# Party Building in the Modern Middle East

MICHELE PENNER ANGRIST

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*MICHELE PENNER ANGRIST*

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*For Ezra*

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*Party Building in the Modern Middle East*

*INTRODUCTION*

# *Party Systems and Regime Formation in the Middle East*

*In 1950, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's ruling Republican People's Party allowed free and fair* elections to go forward in Turkey. To the surprise of many in the party, the opposition Democrat Party won a large parliamentary majority in those elections. Faced with defeat at the ballot box, the Republican People's Party assumed the role of loyal opposition while its rival took control of the Turkish ship of state. This peaceful transfer of power—a rare phenomenon in the Middle East—ushered in a new, pluralistic era in Turkish political history. Since 1950, except for very brief intervals of military rule, competitive party politics and free and fair elections have determined who governs Turkey. Yet of all the modern states to emerge this century from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey alone evolved competitive political institutions that persisted into the contemporary era. Centered on an inflexible parliamentary quota system, a competitive regime functioned in Lebanon for nearly thirty years but then gave way to civil war. Everywhere else in the Muslim Middle East, armies, families, hegemonic single parties, or monarchs came to dictate the rules and parameters of politics.

## *The Question Posed*

Competitive political norms in Turkey have traveled a bumpy road. The military has intervened in civilian affairs on at least three occasions since 1950.[1] After 1961, the military acquired the constitutional right to constrain civilian decision-making processes through the institution of the National

Security Council, a body of military and civilian leaders possessing what amounted to veto power over cabinet initiatives. Yet while post-1950 Turkish politics has not been "democratic,"[2] the norm that competitive procedures should determine who holds power has remained an entrenched one in the Turkish political community. After all three coups, military leaders returned power to civilian politicians in short order (after between one and three years). Despite repeated military interventions, for the half century following 1950, Turkey's party system manifested significant continuity in the organization and leadership of the main center-left and center-right parties. In the first elections following the 1980 coup, victory went to the party most independent of the military. Competitive elections and parliamentary processes thus have been understood by a majority of Turks to be the legitimate mechanisms that govern cabinet formation and political representation. In this respect, Turkish politics has been, by orders of magnitude, more competitive than that of any other Muslim state in the region.

With the exception of Lebanon, the remaining Muslim Middle East states settled into various forms of authoritarian rule in the postcolonial era, and authoritarianism has proven to be tremendously resilient in the region. No Middle East state made a transition to democracy between 1974 and 1990, for instance. During these years, dubbed by Huntington (1991) as the "Third Wave," a significant democratizing trend touched southern Europe, Latin America, eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Yet the Middle East remained seemingly immune to such developments. Some political liberalization—and even some democratizing reforms—were instituted in the region during the Third Wave,[3] but in no country did a democratic experiment with free and fair elections occur that contained the possibility of real change in the locus of political power. Instead, authoritarian rule continued to be *the* rule in the region through the end of the millennium. While several liberalizing and/or democratizing developments have transpired recently in the wake of two dramatic "shocks" to the region (the U.S. military intervention in Iraq and the death of Yasser Arafat),[4] numerous serious obstacles remain in the way of substantial regionwide democratization.[5]

Why, in a region so homogeneously authoritarian, was Turkey able to evolve competitive political institutions? How did patterns of political development there contrast with those of the rest of the postcolonial, Muslim Middle East to yield Turkey's exceptional regime outcome? These are the questions this book sets out to answer. Understanding the macrohistori-

cal dynamics underlying regime formation and regime type has long been a central research concern in comparative politics. On intellectual grounds, then, the puzzle of Turkish exceptionalism calls out for investigation. More important perhaps, in an era when U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East now explicitly aims at democratizing that region, comparative scholarly work offering insights into the ingredients that were necessary to achieve plural politics in the region's one success story in this regard is of practical, policy-informing value as well.

## *Contending Theories of Middle East Authoritarianism*

What explains the emergence of competitive electoral politics in Turkey and authoritarian regimes nearly everywhere else in the post-Ottoman, Muslim Middle East? The argument presented here locates the origins of regional regime configurations in the relationships that held among political parties when countries in the region first gained independence in the early to mid-twentieth century. Several characteristics of the nascent party systems that were in existence at the crucial independence juncture significantly affected the shape of the political regimes that would emerge in the region. With its focus on party system characteristics as pivotal explanatory variables, this study takes a different theoretical approach from the extant literature on regime type in the Middle East, which tends to attribute outcomes to local political cultures, levels of socioeconomic development, or class structures.

### POLITICAL CULTURE

One school of thought on the emergence of authoritarian rule in the Middle East assigns predominant causal weight to culture. "Political culture" can refer to the beliefs, attitudes, and feelings held by individuals concerning the proper organization of their political community (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1988 and 1997), patterns of political behavior (Waterbury 1970), and/or practices of "meaning making" among political actors (Wedeen 2002). However culture is operationalized as an independent variable, resulting hypotheses tend to share a common intuition: culturally patterned beliefs and behaviors have an important, tangible impact on the stuff and functioning of political regimes. A given political culture either is or is not propitious for the founding and/or consolidation of a given kind of regime. More specifically, democracy's development, solidification, and sta-

bility will require a certain set of supportive cultural underpinnings. According to this perspective, authoritarian regimes in the Middle East find their anchor in the attitudes, orientations, and behaviors of their citizens.[6]

Perhaps the most prominent cultural take on regional authoritarianism casts Islam as the culprit. Many argue that the emergence of democracy in the Middle East was (and is) unlikely because democratic ideals and institutions find little to no echo in Islamic sacred texts or political theory.[7] Others, however, have identified nonreligious elements of Middle Eastern cultures as obstacles to the emergence of democracy. Sharabi asserts that a constellation of values, attitudes, and authority relations featuring repressive paternal roles and emphasizing individuals' subordination to personalized rather than legal-rational authority is responsible for thwarting democratic development in the Arab world (1988). Hammoudi suggests that a widely held "master-disciple" norm governs individuals' behavior in the region. Here, authoritarianism is buttressed by a social pyramid of men who show obedient, submissive behavior to those above them in the hierarchy while simultaneously showing authoritarian, domineering behavior toward those below them (1997).

While such arguments may seem reasonable and intuitive, three important liabilities mean that political culture is not an ideal theoretical starting-point for answering the comparative regime-formation question posed in this study. First, the argument alleging Islam's authoritarian affinity is overly simplistic, reductionist, and untenable, as any religion will generate a range of competing interpretations and derivative societal prescriptions. For example, while some Islamic jurists commanded believers to obey their temporal authorities come what may, over the centuries other important strains of Islamic political philosophy disapproved of arbitrary leaders, conceived of rule as being necessarily contractual and consensual, and commanded disobedience of bad rulers (Lewis 1996, 55). Second, cultural accounts of regime type encounter the "chicken-and-egg" problem that it is difficult to determine whether culture molds structures (e.g., regime type), whether structures mold culture, or whether and how reciprocal causation occurs. Both Sharabi and Hammoudi, for instance, discuss specific socioeconomic and political structures that might well account for the cultural-behavioral patterns they identify as facilitating authoritarian rule; the reader is thus left unconvinced as to culture's role.

Third, cultural accounts of regime formation have difficulty when they acknowledge and encounter subnational cultural pluralism. Often they are unable to explain or predict which or whose culture(s) will matter for

regime outcomes. For example, Entelis (1989) identifies Islam, Arabism, and Moroccanism as elements of a common Moroccan cultural "core" but disaggregates the political arena into four subcultures: monarchism, modernism, militarism, and messianism. However, once he does so, he must outline five possible regime trajectories that the Moroccan monarchy might take, for he cannot predict which subculture will triumph.

The larger analytical problem is that cultural approaches tend to present correlations between cultural traits and political outcomes without addressing issues of agency. Inglehart (1997), for example, argues that economic development facilitates democratic development and consolidation not only through its impact on social structures but also through its impact on cultural norms and values. Postmaterialist values emphasizing individual freedom, self-expression, and participation spread among populations, which then demand and defend democratic institutions. At the level at which Inglehart is theorizing, however, little can be said about who will go about constructing democracy, how, and under what conditions. This study views regime type as the product of struggles among concrete, purposive political actors over what the "rules of the game" will be. Linking cultural attributes to regime outcomes without specifying the relevant actors and arenas of struggle is ultimately unsatisfactory. Therefore, while it assuredly must matter in that it will partially inform key agents' preferences, norms, and worldviews, political culture is not the most useful analytical point of departure for this investigation into regime formation dynamics.

## LEVELS OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: MODERNIZATION THEORY

A second important macrohistorical tradition in the study of regime formation and regime type is the modernization paradigm. Modernization theory concerned itself with the processes and implications of industrialization and economic growth in the non-Western world, both for individuals[8] and for polities. In terms of the latter, work in this tradition conceives of democratizing political change as arising from industrialization and economic growth and the various societal changes that these effected. Lipset asserted that urbanization and rising wealth and education levels, as well as decreasing income gaps across social classes, created populations that were oriented to moderate parties, a requisite for making democracy work (1959). Others hypothesized along more functionalist lines. Lerner conceived of democracy as "an institutional outgrowth of needs internal to an

increasingly participant society" (1958, 68). Similarly, Huntington argued that political systems would become more sophisticated, secular, rational, and democratic to successfully manage societies that were increasingly complex and variegated (in terms of class structure, culture, and so on) (1991, 65).

Some have argued that modernization theory explains the prevalence of authoritarian rule in the Middle East. Issawi concluded that the region lacked the economic and social foundations necessary for democracy to "strike root and flourish," including communications infrastructures, higher levels of more equitably distributed income, larger middle classes, industrial and commercial growth, urbanization, improved educational attainment, and growth in the number of cooperative associations (1956). Lerner asserted that much of the Middle East lacked the levels of urbanization, literacy, and mass media communications that would produce well-informed, participatory citizenries and thus democratic governance; by contrast, Turkey was the Middle East's "most impressive example of modernization" (1958, 105).

Yet the empirical record raises questions about the utility of modernization theory for investigating the type of comparative regime-formation question that is posed here. Democratic development in the United States preceded industrialization, for instance. Argentina and Brazil saw economic growth go hand in hand with the breakdown of democracy (O'Donnell 1973). Post-1989 sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a number of democratic experiments in the absence of substantial industrialization, urbanization, or mass literacy. If most of the Middle East was insufficiently modern for democracy in the 1950s, in 1991 Huntington wrote that "Middle Eastern economies and societies were approaching the point where they would be too wealthy and too complex for their various . . . systems of authoritarian rule" (315). Yet, more than a decade later, authoritarian rulers still hang on to power across the region. Economic development thus seems to be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for political pluralization. In Przeworski and Limongi's words, "democracy is or is not established by political actors pursuing their goals, and it can be initiated at any level of development" (1997, 177).

As the preceding quote suggests, the main theoretical drawback to modernization theory for the purposes of this study is that, like political culture arguments, it analyzes observed correlations (economic growth and democracy) without addressing either the struggles through which specific regime configurations emerge or the agents who are party to such strug-

gles. Lipset assumes democratic rules and then theorizes about modernization's production of citizens who act in ways that do not threaten such rules. But he cannot tell us how democratic institutions get built in the first place. Similarly, while Lerner analyzes in great depth the human agents of *modernization*—the "Transitionals" in a given society—he is silent about agency where the construction of *democracy* is concerned. Modernization theory's inability to specify when and under what conditions actors are likely (or unlikely) to put democratic institutions into place suggests that it is not the most useful approach for the research question at hand.

There remains much to be said for the insights that derive from modernization theory. Global economic development, communications improvements, and scientific and technological progress struck at centralized state power and undermined authoritarian regimes, helping to drive the Third Wave of democratic transitions (Pye 1990). An impressive number of quantitative analyses probing Lipset's "optimistic equation" between economic development and democracy have confirmed the correlation and demonstrated that the former appears to be causal of the latter.[9] And while Przeworski and Limongi question that claim, they affirm that, once established, democracy is stabilized and sustained by economic development (1997). Indeed, countries' levels of development will always be relevant to understanding the types of regime they harbor, because while

> history is not moved by some hidden economic hand, but by people and the variety of interests, values, and unique historical factors that motivate them . . . changing social and economic conditions—including economic development and its consequences—powerfully frame those interests and values and conjunctures. (Diamond 1992, 116)

Still, to explore in an intellectually satisfying way the origins of modern Middle East regime types, this study places a primary focus on the "interests, values, and unique historical factors that motivate[d]" the concrete actors whose choices shaped political institutions.

## CLASS

Like modernization theory, class approaches to regime formation see the development of the capitalist mode of production as the most important causal factor driving changes in political institutions. Unlike modernization theorists, however, analysts in this tradition *do* specify who the rele-

vant agents are in regime-building processes. A main claim is that capitalist middle classes are the standard-bearers in struggles for democracy because representative institutions provide them with the public goods they require if they are to flourish (Moore 1966, Hobsbawm 1968). Following a similar logic, the literature assumes that where a labor-repressive, large-landholding aristocracy is the dominant social class, the emergence of democracy is unlikely (Moore 1966; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992).

Those who use class to account for regime type in the Middle East argue that states in the region evolved authoritarian rather than democratic systems in the postcolonial period because they lacked sufficiently large and autonomous middle classes (Bellin 2000) and because they instead tended to possess significant, large landlord classes (Gerber 1987). At the same time, a prominent argument about the emergence of competitive party politics in Turkey attributes this outcome to the preferences and activism of the Turkish middle class. It posits that by 1946, the commercial and industrial middle class was unhappy with the Republican People's Party regime's economic policies and arbitrary tendencies. This middle class is argued to have reacted by forming the opposition Democrat Party and driving a democratizing transition to secure its interests (Keyder 1987; Ahmad 1993).[10]

As intuitively plausible as the arguments appear, class analysis is handicapped as a general, solo approach to regime formation and regime type by a number of shortcomings. First, the notion of one or another class in society acting in concert for a given political objective is problematic because, empirically, classes often are divided (Bellin 2000; Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Vitalis 1995). Second, a broad consensus exists that class interests cannot be deduced from objective relationships to modes of production; instead, interests are contingent (Bellin 2002; Kohli and Shue 1994; Przeworski and Limongi 1993). Third, class analysis tends to be too quick to assume collective action when it is actually the case that members of a given class *may or may not* act collectively in pursuit of commonly held goals (Katznelson 1986). Finally, a society's division along class lines does not inevitably mean that politics will be organized in terms of class; other types of identity—including religion, race, ethnicity, language, and region—may motivate individuals in the political sphere (Przeworski and Sprague 1986).

If classes often are divided, if their interests are contingent, if their ability to act collectively is determined by other variables, and if politics is not necessarily dominated by class concerns, then taking a strictly class approach to the research question posed here is not advisable. Such an approach offers

little hope of generating predictions or general statements about the conditions under which, and as a result of whose agency, democratic institutions will emerge. That said, class considerations often matter greatly to political outcomes. Indeed, this study will show that actors' class positions and material interests were very relevant to Middle Eastern regime outcomes. However, complementing class considerations with an analytical focus on parties is crucial for generating systematic accounts of regime type in the region.

## *The Analytical Approach of the Book: Why Parties?*

This study proceeds on the premise that the contours of political regimes are drawn during struggles for power among purposeful agents—and that political parties are agents that deserve our analytical attention.[11] Interestingly, scholars working in the class tradition often end up writing extensively about parties. In a seminal work, Luebbert (1991) argues that class characteristics and patterns of class alliances determined regime outcomes in interwar western Europe. His work is widely characterized as class analysis (Thelen 1998, 5; Ertman 1998, 494)[12] but revolves around parties and party behavior because parties are, in his words, the "representatives" of social classes. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens also pay significant attention to parties because they "emerged in a crucial role as mediators" between class interests and political outcomes (1992, 9). Though their dependent variable is not regime type, Przeworski and Sprague argue about party rather than class attributes because they find that parties' strategies affect the salience of class for political outcomes (1986, 9).

More generally, the fact that political parties are collective actors gives us sound theoretical reason to expect them to play important roles in regime formation processes. Parties can link together large numbers of individuals and, as a result, can affect political outcomes in significant ways. In his classic work on political parties, Michels stressed that, "be the claims economic or be they political, organization appears the only means for the creation of a collective will. Organization . . . is the weapon of the weak in their struggle against the strong" (1962, 61–62). The ability to mobilize and command the loyalty of large constituencies gives party leaders more potential political influence than that wielded either by individual actors or by smaller, clique-like groups. When the dependent variable to be explained is a macro-level phenomenon such as regime type, parties therefore are likely to be pivotal actors.

The nature of the goals toward which party leaders direct their regime-shaping influence is, of course, an open question. Twentieth-century history furnishes a number of examples wherein political leaders used powerful parties to build authoritarian regimes: Mao Tse-Tung and the Communist party in China and Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany are but two examples. Political parties have proved to be effective instruments for the creation and maintenance of authoritarian regimes, both in the Middle East and around the globe.

At the same time, party-centered competition and opposition can play key roles in moving a polity toward democracy. For instance, the establishment of authoritarian rule can be thwarted—or at least made more difficult—when at least two groups possessing approximate parity in organization and resources confront one another and contend for power. In such a situation, competitive institutions may emerge as a second-best solution that all parties agree to because none is strong enough to impose its own top preferences on the political arena (Rustow 1970; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Where an authoritarian regime already exists, the existence of a party-based opposition can trigger democratizing regime change. Due to their collective character, the emergence of party-based opposition can be a threatening development to authoritarian rulers. If opposition parties grow too large and institutionalized to buy off and too extensive to repress without the incursion of intolerable political costs, they can put pressure on those in power to accommodate them by pluralizing the rules of the game.

Not only can parties bring substantial pressure to bear on authoritarian regimes; they may also be a boon to the success of pacted democratizing transitions. Pact participants will be more likely to sign on if they are confident that their partners will deliver on promises made—for example, not to push beyond agreed-upon policy agendas, not to mobilize too widely, not to prosecute leaders accused of human rights violations, and so on. Cohesive, disciplined parties that are able to keep members and constituents in compliance with pact principles and the evolving rules of a new political game can help supply this confidence (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 40–41, 47; Bruhn 1997, 9).

The historical record also shows that, in many places, competition between two or more political parties has served as an engine of democratic deepening over the long term. This has tended to take the form of suffrage extension and mobilization, processes pushed as competing par-

ties sought to further broaden the bases of their support. Competition between the Liberal and Conservative parties in nineteenth-century England, for example, led to a series of suffrage rights extensions (Sartori 1976, 21). Similarly, Aldrich argues that "the mass party was created for, and was critical to, the extension of democratic practices in nineteenth-century America" (1995, 295–96).

Finally, the democratization and parties literatures contain consistent assumptions about the importance of political parties to the healthy functioning of democracies. To quote Schattschneider, "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" (1942, 1). Indeed, parties play several crucial political functions in democratic systems. They are intermediate institutions connecting citizens to the government. They order the political game by aggregating and articulating citizens' preferences, by reducing information costs and facilitating voter participation at elections, and so on (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, 2–3). They recruit citizens into public office and shape public policy (Mair 1990, 1), and they serve to hold elected officials collectively responsible for policy action (Aldrich 1995, 3).

## *The Argument (I): How Party Systems Shaped Regimes in the Modern Middle East*

As the states of the Middle East broke free from the yoke of the Western imperial powers (France and Britain) in the mid-twentieth century, political parties played important roles in shaping the founding regimes that would emerge in ten countries: Tunisia, South Yemen, Algeria, Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Turkey.[13] Following Collier and Collier, this study defines "regime" as the "structure of state and governmental roles and processes," including "the method of selection of the government and of representative assemblies (election, coup, decision within the military, etc.), formal and informal mechanisms of representation, and patterns of repression" (1991, 789). By "founding regimes" the study refers to the first set of stable rules governing cabinet formation, representation, and repression that emerged in the states of the region after the departure of the imperial powers. The characteristics and behavior of the political parties that were in existence at this historic juncture had an important impact on the types of founding regimes that would be established.

The cases subdivide into three categories (see table 1). In three cases—

TABLE 1. Number of Parties and Regime Outcomes

| *Country* | *Independence* | *Parties after Independence* | *Founding Regime* | *Type* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TUNISIA | 1956 | Neo-Destour | 1956–present | (immediate) authoritarian |
| SOUTH YEMEN | 1967 | National Liberation Front | 1967–1990 | |
| ALGERIA | 1962 | Front de Libération National | 1962–present | |
| IRAN | (1941) | Tudeh/Communists<br>Iran<br>Liberals<br>Democrats<br>Patriots<br>National Union | 1953–1979 | (delayed) authoritarian |
| IRAQ | 1932 | Istiqlal<br>National Democrats<br>Communists<br>Ba'th<br>Constitutional Union<br>Socialist Nation | 1968–2003 | (delayed) authoritarian |
| JORDAN | 1946 | Communists<br>Ba'th<br>National Socialists<br>Muslim Brotherhood<br>Liberation<br>Community<br>Arab Constitutionalists | 1957–present | (delayed) authoritarian |
| SYRIA | 1946 | Communists<br>Arab Socialists<br>Ba'th<br>People's<br>National | 1963–present | (delayed) authoritarian |

| *Country* | *Independence* | *Parties after Independence* | *Founding Regime* | *Type* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EGYPT | 1936 | Muslim Brotherhood<br>Young Egypt<br>Communists<br>Wafd<br>Liberal Constitutionalists<br>Sa'dists<br>Independent Wafdist Bloc<br>Watani<br>Ittihad<br>Sha'b | 1952–present | (delayed) authoritarian |
| TURKEY | 1923 | Republican People's Party<br>PRP>FRP>DP | 1950–present | (delayed) competitive |

Tunisia, South Yemen, and Algeria—an authoritarian founding regime was established immediately at independence. In six cases, founding regimes were established only after significant transitional periods had unfolded. During these periods, the rules governing cabinet composition, representation, and repression were in flux as political parties and other actors jockeyed for position. Transitional periods were characterized by inconsistent methods of forming governments and managing representation—methods that were associated with different levels of repression. Transitional periods ended and founding regimes began in these countries when a consistent, replicated rule governing cabinet formation, representation, and repression emerged for the first time after independence. In Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, founding regimes were authoritarian. In Turkey, however, a competitive regime was constructed.[14]

Three party system characteristic variables help explain this variation in founding regime outcomes. The first is the number of parties. In Tunisia, South Yemen, and Algeria, a single preponderant party monopolized the domestic political stage at independence (see table 1). These parties were "preponderant" in that they were mass parties organized and exerting social control in all (or nearly all) rural and urban areas. The term "social control" refers to the fact that these parties commanded the loyalty of the majority of nonelite actors in these areas. In all three cases, the existence of single, preponderant, mass-mobilizing parties facilitated the immediate establishment of one-party authoritarian regimes at independence. When the

imperial powers departed, these parties faced no significant challengers for power. What's more, they constituted extremely effective tools with which elites could construct authoritarian rule. In Tunisia, South Yemen, and Algeria, party leaders used them to suppress their would-be rivals, to take over the state, and to craft the new political rules of the game in their favor.

The remaining countries under consideration here—Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Turkey—saw multiple parties contending with one another for power at independence. No single actor could impose its will and craft the rules of a stable founding regime right away as had been the case in Tunisia, South Yemen, and Algeria. Instead, in all six cases an interim transitional period of political contestation unfolded between independence and the time when founding regimes put down roots.[15] During these transitional periods, the rules of the game were fluid, contested, and unstable. Importantly, multiple parties competed with one another for influence in political arenas in which, at the outset, competitive elections and parliaments to a significant extent determined representation and cabinet formation. For this reason, all six states had an opportunity to evolve competitive institutions. Of the six, however, only Turkey did so. In the remaining five cases, nascent competitive politics gradually gave way to authoritarian rule over the course of transitional periods.

Why did the norm of electoral competition flourish only in Turkey? Two additional variables sort the multiparty cases in a manner that helps to answer this question: the presence or absence of polarization, and the presence or absence of "mobilizational asymmetry" in party systems. The theoretical context from which these variables derive is what Waterbury dubbed the "contingency school in explaining the initiation and institutionalization of democracy" (1997). Put forth by Rustow (1970) and formalized by Przeworski (1988, 1991), this perspective pays primary attention to relationships among agents during periods of regime flux. It conceives of democracy as occurring when "bargained equilibria lead to the establishment of institutional arrangements from which no significant actors have any incentive to defect" (Waterbury 1997, 387).

The fundamental insight here is that democratic regimes are special sets of rules put into place by concrete historical actors. They are "special" because, by specifying that elections and parliamentary politics will determine the content of governmental policy, they introduce levels of uncertainty into the political process that are unmatched in authoritarian contexts (Przeworski 1986). At the end of the day, in a polity governed by democratic rules, no actor can be sure that its rivals will not come to power.

Democratic institutions, therefore, cannot survive unless all key actors are prepared to live with the fact that no guarantees exist as to the identity of those who will wield policymaking power. Democracy is viable only if all actors make the calculation that they can accept open-ended governance outcomes.

In democracies, elections are the route to power, and parties are the vehicles used by elites to gain the votes they need to defend their interests in parliament. As parties are pivotal to the processes that determine who will wield policymaking power, party-system characteristics will influence elites' calculations about their ability to defend their interests in a democratic context. If viable democracy is a bargain struck by elite actors—a bargain that no actor wishes to terminate—then party-system characteristics should bear greatly on actors' decisions as to whether or not they can tolerate democracy.

For any given party elite, this calculation entails two considerations. The first is an assessment of what rival parties bring to the competitive electoral table, platform-wise. If an opposing party were to win power, what kind of policies would it be likely to implement? How threatening would those be to one's interests? If the answers to these questions suggest that a given party elite's interests would come under substantial threat, those actors will be less likely to remain allegiant to democratic institutions.[16] For this reason, high levels of polarization in party systems lower the probability that democratic rules will survive. Taking its cues from Waldner (1999), this study defines "polarized" party systems as those in which one or more parties advocate policies that threaten one or more segments of the political elite's ability to reproduce their elite status over the long term.

The second consideration is an assessment of what rival parties bring to the competitive electoral table mobilizationally relative to one's own party. How well equipped to capture votes are one's opponents, as compared with one's own party's ability to get the vote out? Can one's own party muster sufficient votes to defend one's interests democratically? These questions are important because they bear on the probability that one's opponents will have the opportunity to carry out alternative policy agendas. If the answers to these questions suggest that one's own party is significantly handicapped in the vote-getting arena relative to its opponents, one will be less likely to remain faithful to democratic rules—especially if polarization exists. In party systems characterized by "mobilizational asymmetry"—that is, the existence of significant gaps in contending parties' respective abilities to get out the vote—the probability that democratic rules will survive is low.[17]