following year, Çalık's bid has accepted. The timing of releasing the confidential contract was meaningful since only four months were left before the elections. This could be read as a strategy by AKP to silence mainstream media outlets at the time.

All of these were important steps to control the media. In time AKP managed to turn the mainstream media outlets into pro-governmental organizations. This has played an essential role in consolidating the autocratization process. In critical time-frames, Erdoğan used media to manipulate Turkish citizens' perceptions. *Usta'nın Hikayesi Belgeseli* and *Milletin Adamı Erdoğan* are the best examples of this. The 2013 Gezi Protests has been regarded as an essential breaking point for Erdoğan since a protest starting with the argument for protecting the trees turned into a protest of unhappy citizens with his rule. To avoid any criticisms of the rule he created in years, he interviewed on *Beyaz TV*, which was owned by Melih Gökçek, who was the then Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Mayor and one of the founders of AKP, which was designed to show how Erdoğan represents the society and how he preserves power in his hands. Starting from his early childhood, he explained his life, symbolizing to show society how successful he was at being one of the members of the 'losers' side of the populist dichotomy. Besides that, artists, TV producers, and sportspeople as Ajda Pekkan, Acun Ilıcalı, Kenan İmirzalıoğlu, Orhan Gencebay, Kenan İşık, Fatih Terim, Hidayet Türkoğlu, and Abdullah Gül were also shown during the program. All of them told a story that they experienced with him, and all of them toned to be supportive of his paternalistic and inclusive attitude.

Similar to this interview session, following the 2016 coup d'état attempt, *Ülke TV*, known for its close link to Erdoğan's rule, created a documentary series called *Milletin Adamı Erdoğan*. Similar to 2013, in 6 episodes, Erdoğan's life starting from

his imprisonment was shown. The message of the episodes provided was Erdoğan's struggle against powers trying to topple the nation's will. In addition to these examples, Erdoğan uses the Hamidian era as an essential tool while constructing the Islamist and Ottoman values. State-owned TRT plays a significant role in this manner. The historical drama series *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, *Filinta*, and *Payitaht Abdülhamid* are being used as essential instruments to build a cultural reality for Turkish people where strong leadership, external threats, and domestic collaborators are being presented (Çevik 2020: 178).¹⁷⁹

As it is an essential characteristic of autocratic leaders, Orbán took significant steps to limit media pluralism, freedom of opinion, and freedom of information. Orbán paid attention to media outlets since his defeat in 2002; he did not hesitate to blame them for his loss. Hungary's media system was also affected by the transition process to democracy. After freeing from Soviet Bloc with the desire to include in the European League, the freedom of the press became an important component. So, the media system adopted the European legal framework from then on. After coming to power in 2010, Orbán took important policy steps which led to a change in the media system and freedom in the country. Like Erdoğan's path, he, through the legal structure and making Fidesz-friendly people own the media outlets, managed to take control of this area and manipulate the perception of Hungarian citizens.

In line with this, The Hungarian Media Council was established in 2010. According to Media Act (2010), the council is an independent body though in reality has a connection with the government since the council chairperson is nominated by the Prime Minister and appointed by President. In addition to that, the members of the council are being nominated by Fidesz. The most important aspect the council holds in its hand is the right to regulate the market. In this sense, it decides who will be included in the market and who will be excluded (Polyák 2019: 285).

¹⁷⁹ Very recently, on the digital platform of TRT, called *Tabii*, a TV series called 'Metamorfoz,' where Osman Kavala's life is being visualized from the state's point of view, started to be screened. The timing was an important indicator to show how media is used as an essential tool. The first episode of the series has shown on May 7 (one week earlier than the 2023 election), and still, the second episode did not release. To see the TV series, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etcTUmUUWDk>

Orbán, besides important policy steps similar to Erdoğan, seized the media outlets by pressuring the media owners to sell their companies either to state or to oligarchs close to Fidesz. When the time came to 2017, 90% of the media were owned by the state or a Fidesz-friendly company (Beauchamp 2018b). In 2018 more than 400 media outlet owners announced that they were going to transfer their websites, newspapers, television channels, and radio stations to Central European Press and Media Foundation without taking any compensation (Kingsley 2018). All of these show how the pro-governmental media empire has built by Orbán in years. Fidesz government also closed down oppositional media outlets after coming to power. The examples include Klubrádió, a radio station that started to be pressured in 2011 and lost its license with the decision of the Media Council in 2021, and Népszabadság, a newspaper that became a target after publishing a story on a helicopter trip of Antal Rogán known as a Fidesz-friendly media patron. Orbán also used media to highlight the importance of the family life. Different from Erdoğan, he has short documentaries about his family life. This is a crucial populist strategy to show the ordinary Hungarians that he is one of them. In these scenes, he rides his children to school and cooks with his grandchildren for easter.¹⁸⁰ All of these linked the personalistic appeal of the leader and the voters. Both leaders use media as an essential tool for gaining and preserving power.

As seen from both examples, two leaders captured the control of the media to manipulate their countries' citizens. Besides this, the media outlets played an essential role in actualizing their propaganda. Furthermore, the stick and carrot method; certain journalists and channels were rewarded for their supportive manner of the leader whereas certain oppositional voices toward the autocratic rule were punished; became an apparatus of the fear policy these leaders were following. This was showing off that the government was not tolerating any oppositional minds, punishing them by dismissing journalists and anchors from the media outlets, and even imprisoning them provided an auto-censor mechanism for citizens to silence their oppositional views.

¹⁸⁰For Orbán's one day, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoyAef5fjEg> ; for Orbán's family cook for easter, see: <https://www.facebook.com/100044628210344/videos/1273922019882694>

5.3.3. Judiciary

Erdoğan and Orbán, after stepping into power, took significant steps to change the legal rules of the political game. The primary motivation of these two leaders was to remain in power, and populist discourse became a vital apparatus to consolidate their followers around them and create a voter base. Since society in both cases was divided and had the potential to be polarized, these leaders used identity politics as an essential weapon and a tool for their populist discourse to strengthen their power and prolong their rule. In this respect, both blurred the line between executive, legislative, and judiciary elements representing the separation of powers. However, capturing the judiciary's power in their hands in time became an important mechanism for their personalized politics. They have the chance to punish the ones who are not corresponding to their ideal society. Turkey, compared to Hungary, has the chance to cause a more profound erosion in the country's judiciary system since it has lost the European Union's leverage more easily by not being a member state compared to the Hungarian case. Still, the EU's institutional structure also seemed to be slower than the political capacity of Orbán, which is embellished with a populist benefit-maximizer character. Also, as Levitsky and Way (2020: 53-54) pointed out, the West lost its interest in the democratic ideal in developing countries with time. The leverage of the West and EU was much more visible in the 1990s though this is not the circumstance anymore. CEU, explained in the below section, is one of the best examples. EU decided that making a university to be expelled from the country was against the union's values, though the decision came late when Orbán had already managed to make the university leave the country.

As Göztepe (2021: 415) pointed out, each country should face the weaknesses of its people and institutions to decide how to recover from the democratic backsliding process they witness. As discussed earlier, constitutionalism is vital for preserving a democratic system since it provides a checks and balances mechanism. However, it should not be forgotten that the existence of a written constitution does not mean that there will be the existence of a liberal constitutional state framework (Göztepe 2021: 417). To understand the democratic backsliding process, one would benefit from Loewenstein's (1957) distinction of constitutions as normative, nominal, and semantic. From Göztepe's (2021: 418) point of view, countries like Turkey would be

examined through the degradation process of constitutions from normative to semantic ones. In such examples, the written constitution is not being abolished but deprived of its moral significance. Regarding this, the importance of whether the existing norms are being applied in line with their aim and function is being crystallized (Göztepe 2021: 418)

Interpretation of laws favoring a leader's rule can be observed in both cases that this thesis focuses on. Regarding the Turkish example, since both Erdoğan is in power longer than Orbán and since Turkey lost its connection to European Union in time, Erdoğan does not hesitate to take personal judicial decisions.¹⁸¹ Shifting toward a presidential system, unique to the Turkish case, also undeniably affects the personalization of the rule in the Turkish case. With this unique presidential system, every branch of the system gathered in the hands of the executive. One single man is responsible for the decision-making process. One of the examples of such decisions is the sword of Damocles of judgment winging above Ekrem İmamoğlu's head. The other examples include ECtHR decisions on Selahattin Demirtaş's and Osman Kavala's cases. Besides ECtHR's decision requesting to release Demirtaş and Kavala immediately, they are still in prison (Karar 2019; F. Öztürk 2020; BBC 2022; Türmen 2022; Euronews 2023; VOA 2023). This is an essential indicator for showing that the personalistic rule's arbitrariness does not obey international standards and supranational organizations like the EU. They could not have the power to sanction the judicial system and to slip these countries into democratic backsliding.

5.3.4. Higher Education System and Elite Academic Institutions

The higher education system in general and higher education institutions in specific terms became a vital battleground for Erdoğan and Orbán to actualize their populist rhetoric. In the Turkish case, many new universities have opened to provide everyone with higher education. This was a part of the policy that started in the 1980s called "One university in each province" (Yalçıntaş and Akkaya 2019). The

¹⁸¹ Since Turkey lost its connection with the EU, the EU's leverage has been lost in the Turkish case. To see how European Union Progress Reports showed that Turkey distanced itself from EU visit: Dünya (2018), BBC News Türkçe (2018), VOA (2020).

focus in this period has been the establishment of public universities, especially in the country's rural regions. This has been an essential tool for the populist discourse, where AKP gained support through bringing the opportunity to rural Turkey to obtain a higher education degree besides the quality of education the students are taking. Especially people in rural areas regard this as a significant opportunity for their children since the parents could not get a higher education degree. Diplomas their children would obtain seen as an important achievement for these families, which was blinding them to the quality of the institutions. This helped Erdoğan's populist rhetoric, where he defined himself as belonging to the society (the man of the society). This has resulted of his political image, which is leaning on providing service to citizens, could be traced back to the right-wing leader tradition in the Turkish case (Türk 2014b).

On the other side of the story, Erdoğan, endowed with immense powers, also used these powers to control the higher education system. Turkish history did not have a crystallized separation between politics and the higher education system. Still, the steps that Erdoğan took were far more than what had happened until then. By appointing kayyım rectors to universities and closing down the universities, such as Şehir University, he has managed to control this institutional structure.

Orbán did a similar thing regarding the higher education system of Hungary. Following the constitutional amendment after coming to power, he introduced a new Higher Education Law in 2011. Through this new law, universities lost their autonomy. This resulted in granting the power of the selection procedure of the critical appointments to the central authority (Kováts et al. 2015). This law also opened an area where the government could limit the revenues allocated to universities and the student's admission scores. Besides these, Orbán did not only limit and change the rules for higher education in 2011. As will be explained, the expelling process of CEU from the country was a significant development, showing his desire to end oppositional forces out of the country.

Following the removal of CEU from the country, the Orbán government took further steps to take the higher education system under control. The government started a

process to transfer previously state-funded public universities to private ones, with the power granted by the Higher Education Reform. The Corvinus University of Budapest was the first one that had experienced such like transformation. It transformed into a private university under the control of a foundation called Maecenas Universitatis Corvini in 2019. Eight universities followed the same line in 2020, and only five universities were left state-funded in 2021 (ÁTLÁTSZÓ 2021). With the privatization process, the founding assets of the universities have moved to the foundations' trust fund, mainly managed indirectly by the state since an unelected and delegated Board of Trustees is running them. Also, the foundations have the right to receive public funds. With this, the transparency has been lost because the public money given by the state to these universities could not be tracked afterward.¹⁸²

This section will provide evidence from Boğaziçi University and Central European University to show how populist leaders use their power to control elite academic institutions, which in their ideals are providing social mobility opportunities and fading the liberal ideals at the end, bringing oppositional minds into the scene. These institutions became a battleground for these two autocrats to clear the way from oppositional ideas and rule the country without disobedience.

5.3.4.1.Boğaziçi University and Central European University

On 1 January 2021, with a presidential decree, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appointed a rector from outside the university for the first time in the history of Boğaziçi University. This not only affected a single university, but it imposed an alarm bell for the well-educated Turkish citizens, who got aware of the fact that the omnipotent ruler of the country would pose a threat to the freedom of higher education institutions, more specifically to the freedom of people to decide what kind of an education they want to get. As it could be read from the events that took place in the aftermath of this decision, by attacking one of the most prestigious universities administrations in the country, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan aimed to get stronger by

¹⁸²The budget for higher education had cut down in 2012. An alternative budget had been promised from EU research and development grants, which would be channeled through the government. This new system of the transformation of the control of universities with pro-state foundations also made it impossible to track this budget.

controlling the institutions that educate the oppositional minds to his rule.

Immediately following the Presidential decree, the protests started that had read as noncrucial opposition by the government at the beginning since, in time, with more and more power, it had easily suppressed oppositional movements.

In 2016 the deputies of AKP brought a bill to the parliament which entrusted the authority of appointing the rectors directly to the President. However, it had withdrawn as a result of the objections of the opposition.¹⁸³ Regarding the country's political atmosphere, since the Council of Ministers was granted the right to issue emergency decrees, three months later, from the draft of the bill, the bill came into force with a decree-law. With this legislative decree, in-state universities, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), became responsible for selecting and offering three candidates, and President granted the right to appoint one of these three candidates to office. On 2 January 2021, a Presidential decree appointed Prof. Dr. Melih Bulu as the new rector of Boğaziçi University. Following this appointment, the academicians and students started the 'Boğaziçi Resistance Protests.' As Bulu stated, the state did not expect the protests to last longer than six months. In this respect, in the early days of the protests, he made it clear that he would not resign from his position (Euronews 2021). Though, things did not go in the direction that the state and Bulu had expected, he was dismissed from his office seventh months later. Still, this did not last the unrest; today, protests continue. Taking into account the developments since 2016, Bulu was not the first appointed rector of Boğaziçi University, and criticisms have been there since the appointment of Prof. Mehmed Özkan in 2016, but he was the first rector who had been appointed from outside of the university since the 1980 coup d'état.¹⁸⁴ First of all, this had been regarded as an attack on the tradition of Boğaziçi University, and from there on, it had been regarded as a threat to the democratic values that exist in the everyday practice of

¹⁸³ On July 16, 2015, Turkey experienced a coup d'état attempt, followed by a State of Emergency (SoE) declaration on July 21, 2015. Article 121 of the Turkish Constitution empowers the Council of Ministers, which meets under the leadership of the President, to issue decrees with the force of law (KHK) regarding the subjects of SoE.

¹⁸⁴ Prof. Dr. Melih Bulu graduated from Middle East Technical University, Industrial Engineering Department, in 1992 and completed his master's and Ph.D. at Boğaziçi University. After graduation, he worked in the private sector while lecturing at several universities. His full-time academic carrier started in 2009. He was the constituent rector of İstinye University from 2016 to 2019. He became the rector of Haliç University in 2020. From that position, he had appointed as the rector of Boğaziçi University in 2021.

people in the country. In this regard, the protests would be interpreted as a reaction to the people's unhappiness because of the presidential system, which reinforces President with immense power and annihilates the checks and balances system in politics and everyday practices. The reactions toward Bulu also resulted from his politicized career. He had a close connection to AKP, and his career in higher education resonated with his linkage to the party. After his desire to become the municipal of Ataşehir in 2009, AKP rewarded him with a consolation prize of being head of the Management Department of Şehir University in 2010. In 2015, he applied to be a deputy of the party; however, he could not, and again as a consolation prize, he became the rector of İstinye University (Yetkin 2021).

The roots of Boğaziçi University can be traced back to the late Ottoman Empire. Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, a US missionary, and Mr. Christopher Rhineland Robert, a US merchant, had decided to establish a modern school that gave a secular education in 1859 and opened the school's doors in 1863, which had been named Robert College. In the founding process of the school, the Board of Trustees made it clear that the instruction language of the school would be English, students without considering their races, religions, and nationalities would be accepted, and it would remain depoliticized. The idea of a university was planted by Dr. Caleb Frank Gates', who worked as the school's president from 1903 to 1932. He had the idea of opening an engineering school. Following the establishment of the School of Engineering in 1912, the School of Business Administration and the School of Sciences had established in 1959. All the faculties mentioned above were placed within the *Yüksek Okul* (Higher School), which was positioned under Robert College. Until the late 1960s, establishing a university was not an option for the college. However, both the political atmosphere of the country and the financial difficulty that the college faced brought different options to the table. One of these options was to Turkifying either the yüksek okul or the schools- Robert College and the American Colleges for Girls. At last, the Board of Trustees decided to preserve the schools under the present management and transfer yüksek okul to the Turkish government. As a result, Boğaziçi University had established in 1971.

Despite the nationalization process, with the efforts of the faculty and administration, the culture of Boğaziçi University survived until today. This culture could be traced

back to one of the founding principles of college, which had been shaped by excluding the racial, ethnic, and national identities of people outside the school's doors. In this respect, people at Boğaziçi University represent the colors of the rainbow. So, people from different classes, having different views of the world, are gathered under the university's roof, where they find a way to be together without bringing their different backgrounds and identities to the floor. This has been defined as 'the culture of living together' by the members of the university, which would be regarded as a prototype of the liberal democratic society since it had been shaped by the idea of living together despite the differences, respecting the differences, and establishing unity with the differences (Medyascope 2021). The most crucial factor that makes these differences stick together could be described by the existence of a democratic environment within the boundaries of the campus.

Different policies shaped the history of the selection procedure of rectors in Turkey due to the changing political atmosphere of the country. As a part of the modernization project, the higher education system was seen as a tool in the early years of the Republic, and until the introduction of the multi-party system, rectors were appointed by the President (Doğramacı 2000). The multi-party period brought the idea of autonomy into the picture, where universities were placed at the center of the selection procedure, though this did not last very long as a result of the political atmosphere of the country. The 1970s and 1980s, one more time, brought the state's control on the higher education system. The Law of Higher Education was accepted in 1981, which granted YÖK the role of being the central organ for which universities will be responsible. This new law also granted the right to appoint rectors to the President. This undemocratic appointment procedure of rectors changed to selecting the rectors through an election procedure in 1992 and lasted until 2016.¹⁸⁵ As mentioned above, with the legislative decree, YÖK became responsible for selecting and offering three candidates to President, and President was granted the right to appoint one of these three candidates to the office. However,

¹⁸⁵ With the new regulation introduced in 1992, following the universities' election procedure, six candidates with the highest votes were notified to YÖK. After this, YÖK was presenting three of these six candidates to the President. President was appointing one of these three candidates as the university's rector for four years.

in recent years the appointment of the rectors did not follow the steps that were decided by the decree.

Boğaziçi University, with its culture mentioned above, has been a safe haven for the students representing different faces of the country.¹⁸⁶ University took the attention of Erdoğan's rule after Turkey's democratic backsliding process gained momentum in the 2010s due to its liberal nature, providing a free zone for sustaining differences. Following the legislative decree of 2016, YÖK only brought the name of Prof. Dr. Gülay Barbarosoğlu to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had received the 86% of the votes in the election of the university. However, rather than Barbarosoğlu, Erdoğan had appointed Özkan, the vice-rector at the time and who was not a candidate in the elections. Considering all these, Bulu's appointment by a presidential decree was the last straw. The protests started with the argument that the rectors should be selected through an election process, which is an important tradition reflected in the Boğaziçi University culture. In line with this argument, the slogan of the student protests had been shaped by their desire not to have a 'trustee rector.' From the early days of the protests, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan responded with a populist tone, linking these protests to terrorists. In this respect, he blamed a group of people for heating the atmosphere and as the force for provoking the students to act like this. In line with this argument, Bulu and the government clarified that these protests would end soon. So, through suppression and fear, as it had been used for all of the protests and uprisings in the country raised during AKP's term; the government thought this protest could end quickly. However, the long-going unhappiness in the country regarding the well-educated citizens found a voice through an unarmed protest and did not end until today.

When one looks at the general picture, it can be seen that Boğaziçi University is where the country's elites are being educated. As the academicians make it clear, Boğaziçi University accepts students from around the country. So, the students are coming to university with a very narrow worldview, though through a critical and analytical education system, they are widening their worldviews. Also, the leading

¹⁸⁶ In the 1990s, when the headscarf question came into light regarding higher education institutions, Boğaziçi University refused to implement the autocratic state policy of banning the students who wore a headscarf within the boundaries of the campus.

universities within the country aimed to educate bureaucrats that would serve the establishment of Kemalist elites for years. Taking into regard all of these, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's attitude towards the rector selection process could be read through his populist discourse, shaped by an anti-establishment and anti-elitist standing, which aims to suppress and clear possible oppositional forces from the road.

Similar to the Turkish case, in Hungary, a bill was submitted to the parliament in the spring of 2017 which threatened the existence of CEU. This bill claimed that some universities (the foreign-funded ones) were operating irregularly, so new regulations should be adopted. In reality, the bill was pointing to CEU specifically since there did not exist any university like that in the country. Following certain amendments to the Higher Education Law, reorganizing how the foreign-funded universities would continue their operations in Hungary, the protests started towards them. The protestors crossed the borders of Hungary, since this step that the government with Viktor Orbán took was read as an assault not only towards to one of the most prestigious universities within the country but to the narrative of the success story of a third-wave of democratization that had adopted by the liberals all around the world. So, liberals worldwide, who pinpoint Hungary as a success story of post-communist East Europe, are faced with the annihilation of their fairy tale.

Since the beginning of the post-communist era, the governments could not successfully build a comprehensive higher education system. After several attempts to develop a higher education law, Orbán, after re-writing the constitution in favor of his rule, introduced a new Higher Education Law in 2011 with which universities lost their autonomous natures. Like Turkey, with this new law, the central authority granted the power of the selection procedure of the critical appointments (Kováts et al. 2015; Chikan 2018). Following this, Zoltán Balog's, the then Minister of Human Resources, submission of a bill to the parliament in March 2017 became a vital vertex for the future of higher education institutions. In this bill, foreign-funded higher education institutions were claimed to operate irregularly in Hungary. This had been regarded as an act directly against CEU since it would not be possible for the university to continue its operations in the country.

Following Balog's bill, on 4 April 2017, the parliament adopted certain amendments to the Higher Education Law, which intended to regulate the activities of foreign-funded higher education institutions in Hungary, also known as 'Lex CEU.' This new law requested that foreign institutions outside the European Economic Area operate in their country of origin in addition to Hungary and sign a bilateral agreement with the Hungarian government to continue their operations. CEU was founded by George Soros, who has a Hungarian origin, a billionaire, and a philanthropist, in 1991 following the desire of a group of intellectuals who imagined an internationally recognized university that would serve the transition process of democracy in 1989. The university's founding mission was shaped by the idea of an 'open society' and the democratization process.¹⁸⁷ In 1993, university obtained accreditation in the US, and the Hungarian accreditation was added to it in 2004 (Oktatói 2020). As Lex CEU had requested, CEU needed a campus in the US to continue its operations in Hungary, which was not the case.

George Soros and the CEU became a natural 'enemy figure' for Orbán when democratic backsliding gained momentum. Orbán did not hesitate to position Soros and his influential network of charities, the Open Society, as a 'shadow power.' This is a common political strategy populist leaders use. In this regard, Orbán visualized Soros as a symbol of a foreign threat to the national sovereignty. After finishing his bachelor's degree, Soros emigrated to US, whereby working in the finance and investment sector became one of the most successful investors in the US. As a holocaust survivor and billionaire, with the effect of Karl Popper on his intellectual development, he dedicated his wealth to human rights, education, and health. In line with this desire, he established the 'Open Society Foundation,' which had the mission to fight for freedom of expression, accountable government, and societies on a global scale.¹⁸⁸ In line with this, Soros also looked forward to help his country of origin while it was being reshaped in the post-communist era. He provided scholarships to students and dedicated his money to transmitting the newest technologies to the

¹⁸⁷ After experiencing the Nazi occupation in Hungary, George Soros went to London to build a new life. He started to study at the London School of Economics (LSE) and had the chance to take lectures from Karl Popper, who became his intellectual hero in the upcoming years. Soros had affected by Popper's (2020) writing on the open society.

¹⁸⁸ "George Soros" Open Society Foundations. Retrieved from <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/george-soros>

country, which would benefit the progress of the students and the country. CEU had established with the same mission in 1991. Soros thought that this university would serve as a place for training the new elite of the post-communist society.¹⁸⁹

The first encounter with Soros' image occurred when Orbán and his government used his photograph for a billboard campaign in 2017 against migration and foreign influence. Through this campaign, he wanted to actualize George Soros, in the eyes of the Hungarians, as the one behind the flow of immigrants from the Middle East and Africa. Following this event, the government passed the so-called 'Stop Soros' law, which created a new crime category as "promoting and supporting illegal migration" (Beauchamp 2018a). In addition to anti-migrant sentiment, the second component of Orbán's populist discourse had shaped by attacking liberalism. On behalf of preserving national values, he took significant steps towards liberal ideals. One of these steps took place in attacking the LGBTIQ community in Hungary.¹⁹⁰ As Elissa Helms and Andrea Krizsan (2017: 169) pointed out in their article, the most significant sin of CEU for facing an attack from the government was the existence of the Gender Studies department, which brings the visibility of the initiations on campus, seeks to raise awareness of gender inequality to advocate LGBTIQ rights, or denaturalize normative gender assumptions.¹⁹¹ Orbán, as the people's representative, was responsible for safeguarding Christian values against Western liberalism and started his attack on CEU under this premise of his populist discourse. From the beginning, Soros' aim in establishing such like higher education institution in the country was to educate a new set of political leaders and scholars, who were nurtured with a free atmosphere of academic inquiry and critical thinking. So, the actual sin of CEU was promoting the points mentioned above under the 'open society' ideal. By creating the image of Soros, as explained here, Orbán had the opportunity to nurture his populist rhetoric, which brought success and more power to him in time.

¹⁸⁹As Soros imagined, the university educated Presidents, bureaucrats, and high-level civil servants in time (Foer 2019).

¹⁹⁰Orbán, after coming to power in 2010 with the new constitution, banned same-sex marriage, followed by the ban on adopting a child in 2020. The most significant development occurred when the parliament passed 'Anti-LGBTQ Law' in the summer of 2021.

¹⁹¹Following this, in 2018, the Gender Studies programs closed down. Only two universities provided this program, and one was CEU. On the Turkish side, the LGBTIQ Study Club of Boğaziçi University has closed down; certain movie screenings were forbidden during Pride Week (A. Tekin 2021; D. Esen 2022). Similar to this, on March 1, 2023, the gender studies program at Kadir Has University, a foundation university, changed to be women and family studies program. To see the regulation: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2023/03/20230301-1.htm>

At the end of the month, when Lex CEU was accepted, European Union (EU) started its three-step EU infringement procedure towards Hungary by arguing that 'the amendments on Hungarian Higher Education Law is not compatible with the fundamental internal market freedoms, notably the freedom to provide services and the freedom of establishment but also with the right of academic freedom, the right to education and the freedom to conduct a business' (EuropeanCommission 2017b). The Hungarian government responded by arguing that the Higher Education Law was not violating the EU Law. As a result of Hungary's insistence on remaining firm, European Commission decided to take the case to the Court of Justice of the European Union in December 2017 (EuropeanCommission 2017a). The Court decided that the amended Higher Education Law was incompatible with EU law in October 2020 by arguing that Hungary is taking steps toward harming the checks and balances system by weakening the institutions (Inotai 2020). While this procedure was going on, the then-rector of CEU, Prof. Dr. Michael Ignatieff, suggested relocating the university to Vienna. Before taking steps towards the relocation, Soros and the university waited for the decision of the Hungarian government to be changed and to find a way for the university to continue its operations in Budapest. However, the decision did not come in time, and CEU's courses based in the US needed to be relocated to Vienna in 2019.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL CULTURE

The scholarship highlights the importance of political culture on democracy. As discussed in Chapter II, the consolidation of a regime happens when the majority of the public opinion accepts that problems would be solved through democratic procedures and institutions, which means that democracy becomes the only game in town. The political culture as a concept is an essential indicator of political regimes literature. The relationship between the way people are being ruled and the political beliefs, values, and attitudes they have could be traced back to ancient Greece (Esmer 1999: 28). Considering the importance of political culture on political regimes, this thesis focuses on the effect of cultural premises in political terms on the democratic backsliding process of Turkey and Hungary. The chapter starts with a theoretical framework, where culture and its relation to politics are first defined. Following this, the relationship between democracy and citizenship is being studied. The idea that democracy would not flourish without democratic minds is being examined, an important indicator showing how the democratic backsliding process takes place in the cases of the thesis. From there on, the scholarly debate on the perception of citizens toward democracy is being studied. How people define democracy becomes an essential indicator of understanding how as citizens, they allow their regime to shift from democracy to autocracy. Following the theoretical framework, this chapter continues by portraying Erdoğan's and Orbán's personal lives since the autocratic culture would be traced back to the core premise of society, family. From there on, the importance of political culture in both cases is examined by focusing on the effect of Islamic history, in addition to the Ottoman past, on Erdoğan and the effect of the Kingdom of Hungary on Orbán's rule being studied. The last section of this chapter focuses on the democratization process of Turkey and Hungary since the democratic histories of these cases explain how citizens' perceptions toward democracy have developed.

6.1. Theoretical Framework

6.1.1. Culture and Politics

Culture, originates *cultura* in Latin, comes from the word *colere*. *Colere* has different meanings as cultivating, inhabiting, worshiping, and protecting. Until the 18th century, culture as a concept did not exist in English in the sense that it is used today. One of the original meanings of culture was *husbandry*, which passed English from French in the 15th century. It referred to the ‘tending of natural growth’ (Williams 1976: 77). In today’s sense, the concept emerged in the mid-18th century in French and was linked to *civilization*. As Williams (1976: 78) pointed out, the relation between these two concepts has been complicated from then on. In the 19th century, when civilization turned to be used in an imperialist sense, the connection between these two concepts ended, and they started to be used in opposition (Eagleton 2000: 15).

During these developments, Germans borrowed the term first as *Culture* at the end of the 18th century and then used it as *Kultur* in the 19th century. It has been used as a synonym for civilization: firstly, it meant civilized or cultivated, and secondly, as a secular process of human development. Herder was the first German who distinguished the term from civilization by using it in plural terms. Herder by defining culture as people who are living in similar places with similar habits and sharing the standard of living, eventually ending up with a common culture (Dellaloğlu 2021: 23). Through using it as a plural noun, he also argued that there exist cultures of different nations and periods; and also, different social and economic groups representing different cultures within a nation. In this regard, culture has been used to describe a general intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development process in the 18th century. It was used to indicate a particular way of life of people or a period of groups in the 19th century (Williams 1976: 80).

Using Weber’s explanation of man as an animal suspended on the web of meanings he created, Geertz (1973: 5) positioned culture as constructed by those webs. In this regard, understanding people's everyday world is essential for understanding culture. Cultural meanings create the basis of social values created by people's everyday lives. As Highmore (2008: 1) argued, everyday life refers to the readily available

reality and the hidden aspects of life.¹⁹² So, to see the culture in everyday life, one should be able to make invisible, the visible. Culture, in this sense, would be understood through the symbolic meanings of life. As the anthropologist Marc Augé suggested, “traditional can be characterized as a ‘concern for the qualitative, insistence on collecting direct testimony- live experience,’ for the purpose of discerning what is ‘permanent and unconscious’ about a culture” (Augé 1999: 1). In this regard, people's behavior and interpretations of the social structures become essential for understanding the dominant forms of culture. As Grindstaff, Lo, and Hall (2018: 5) pointed “the social consists of networked relationships that develop through face-to-face and mediated interactions. All people live in the lifeworld- or more accurately, in lifeworlds- where we enact or lives socially, episodically, in relation to other people.”

As Berezin, Sandusky, and Davidson (2020: 102) pointed out, culture was relatively novel for political sociology in the 1990s though today, both sociologists and political scientists agree on the importance of culture in politics. In this regard, cultural imagination became essential to explaining the historical trajectories. Through this, people are oriented toward particular embedded meanings and shape their understanding of everyday life by these meanings. In addition to imagination, discourse is also crucial for political life. Discourse creates commonsense reasoning, an expression of categorical commitments fitting to shared language practices (Mukerji 2018: 114). On the other hand, as Benedict Anderson(2006) pointed out in his book *Imagined Communities*,¹⁹³ political imagination creates the basis for collective identities. Here, it should not be forgotten that imagination is more potent than discourse since it can potentially exceed the common sense created by discourse. In this regard, sociological imagination is becoming valuable for using it as a tool for thinking beyond the political cultures promoted by states at discursive and political imagination levels (Mukerji 2018: 114).

¹⁹²While studying the everyday life of people and their relationship with the culture, this thesis will look at individual behaviors and their effects on change and the collective acts of groups and their effects on change.

¹⁹³The book was initially published in 1983. This thesis uses the 2006 edition. All references refer to this edition.

In Berezin's words (2012: 619), political institutions express daily life. So, political institutions are linked to everyday life, and citizens engage with them daily. Here Geertz's (1973) distinction of twitch and wink for thick description in ethnographic studies comes to the scene. In this explanation, Geertz wants us to consider two boys contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. One of them is twitching, which means that his action is unintentional, and the other is winking toward his friend, which is intentional. If one does not have the cultural code for twitching and winking, then both neurological reactions would mean the same to them. Neurologically twitching and winking would mean the same things, though they have different meanings from a cultural point of view. So, the cultural codes of a society or a group decide what such like act is referring to. To be able to understand the meaning, one should know the context.

As Geertz (1973: 11) posed, culture is in the minds and hearts of men. To understand the cultural codes and their effect on political development, one should be able to see what is hidden under the surface. The meanings are hidden; therefore, they would not be seen but must be interpreted. The importance of meanings and the global definition of culture, which is not used commonly, brought scholars to two sets of narrowed conceptualizations. One of them is socio-psychological, and the other one is semiotic. In the socio-psychological definition, culture is presented as the attitudes, beliefs, values, and skills of the whole society or a group.¹⁹⁴ The second conceptualization resonates with Geertz's 'web of meaning' explained earlier, which he described as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz 1973: 89).¹⁹⁵ In the semiotic approach scholars focus on the "content and form of texts and cultural practices" whereas in the socio-psychological approach, they focus on "syndromes of attitudes" (Kubik 2019: 85). Since symbols and meanings are important, to understand behaviors of people, one should belong to that community of shared culture. In this shared culture, meanings are hidden and unspoken. In this equilibrium, events become essential for how citizens imagine the

¹⁹⁴ This definition is dominant in political science.

¹⁹⁵ Lisa Wedeen's (1999) study on Syria is an excellent example of the semiotic conceptualization of the culture and its effect on political developments.

world they are living in. This kind of imagination can develop certain emotions as hope or fear. As can be seen from here, perceiving the world decides how we will visualize what we are living.¹⁹⁶

There is an undeniable relationship between culture and politics. As Eagleton (2000: 12) pointed out, cultivation could be regarded as something both we do to ourselves and something done to us. *Bildung* used in German would be examined in this respect. It flourished during the adaption of culture and civilization concepts in French and English to refer to education and culture construction. Politics used *Bildung* since it refers to education as an instrument for creating responsible and well-tempered citizens (Eagleton 2000: 12). As Delllaoğlu (2021: 26) pointed out, education has been an instrument for direct intervention in culture. In this regard, how politics use specific instruments to shape the culture has shown. And so, the desired citizen is represented.¹⁹⁷ Before entering into the political culture part of this section, the vocabulary on politics and culture that scholarship focuses on will be examined.

As Berezin, Sandusky, and Davidson (2020) point out; culture, nation-state, and identity play an essential role while studying politics and culture. In this regard, nation-states are the primary vehicle for inserting cultural meanings into politics (Berezin, Sandusky, and Davidson 2020: 107). As discussed earlier and as Anderson pointed out, nations are imagined communities where people imagine sharing specific values and beliefs with people they did not meet face-to-face. So, the nation is being constructed by the everyday life practices of people. Here, “How do people identify themselves?” becomes essential. Burke and Stets (2009) put emotions and ‘perceptual control’ to the core of their identity theory and argue that the way individuals take themselves as objects or subjects of meaning, is the basis of their identity creation. This way of identity creation would be a mirror for individuals to see themselves and how others perceive them.

¹⁹⁶ Kanan Makiya’s (1998) study on Iraq and Jan Kubik’s (1994) study on Poland are good examples of showing the power of symbols on how people perceive the world and add meaning to it.

¹⁹⁷ This thesis looks at the relationship between culture and politics mutually. So, politics has an undeniable effect on shaping the cultural premises of people but also, the culture that people cultivated over the years is shaping the future of politics.

As Almond (1980) pointed out, the notion of culture in political terms would be traced back to the ancient writings. In this regard, from Plato to Aristotle, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Rousseau are being studied. The importance of socialization in political terms is also considered while studying political culture and its effect on political development. Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* emphasized people's behavior and its effect on maintaining democratic rule. By studying the political attitudes of citizens in America, which has its origins in French Revolution and therefore, he also focused on the attitudes of the French bourgeoisie and aristocracy, Tocqueville is regarded as the forerunner of modern political sociology (Almond 1980: 6). As explained here, the political attitudes of people have been essential for scholars to understand the evaluation of political culture.

Psychoanthropology, which has focused on the importance of socialization starting from childhood, has been an essential intellectual wave for studying political culture and its development. By combining anthropology and psychology, this intellectual accumulation first focused on childhood socialization but then expanded its vision to lifelong socialization and its effect on shaping the political attitude of citizens. Almond and Verba (2015), while studying the political culture of democracy through the influence of the above-mentioned intellectual waves, introduced the *civic culture* concept.

While developing this concept, Almond and Verba, by considering the changing political atmosphere of the time, understood that Western culture's aspects did not correspond to the emerging world's cultural content since the political character of this new world was different from the Western countries. The main characteristic of this new world's political culture has regarded as participation, shaped by two modes: democratic participation and totalitarian participation (Almond and Verba 2015: 4).¹⁹⁸ In this equilibrium, democratic participation refers to the 'participation of citizens in decision-making process' and totalitarian participation referred to 'participant subjects.'¹⁹⁹ Since the participatory future of the emerging world is uncertain on which pole it will follow, *civic culture* comes into the scene as an

¹⁹⁸The book was initially published in 1963. This thesis uses the 2015 edition. All references refer to this edition.

¹⁹⁹This idea of participation which included men but not the elites, has been important for the rise of populist politics and its success in today's world.

essential concept. In Almond and Verba's (2015: 6) words, civic culture is a mixture of modern and traditional, which could be considered a third alternative. The civic is regarded as enabling factor for including all citizens in politics (Almond and Verba 2015).²⁰⁰ In total, civic culture, by taking into account of all the philosophical inquiries that started from Plato and onward, came up with the idea of the 'rationality-activist model' of democratic citizenship. In this idea, the citizens are represented as active participants of the processes where their participation works as informative, analytical, and rational (Almond 1980: 16).²⁰¹

Regarding the importance of civic virtue, Putnam (1993: 87) in his study, focuses on the effect of the 'civic community' on the success of democratic government. Civic community requires active citizens, though this does not mean that all political activities equalize by being virtuous or working for the common interest. Citizens in a civic community are neither self-interested nor altruistic. However, the self-interest of citizens in such communities should be defined in an enlightened way, where it should provide liveliness to the interests of others (Putnam 1993: 88). In line with this, participation should provide a ground for flourishing the common interest rather than focusing on achieving the personal desires. The most important aspect of a civic community is the existence of political equality, which prevents any vertical relationship between the authority and the citizens. Since everybody is equally footed, there would not be a patron-client relationship. Civic community compromised of 'virtuous citizens,' who do not only active, equal, and public-spirited but also helpful, respectful, and trustful toward each other (Putnam 1993: 88). So, tolerance is an essential defining element of civic community, where citizens are tolerated toward oppositional ideas too. Participation is the most important aspect of a civic community.

Besides joining formal organizations is one of the aspects of social capital, it is regarded as an essential measure for community involvement (Putnam 2000: 48). In Tocqueville's (1981) view, what makes Americans essential is the voluntary

²⁰⁰The civic culture concept flourished in the British example, so Almond and Verba foremost focused on this case. In their book, they compared five countries where they found that the development of political culture happens differently.

²⁰¹ At this point, we should not forget that this democratic citizenship model has regarded as one of the components of the rationality-activity model but not representing the whole of it.

participation of the citizens to associations. By focusing on the points mentioned above, Putnam (2000: 365) focuses on the healthiness of American democracy and points to the importance of voluntary associations. He describes voluntary associations and the social networks of civil society as ‘social capital,’ which contributes to democracy both externally and internally (Putnam 2000: 367). Externally these associations provide citizens a ground to voice their interests and demands on the government, which helps to protect them from the abuse of political leaders. In this regard, political information flows among the associations. Internally, in addition to teaching skills to be a part of public life, these associations teach cooperation and public-spiritedness to their members. In this respect, voluntary associations become places for learning social and civic skills, which Putnam (2000: 368) describes as ‘schools for democracy.’ Civic virtues learned in these associations include active participation, trustworthiness, and reciprocity. Civic engagement provides a two-folded benefit for society and the state. On the one hand, “citizens in civic communities expect better government and (in part through their efforts) they get it,” and “the performance of representative government is facilitated by the social infrastructure of civic communities and by the democratic values of both officials and citizens” (Putnam 2000: 376).

One should also focus on how values/attitudes and modern political institutions interact to understand the relationship between politics and culture. In this regard, the importance of focusing on culture while analyzing political development is becoming crystal clear. As Pye (2015: 6)²⁰² pointed out, “questions about the limits of variety and the consequences of differences in the attitudes and sentiments that shape politics can be answered only by an approach that combines individual psychology and collective sociology. Only with such an intellectual focus, can we hope to get answers to such questions as: Do similar historical processes tend to produce the same distribution of attitudes and feelings about politics? What effect do particular dimensions of traditional culture have on the capacity of people to engage in the various functions of modern political life?” With this purpose of finding answers to such questions, the importance of political culture is being realized.

²⁰² The book was initially published in 1965. This thesis uses the 2015 edition. All references refer to this edition.

As Almond (1956: 396) pointed out, “every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientations to political action” which he regarded as political culture. In this regard, each society has its distinct political culture, which is being learned and involved by the citizens in its historical context. At this point, the culture should be regarded as an evolving context. Since the citizens are learning political culture with their knowledge and feelings, with each new generation, the understanding of it is developing and changing by how much this new generation will be adapted to it. So, political culture provides structure and meaning to the political sphere as culture gives coherence and integration to social life (Pye 2015: 8). Verba (2015)²⁰³ identified essential dimensions of political culture as national identity; attitudes towards oneself as a participant, towards other citizens, towards the decision-making process; attitudes and expectations towards the government output; and the knowledge. As seen here, attitudes towards the political system and citizens' attitudes toward their roles in the system create the political orientations constructing the political culture.

The importance of studying political culture comes from the fact that it helps us to see the relationship between the rational choices and the unconscious human behaviors, which sheds light on the reasons behind political behavior. From this point of view, the thesis regards the value system of the societies creating the cultural premise as essential to understand the reasons for the political outcomes as the democratic backsliding process Turkey and Hungary are experiencing. Without understanding the behaviors, one could not understand the reasons for the institutional arrangements. As the last word, to understand how a political system that introduced democracy turns its face towards autocratization with a cult of personality of the leader, one should be able to understand the hidden meanings in the behaviors of citizens.

6.1.2. Democracy and Citizenship

The political culture links with how the citizenship notion has developed in a given country. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the scholars who defined culture also

²⁰³ The book was initially published in 1965. This thesis uses the 2015 edition. All references refer to this edition.

mentioned *Bildung* as a concept and how it has been used as an educational instrument for shaping citizens' values and attitudes. This section will focus on how a democratic citizen would be educated and how such a citizen would play a vital role in consolidating and preserving a democratic rule. Salame, in the edited volume of *Democracy Without Democrats* (1994), focused on the problems in front of democratization of the Arab world while the Western world was experiencing the heydays with newly established 'third wave' democracies. In the introduction chapter, he asked, "Where are the democrats" in the Arab context. In today's political circumstances, it would not be a vague question to ask in democracies that could not be consolidated as expected. Jena Leca (1994: 50-1), in the same volume, argued that democrats are the ones who accepted pluralism, free elections, and constitutionalism, which is the basis of liberal democracy. For consolidation of democratic regimes, as Linz and Stepan (1996: 15) offered, there needs to be an embracement of the system through the attitude of the citizens. So, if and only if democracy becomes the only game in the town, then it would consolidate. This means that citizens should embrace democratic norms and rules where they should feel that there are no other options. This thesis argues that democrats are the people who reflect the definition mentioned above.

Initially, *Democracy without Democrats* argument would trace to the Weimar Republic in Germany. Following World War I, Germany established a constitutional federal republic. It is mentioned as the first democratic history of the country by literature (Fritzsche 1996: 629). This can be marked as an essential success for German democrats. After fourteen years, the replacement of Social Democrats by a Nationalist Socialist dictatorship opened the way for historians to discuss why German democracy has failed.²⁰⁴ During the Golden Years of the Republic, from 1925 to 1928, the country experienced a relative development process and a higher living standard. When the time came to 1928, economic problems, such as hyperinflation, were mainly overcome. Democratic parties consisted of the majority in parliament, and democrats were right up to the point of thinking that Weimar democracy was promising. In this respect, people in cities such as Berlin lived a modern and liberal democratic life (Schongast 2021). People in rural areas,

²⁰⁴ A discussion on whether this should be marked as a failure is also a lively debate in the scholarship (Fritzsche 1996; Bavaj 2016).

especially farmers, lived traditionally and experienced economic problems. So, these golden years did not sound as golden to most of the society. The distinction between cities and rural areas highlighted the reason for falling toward Hitler's fascist regime. The alienation of the worker class, where people started to feel that state institutions were not corresponding to their problems, played an important role. Peukert (1993) in his book, defines the years of Weimar as an example of a 'crisis of the classical modern' where attributes of modernization (democratic practice, economic and technological rationalization, and social reformism) came together in a squeezed form (Fritzsche 1996: 648). The most crucial difficulty the Weimar system needed to face was the economic crisis of 1929. Many argued that the economic depression was the reason for the failure. Farmers in North Germany felt that there did not exist any party representing their concerns. Rising costs and foreign competition, combined with bank loans through high-interest rates, ended up unrest in the society. Protests starting as a rural movement were used by the Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) in time. Also, one of the outcomes of economic depression was the unemployment rate, where control of it has lost, and seven million people were counted as unemployed in 1932 (Berger 2000: 109).

Since this was the early experience with democracy, Weimar's Constitution had features criticized for having the potential to undermine democracy. The newly introduced system was giving more power than typical to the executive. Friedrich Ebert, the first president of the Republic, used these powers to protect the state from its enemies, but Paul von Hindenburg had a more authoritative tone and used his power to undermine the Republic. The most crucial problem the Republic needed to face was the absence of popular support for an extraordinarily democratic constitution (Berger 2000: 104). Also, the structure of the system had its deficits. For example, law courts ignored right-wing violence in political terms whereas they punished the political left. For example, between 1918-1921, judges passed eight death sentences and an average of fourteen years of imprisonment for fifteen murder trials on the left, while they did not pass the death sentence and gave only an average of two months' imprisonment to three hundred fourteen political murders, which took place on the right spectrum (Berger 2000: 106-107). Also, the German military could not overcome the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles. By rejecting it, they looked forward to restoring their reputation and influence during the Imperial

Germany period. Since efficient democratic control was absent among them, the military became a 'state within a state' (Berger 2000: 107). Weimar Republic's values could not flourish among agricultural and industrial elites too. As seen here, since democracy could not flourish in the society for several reasons, including the nationalistic elements within the political culture, the first democratic experiment of the country resulted in a collapse. The Weimar Republic, in this sense, represents one of the excellent examples to show the importance of the number of democratic minds among the society for preserving a democratic regime.

In Salame's (1994: 3) point of view, democrats are the ones who regard human rights and citizenship as the essence of democracy. They also acknowledged that democracy in liberal terms would not be achieved at the same time everywhere. So, this idea realizes that the pace of democratization of each society would differ.²⁰⁵ Democrats are regarded as the essential component of democracies. Especially for the consolidation of younger democracies, the existence of democratic minds is necessary, who would work out to make it the only game in town. In this equilibrium, for consolidating the democracy, it is requested to be preferable among any other kind of government all of the time. So, the arguments such as non-democratic government can be preferable or it does not matter what kind of government rules the country should not be there. At this point, the importance of democratic citizens came into the picture. Democrats are the ones who would also be named as the democratic citizens of the country. This thesis takes the idea of democratic citizenship as the educated citizens of a country in a democratic manner.

As Shachar et al. (2017) pointed out, it would not be possible to come up with a single definition of citizenship in today's world when considering the differentiating meanings and the usage of the term. Being aware of this reality; this thesis has focused on a particular area where citizenship is being defined or cannot be defined with the democratic norms. So, this thesis considers citizenship resonating with the legal rights and duties shared between the state and a citizen. The concept of 'citizenship' could be built around the legal rights of the citizens and their duties towards the state. Dahl (2005: 188-9), in his study, by focusing on the necessary

²⁰⁵ This would also link to the findings of scholars studying culture and its relation to politics, where they realized that every society has its own pace.

political institutions for achieving democratic goals in a state, concludes that inclusive citizenship, in addition to other essential factors such as elected officials, free, fair, and frequent elections, freedom of expression, access to alternative sources of information, and associational autonomy is needed while defining a representative democratic government. This inclusive citizenship is seen as two-folded since, on the one hand, all the citizens within a country would not be bereft of the rights that would apply to others, and all the citizens should be embraced the idea that other political institutions should function in a proper way, which would enable us to talk about the consolidation of democracies in the world.

This relationship between the citizen and the government could be traced back in history for a very long. The liberty of individual citizens had been an issue for all the thinkers. Locke argued that for liberty, there need to be laws. These laws in today's world resonate with the laws of liberal democracies where the fundamental rights of the citizens, as explained by Dahl, are protected under a constitution. As Acemoğlu and Robinson (2019: 15) pointed out, there need to be laws and a state for liberty. However, both of these components guarantee these rights, which means they are not the ones who would obtain the liberty of citizens. So, in this case, citizens are responsible for obtaining their rights. In this equilibrium, society is requested to be a part of the checks and balances system, where they need to control whether the state is watching out to protect their rights. As seen from here, the freedom within society allows the citizens to be 'active' participants of politics where they would protest or, even through their votes, would topple the existing government, which is holding the state's resources in its hands.

The debate of who should rule the state has existed since ancient Greece. For example, Plato brought the question of who should be the ruler in *The Republic* to light. The question was gathered around whether the ruler should be selected among philosophers or from the class of ordinary citizens. As a result of this debate, knowledge was seen as the critical point while a selection was made. A significant development regarding the question of who should rule, how should rule, and how ordinary citizens should situate themselves could be the enlightenment process which would be named as the backbone of how we define the role of the citizens in politics while talking about the representative governments of today's world. After years of

positioning individuals' roles as political subjects, with Renaissance, the seeds for the involvement of ordinary people in public life were planted, where education became an important subject that had been discussed. The ordinary people were left out of politics, for long and with these developments the idea that they needed to be informed (educated) about politics came to light. The role an ordinary man would take became a central issue, bringing the ideal of the democratic citizenry into the picture. As seen from here until today, scholars and philosophers focused on the role of the citizen within a government regarding political ends. So, besides the opposing camps, many argued that an 'enlightened public' is a prerequisite for a democratic form of government (Rapeli 2014: 19). Through the introduction of liberal norms, which are taken as the prerequisite to achieve a consolidated democracy, the existence of a certain kind of citizen came into the picture. The dilemma of modern democracies is visualized by their desire to have a 'good' citizen rather than an 'active' one (Crick 2002: 113).

In *Two Treatises on Government*, John Locke criticized Sir Robert Filmer's idea, where he positioned the state as the 'family' and the king as the 'father' and the patriarchal authority as the basis of political obligation. As a response, Locke divided sovereignty into as many pieces as possible where citizens are positioned. Also, he actualized that children are attached to their parents, where parents educate and prepare them to be citizens. Political socialization, as a manner that people learn about politics and develop political opinions, starts in childhood (Clawson and Oxley 2021). As Duff (2011: 1) has positioned, "in modern times, people have come to know themselves as citizens- to become themselves as citizens- through thinking about a parent's relationship to children." As can be seen from this definition, embracing democratic norms starts within the family.²⁰⁶ Families are the primary sources of socialization, and the other agents include schools, peer groups, and media. So, families in this equilibrium work as places where they teach their children to have a sense of citizenship. Families who embraced the liberal norms could teach their children that citizenship is not constructed only by obligations to the state but by the fundamental rule of law. Their attitudes towards the world would also affect

²⁰⁶ This thesis also considers the family as the basic unit of society as the starting point for a state's democratization or autocratization process.

their children's attitudes. As Locke has pointed out by criticizing Filmer, our ideals of parenthood construct our ideal of democratic principles.

Education is another crucial component while raising a democratic citizen in a state. The children explore the world by imitating the acts of elders. So, this imitating process starts at home and expands at school, where children imitate their teachers. When a child starts to go to school, the imitation process also expands from elders to peer groups. Children's social interactions in time help shape their ideals, showing us that parents, teachers, schools, and friends are essential while educating people with a specific citizenship understanding. By providing citizenship education to students, the states would provide people to be more knowledgeable on the demands of their citizenship rights. So, here a controversy arises, which is discussed earlier, the modern states are willing to raise 'good' citizens, who are loyal to governments' decisions rather than active ones, who would request to preserve their citizenship rights in liberal terms. This became an essential issue with the rise of populist governments. As explained in the literature review part of the thesis, populist discourse surrounds the idea of representing the people, and here the people are resonating with the obeying citizens to the system that a populist leader and a populist party would create since they would know what the best for these people is.

Another pillar of education is the government's historical narratives, where the idea of a 'good' citizen would be established. As Çınar (2015: 3) quoted from Hayden White, "the historical narrative, as against the chronicle, reveals to us a world that is putatively "finished," done with, over, and yet not dissolved, not falling apart. In this world, reality wears the mask of meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience." Through the creation of narratives, citizens are being educated about their pasts, and here it should not be forgotten that these narratives are being constructed in line with the government's desires. So, they are becoming stories and creating an imagined past with the vision of those ruling the country. We could also link this to identity politics. By being educated in a specific world, people are dressed with a particular identity while defining themselves politically. As Ajit Maan (2015) pointed out, "narrative is not just a mode of communication, messaging, explanation or description. It operates at the most basic neurological level of perception, thought, and, most fundamentally, identity. Through

narrative, we co-construct our personal and cultural identities.” The vital dilemma between democracy and citizenship came into the picture with the rise of populist discourse today. Populist discourse, through the claim of being the voice of the excluded ones, brings a new area to be discussed where the citizenship narrative of unconsolidated democracies brought a sense of being excluded to a group of people who decided to support politicians and parties who have undemocratic political goals. In reality, in the long run, this harms the well-being of the excluded ones too. From these points, it can be seen that democratic minds are the most crucial component of democratic rule.

6.1.3. Conceptualization of Democracy Through Perception

The interviews conducted on behalf of this research shed light on the importance of the perception of citizens toward democracy. The way they conceptualize democracy is an important indicator to explain why some countries are more likely to drift into an autocratic regime compared to others. Since this research adopts a bottom-up perspective, the focus is also given on people's perceptions for understanding why the vast majority of given countries are not raising the expected concerns for the regime shift their system is experiencing. The examples in the world provide the scholarship to realize that support for democracy exists within countries showing autocratic characters, too (Welzel and Alvarez 2014: 59; Kirsch and Welzel 2018: 60). This could be related to the democratization trend that took place after the end of Cold War. As discussed earlier, since representing oneself as democratic plays an essential role on countries' position within the world order, it is unsurprising that citizens of autocratic states support democracy.

Welzel and Alvarez (2014) describe this as a ‘paradox of democracy.’ The understanding of citizens on democracy becomes essential at this point. As Alonso (2016) points out, the importance of questions asked to citizens while measuring the support for democracy describes why many people declare their support for democracy worldwide. When one asks the public whether democracy is the best form of government or the most preferable one, the question is not providing information on how democracy is being defined (Alonso 2016: 130).

As also discussed earlier, democracy as a concept has multidimensional aspect. Regarding the differentiating perceptions of citizens on how they understand what democracy means to them, such a question would bring support for democracy in a wide range of countries in the world. The literature provides various ways of conceptualization of democracy. As Çınar and Bülbül (2022: 470) pointed out, the liberal, redistributive, and authoritative conceptualization of democracy are the most widely debated and practical notions of the term in today's world.²⁰⁷ The liberal notion of democracy refers to “civic freedoms that entitle people to a self-determined life and give them a voice and vote in politics” (Kirsch and Welzel 2018: 60). Conceptualizing democracy in liberal terms refers to the inclusion of the majority of people on the system, where they have the power to influence the decision-making process. As discussed in earlier chapters, this conceptualization also includes the rule of law and protecting fundamental human rights. The authoritative notion of democracy refers to the “guardianship of wise rulers whose authority defies constitutional checks, public criticism, and electoral contestation” (Kirsch and Welzel 2018: 60). As seen here, democracy for many people would be equalized with electing a leader and then, obeying to him (S.K. Çınar and Bülbül 2022: 471-472).

This thesis has benefited from the joint data set of the WVS and EVS to understand citizens' perceptions in Turkey and Hungary.²⁰⁸ Turkish and Hungarian data sets were collected in 2018.²⁰⁹ In the findings of this data set, politics is an important matter for the majority of Turkish citizens, whereas for most Hungarians, it is not that important (See Table 1).

TABLE 1: IMPORTANCE OF POLITICS IN LIFE*				
	Very Important	Rather Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important
Turkey	20.9%	35.3%	29.7%	13.1%
Hungary	7.4 %	22.3%	43.1%	26.2%

*This is the 235th question in the survey

²⁰⁷ Since this thesis focuses on the authoritative conceptualization of democracy, liberal and authoritative notions of democracy will be studied

²⁰⁸ For the data set resources visit: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSEVSjoint2017.jsp>

²⁰⁹ We should not forget that it was the year when Turkey entered its unique presidential system. Therefore, the data set results would have changed over time, but still, comparatively, this data set provides insight into how citizens perceive democracy in Turkish and Hungarian cases.

This is meaningful since, as will be discussed below, Hungarians were alienated from politics during the Communist period. Furthermore, their alienation continued after the introduction of democratization since it remained an elite discussion rather than spreading to society. In both cases, most participants declared that having a democratic political system is meaningful (See Table 2).

TABLE 2: HAVING A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM*				
	Very Good	Fairly Good	Fairly Bad	Very Bad
Turkey	40%	36.7%	13%	3.1%
Hungary	57.8%	30.3%	4.4.%	2.3%

*This is the 117th question in the survey

In addition, when the importance of democracy has asked to them, a significant majority of Hungarians regarded it as an absolutely important thing. In contrast, Turkish participants tend to give importance to it but do not regard it as absolutely important (See Table 3). Besides that, both Turkish and Hungarian participants declared that free election is an essential component of democracy (See Table 4), which shows that most citizens in both cases equalize democracy with elections.

TABLE 3: IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY					
	Not At All Important	Not All Important	In Between	Important	Absolutely Important
Turkey	0.9%	4.8%	9.9%	47.2%	35.1%
Hungary	0.7%	2.7%	6.6%	26.4%	62.4%

TABLE 4: "PEOPLE CHOOSE THEIR LEADERS IN FREE ELECTION"*					
	Its Against Democracy	Not an Essential Charachteristic of Democracy	In Between	Almost an Essential Charachteristic of Democracy	An Essential Charachteristic of Democracy
Turkey	—	11.9%	10.1%	40.6%	34.4%
Hungary	0.1%	6.2%	6.7%	19.8%	65.4%

*This is the A4th question in the survey

6.2. Importance of Culture, Democracy, and Citizenship: Evidence From Turkey and Hungary

6.2.1. Portrayal of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Viktor Orbán

While the researcher was writing this thesis, she encountered one of her family friends, and they started to talk about the thesis topic. Since this thesis is gathering data from interviews and field research, the researcher realized that what they discussed in their conversation was nurturing the potential outcome of this thesis. Also, it helped her to realize that the family structure of the leaders is essential to understand what kind of rule they will adopt. This friend had a business relationship with bureaucracy but also had connections with the members of the opposition parties in the country. When the researcher explained that she was looking at the autocratization process of the system and its relation to the internal structure of the party organization, the friend informed her that not only the ruling party in the country but also the opposition parties had a similar pattern. Moreover, she added that this autocratization process starts within the family. This helped the researcher realize that the system's autocratization process starts from the basic unit of the society, which in this case family. Therefore, she decided to add a section in which biographical information of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Viktor Orbán is being provided. As will be seen in upcoming pages, Erdoğan's father had an authoritarian style that significantly affected how Erdoğan's life was going to be shaped. In addition to this, as will be seen in upcoming pages, Erdoğan came from a similar lifestyle to the millions, who have the potential of tight-knitting to the 'losers' rhetoric of the populist discourse, which is bringing the electoral success to the political leaders in all over the world.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was born on February 26, 1954, to a migrant family. His father, Ahmet Erdoğan, migrated to Istanbul from Rize when he was only 13 years old, hoping to find a job. With the transition process and developments in the 1950s, a migration flow within the country came into the picture. Many families migrated from the countryside to the cities hoping to find jobs and end their miserable and poor lives.²¹⁰ Ahmet Erdoğan was one of these "many people." He took a job as a

²¹⁰ It should not be forgotten that the migration toward Istanbul was not a novelty to the Turkish Republic. Many people were migrating to this city in Ottoman times too.

captain at *Şirket-i Hayriye*, which helped him to adopt a nickname as ‘Reis Kaptan.’ The atmosphere of the ship and sea helped Reis Kaptan have an authoritarian character, which was reflected to his family life too. As Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had described, “We were respectful towards the authority since we knew that unrespectful manner would end up with the anger of my father” (Çakır and Çalmuk 2001: 16).

To understand Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s political style, which could be described in his attitudes, talking style, and even walking style, the understanding his family life would not be enough. So, to understand him, one should also need to understand the neighborhood he grew up, which is Kasımpaşa. Historians say the neighborhood has 2700 years of history, making it possible to be named one of the oldest residential areas in Istanbul (T. Yılmaz 2001: 28). Erdoğan was not the only one who resided there. The history of the neighborhood shows that it has hosted many influential people as Evliya Çelebi, İbrahim Müteferrika, and Aziz Nesin (Çakır and Çalmuk 2001). The specific unwritten laws of the neighborhood brought a unique character to the people who grew up there. This could be named the culture of ‘rowdyism,’ which included a particular drill. The common characteristic of these rowdies could be described as having the intention of ‘protecting the honor and security’ of the neighborhood by being able to fight well on one hand and by being respectful to the elderly, helping the ones in need, and being the leading actor to solve the problems in the neighborhood (T. Yılmaz 2001: 31).

His religiosity was one of his father's essential features that significantly affected Erdoğan’s life. One day when he was a primary school student, he volunteered to pray with his teacher, who was the principal of the school. With this, he gained the appreciation of his teacher, which was going to have a significant effect on his education life since this teacher was going to be the one who would recommend Erdoğan to study at Imam-Hatip school. In 1965, after finishing the primary school, Erdoğan started his high-school education at Imam-Hatip School. The high school years of Erdoğan were tough times for him since his family was living on scarce. He was staying at the school's dormitory and working at his spare hours to earn pin money. However, these years substantially affected how his political career would be shaped. As a high school student, he joined Turkish National Student Union (*Milli*

Türk Talebe Birliği, MTTB).²¹¹ In the 1970s, MTTB was under the control of national conservative students, who had an anti-communist standing. From MTTB, Erdoğan, step by step, entered the political scene. He first attended the conferences of Erbakan named 'Islam and Science' and then started to play an influential role in MSP. He got involved in politics by being a member of the youth branch of MSP. He was elected president of the MSP Beyoğlu Youth Branch in 1976 and then as the MSP Istanbul Youth Branch president. While his political career had started momentum, he had gained the right to study at Erzurum Atatürk University, according to the exam results.²¹² However, Erdoğan desired to study Political Science. In line with this desire, he decided to complete high school from outside and reenter the university exams. According to his exam results, he had the option to study at the Istanbul Academy of Sciences, which did not match his desire to study Political Science at Ankara University and meant that he would be able to associate with politics in practice (Çakır and Çalmuk 2001: 25).

Besides his academic career, he had an interest in football. However, among Islamic circles, football was seen as a creation of the devil. His father also believed in this. He realized football as not feeding the beech. That is why he never wanted his son to become a football player. Though Erdoğan had the chance to play football starting from 14 years old when he entered Erokspor, a club in his neighborhood. One year later, he had the chance to be transferred to Camialtı Sports Club, which brought transfer money to him. Since his father disapproved this, he had to continue his football career secretly. The most crucial leap in his career came when the General Directorate of Istanbul Electric Tram and Tunnel Operations (IETT) 's technic director transferred him to the team. The players in the team were taking their salaries by appearing as the staff of the Istanbul Municipality. Following the 1980 coup d'état, the commander who came to IETT wanted Erdoğan to cut his beard.²¹³ The fight between the two, who often argued on this issue, ended when Erdoğan decided to end his football career. From then on, he focused on his political career.

²¹¹ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk established MTTB.

²¹² At that time, Imam-Hatip graduates were only allowed to enter this university.

²¹³ At that time, the Islamic Revolution in Iran had an essential effect on the Islamist youth. Many of them started to grow their beard. Erdoğan was one of them. Not only his beard but also his connection with MSP made the commander feel uncomfortable.

After finishing his football career, he got a job at 'Coşkun Sucuk,' a private company one that his compatriots owned. However, this job experience ruptured in 1982 due to his military service. When he returned from the military, he continued to work in the same company for a while. From there, he moved to another company called 'Elif Sucuk' owned by another compatriot (T. Yılmaz 2001). When all of those were happening, an interesting offer came from RP's Istanbul Provincial Organization: to start working as a professional in the party and get a wage for it. With this offer, his professional political career started. In the early years of his career, he was likened to Erbakan. Initially, he was charged with the presidency of the Beyoğlu district of the party. In 1985, he became the president of the Istanbul province and a member of the Central Decision and Executive Board (*Merkez Karar ve Yönetim Kurulu, MKYK*). His following political career was explained earlier. That is why it will not be provided again in this section.

Viktor Mihály Orbán was born in a highly low-income family on May 31, 1963. Until he was ten years old, his family lived with their parents. Orbán, by having the chance to live with his grandparents, was influenced by his grandfather's strong physical and mental appeal.²¹⁴ The Orbán family moved to a village called Felcsút when Viktor Orbán was only ten years old due to the endless fights between his mother and grandmother. Their life in this new village was poor. They did not have hot water, a bathtub, or a shower in their apartment (Baer 2021).²¹⁵ This low-income family life experienced a transformation when Viktor Orbán had accepted to one of the most prestigious grammar schools in the country, *Teleki Blanka Grammar School*, which strongly affected Orbán's intellectual development. Following the acceptance, the family moved from a village to the country's medieval capital, Székesfehérvár, where they started to live in an apartment, including the missing elements of their previous lives as hot water and a bathtub.

Kádár's regime had an undeniable effect on Orbán's family. Kádárism, in its heydays, was managed to separate political life from public life, where politics has only

²¹⁴ Orbán's grandfather was enlisted in the Second World War and served on the Eastern Front. He completed school and had a certificate when he was 48 (Lendvai 2017: 12).

²¹⁵ Orbán, at age 30, described his experience of using warm water by opening a tap when he was 15 years old as an 'unforgettable experience' (Lendvai 2017).

belonged to Kádár's cadre. This brought a unique characteristic to the communist regime in Hungary. Orbán's father was also a member of the Communist party, which meant that he also embraced the Hungarian style of communism. Still, the family was not involved in any political debates at home. They were not reading any newspapers or watching any news. They have only linked themselves to the Kádár regime.²¹⁶ Like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's father, Orbán's father was authoritarian. As Orbán's biographer József Debreczeni explained, he was an angry man, and as Orbán stated, he had been beaten and kicked by his father until he was a young lad (Baer 2021). His family moved to Libya when his father got a job offer. While essential shifts took place in his life, Orbán became passionate about football. Different from Erdoğan, Orbán did not have a natural talent, which pushed him to work harder to have the opportunity to join a youth team in the first league. This passion played a vital role in his persistence to achieve things in his future career. As he clarified, this experience helped him to realize that if he worked hard, he would achieve what he wanted. Also, gathering with people in his team with different social backgrounds helped him to see the life from a different perspective.²¹⁷ Regarding the steps he is taking today to preserve his power, it could be seen that his football career had an essential effect. After graduating from high school, he continued his university education. Since his university years and political career has discussed earlier, it will not be repeated in this section.

In recent years, the attention on the discursive and performative aspects of populism increased in the studies of gendered construction of the appeals populist leaders created. The importance of the gendered manifestation of populism, where 'performances of masculinities' has discussed, became an important topic to be studied. This section, designed to give information on what kind of childhood and adulthood these two leaders experienced, would be regarded under this newly developing literature on populism. The way these two leaders create their standing as the representatives of ordinary people would be explained through which masculinities they are using. This corresponds to the discursive populism idea that

²¹⁶ Kádár managed to alienate the people from politics. As could be seen from here, people at that time were linking themselves to the ruling party without reaching any channel of information.

²¹⁷ The students studying in the grammar school had similar backgrounds, limiting Orbán's vision of the real Hungary.

flourished in the literature, which was explained in the Literature Review chapter in length of this thesis. The populist leader's appeal could be described as form rather than ideology (Sayan-Cengiz and Akyüz 2021: 41). How these two leaders narrate themselves becomes essential for being successive in people's eyes. As seen here, populism becomes a political style where leaders perform by using specific masculinity codes to represent the so-called 'ordinary people' of the dichotomy established through populism.²¹⁸

The gendered identities in the Turkish context flourished with the Kulturkampf of the society. The newly established Republic was desired to create a Westernized citizen, where gender roles were shaped per this idea. However, as Mardin (1983: 156) mentioned, the Kemalist elites could not capture the cultural premises of the society at all and could not develop a 'social ethos,' which would replace the religious culture. Religion remained a crucial cultural premise for the masses, the so-called periphery. By starting with the definition of Muslim men, which benefits from ethnicity, social, and economic situations while constructing the masculinities, Akyüz (2012: 69) focuses on how Turkish Muslim men's gender construction took place. In this respect, social, economic, and cultural dynamics were essential in constructing masculinities. As discussed earlier, different paths of masculinities could be observed in Turkey since people's identities are shaped according to where they are positioned in the famous center and periphery paradigm. In this regard, masculinities constructed as neo-Muslim, Kemalist/Secular, and Nationalist (Akyüz 2012: 94). Regarding the political culture of Turkey, strong state tradition (father state), military's role (every man born as a soldier), and westernization process (Kulturkampf) played an essential role on the construction of masculinities. Europe's populist radical right developed masculinity codes by creating Muslim immigrants as the enemy of the nation's sovereignty. In this context, "masculinity codes glorified virility, toughness, patriotism and bravery" (Sayan-Cengiz and Akyüz 2021: 38). As seen from here, nationalistic symbols also played an important role. Representing oneself as the protector of national unity, find a voice through the gendered construction of the leader's populist discourse.

²¹⁸ Here, as Moffitt(2016) raises that populist leaders do not try to look like people but also, through their style, construct the people's behavior.

The way leaders narrate themselves and their words help us see the masculinity style they are using to be robust and successful in voters' eyes. The portrayal of these two leaders provides insight into what kind of gendered sphere they were raised in. The way Erdoğan developed his outlook, which could be described through *kabadayılık* (tough uncle) and *maçoluk* (machismo), would be explained through the clash between the modern and traditional culture of the country. Kasımpaşa neighborhood represents *kabadayılık* as an important cultural aspect. So, how he constructed his speech and manner of acting represent the characteristics of being a member of the neighborhood. In this respect, he represented himself as the guardian of people (corresponding to the tough uncle aspect) and as the provider of all of the needs of the society (representing to be a member of Kasımpaşa) (Akyüz 2012: 157). On the other side, Orbán's anti-immigrant sentiment, combined with his nationalistic premise of preserving Christian values through anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric, brought the nativist politics he is following to the forefront. The populist rhetoric allowed these leaders to speak of what is going wrong in the system. This brought bravery to the forefront, a component of masculinity in the radical right-wing of European politics. By being brave enough to say out loud what is not being spoken in Europe, Orbán gained the support of the people. Sayan-Cengiz and Akyüz (2021: 51) described this brave self-presentation as representing the bravery of a bad boy, where Orbán did not hesitate to be confident in tense confrontations with other leaders from the EU. Also, Orbán's nativist politics is an essential component of his politics shaped by the gendered identity, where he constructed the people by benefiting from the notion of traditional family and through the established gender identities. This also paved the way for his anti-LGBTIQ standing, found essential support among the Hungarian people. These are important aspects of masculinities Erdoğan and Orbán use in their populist discourse, paving the way for success. The portrayal of these two leaders provides their life stories, which also help the readers to see what kind of an effect it had on the development of their political life.

6.2.2. Political Culture: Effect on Autocratization

Mehmet (academician-public university) raised the importance of the socialization process of individuals as citizens with the following words:

We could not explain everything with the distribution of pasta and coal.
We need to understand the way people socialize from a broader perspective.²¹⁹

Since, as explained earlier, this thesis focuses on the hidden meanings while understanding the reasons behind the autocratization process of the given two cases; this section will focus on the culture and its importance in political developments. Here, specifically, the focus will be on the democratization process and the importance of culture in consolidating democratic regimes. As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, for the consolidation of democracy, there needs to exist democrats. As Fatma (academician-private university) claimed:

I think that democracy is a culture. In this regard, we could not talk about democracy as long as democratic citizens do not exist in the system.

Furthermore, as Erol (former AKP member) stated:

Authority exists in the culture. Democracy cannot be strong in societies where the perception of the individual is not strong.

The essential two questions come into mind while studying the democratic culture: where are the democrats, and how is the civil society get organized? On behalf of these questions also how the culture, which has been carried for centuries by the society, is affecting citizens' behaviors and decision-making processes. Öztürk (2022), a psychiatrist, focuses on the origins of allegiance of a society. For this purpose, he divides the self into the 'autonomous self' and 'servant self.' In this equilibrium, people who obtain an autonomous self would be aware of their identities, what they want from life, and why they exist in this society/world/universe. People who could not realize that they are the subject of their lives, live as objects. This is the most basic differentiating point between the autonomous and servant selves. According to Öztürk (2022: 9), traditions, customs, beliefs, and how children are brought up are very important in their personality development. In this regard, knowing, learning, and curiosity are innate abilities. These innate abilities would be flourished or be suppressed by the environment they have surrounded. In repressive and restrictive environments, people's innate abilities would fade and be lost in time since such environments would not value autonomy and freedom. This would be described as an 'allegiance society,' where people

²¹⁹ The phrase the distribution of pasta and coal has a meaning in the Turkish context. The patronage linkage AKP develops focuses on the economic premises of the party. In everyday life, the poorest segment of society is accused of exchanging their votes for pasta and coal, which represents the basic (minimum) requirements for continuing one's life.

would not question, would obey power (a landlord, boss, leader), and would be surrendered (M.O. Öztürk 2022: 44).

Considering Öztürk's definition of an autonomous self, this section will focus on the cultural premises of the rise of two leaders. As Mehmet (academician-public university) has raised, 'obedient society and patron party leader' could be used as the describing characteristics of Erdoğan with AKP and Orbán with Fidesz. The idea comes from the possession of these two cases toward having what kind of a political culture. As Tessler and Altinoğlu (2004: 25) pointed out unless a significant portion of citizens possess attitudes and values supportive of democracy, the country's democratic transition would not be considered as complete. In this respect, this section focuses on the cultural premises of the given cases in political terms and its effect on the democratic backsliding process.

Regarding to find an answer to whether Turkey is possessing to have a democratic political culture, in addition to importance of values and beliefs, military's role and Islam's compatibility with democracy is being taken in consideration (Tessler and Altinoğlu 2004: 25). Some of the scholars argue that Islam is creating a certain mindset where citizens accept authority uncritically. In this respect, "Islam is said to be anti-democratic because it vests sovereignty as the foundation of governmental legitimacy, the idea of representation, or elections, of popular suffrage, of political institutions being regulated by laws laid down by a parliamentary assembly, of these laws being guarded and upheld by an independent judiciary, the ideas of the secularity of the state, of society being composed of a multitude of self-activating groups and associations- all of these are profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition" (Tessler and Altinoğlu 2004: 26). The interviews conducted on behalf of this research showed that Islamic history has an undeniable effect on legitimizing the role of the leader in the eyes of the voters in right-wing parties. So, while studying the effect of political culture in the Turkish context, this research considers the importance of early Islamic history's effect in addition to the political cultural premises adopted from the Ottoman Empire.

Islamic connotations gained importance in the second phase of AKP's rule with neo-Ottomanism ideology, which resonates to the authoritarian drift of his rule starting

with 2011. Especially with the regional power position, Erdoğan has been assigned the role of being the leader of the Muslim ummah. This idea could be traced back to the Ottoman history. The personalization of Erdoğan's rule has its roots in the late Ottoman past, which could be traced back to the Tanzimat period when specific remedies were created to avoid the empire's collapse. Abdülhamid II has a special place in this history, which can be traced in the visualization of the personalization of Erdoğan's rule. As explained above, Ottoman history plays a significant role in understanding the cultural premises of right-wing politics in Turkey. Nevertheless, Ayşe (ex-party member of RP, academician- public university) raised awareness with the following words:

In our culture, selecting a democratic leader, respecting the elected leader, and believing in his correct decisions can be traced back to the ancient times.

The thesis has realized the importance of Islamic history.²²⁰ To understand what a leader means in cultural terms for citizens, this thesis will go back to the first Islamic literary work in Turkish history.

According to Başer (1990: V), when one thinks about 'Turkish culture,' then s/he is thinking about the futures that distinguish it from others; to understand it, one should understand Turkishness and Islam's influence on this culture. Yusuf Has Hacı, the writer of *Kutadgu Bilig*, was born to Karakhanids, regarded as the first Muslim lineage of Turkish Khans. 'Kara Khan' resonated with the 'big ruler' or the 'head ruler.' They adopted the Chinese description of colors to explain the directions. So, the north meant 'kara' (black), the south meant 'kırmızı' (red), the east meant 'gök' (sky, so blue), and the west meant 'ak' (white). The Turkish Khan, living in the north, was named 'Kara Khan' to describe his power among the others. This power was meant to be the Khan's size, height, and dominance (Dilaçar 1988). As seen from here, in the Islamic tone, the ancestor of Turkish Khans symbolized the magnificence of the 'head ruler.'²²¹ The cult of personality Erdoğan managed to

²²⁰ Here the thesis follows the approach of Aytürk (2015, 2019), where he took the discussion of one of the most important themes of Turkish politics beyond the scope of 40 years. To understand how the cult of personality has been created in Turkey, this thesis will go beyond the discussions, which focus on the impact of the late Ottoman period.

²²¹ The followers of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also magnified his leadership by giving him specific attributes, which could be regarded as going beyond charisma. They attribute him a half-God role by narrating stories showing him as the selected one by God to represent him on earth.

create in his followers' eyes could be traced back to the Islamic literary works in this sense, where the ruler was equipped with divine attributes.

Kutadgu Bilig could be taken as one of the early political treatises of Islamic culture. The most crucial point of the book was its emphasis on 'tradition.' Here the tradition was being defined in the domain of a monotheistic religion. The ruler was being taken as the representative of God, and God, through 'Kut' (which could be translated into English as a blessing), was selecting a person to be the ruler and hold power in his hands. This idea could be traced back to the Orkhon Inscriptions, where Bilge Qaghan represented his accession to the throne through being blessed (T. Tekin 1988).²²² The ideal in this blessing was explained through God's will to support and help a person.²²³ As seen from here, in this understanding, God selected a person to support and help him get power among the others. The world was in the hands of the person who would take the support of God.²²⁴ Besides God's blessing, 'tradition' (custom) limited the selected person's rule. Here, tradition refers to the order placed by God. He faced losing his blessing if the ruler did not follow this order. To be blessed, a person needs control over his soul; to preserve it, he should not be involved in power games and must be just and truthful.²²⁵ If he lost these virtues, then God would take the blessing back.

This shows the importance of tradition and positioning the leader as the representative of God is hidden in the culture. Since Erdoğan uses Islam as an essential connotation to describe the New Turkey designation, the leader's position in this tradition comes into light. When one looks at the leader's relationship with its citizens from these ancient times, it could be stated that the servant self is a cultural aspect of Islamic tradition, which paved the way for raising allegiance society into being. Ayşe during the interview added following sentences to describe the intra-party politics of right-wing parties in the Turkish case:

²²² This would be seen at East Binding Line 29 of the inscription.

²²³ Kutadgu Bilig, 1267 and 1268 verses

²²⁴ Ibid, 6192 verse

²²⁵ Here, also the ruler needed not to drink alcohol. Ibid, 707,708 and 709 verses

Right-wing parties have a path where the party members follow the motto of ‘*Kol kırılın yen içinde kalsın.*’²²⁶

Considering all these, the cultural premise of creating a cult of personality resonates with the conceptualization of Erdoğan’s rule in its third phase, introducing a unique-presidential system as ‘Erdoğanism’ (Çakır 2018a). Erdoğan built his populist discourse as a reaction to the Kemalist elites, who were represented as the creators of Old Turkey. The cultural revolution Kemalist elites carried on was described as creating a duality between laicism and Islamism, which brought a desire to create a New Turkey as opposed to the values of Old Turkey. For this purpose, Islamization became an important tool, and the autocratization process of creating a cult of personality has actualized. Erdoğanism, in this sense, refers to the narrative of Erdoğan of dividing the society into two, where Kemalists have positioned as the products of Western cultural imperialism and as the ones who seek to destroy the Islamic identity and Muslim population in Turkey (Yılmaz 2021: 128).²²⁷ In this equilibrium, ordinary citizens in the famous populist dichotomy are referred to as representing the ‘periphery’ in the famous center-periphery paradigm of Şerif Mardin.²²⁸ These people gathered under the umbrella of a narrative of the Ottoman past. In this premise, citizens outside the closed circle of Kemalist elites were excluded from the system for a very long time. Overcoming this exclusion has represented settling down and fighting with the past, which found a voice in neo-Ottomanism ideology.

On the Hungarian side, Orbán, while creating his personalistic rule, benefitted from the cultural premises of the society. As Zalan (academician-public university) stated:

I guess we could explain what is going on in Hungary by Führer's ideal in Germany. Hungarians are looking for a strong leader. There is the idea that “You need a strong leader.” He is the king; ‘he does everything right’

²²⁶ This phrase in Turkish could be translated into English as ‘do not let it out of this room.’ The phrase refers to not showing what is happening inside to the outside world. It is a way of acting towards the outside world by not showing the weaknesses that the party is experiencing.

²²⁷ This narrative has its roots in Necip Fazıl Kısakürek’s works.

²²⁸ It should be remembered that after staying in power for more than two decades, AKP had destroyed this paradigm since it created a new circle of elites composed of the Islamic bourgeoisie it had fed during its term in office. Dilek Yankaya’s (2014) book *Yeni İslami Burjuvazi* would be visited to gain insight into this new Islamic bourgeoisie class. As Bakır (2018) pointed out in his paper, today’s Turkey would not be explained through the old paradigm of center and periphery. Since the weight of the center had shifted from the Kemalist elites to a new group that flourished under AKP’s power.

understanding exists. I guess, especially the uneducated rural class, is thinking like this. Before, we had the king, and it was good. For example, the Horthy era. Some call it as good as calling Horthy knowing everything that is right for Hungary though it is a disaster in reality. I started to think that Horthy remained in power for 25 years until the society realized he was terrible. Maybe, Orbán needs to stay that long for the society to see that he is terrible. So, maybe we have ten more years for Hungarians to see that Orbán is not good for them.

One of the most critical components of Orbán's populist discourse was shaped around his religious outlook on his followers. Even some of his admirers regarded him as the messiah of Hungary (Balogh 2011).²²⁹ As could be seen from here, his followers admired and visualized him as the savior of the country; also, they, by going one step forward, argued that he would be the light of Europe to get out of darkness (Balogh 2013). To understand how Orbán developed his personalistic rule in a European democracy, one should trace back in the history to the Kingdom of Hungary.

The past will be an essential indicator for understanding how ordinary Hungarians, like Erdoğan, supported Orbán. He also used us versus them rhetoric pretty well while positioning people's desire to have a strong leader under the ideal of the good times when the strong kings ruled the country.²³⁰ One of the good examples would be András Fazekas, a winegrower about a two-hour drive from Budapest. In a documentary by DW (2019), he explained why he supports Orbán. The reason was his position towards the Hungarian family tradition, where he defended this traditional structure, and also because of his anti-immigrant sentiment. He added that several times in the history of Hungary, they had fought for their territories against the Islamists, which was an important indicator for this thesis showing how the citizens supported Orbán because of the traditions they had adopted for generations. As seen from this statement, the voters for Fidesz and Orbán legitimize their choices

²²⁹ Szófia Boros, who belongs to an evangelical Christian group in Hungary, after 2022 elections clarified why she is supporting Orbán by arguing that "he is a conservative Christian standing up against a liberal Europe" Available at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/april/orban-hungary-evangelical-election-voices-choice-conservati.html>

²³⁰ Here, the 'ordinary citizens' refer to the power base of Orbán. It could be stated as the grass root organization of the party and himself. So, mainly the people living in rural areas with lower education levels could be listed in this group.

by referencing history, which shows that history plays a vital role while defining their political choices.

St. Stephen (also called Stephen I) established the Kingdom of Hungary around 1000, and his family remained in power for approximately 300 hundred years.²³¹ As Bodi and Savavo (2020: 39) stated, “he was the one who accepted the Western Christian idea of the state and considered the multilingualism and coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups as a great advantage.” The kingdom's history was shaped by different threats, which started with the invasion of Mongols in 1241. It had lost its power base during the Ottoman occupation and continued with the domination of the Habsburg Empire, which ended up with a compromise between Austria and Hungary that created a dual monarchy system for the empire. This thesis will take two important names from the Kingdom of Hungary, which are believed to affect how Orbán built a cult of personality to mesmerize his voters and win the elections. These two names are Lajos Kossuth and Miklós Horthy.

Lajos Kossuth was an important political figure in Hungary’s history since he was the one who inspired the Hungarians to revolt for independence from Austria in 1848. He announced, "From this city, the freedom of Europe will radiate" (TheNewYorkSun 2022). Though he could not stay in power for long, Russians invaded in 1849 to put the Austrian rule back into force. So, why such a politician as Kossuth, who could not stay in power very long, would impact Orbán could be explained through the importance of nationalist symbols in Hungarian society. As András Gerő pointed out in his book, by focusing on nationalist religious symbols, it is possible to understand how the nationalist historical consciousness was built in Hungary, which would be necessary for understanding the political decisions. In this book, Gerő described Lajos Kossuth as the ‘father of the nation’(Rac 2009). When we look at the voter base of Fidesz, we can see that Orbán’s populist discourse had built by the idea of ‘It is about Hungary,’ which brings Hungary and Hungarians to the front on any political decisions. As seen from here, Orbán is obtaining an outlook where his style could be read as an example of acting like the father of the nation, so as Kossuth, who is trying to bring independence to Hungary. This independence war

²³¹ Besides this, the kingdom had lived for more than 900 years.

is being fought against the older men in Brussels, George Soros (resonating with liberalism and migration), and the USA. As Zalan added to the above-referred sentences:

Christian fundamentalism and nationalist extremism are there in the Hungarian case. Orbán's language resonates with society. They do not want to see the immigrants in the country. Society is in love with Orbán's speech because it names Soros, Brussels, and the US as wrong and the enemies. The illiberalism of Orbán has been constructed by the "It is about Hungary" ideal.

Miklós Horthy was the regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944, between the two world wars. Before obtaining the position of head of the state, Horthy was a naval officer who had organized the army to oppose the Communist regime. His era could be described by its Christian-nationalist nature. The Hungarian society had a mixed outlook toward this leader. For some, Horthy was a savior of the country, and for others, he was the reason for the genocide of Hungarian Jews (Inotai 2022). The war's bind-up wounds shaped the early years of Horthy. The most crucial wound was the Treaty of Trianon. So, steps were taken for not experiencing such a thing again. In the early years of Horthy's regent, he did not involve public affairs. By appointing István Bethlen as the prime minister, he left it to him. Though in the 1930s, his power and control of politics had expanded. The post-World War I period had shaped by an anti-feminist and anti-communist tone.

Regarding why Fidesz and Orbán prefer the Horthy era as a reference point for themselves are both religious and nationalistic aspects of that time. Horthy's era could be described as an era for extremist ideals to be realized globally since fascism found a voice during that time. Horthy, by himself, did not admire Hitler though still, his rule was not democratic at all. You needed to stay in the safe zones to live an everyday life under this government. Some believed that Horthy ruled brutally (including killings) at the beginning, though, in time, he managed to bring stability to a country where people play according to the rules of the game to find a safe and secure environment. So, Orbán's cult of personality resonates with the strong leader

ideal of the Kingdom of Hungary, shaped by the idea of standing against the threats that Hungary's unity is facing.²³²

By adding -ism to autocratic leaders' names, this thesis studies both of them to describe the philosophy behind their ruling style. Regarding the Turkish case, Kemalism and Atatürkism became essential concepts for the secular circles of Turkey to describe themselves and their commitment to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ideas.²³³ Especially, Erdoğan, after consolidating his power and introducing the presidential system, which equipped him with immense powers and abolished the checks and balances system, brought Erdoğanism into the scene. This chapter aimed to explain the cultural baggage both of the cases breast until this day and how it has affected the rise of such autocratic leaders with their populist premises into the scene. Similar to Erdoğan's creation of Erdoğanism in years, Orbán also managed to develop his ruling philosophy, which could be named Orbánism. In the mid-2010s, with Orbán's steps, extremism, and Christian fundamentalism became essential components of the Fidesz government. Especially nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment find a voice among the voters. As explained earlier, Orbán's autocratic politics since 2010 could be traced back to his failure in the 2002 elections. As mentioned in length in Personalism chapter of the thesis, Orbán, during his time in opposition, managed to establish a sizeable rural network called 'civic circles.' In the rallies of the civic circle, citizens came together and did not only listen to the political speeches but also, the rallies offered games, concerts, and barbecues. In this sense, the most crucial aspect of these gatherings was to spread the message of togetherness and community spirit (Kurti 2020: 64-65). In addition, the gatherings of 'civic-circles' provided a ground for speakers to raise the importance of family life, Christian values, and patriotism (Kurti 2020: 65). 'Civic-Circles' movement represented Orbán's desire for creating a renewed society. On this occasion, the importance of populism was undeniable. By winning the elections in 2010, he took significant steps towards harming the checks and balances system in the country,

²³² It is not a matter whether this threat would be a Muslim, an American-oriented university, or gender studies.

²³³ The discussion of Kemalism and Atatürkism would be beyond the scope of this thesis. That is why it will not cover what these terms correspond to in-depth. The way both concepts have been defined here aims to show, in general, how the secularist side of Turkey is embracing them.

which brought the illiberal democracy into the scene. Orbán created the Orbánism in Hungary.

Both examples show that Öztürk's description of the autonomous self and servant self finds its voice in the culture. The tradition in both cases helped these two leaders develop a cult of personality by using the political culture, which affected the everyday living styles of people. Furthermore, since democracy is not consolidated in both countries and cultural codes have meanings for everyday life, citizens of these two countries are not feeling differentiated for being ruled under an autocratic system compared to democracy. Here, as Mehmet (academician-public university) mentioned:

Perceiving authoritarianization is different for the citizens living in metropolitans and the countryside. The everyday practice of citizens differentiates in both cases; therefore, the way they read the leader's acts differs.

This is an important indicator since it shows that the democrats broadly were missing in the picture of the democratization process of these two countries.²³⁴ Secondly, civil society could not develop as expected in both cases because of the traditional ruling style. Democrats and civil society are two components of the consolidation of democracy complementing each other. The absence of these two points paved the way for the success of populist discourse, where both leaders managed to represent themselves as the representatives of the 'losers' side of the system. This allowed them to open a road toward the autocratization process by creating a cult of personality.

6.2.3. Democratization Processes in Turkey and Hungary

The literature agrees that since the establishment of the Republic, Turkey could not consolidate its democracy and remained an 'imperfect' one until turning into a competitive authoritarian regime (Baykan 2021; Çınar 2015; Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Özbudun 2014). Not only literature but also civilians in today's Turkey has

²³⁴ The most crucial obstacle these two countries faced during the transition process was that they remained in the elite circle of society. Here, the thesis wants to show that democrats were only the ones, who were elites, and therefore, democrats could not be seen in different segments of society. The populist discourse of these two leaders has also been successful because of this reality. The system's losers are far more than the successors, the so-called democrats, of the system.

realized that the country has never been able to consolidate its democracy since it remained with a limited definition, which has changed according to the period and by whom it had defined. In one of the documentaries of 140journos (2022), as Levon Bağış stated, “Turkey has never been a very democratic, very prosperous, economically and socially comfortable place for anyone.”²³⁵ This section will focus on Turkey's democratization process by singling out the obstacles it has encountered on the road, which hindered the consolidation process and, last, brought the autocratization of the system. AKP's establishment and its slight victory in the early 2000s, when the citizens lost their faith in the political system, have seen as a possibility for many to at long last chance to achieve the necessary democratization that the country should be achieved until then. Nevertheless, as time passed and AKP consolidated its power by consecutively winning the elections, it became apparent that the country was shifting towards an autocracy rather than taking steps towards democratization.

In the Republic's early years, the founders adopted the ‘rational democracy’ ideal in which they saw democracy as an educated debate among a few (Heper 1985). In line with this, they believed that the society needed to be under the surveillance of the educated elites until embracing the reforms introduced by the founders of the Republic. In the Republic's early years, two attempts to introduce a multi-party system took place though both of them induced the founders of the Republic that the society was still not ready to embrace democracy properly.²³⁶ The 1924 Constitution, which, as Özbudun (2014) stated, lacked a proper checks and balances system, opened the way for the political system to be turned into an authoritarian one easily, which could be described as the single-party period of CHP. The single-party regime that lasted until 1945 could be described as a period of cultural transformation.²³⁷ Here, the founders of the Republic, who were well-educated military officers and bureaucratic elites, realized that society lacked important aspects compared to citizens of the civilized World.²³⁸ They saw society as in need of being modernized

²³⁵ Levon Bağış is a columnist, whose writings has focused on wine and its culture.

²³⁶ Here, the proper way resonates with the citizens of the ‘civilized’ Western World.

²³⁷ Cultural transformation here refers to the social cleavage, which is explained in the ‘Populism in Turkey and Hungary’ section of this thesis, that was started in the late Ottoman Empire and brought a cultural war between the sultan and his officers (center) and the rest of the society (periphery).

²³⁸ This group will be named Kemalist elites (Göle 1997).

and Westernized. For this purpose, they adopted a radical secularization agenda, which had essential changes and effects on different realms of life. According to Özbudun (2014, 2016), the problem that Turkish democracy faced resulted from this authoritarian state tradition, which tried to implement uniformity in a fragmented society.²³⁹

To understand the democratization process of Turkey and the reasons why it failed to consolidate for a very long time and, in the end, turned into a competitive authoritarian system, the focus should be given to different dimensions such as constitutionalism, civil-military relations, party politics, and civil society. As mentioned above, the constitution-making processes in 1924, 1961, and 1982 lacked negotiation and bargaining.²⁴⁰ The 1924 Constitution was the product of the Second Assembly, whereas the 1961 Constitution was the product of a commission of the university professors²⁴¹, and the 1982 Constitution represented the interest of the state elites. Turkey entered a multi-party period with the establishment of the first National Development Party (*Milli Kalkınma Partisi, MKP*)²⁴² and DP in 1945. The literature provides several explanations for the reasons for this transition.

On one hand, by the end of the Second World War, CHP felt the need to integrate itself into the Western bloc towards the Soviet Union threat (Ahmad 1994, 1995; Özbudun 2014; Turan 2015). Also, some scholars agreed that the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan played an essential role since, with both of these plans, the US decided to help the countries facing threats both in political and economic terms (Zürcher 2007). Besides the external reasons, the scholars also focused on the internal factors that led to this transition. One line of argument in the literature followed the idea that CHP never wanted to end up with an authoritarian regime, and it aimed to transform the system into a multi-party one when society became ready for it (Özbudun 2016; Turan 2015). Some others focused on the economic decisions

²³⁹ Social fragmentation has different layers in the Turkish political context. In this regard, fragmentation occurs as center versus periphery, secularism versus religious conservatism, Turkish nationalism versus Kurdish nationalism, and mostly due to the divisions mentioned above, tutelage versus majoritarianism.

²⁴⁰ Most importantly, this resulted from the absence of a visible and robust civil society.

²⁴¹ Here, it should not be forgotten that this constitution had been prepared after the coup d'état and requested the approval of the military officers. That is why it was not fully democratic.

²⁴² Nuri Demirağ established the party and could not be an influential actor in Turkish politics.

of the single-party regime, which was the “Land Reform” (Ahmad 1995; Zürcher 2007). The reform heated the debates within the National Assembly and brought unhappiness to the landowners. To overcome this unhappiness and reaction, İsmet İnönü, the then President of the Turkish Republic, decided to introduce the multi-party system.

The first free and fair elections on May 14, 1950, resulted in the victory of DP, which could be marked as a new period in Turkish politics.²⁴³ At last, the system was turned into a democratic one. However, starting from this period, the definition of democracy got the characteristic of representing the ‘national will.’ The election campaign of DP had the slogan of “Enough! It is the nation’s turn to speak!” which, after the elections, garnished the founders of the party with the idea that the society was supporting their party program and staying in power, they needed to preserve this support. With such an ideal in their minds, the DP members started not to listen and credit the critiques directed by the opposition. After its first four years, DP preserved its support base in the countryside because of the economic developments it achieved. However, it started to lose support from the intelligentsia and universities in the urban areas since it started to show authoritarian characteristics during the single-party period of CHP. Despite the success in the first free and fair elections, the doubts of Adnan Menderes with his party were still there. Maybe he and his party were ruling the country, but since CHP constructed the bureaucracy, military, and judiciary, they could not be sure whether they had the power to control the state apparatus at all or not. To overcome this suspicion, people in critical positions rotated with new ones known for their loyalties to the party. After being successful in the second election in 1954, Adnan Menderes started to change his attitude, in which he started not to consider the recommendations while making decisions. The citizens' unhappiness and the authoritarian tendencies of the rule combined with the economic problems over time. DP focused on developing the country by building factories, infrastructure, and roads. This meant that not so much money was allocated to the military budget. Also, it was thought that the country would not need to spend much on its military after joining NATO in 1952; however, the reality showed this was not the case. By joining NATO, the senior officers of

²⁴³ Before elections, the Electoral Law changed to secret vote and open counting; the judicial review of elections has also added.

Turkey had the chance to witness how the senior officers in other countries were living while their purchasing power was decreasing with the inflation in the country. The economic problems combined with authoritarianization and personalization of the political arena ended with a coup d'état in 1960.

The coup d'état took place due to the argument that the problems in the country occurred because all the powers were concentrated in the hands of one body- the Assembly. To overcome such an experience in the future, a new constitution was written by a commission composed of university professors, in which proportional representation was introduced, the Constitutional Court was established, and the Grand National Assembly was divided into the National Assembly and Senate. With these developments and the strong state tradition and the revolution from the above; tutelage was also added as a new reason for Turkey's failure to consolidate her democracy. As Baykan (2021: 29) stated, until the rise of the AKP, a dual-tutelage system, which had the military-bureaucratic elites on one side and the political elites on the other side, created a turbulent democracy by distancing elites from accountability, limiting popular participation and deliberation and distorting the bond of representation. After 1960, Turkey experienced two more direct coup d'états in 1971 and 1980, in which the military legitimized its intervention into politics by the argument of 'saving democracy.'²⁴⁴ As could be seen from here, the civil-military relations in Turkey are shaped by the image of the state elite, which represents the bureaucracy and military, which they represented themselves as 'the guardian of the Kemalist regime' (Cizre 2012; Gürsoy 2013; Heper 2019; Narlı 2011; Satana 2008). In line with this perception, they regarded themselves as superior to the ruling elites, representing the parliament's elected party members.

Here, the root cause of this superior perception of being the guardian of the state could be traced back to the political history of Turkey, where the notion of 'father state' resonates with an essential political culture (Cizre 2012; Demirel 2005; Heper 1985; Kalaycıoğlu 2012).²⁴⁵ 'Father State' is embedded with the notion of a strong

²⁴⁴ Not only the military but also the citizens regarded the military as 'the protector of democracy' (Demirel 2005; Gurcan and Gisclon 2016; Satana 2008).

²⁴⁵ As Uğur-Çınar (2017: 331) pointed out, the Turkish case would be defined as an example of neopatrimonialism not only because of the system that provides much room for maneuvering to the leader but also because of the existence of certain political and bureaucratic institutions providing a

state, which was inherited from the Ottoman Empire, where the Sultan held all of the power in his hand as a result of having the ownership of the lands by the absence of aristocracy that brought the gift result of protecting the state. This legacy of the patrimonial nature of the rule inherited from the Ottoman Empire had an essential effect on politics. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also benefited from this tradition, where he built an image of being the father of the family while creating a cult of personality in the eyes of the Turkish citizens that paved the way for the autocratization of the system by using the populist discourse. This has explained in length in Personalism chapter. The definition of citizenship is also important for understanding the political culture. One of the critical aspect of the political culture is the idea of a ‘military nation’ (Altınay 2004), where the founding myth of the Turkish nation is hidden in the military. In line with this, the Turkish citizenship is a duty-oriented one, could be described as civic-republican. As Kardam and Cengiz (2011: 151) described, it has a republican, state-centric, and passive nature (a combination of German and French models). It is not an inclusive one, defined in a top-down manner (described through the center-periphery dichotomy) and rejects the differences. As seen from here, citizens are not the subjects but objects of politics. Rather than actively involving in political life, they are passively obeying the military ideal of the establishment. This also had an important effect on the development of civil society, which is being explained in the below paragraph.

In line with Altınay’s (2004) argument, the coup d’états took place under the idea of the inability of the political elites to rule the country. The state elites saw themselves as only the ones who knew the best political option for the country. The military’s role as the guardian of the ideals of the founders of the Turkish Republic, when combined with the strong state tradition, had an essential effect on understanding how civil society developed in the Turkish case. As seen from the studies in the literature, not only the military but also the civilians recognized it as responsible for protecting the country from democratic backsliding. This role of the military and the strong state harmed civil society, which could not be flourished as it should in liberal democracies. Not only the two points mentioned above but also the organic vision of the society where it has defined without classes, the republican model of citizenship

legal-rational appearance to the regime. That is why this thesis also resonates with the cultural aspects of Turkey and tries to understand the effect of these traditions on the changing nature of the regime.

where the national interests came before the individual interests, and the national developmentalism idea in which the state had the role of involving in economic activities for industrialization by the founders of the Republic gave harm to the development of the civil society. As Keyman and Kancı (2013) clarified in their work, a significant relationship exists between civil society and democracy. So, as long as democracy deepens in a country, civil society would also consolidate, whereas the exact causal relationship would be applied to a vice-versa situation.

As Sayarı (2018) stated, military interventions in the political scene were essential to Turkey's evolution of the party politics. The literature agreed that the party divisions were constructed by the social fragmentation lines of the country in which the center-periphery paradigm was the most applicable until the rise of AKP into power. After transitioning to a multi-party system until the first coup d'état, a two-party system evaluated a fragmented and broader ideological spectrum in the post-1961 period. However, the political rupture several times ended up with the intervention in the natural evolution of the party competition in the country by banning certain parties and their elites from politics, changing electoral laws, and introducing new constitutions.

After a smooth transition to democracy with the introduction of multi-party politics and with an unsuccessful journey towards the consolidation process of it, when the time came the early 2000s, AKP's rise to the political scene and adoption of *conservative democracy* as its political identity, both by Turkish people and by the World, recognized as an essential step for the democratic settings regarding the security concerns of the Western countries as a result of realizing the threat of Islamic terrorism. As Kalın (2013: 423) stated, "acting with a cosmopolitan spirit, the AK Party leaders have embraced both national values and global trends and sought to create a synthesis- a synthesis that suggests new modes of relation between tradition and modernity on the one hand and Islam and the political order on the other." From the early days, the AKP government turned its face toward the EU accession process, marking an essential step for the country's democratization process in an environment where it needed to operate within the parameters of a strictly secular state system. As Belge (2004) said, "by resolving to join the European Union, AKP has propelled Turkey onto an open-ended path of European-

style normalization.” The literature agreed that with the EU’s recognition of Turkey at the beginning of the 2000s, a new phase has started in civil-military relations (Sarigil 2011).

In this respect, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s years in power would be divided into three phases, and those mentioned above could be named as the first phase of his rule. The first phase is described as the democratic years of AKP rule. After splitting with Erbakan’s National Outlook movement, the founding names of the party aimed to rule the country collectively. Still, from those days, Erdoğan’s weight was evident. After reading a poem, which ended up with imprisonment, since Erdoğan could not be the leader of his party, Abdullah Gül took this position. When Erdoğan became eligible for leadership, without any hesitation, Gül left the floor to him.²⁴⁶ By adopting the ‘conservative democracy’ ideology, AKP aimed to end the autocratic nature of the state in Turkey created by the tutelary system. Erdoğan, with his friends like Abdüllatif Şener, Abdullah Gül, and Ali Babacan, framed a friendly face for liberal democrats in the early years. Liberals regarded AKP as a vehicle for overcoming the country’s traumatic past (Bechev 2022: 51). This traumatic past was linked to the September 12 regime of the 1980 coup d’état. In these years, AKP gave importance to democratization and the EU membership process, corresponding to the desire for liberal democracy and high human standards of society (Hale and Özbudun 2010: 55). These promising democratic steps were regarded as a chance to have a critical breaking point with the old regime in liberal intellectuals’ minds.²⁴⁷

As Taşkın (2013: 294) pointed out, AKP was a product of a half-century struggle of the political Islam with the Kemalist elites and the center-right leadership. When this has been taken into consideration, the conservative democracy ideal flourished as a response to the political atmosphere of the country. In this regard, conservatism in democracy definition was providing a possible limitation for the democratization process of the country. In those years, in addition to the liberal intellectuals, the Gülen movement’s support undeniably created an atmosphere for the hope of democracy besides its conservative nature. The movement gave importance to

²⁴⁶ Here, Erdoğan’s popularity among society played an important role. Gül would stay in his position, but they regarded that they should respond to the desires of society.

²⁴⁷ The old regime represents the values of the Kemalist establishment.

education, which was not the case in other Islamic communities, and prepared the students for the university (Koyuncu-Lorasdağı 2010: 225). This provided well-equipped bureaucrats into the picture, and AKP, by bringing these people to the critical positions, had the chance to link itself to the world. While these bureaucrats transformed the state institutions, they also provided a trustful picture to the world in democratic terms since the movement had an international network.

While liberal intellectuals and the world saw this period as an essential step for Turkey's democracy, the alarm bells were ringing for the secularist side, who described themselves as the country's Kemalist elites. The cultural clash between secularists and Islamists was there for a long time, and Erdoğan's populist tone gained significant momentum from this clash. Since Gül was selected as the president after the third round in July, the law amendment was implemented in the 2014 Presidential election. On the one hand, this development could be regarded as the first step of AKP for consolidating the power since it opened the way for the trials of Ergenekon and Sledgehammer, which were the most important developments that took place to end the tutelary system of the old regime; on the other hand, this development brought the crack between two old friends calling their friendship as 'litigation friendship.'²⁴⁸

AKP's first phase in power, which could be described as an instant moment for capturing the long-desired democratic rule by different segments of the society, started to show opposite signs with the developments in 2007. The early 2010s would be marked as the years when AKP started to seek a new identity (M. Çınar 2021). The essential obstacle in front of the party was regarded as the existence of a tutelage system. As Baykan (2021: 29) described, Turkish politics was composed of a 'double-tutelage' system, where there were military-bureaucratic elites on the one hand and political elites on the other hand. This system has remained the main obstacle to the consolidation of democracy since such a system was created as a sophisticated authoritarian checks and balances system based on the reconciliation of elites where accountability and widespread participation and negotiation were absent. AKP ended the military-bureaucratic wing of the tutelage system by using the EU

²⁴⁸ Abdullah Gül describes their friendship as a companionship and a litigation friendship in *Usta'nın Hikayesi* (2013) documentary.

accession process and the trials imposed on these elites with the help of the Gülen movement. However, this did not bring the desired democracy to Turkey and instead paved the way for Erdoğan to build his own personalistic rule.

Abdullah Gül's presidency, followed by some instances towards the military officers, and with the 2010 constitutional amendment when coupled with three consecutive electoral victories in 2011, AKP fell into an authoritarian drift rather than bringing the long-desired democratic rule to the country and lasted with being named as an example of competitive authoritarian regimes. Since those years have coincided with the Arab Uprisings, which brought a lively discussion on Turkey's leading role in the region as the guidance for the transition of the Middle Eastern countries, the Islamic character of the AKP and Erdoğan seemed more visible. The AKP's position in the second phase of its rule would be marked with the *neo-Ottomanism* ideal. This was important since, after ending the tutelary system, essential steps started to be taken towards structuring New Turkey to break the chain with Old Turkey.²⁴⁹ With the idea of strategic depth, which could be traced in the writings of Davutoğlu, a significant shift in republican foreign policy from Western priorities was marked (Ongur 2015: 425). In this regard, Erdoğan's New Turkey ideal was shaped by Islam and the glorification of the Ottoman past, especially the reign of Abdülhamid II.²⁵⁰

As explained in the earlier paragraphs of this section, Turkey had been marked as a representative of 'tutelary democracy' (Baykan 2021; Çınar 2015), which had turned into an 'illiberal democracy,' 'delegative democracy,' 'competitive authoritarianism'

²⁴⁹ The Gezi Park Protests 2013 have had a remarkable effect on those years. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan after holding the power in his hand for three consecutive elections, needed to face the unrest within the society. This protest not only showed the country's unhappy citizens but also marked the crack between Abdullah Gül and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In addition, how the Gülen movement positioned itself in this protest could be marked as the breaking point with the rule. All of these developments brought Erdoğan to a position where he needed to show autocratic signs to overcome any democratic reactions to his rule, which would threaten his power.

²⁵⁰ Erdoğan's Islamic tendencies could be traced to his years as Istanbul's Mayor. He started to take steps toward showing off his Islamist character. First, he declared a dress-code circular (linked to his experience with the military officer at IETT), and then, he opened the council with 'Fatiha,' rather than homage, which was an important tradition. Erdoğan also took control of the municipal billboards and forbade any advertisements, including women with bikinis. Also, he demolished the summer facilities of the municipality to build an indoor swimming pool where veiled women could enter too. These were followed by removing liquor service at municipal services and official municipal receptions. Meanwhile, Erdoğan also was not hesitated to declare his ideas on democracy. In several places, he stated that democracy was a tool for him. In his words: "Democracy is a tramway; we would go as far as we can, and when the time comes, we will get off it" (Çakır and Çalmuk 2001: 13).

or ‘new authoritarian’ regime rather than moving towards a consolidated democratic one with the autocratic tendencies of AKP in recent years (Baykan 2018; Bechev 2014; B. Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Özbudun 2015; Somer 2016; Taş 2015). After opening the way for the president's election by the citizens, in 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected as the President of Turkey for the first time and came to office through the electorate's votes. The presidency of Erdoğan did not fit into the democratization process and the existing constitutional structure of the country since the first day of his term in office. From then on, the AKP government turned its face to create a constitutional structure that would fit the political style of Erdoğan. This political style could be explained as having all the powers to be gathered in the hands of the leader by blurring the separation of powers and causing harm to the checks and balances system, which led Turkey into an adventure towards autocratization. In 2017, a referendum for a constitutional amendment, which brought Presidential System peculiar to Turkey into the picture,²⁵¹ took place under the State of Emergency (SoE) conditions.²⁵² With the constitutional amendments, the checks and balances system was severely damaged. The executive and legislative have merged, and as explained in the earlier chapters, the judiciary has taken under the control of the executive.²⁵³ After five years had passed since the newly established system, with a president connected to his party and endowed with countless powers; Turkey came to a point where it needed to deal with specific problems, such as the economic crisis, which could be taken as the most visible and most problematic issue that Turkish citizens are face-to-face today.

²⁵¹ This new system did not resonate with the U.S. presidential system or France's semi-presidential system. As could be seen from its name, which is the *Presidential System of Government* (*Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükümet Sistemi*), it is unique to Turkey.

²⁵² Following the coup d'état attempt in 2016, SoE declared, and it lasted for two years. The legitimacy of a referendum under the SoE conditions is open to question. Also, *European Commission for Democracy through Law* (Venice Commission) prepared an opinion on the constitutional amendment procedure in Turkey in which it clarified that there does not exist any formal rule in international law that binds the countries not to have constitutional amendments during SoE conditions; however, it also mentioned that such like prohibition exists in several constitutions around the World. This prohibition was because, in an SoE condition, the supremacy of law would be limited, and in such a like condition, a pluralist and democratic negotiation process would not be possible. The Turkish constitution did not include such prohibition, but it is evident that having a referendum in SoE condition could not be democratic in these circumstances. To see the full text of the Venice Commission: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2017\)005-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2017)005-e)

²⁵³ Here, it should be clarified that taking the judiciary under control started in 2007 when the AKP government and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan realized that the tutelary powers within the system were not going to allow them even if they won the majority in the elections and represent themselves as the representative of the ‘national will.’ From then on, important steps were taken to change the existing system. However, these changes did not take Turkey towards consolidating its democratic regime as expected by many but towards an autocratic one.

The Hungarian People's Republic (*Magyar Népköztársaság*), which was a single-party rule of the MSZMP, was established in 1949 and lasted until the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989. Hungary's experience with communist rule for four decades left a crucial social legacy in every aspect of the lives of Hungarians (Tökés 1996). In this regard, the communist rule affected how the democratization process occurred. During the Second World War, Hungary became a battleground for Soviet and German forces. German troops occupied the country in March 1944.²⁵⁴ After a few months, the Hungarians decided secretly to start the negotiation process with the Soviet Union, which failed to achieve a concluding armistice agreement.²⁵⁵ Following Romania's withdrawal from the war, Hungary became the central scene of the war on the eastern front. The most significant development took place when Soviet troops, the so-called Red Army, sieged Budapest on Christmas Eve in 1944, which lasted until February 1945.²⁵⁶ The war impacted Hungary, especially the country's economy, since many people migrated to the West and did not return (Cornelius 2011).²⁵⁷ Also, the end of the war did not bring hope for democratic rule in the country. After seizing most of the country's assets from the Germans, the Soviets also attempted to control the country's political affairs. The elections in November 1945 showed that Hungarians were not looking forward to having a communist government. Following this experience, the Soviet Union took steps toward controlling the country's political scene. In 1949, all possible oppositional forces were suppressed, and a communist-dominated list was introduced for the May 1949 elections. After the elections, following the constituency of the national assembly, a new constitution had accepted, which could be regarded as a carbon

²⁵⁴ Here, it should not be forgotten that Hungary collaborated with Germany beforehand. She joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1939, which was concluded by Germany and Japan in 1936. The pact was directed against Communist International (Comintern); in practice, it was directed against the Soviet Union. Following this, Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact, also known as the Berlin Pact, on November 20, 1940, concluded by Germany, Japan, and Italy on September 27, 1940. It was a defensive military alliance mainly aimed at dissuading the US from entering the conflict. In 1941, the Hungarian army joined Operation Barbarossa, where the Axis power invaded the Soviet Union.

²⁵⁵ Negotiations started on October 1, when three Hungarians were sent to Moscow to meet with Stalin. They brought a letter from Horthy, an admiral, and statesman who served as the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary (1920-1946), in which he clarified that the Hungarians were looking forward to taking the Soviet's help. On October 10, Horthy accepted the preliminary terms of the armistice though this agreement failed to be completed, which led the country into a catastrophic situation.

²⁵⁶ This has been regarded as one of the longest sieges of a city in history, which left a significant imprint on the Hungarian society since they were not expecting such a long battle in their city.

²⁵⁷ Most of them migrated with the idea of returning after the war, but due to several reasons that the Soviets imposed in the aftermath of the war, these Hungarians decided not to return to their country of origin.

copy of the Soviet one. This brought the Hungarian People's Republic into existence, and the communist era officially started.²⁵⁸

The communist rule of Hungary could be divided into three phases. The first phase marked a totalitarian dictatorship since it not only obtained political power in its hand but also abolished all of the institutions that provided an autonomous sphere for the society.²⁵⁹ During this period, every aspect of life was brought under the control of the Communist Party and the state. This significantly affected the social composition of the society as Körösenyi (1999: 80) stated that Hungary was marked as the highest individualized society in the European context when the time came to the 1970s and 1980s. In 1956, thousands of Hungarian students and workers gathered in front of the National Assembly to protest for independence from Soviet rule. The peaceful demonstration turned into a bloody revolution between the Soviet forces and Hungarians when the Soviets decided to take harsh measures against it. In the revolution's early days, the Soviets left the country, and a new government was installed under Imre Nagy's leadership. However, the Soviets returned to the country with extra forces from Moscow and managed to suppress the uprisings in the following days. After that, a new government under the leadership of János Kádár, which was collaborating with the Soviet officials, was established. Kádár was aware of the fact that he should find a lasting solution and made his decision on what will going to happen to the revolutionaries in light of this. After arresting and executing the revolutionaries, he managed to visualize this history as horrible for the upcoming generations. He avoided all the possibilities for mass mobilization to be able to control the country politically.

While all these developments were taking place, the totalitarian dictatorship started to lose its power in the 1960s, when building an individual life became an option in which a career beyond the political pressure started to seem possible. Under the Kádár regime, which is called an 'authoritarian regime,' the control over the society and economy had relaxed, and this opened the way for the rise of a second economy

²⁵⁸ In the last phase of the German occupation, people were suppressed from participating in politics. This situation changed when the Soviet Union entered into the scene. 1945-1947 period witnessed political mobilization of people. Approximately, 90% of the people, who were eligible, voted in the elections (Körösenyi 1999: 5).

²⁵⁹ These institutions included associations, interest groups, and religious and youth organizations.

in which people found a place to fulfill their consumption and assumption desires beyond the control of the state. The second economy became popular among Hungarians, and the number of people involved in it grew in time. This had a crucial socio-economic outcome for the Hungarian society in which the dual societal aspects were created. As explained above, the pressure on the people made them passive political actors, and the state was seen as a powerful institution rather than the representative of popular sovereignty. In addition, a dual value system was created in the following years of the regime, which alienated people from politics. These substantially affected how politics and society were shaped following the transition to a democratic regime.

When the time came to the 1980s, Kádár changed from being a conservative reformist to an objector of everything, which ended up with the loss of the support of intellectuals, who played an essential role in the 1960s in preserving Kádárism alive (Schöpflin 1992). As Körösenyi (1999) pointed out, Hungary started to be governed by a dictator who was unsure which path he was following and who was not aware of how to justify his existence in the eyes of the people under his control. The consciousness of intellectuals played a vital role during the regime change in the country. In the late 1980s, they realized that the party needed to loosen its control over the political system. In the end, they came up with the idea of *Constitutional Communism*, which resonated with the existence of the communist party by losing its absolutist nature (Schöpflin 1992: 99). So, with this new design, the party was going to be limited by specific legal and political boundaries, which would open the way for the market to function in the economy and the political actors to have more legitimacy.²⁶⁰ Following this, Kádár and his followers were convinced to have a party conference, which led to an opportunity for his opponents to topple him. However, the leadership change did not end the struggle within the party. The new leader Károly Grósz looked forward to implementing an authoritarian model for the economy, whereas the party reformists looked forward to achieving a democratic system. This clash of interests within the party, when combined with the

²⁶⁰ The intellectuals were composed of two groups. On the one hand, there were party reformers combined with historians, jurists, sociologists, and political scientists; on the other hand, there was democratic opposition (Schöpflin 1992). Democratic opposition took a more marginalized position. In this regard, they argued that constitutional communism would be possible if Kádár resigned from his office.

disappearance of the Soviet Union after the introduction of Gorbachev's reform program, brought it to a round table in the summer of 1989 to decide on the construction of a new political system.

The transition process from a communist regime to a democratic one took place as a round-table negotiation process between the regime and the elites, which lasted with a peaceful transition to democracy. As seen from here, the regime change had an elite characteristic. So, Hungarians did not become active participants in the regime change but instead remained passive observers. The Kádárist era brought a non-political sphere where citizens were individualized, resulting in a lack of collective action. So, millions could not gather to overthrow the existing regime by introducing a democratic one. Therefore, the transition process remained a struggle of intellectual elites within the system. Highley and Burton (2006) described the transition to democracy as a process of 'elite settlement.' These elites brought capitalism as the economy to the country and the democratic institutions as the providers of liberties, which was absent in the old regime. So, in these round-table negotiations, the elites accepted parliamentary democracy, civil rights, and competitive elections. The fundamental goal of these negotiations was to guarantee political safety and the existence of stable institutions for bringing safety to elites' positions one more time. When one looks at the citizenship notion in Hungary, remaining passive actors in the communist era brought the absence of active citizens from the picture. Also, civic education had been seen as the duty of all teachers before 1978. After 1978, civic education has been focused as a special subject but it remained in line with the constraints of the communist system (Davies et al. 2004: 367). Still, this did not be enough to create an active citizen understanding in the country. Even, after the transition process, the citizenship education in schools showed that students did not encourage to be active citizens and participate in social and political life. In Mátrai's (1997: 61) words "this model represents the citizen attitude where the individual is not a participator but rather an observer of the processes; possessing information enables him to form his own opinion, which he expresses if necessary but does not want to enforce by any means."

As stated earlier, the transition process happened peacefully and brought the same six parties into the parliament both in the 1990 and 1994 elections (Enyedi 2016a;

Evans and Whitefield 1995; Körösiényi 1993; S. Szelényi and Szelényi 1991; Vegetti 2019)(Enyedi 2016a; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Körösiényi 1993; Szelényi and Szelényi 1991; Vegetti 2019).²⁶¹ From the beginning, many scholars approached newly established democracies in East-Central Europe skeptically. The continuity and stability of these democratic systems were questioned since a rapid transition toward the market economy and the political culture lacked democratic values. However, this did not withhold the literature to mark Hungary as the success story of the third wave of democratization until Viktor Orbán and Fidesz's reentrance into the political scene with the 2010 elections.

There are various interpretations of Hungary's democratic erosion in the literature following Orbán's step. So, scholarship does not agree on a specific definition of Hungary's political regime. A group of scholars describes Hungary by focusing on the autocratic side of the regime as a 'semi-dictatorship' (Rupnik and Zielonka 2012), 'semi-authoritarianism' (Dawson and Hanley 2016), 'elected autocracy' (Ágh 2016; Kelemen 2017), and 'operetta dictatorship' (Van Til 2015); another group of scholars defines it as a hybrid regime that is a mixture of democratic values and authoritarian ones (Batory 2016; Bozóki and Ádám 2016). Besides this, another group of scholars focuses on the democratic side of the regime and describes Hungary as the representative of 'deconsolidation of democracy'(Brusis 2016) (Brusis 2016), 'democratic backsliding' (Greskovits 2015), 'simulated democracy' (Lengyel and Ilonszki 2012), 'populist democracy' (Kocijan 2015; Pappas 2014), 'selective democracy' (Varga and Freyberg-Inan 2012), and a 'diminished form of democracy' (Bugarič 2015). Körösiényi, Illés, and Gyulai (2020) described Orbán's regime as an example of a Plebiscitary Leader Democracy.²⁶² In this regard, the literature tends to describe the Hungarian case with the adjectives of democracy. However, a significant development took place on September 2022 when the European Parliament voted for Hungary, where it agreed that it would no longer be considered a full democracy under the rule of the populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (EuropeanParliament 2022). The parliament raised that Hungary has breached the

²⁶¹ These parties were MSZP (heir of the Communist Party), MDF, FKgP, KDNP, SZDSZ, and Fidesz.

²⁶² Körösiényi, Illés and Gyulai (2020) argument has studied in length in the internal party organization section of the thesis.

values of the EU, which could be read as the democratic norms of the union. This has been read as putting Hungary in the hybrid regimes category by showing a correlation with ‘electoral autocracies,’ which is the case to describe Vladimir Putin’s Russia and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Turkey (France24 2022).



CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the reasons for democratic backsliding in countries where a cult of personality is established by using populism as the essential tool for achieving their goals. In this regard, thesis aimed to shed light on the hidden meanings and symbols of societies affecting the democratic backsliding process. Conducting a comparative case study analysis on Erdoğan's Turkey and Orbán's Hungary, this research aimed to take a step forward on the democratic backsliding literature, which focuses on how democracies die in countries where governments do not obey the rules of separation of power. The research focuses on what happens after supposing that such governments do not fit the doctrine of separation of powers? At the early stage of the democratic backsliding process, it is observed that the lines between the three branches of government are blurring, especially the judiciary being taken under control, which undeniably diminishes the checks and balances system. However, the vital question arises at this point; since the examples in the world show that the democratic backsliding process is not ending there. Countries' political system is continuing to show autocratic tendencies more and more. So, the question here is, after diminishing the checks and balances system, what takes place and affects the autocratization process in such examples?

To investigate the factors for the increasing level of autocratization in Turkey and Hungary, political regimes, especially the meaning of democracy, and how literature focused on the democratic backsliding process, and populism are considered as core concepts. Regarding the rise of populist movements, parties, and leaders worldwide, especially in the last two decades, the intention of the literature on populism turned towards analyzing the concept. Since it became a widely discussed topic worldwide, it has been treated mainly as evil for democracy. Besides this portrayal of populism in its de facto terms, also the questions "do we need to take populism as a bad thing

that a political system/country would ever experience" or "can we regard populism as a positive impetus for democratic values?" should become essential to be studied.

Populism discourse suggests that it rose as a response to a not well-going democratic system. Since populism also takes its legitimacy from popular sovereignty and uses elections to achieve political goals, it is difficult to identify the concept by not considering democracy. The main distinguishing feature of populism from democracy is the absence of liberal values in the concept. However, the literature has a strewn view of the relationship between populism and democracy. In this respect, different approaches have been taken to explain this relationship by regarding populism as the 'pathology of democracy,' 'purest form of democracy,' and 'incidental outcome of democracy.'

At the very core of the populist discourse, it could be seen that it aims to represent the people who felt excluded from the system due to the changing socio-economic settings. With the changing nature of life, people started to feel that the political actors were not representing their interests and desires but focused on a particular social group's interests and desires, which is constructed as the establishment (corrupted elites) by the populist discourse. Populism found a crack at this point to rise and argue that it would be the changing force in this political setting. From this point onward, populist leaders and parties gathered their supporters around them by arguing that they would represent these people, who felt alienated from the existing system. In this sense, populism can be regarded as a pathology of democracy, trying to fill the gap within the existing system that democratic values could not capture. If we take populism into account only by this premise, we could argue that populism is a positive impetus for democratic values. However, the problem of populism, for a democratic system, results from the fact that even if it fosters representativeness within the system, it could undermine the accountability of the actors. Accountability is one of the essential aspects of consolidated democracies, which is why Western democracies have been such successful while the unconsolidated and emerging ones failed to achieve a consolidated democracy. In respect of all these points, this thesis takes this argument as the starting point and focuses on how populism as a discourse and a political tool threatens liberal democracy in the given cases.

Erdoğan and Orbán, by benefitting from the populist discourse, which opened a space for these leaders to make quick decisions that did not require to be in line with the institutional structure, deepened the democratic backsliding process of their countries. Since specific rules bound institutions, the process takes longer to result. Populism, on the other hand, by focusing on maximizing the leader's power, does not request procedural approvals for the leaders while taking steps forward autocratizing their rules. The interviews conducted on behalf of this thesis worked as a navigation for the researcher to realize that to understand why such populist leaders do not stop after giving harm to the checks and balances system but to continue the autocratization process they started, we should also consider different factors as important indicators affecting the autocratization process in these countries. So, with this, the importance of a process-oriented approach toward the democratic backsliding literature has been revealed. The citizens' perception in a given country needed to be studied to understand the reasons behind the autocratization process. Democratic backsliding is such a process in countries like Turkey and Hungary, which takes place not only with leaders' decisions but also with the support of the citizens. Besides the effect on the definition of democracy, these leaders are legitimizing their autocratic ruling style by obtaining the simple majority of the votes by degrading success and democracy to elections.

In line with these, chapters of the thesis have been designed to give insight to the readers on different factors affecting the democratic backsliding process. After defining the concepts of political regimes and populism in the literature review chapter, the researcher focused on the themes that interviews released as essential factors for the autocratization process. Since the institutional structure of countries played a vital role in starting the autocratization process, it has been studied as the first theme of the research. The institutional structure and its effect on democratic backsliding have been divided into two chapters. Chapter III focused on political institutions. Scholarship agreed on the importance of institutions for organizing the daily life of people. The rules must establish to create order and to provide a peaceful public sphere to citizens. Political institutions are established to design and implement necessary rules for societies. In this chapter, the importance of a well-functioning checks and balances system has portrayed by examining how Erdoğan

and Orbán, by taking control of the judiciary, favored their rules over the democratic values that would favor citizens' well-being.

Besides the three branches of government and a well-functioning system where separation of powers exists, political parties are regarded as essential actors in the democratic nature of the political regimes. So, the intra-party organization has been highlighted as the second important theme for understanding democratic backsliding. Chapter IV focused on the internal party organization and its effect on the bigger picture. The main question derived from adding such a chapter was aimed to show the relationship between autocratization process and the internal structure of the party organization. However, the field work of the thesis helped to realize that all of the societal layers potentially affect the democratic backsliding process. In this respect, studying multiple angles and understanding how they affect the autocratization process of the countries came to the front. At this point, the scholarship looks at the institutional structure and its relation to democratic backsliding from a macro level, whereas this thesis adopts a micro and meso-level analysis.

Considering this, one of the remaining two important themes for democratic backsliding process studied in Chapter V, is the personalization of politics. After providing a literature review on the personalization of politics, this chapter continued by dividing the importance of personalization into sub-themes. These themes were also found during the interview process. The leader's personalistic appeal is affected by the people close to him, the patronage linkage he builds, and using certain institutions for his desires are also important indicators for showing the personalization of politics. Besides discussing the judiciary and its importance in Chapter III, it is studied again in this chapter since the leader's increasing power in the system allows him to use such institutions to punish possible powerful oppositional forces within the system. This is important since these examples show that the democratic backsliding process is not ending after obtaining power by diminishing the checks and balances system. Nevertheless, it is starting to be used as a personal tool of the ruler for deepening his power within the society by creating a fear mechanism over citizens. Another essential institution Erdoğan and Orbán focused on is higher education institutions. This also shows us that when leaders

personalize their rule, they do not stop harming the political institutions but start controlling all of the institutions within the system. In this regard, specific elite academic institutions are becoming a crucial battleground for populist personalistic leaders to actualize their autocratization process.

The last theme thesis has focused on is the importance of culture in society and how leaders legitimize their rules by referring to their political history. Chapter VI focuses on political culture and sees it as an essential component for developing political behavior, which shapes the structure of the institutions in the political setting. Besides the attitudes most political science literature focuses on, this thesis considers the importance of symbols and hidden meanings. The idea is that how humans perceive the world helps shape how people give meaning to their world. For this purpose, this chapter starts by explaining how scholarship defines culture and its relationship with politics. From there on, the emphasis is given to the importance of the existence of democratic minds to have a democratic structure of institutions. Here, the citizenship notion has been studied. Also, regarding perception of people play an important role on how they define democracy, a section focused on the importance of perceptions. Lastly, evidence from Turkey and Hungary has been provided to show how culture in political terms plays an essential role in the democratic backsliding process of both cases.

Overall, today's world is faced with the rise of hybrid regimes in different political settings, which has become an important topic to be studied by political scientists. The most crucial aspect of democratic backsliding today is that the leaders combine the autocratization process of the unconsolidated democratic regimes of their countries by using populism as the core tool for legitimizing their powers. The populist flow, flourishing the hybrid regimes, brought the question of "what have we learned from the democratic backsliding process?" for the future of politics. After the populist flow of the last two decades, studies showed that the number of populists is decreasing worldwide.²⁶³ The achievements in quotes of opposition in different political settings brought hope to literature that populists would be beaten. For

²⁶³ Meyer (2022) described that the number of populist leaders at the beginning of 2022, when compared to the previous year, decreased from 17 to 13 in their annual update for the *Populists in Power* database. She added that this was the lowest number since 2004.

example, the local election results in Turkey flourished the hopes for scholars that even in hybrid regimes, there would still be resilience to democracy and a vibrant opposition would be observed (B. Esen and Gumuscu 2019; Wuthrich and Ingleby 2020; Korkmaz 2020; Demiralp and Balta 2021). The studies focusing on how to beat populism gained momentum (Sierakowski 2019; Pappas 2020b; de Lara and de la Torre 2020; Pérez-Boquete and Bello 2023). However, by taking cautious steps, this research asks whether it is possible to beat populists that easily. The 1990s also witnessed optimism among scholars, but history showed that democracy did not flourish as expected in years. So, populism would seem to be beaten in today's world, but still, it would not end the democratic backsliding process of the countries as expected. The recent national elections in Turkey and Hungary also proved that populist personalistic leaders with their autocratic nature are resilient towards a change in the system.

This research provided a process-oriented approach, showing that different factors affect the democratic backsliding process in today's world. Besides the checks and balances system, the scholarship should consider different societal layers as essential indicators for understanding autocratization. So, we should consider that the examples of successes of oppositional forces in hybrid regimes would cause disillusionment to see the reality. This research argues that cautious steps should be taken to agree that populism could be beaten.²⁶⁴ This would be best explained by using the example of the learning process of autocrats in Middle Eastern countries following the Arab Spring. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle Eastern context showed resilience toward the protests that broke down in their countries. The violent conflict became a critical characteristic, and in most cases, the existing authoritarian regimes' breakdown did not occur. Tunisia's revolution became an inspirational movement for Arabs in the region. The mass protests in different places of the region taught society how to start protest movements against the autocratic rules in their countries, but also had a significant effect on the 'authoritarian learning' process for autocratic regimes.²⁶⁵ Lynch (2016) explains this with demonstration and diffusion

²⁶⁴ Esen and Gumuscu (2019: 318) also pointed out that the defeat of AKP in the 2019 local elections showed that Turkey was still a competitive authoritarian regime and did not yet turn to be a full authoritarian one.

²⁶⁵ To understand how autocrats learned to cope with uprisings in the Middle Eastern context following studies would be visited: Heydemann and Ketcham (2016), Leenders (2016), Marks (2016)

effects. During the process, autocratic regimes learned how to cope with uprisings from one another. So, in time resilience of authoritarianism has been witnessed in the region. In addition, the autocratic rules of China and Russia also taught Middle Eastern authoritarianism how to cope with oppositional voices. During the protests, they silenced social media, an essential tool the other autocratic countries use to suppress the opposition (Boisseau 2015; Lutscher and Ketchley 2023). As seen from here, the learning process of autocratic regimes in the Middle Eastern context would be applied to populist leaders in today's world. In the long run, the rise of opposition, especially in hybrid regimes, as essential actors in the game, would teach personalized rules of populist leaders how to topple with possible uprisings to their autocratic ruling style. Considering the experience of the Arab Spring, the scholarship on the democratic backsliding process of countries where populism becomes an essential tool for the autocratization process should be cautious to have an optimistic point of view for the future of hybrid regimes worldwide. Examples of defeats in different countries would not end the democratic backsliding process but would bring resilience of populist leaders in other examples toward the autocratization process in time.

7.1. Suggestions for Future Research

Regarding the research findings, the thesis argued that the democratic backsliding process should be studied from multiple angles to understand why countries with a populist discourse and a personalized leader are showing tendencies toward autocratization rather than showing any signs of democratization. Considering the time limit, this thesis focused on comparing two cases selected as representing the typical cases of the combination of populism with personalistic leadership and examined as examples of hybrid regimes by the literature. For further research, adding other countries experiencing democratic backsliding to study, such as Poland, would be meaningful to see how different factors affect the process in different countries. Also, a study could be conducted comparing these cases to examples of other cases where institutional structure shows resilience toward populist dichotomy as Austria (also, US would be considered). The question here would be to understand why Turkey and Hungary experienced a deepening process of democratic backsliding with a populist leader, whereas this did not happen in the other cases.

Resilience would be highlighted in such like research. All of these possible research areas would help shed light on the hidden factors this research could not reach.



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APPENDIX I. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PARTY MEMBERS

1. Has this been your first experience within a party organization?

Follow-up Question: If no, please give information about your previous experiences.

2. What were your motivations for being a member of this party? And if you had previous party experiences, what were the motivations for being a member of those parties?
3. What is your position at the party? Can you explain how you came to this position?

Follow-up Question 1: Did you have any other positions before taking this position in the party?

Follow-up Question 2: Did you have some other positions in your previous experiences?

4. How many hours do you spend per week for your party organization duties?
5. Do you think that spending more time within the party organization is strengthening the relations of the members?

Follow-up Question: How does this relationship affect the success of the party in elections?

6. How does the party organize the relationship of the members with each other?
7. Can you provide details about the structure of your party organization?

Follow-up question: If you had a chance, would you change anything in your internal party structure?

8. Have you ever met with the leader of your party before?

Follow-up question: If yes, can you describe your relationship with him. Do you have a face-to-face relationship with him? If yes, how frequently do you meet him?

9. How often do you meet with the party members?

10. How long does an average meeting last?

11. Can you describe the structure of these meetings?

a. Is there genuine discussion and exchange of views?

b. How are decisions -if any- made?

12. What kind of topics/issues are being discussed in these meetings?

Follow-up question: Could opinions against the party leader's ones be freely discussed?

13. How do you prepare for the elections?

14. In your view, what makes a party successful in the elections?

15. How would you map your party's leader's position in the party organization?

16. Do you think that the internal party structure nurtures your party leader's successful appeal in the eyes of the voters?

17. What are the most promising futures of your internal structure of the party organization?

BUREAUCRATS

1. How long have you been working in your position?
2. Have you had any other posts previously as a civil servant?
3. Do you have any relationship with a particular party? If yes, can you explain the relationship?

Follow-up question: How does being a member of the party affects your job? Is there any relationship between these two?

4. Can you describe your workplace?

Follow-up question: Can you give information about the structure of your workplace.

5. Did you meet with your minister before? If yes, can you describe your relationship with him?
6. How often does your department is meeting with the minister?
7. Did you meet with the leader of the party, who rules the country?
8. How would you describe the position of the leader of the party, who rules the country, within your ministry and your department?

ACADEMICIANS

1. How would you define an elite?
2. Do you think there still exists a robust social cleavage in your country?
3. Do you think the political atmosphere of your country uses higher education as a tool to implement a populist discourse?
4. Do you think higher education is being used as a tool for inciting anti-elitist sentiment in your country?
5. How would you explain the historical relationship of politics with higher education in your country?
6. Do you think there is academic freedom in your country? How would you identify it on a 1 to 10 scale (1 being most and 10 being least free)?

Follow-up question: If the interviewee would say no, then do you think there had existed academic freedom ever in your country?

7. Can you share your vision of an ideal university? How should it be designed?
8. Do you think the level of democracy affects the structure of a higher education system?

Follow-up Question: Can we say that more democratized countries have more autonomous higher education institutes?

9. Regarding the populist leader's success in your country, the literature names the regime as an example of a competitive authoritarian one, walking towards authoritarianism rather than showing any sign that it would return to its democratization process. How would you interpret the democratization process in your country (both in historical and present terms)?
10. Regarding the previous question, do you think the party system in your country would allow the regime to turn its face towards authoritarianism?
11. Some argue that a regime's authoritarian character is first nurtured within the internal party organization. In this regard, the party first experiences power concentration in the hands of the leader, and then, the regime begins to show authoritarian tendencies. Would you agree with this statement?

APPENDIX II. INTERVIEW METHODS

	INTERVIEWEE	TITLE	SEX	COUNTRY	SOURCE	LENGTH	POSITION
1	Mehmet	Academician	M	TURKEY	Purposive	1,5 hours	Public University
2	Ali	Academician	M	TURKEY	Purposive	30 minutes	Private University
3	Fatma	Academician	F	TURKEY	Purposive	40 mintues	Private University
4	Ayşe	Academician, Former Party Member of RP	F	TURKEY	Purposive	1 hour	Member of districh branch, Public University
5	Eva	Academician	F	HUNGARY	Purposive	40 mintues	Private University
6	Zalan	Academician	M	HUNGARY	Purposive	40 mintues	Public University
7	Szilvi	Academician	F	HUNGARY	Purposive	30 minutes	Private University
8	Nora	Academician	F	HUNGARY	Purposive	40 mintues	Private University
9	Hatice	Civil Servant	F	TURKEY	Purposive	1 hour	Civil Servant (High-level)
10	Adnan	Civil Servant	M	TURKEY	Purposive	1,5 hours	Civil Servant
11	Ahmet	Civil Servant	M	TURKEY	Purposive	1,5 hours	Civil Servant (High-level)
12	Alper	Bureucrat	M	TURKEY	Purposive	50 minutes	Senior Bureucrat
13	Erkan	Bureucrat	M	TURKEY	Purposive	1,5 hours	Senior Bureucrat
14	Özlem	Former Civil Servant	F	TURKEY	Purposive	1 hour	Civil Servant
15	Erol	Former Party Member	M	TURKEY	Snowball Sampling	50 minutes	Central Executive Board, Former MP
16	Gül	Party Member	F	TURKEY	Snowball Sampling	1 hour	Central Decision and Executive Board, Women's Branch
17	Cüneyt	Party Member	M	TURKEY	Purposive	1 hour	Member of district branch
18	Berna	Former Party Member	F	TURKEY	Purposive	50 minutes	Member of districh branch
19	Bülent	Party Member	M	TURKEY	Snowball Sampling	1,5 hours	Youth Branch, MP Candidate

*This thesis selected most representative sentences of the interviewees and cite-in those in the text

**Pseudonym used for the interviewees regarding protection of their personal data

APPENDIX III. THE CODEBOOK

CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Socialization through partisanship	Gaining an identity through being a member of a group (party). Socialization through being a member of the party brings primordial ties and clientelistic relationships to the forefront. All of these affect the perception of citizens on the democratic backsliding process	“In the lectures, I explain autocratization as a concept to students. They regard what is going on in Turkey as an autocratization process through this definition, but this autocratization process does not affect their daily life since this does not seem to be that much important” (Mehmet-academician, public university)
Essence of politics	Autocratization as a giant political mechanism penetrates to the essence of social, economic, and political areas of society	“In society, the understanding that ‘politics serve the country’ should be established. Otherwise, the system of patronage linkage created by the party would establish and remain for a long time” (Erol- former AKP member)
Design of political institutions	How existing political institutions are formed provide information on the tendency toward democratic backsliding	“The design of political institution is autocratic. The relationship between parties and society is vertical and authoritarian. There is a boss at the top and obedient people at the bottom. We see a very obedient society with a very well-organized party” (Mehmet)
Political culture	The lack of rational politics ideal brings the absence of democratic minds and paves the way for democratic backsliding	“Democracy is absent in our political culture. If you are a deputy in Turkey, you dedicate your whole life to politics. In advanced democracies, this balance is more settled. MPs have opportunity take time for themselves. They have the chance to read books, develop themselves intellectually. This is missing in the Turkish political context. So, the political culture is remaining very low and the intellectual capacity of the politicians is becoming to be a question” (Erol)
Democratic culture	By placing democracy at the base of society, creating an environment of consultation and common sense	“Without having democratic individuals in a context, we would not talk about democracy” (Fatma- academician, private university)
Intra-party organization	Requesting you to be obedient and an active member of the party	“When you become a party member, they include you in a subgroup. For example, the head of the women’s branch called me when I became a party member and requested to be a member of that subgroup. She explained what I need to do and how often I should visit the party as a member of the women’s branch” (Berna- former AKP member) “In every meeting, I highlighted what I wanted to say. I was voicing my criticisms. Tayyip Bey told me not to mention those things in these meetings but instead write them as a report to him” (Erol)
Obedience	To avoid any exclusion from the community, citizens prefer not to raise their ideas and concerns. To preserve their status, citizens become more obedient	“I am not exaggerating; when something was to be confirmed, there were 85 steps. Since no one wanted to take responsibility, everyone was asking their supervisor how to proceed. The idea of ‘let me preserve my chair’ by not making a mistake was prevailing” (Özlem- former civil servant)

Demonstration effect	Creating a system where arranging one area spruces itself up in other areas. An essential aspect of creating a fear mechanism for the autocratization process of a regime	“Recently, a thesis written at Binghamton University was not approved. This is a way for warning the others. This means that if you study certain subjects, then the system will exclude you” (Ali- academician, private university)
Being organized up to the capillary	Creating a party organization where party members reflect on society's needs. Becoming a mechanism to win the elections	“Neighborhood level politics is vital for the party. I received a phone call for the election period, where the party members requested from me to be an active participant of the process” (Cüneyt- a member of AKP) “If I would define our party and if we would think that it is a vehicle, then the leader is the one firing it though the cadre is the one moving the vehicle. The party seems to have 70% of the weight of the leader and 30% of the cadre. But in reality, 50-50% leader and cadre share the weight” Bülent (AKP member- youth branch) “We were going to select a person for the provincial women’s branch in Edirne. They told us you would not catch people's votes if you did not belly up at weddings. As seen from here, each province has its own culture, and to be able to preserve neighborhood-level political success, we make choices accordingly to those cultures” (Gül- AKP member, women’s branch)
Leader	Democratic/Autocratic selection procedure of leader, who belongs to the close circle of the leader, and the charismatic or personalistic style of the leader decides the deepening of the democratic backsliding in a given context	“You need to look at people who make up the bark forming around the leader. Over time, this curst is hardening and expanding” (Alper- senior bureaucrat)