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**ELECTORAL SUCCESS of the JUSTICE and DEVELOPMENT PARTY: the
ROLE of POLITICAL APPEAL and ORGANIZATION**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2016

University of Sussex

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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ELECTORAL SUCCESS of the JUSTICE and DEVELOPMENT PARTY: the ROLE
of POLITICAL APPEAL and ORGANIZATIONSummary

The Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey was founded by a reformist spin-off from the Islamist National View (*Milli Görüş*) tradition in 2001 and came to power in 2002. Between 2002 and 2014, the JDP and its leader Erdoğan remained in power by receiving 35–50% of all votes in several elections despite many social, economic and political crises. The literature on the “normalization” of Islamist politics and the JDP’s unprecedented electoral resilience in Turkey overwhelmingly focused on the economic and social-structural reasons. This dissertation aims to complement existing explanations by focusing on the role of party agency: the political appeal and organization of the JDP. The research relied on in-depth interviews with around 50 participants, the overwhelming majority of which came from various hierarchical levels and branches of the JDP across Turkey. It is argued that the party’s “low-populist” political appeal/style consolidated the JDP’s connection with the low-income, peripheral and provincial majority of the country. The JDP leadership also encapsulated divergent segments within the party organization and within its electoral base (the pluralization caused by Islamist party normalization) through a tightly controlled, year-round active, large and pervasive membership organization. The personalistic leadership of the party supported this massive membership organization with political marketing techniques. As a result, the JDP became a “personalistic membership party”, which blended mass and elite-based party models. Thus, the dissertation highlights the combination of a “low-populist” appeal with a “personalistic membership party” as a convenient mode of agency for electorally successful Islamist party normalization. Another implication of the research is that despite the rise of elite-based party models and capital intensive campaign techniques, particularly in the developing world which is characterized by uneven socio-economic development, various traits of the mass party model are still indispensable for electoral success and political resilience.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research question and an initial glance at the JDP

Turkish politics were reshaped by a remarkable transformation at the beginning of the 2000s. The decreasing vote for the parties of the Islamist National View tradition (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*)¹ and of the total votes of the traditional centre-right² corresponded to the electoral breakthrough and success of a new party. The Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), which was founded only a year before the general election in 2002 by politicians coming from different right-wing political backgrounds under the control of a formerly Islamist elite, won a landslide victory. The JDP continued to receive 35–50% of all votes until the presidential elections in 2014, when the JDP leader Erdoğan received more than 50% of votes and became the first president of the Turkish Republic who was elected by popular vote. Figure 1.1 illustrates this extraordinary transformation of Turkish politics.

Throughout this period, apart from intraparty organizational difficulties entailed by the initial formation of the JDP by politicians with different backgrounds, the party also encountered many problems stemming from the corrosive effects of incumbency³ as well as social, political and economic crises. For example, in 2008 a legal case was initiated by the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) in order to ban the JDP, and the global financial crisis hit the country in the same year. In 2011 an earthquake left 600 people dead in provincial Turkey. Two years later, nine young people were killed under the circumstances of disproportionate police violence during a weeks-long wave of mass protests against the government. Episodic eruptions of armed struggle with the Kurdish insurgents caused the death of many more people. The corruption probes against four ministers in 2013 imposed enormous damage to the image of the JDP government. A mine blast killed more than 300 workers in 2014, and many other “work accidents” killed

¹ These Islamist parties are the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*) and the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*) of the 1970s, and the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*) and the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*) of the post-1980 period. For brief information on these parties as well as other significant political parties and movements in Turkey, see Appendix 1.

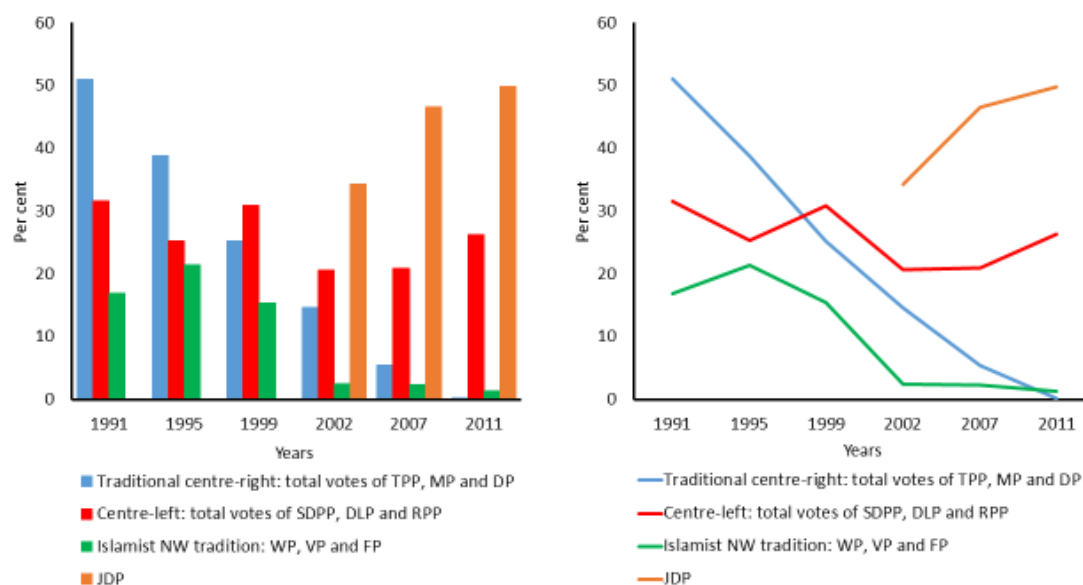
² These are the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*) and the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*).

³ See Rose and Mackie (1983) for consideration of incumbency in government as a liability for parties negatively influencing their electoral fortunes.

hundreds of workers throughout the JDP years. On top of all these, a huge humanitarian crisis emerged after the outbreak of Syrian Civil War, which brought almost three million refugees to the country.

The extremely surprising fact was that these enormous problems neither influenced popular support for the party negatively nor caused any massive discontent within the JDP organization. Thus, the rise of the JDP in Turkey was a dramatic story of political success in its own right. The rise and subsequent electoral and political predominance of the JDP was also a qualitative transformation, a solid example illustrating one of the potential trajectories of the transformation of Islamist politics. What kind of political circumstances paved the way for the rise of the JDP? More importantly: what kind of strategic choices and actions of the JDP politicians substantially contributed to the party's unprecedented electoral achievements and political resilience in Turkey? This research is a systematic explanation of the rise, electoral achievements and the political resilience of the JDP in Turkey between 2002 and 2014 that particularly focuses on the political agency of the party, in other words, its political appeal and organization.

Figure 1.1: The electoral breakthrough and the rise of the JDP



Source: General election data received from the Turkish Statistical Institute (2012: 93–94). (Author's compilation)

The rise and enduring electoral success of the JDP in Turkey has drawn remarkable attention from students of political Islam, Middle East politics and party politics in general.⁴ The JDP's exceptionally successful "normalization",⁵ as a party with an Islamist background, was one of the underlying reasons for this enormous interest. The JDP was strikingly successful, too, in protecting and increasing its vote steadily during previous elections, despite its position in power, or the negative incumbency effect – a situation that has also increased interest in the party. The wide-ranging literature focusing on the rise and electoral achievements of the JDP, as I will illustrate in the literature review section below, predominantly embraces the following perspectives: economy-based explanations; ideology/discourse-based perspectives; leadership-based approaches; and constituency-based perspectives (the rise of the so-called Islamic bourgeoisie).

In this dissertation, I propose an overwhelmingly agency-based explanation for the normalization and electoral achievements of the JDP that focuses on the organizational and strategic reasons behind the JDP's political success and aims to complement the current literature on the party, which frequently focuses on the external-structural reasons for the rise and the electoral success of the party. In this dissertation, it is argued that the rise, electoral success and political resilience of the JDP relied on the "low-populist"⁶ appeal of the party and its tightly controlled, year-round active, massive membership organization which penetrated into the remotest corners of the country. This massive and pervasive organization was built by and around a personalistic leadership and was supported by political marketing techniques. Therefore, in this dissertation, the JDP is called a "personalistic membership party". In short, this dissertation has defined the political appeal and organization of the JDP – the "low-populist appeal" and the "personalistic membership party" – as the essential agency-based factors behind the unprecedented political predominance of this new party in Turkey for over a dozen years.

⁴ See Atacan (2005), Atasoy (2009), Insel (2003), Jang (2005), Mecham and Hwang (2014), Mecham (2004), Somer (2007), Şen (2010), Tanıyıcı (2003), Taşkın (2008), Tezcür (2010), Tuğal (2009) and Yavuz (2009).

⁵ For the term "normalization", see the volume by Mecham and Hwang (2014), and particularly their introduction in which authors propose the term "normalization" instead of "moderation" since the latter term also assumes an ideological liberalization of Islamist movements. According to Mecham and Hwang, "normalization is a process by which Islamist parties increasingly accommodate themselves to the rules of the political regimes in which they operate; in other words, they become less unique and more normal political actors when compared with other parties in the competitive system" (2014: 6–7). Hence, "normalization" has less normative implications than terms such as "liberalization" and "moderation".

⁶ In this dissertation I am using the approach proposed by P. Ostiguy (particularly 2009c and forthcoming) which evaluates populism as a response to "high" political appeals/styles. I elaborate on the concept in Chapter 3.

Before moving on to the literature review, and then explaining the rationale behind the methodological and theoretical approach embraced in this research, I briefly introduce the main characteristics of the JDP.

1.1.1 An initial glance at the ideology, organization and policies of the JDP

One of the most illustrative documents defining the JDP's position *vis-a-vis* the party's Islamist legacy (the Islamist National View tradition), its electoral and elite competitors in the Turkish political system, and the party's position within the Turkish political history in general, is a booklet written by one of its ideologues and prominent figures, Yalçın Akdoğan (2004) titled *The Justice and Development Party and Conservative Democracy (Ak Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi)*. Although the party was a coalition of politicians with different right-wing backgrounds at the beginning, as repeatedly underlined in various studies on the JDP,⁷ the majority of the party's founders came from the Islamist National View tradition. The suspicion of the powerful secularist circles surrounding the National View tradition pushed JDP leaders to define their ideology in a very careful manner, and Akdoğan's work was an outcome of this concern.

It is interesting to see that, in line with Bayat's definitions of Islamism and post-Islamism (1996; 2007), the party's most prominent ideologue defines political Islam as a strategy which pursues a top-down method to Islamicize society through the seizure of the state and political power (Akdoğan 2004: 92). Akdoğan defines the political stance of the JDP quite differently from this understanding, calling it "conservative democracy" (2004: 12–21). Akdoğan refers to the incompatibility between the Islamic symbolism and the political position and goals of the JDP (2004: 119). Instead, he defines the JDP as the party of those with religious sensibilities (2004: 111).

In his book, Akdoğan repeatedly refers to an evolutionary and gradual approach to social and political change as the marker of a conservative democratic stance (2004: 15–16, 46, 121). These emphases on gradual change and refusal of a revolutionary top-down change strongly evoke the "idea that Islam does not have answers to all societies' social, political, and economic problems" (Bayat, 1996: 45–46). He also discusses the importance and location of democracy, human rights and secularism to the identity of the party. Akdoğan underlines the compatibility of these concepts with the demands of Islam (2004: 62–87). Hence, in line with Bayat's recent definition of post-Islamism, the JDP and its

⁷ I discuss the composition of the JDP cadres in some detail in Chapter 5.

conservative democratic identity was a decisive enterprise in conciliating “religiosity with rights and liberties” and incorporating “Islam, freedom and pluralism” (Bayat, 2013: 8). This is why I define the JDP as a pioneering, electorally succesful “post-Islamist”⁸ party in the Muslim world.

Although Akdoğan points to a very strong intraparty democracy as the JDP’s primary organizational hallmark, he also describes the “charismatic leadership of Erdoğan” as a “dominant factor” in this “new representative of the centre-right in Turkey” (2004: 151). In contrast to its predecessor, the Islamist Welfare Party, the JDP was much more keen to develop relationships with the West and with the European Union in particular, and much more careful about protecting the democratic and secular qualities of the regime (Akdoğan, 2004: 106). In the economic sphere, Akdoğan emphasizes that the JDP was in favour of a free market economy, and a competitive economic understanding, which were compatible with the global system (2004: 13).

Indeed, in the economic field the JDP followed the structural adjustment programme of the International Monetary Fund (Ekzen, 2009: 475), which imposed widespread privatization and a drastic reduction of the size of the state. Nevertheless, the JDP also sought to improve income distribution through the use of public sources (Bakirezer & Demirer, 2009: 166). Social expenditure by the state on education, health and social security (Bakirezer & Demirer, 2009: 167), together with the amount of direct social aid spending by various ministries, increased between 2002 and 2006 (Bakirezer & Demirer, 2009). The JDP also deployed the networks of religious charities in order to reduce poverty (Buğra & Keyder, 2006: 224). Buğra and Keyder (2006) also argue that the JDP had an inclination to transform the very hierarchical and uneven corporatist welfare regime which ignored the majority who work in the informal sector. Indeed, the reforms implemented during the first years of the JDP revealed its willingness to abolish separate, hierarchical and corporatist social policy regulations for public employees and people working in the private or informal sector (Keyder, 2007: 34). Hence, Keyder and Buğra

⁸ I borrow my definitions of Islamism and post-Islamism from A. Bayat (1996). Very roughly, while the former term refers to a strictly Islamist politics which follows a top-down strategy to Islamicize the society, particularly through the seizure of the state, a post-Islamist movement refrains from such top-down strategies, adopts a perspective prone to conciliating religiosity with rights and liberties and embraces a pluralist stance where Islam is not considered the single truth and remedy for all social, political and cultural problems (Bayat, 1996: 44–46).

argue that there was, at least, a reformist wing in the party which advocated a universal and inclusive welfare regime (2006: 225–227).

Thus, the JDP can be initially described as a conservative, post-Islamist, centre-right party with religious sensibilities. Nevertheless, the party leadership was very careful with regards to its emphases on religion and consistently excluded any Islamic symbolism from its official image. Not surprisingly, the party leadership tried to give a pro-West and pro-European Union impression, and the party leadership repeatedly drew attention to the importance of a secular, democratic and pluralist regime, at least during its initial years. In line with the definitions of Bayat, these features made the JDP a post-Islamist political force in Turkey. In organizational terms, despite its emphasis on intraparty democracy, the preeminence of the party leader was underlined by its most important ideologue. In terms of its economic stance, unlike its Islamist predecessors, the JDP could be defined as a party in favour of consolidating a free market economy. Nevertheless, the party also deployed various redistributive mechanisms, ranging from public expenditure to managing social aid through religious charity networks, in order to reduce the impact of neo-liberal reforms on the poor in particular.

1.2 The literature on the JDP

In this part of the introduction, I will show that the majority of the literature on the JDP focuses on factors other than the role of the party's strategic and organizational agency in its electoral and political resilience. This literature can be separated into four main domains: research focusing on the economic reasons; studies focusing on social structural- and constituency-based dynamics; studies focusing on discourse/ideology and hegemony; and the research focusing partially on party agency through the analysis of the organization and leadership of the JDP. As I will illustrate in the following sections, even the most agency-based explanations do not fully focus on the role of the JDP's organizational dynamics in the success of the party and see the JDP (and therefore its political agency) simply as a reflection of wider external social, economic and political circumstances. This research, then, aims to contribute to the broad literature on the rise and electoral success of the JDP by highlighting the role of organization and strategy, in short, the party agency.

1.2.1 Research focusing on economy

One of the oft-cited factors behind the electoral success of the JDP in the literature has been the growth of the Turkish economy, notably the decrease in consumer price inflation throughout the JDP's rule and the dramatic rise of *per capita* income. Studies by Kalaycıoğlu (2010: 39), Dağı (2008: 29), Çarkoğlu (2007: 515–516), and Öniş (2012: 137) underline the role of the economy in the electoral success of the party. One of the most prominent economists in Turkey, Korkut Boratav, also explains the political success of the JDP as an outcome of global economic cycles. According to his analysis, while the failure of previous coalition governments preceding the JDP corresponded to the downturn of the global economic cycles, the electoral breakthrough and the rise of the JDP is explained as resulting from the global economic recovery and rising foreign investments in Turkey (Boratav, 2009). There are also other economy-based explanations of the success of the JDP as resulting from its redistributive policies. In this sense, the studies of Bakırezer and Demirel (2009), Öniş (2012: 137), Yıldırım (2009: 102) and Yücesan and Özdemir (2012: 143–144) highlight the role of redistributive strategies in the party's success. In short, there is a remarkable literature highlighting the economic reasons for the JDP's success that focuses on the role of macroeconomic trends and redistributive mechanisms.

1.2.2 Research focusing on social structural dynamics and constituency

Secondly, many studies of the rise and electoral success of the party highlight the role of the “Islamic bourgeoisie” in Turkey. In Turkey, for a long time the business community developed under the protection of the state. Until the 1980s, the state supported the businessmen close to the secularist worldview of the establishment elite of the country (the military and bureaucratic elite).⁹ Nevertheless, since the 1980s, and through the introduction of a more liberalized economic regime by the Motherland Party governments that replaced the import substitution regime of the previous era, small- and medium-sized businesses that were conservative and religious in orientation gained momentum and started to grow. These business networks, or the “Islamic bourgeoisie”, tended to support, first, the Islamist parties of the National View tradition such as the Welfare Party, and then the JDP.

⁹ See Keyder (2003) for these economic developments.

The historical and ideological transformations leading to the formation of a pious bourgeoisie are well-documented in the literature. In the ESI (2005) report, prominent examples can be seen of the development of the pious small- and middle-range enterprises and the role of religious factors in their achievements. The studies of Şen (2010) and Atasoy (2009) reveal the ideological and economic transformations which gave rise to the formation of the pious bourgeoisie. In a comparative study, Buğra (1998) analyzes the development of the business association of the pious bourgeoisie. Gümüşçü and Sert (2009) and Hoşgör (2011) illustrate the organic relationship between the JDP and the pious bourgeoisie. Jang (2005) uses statistical methods in her study to analyze the geographical correlation between the votes received by the Islamist parties and the JDP, the size of the enterprises of the pious bourgeoisie, and the number of members of their business association.

According to Tuğal, the “pious business community has established hegemony, that is, it has made its vision the vision of pious popular sectors and activists, through the AKP [JDP]” (2009: 8). Insel (2003: 299–300), Gümüşçü and Sert (2009: 957–958), Yavuz (2006: 1) and Hoşgör (2011: 355) also point out the role of the Islamic bourgeoisie and highlight the relationship between this social group and the party. In her PhD dissertation on the relationship between the rising Islamic bourgeoisie and the “moderation” of Islamism and the electoral success of the JDP, Jang hypothesizes that the rise of Islamic capital had a taming effect on Islamism in Turkey (2005: 4). Hence, although she emphasizes that “Islamic capitalists do not share any commitment to political liberalism or democracy” (2005: 190), she convincingly illustrates that Islamic capital made a decisive contribution to the rise and electoral success of the JDP.

There is also various research illustrating the socio-economic accord between the JDP cadres and JDP voters. One of these studies is the research of Aydın and Dalmış (2008). According to Aydın and Dalmış’s interpretation of polling data and public surveys, JDP supporters had a lower educational level as well as a lower profile in terms of professional training than had voters of other parties (2008: 218). Aydın and Dalmış also argue that “when the socio-political identities favoured by the deputies were examined, it was seen that they shared similar identities as their supporters” (2008: 217). This social resonance between party members, in particular party deputies in the parliament, the electorate of the party and the support of the Islamic bourgeoisie, to a certain extent facilitated the rise and electoral success of the party.

1.2.3 Studies focusing on discourse/ideology and hegemony

Some studies in the literature have a stronger emphasis on the JDP's agency. For instance, Hale and Özbudun (2010: 24) and Yıldız (2008: 46) underline the central role of an evolutionary understanding of political and social change as an important marker of the conservative ideology of the JDP leadership. In line with these approaches, Cizre argues that the JDP had a more pragmatic and less essentialist and dogmatic strategy, which was compatible with the expectations of the rising Islamic bourgeoisie (2008: 5). It could be seen that the ideological picture of the party drawn by scholars and party ideologues highlighted a quite sophisticated worldview and underlined labels such as "conservative democracy" or "evolutionary approaches to social change". These studies did not directly address contributions of these ideological and strategical stances to the party's electoral achievements although they implied the role of moderation in the rise of the JDP.

1.2.3.1 The populism of the JDP: a controversial issue

The more challenging and promising aspect of the literature on the JDP is the emphasis on the concept of populism. Economic and political-ideological explanations of the party's rise and electoral achievements frequently deploy this concept. While some of these analyses underline the "non-populist" character of the JDP, some studies emphasize the "populism" of the party as a factor in its rise and electoral achievements. This contradiction in the literature on the populist qualities of the JDP specifically highlights the conceptual ambiguities within the literature, particularly that on the concept of populism. For instance, in his study, Yıldız argues that the JDP could be characterised by "less populism and more economic rationality" (2008: 43). Similarly, Duran argues that the JDP's leaders tried to construct a political stance that was free from "populism" (2008: 82). According to Öniş, the JDP implemented in the redistributive field a "controlled populism" quite unlike the "old-style populism" of the former centre-right parties in Turkey (2012: 137). Similarly, Yıldırım describes the redistributive social policy approach of the JDP as "neo-liberal populism" (2009). In contrast, according to White, "Erdoğan's populism" articulated the diverging desires of rising pious middle classes and the politically alienated young conservatives (2008: 373). Along the same lines as White, Dağı defined the JDP as a "populist political party" (2008: 30). Taşkın, too, argues that the outsider character of the founders of the JDP made their "populist claim" much more persuasive (2008: 59).

Thus, it is fair to argue that there is a marked disagreement in the literature on the populist qualities of the JDP. This “disagreement” signified a gap in the literature which is closely related to the overestimation of the role of Erdoğan and redistributive strategies and, therefore, to an underestimation of the role of party organization and strategy in general. In other words, while some of these studies see populism as a redistributive strategy, some of them only evaluate it as the popular appeal of the party leader. Populism, by many scholars, is understood either as an economy-based electoral strategy or as a popular-telegenic leadership. These inaccurate understandings led most of these studies to overlook the broader role of party organization and strategy.

1.2.3.2 The JDP’s hegemony

There is also a remarkable literature on the success of the JDP, in which the JDP’s electoral and political success was evaluated as a part of a wider hegemony based on a cross-class coalition including “popular sectors” (low-income, peripheral and provincial segments of society). Roughly, these works in the literature see the JDP as an outcome of the articulation of low-income, subordinate segments of society through a cultural bond by Islamic-leaning dominant classes. This stream of studies implies that this articulation depended mainly on the overplaying of cultural cleavages, controlled redistributive policies and, hence, the absorption of the dissent of popular sectors by the dominant classes which had vested interests in the running of neo-liberal processes. For instance, Yıldırım argues that, on the ground of the “neo-liberal populism” in Turkey, the JDP and Erdoğan underplayed class conflicts and consolidated the rhetoric that depicted politics in Turkey as a struggle between the “bureaucratic elite” and the “people” (2009: 85). Yıldırım also strongly emphasizes the social policies of the JDP, which heavily relied on civil and non-governmental charity activities to support the poor, as one of the main reasons of the party’s electoral achievements (2009: 102).

In a similar vein, another study on the electoral and political predominance of the JDP highlights the role of the “technocratic cum culturalist discourse” (Yalman 2012: 23). According to Yalman, the “replacement of class-based politics” by the “manipulation of identity politics” was the main achievement of the power bloc in Turkey (Yalman 2012: 23). Yalman contends that the JDP’s struggle with the systemic veto players opened room for the JDP elite to enhance the depiction of Turkish politics mainly as a cultural struggle and made it possible for the party to claim a democratizing position against the allegedly

anti-democratic secularist elite of the country. Hence, the JDP could become “oppositional, yet also hegemonic” (2012: 35).

Atasoy’s work also problematizes the articulation of a neo-liberal agenda with previously redistributive inclinations of Islamic orientation (2009: 14). She underlines the fact that democratization and globalisation discourses *vis-a-vis* Kemalist discourse developed by the Islamists had also pushed them to an economic outlook much closer to the neo-liberal agenda. In other words, in their struggles against Kemalists, the Islamist elite embraced economic liberalization policies in order to curb the power of the Kemalist establishment. According to Atasoy, the JDP’s “state transformation policies operate through cross-class coalition building between economically disadvantaged groups and large, globally competitive firms” (2009: 110). In her work, Atasoy also underlines the importance of the ideological and financial support of the Islamic business to the construction of this coalition by the JDP (2009: 119–122). Hence, at the heart of the abovementioned articulation and the cross-class coalition of the JDP, Atasoy identifies the rising Islamic business circles.

A very similar problematic – that of the cross-class coalition of the JDP – also occupies a central place in the work of Tuğal (2009). In his detailed ethnographic study of the transformation of Islamism in Turkey, Tuğal searches for an answer to the following question: “Why did the activists and popular sectors, who had until that point supported the religious and anti-free market platform of the Islamist party, wholeheartedly embrace the AKP [JDP] government?” (2009: 9). In line with Atasoy, Tuğal underlines the importance of the Islamic business community in the construction of this transformation (2009: 9). According to Tuğal, following a phase of bourgeoisification of Islamist lower-middle and middle classes and the molecular Islamization of society – in other words the bottom-up diffusion of conservative and Islamist values and practices across the society – within a “consumerist, secular and capitalist urban world” (2009: 55), Islamic radicalism had already started to lose ground. According to Tuğal, the emergence of the JDP enhanced these processes (2009: 162). Tuğal argues that the JDP’s success relied “on integrating Islamic activists and appropriating many strategies from the Islamist tradition, while at the same time shedding the thorns of religious mobilization – a politics of absorption” (2009: 147). Thus, Tuğal evaluates the rise of the JDP as an outcome of a “passive revolution” in which the formerly radical and revolutionary leadership of

Islamism and the institutions this leadership had created *vis-a-vis* the Kemalist-secularist establishment were absorbed by the political system (2009: 236–243).

1.2.4 Research focusing on the organization and leader

Apart from the above-mentioned analyses regarding the JDP, I would also like to elaborate a bit more on crucial studies focusing fully on the JDP's organization and the leader or devoting considerable attention to this dimension. Apart from the work of Kumbaracıbaşı (2009), most of the research regarding the JDP treat the issue of the organization as part of a wider framework and deal with this dimension in passing. Given the fact that one of the widespread truisms in Turkish political science literature is that all the Turkish political parties were very centralised and dominated by the leadership (Massicard & Watts, 2013) due to the framework defined by the Law on Political Parties (Law No. 2820), it is hardly surprising to not see an interest in party organizations as an explanatory variable of party success. There are, however, some studies on the role of leadership and party organization and these studies can be evaluated as evidence of the contribution of a certain political and organizational strategy to the electoral success of the JDP, which encourages further examination of organizational factors beyond the analysis of formal evidence such as laws, statutes and other written party material.

One of the most comprehensive analyses of the JDP organization is the oft-cited study of Hale and Özbudun (2010), although their examination of the JDP only devotes a single chapter to party organization. However, in addition to a general exploration of the legal basis of JDP activity (2010: 45–46), Hale and Özbudun also draw attention to the “organizational culture” beyond “formal structures” (2010: 46). Hale and Özbudun underline the importance attached to the “education and indoctrination” by the JDP (2010: 48). Another remarkable part of their study is their focus on a sub-provincial JDP organization in İstanbul (Hale & Özbudun, 2010: 49–51). They underline the fact that local JDP organizations were the most active, motivated and elaborately organized among Turkish parties (2010: 49).¹⁰

In a work on the Islamist social movement in Turkey, Eligür (2010) also devotes a chapter to the organizational dynamics of the Islamist National View parties (2010: 182–213) as well as a section on the JDP organization (2010: 243–275). Apart from generally

¹⁰ Hale and Özbudun provide very accurate details about these kind of sub-provincial organizations of the JDP through the example of Gaziosmanpaşa sub-province in İstanbul (2010: 49–50).

illustrating the centrality of the informal networks for National View parties as well as for the JDP, Eligür especially underlines the role of “strong organizational networks of the JDP” (2010: 258) in distributing selective incentives to the urban poor.

There are also many accounts of the rise and success of the JDP which highlight the role of its leader, Erdoğan. For instance, Hale and Özbudun argue that Erdoğan has been perceived as “a ‘man of the people’”, coming from a modest background (2010: 154–155). Similarly, Tuğal draws attention to the popular perceptions of Erdoğan as “one of us” (2009: 176). Cizre also underlines a similar point on the perception of Erdoğan as a “man of the people” (2008: 5). In parallel, Tezcür emphasizes the role of Erdoğan in the JDP’s electoral victory in 2011 (2012: 122). In their study on Erdoğan, Heper and Toktaş stress the role that he played and argue that he “belongs to Turkey’s cultural periphery” (2003: 160). In a comprehensive and oft-cited work on the JDP by Hakan Yavuz, a separate chapter is devoted to the ideology, leadership and organization of the party (2009: 79–117). In this chapter Yavuz strongly underlines the personalist organizational structure of the JDP and the party’s lack of a well-defined ideology and identity. Indeed, previous works on the JDP (as well as my personal observations) affirmed the importance of the JDP leader Erdoğan within the organization as the glue of “too many diverse groups within the party” (Yavuz, 2009: 85) and “a set of informal networks” (Yavuz, 2009: 99).

That the above-mentioned studies emphasize the importance of the JDP’s leader, on the one hand, and the role of organization, on the other hand, in the party’s electoral success, does indicate a certain political and organizational strategy. Nevertheless, as I have illustrated so far, the literature on the JDP either focuses exclusively on the image of Erdoğan or on the role of redistributive mechanisms, and therefore has overlooked party organization and strategy in general. In fact, the centrality of the leader of the JDP was complemented by the very centralised and hierarchical party structure. According to the analysis of the JDP’s organization by Kumbaracıbaşı, the party was mainly characterised by the “lack of internal democracy and leadership accountability” (2009: 124). These characteristics also caused members and activists to be excluded from decision-making processes (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 124–153). According to Kumbaracıbaşı, besides the “charisma” of the JDP leader, a highly autonomous leadership and strong centralization were decisive in protecting the party from fragmentation by different ideological elements (2009: 146). In short, as Özbudun maintains, what we observed in the case of the JDP was “a highly centralized and hierarchical” organization (2006: 552). Özbudun also notes

that, although local organizations were tightly controlled by the centre, they could not be seen as absolutely submissive extensions of the central organizations (2006: 552). Hence, it seems that the party had a very fragile balance between absolute leadership control and widespread grass roots participation in intraparty politics.

In this context, it is also necessary to note that many studies pointed out the role of normalization in the electoral success of the party. According to R. Q. Meham, before the foundation of the JDP, dissident members of the parties of the Islamist National View tradition knew that “electoral rewards could be found” outside a narrow Islamist political stance (2004: 350). Murat Somer also looks at the role of “moderation” in the electoral success of the JDP (2007). According to Somer, too, the JDP leadership realized that a revolutionary Islamic stance would not attract a majority of Turkish voters (2007: 1277). Nevertheless, further normalization of Islamist parties in Turkey and the rise of the JDP contributed to the enlargement of the party base (as a result of the move beyond core Islamist constituency) and therefore also to the ideological and socio-economic pluralisation within the party and its electoral base.

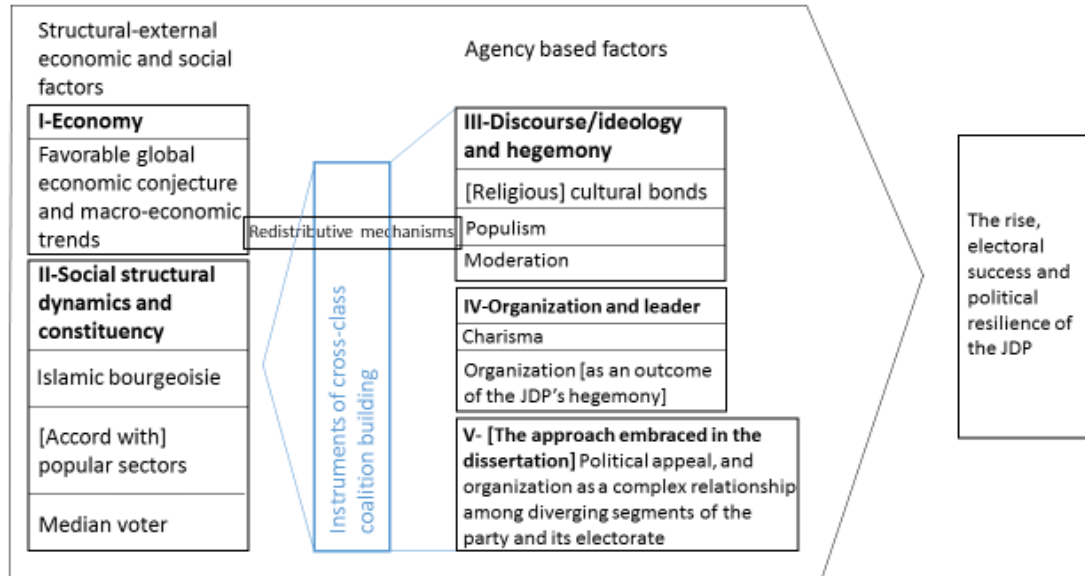
It seems that the organizational structure of the JDP was, to a large extent, shaped by the problems imposed by normalization. In other words, the party itself started its political life as a coalition of former Islamic cadres, centre-right politicians, far-right politicians and members with divergent ethnic and class backgrounds. This fragmented party leadership also corresponded to a fragmented electoral base as a coalition of the “Islamist core constituency”, “part of [the] far right constituency”, “centre-right votes” and the “Kurdish Vote” (Aydın & Dalmış, 2008; Erder, 2002). Thus, the normalization of Islamism and subsequent electoral victories of the JDP imposed a dual problem on the party: a fragmented party organization consisting of people coming from diverging political backgrounds and a fragmented electoral base consisting of diverse voter groups. For the JDP elite, keeping the party together and protecting and enlarging its fragmented electoral base have required a very specific political, organizational and discursive strategy.

In his study, Kumbaracıbaşı (2009) outlines a very similar problem for the party. He argues that the JDP gradually found itself in a situation where it was wedged between the restrictions of a secular system, and the expectations of a non-Islamist centrist electorate and its own grass roots’ radical ideological leanings (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 19).

According to Kumbaracıbaşı, in order to overcome this problem and protect and enlarge its electoral base, the JDP leadership deployed a “tight [...] control over the party base and factions that [might] be more partisan in nature” (2009: 78). He defines the strategic consequence of this problem as a “dilemma” with reference to Panebianco, one in which a party can neither move towards further “systemness” nor towards further “autonomy” (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 3). The difference between Kumbaracıbaşı’s approach and Panebianco (1988: 57) is that Kumbaracıbaşı defines an inverse relation between autonomy and systemness in the specific case of the JDP (2009: 18–19). This is to say that the JDP elite was not able to accept further grass roots participation – a move towards further systemness – and at the same time the JDP leadership was not able to increase its control over the external environment by strongly appealing to median voters – a move towards further autonomy. Increased participation by the radical-leaning grass roots of the JDP would cost the median voter, and further moves towards policies designed to target median voters and consolidate the party vote and image in such a way that allows the party to exert control over its systemic environment – such as the establishment elite of the country – would cost the core grass roots support.

Thus Kumbaracıbaşı defines the main dilemma of the JDP as that between its allegedly more radical-leaning grass roots and its leadership’s inclination towards targeting the median voter (2009: 19). According to Kumbaracıbaşı, this dilemma was solved “through tight leadership control over the party base and factions” (2009: 78). Relying on one of his senior interviewees from the JDP, he underlines that the JDP elite “believed an equilibrium needed to be found among religious, conservative nationalist, liberal, and traditionalist ideas within the party. The leadership of Erdoğan is the primary factor that keeps these groups under control and prevents break-aways” (2009: 146). Nevertheless, Kumbaracıbaşı’s work demonstrates little about how the JDP leadership exerted this tight control over the party base and over the diverse groups within the organization and the party’s electoral base in general. One of the main undertakings in this dissertation is to empirically illustrate how the JDP leadership exerted this tight control over the party base without alienating its massive membership organization and to illustrate the organizational mechanisms that helped Erdoğan to tighten his grip over the party organization and helped the JDP to encapsulate a very heterogeneous constituency.

Figure 1.2: Current explanations of the rise, electoral success and political resilience of the JDP and the location of the approach embraced in this dissertation



Source: Author's own compilation

1.3 The approach and purpose of the research: shifting the focus to party agency

A graphic illustration of the relevant literature and the position of the approach embraced in this dissertation can be seen in Figure 1.2. The main issue addressed by all relevant major works on the JDP examined above is the articulation of diverse tendencies, segments, social classes and political actors by the JDP. Most of these works reviewed above try to explain the co-existence of the dominant as well as subordinated segments of society under the roof of the JDP. Which mechanisms and processes provided the consent of the subordinated sectors and convinced them to remain loyal to the (formerly Islamist, then initially post-Islamist) dominant social segments? The works I evaluated above point out discursive-ideological change/interventions (such as emphases on cultural differences and the language of democracy, rights and liberties), redistributive policies of the dominant sectors, or social transformations of the Islamist elite and Islamist sectors of society as the basis of this coalition. Hence, on the one hand, they treat the JDP either as the generator of ideological-discursive interventions or as a redistributive mechanism. On the other hand, most of the studies analysed above tend to see the JDP as a simple reflection and political expression of the Islamic business community. In a sense,

these accounts evaluate the JDP simply as an outcome of a wider social process and tend to underline the external-structural conditions of the current predominance of the JDP.

All of these external-structural processes highlighted by the major scholars, in fact, had an impact on the rise and electoral predominance of the JDP. However, while these accounts highlight the structural processes, and to a certain extent the discursive agency of the party, they fail to notice the role of the party's broader organizational and strategic agency. This is why, in most of these accounts, the JDP was everything but a party organization. These works, which focus predominantly on the wider structural reasons for the rise, electoral achievements and political resilience of the JDP, are characterized by a lack of interest in the JDP's organizational mechanisms because most of these studies considered the party as a given, a reflection of the social hegemony of conservative dominant classes. In fact, my argument in this dissertation is that the party organization played a crucial role in the success of the party, and was at the heart of the current conservative hegemony in Turkey, and it was this that resulted in the electoral and political resilience of the JDP. In other words, consent was first and foremost produced within the party and extracted from the party base, and then extended beyond other spheres of the public life. As an intense and intricate relationship¹¹ between diverging segments, tendencies and desires, party organization was the kernel of the JDP's hegemony where dominant and subordinated social elements met each other on the basis of a particular organizational dynamic. This is the broader rationale that led me to focus primarily on the party's organizational agency.

This review also pointed out a couple of interrelated theoretical and methodological lacunas in the literature on the rise and electoral success of the JDP. First of all, studies focusing on external-structural economic and social reasons for the JDP's rise and electoral achievements have a predominant position in the relevant literature. In addition, when it comes to the analysis of the party agency, past studies either showed a conceptual inaccuracy – as in the case of the concept of populism – or they exclusively focused on the role, and more precisely the image, of Erdoğan and the ideological-discursive aspects of the JDP politics from a narrow perspective. Furthermore, the analyses of the JDP organization have not properly demonstrated the crucial intraparty dynamics of the JDP, which played a central role in the cross-class coalition of the party and the conservative

¹¹ In line with Massicard and Watts, I take parties to mean “relational entities” (2013: 1–6).

hegemony in Turkey in general, either. In other words, exclusively focusing on the leader, or patronage/pork-barrel politics, or ideology/discourse [as “mere words” (Ostiguy forthcoming)] has overshadowed a much broader organizational-strategic dynamic behind the rise and electoral achievements of the JDP. This research’s primary theoretical and methodological aim is to fill this caveat in the current literature on the JDP by analyzing the case through more rigorous conceptual tools borrowed mainly from literature on party politics (and, to a certain extent, from the literature on populism).

Given the state of current literature analysed above, the lack of a systematic focus on the role of party agency – the immediate discursive/stylistic and organizational mechanisms connecting the JDP with its electorate and protecting the party from fragmentation – becomes rather puzzling. After all, the JDP as a party has capitalized upon convenient economic circumstances and social transformations within Turkey, and the party’s agency was not restricted to pork-barrel politics, its leader’s image and official messages indicating moderation and normalization. The party’s agency was also about emotionally engaging with its voters and supporters and creating and sustaining a unique organizational culture conducive to winning elections. As popular commentators in Turkey argued, there were indeed an “economy” (careful economic management according to pro-JDP columnists, and “food-baskets and coal” according to the opponents of the party), a specific “sociology” (conservative wealth and bourgeoisie and/or devout and humble Anatolian people) and a “leader” (Erdoğan’s image) behind the JDP’s success. But there were also “politics”, things done by the party as an organization, the actions and choices made by its elite, their engagements with the organization, and their emotional and stylistic appeal to the electorate beyond discursive and programmatic links. In my view the political agency of the party in this sense was key to transforming these external-structural economic and social circumstances, as well as the redistributive mechanisms and the leader’s image, into concrete electoral gains for the JDP. Thus, in this research I wanted to focus on this “politics” with a highly empirical and, to a large extent, inductive approach. I wanted to explore and demonstrate discursive/stylistic and organizational mechanisms behind the JDP’s electoral success and political resilience.

1.4 Method, fieldwork and sources

In the literature review, I pointed out that specific organizational mechanisms and strategic choices, which protected a balance between diverse desires and interests of different groups within the party and within the party’s electoral base, were central to the

JDP's electoral success. In this sense, as illustrated above, the study of Kumbarcıbaşı (2009) underlines a very similar point in the organizational and strategic problems and choices of the party and diverges from the rest of the literature. Nevertheless, his study mainly depends on a top-down perspective and focuses on the central organizations of the party. In order to see the effect of the specific organizational dynamics and strategic choices of the party elite that helped the party to protect its electoral predominance, I embraced a broader – and, to a greater extent, a bottom-up – approach which takes into account the different levels of party organization ranging in size and influence. This is in line with the perspective of Levitsky (2003), who places a special emphasis on the intraparty relationships of various hierarchical units within parties.

Neither the examination of the central organization nor the examination of the local or provincial organizations of the party alone could accurately depict the political and organizational strategy of the JDP. This is why I conducted in-depth interviews with the JDP deputies and central elites as well as provincial (*il*) and sub-provincial (*ilçe*) chairs, members and neighbourhood representatives across Turkey. I asked my interviewees open-ended questions about the organizational characteristics of the party and these characteristics' contributions to the JDP's electoral success. The length of my interviews varied between half an hour and two hours. I spoke to more than 50 people¹² during my interviews. I conducted interviews with participants from the JDP as well as people who were neutral observers or indirectly related to the party. Of my interviewees, 39 were JDP members, 26 of whom were active members and 13 of whom were former members at the time of interview. The rest were experts from bureaucracy, journalism, academia and politicians from other relevant parties. I started my fieldwork in September 2013 with several initial interviews, and I conducted the overwhelming majority of my interviews with the JDP members and relevant participants between January 2014 and May 2014.¹³

¹² The distribution of my interviewees as well as their roles and positions in the party can be seen in Appendix 3. In fact, I saw more than 50 people for my research – the exact number is 55. Nevertheless, a few of my interviewees told me in advance that they would speak but that they did not want to be cited in the research. I also had a chance to speak with a few people coincidentally while conducting interviews with others. I indicate them in the total numbers but I did not cite them in the bibliography of this research. However, I think they also contributed to my overall understanding and this is why I wanted to acknowledge their participation. At their request I use numbers for identifying my interviewees and omitted their real names and any other information that could lead to the identification of the individual participants of the research. I only indicated the place and the position of my interviewees if it was not possible to figure out individual interviewees from this information. Hence, in the bibliography, I did not indicate the provinces of party chairs or any sub-province name that might lead to the identification of individual participants amongst a limited number of names.

¹³ The exact date of each interview can be seen in the bibliography.

I conducted my interviews in different cities and regions across Turkey such as Ankara, İstanbul, Konya, Trabzon, Diyarbakır, Batman, Şanlıurfa and Mardin, which can be seen in Figure 1.3. I conducted 26 interviews in Ankara, 9 in İstanbul, 6 in Trabzon, 6 in Konya and 5 in Mardin. I also conducted 3 interviews each in Diyarbakır, Urfa and Batman. Each of these cities represents various degrees of electoral success of the party as well as diverging regional and socio-demographic features. While İstanbul and Ankara more or less represent the national average for the party in terms of electoral success, Mardin, for example, represents the least successful and Trabzon and Konya represent the most successful instances for the party in my sample. Looking at these different regional settings also provided an idea about the degree of centralization of the party by providing an amount of uniformity of the same levels of party organization in different regions.

Figure 1.3: Cities visited for the research



Source: <http://www.mapsofopen.com/turkey-outline-map-black-and-white.html> (accessed: 27.5.2016)

I also conducted my interviews with members of the JDP who represented different hierarchical positions. On the one hand, I did interviews with JDP deputies and vice-ministers, JDP Central Executive Committee (*Merkez Yürütme Kurulu*) and Central Decision and Administration Board (*Merkez Karar ve Yönetim Kurulu*) members and advisors to the chairman as well as provincial, sub-provincial party chairs and vice-chairs.

On the other hand, I also conducted interviews with chairs of the youth and women's branches of the party and neighbourhood representatives.¹⁴ There were 9 high-ranking interviewees among the sample, including deputies, ministers and Central Executive Committee members of the party. There were 14 members from the provincial organizations and 16 members from the sub-provincial organizations of the party in various cities. This variety of interviewees provided me, as I expected, with a chance to see the vertical relationships between the party echelons and a better understanding of the implementation of JDP centralism. The rest of my interviewees were more or less neutral, non-JDP participants coming from academia, bureaucracy, journalism and other relevant parties.

The sample also included current and former members. Interviews with active party members as well as former party members and failed candidates provided me with two different, yet complementary perspectives. I also conducted some interviews with prominent figures of the former centre-right Motherland Party, Islamist Felicity Party and experts on the centre-right and Islamist parties in Turkey, which helped me to better understand the distinguishing features of the JDP organization and its strategies in the context of Turkish party politics. The interviews with former JDP members or non-JDP members in particular provided me a control narrative.

I also encountered many unexpected yet quite illustrative obstacles during my research that re-shaped my methods and research design substantially, such as the corruption probes against JDP ministers in the middle of December 2013 (and just before the local elections on the 30 March 2014). These circumstances naturally caused considerable difficulties in getting in touch with even junior and local party members, let alone senior party members from the headquarters. Yet this difficulty in getting in touch with the party members provided some first-hand insight about the organizational characteristics of the JDP.¹⁵ It seems that in times of political crisis, highly hierarchical and centralized parties like the JDP show a natural tendency to be much more vigilant and conservative against

¹⁴ An important detail illustrating the hierarchical and socio-economic variety of the sample emerged in my attempts to get in touch with my participants. As could be expected, while it was very easy to get in touch with senior and central JDP members and receive answers via email, it was extremely difficult to get in touch with more junior, provincial members of the party in this way. Some of them did not check email accounts properly or they simply did not have an email address or any computer literacy at all.

¹⁵ As Dexter stated, "frequently the circumstances of the refusal, the way in which it is done, the excuses given, the reaction to the interviewer, may provide valuable data or, at least, hypotheses about the situation" (Dexter 1970: 31). It was indeed the case, and indicative of the change of reactions I got over time after my attempts to get in touch with the JDP members helped me to understand some features of the party.

external demands such as interview requests. One should also note that previous researchers investigating party politics and organizations in Turkey frequently had similar difficulties, and even in quite stable periods party elites and members have held a deep suspicion towards these kinds of requests.¹⁶

The practical consequence of these circumstances, as mentioned above, led me to find and talk mostly to the former members of the party until the March 2014 local elections. After the party's victory, it became much easier to find party members as interviewees: even the high-ranking members of the party headquarters. Nevertheless, my initial interviews with former party members and failed candidates, and their more critical voices, provided me with a "control narrative" against which I could test the more reserved and "diplomatic" narratives of active party members that depicted an idealized picture of party life and remained within the limits of the "official story" of the party as defined by Katz and Mair (1994). This is also to say that, by talking to the active members of the party after the elections, I obtained yet another "control narrative" where I could test critical but potentially biased interpretations of some of the former members and failed candidates of the party.

In addition to the above, I also had difficulty getting in touch with local party branches in peripheral, low-income and recently urbanized sub-provinces and the neighbourhoods of big cities such as İstanbul and Ankara. My attempts at getting in touch with any member of these JDP strongholds failed even in cases where I had the help of "gatekeepers" such as relatives and friends. This situation represented a pattern and it is plausible to think that the nature of the party activity in these kinds of settings might be remarkably different than in party branches, where I mainly conducted my interviews. On the one hand, in these JDP strongholds, party activity and the duties of the party chairs and activists should indeed be very intense. Therefore it is plausible to think that party activists in these settings had no time for responding to such requests. On the other hand, there were certain reasons to think that the nature of party activity in these settings might also be different in terms of the prevalence of selective incentives –distribution of goods and aids in

¹⁶ See research conducted 15 years ago by Çarkoğlu et al. (2000). "In evaluating the fieldwork results of the project, the point that needs to be borne in mind right at the start is perhaps the difficulties encountered in working with the various parties during the course of this research. It was extremely difficult to gain access to these party workers and to persuade them to answer the questions put to them of their own free will" (2000: 22).

particular – for the party branches.¹⁷ Perhaps this was why, in these regions, it was unusually difficult to get in touch with the chairs or members of governing bodies of the party. In contrast, I realized that it was much easier to get in touch with the local party branches where the party was electorally relatively unsuccessful, such as central sub-provinces of Ankara and İstanbul.

The lack of full access to these kinds of settings – low-income, peripheral sub-provinces in metropolitan cities such as İstanbul and Ankara – during my fieldwork could be considered the major limitation of my sample. However, I should also note that although I could not speak to party activists from branches of the JDP in poor sub-provinces in İstanbul and Ankara, I was able to conduct interviews with party activists from relatively poor provincial and sub-provincial settings in other Anatolian cities. This gave me some solid impressions about the JDP politics in localities where the overwhelming majority of inhabitants come from socio-economically lower-status groups. Overall, during the fieldwork I was able to see vertical ties amongst various JDP branches and the leadership. Despite its limitations, the fieldwork process provided rich empirical material for my dissertation, and its contribution to my understanding of the JDP's political appeal and organization was invaluable.

Apart from interviews, there is already a vast amount of information on the organizational dynamics of the party on the internet. Thanks to the ease of internet publishing, it was possible to access local newspapers and the personal blogs and websites of politicians, as well as videos on local JDP activities such as consultation meetings (*istişare toplantıları*), non-binding elections among selected members (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*) and provincial conventions. I was aware that the use of personal blogs on local politics and media might entail special problems for neutrality since I had a strong impression that these sources were often controlled by the local power holders and politicians. Thus, I tried to double-check the information from this type of source with other websites and, if possible, with reports from national media. Another source that I used, apart from secondhand accounts and some newspapers close to the JDP such as *Yenişafak* and *Sabah*, was the official publication of the party, *Turkey Bulletin (Türkiye Bülteni)*, which to a

¹⁷ A short illustration of the JDP activity in these kinds of settings can be found in Hale and Özbudun's (2010: 49–50) account.

certain extent helped me to understand the main emphases of the organizational activity in the JDP.

Another source I extensively drew upon, as the reader will notice, was the work of Hulusi Şentürk. Şentürk, formerly a high-ranking member of the İstanbul branch of the Islamist National View parties and the JDP, has written several books regarding practical aspects of party politics and organizations in Turkey as guides for aspiring politicians. Apart from his book on Islamism (Şentürk, 2011), where he briefly discusses the formal structures of the National View parties and the JDP, he has written some empirically rich works on intraparty politics which contain crucial information and clues about the formation of governing bodies of the party and candidate selection processes as well as about the worldview of the JDP elite (Şentürk, 2006; 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2008c). It is plausible to think that all of these publications depend mostly on Şentürk's experience in the Islamist National View parties and the JDP.¹⁸ These works should be considered some of the most important publicly accessible observations by an insider of the Islamist National View parties' and the JDP's organizational and strategic features. As this provided relatively neutral and, from time to time, humorous accounts of intraparty politics of the National View parties and the JDP, I extensively used the empirical evidence provided by Şentürk's works throughout this dissertation.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

As I have illustrated in the literature review section, a considerable majority of the works on the JDP focused on the external-structural social and economic reasons behind the extraordinary electoral and political achievements of the party. In this dissertation, by diverging from these overwhelmingly structural explanations, I put a strong emphasis on the role of party agency – the “low-populist” appeal and the robust organizational leverage firmly controlled by the leadership – in the rise, electoral success and political resilience of the JDP. Hence, the majority of chapters following this introduction focus on the organizational characteristics of the JDP as well as the strategic discursive and stylistic manoeuvres and preferences of the party elite. Although I highlight the role of party agency, all the chapters of the dissertation in one way or another take into account the inevitable interaction and interpenetration of external-structural and agency-based factors in the rise and electoral and political resilience of the party. After all, from the

¹⁸ Also see Çarkçı's (2006) interview with Şentürk.

party elites' discursive, strategic and stylistic preferences to the organizational characteristics and leadership modes within the JDP, agency-based factors in the electoral and political resilience of the JDP cannot be understood unless they are evaluated as responses to certain socio-political and historical developments in Turkey. Yet, as I make clear throughout the dissertation, the party agency of the JDP was the constitutive dynamic that capitalised upon the opportunities for electoral and political success created by these socio-political and historical developments.

In Chapter 2, I focus on the broad political structural factors that facilitated the rise of Islamism and eventually the post-Islamist JDP. Even here, in this most structural part of the dissertation, I put special emphasis on the interaction of the political actors who created the political institutional setting that facilitated the JDP's rise and electoral and political resilience. In this chapter I illustrate how the establishment elite of the country after the 1980 coup prepared the ground for the rise of Islamism, and eventually post-Islamism, through the inhibition and destruction of leftist organizational networks, through a virtual consensus with the conservative-Islamist elite, through the introduction of a new conservative and nationalist indoctrination of the masses, and through selective limitations on the political space with restrictive constitutional and legal regulations. This strategy, which I call "selective pluralism", later on became a political and institutional opportunity space for the Islamist and post-Islamist elite that facilitated the electoral and political resilience of the JDP.

After this rather structural chapter, I focus in Chapter 3 on the political appeal/style of the JDP. Here, I again highlight a relatively structural aspect of Turkish politics: its "populist emphasis". In this chapter I adopt the perspective of Ostiguy (forthcoming) on populism, taking the concept as a political appeal/style, and use his high and low divide in order to locate the JDP's political appeal. This chapter makes it clear that, more than the party's position along a left-right or secular-religious divide, the JDP's success at reaching economically and culturally unprivileged segments of society was strongly connected to a "low-populist" political appeal/style that created a strong sense of similarity between the party elite and the ordinary people. I demonstrate evidence from both the party's discursive interventions to the public debate and its communication and propaganda style.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the JDP leader, Erdoğan, since he was key to the appeal and organizational formation of the JDP. After a theoretical discussion on closely related

concepts such as charisma, personalism and personalization, I evaluate the role of Erdoğan within the party by relying on my interviews and some secondary sources such as biographies written about him. I highlight the central role of organization building and “robust action” (Ansell & Fish, 1999) in his leadership style. In contrast to existing descriptions of him as a charismatic leader, I define him as an inventive and diligent organization man (*teşkilatçı*) who exclusively focused on achieving and maintaining power. Hence, I call the relationship between Erdoğan and the JDP as “non-charismatic personalism” (Ansell & Fish, 1999).

In Chapter 5, I elaborate on the JDP’s strategic approach to redistributive tactics, organization and communication. In this chapter I again focus on the historical background, and demonstrate the contribution of the organizational and strategic experience of the JDP elite, who came from different backgrounds such as centre-right parties and the Islamist National View parties. I demonstrate that these previous experiences provided the JDP elite with a highly effective strategic inclination, which led them to certain organizational and electoral-tactical preferences. In order to maintain electoral predominance, the JDP elite embraced an organizational and electoral strategy that struck a balance between the short-term requirements of elections (responsiveness) and the long-term requirements of government processes (responsibility), between collective and selective incentives, and between idealism and pragmatism. The combination of robust organizational leverage – a year-round active, tightly controlled massive membership party present in neighbourhoods – with a strong and decisively pro-JDP media was key to this balance and, therefore, to the JDP’s electoral predominance.

In Chapter 6, I exclusively focus on the JDP’s organization by following the classics of the party organization studies as well as new perspectives highlighting the importance of the interaction between various hierarchies within parties (Levitsky, 2003; Massicard & Watts, 2013). In this chapter, I illustrate the formal territorial and membership structure of the party and put a special emphasis on how this massive membership organization was kept under the control of the central JDP elite. Here, I demonstrate the details of the central control mechanisms in the JDP, such as public opinion surveys (*anketler*), technological communication instruments and party coordinators. I also underline the role of “controlled participation” channels in the JDP, such as regular consultations (*istişareler*), non-binding elections among selected members (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*) and women’s branches, which together had a vital contribution to the

absorption of the potential dissent against the firm leadership control through the creation of a very strong sense of participation in the party base. In this chapter, relying on a discussion of party typologies, I also argue that these organizational traits of the JDP made it difficult to identify the party's organization simply as either a mass-based (mass party) or an elite-based one (such as cadre, catch-all or cartel party). Instead, I propose to diverge from Eurocentric conceptualizations regarding party organizational typologies and define the JDP organization as a hybrid electoral machine, or more precisely "a personalistic membership party", combining a firmly controlled massive membership organization with political marketing techniques.

In Chapter 7, I take a closer look at the elite recruitment processes of the JDP. I demonstrate the rise of the leadership domination within the party just after its foundation. I also focus on how the provincial and local governing bodies of the party were accurately designed by the central party elite and how candidate selection processes were kept under the firm control of the party leadership. Here I also focus on the different narratives deployed by, on the one hand, high-ranking party elites and, on the other hand, junior party members, failed candidates and "true democrats" in struggles over elite recruitment within the JDP. In this chapter I also focus on the characteristics of the relationship between local and provincial elites and the JDP leadership, which represents one of the novel elements in JDP politics compared to its rightist predecessors in Turkish politics.

In the conclusion, I summarize the crucial empirical findings and broader theoretical implications of the research regarding the literature on the JDP and Turkish politics in general. In this chapter I also take a closer look at the JDP as a case of electorally successful Islamist party normalization, with a brief comparative discussion on post-Islamist parties/movements in Egypt, Iran and Turkey. I then highlight some of the theoretical implications of the analysis of the case of the JDP in the dissertation in general, with a brief comparative discussion with regards to the relationships between Islamist party normalization and party organizations in particular.

2 The TRANSFORMATION of the TURKISH PARTY SYSTEM: SELECTIVE PLURALISM and the RISE of the JDP

2.1 Introduction¹

The literature on the transformation of Islamism and the rise of the Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey usually highlights the role of the pressure from external actors such as the army and judiciary.² In this chapter, I argue that a much more complicated relationship between external actors and Islam and the Islamist elite caused the transformation of Islamism in Turkey and the rise of the JDP.³ Without the permissive attitude of the powerful external actors and a degree of consensus between them and the Islamist elite, prospects for Islamism in Turkey would have been remarkably different.

I use two central concepts in this analysis: “establishment elite” and “selective pluralism”. By the concept of “establishment elite” I refer to the high-ranking ruling cadres of the military and judiciary as well as the President of the Republic, who always had a decisive effect on the formation of Turkey’s legal political space and the “official doctrines”: a restrictive official ideology and restrictive narrative of national identity. The establishment elite in Turkey – like its counterparts in other Muslim countries where the concept might refer to royal monarchies, high-ranking religious clerics, high-ranking military officers, established ruling families, or personalized dictatorships⁴ – tried to protect its power position, and frequently the wider *status quo*, through defining the boundaries of the legal political space and the official doctrines.

The strategy of selective pluralism mainly refers to the exclusion of the particular elite groups and their organizations from political competition and representation through legal and coercive means while including others who are seen as compatible with the *status*

¹ All translations of excerpts from interviews and Turkish sources in the text are mine.

² For this kind of approach to the transformation of Islamism and the rise of the JDP see Atacan (2005: 196), Çarkoğlu (2007: 504–505), Çınar (2006a: 473–474), Dağı (2008: 27), Hale and Özbudun (2010: 10), Jenkins (2003: 51), Öniş (2001: 286–287), Özbudun (2006: 547) and Taşkın (2008: 58–59).

³ There is a new tendency in the scholarship on Islamism and the JDP in Turkey. This new approach underlines the interaction between external actors and Islamist movements. The volumes by Cizre (2008) and Turam (2012) represents two solid examples of this approach. My perspective in this chapter has remarkably benefitted from these approaches.

⁴ For the diversity of the political power holder elite in the Middle Eastern context, see Owen (2002).

quo.⁵ Most of the establishment elites across the Muslim world chose the strategy of authoritarianism and monopolised the legal political space by inhibiting the existence of opposition through legal as well as coercive means. However, in Turkey, the establishment elite chose to engineer a peculiar pluralism which excluded the meaningful political representation of the left and the Kurdish opposition through high national electoral thresholds, a restrictive party and election law as well as coercion. The very same strategy was relatively permissive towards the Islamist elite and their organizations. In addition, the establishment elite also initiated the semi-official indoctrination of nationalist and religious values since the beginning of the 1980s, like its counterparts in the Muslim world, and this created the wider social context for the rise of Islamism and post-Islamism in Turkey. Gradually, selective pluralism started to work against the establishment elites themselves due to the fragmentation of the party system and the decline of the legitimacy of the political system in general throughout the 1990s. Thanks to selective pluralism, the JDP enjoyed a disproportionate majority in the parliament and relied on this majority as well as a discourse of reform and democratization in their struggle with the establishment elite.

One of the widespread convictions in the literature on Islamism and the JDP is that the Islamist elite, and later on the JDP elite, had to overcome secularist⁶ systemic pressure. There is no doubt that there was always a certain tension between the establishment elite and first the Islamist, and then the JDP, elite. However, focusing on this tension usually overshadowed the ultimately consensual nature of this relationship. Hence, apart from Eligür's work (2010), few studies underlined the contributions of the strategic choices of the allegedly secularist elite of the country in the rise of Islamism and the JDP. Similar to

⁵ From a historical institutionalist point of view, "selective pluralism" can be considered as a strategic decision taken by the establishment elite in Turkey at a critical juncture, namely during the 1980 coup which created a certain "developmental pathway" for every political actor of the country. Gradually, this strategic decision, compatible with the restrictive political cultural legacy of the country, became a formal as well as an informal institutional context which defined the rules and boundaries of the political game in Turkey. One of my interviewees, an experienced politician from the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*) succinctly described this "path dependency" and the contradictions it entailed: "The 1980 coup brought this 10% threshold. Everybody knows that this is not right and the party holding the majority – in other words the foremost beneficiary of the threshold – has to change it. This is why the system cannot fix itself" (Interviewee 22 2014, March 5). Hence, selective pluralism in Turkey was a strategy which later became a binding structural context for the original decision makers as well as their opponents. For historical institutionalism, path dependency and critical junctures, see Thelen (1999).

⁶ By the term "secularist" I refer to a particular worldview consciously embraced by the establishment elite in Turkey which relies upon a highly exclusionary modernising attitude towards religious symbols in public life and devout segments of society. "Secular", in this context, unlike "secularist", would refer to the spontaneous predominance of non-religious attitudes and mentalities in the public space as the case in the Anglo-Saxon world.

the “inadvertent elite ally” argument of Eligür, which underlines the importance of the introduction of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis and repression of organized leftist networks by the military elite in the rise of Islamist movement (2010: 277), I argue that, without the strategic choices of the establishment elite of initiating a gradual Islamization of society and of constructing a selectively pluralist political space, the JDP’s spectacular electoral achievements and its resilience before the establishment elite would have been impossible. Although my argument is in line with Eligür’s recent work, I put a special emphasis on the selectively pluralist political space and the electoral system of Turkey since the foremost beneficiary of the exclusion of small, organizationally weak and more ideological parties through the 10% national electoral threshold, and the restrictive electoral and party laws in general, was the JDP.

In the following section I firstly describe the introduction of selective pluralism by the establishment elite in the 1980s through legal and coercive interventions as well as the gradual Islamization process, which created unexpected opportunities for the Islamist political elite. In section three, I briefly describe the fragmentation in the Turkish party system and the decline of the legitimacy of the regime in 1990s, which caused the rise of Islamism and the backlash of the establishment elite towards the end of the decade. Following this, in section four, I demonstrate how the JDP benefitted from the fragmentation of the party system and the political environment that was created by the strategy of selective pluralism in the previous period after it came to power. In conclusion, I argue that, to a certain extent, the JDP owed its electoral success and political resilience against the assaults of the establishment elite of Turkey to the political environment created by the strategy of selective pluralism.

2.2 1980s: restoration through selective pluralism

2.2.1 The coup and selective pluralism

The politics of Turkey after the military coup on 27 May 1960 was characterized by a rapid pluralisation of the political space on the basis of a liberal constitutional framework. As underlined by Çavdar (2008: 110), the Constitution of 1961 opened the political space for various democratic demands repressed in the previous period. The new political forces of the era represented workers and marginalised urban segments and were mostly led by the radical intelligentsia of Turkey (Ahmad, 1977: 186). This liberal legal framework, alongside the accelerating urbanisation and industrialization of the country throughout the 1960s, gave rise to leftist movements as well as Islamist parties and ultra-nationalist

political actors. In other words, the pluralisation of the political space unintentionally created a fertile ground for the radical political forces. During the 1970s, the country also witnessed the leftwards turn of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)⁷ as a response to these political and socio-demographic changes. The overall result of these changes was the rising salience of the left-right cleavage in the country (Özbudun, 2013: 43). This pluralisation and simultaneous radicalisation of the political scene throughout the 1960s and 1970s resulted in unstable and weak coalition governments and rising street violence among militant leftist and rightist groups, particularly during the last seven years of the 1970s (Zürcher, 2004: 261–264). A crisis of the import substitution economy completed this bleak political picture towards the end of the decade (Boratav, 2005: 139–145).

On 12 September 1980, the military elite decided to intervene on the ground of the rising economic problems and the lack of public security (Ahmad, 2003a: 181). Although the coup was successful in erasing political violence, this was achieved at a high human cost and through the heavy violation of basic rights and liberties (Zürcher, 2004: 279–280). In the eyes of the military elite, the conditions triggering the intervention were mainly the excessive plurality of the political system and its radicalisation. In the military junta's view, the political instability was mainly due to the weak coalition governments that were in power throughout the 1970s. The rising violence between ultra-nationalist forces and the leftist movements in particular was seen as a major destabilising factor by the military elite. Thus, the military coup grimly crushed these movements (Ahmad, 2003a: 184–185; Zürcher, 2004: 279–280).

The military elite's strategy ruthlessly crushed some movements and drove some of them towards a decisive and prolonged armed struggle with the armed forces. As Belge underlined, the coup created a "political exodus" for leftists due to torture and heavy interrogations in prisons and caused thousands of them to flee to European countries (2008: 43). Most notably, facing the heavy repression of the military regime was the main body of the Kurdish left, namely the PKK (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers' Party). Unlike the Turkish left, thanks to their underground organizations and timely flight to Syria just before the military coup, the PKK could protect its organizational strength and, to a great extent, avoid the heavy repression (Romano 2006:

⁷ For brief information on the Republican People's Party and other parties mentioned throughout this chapter and their positions in the Turkish political system see Appendix 1 and 2.

49–50).⁸ The PKK later followed a much more nationalistic direction (Bozarslan 2008: 860–868). Apart from state repression towards the left, the armed struggle between Kurdish separatist forces and the state drove the more centrist left-wing actors of the country, namely the Republican People's Party and the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*), towards a more nationalistic direction, particularly throughout the 1990s. Hence, unlike the previous period, the political space of the post-coup period in Turkey was deeply shaped by the absence or the weakness of the organizational networks of genuinely leftist movements.

At this point it should be noted that the mainstream Islamist movement among the radical political forces – in other words the Islamist National View Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*) – avoided street violence throughout the 1970s (Eligür, 2010: 24). These strategic choices of the Islamist actors and the military elite protected, to a great extent, the Islamist movement and its organizational networks from heavy repression after the military coup in 1980. According to Türköne, “if there was not Necmettin Erbakan and the National View tradition, Islamism in Turkey would have become an anti-systemic ideology which uses violent means similar to its counterparts in other Islamic countries” (2012: 87). He contended that through channelling the energy of the Islamist opposition to legal-electoral political struggle, Erbakan could inhibit the radicalisation of Islamism in Turkey (Türköne, 2012: 87). Indeed, the organization of the National View tradition was characterised by a tight leadership grip over the grass roots and this, to a large extent, prevented the movement from using violence.⁹

In electoral politics, the military junta was also aiming for the elimination of potential tendencies towards radicalization as well as the potential for coalition governments through sustaining a two or a two-and-a-half party system (Özbudun, 2013: 73). The main device introduced for this purpose, and hence the main component of the establishment elite's strategy of selective pluralism, was the Law on Political Parties and the Law on Election of Deputies, which were both accepted in 1983. The main measure introduced to inhibit the excessive fragmentation of the party system, and hence radicalization, was the 10% national electoral threshold. Another measure introduced against the

⁸ For further information on the PKK, also see Marcus (2007).

⁹ A similar point was also underlined by a high-ranking Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*) member in a personal interview. As a response to a question regarding the reaction of the National View supporters after the soft military intervention on 28 February 1997, he underlined the role of the tight leadership control over the organization in avoiding violent political reactions (Interviewee 1 2013, September 2).

pluralisation of the system, and which hence kept parliamentary fragmentation low, was the inhibition of participation for parties without a certain number of branches across the country in elections. According to the legal regulations prepared on the order of junta, in order to be eligible to take part in elections a party should have branches in the majority of Turkey's provinces, and at least one-third of the sub-provinces in each of these provinces should contain a party branch. Hence, the Law on Election of Deputies and the Law on Political Parties effectively inhibited the representation of small, organizationally weak, and somewhat more ideological parties in the parliament.

2.2.2 Gradual Islamization of society

In the eyes of the military elite, the remedy for the rising polarization between left and right and the violent outcomes of this polarization was a more religious and conservative society. More precisely, considering communism and socialism as the most dangerous enemies of the state and society, the military regime initiated a new indoctrination and restoration process depending heavily on a mixture of Turkish nationalism and moderate Islam (Zürcher, 2004: 288). Kenan Evren, the leader of the military junta, repeatedly argued that “those who are loyal to religion cannot rebel against the state and nation” (Şen, 2010: 67). In order to construct such a society, the military elite embraced the “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis”, which was proposed by the conservative nationalist intellectual circle known as the “Hearts of the Enlightened” (*Aydınlar Ocağı*), as the semi-official doctrine of the recently restored regime (Şen, 2010: 65–66).

“The National Culture Report”, a concrete expression of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis as the semi-official doctrine of the new regime, was prepared and published by the State Planning Organization in 1983. The report advocated the restoration of Islam and the “essential values” of the nation by the intervention and protection of the state (Güvenç et al., 1994: 43–44). A heavily religious curriculum became a part of the education policies of the new regime (Kaplan, 2006: 73–124; Copeaux, 2006). The military elite also opened state institutions and civil society associations to the influence of the religious brotherhoods and groups (Cizre, 1998: 107–108). The main outcome of the implementation of this new semi-official doctrine of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, alongside the harsh repression of the left, was a narrower political space and the predominance of more conservative and nationalist views on politics in society (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2009: 10).

2.2.3 The re-introduction of party politics and the rise of the Motherland Party

After three years of junta rule, the military elite decided to re-introduce party politics. The political engineering project of the military elite was deeply affected by the radicalization of politics in the country throughout the two decades before the coup. As mentioned above, the military elite were also in favour of a two or a two-and-a-half party system in which radicalization of politics could be prevented. In order to realize this idea, the military regime banned the parties of the pre-coup period and their leaders from politics and increased the national electoral threshold to 10% (Özbudun, 2013: 73). The military elite also effectively narrowed down the political space through a new constitution which curtailed the liberal and pluralist articles of the Constitution of 1961.

In the first general elections in 1983 after the coup there were only three parties: the Nationalist Democracy Party (*Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi*), the Populist Party (*Halkçı Parti*) and the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*). The military elite were in favour of the rule of the Nationalist Democracy Party and the party was explicitly supported by Evren, the leader of the junta. The Populist Party was expected to be the loyal, slightly left-wing opposition party (Zürcher, 2004: 282). The Motherland Party was not expected to take part in the parliament at all. The result of the first election must have been shocking for the junta since the Motherland Party won a landslide victory by receiving the 45% of the votes. As Zürcher emphasized, the Motherland Party benefitted immensely from the military junta's open support of the Nationalist Democracy Party during the elections by simply appearing to be the only democratic and independent party among those three alternatives (2004: 282).

In the following general elections, the Motherland Party was still predominant with 36% of the votes, despite the significant decrease in its total number of votes. Thanks to new electoral regulations prior to the 1987 general election, the Motherland Party gained more seats in the parliament than the previous election and maintained a single-party majority government from 1983 to 1991. Thus, throughout the 1980s, the military junta's idea of a stable two or a two-and-a-half party system seemed to be realized, albeit under the dominance of an unexpected political actor (see Table 2.1). Table 2.1 illustrates the fragmentation of the party system in Turkey starting with the 1991 general election. In 1987, the ban on the parties and leaders of the pre-coup period was lifted through a referendum (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 49). In the 1991 general election, the monopoly of the Motherland Party over the centre-right votes was broken by the re-emergence of

Süleyman Demirel and his True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*) on the Turkish political scene. The centre-left also gave signals of fragmentation with the re-emergence of Bülent Ecevit and his Democratic Left Party. The particular importance of the 1991 general election was the appearance of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) in the parliament through an election coalition with far-right Nationalist Work Party (*Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi* – this later became the Nationalist Action Party) and the representation of Islamist politics in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*) with a remarkable number of deputies.

Although the establishment elite's strategy was running smoothly at the beginning, the military regime's top-down project of creating a slightly more religious and nationalist society in order to save the country from the "perils of the left" gradually created some unexpected consequences from the point of view of the secularist segments of Turkish society, such as the rise of Islamism at the beginning of the 1990s. As illustrated in the next section, the repression of the leftist and ultra-nationalist forces, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis and rising conservatism created unexpected opportunities for the Islamist elite in Turkey.

Table 2.1: Results and significant actors of last seven general elections

	Elections	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2002	2007	2011
Parties	Vote share (V) and seats (S)								
Nationalist Democracy Party	V S	23,3 71	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Populist Party	V S	30,5 117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Motherland Party	V S	45,1 211	36,3 292	24,0 115	19,6 132	13,2 86	5,1 -	-	-
True Path Party	V S		19,1 59	27,0 178	19,2 135	12,0 85	9,5 -	-	-
Welfare, Virtue, Felicity*	V S		7,2 -	16,9 62	21,4 158	15,4 111	2,5 -		
Democratic Left Party	V S		8,5 -	10,8 7	14,6 76	22,2 136	1,2 -		
Republican People's Party*	V S		24,8 99	20,8 88	10,7 49	8,7 -	19,4 178	20,8 112	20,8 135
Nationalist Action Party	V S				8,2	18,0 129	8,4 -	14,3 71	13,0 53
Young Party	V S						7,2 -	3,0 -	
JDP	V S						34,3 363	46,6 341	49,8 327

Source: Election results from the Turkish Statistical Institute (2012)

*Due to the political bans the Republican People's Party was represented in the parliament as the Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*) until 1995. The Islamist Welfare Party also re-appeared under different names due to party closures during the 1990s and beginning of 2000s.

2.3 1990s: fragmentation in the party system and the legitimacy crises

2.3.1 The decline of the Motherland Party and fragmentation in the party system

The importance of favourable political and electoral circumstances – such as high levels of electoral volatility and fragmentation throughout the 1990s – in the rise and electoral success of the JDP has been frequently underlined by the students of Turkish politics (Tezcür, 2012: 119–122). Indeed, Turkish politics had been characterised by the fragmentation of the centre-right and centre-left in 1990s. Governments formed by these parties throughout 1990s were not successful in terms of government stability, either. The

strongest party of the post-coup period, the Motherland Party, started to lose momentum at the end of the 1980s after the election of its influential leader, Turgut Özal, as the President of the Republic. Given the leader's weight in this party's organizational life, this decline was no surprise. The Motherland Party failed to find a successful substitute for its influential leader and/or to construct a stable party identity, which resulted in the emergence of electoral competitors and the fragmentation of the party system (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 58).

This period also overlapped with the return of the experienced centre-right politician Demirel to the political game. As a result, during the 1990s the centre-right in Turkey was represented by two political parties: the Motherland Party and the True Path Party. After Özal's election to the presidency, the leadership of the Motherland Party became contested. Mesut Yılmaz, a well-educated, Westernized man, became the leader of the party in 1991 (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 49–50). After the unexpected death of Özal in 1993, Demirel became the president of the Republic. A Westernized, modern-looking woman and a professor of economics, Tansu Çiller became the leader of the True Path Party in the absence of Demirel (Cizre, 2002: 88–89). It must be underlined that these two new leaders of the centre-right had quite different personalities and backgrounds compared to the former leaders of their parties. Because of their wealthy and well-educated backgrounds, Westernized looks and cold attitudes towards the electorate, the majority of the traditional Turkish centre-right voters had great difficulty in seeing these figures as being one of them.

These developments in the leadership of the centre-right forces in Turkey remarkably contributed to the fragmentation of the Turkish party system alongside other economic and social problems that triggered the dissatisfaction of voters from the centrist forces of Turkish politics. It is striking that between 1991 and 2002 Turkey had nine different governments (See Table 2.2 for government types between 1983 and 2013). From 1991 to 2002, Turkey was ruled by various weak minority and coalition governments. Political instability was a major visible and persisting feature of Turkish politics alongside other social and economic problems such as Kurdish insurgency, inflation, a financial crises, corruption and natural disasters in the background. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that voters, to a great extent, saw the minority and coalition governments, and the fragmentation of the party system, as being responsible for the economic and social problems that they suffered.

In 1987, there were only three parties in parliament, and the Motherland Party had a clear majority with 299 deputies. During the 1990s the number of parties increased and the number of the deputies of different parties became almost equal. In this sense the composition of the parliament after the general elections in 1999 is very striking: the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) won 126 seats, the Motherland Party won 88 seats, the Democratic Left Party won 134 seats, the True Path Party won 83 seats and the Virtue Party won 102 seats (see Table 2.1). This almost even distribution of seats among five parties in the parliament created many opportunities for different configurations of coalition governments but, at the same time, the very same abundance of coalition possibilities in the parliament brought great instability.

Table 2.2: Government types since 1983

No	Years	Party or Parties	Government type	Prime Ministers
45	1983-1987	Motherland Party	single majority	Özal
46	1987-1989	Motherland Party	single majority	Özal
47	1989-1991	Motherland Party	single majority	Y. Akbulut
48	1991	Motherland Party	single majority	Yılmaz
49	1991-1993	True Path Party – Social Democratic Populist Party	majority coalition	Demirel – E. İnönü
50	1993-1995	True Path Party – Social Democratic Populist Party	majority coalition	Çiller
51	1995	True Path Party	single minority	Çiller
52	1995-1996	True Path Party – Republican People's Party	majority coalition	Çiller
53	1996	Motherland Party – True Path Party	majority coalition	Yılmaz
54	1996-1997	Welfare Party – True Path Party	majority coalition	Erbakan
55	1997-1999	Motherland Party – Democratic Left Party - Democratic Turkey Party	minority coalition	Yılmaz
56	1999	Democratic Left Party	single minority	B. Ecevit
57	1999-2002	Democratic Left Party – Nationalist Action Party and Motherland Party	majority coalition	Ecevit
58	2002-2003	JDP	single majority	A. Gül
59	2003-2007	JDP	single majority	Erdoğan
60	2007-2011	JDP	single majority	Erdoğan
61	2011-2015	JDP	single majority	Erdoğan

Source: Author's compilation

2.3.2 The legitimacy crises of the establishment and the rise of the Islamist elite

The fragmentation of centre-right politics and the instability of the minority and coalition governments in Turkey exacerbated the demise of the legitimacy of the political system in general. During the 1990s, some scandalous incidents of political corruption were publicised. Most notably, the notorious Susurluk Incident in 1996 in a sub-province in western Turkey revealed the close ties between organized crime groups, parliamentarians and security forces.¹⁰ In the background of the Susurluk Incident, less sensational yet

¹⁰ The investigation of the accident did not go too far and, therefore, abovementioned bonds among state and organized crime, to a great extent, remained intact and unexplained (Baran, 2000: 137–139).

highly publicized incidents of political corruption were also taking place (Şener, 2001). According to research published in 1997, although Turkish people had a commitment to democracy, there was also a widespread distrust in the political institutions of the country such as governments, the parliament and the bureaucracy towards the end of the decade (Akgün, 2000: 18).

The 1990s were also characterised by the crimes committed by the forces of the Turkish “deep state” against civilian Kurdish dissidents. The methods of struggle with the insurgency of the pro-Kurdish PKK hardly distinguished between violent and non-violent Kurdish opposition and criminalised a wider community including Kurdish intellectuals, artists and businessmen. The war waged against the PKK also frequently crossed the borders of legitimate action with the involvement of criminal underground organizations in the process (Hamdan, 2009: 234). Paramilitary techniques deployed in coping with the Kurdish insurgency caused massive human rights violations during the 1990s. Murders of well-known Kurdish activists as well as of ordinary citizens in the name of the struggle against terror had a corrosive effect on the image of the Turkish state as a “state of justice”.

In contrast with this picture, the clean image of the Islamist Welfare Party was consolidated by the performance of Islamist municipalities in two major cities of Turkey in the mid-1990s: İstanbul and Ankara. The relatively transparent and efficient management of these two cities under the rule of Welfare Party mayors increased the image of managerial competence for the Islamist elite in the eyes of the electorate (Öniş, 2001: 286). The electorate started to see the Islamist National View parties as a decent political alternative against the corrupt centrist politics of the country. As noted above, oppression towards the leftist organizations after the coup in 1980 and the rightwards turn of the centre-left forces in Turkey during the 1990s completed this picture. In the absence of robust leftist organizational networks that could channel the grievances of the poor urban masses stemming from the declining legitimacy of the system and rising economic problems, Islamist politics started to be seen as the only reliable political choice for the disillusioned and unprivileged urban voters.

The outcome of these circumstances was a remarkable victory for the Islamist Welfare Party in the 1995 general election with 21% of the votes. Afterwards, the formation of a coalition government of the centre-right True Path Party and the Welfare Party under the leadership of Erbakan from the Welfare Party in 1996 (Ahmad, 2003b: 168–169)

triggered the resistance of the establishment elite, which was already alarmed by the rise of the Islamist Welfare Party in the middle of 1990s.

2.3.3 The establishment elite strikes back: the soft intervention of 28 February 1997

The coalition government shortly became the target of high military circles after a number of controversial activities. As part of Erbakan's foreign policy strategy of enhancing the cultural and economic bonds among Muslim countries, he and a group of ministers, bureaucrats and businessmen from Turkey visited Libya and a couple of other Middle Eastern and African countries in October 1996. In Libya, the Turkish group was accepted in a tent in the middle of the desert by the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi. Before the negotiations began between the two sides, Qaddafi decided to hold a press conference. Qaddafi, in front of the cameras, criticized Turkey's attitude towards Kurds and the United States. Although the bombastic and undiplomatic style of Qaddafi was not unknown, this meeting in Libya was depicted in the mainstream media as a major humiliation stemming from the Islamist inclinations of the government (Ahmad, 2003b: 170).

Some very controversial speeches by Welfare Party members addressing the issues around sharia rule and secularism of the country were publicized on several occasions through mainstream media during the rule of the Welfare-Path (*Refah-yol*) coalition government.¹¹ A very debatable plan for the regulation of working hours according to the local fast-breaking (*iftar*)¹² times by the government was also followed by the fast-breaking invitation made by Erbakan in the Prime Minister's residence (Sabah, 1997). This invitation was harshly criticized in the mainstream media due to the attendance of sheiks and leaders of religious brotherhoods and communities in their religious dress (Ergin, 1997). The last highly controversial event was the "Jerusalem Evening" (*Kudüs Gecesi*), where a theatre play on the Palestinian resistance against Israel was staged under the sponsorship of the Welfare Party municipality of Sincan, a sub-province of Ankara, in January 1997. In this play, one of the guests at the play was the Iranian ambassador

¹¹ Later on these controversial speeches were used as proof of the anti-secular and anti-constitutional activities of the party in the closure case opened by Vural Savaş, the Chief Prosecutor of the High Court of Appeals of the era. These excerpts from the speeches of prominent party figures can be found in the indictment for the case (Hürriyet, 2008).

¹² According to the Islamic calendar, the month of Ramadan is considered holy and observant Muslims do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset throughout the month.

and there were posters on the walls of the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah. This event was followed by the so-called “practice manoeuvres” of military tanks on the streets of Sincan at the beginning of February 1997 (Ahmad, 2003b: 171–172).

One of the prominent researchers of the Islamist movement in Turkey, Hakan Yavuz, evaluated all these minor incidents as signs of frustration since the Welfare Party elite was not able to implement the redistributive economic programme called “just order” (*adil düzen*) under the constraints of the coalition government and International Monetary Fund agreements (Yavuz, 2009: 64). In other words, despite the radical tendencies of the party’s grass roots, the party elite had to remain within the boundaries of the given systemic constraints. Instead, some of the Welfare Party elite appealed to highly sensational activities in order to satisfy the party’s grass roots. One should also note that this political picture was preceded by a wider process in which assassinations of some of the country’s prominent secularist intellectuals had already started to represent a concrete threat. The most dreadful incident was the mob arson of a hotel full of secularist-leftist intellectuals and artists in 1993. Those people came to the inner Anatolian province of Sivas for the celebration of an Alawi religious festival. The attack resulted in the death of 36 people.

The enmity of the military elite against the ruling Islamist Welfare Party ended with the declaration of a series of “anti-reactionary” measures imposed on the coalition government in a notorious National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*) meeting on 28 February 1997. These measures included the taking control of non-registered Quran courses by the Ministry of National Education; the implementation of eight years of continuous education, which would undermine the educational strongholds of Islamist politics in Turkey, namely the Imam and Preacher Schools; and a ban on religious brotherhoods (Zürcher, 2004: 300). These measures were unacceptable for the Welfare Party elite in terms of the party’s strictly Islamist ideology and the expectations of its core constituency. After a couple of days of hesitation, the Prime Minister and the leader of the Welfare Party, Erbakan, had to sign the document known as the “February 28th Decisions”, which was prepared by the military elite.

Later on, the Welfare Party was banned by the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) on the grounds of anti-secular activities (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 1998). The leaders of the party, most notably Erbakan, were banned from political rights for five years (Zürcher,

2004: 301). After the closure of the party, prominent figures of the Welfare Party brought the case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The decision of the ECtHR (ECtHR, 2003) confirmed the anti-secular and anti-constitutional activities of the Welfare Party and, to a large extent, was in accordance with the decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court. This was a decisive point in the history of the Islamist National View tradition (Yavuz, 2009: 69). After the decision of the ECtHR, the Islamist political elite must have recognized the importance of the support of domestic and foreign democratic circles in the survival of Islamist political movement.

The military elite's soft intervention, or its non-violent methods of dealing with the Islamist forces, should also be underlined. Despite the tensions between these two political forces in Turkey throughout the 1990s, the interaction between them had been sustained, particularly within a non-violent framework. In a sense, there was a kind of "virtual consensus" between the establishment elite and the mainstream Islamist elite. On the one hand, as underlined above, mainstream Islamist politics in Turkey never resorted to political violence despite the use of violence by the marginal radical Islamist groups such as Kurdish Hezbollah and İBDA-C. On the other hand, the establishment elite used considerably light methods in the struggle with Islamists when the heavy and repressive measures deployed against Kurdish and left-wing political movements were taken into account. According to Cizre, there was a strong connection between the transformation of Islamism in Turkey and the fact that the members of the Islamist movement were not jailed and their sympathizers were not tortured or massacred by the establishment (Cizre, 1998: 116). The transformation of Islamism and post-Islamist developments in Turkey should be understood on the basis of this "virtual consensus" between the establishment elite and Islamist elite over the means and limits of political struggle.

After the military intervention in 1997 and the collapse of the Welfare-Path coalition government, Islamist politics entered a period of decline and reformation. In fact, the Islamist National View movement had already started to gain a new direction with the rise of internal opposition to the decades-old dominance of the party leader Erbakan. Experiences in consequent elections and in office, particularly in local governments, had a crucial influence on the younger generation of the Islamist National View tradition. This experience had a very decisive impact on the would-be leader of the JDP, Erdoğan. According to Dağı, Erdoğan had become much more pragmatic, less ideological and had

embraced a “service”-oriented outlook during his years as the mayor of İstanbul (2008: 28).

Indeed, some of the Islamist politicians, and particularly Erdoğan, realized the opportunities that lay beyond a narrow Islamist appeal due to their municipal experience. In the literature, as underlined in the introduction of this chapter, the repression by the secularist elite has been frequently addressed as the main factor behind the moderation of the Islamist movement in Turkey. But it seems that the pressure from the secularist forces was only a catalyst for the internal transformation of the movement triggered by the opportunities of a permissive democratic system, or a selectively pluralist environment, which accommodated Islamist parties of the National View tradition within the system and which did not choose to criminalize them as it did the leftist and Kurdish nationalist forces.¹³

As one member of the Islamist Welfare Party, who later on became a JDP deputy, underlined in an interview, “intensive state interventions or the closures by the oppressive coups only provided an opportunity for the party to interrogate itself” (Interviewee 29 2014, April 16). Another interviewee explained the transformation of the Islamist Welfare Party in similar lines: “we went beyond this more Islamic discourse of the National View because we wanted to be a more inclusive party. You cannot make it with an Islamic discourse. This is why we remained at 18, 20, 22 per cent. [When the party was using an Islamic discourse] we got 24, 25 per cent in our best performance” (Interviewee 26 2014, April 4). Another experienced former member of the Islamist National View parties and the JDP underlined the same inclination of the Islamist elite prior to the intervention of the establishment elite:

The National Salvation Party [*Milli Selamet Partisi* – the Islamist National View party of 1970s] received 11 per cent in the general election in 1973 and 7 per cent in 1977. Hence, the number of deputies was reduced from 48 to 24. So there was an electoral failure. If there was no September 12th [military coup in 1980] the party would have received many fewer votes. Because you can’t renovate yourself and people start to move away. The Welfare Party received 22 per cent of the votes in the 1995 general elections but the Virtue Party received 15 per cent in the general elections in 1999. These were electoral failures. Why did the votes of the Virtue Party decrease? People started to discuss these things. [...] The February 28th intervention was unfair but

¹³ Mecham strongly emphasizes the permissiveness of the system, but the repression towards the leftist and Kurdish nationalist political actors eludes his observations (2004).

why was this unfair treatment of the party not corrected by the electorate? These discussions within the party gave rise to the change (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4).

As argued above, the soft intervention of the military elite was only a catalyst for this transformation. As one of the experienced National View members of the era pointed out in an interview, the main dynamic behind the transformation of the Islamist elite and the rise of the post-Islamist JDP was the desire to be more successful in elections:

[In 1999], for the first time in Turkey, local and general elections were held together. [...] The Virtue Party lost 8 per cent of the votes [the Welfare Party received in the previous elections]. Its votes decreased to 15 per cent. [...] But at the local level we protected our votes and even increased it. Thus, the Democratic Left Party was the winner [of the general elections] in my sub-province but we got the municipality [in local elections]. The Democratic Left Party crushed us in the central government elections but we crushed them in the elections for the municipality. As a result, an 8–10 per cent gap, almost the vote of a single party, appeared between the votes received by the Virtue Party municipalities and the Virtue Party itself. The local level was much more successful and this was an indication of the fact that the headquarters could not bear the young cadres anymore and there would be an interrogation of this situation [within the party] (Interviewee 29 2014, April 16).

Thus, it would be fair to argue that the divide within the Islamist National View tradition and the rise of the so-called reformist wing within the party were rather results of internal interrogations of the party's electoral failures than a response to external pressures.¹⁴ Mainly on this background, at the 2000 convention of the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* – which became the home to many members of the Islamist Welfare Party after it was banned by the Constitutional Court), Abdullah Gül challenged the authority of the old guard of the Islamist National View tradition. He lost the competition for the party leadership by a very slim margin. Nevertheless, in 2001, the JDP was founded by this same, younger, reformist generation of the National View Movement led by Erdoğan and Gül, and which was influenced, to a lesser extent, by figures such as Bülent Arınç and Abdüllatif Şener, with the support of some centre-right and even left-wing politicians.¹⁵

When we focus on the wider political scene of the decade we see that the years following the 28 February 1997 intervention and the decline of the coalition government, including

¹⁴ For a very rich empirical source revealing the pragmatism and electoral concerns of the reformist wing in the Islamist National View see Selim (2002).

¹⁵ For a detailed description of this process see Mecham (2004).

Islamists, did not change a lot in terms of the fragmentation and volatility of the Turkish party system and the instability of the governments. The first general elections in 1999 after the military intervention brought five parties into the parliament with roughly the same numbers of seats. The first party of the elections, the Democratic Left Party, and its old and experienced leader, led the coalition government formed from his party, the Nationalist Action Party and the Motherland Party against the Islamist Virtue Party (Ahmad, 2003b: 173).

The already declining legitimacy of the system was made worse in 1999 by the biggest earthquake since the 1940s and by the financial crises in 2000 and 2001. The earthquake devastated the most developed parts of the country, namely İzmit and some parts of İstanbul, and left over 17,000 people dead and a quarter of a million homeless. The amount of damage caused by the earthquake was around 3–6 billion dollars (Jalali, 2002: 120). The coalition government's inability at dealing with this catastrophe, particularly just after the earthquake (Jalali, 2002: 124–126), was never erased from the public memory. This tragic event was also complemented by the 2000 and 2001 financial crisis (Uygur, 2001). As Öniş made clear, there was a dramatic decline in GNP and per capita income, and the crises affected highly skilled and educated people, small- and medium-size businessmen, and the very poor (2003: 14–15). Despite the technocratic steps taken with the appointment of the Kemal Derviş, a former World Bank executive, as the Minister of Economic Affairs (Öniş, 2003: 18), the image of the managerial incompetence of the coalition governments barely improved and was made even worse by the sickness of the Prime Minister Ecevit.

2.4 2002 onwards: the rise of the post-Islamist elite

2.4.1 The JDP benefits from fragmentation and selective pluralism

Under the abovementioned political and electoral circumstances, the JDP achieved a spectacular electoral victory in the November 2002 general elections. The JDP won 34% of the votes and gained 363 seats in parliament, a clear majority. The Republican People's Party received 19% of the votes, gained 178 seats and became the second largest force in the parliament. Although the True Path Party and the Nationalist Action Party won 9% and 8% of the votes respectively, they could not gain any seats in parliament due to the 10% threshold. The other coalition parties of the pre-election period, namely the Motherland Party and the Democratic Left Party, did much worse in the 2002 election. While the Motherland Party won 5% of the votes, the Democratic Left Party could only

get 1% (see Table 2.1). As one of the JDP elite emphasized, one of the main factors in the political and electoral success of the JDP was the negative experience Turkish people had had under the minority and coalition governments and the instability caused by this political environment throughout the 1990s (Şentürk, 2008b: 108). Apparently, the coalition partners were heavily penalized by the voters.

The following years and elections brought a total dissolution of the centre-right parties of the period before 2002. To a certain extent, the JDP voters' main intention in the 2002 election was voting against the established Turkish parties (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 10). Indeed, the JDP was the main beneficiary of the diminishing popular appeals of its rivals in 2002 (Sayarı, 2007: 201). Not only the coalition partners' failures but also the fragmentation and weakness of the opposition parties, as Sayarı underlined, paved the way for the JDP's achievements in the general elections in 2002 (2007: 202). This picture clearly addressed the weakness of the centre-right and coalition partners in 2002.

However, the relatively poor performance of the Republican People's Party remained unexplained. The Republican People's Party's absence in parliament in the period between 1999 and 2002 protected its image, to a great extent, from the negative impacts of the deterioration of the political and economic circumstances after 1990 – a very similar situation to the clean image of the JDP. Electoral fragmentation, government instability, managerial incompetence of the coalition governments, economic crises of 2000 and 2001, and the decline of the legitimacy of the regime in general during the 1990s might have also worked in the Republican People Party's favour. However, this was not the case, and the party could not reach beyond the traditional electoral limits of the centre-left in Turkey. As I will discuss in the following chapters on the political appeal, organization and leadership of the JDP, the relative failure of the Republican People's Party in this particular election illustrated the importance of effective political agency: the role of a robust organization as well as suitable political appeals. Hence, convenient political circumstances were not a sufficient condition for electoral success in its own right. In other words, agency matters.

After its electoral victory, the JDP formed a single-party majority government. The first years of the JDP corresponded to the recovery of the Turkish economy thanks to the upwards trend in global economic cycles (Boratav, 2010: 463) and regulations introduced by Derviş in the period before the 2002 election. Within a couple of years, the consumer

price index dropped dramatically and the GDP per capita began to increase (Öniş, 2012: 140). This promising picture was also complemented by the determination of the early JDP government in the European Union accession process. The consecutive liberal and democratic reforms created an optimism and trust towards the democratic credentials of the party in the country and abroad (Hale & Özbudun, 2010: 55–67).

2.4.2 Resistance of the establishment elite

Despite the ideological change of Islamist politics and the initial liberal image of the JDP, the party had to deal with the resistance of the establishment elite since the beginning of its formation. The clear majority the party gained in the 2002 general elections made a remarkable contribution to the resilience of the JDP before the attacks of the establishment elite. In the absence of other centre-right and rightist parties in the parliament, the JDP found an opportunity to stand as the only representative of the right-leaning majority of the country *vis-a-vis* the establishment elite. As a result, the establishment elite lost its social support, which stemmed partly from its right-wing political allies such as former centre-right parties. As Sayarı highlighted, “in the absence of an effective political opposition in parliament, the Constitutional Court and the Presidency have emerged as the two principal institutional sources of counter-majoritarianism in Turkish politics” (2007: 203). The relationship between the establishment elite and the Republican People’s Party was not that crucial in providing social legitimacy to the interventions of the former since the Republican People’s Party was usually seen by the majority of the population as the representatives of the establishment elite. Hence, the establishment elite remained weak in front of the JDP’s parliamentary majority due to the lack of right-wing political allies, with considerable seats in the parliament sympathetic to their interventions. In this section I will give a brief descriptive account of this tension between the JDP elite and its elite opponents through some critical interventions of the establishment elite.

2.4.2.1 The Presidency of the Republic

The Presidency of the Republic, despite its lack of effective executive authority, always held a significant veto power in Turkey. According to article 104 of the Constitution of 1982 prepared on the order of the military junta, the President of the Republic had the authority to return laws prepared and decisions made by the parliament and call for elections (TBMM: 50–52). Hence, the ideological leanings of presidents made a great difference to the country’s politics. One should also underline the fact that this position

had been traditionally occupied by persons who were more or less in consensus with the establishment elite of Turkey until the selection of Gül by the Parliament in 2007.

In its initial years, the JDP had to work with committed secularist and jurist Ahmet Necdet Sezer until 2007. Sezer, the former chief of the Constitutional Court, was elected as the President of the Republic for seven years with a consensus in the parliament in 2002. On the grounds of his secularist tendencies, the military elite were positive towards his election as the President of the Republic (Demirdöğen, 2007a). His fair attitude towards the victims of the 28 February military intervention was also received with sympathy by Islamists. Nevertheless, after the JDP came to power, the relationship between Sezer and the JDP immediately started to grow more tense.

Due to his imprisonment after citing a poem allegedly praising religious war in 1997, Erdoğan became ineligible to become a deputy. The only way for Erdoğan to make it into parliament was a change in the constitution. Sezer resisted this change but ultimately confirmed it (Demirdöğen, 2007b). Another significant case of resistance by Sezer was his rejection of the decision to provide scholarships to students in private schools. Sezer rejected this law on the grounds of the potential danger of financing reactionary activities (Demirdöğen, 2007c). Sezer vetoed the appointment of ministers and many high-ranking officials in the JDP years. He also showed a ruthless and rough symbolic resistance to the JDP elite stemming from his firm secularist world view. For instance, he did not accept or invite the veiled spouses of JDP deputies to presidential receptions (Demirdöğen, 2007b; 2007c). He was one of the most active presidents in the history of the Republic in terms of the laws that he had vetoed and returned to the parliament (Demirdöğen, 2007d).

2.4.2.2 High Judiciary, Constitutional Court and the Military

Towards the end of Sezer's term in office in 2007, the election process of the new president triggered a political crisis between the secularist establishment elite and the JDP. With a clear majority in parliament, the JDP wanted to elect its own candidate to the presidency. Secularist circles, given the abovementioned veto power of the President, advocated the idea of reaching a meaningful political and social consensus on the next presidential candidate. In other words, they were not willing to accept a candidate from the ranks of the JDP. At this point, high judicial circles were involved in the discussion. Sabih Kanadoğlu, ex-chief prosecutor of the High Court of Appeals (*Yargıtay*), through a highly disputed interpretation of the constitution, underlined the necessity of the

presence of 367 deputies, or two-thirds of the all deputies of the parliament, for a legitimate election process. Otherwise, he contended that the first round of the election of the president might be cancelled by the Constitutional Court and the process would not be completed. This argument was embraced by opposition parties in the parliament and by many law experts in the country (Uluşahin, 2007: 19). In the first round of the elections, opposition parties simply did not attend the voting. As expected, the first round of the election process was annulled by the decision of the Constitutional Court (Eroğul, 2007: 171) and the crisis led the JDP elite to call for an early general election.

The military were also involved in the discussions. On the evening of 27 April 2007, a declaration was published on the website of the Turkish Armed Forces. The declaration indicated that the military was determined to reassert its role in Turkish politics. The discussion over secularism which was triggered by the crisis regarding the election of the new president gave the pretext that the Turkish Armed Forces was looking for.¹⁶ This declaration was called “e-memorandum” (*e-muhtıra*) later on. Unlike the previous obedient attitude of the elected political cadres of the country towards military interventions, the JDP elite strongly criticized the declaration. Immediately after the e-memorandum, the government spokesman, Cemil Çiçek, underlined the fact that the chief of staff was bound to the prime minister but not the other way around (Yetkin, 2007).

In the 2007 election, the JDP increased its share of the vote dramatically due to the image that the JDP had been treated unfairly by the establishment elite. The party won 46% of the popular vote and gained 341 seats in parliament. This was slightly less than the number of seats the party gained in the previous election as a result of the entrance of a third party in the parliament, the Nationalist Action Party, which passed the 10% threshold in the 2007 election. Afterwards, the party could elect Gül as president without any legal discussion thanks to the presence of the Nationalist Action Party with its own candidate in the first round of the presidential elections in parliament.

The most significant political event that followed the JDP’s 2007 electoral victory and presidential election was the case opened by the Constitutional Court for banning the JDP. On 14 March 2008, the Chief Prosecutor of the High Court of Appeals of the era, Abdurrahman Yaşınkaya initiated a case against the party in the Constitutional Court on

¹⁶ For a longer version of the e-memorandum and the screenshot of the Turkish version see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-memorandum> , (accessed: 27.5.2016).

the grounds that the JDP became the “focal point of anti-secular activities” (Bianet, 2008). The prosecutor demanded the closure of the party and a ban on 71 people from politics for five years, including Erdoğan and Gül. In the end, the Constitutional Court found the party guilty but decided not to close it, instead cutting its financial support from state sources (Milliyet, 2008). During this process, both conservative and liberal circles in Turkey criticized the case as a gross mistake and a massive violation of democratic politics.

As the course of events illustrated, the JDP elite were much more resilient than their Islamist predecessors. The disproportional parliamentary majority enjoyed by the JDP since its first years was the main basis of this resilience. Under the circumstances of the political framework that had been created by the strategy of selective pluralism, the main losers were small parties with weak organizational networks. Because of its robust and extensive organizational networks, analysed in the following chapters of this dissertation, restrictions imposed by the laws regarding elections and political parties, as well as the 10% threshold, were not real impediments for the JDP. On the contrary, the party was the foremost beneficiary of the abovementioned election and party rules in place in the 2002 general election.

Hence, the “selective pluralism” introduced in Turkey after the 1980 coup worked in the JDP’s favour. As a consequence, the JDP could secure 66% of the seats in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey after receiving 34% of the votes in 2002. Hence almost 50% of the votes cast in the 2002 election could not be represented in the parliament. Relying on its parliamentary majority and a new language of reform and democratization, after 2002 the post-Islamist JDP elite gained the upper hand against the establishment elite in Turkey. After all, as noted by Toprak, “the military finds it difficult to show open resistance to civilian decisions when these are taken through legitimate democratic procedures and rest on consensual politics” (2005: 179). As long as selective pluralism worked in favour of the JDP, despite the discourse of change, reform and democratization, the party elite did little to promote further pluralisation of the political system. They neither reduced the national electoral threshold nor changed the Law on Political Parties. In short, the strategy of selective pluralism remained intact and started to work to the benefit of the post-Islamist elite.

2.4.3 Political conflict under the conditions of selective pluralism and the JDP

The discussion in this chapter in general, and the demonstration of the confrontations between the establishment elite and the Islamist political entrepreneurs in the previous section in particular, pointed out a couple of important features regarding the political context in which the JDP – or initially the post-Islamist party – emerged and came into prominence. One of the main features of this political context is the weakness of the liberal democratic architecture. In other words, in Turkey, at least since 1980, there have been decisive restrictions upon certain political actors in the legal political space, and powerful, highly politicized, non-party systemic actors including the military, high judiciary and bureaucracy were always central to the political game. Although for a certain period these circumstances worked in the Islamist elite's favour, particularly from the middle of the 1990s onwards, political actors behind these restrictions decisively turned against the rise of the Islamist elite. Under these restrictive conditions, and in their encounters with powerful, non-party elites, it is plausible to think that organizational capacity was seen as key for political survival by the Islamist elite.

The Islamist and anti-systemic ideology of the predecessors of the JDP also consolidated this need to rely on a robust organizational network. Although the relationship between the establishment elite and the JDP did not include violent confrontations, it was not an entirely peaceful one, either. Given the methods used by the establishment elite, ranging from military memorandums to legal intimidations, and given the extent of the change aimed by the Islamists, and later by the JDP elite – such as more freedom for religious expression – the political conflict in Turkey was remarkably deep. These characteristics and the degree of political conflict described in this chapter deeply shaped JDP politics in terms of its political appeal and organization.

The impact, as I will discuss in the rest of this dissertation, was twofold. While the resistance of highly visible and powerful non-party elites led the JDP to easily embrace a “low-populist” appeal, the party also carefully protected its hierarchical, centralized and robust organizational legacy that stemmed from the party's Islamist past and which proved remarkably resilient. In this context, “political organizations” should be considered as “a means of collective empowerment”, which is “a counterwailing power to the concentrated economic or institutional resources of elite groups” (Roberts, 2006: 136). It is plausible to think that the nature of conflict with the establishment elite, and the insecurities that these conflicts inscribed in the perception of the JDP elite, led them

to perceive party organizations as something beyond an electoral apparatus in a peaceful democratic game – as it is in liberal Western democracies – and a potential resource that they could deploy against the systemic pressure. Hence, the JDP elite constructed robust organizational leverage on the one hand, and a very strong leadership relying on a decisively pro-JDP media and a “low-populist appeal” on the other. This paved the way to deepen the already hostile divides among political actors of Turkey in the following years and decisively shaped the JDP politics – its political appeal and organization – as delineated in the following chapters.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, in contrast to the widespread emphases on the struggle between secularist actors and the Islamist and post-Islamist elite, I have argued that the permissive attitude of the establishment elite paved the way for the rise of Islamism and post-Islamism in Turkey. As illustrated in the second section of the chapter, the military junta’s strategy of selective pluralism against the fragmentation and radicalisation of the political space destroyed leftist organizational networks, deepened the Kurdish opposition’s armed struggle and drove the centre-left forces of the country in a nationalist direction since 1980s. As a part of its strategy of selective pluralism, the establishment elite introduced highly restrictive regulations on political parties and elections and a very high national electoral threshold, which inhibited the representation of small parties in the parliament. The military elite did not only use restrictive coercive and legal measures to inhibit the emergence of a genuinely plural political space, but they also initiated a societal process of gradual Islamization like its counterparts across the Muslim world.

Nevertheless, the military elite’s desire to inhibit the fragmentation of the party system and the radicalisation of politics was not fully realized. After the re-appearance of the traditional leaders of the centre-right and centre-left in the political stage of the country, the Motherland Party lost momentum and this caused the fragmentation of the centre-right and centre-left from the beginning of 1990s. Representation of five parties with more or less equal numbers of seats in the parliament throughout the 1990s caused political instability due to weak coalition and minority governments. Social and economic problems accompanied these political developments and accelerated the decline of the legitimacy of the political system in general. In the middle of the 1990s, this background gave rise to Islamism in Turkey, and towards the end of the decade triggered the intervention of the establishment elite to the rise of Islamism. After this “soft

intervention”, and mainly relying on their experience in elections and in office, some of the Islamist elite developed reformist ideas, and an elite spinoff from the main body of the Islamist National View tradition founded the JDP.

In the election held on 3 November 2002, the JDP achieved a spectacular victory over the protest votes of the electorate to the existing political actors of Turkey that held power throughout the 1990s. Thanks to selective pluralism – in other words, a restrictive party and election law, an unusually high national electoral threshold, and the gradual Islamization of the society – the JDP acquired a disproportionate majority in the parliament, particularly in its first term. The deployment of a language of reform/democratization and the parliamentary majority of the JDP helped the party elite to overcome the resistance of the establishment elite. Hence, selective pluralism started to work in favour of the post-Islamist elite and against the establishment elite. In the last section of this chapter I also pointed out that these characteristics of the political conflict in Turkey deeply influenced the JDP politics in terms of its political appeal and organization. I argued that, despite its mainly non-violent framework, the hostility between powerful non-party elites and Islamist political entrepreneurs have led the Islamist elite and, later, the JDP elite to embrace a “low-populist” appeal and to construct a robust organizational leverage for electoral success and political resilience. As I illustrate in the following chapters, the role of agency, in other words, the political appeal and the organization of the JDP, was essential in the exploitation of the opportunities created by selective pluralism in Turkey.

3 The HIGH-LOW DIVIDE in TURKISH POLITICS and the POPULIST APPEAL of the JDP

[Two prominent characters of the traditional Turkish shadow theatre are] Karagöz and Hacivat. Karagöz is an extrovert, a tactless and frank man of the people who does not pretend to be someone else. People connect to him emotionally and ignore some of his little vices, such as cheating his business partner. Karagöz is representative of the morale and common sense of the ordinary people. [...] He always struggles to make a living since he has got neither a particular occupation and education nor charm. [...] He wants to use nice words like Hacivat but can't pull it off. [...] He does not understand elegance. He is realistic and can't take dreams, pretensions and illusions too long. [...] With his full beard and big eyes he is a real man of the people. On the other hand, Hacivat is pretentious, somewhat hypocritical [...] [yet] prudent and earnest. [...] He gives advice, guides and mediates. He speaks well. [...] He observes the minute details of manners and gives advice to Karagöz accordingly. His knowledge is superficial but he knows everything (And, 1977: 297–300).

3.1 Introduction

There is a widespread tendency in various evaluations on Turkish politics to underline the conservative-religious content of the Justice and Development Party's (JDP - *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) political appeal.¹ In this chapter, by shifting the focus from religion to a wider socio-cultural bond between the party and the electorate, I argue that the JDP owed its political success, to a great extent, to the "low-populist" political appeal as defined by Ostiguy (2009c; forthcoming). The JDP was the last actor playing the role of Karagöz, "a thick voiced man of the people", and skilfully pushed its political opponents to play the role of Hacivat, "a soft voiced Istanbulite gentleman", in the political drama of Turkey.²

In section two, starting with a discussion over the concepts of cleavage and divide and their relevance for Turkish politics, I briefly discuss the relevance of left-right, centre-periphery and high-low divides, and argue that the high-low divide, which consists of

¹ There are many studies focusing on the centrality of religion for the JDP and its supporters (Çınar, 2013; Başlevent et al., 2005). It is undeniable that religiosity is a central asset for the JDP leadership. But in this chapter I put a special emphasis on a wider context which made the JDP's appeal particularly attractive for the less educated, provincial and low-income majority of the country.

² For these character traits of the Turkish shadow theatre figures, see And (2001: 402).

rival perceptions of the social and cultural inequalities in politics, provides the most appropriate lens to fully see the nature of the JDP's political appeal. In section three, in order to complement this theoretical discussion over cleavages and divides I elaborate further on the concept of populism. In section four, I give a brief political sociology of the JDP phenomenon by focusing on voter profiles of the JDP and its main competitor, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*),³ and show the relevance of the high-low divide through several examples from the Turkish political practice.

In section five, I empirically support the argument for the importance of a wider socio-cultural divide than religious appeal for JDP voters through the speeches and writings of the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media, as well as through my interviews. In the analysis of these speeches it becomes clear that the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media see the role of religion as part of a wider socio-cultural divide, which we can refer to as the high-low divide. In section five I also focus on the presidential election in 2014 in order to consolidate my argument. The nomination of a highly conservative figure by the opposition parties for the 2014 presidential race against Erdoğan highlighted the salience of the high-low divide *vis-a-vis* a secular-religious divide for the JDP's political appeal. In section six, I analyse the JDP's communication style. This also shows the highly conscious engagement of the JDP elite with "low" political appeal and demonstrates the relatively unimportant place of religion in JDP propaganda.

3.2 Defining the relevant divide: how to locate the JDP's political appeal?

In this section, I briefly draw attention to an important theoretical discussion around concepts of "cleavage" and "divide" and point out a couple of important characteristics of the social and political confrontations in Turkish history. I argue that the JDP's political appeal is understood best within the framework of the high-low divide proposed by Ostiguy in his various works.⁴ In order to illustrate the importance of the high-low divide in the formation of the JDP's political appeal, in the following subsections I briefly discuss the relevance of the left-right and centre-periphery (or secular-religious) divides with regards to Turkish politics.

³ For brief information on the Republican People's Party and parties other than the JDP cited in the chapter and for their relative position to each other, see Appendices 1 and 2.

⁴ Ostiguy has produced the high-low divide from his earlier analyses of the Argentinian politics (1997; 2009b). In this chapter I heavily rely on his works in which he proposed the high-low divide as a more or less universal, but not always present, political phenomenon that can travel across different contexts (2009a; 2009c; 2013 and forthcoming).

3.2.1 Cleavages or divides? The Turkish case and the high-low divide

A highly important concept for the analysis of political appeals in Turkey is “cleavage”. In its original exposition in the seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan, the centre-periphery and state-church (which together represent the national revolution process), and land-industry and owner-worker (which together represent the industrial revolution process) conflicts prepared the formation of cleavage structures within the Western party systems (1967). According to Kriesi (1998), Lipset and Rokkan’s idea of “cleavage structures” was an attempt to relate the social and cultural divisions of Europe to the European party systems. Kriesi also underlined two other features of the notion of cleavage: “the groups involved must be conscious of their identity” and it “must be expressed in organizational terms” (1998: 167). Hence, the notion of “cleavage structures” presumes relatively stable party systems where, at least for a certain period of time, political identities and organizations have more or less fixed relationships with certain social segments. However, in many party systems, it is hard to come across such institutionalized cleavage structures connecting parties and their identities relatively stably to clearly identifiable social segments. Hence, Deegan-Krause (2007: 539) has pointed out the necessity of using “something less”, in a sense, something softer and fuzzier than the concept of cleavage proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), and later by Mair and Bartolini (1990). Hence, I use the term “divide” as suggested by Deegan-Krause (2007) in order to underline a fuzzier and less institutionalized relationship between political actors, political appeals and specific social segments.

When analysed from this perspective, at first glance the main political confrontation in modern Turkey since the foundation of the secular Republic in 1923 appears to be a cleavage between secular urban nation builders (Kemalists) and conservative and traditional rural-provincial power holders (an amalgam consisting of social segments ranging from tribal leaders, local notables and respected religious authorities). Immediately after the foundation of the Republic, the Kemalist secular nation builders tried to politically incorporate popular sectors (low-income rural segments, either with or without land, and poor urban populations) through top-down ideological narratives of “populism” (*halkçılık*) and “peasantism” (*köycülük*) during the 1930s and 1940s. The

Kemalist elite ultimately failed to sustain a lasting and widespread popular sector support, particularly in rural-provincial Turkey.⁵

One of the ideological hindrances for the early Republican elite of the country that undermined their capacity to reach out to popular sectors was their strictly positivist-secularist worldview, which was deeply hostile to any religious symbol in politics (Hanioğlu, 1997; 2011). The outcome was the disappearance of a common language between secular nation builders and popular rural and urban sectors, which would provide a suitable ground to the regime in the initial stages of their attempt to mobilize and incorporate popular masses. One of the strategic hindrances, on the other hand, was that the Kemalists were very reluctant to mobilize and eventually politically incorporate popular sectors to the Republican People's Party since they were extremely worried that this mobilization would lead to the increasing political salience of masses – and ultimately to chaos, from their perspective – due to the loosening of the Kemalist elite's tutelage over society (Karaömerlioğlu, 2006: 84; 1998: 70).

It was not surprising that one of the massive attempts by Kemalists to incorporate rural popular sectors to the regime, namely “Village Institutes” (boarding schools for poor peasant children across Anatolia), was prematurely cancelled before achieving any extensive outcome under criticism from opponents claiming that communist indoctrination was taking place in these institutions (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998: 65–67). And the so-called “people's houses” (*Halkevleri*), opened by the Republican People's Party to incorporate the popular masses to the regime in urban Turkey through various social activities, lacked the proper language and organization to appeal to these social segments. These institutions ironically became centres of attraction for bureaucratic and intellectual upper and middle classes (Şimşek, 2005: 88). It also seems that another fundamental reason was the lack of sufficient financial and organizational capacity available to the Kemalist elite for a much fuller political incorporation of the rural and provincial masses. Instead, the early Republican elite usually made deals with certain segments of traditional provincial and rural power holders of the country, giving them concessions in order to keep the popular sectors under the control of the regime in provincial Turkey.⁶

⁵ For populist and peasantist narratives during the early Republican period between 1923 and 1945, see the studies by Karaömerlioğlu (1998; 2006).

⁶ For evidence of the lack of financial and organizational capacity of the early Republican regime which deprived Kemalist elite of directly reaching out the provincial and rural popular sectors for a remarkably long time, see Meeker (2001).

One should also add that Kemalist nation builders always had a very strong inclination towards economic liberalism and attached great importance to the growth of a national bourgeoisie. Since the beginning of the Republic, the Kemalist elite supported a small business community that was submissive to the secularist worldview of the Kemalist elite. In addition, unlike their counterparts in Western Europe (Bartolini, 2000), secular nation builders in Turkey established a remarkably institutionalized organization, the Republican People's Party – which was, to a large extent, incorporated with state institutions – well before the formation of the party system and the transition to multi-party politics in the middle of 1940s. These historical-institutional developments, as well as the Kemalist nation builders' close relationship with the embryonic secular bourgeoisie of the country, were impediments blocking the chances of the incorporation of the popular sectors by the Republican People's Party on the one hand, and the rise of a strong and independent working-class party after rapid industrialization and urbanization on the other.

The transition to a multi-party system in Turkey was also made before the rise of the political salience of urban working classes during the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, a political divide between secular nation builders (the Republican People's Party) and their opponents (the Democrat Party – *Demokrat Parti*) was already present and well-established, suffrage for men and women had already been introduced, and therefore the considerably weak working classes and poor rural segments were not able to establish their own rigorous political institutional expression in the form of an agrarian, mass socialist or social democratic party for the pursuit of political and social rights. Instead, the working classes, alongside poor rural segments, were incorporated to a large extent by the elite victims of the secular nation building process (who were primarily composed of conservative provincial-rural power holders such as certain segments of the large landowners and local religious leaders), in other words, by the populist centre-right. What followed the failure of the full incorporation of popular sectors into the secular nation building project during 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was, from 1960s onwards, accelerating industrialization, domestic immigration to urban centres, and unorganized urbanization. At this second critical juncture, political institutions of Kemalist nation builders, and the Republican People's Party in particular, once again failed to incorporate popular sectors

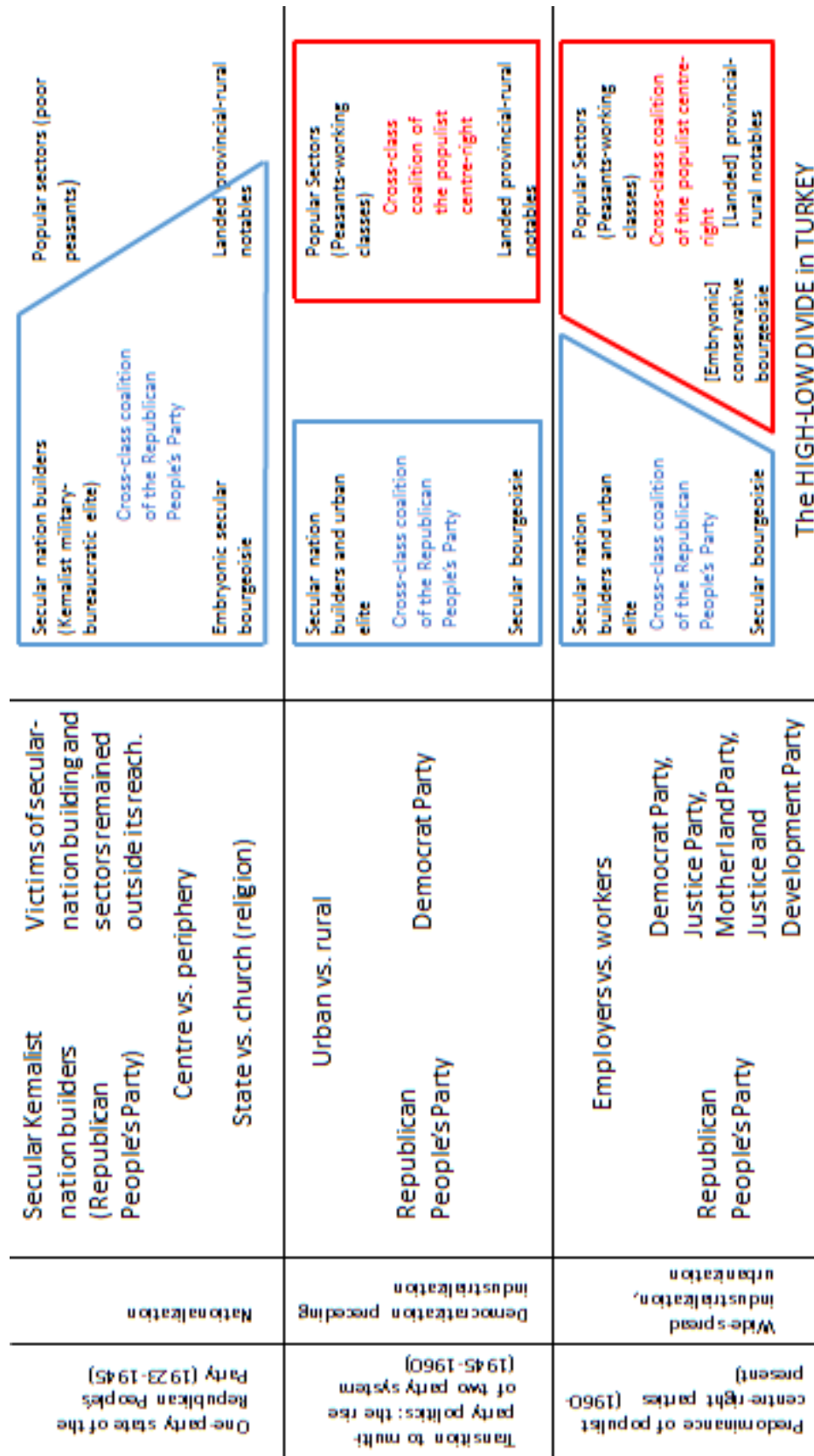
to the secular nation building process despite a short-term success during the 1970s with Ecevit.⁷

These circumstances did more than simply contribute to the weakness of the “left” on the one hand, and to a very well-organized, robust “right”, on the other, as usually argued by popular commentators in Turkey. In fact, these circumstances were the main factors that inhibited the growth of a clear and pre-dominant left-right divide in the country in general since there was no clear and rigorous institutional expression of the working classes (either through an alliance with secular nation builders or through the construction of a mass socialist or social democratic party, as was the case in Western European party systems [see Bartolini, 2000]).⁸ Instead of a predominant left-right cleavage as a solid expression of the workers vs. employers conflict, early political development of the Republican era created a predominant high-low (or anti-populism-populism) divide, as I will elaborate in the following sections. To put it succinctly, the critical historical dynamic behind the predominant high-low divide (and the lack of a neat left-right divide) in Turkish politics was the “democratization – the introduction of universal suffrage and transition to multi-party politics – before rapid and widespread industrialization” or “democratization before the rise of politically salient urban working classes”. A graphical summary of this discussion can be seen in Figure 3.1.

⁷ For these processes see classical accounts on modern Turkish history by Ahmad (2008b) and Zürcher (2004). For an account of the Ecevit’s appeal to popular sectors during the 1970s, see Erdoğan (1998).

⁸ Not surprisingly, during the 1960s, one of the prominent economists of the country, İdris Küçükömer, claimed that what was known as the “left” (the Republican People’s Party) in the country was actually “right” and “right” (the Democrat Party and the Justice Party) was actually “left” given the policies they defended and profiles of their supporters (1994). Küçükömer’s argument caused a heated debate among Turkish intellectuals of the period not simply because it was a very sensational claim, but also because there was a degree of truth in it since centre-right parties in Turkey were overwhelmingly supported by the most unprivileged urban and rural segments. What Küçükömer failed to see at that time was that the confrontation that he observed was not between left and right, but between populism and anti-populism.

Figure 3.1: Cleavage structures and the formation of the high-low divide in Turkey



Source: Author's own compilation

As I will discuss in length in the rest of the chapter, what eludes observation when Turkish politics is evaluated around a secular-religious cleavage is that religion was only an element of a wider socio-cultural divide in the country, that of the high-low divide (elaborated below). Taking the centre-periphery (or secular-religious) divide as a cleavage is misleading because cleavages (in the fashion of Lipset and Rokkan's analysis) require a relatively more stable party systems with highly institutionalized expressions of self-aware social and political forces such as socialist or social democratic working class parties or denominational parties of liberal Western democracies. Instead, using divides rather than cleavages would help to better understand volatilities and fragmentations in the Turkish political system as well as the lack of predominance of highly institutionalized political actors associated with relatively homogeneous social segments such as the working classes, denominational groups or rural social groups. This kind of approach would help to grasp many hybrid forms, interpenetration and transitivity among political actors and their ability to articulate seemingly heterogeneous social groups and expectations, in other words the cross-class nature of Turkish party politics since the transition to the multi-party regime.

3.2.2 Left-right divide

As a consequence of the above-mentioned formation of the Turkish party politics, a strong social support for the centre-right political parties among most of the lower income urban and rural masses has been one of the most enduring features of Turkish politics since the transition to multi-party politics. Since 1945, subsequent centre-right parties in Turkey, namely the Democrat Party, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*) and the JDP – except for a short period during 1970s – have always been much more successful in elections than the so-called centre-left Republican People's Party due to the support of the most unprivileged social segments of Turkey. Hence, it has always been very puzzling for Turkish leftists to see the workers and peasants support the centre-right parties in Turkey. The first influential socialist political organization, the Labour Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*), was strikingly lacking in lower-class support compared to the centre-right Justice Party, as Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, one of the most prominent socialists of Turkey, noted at the end of 1960s:

Two parties campaigning side-by-side were observed. Meetings of the Justice Party were full of shabby (*külüstiir*) "common rabble" (*ayak takımı*) with calloused hands (*nasırlı eller*), peasant caps (*kasket*), peasant mocassins (*çarık*) or black rubber shoes (*kara lastik*). Those

who attended the meetings of the Workers' Party of Turkey were more or less well and nicely dressed citizens with ties and leather shoes (*iskarpin*). In Turkey, "people", as everybody knows, is the congregation of the penniless (*ziğürt*) poor. Despite the fact that the Labour Party of Turkey uses the language of the poor, the poor continue to support the Justice Party. Well-dressed gentlemen support the Labour Party of Turkey more than the Justice Party (Kıvılcımlı, 1969: 27–8).

Today, it is known that when competitive politics in Turkey began with the foundation of the Democrat Party in 1945 there was a striking confusion amongst both the founders of the party and the public regarding the position of this new party along the left-right axis (Demirel 2009: 417). Not surprisingly, the two dimensions of the left-right divide⁹ in Turkish politics, the "socio-economic policy" dimension and the dimension of "political attitudes towards order and authority" (Ostiguy, 2009c: 13), usually could not help distinguish between "left-wing" and "right-wing" political forces in Turkey, particularly those close to the centre. On the one hand, with regard to economic policies, it is hard to distinguish the redistributive inclinations of the centre-right from the centre-left in Turkey, given that pro-market attitudes exist alongside redistributive political strategies in both political camps. On the other hand, with regard to the attitudes towards authority and order, liberal, non-hierarchical, anti-authority, and horizontalising attitudes (Ostiguy 2009c: 13–14) are, to a large extent, lacking in both the centre-right and centre-left forces of the country.

When the Democrat Party started to gather momentum in the mid-1940s, there was, however, a remarkable conviction among the rural and urban poor people that, compared to the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party, this new party was "taking them seriously" (*adam yerine koymak*) and "treating people humanely" (*insanca davranmak*) (Demirel, 2011: 123). Not surprisingly, even from the perspective of the Turkish bourgeoisie, the successor of the Democrat Party, the Justice Party, was considered to be rural and far from the civilized life, whereas the leader of the "left-wing" Republican People's Party was considered to be more familiar, "Westernised", "refined" (*kültürlü*) and "civilised" (*uygar*) (Demirel, 2004: 91). No surprise then that the historical tension between the centre-right parties of the country and the Republican People's Party has

⁹ For elaborate analyses of the left-right divide see Bobbio (2005) and Laponce (1981). I, to a great extent, embrace Ostiguy's interpretation of the left and right distinction and tend to see attitudes towards order and authority as a fundamental aspect of the divide (2009c: 13–14). As one accepts more hierarchical authority structures, s/he moves towards the right, and as one defends more horizontal authority structures and orders, s/he approaches the left.

always been perceived, first and foremost, as a clash between two lifestyles: an allegedly westernized, modern, civilised (*çağdaş, uygar*) one vs. an allegedly native, national (*yerli, milli*) one in line with the custom and tradition (*göreneğe ve geleneğe uygun*).

In each other's perceptions, rightist (those supporting centre-right parties such as the Democrat Party and the Justice Party as well as more radical rightist parties such as the Nationalist Action Party [*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*] and Islamist National View parties [*Milli Görüş Partileri*]) and leftist (those supporting the centre-left Republican People's Party, the socialist Labour Party of Turkey and other minor legal and illegal leftist parties and factions) intellectuals attached little importance to attitudes regarding economic policies and authority. Instead, as Demirel illustrated, their criteria have been highly socio-cultural.

According to the leftist narrative in Turkey, rightists are "first of all, ignorant" and they are not "individuals"; they are prone to violence; "they do not read and interrogate"; they are peasants and/or provincial town dwellers; and therefore "they lack horizon and they are shallow and rude" (Demirel, 2009: 425). They are philistine and they lack manners (Demirel, 2009: 426). They exploit the religious inclinations of the ignorant masses (Demirel, 2009: 427). On the other hand, according to the rightist narrative, leftists are anti-religious and anti-Islam. Left is the ideology of the anti-religious "minority elite" (Demirel, 2009: 431). They are "cosmopolitans" and they lack "notions of country and nation" (Demirel, 2009: 435). They are "rich", and as the "heirs of the westernized elite" they have been eating the "cream of the system" (Demirel, 2009: 436).

Given the abovementioned socio-cultural content of the left-right divide, it was no surprise that there was a strong quest for a new understanding of the main divide of Turkish politics. The centrality of the attitudes towards religion in the perception of the left and right by the leftists and rightists illustrated above played a crucial role in the formation of a new understanding of the Turkish politics under the "centre-periphery" divide.

3.2.3 "Centre-periphery" divide or "religious-secular polarisation perspective"

In the analysis of the multi-party politics in his highly influential study titled *Centre-Periphery Relations: a Key to Turkish Politics?*, Mardin argues that "the electoral platform of the opposition, especially as seen in Democrat Party political propaganda, in newspapers, and in the media, established the lines of a debate between 'real populists'

and ‘bureaucrats’” (1973: 185). Also, Mardin himself defined the contradiction between the Democrat Party and the Republican People’s Party in a similar vein, whereby the latter ‘represented the ‘bureaucratic’ centre, whereas the Democrat Party represented the ‘democratic’ periphery” (1973: 186). According to Mardin, especially after the foundation of the Republic, secularist attitudes of the centre deepened the divide between the centre and the overwhelmingly religious periphery (1973: 182). After Mardin’s work, Turkish politics and society have started to be seen by the majority of its students as having a centre-periphery cleavage, a struggle between the secularist and authoritarian state (centre) and the religious yet pro-democracy social forces (periphery). The “centre-periphery” approach has dominated the analyses of Turkish politics and society since its publication in 1973 and has obtained, so to speak, a paradigmatic status (Hale & Özbudun, 2010: xviii).

The centre-periphery paradigm recently received some very substantial criticism. First of all, the centre-periphery paradigm had some strong normative presumptions (Ahiska, 2006: 18). Centre-periphery analysts in Turkey, depending on their ideological stance, either praised the allegedly secularist high-politics of the centre or the allegedly democratic and religious stance of the periphery. The centre-periphery paradigm depicted only two important conflicting actors in Turkish politics on the basis of secular-religious divide and a zero-sum political game: the secular state and the religious social forces, with nothing in between them. This so-called “culturalist” and “dualist” approach to politics (Açikel, 2006) tended to identify the concept of centre with the state and ignored the plurality of the social forces, called the periphery (Gönenç, 2006: 131–132), while oversimplifying the complexities of the social and political struggles by reducing them to a simple struggle around the position of religion (Çınar, 2006b: 163). Apart from this, as many studies on Turkish political parties have illustrated, the centre-periphery approach led researchers to identify the centre-left and centre-right parties of Turkey with the concepts of centre and the periphery respectively.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the centre-periphery paradigm implied a very resilient and fundamental dimension of Turkish politics. The resilience of the centre-periphery paradigm should be

¹⁰ Apart from the uses of the centre-periphery approach in various social scientific research on Turkey as an explanatory framework, to see the longevity of the effects of Mardin’s approach on the analyses of political parties in Turkey, see Feride Acar (1991), Kemal Karpat (1991), Avner Levi (1991) and Sarıbay (1991).

seen as connected to the different political appeals/styles in Turkey. From this perspective, the main problem with the centre-periphery approach and its various interpretations appears to be the misleading identification of this divide with a full cleavage in the fashion defined by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and Mair and Bartolini (1990), which corresponded to neat differences between two main identity-conscious social segments stably represented under highly institutionalized organizations and party systems.¹¹ In fact, the main divide in Turkish politics that gave rise to the centre-periphery paradigm, as mentioned above, has always been “something less” (Deegan-Krause, 2007: 539), something fuzzier and softer than a “full cleavage”. This divide, which I will call the high-low divide in the following parts of the chapter in the fashion of Ostiguy (forthcoming), stemmed from widespread reactions to a civilizing intervention, a “proper” civilizational project which created an “unpresentable Other”.¹²

Indeed, as illustrated above, attitudes toward religion played a crucial role in the formation of this divide. Nevertheless, I would argue that religion was an important yet subordinate dimension of a mainly socio-cultural divide. The puzzle of the lack of popular support for the Islamist National View parties of the old guard after the foundation of the JDP by a new reformist generation within the tradition indicated the true position of religious rhetoric and symbols in the formation of political appeals in Turkey. In other words, parties explicitly using religious symbols and rhetoric in their political appeals could not be more successful than the centre-right forces, and particularly not more than the JDP.

3.3 The concept of populism

In order to understand the puzzle of the stronger popular appeal of the centre-right parties compared to the parties with predominantly religious or ideological appeals, it will help a lot to have a closer look at the concept of populism. In this section of the chapter I will focus on three main conceptualizations of populism: those of Mudde (2004), Weyland (2001) and Ostiguy (forthcoming). The concept of populism, or the populism/anti-

¹¹ For such an interpretation of the centre-periphery divide as a cleavage, see Özbudun (2013).

¹² “I wish here to start at the most abstract (and perhaps not most helpful) level, by conceptualizing populism, independently of continent, as an antagonistic appropriation for political, mobilizational purposes of an ‘unpresentable Other’, itself historically created in the process of a specific ‘proper’ civilizational project. Proceeding in reverse, what is that ‘proper’, civilizational project? It may be as variegated as liberalism, multi-culturalism, adapting to the ways and manners of the First World or the West, orthodox ‘textbook’ economics, European integration, racial integration, colonial France’s ‘mission civilisatrice,’ or any other” (Ostiguy, forthcoming).

populism divide, might be seen as the proper approach to Turkish politics, given the highly socio-cultural nature of the competing political appeals in Turkey. This is why the concept of populism has been frequently deployed by the students of Turkish politics, albeit with a surprising lack of attention to the definitional problems inherent to the concept.¹³ Just like the centre-periphery approach, to see the Turkish politics from the perspective of the concept of populism usually reproduced dichotomous approaches. This could be explained by the fact that most of the general academic definitions of the concept were not ordinal and led researchers to only a nominal understanding of the political positions and actors. In other words, most of the definitions usually result in researchers labelling political actors as either populist or anti-populist, and generally inhibited a definition of the degrees of populism¹⁴ since these definitions did not distinguish political actors from political appeals or styles.

3.3.1 Populism as an ideology or [organizational] strategy

Highly influential current definitions of the term do not help us to understand the core of the populist phenomenon, namely the socio-cultural and political cultural stylistic aspect, for reasons convincingly illustrated by Ostiguy. Ostiguy (2013; forthcoming) presents a critique of two main, oft-cited conceptualizations of the term by Mudde (2004) and Weyland (2001). Mudde defines populism “as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous 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” (2004: 543). Weyland’s definition is as follows: “populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic

¹³ For a discussion on the concept of populism with a special emphasis on the Turkish case, see Baykan (2014).

¹⁴ In this regard an exceptional position belongs to Sikk. According to him, “analysing degrees of populism in party rhetoric or programs is much more promising than the so far dominant dichotomous approach. To some extent, all parties are or appear to be populist” (2009: 12). It should also be noted that when the researchers start to look at degrees of populism they should also give up understanding populism as “a thing” or “a physical object”. In this case, they need to look at the political appeals of actors instead of ideologies or organizations. For when a researcher evaluates populism as an ideology in line with Mudde (2004), this would lead him/her to consider political parties either populist or not since ideology is the essential rationale of the existence of any political party. An ideology, thin or not, should be classified either as populist or not, but not something in between. As, for example, we do not label parties as liberal and less liberal, but rather talk about liberal and conservative parties, we also cannot talk about populist and less populist parties if populism is evaluated as an ideology. The same thing is valid for the organizational-strategic definition of Weyland (2001), too. If certain organizational traits are decisive in the populist strategy, a political party or leader would either be a populist or not. In this case, too, we logically should not talk about parties or leaders being more or less populist. In other words, looking at degrees of populism automatically imposes a requirement to understand populism as “an emphasis”, as a dimension of political culture in a given context. Hence researchers should talk about populist appeals, styles or discourses rather than populist parties, ideologies or leaders if they want to define degrees of populism.

leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (2001: 14).

As Ostiguy points out, by focusing on “discourses as mere words”, the minimal populism definition as an ideology proposed by Mudde (2004) underestimates the centrality of the political styles/appeals in the populist phenomenon and might cause “many false positives” (forthcoming). The same problem, in other words the underestimation of the style in the identification of the populist phenomenon, with the additional problem of focusing on organizations (or lack of organization) as one of the main criteria of populism, is central to Weyland’s definition (2001). This approach fundamentally ignores the centrality of the style/appeal as the content of the “direct and unmediated” link between the populist leader and the people (Ostiguy, forthcoming). These approaches do not help in understanding the central role of the social tastes and emotions in the formation of the political divides in a considerable number of political contexts, as illustrated in great detail by Ostiguy.

The case of the JDP particularly makes it clear that, as elaborated in the following chapters of this dissertation, populism can be seen side-by-side with a highly routinized and remarkably bureaucratized organization. Hence Weyland’s approach helps little in grasping the populist component of the JDP politics since lack of a proper organization is central to his definition. As pointed out by Ostiguy, the understanding of populism as a Manichean ideology separating the elite and the people as proposed by Mudde does not help much, either, since this kind of dichotomy can be seen in the discourse of many non-populist political actors. In addition, as the case of the JDP illustrates, the search of the systematic use of this kind of dichotomy can also lead researchers to underestimate the populist aspect of many political parties with a catch-all approach to the electoral processes. After all, as in the case of the JDP, a party can be populist in style and appeal by avoiding a systematic deployment of a Manichean worldview and by slightly underplaying the moral dimension of populism in their written material, which is central to Mudde’s definition and approach. In order to grasp the populist aspect in such cases one should take populism as a political style/appeal,¹⁵ as an emphasis of politics¹⁶ rather

¹⁵ Apart from Ostiguy, De la Torre (1992; 2000) and Knight (1998) put a special emphasis on style in their understanding of populism.

¹⁶ Here I see a certain proximity between the approaches of Ostiguy and Worsley. Worsley, decades ago, underlined the importance of seeing populism as something about style and political culture: “Populism is

than a physical object or thing, and rely on other methods to understand the populist phenomena, ranging from the observation of the day-to-day activities of parties and spontaneous speeches of leaders to watching and observing numerous videos and meetings. Hence I rely to a large extent on methods proposed by Ostiguy¹⁷ and embrace the definition of populism proposed by him: “the antagonistic and mobilizational flaunting of the culturally popular and ‘native’ in politics with personalism as the hypostasis of its mode of decision making”.¹⁸

3.3.2 Populism as a socio-cultural and political cultural phenomenon: the high-low divide

Thus, the high-low divide developed by Ostiguy, which evaluates populism as a style/appeal,¹⁹ can help researchers overcome the weaknesses of the centre-periphery (secular-religious) divide and mainstream definitions of populism analysed above, as well as avoid the insufficiencies of evaluating Turkish politics from the perspective of the left-right divide. First of all, as Ostiguy underlined, the high-low divide approach refrains from seeing populism as a “thing” or “physical object”, as other common nominal understandings do (Ostiguy, 2013: 27). Instead, Ostiguy’s approach helps researchers to grasp populism (and therefore anti-populism) as a space of symbolic, emotional, stylistic and discursive resources that parties and leaders could deploy and locate themselves. This methodological caution helps the high-low divide travel extremely easily across different settings (2009a: 2). According to Ostiguy, particularly in the contexts where the left-right and the liberal-conservative divides do not have strong salience, the high-low divide is a useful perspective in explaining the structure of political appeals (2009a: 2). Ostiguy emphasizes that the high-low divide is about “ways of relating to people, as such, they go beyond discourses as mere words, and they include issues of accents, level of language, body language, gestures, ways of dressing” (2009c: 5). He also adds that this way of relating to people covers different decision-making styles as well (Ostiguy, 2009c: 5).

better regarded as an emphasis, a dimension of political culture in general, not simply as a particular kind of overall ideological system or type of organization” (1969: 245).

¹⁷ “The political style of the low is clearly recognizable and delimited, empirically. It simply requires a different method of observation and a different acquired comparative expertise: the watching of innumerable videos of campaign rallies, political advertising, speeches, televised appearances, etc.” (Ostiguy, 2009c: 49).

¹⁸ P. Ostiguy, personal communication, 25 January 2016.

¹⁹ Ostiguy, by the term “appeal”, as explicitly stated in his various works, understands it to mean something including discourse but at the same time something that goes beyond “mere words”: “An appeal in politics is simply a way in which a politician or a political party attempts, usually voluntarily, to *woo* voters or people more generally to support him, her, or it” (2015: 11).

Ostiguy asserts that the high-low divide consists of two components: a “socio-cultural” and a “political cultural” one (2009a: 5).²⁰ According to him, the socio-cultural component of the high-low divide is about “manners, demeanours, ways of speaking and dressing, and tastes displayed in public”, while the political cultural component is about “forms of leadership and preferred decision making modes” (Ostiguy, 2009a: 6–8). He emphasizes that while the high tend to be “refined”, the low tend to be “crude” in socio-cultural terms. In political-cultural terms, the high tend to be “formalistic and procedural”, whereas the low tend to be highly “personalistic” (2009b: 9). When the high tend to be “cosmopolitan”, the low is rather “nativist” (Ostiguy, 1997: 5). As underlined by Ostiguy, the high-low divide is also quite often connected to resentments and is also deeply embedded in societies’ history and existing group tensions (2009c: 5–6).

As underlined by Ostiguy, through showing the attractiveness of each side of the high and low, this approach also helps researchers to avoid normative bias (2009c: 4). This is why when defining the assets of the high and low in socio-cultural and political cultural terms, Ostiguy uses the mutual point of view of each side of the separation. According to him, in socio-cultural terms, the low tend to see the high as “stiff, rigid, serious, colourless, somewhat distant and boring” (2009c: 6). On the other hand, the high tend to see the low as “grotesque” (2009c: 6). According to Ostiguy, in political cultural terms, while the high claim to be “formal, impersonal, legalistic, institutionally mediated”, the low tend to attach importance to “personalism” and “strong (generally male) leadership” (2009c: 9).

3.4 The high-low divide in the political practice of Turkey and a brief political sociology of the JDP phenomenon

Before discussing the socio-cultural content of the JDP’s political appeal in length in section five and six using the conceptual and theoretical tools introduced so far, in this section I will give some examples of the relevance of the high-low divide in recent Turkish politics through a brief evaluation of significant political figures of the last couple of decades, and try to provide a background to the later discussion focusing on the “low-populist” appeal of the JDP. In addition, in this section, I also underline similar socio-economic origins of the JDP elites and members. This information regarding the similarity of the social profiles of JDP elite and voters will support the argument that the

²⁰ In this chapter, I almost exclusively focus on the socio-cultural axis of “low-populism” in Turkish politics. I analyze the political cultural component of the “low” in Turkey with regards to the leadership of the JDP in the following chapter.

“low-populist” appeal was central in the construction of a very resilient bond between the JDP leadership and its constituency. In the third part of the section I give some brief information about the profiles of the JDP and the Republican People’s Party voters which shows that the JDP supporters came overwhelmingly from underprivileged segments of Turkish society.

3.4.1 What does high and low as a socio-cultural divide mean in Turkey? A glance at the socio-cultural affinity between voters and leaders

In this part I will try to give a solid idea about the practical reflections of the high-low divide through a couple of fictive example and through a closer look at the recent party leaders and their political appeals in Turkey. A fictive voter who could fully respond to an extremely “high” appeal in Turkey would come from a small family with only one or two children. In this family, parents who receive a salary would have either executive, white-collar occupations or high bureaucratic positions. Her family would likely have been urban for more than a couple of generations. She would be highly educated, with a university degree from one of the reputable higher education institutions of the country in Ankara or İstanbul and with fluency in at least one European language. She would be working in the service or creative sector in an executive position. If she lives in İstanbul, or any other big city, she would be living either in recently gentrified urban centres or in suburban gated communities. This position on the high end would also have specific consequences regarding her “judgement of taste”. She would listen to classical music or jazz and would show open disdain for popular genres such as pop or *arabesk*.²¹ She would not enjoy football. She would show an interest in literature and “European movies” instead of Hollywood cinema and TV serials. She would tend to be not too religious, at least in appearance. Politically, she would attach importance to secularism with an extra emphasis to environmentalism and minority rights (particularly to those of non-muslim religious minorities and LGBT communities more than the rights of the Alawis and Kurds).

In contrast, a fictive voter who could respond to an extremely “low” appeal in Turkey would come from a large family with many siblings. His family would be one of urban and rural working-class families in which the salary-earning parent in the house –usually the father – either works in agriculture as a share cropper (*yarıcı*) or as a seasonal worker

²¹ For accounts on *arabesk* demonstrating the genre’s appeal to poor dwellers of Turkish metropolitan centres, see Stokes (1992) and Özbek (1991).

(*günlükçi*) in the rural parts of the country. If the father is living in urban Turkey he would be a street vendor in the large informal sector. The voter himself would be either from the socio-economically deprived provinces of Anatolia or a new immigrant in the ever-enlarging slums of big cities. His immigration story would only go back to his parents. In big cities, he would be either living in decayed urban centres or in faraway slums filled with squatter buildings (*gecekondu*). He would have only a primary school degree. He would be working in agriculture as a seasonal worker if he is living in rural Turkey, and as a street vendor or in a small- or mid-range business as a manual worker with a very limited salary and without social security if he is living in urban Turkey. If he is young, he would be involved with local ruffian networks and under the influence of the deeply macho sub-culture in his neighbourhood. He would listen to pop and *arabesk* – and, more recently, hip-hop, electronic and Turkish rap, too – and enjoy watching football. He would not pretend to have good taste in literature and cinema and would, probably, find those claiming to be so bookish and pretentious. He would be fine with watching soap operas on TV. He could be highly religious in terms of rituals such as fasting in Ramadan and praying on Fridays but would be far from observing a very strict religious code. Politically, he would be highly conservative and/or nationalist. He would attach greater importance to leaders than party ideologies and programmes.

Between these two fictive extremes, there would be numerous individual cases. Yet voters in Turkey have always been inclined to see political options through the prism of these socio-cultural experiences. Different political appeals ranging between extremely high and low positions have articulated voters' different socio-cultural experiences. Their likes, dislikes and socio-cultural affinities have played a major role in voters' decision-making and have strongly influenced the electoral fortunes of parties in Turkey. Apart from the overall representation of parties in the media, one of the central mediums of this crucial socio-cultural information that leads to association with a certain party and dislike of the rest for voters in Turkey is the party leader²² (and, less important than that, prominent figures from the leadership circles of parties). In this context, a closer look at a couple of recent leaders from prominent parties in Turkey would clarify the concrete meanings of the high and low in Turkey.

²² See Akgün (2007: 197) for the importance attached to the leadership by the JDP voters.

Compared to a series of leaders of the centre-right tradition in Turkey, leaders of the Republican People's Party always had a relatively high appeal. For example, Bülent Ecevit, one of the prominent leaders of the Republican People's Party in Turkey, despite the familiarity and popularity he acquired during the 1970s in the eyes of lower classes, had a remarkably high appeal. With his strictly urban background,²³ flawless manners, quite fluent English, perfect "İstanbul Turkish" and intellectual and artistic occupations as a translator, poet and writer,²⁴ Ecevit's appeal could be predominantly located somewhere higher than Süleyman Demirel. On the other hand, despite his degree from one of the best higher education institutions of the country, and a background in higher-echelons of the bureaucracy in Turkey, with his upbringing in provincial-rural Turkey and slightly rural accent, Süleyman Demirel – who was called "father" or "Shepherd Süli" (*Çoban Süli*) – had always been a much familiar figure in the eyes of the electorate who were socio-culturally more open to "low-populist" appeals.

After the coup in 1980, the predominant figure in the centre-right, and on the low politically, was Turgut Özal. Despite his engineering degree from one of the best higher education institutions of the country, and his work in higher bureaucratic positions, with his provincial upbringing in a Turkish-Kurdish family from Malatya, relaxed manners,²⁵ interest in popular culture and unpretentious religiosity, Özal had been more familiar for voters socio-culturally open to "low-populist" appeals in Turkey than the leader of the centre-left party of the era, Erdal İnönü. In contrast, İnönü, a physics professor with a PhD degree from US, was the son of İsmet İnönü, a national independence war hero. Highly urban and intellectual, his appeal was more familiar for the voters prone to respond to high appeal during the short period he was active in politics.

A similar pattern can be observed between the recent leaders of the Republican People's Party and Erdoğan, too. Deniz Baykal, the leader of the Republican People's Party for almost two decades, had his degree from one of the best higher education institutions of the country. He also studied in US and lectured as a professor of law in Ankara University until the mid-1970s. He is articulate when speaking, yet somewhat distant, serious and rigid. His successor, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, despite his origins in provincial Turkey in a

²³ Ecevit was brought up in İstanbul as the son of a parliamentarian and went to the Robert Kolej, one of the most prestigious schools in the country.

²⁴ Besides writing several books on Turkish politics and a couple of poetry books, Ecevit translated works of Tagore and T. S. Eliot into Turkish.

²⁵ On several occasions Özal was caught in inappropriate attire. He greeted soldiers in a military ceremony with sports wear and visited governors in shorts and a t-shirt.

very modest family and having lower, more populist appeal than his predecessor, would also be located somewhere higher than Erdoğan in terms of his appeal to the electorate. He had a successful career in state bureaucracy and worked in the top positions of the Ministry of Finance and related state institutions. He was a late-comer to politics, with his political career starting only in the 1990s. His rhetorical skills were by no means perfect and far from being attractive to a broad and heterogeneous audience. With his glasses and proper-official appearance, his appeal was more on the high than the low. One should also remember that, in a quite contemptuous way, Erdoğan used to call Kılıçdaroğlu “general director” (*genel müdür*) in order to emphasize his bureaucratic origins and, perhaps, his alleged lack of political experience.

One should also add that for a very long time, and until recently, the primary position the Republican People’s Party adapted in its political criticism of centre-right parties in power was to defend “secularism” (*laiklik*). Even their attempts at reaching out to the popular sectors of Turkish society was weakened by the terminological enframing of their promises, such as arguing that the Republican People’s Party was pro welfare state (*sosyal devlet*). While criticizing the JDP, they usually underlined the decline of institutions and state of justice (*hukuk devleti*) in the country. This style and discourse, which put a special emphasis on abstract notions such as “secularism”, “welfare state”, and “state of justice”, usually failed to create an emotional bond between the Republican People’s Party and the popular majorities of the country.

In contrast to the leaders of the Republican People’s Party and the party’s high appeal, the appeal of Erdoğan and the JDP could be considered remarkably lower. The JDP leader Erdoğan was never bright academically²⁶ and, until he became the mayor of İstanbul in the mid-1990s, he did not have an idea about bureaucracy. However, he spent his youth and adult life in the middle of very intense party activity, and worked in every possible position in the Islamist predecessors of the JDP, which also helped him meet all kinds of people from every walk of life (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). As would be illustrated in length in the next chapter, he was the son of a low-income, immigrant family and he was brought up in one of the rough neighbourhoods of İstanbul. Although he was physically quite above the Turkish average to the point that he was called “tall man” (*uzun adam*) by his supporters, he also had a very peculiar, slightly bulging posture, which

²⁶ There were even some speculations regarding Erdoğan’s university degree.

resembled traditional Turkish roughnecks. There were many instances where he was quite rough and harsh. For example, he scolded citizens who complained to him and physically assaulted a man in one of the Turkish provinces after the tragic mine blast which killed more than 300 workers.²⁷

He is a football lover, and it is also known that many popular media figures were quite supportive of him, ranging from pop and *arabesk* singers to former models. Singers in *arabesk* genres – mostly listened to by low-income, immigrant populations of urban centres in Turkey – such as Adnan Şenses and Niran Ünsal were publicly-known admirers of Erdoğan. A fast-breaking invitation by Erdoğan revealed this relationship between Erdoğan and the popular culture. Unlike the one held by Erbakan (the founding figure of the Islamist National View tradition) almost two decades ago, which was full of sheikhs and religious personalities, the JDP's highly publicized fast-breaking dinner was full of popular media figures ranging from pop singers to popular soap opera actors, football players to popular TV personalities (T24, 2014). Not surprisingly, a pop singer who wrote the following lyrics (which also highlighted the “low-populist” appeal of the party) for the JDP in the 2014 local elections later on became a JDP deputy:

He is the strong voice of the oppressed
 He is the free voice of the silent world
 He is as he looks, he gets his strength from the nation,
 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
 The man of the people, the lover of the God,
 He is the light of hope to millions,
 He is confident to the downtrodden,
 He is comrade to the excluded,
 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
 He has always been loyal to his word,
 He did not return from the way he started to walk,
 He is determined in his cause,
 He is in the prayer of mothers,
 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
 His word is true and he has no hypocrisy,
 He is the nightmare of the oppressors,
 He walks in the way he believed,
 He is the leader who has been awaited for years,
 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.²⁸

²⁷ See http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/video/video/72221/Basbakan_Erdogan_vatandasa_yumruk_atti.html#, (accessed: 27.5.2016).

²⁸ For the song, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6jL95BaSeM> , (accessed: 27.5.2016).

Nevertheless, Erdoğan has always been received with hostility by the cultural elite of the country – particularly by secularist artists and intellectuals as would be illustrated in length in the following parts of the chapter.²⁹ In order to illustrate the importance of this socio-cultural bond between party leaders and voters of the centre-right and rightist parties it would be very illustrative to have a look at the political destiny of a couple of other prominent leaders in recent Turkish politics who did not fit well into this pattern.

One of these leaders was Tansu Çiller. As the first woman prime minister of the country, at the beginning of her political career in 1990s she was very welcome, particularly by educated women. Çiller was born in İstanbul and brought up by a wealthy family. Her father was a governor of a Turkish province. She had degrees from Robert Kolej, a prestigious school in İstanbul, and she also had masters and PhD degrees from renowned universities of the US. Until the 1990s, Çiller was a professor of economics in Boğaziçi University. With her blonde hair and Westernized appearance Çiller was hardly a familiar figure for the True Path Party voters who were still overwhelmingly rural-provincial and conservative.³⁰ Çiller herself was also not good at establishing an emotional connection with this voter profile. She was not a talented orator and she did not have a warm personality like her predecessor Demirel. She was also known for her gaffes in her speeches in mass rallies across Anatolia, which were probably taken as evidence by popular sectors that she was not in touch with the Anatolian heartland.

Very similarly, Yılmaz, the leader of other centre-right party of the country, the Motherland Party, during the 1990s, was brought up in İstanbul by a bourgeois family. He had a degree from one of the prestigious colleges of İstanbul and he was a graduate of a reputable public university in Ankara. Like Çiller, he was a highly Westernized man who did not attract any sympathy from the low-income and conservative segments of the Motherland Party voters. As one of his biographies underlined, he was “cold, distant and arrogant” (Bildirici, 2003). It is highly plausible to think that this incompatibility between these two leaders and profiles of their parties’ voters was one of the reasons of their short (by Turkish standards) political careers. Here, one should also add Necmettin Erbakan to this picture. Although he had a very long predominance as a leader within the Islamist movement, Erbakan cannot be considered to be a figure with a strong “low-populist”

²⁹ Fazıl Say, a world-renowned classical music pianist of Turkey, was also a fierce opponent of the JDP.

³⁰ For further information, see Bildirici (1998).

appeal. Until the mid-1990s his parties remained small and marginal without any considerable support from large segments of the urban poor.

The spectacular support for the Islamist parties in the middle of the 1990s in poor urban contexts was an exception. These new bonds between the Islamist National View tradition and the popular sectors in big cities were based more on the Islamist ideology and its redistributive just order (*adil düzen*) promise than the personality of Erbakan. As elaborated in the following chapters, it was also due to the enhanced organizational capacity of the Islamist movement achieved during the 1990s. Despite the deep personal respect of his colleagues and friends for Erbakan as the founder of mainstream Islamist politics, he was by no means a man of the people. Erbakan was born in provincial Turkey as the son of a local notable family. His father was a judge. He received a degree from the prestigious Istanbul Technical University in mechanical engineering and he also had a PhD degree from Germany. Despite his sense of humour and intelligence, he was not a particularly modest figure. His allegedly Versace ties and expensive taste in clothing were a topic of heated debate during 1990s. Given these brief biographies and socio-cultural characteristics of recent prominent figures of Turkish politics, Erdoğan had a much more convincing “low-populist” appeal than a series of recent Turkish political leaders. These short evaluations on party leaders and their political stories in Turkey demonstrated the salience of the high-low divide in Turkish politics.

3.4.2 A glance at the social profiles of the JDP elite and activists

There is reason to believe that the majority of the JDP voters are highly open to a “low-populist” appeal since a study published in 2008 confirmed that supporters of the JDP came from lower and middle socio-economic status groups of Turkish society, as illustrated in detail in the next part of this section. According to Aydın and Dalmiş, “the JDP’s support base lies in the peripheral elements of society” (2008: 215). The important point of Aydın and Dalmiş’s study, however, is the argument that the JDP deputies, despite their present high socio-economic and educational levels, overwhelmingly came from backgrounds similar to their voters. This is to say that the socio-economic status of families of the JDP representatives in the parliament were by no means high. According to data presented by authors, while 85% of JDP deputies had a university or a postgraduate degree, the percentages for individual deputies’ spouses and mothers and fathers were remarkably lower. Only 32% of spouses of JDP deputies had a university or a postgraduate degree. When the percentages of the parents of the JDP deputies were

taken into account, the difference was extremely striking. Only 6% of fathers of JDP deputies were university graduates and 71% of them had only a primary school degree. While mothers of JDP deputies were overwhelmingly primary school graduates (87%), only 1% of them had a university degree (Aydın & Dalıms, 2009: 215). Another striking finding from Aydın and Dalıms's study was that more than half of JDP deputies spend a considerable amount of their childhood in rural Turkey, away from the cities (2008: 215).

This pattern regarding the backgrounds of JDP deputies was also clearly observable in my fieldwork.³¹ For example, when one of my interviewees, a former JDP deputy, talked about his family, he mentioned that his father was an illiterate (*ümmi*) farmer (Interviewee 23 2014, March 7). Another former JDP deputy highlighted that he came from a low-income, provincial family (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28-March 4). One of the founders of the JDP in one province also argued that he had a blue-collar occupation when he started out in politics in the Islamist National View Parties in the 1980s (Interviewee 18 2014, February 26). Only relatively younger JDP members among my interviewees came from relatively better-off families with roots in prominent urban centres of the country.

3.4.3 Voter profiles of the JDP and the Republican People's Party

In this section I will underline a couple of important features about the profiles of the JDP and the Republican People's Party voters. Since the JDP's rapid rise, many studies underlined the relatively strong support for the JDP among less educated and low-income segments of the electorate. According to research conducted in 2002, voters with primary school education or with an education below this level were the biggest group of the JDP voters (Erder, 2002: 74). Small shopkeepers and craftsmen comprised the largest segment of JDP voters and, at the same time, voters with white-collar occupations comprised the smallest group (Erder, 2002: 74). In contrast, the largest group among the Republican People's Party in terms of education was comprised of people with university degrees and those with white-collar occupations (Erder, 2002: 79). Akgün's research also confirmed these findings. According to Akgün, as education levels increase, voters' tendency towards the Republican People's Party becomes stronger (2007: 209). In contrast, JDP supporters predominantly come from social segments with lower education levels, such

³¹ Also see Ergün's (2015) memoirs. A former JDP minister, he gave details about living with his low-income family in a province near İstanbul. This book is an extremely valuable source for understanding the transformation of Islamist politics and the transformation of the majority of the Islamist elite from ideological, Islamist vanguards to pragmatic politicians.

as primary or secondary school graduates (Akgün, 2007: 209). It should be also noted that the JDP elites were also aware of the pattern to the extent that one of the former JDP ministers underlined the difficulties the party had in reaching out to well-educated voters.³²

Another study, which depends on data from various opinion polling companies, conducted by one of the JDP elites about the factors influencing voter preferences in Turkey, paints a similar picture (Şentürk, 2008b). According to Şentürk, the lower the education level of voters, the stronger the support for the JDP (2008b: 24). Not surprisingly, as education level increases, voters are more likely to support the Republican People's Party (2008b: 40). According to Şentürk, the Republican People's Party's votes increase as the income level increases. Not surprisingly, support for the JDP is stronger among those segments of voters with the lowest income levels (Şentürk, 2008b: 112). Another important point underlined by Şentürk is that support for the JDP among large families with many children and elders is stronger (2008b: 90). In Turkey, family size could be considered a proxy for the socio-economic and socio-cultural level of families. The larger the size of the family, the more likely they are to fall lower on the socio-economic and educational scale.³³

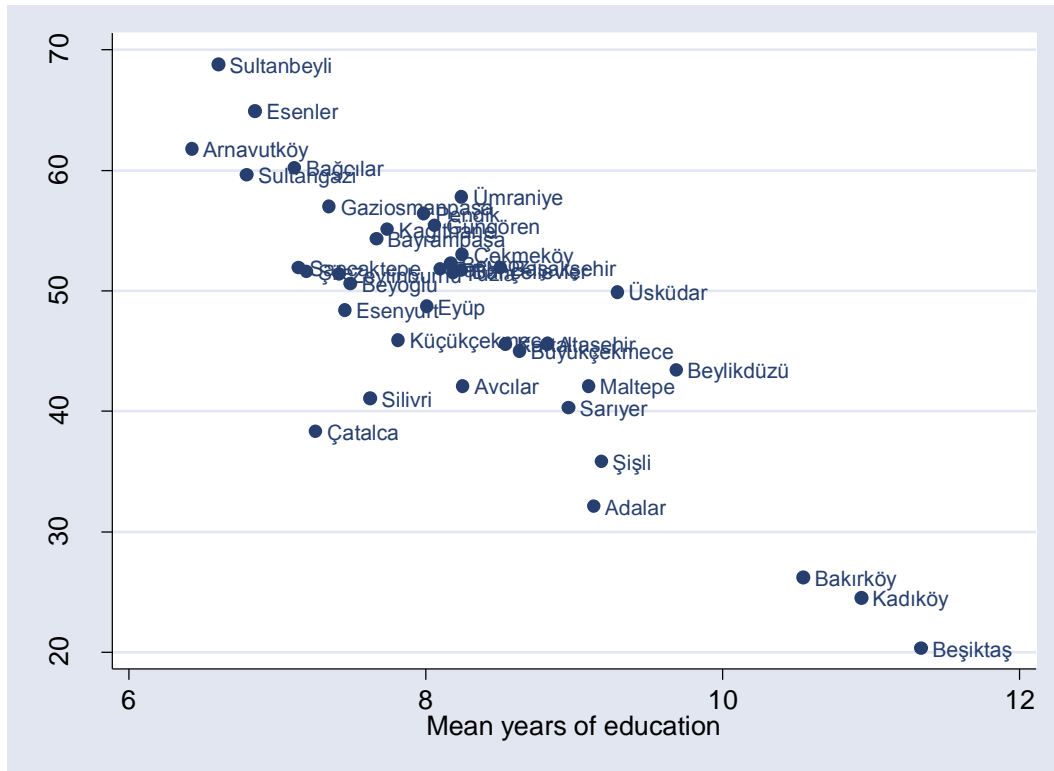
Another study also underlines similar characteristics of JDP voters: "AKP [JDP] voters appear to be religious, young, shantytown dwellers" (Başlevent et al., 2005: 560). In a later study Başlevent also underlines the predominance of the JDP preference among lower- and middle-class residents of metropolitan areas and particularly in regions where "lower class migrant populations are concentrated" (2013). According to Başlevent, "the party has been particularly successful in identifying the worldviews and addressing the needs of conservative and, generally, underprivileged segments of voters, many of whom are first or second generation migrants" (2013). Başlevent also underlines the importance attached to provision of public services in the low-income neighborhoods as an important reason behind the JDP's electoral success (2013). The following graph from Başlevent's study on the correlation between the JDP vote and lower levels of education in 39 sub-

³² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnsftqyDGLQ> , (accessed: 27.5.2016).

³³ Here one should also keep in mind that one of the widely debated political topics in Turkey was Erdoğan's repeated recommendations to newly married couples to have "at least three children" (Haberler.com, 2014b). Fierce critiques of Erdoğan usually did not understand that this was not simply intervening in people's lives, but was a way of enhancing bonds between the JDP and its supporters, most of whom came from large families with lower socio-economic status and education levels. Not surprisingly, Erdoğan has four children, and many JDP elite also have more than two children.

provinces (*ilçeler*) of İstanbul overwhelmingly overlaps with previous evaluations on the voter profiles of the party.

Figure 3.2: The JDP (AKP) vote share vs. the mean years of education in 39 sub-provinces of İstanbul



Source: Başlevent (2013)

In order to explain this graph I will give some brief information about the two sub-provinces located at the extreme ends of the imaginary line stretching from the top-left to the bottom-right, between Sultanbeyli and Beşiktaş. According to data published by the Turkish Statistical Institute, in Beşiktaş almost one-third of the total population above 15 years old – 150,000 people – are university graduates and almost 10% of the population in the same sub-province have masters or PhD degrees (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013: 107). In this sub-province, the vote share of the JDP in the 2014 local elections was only 16%. In contrast, the Republican People's Party received 76% of votes in Beşiktaş. When the vote shares of the two parties in Sultanbeyli is considered, the pattern is the opposite. In this sub-province, the JDP received 61% of votes and the Republican People's Party

only received 7%. According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute yearbook, there are only around 11,000 people with graduate degrees from universities in the total population aged above 15 (slightly over 210,000 people) (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013: 111). Other data from the Turkish Statistical Institute confirming this pattern is household size. While the average household size in Beşiktaş is 2.49, it is 4.67 in Sultanbeyli (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013: 117).

In order to make this dramatic difference between the support for the JDP and the Republican People's Party in these two different settings clearer, it would be useful to give a couple of other details about these two sub-provinces of İstanbul. Beşiktaş is one of the central sub-provinces of İstanbul in the European part of the city which stretches along the Bosphorus strait. The sub-province is known for its touristic (such as Ortaköy) and extremely wealthy neighbourhoods (such as Bebek). The sub-province includes some of the most important historical heritages of the late Ottoman period that reflect the modernization efforts of the Empire, such as Çırağan, Dolmabahçe and Yıldız Palace. The sub-province also includes one of the financial centres of the city, Levent. Nightlife in Beşiktaş has always been vibrant and the central parts of the province are full of bookstores, cafés and live music venues. Some of the best higher education institutions of the country, such as Boğaziçi, Yıldız and Galatasaray University, are located in Beşiktaş. According to a socio-economic categorization report prepared by REIDIN, a real estate market information service, the highest socio-economic and socio-cultural records in Turkey belong to the Bebek neighborhood of Beşiktaş (Trthaber, 2014). As a consequence, real estate prices in Bebek are extremely high and, not surprisingly, in the 2014 local elections the Republican People's Party received around 3,000 votes in this neighborhood while the JDP received only around 500.³⁴

When we look at the Sultanbeyli, what we see is a remarkably different setting and very low levels of support for the Republican People's Party. Sultanbeyli is located in the Anatolian part of İstanbul. It is far from the historical centre of the Anatolian part, namely Üsküdar and Kadıköy, and therefore from the wealthy sea side. Sultanbeyli's population started to increase during the 1990s as a result of large numbers of domestic immigrants from provincial Turkey. Immigration to the region also brought rapid and unorganized

³⁴ See the High Election Committee (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) website for results: <https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/sspsYerel.jsf>, (accessed: 22.3.2016).

urbanization.³⁵ Despite the remarkable development Sultanbeyli underwent throughout the JDP local government, some of the longtime landmarks of the sub-province had been squatter buildings (*gecekondu*).³⁶ In the sub-province, it is hard to come across pubs or shops selling alcohol and “cafés” where young people – both men and women – spend time together. Instead, one would come across many *a la turca* coffee houses (*kahvehane*), with unemployed young men spending time around mosques and religious endowments. The sub-province hosts the poorly-paid working classes of İstanbul. Unlike Beşiktaş, some of the cheapest real estate options in İstanbul could be found in Sultanbeyli.

Not surprisingly, one of my interviewees associated real estate prices with voting preferences in such a way that he was able to underline the proximity of the JDP to poor people:

I mean, if the real estate prices in an area are above five hundred thousand Turkish Liras, the people living there most probably support the Republican People's Party. [...] For example, in Ataşehir, when the sub-province was a slum [*varoş*, as called by my interviewee] and prices were around a hundred or two hundred thousand Turkish Liras, the support for the JDP [was much stronger]. Now if you go and conduct research there you would notice that those people left their land and moved to Ümraniye (a relatively low-income sub-province of İstanbul) for the construction of new buildings worth a million dollars. Now, in Ataşehir, those people were replaced with people who can afford these prices and you have the fact that as people get richer they tend to support the Republican People's Party. [...] It is very interesting that rich people lean towards the Republican People's Party. [...] The Justice and Development Party is still the hope for the poor people (*gariban insanlar*) (Interviewee 12 2014, February 6).

The voting patterns in Turkey indeed confirmed my interviewee's association of high real estate prices with the Republican People's Party vote. However, one would also find exceptions to this pattern in relatively wealthy strongholds of the JDP: a few relatively wealthier but conservative sub-provinces in metropolitan cities, such as Keçiören in Ankara and Başakşehir in İstanbul, and several cities in the conservative Anatolian heartland of the country, such as Konya and Kayseri. In the following part of this chapter

³⁵ For the rapid urbanization in Sultanbeyli and the cycles of poverty it created for the new immigrants, see the works of Pınarcıoğlu and Işık (2001; 2008).

³⁶ These residences are built by new immigrants without the permission of state authorities. For a very vivid literary account of this kind of urban development in Turkey, also see a novel by Pamuk (2015).

I will elaborate on the “low-populist” appeal of the JDP and its central role in the party’s connection with the constituency profile outlined above.

3.5 Political appeals of the JDP: from “high” to “low”

In this section I illustrate that after a temporary engagement with a much more liberal and procedural (in a sense “high”) post-Islamist appeal, the JDP has adapted a full-scale low appeal. In the first sub-section I briefly illustrate this high appeal of the party, or “conservative democracy”. Conservative democracy served the JDP in monopolizing the centre-right field of Turkish politics and in overcoming the oppression of secularist systemic forces through the implementation of pro-democracy and pro-EU reforms. In the following sub-section I elaborate the subsequent “low” appeal deployed by the JDP, which clearly emerged after the first term of the party between 2002 and 2007. I illustrate that the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media have constructed a “peripheral identity” for the party that to a great extent overlapped with what is called “low” by Ostiguy.

3.5.1 Conservative democracy: a “high” prologue

During the foundation of the JDP, there was a vigorous debate around whether the founding cadres of the party sincerely gave up their Islamist convictions or not. Particularly in the critical secularist and Kemalist circles, there was a strong belief that the JDP had a hidden Islamist agenda, and that the party elite engaged in a religiously permitted dissimulation (*takiyye*). In response, the party leader Erdoğan and prominent party members repeatedly underlined that they had founded a new centrist party which has no connection whatsoever with the Islamist National View tradition. Party intellectuals made a remarkable effort at making a strong case in favour of this new identity. According to Yalçın Akdoğan, then chief political advisor to Erdoğan, the JDP was not an Islamist party that saw the solution for change in the seizure of the state’s apparatuses (2004: 92). Unlike its predecessor, the Welfare Party of the Islamist National View tradition, which used religious symbols and appealed to the highly religious segments of society (2004: 101), the JDP was a conservative party whose members attached importance to religious values (2004: 111).

To Akdoğan, a conservative democratic identity had a conciliatory role between the demands of the state actors (such as the unitary character of the state as well as secularism), median voters and the centrifugal tendencies of Islamists, Kurdish and Turkish nationalists (2004: 136–141). Thus, during the foundation of the JDP, the conservative

democratic appeal, or post-Islamist appeal as described in Chapter 1, served two aims of the party: overcoming the boundaries of a classical Islamist party base by reaching the more centrist electorate, and overcoming the secularist sensitivities of systemic actors by downplaying religious symbols and language. By using this conservative democratic appeal, the JDP could easily engage with the pro-market and pro-EU policies and overcome the systemic actors' resistance by the support of domestic and international pro-democratic forces.

Strategically, the period from 2002 to 2007 is called "politics of patience" by Duran, a close observer of the party (2013: 98). As underlined by Duran, after the crisis of the 2007 presidential elections and the case opened against the JDP in 2008 attempting to ban the party, the JDP entered a new phase in which the dominant strategy became "controlled tension" instead of "politics of patience". During this phase, according to Duran, the JDP elite eroded the power of the Kemalist elite (2013: 98). This change of strategy and the decline of the systemic pressure on the party gradually entailed the disappearance of the conciliatory, democracy- and rights-based post-Islamist appeal of the JDP, in other words the high appeal of conservative democracy. In its place, the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media substituted not an Islamist but a wider "low-populist" appeal, which aimed to deploy the resentments of the majority of the electorate to the socio-cultural inequalities in the country.

Although the conservative democratic appeal served the JDP well for a short period until 2007, after this point the JDP elite might also have realized the insufficiency of a narrow conservative democratic identity in keeping its very diverse electoral base intact. A political appeal mainly grounded on democracy, the European Union process, and rights and liberties was neither emotional enough nor sufficiently flexible and simple to keep the party's core Islamist, nationalist, conservative and low-income constituency together. At this point, a return to a full-scale Islamist appeal would also have been extremely detrimental to the electoral fortunes of the party. It would have alienated the non-Islamist, median voter who had supported the JDP since the party's foundation. The "low-populist" appeal, tested and deployed by the centre-right predecessors³⁷ of the JDP, and which focused on the historical grievances of the masses as well as the role of the leader and

³⁷ In a classical study, Açıkel (1996) illustrated from a psychoanalytical point of view that the repressive rightist power structures in Turkey have always been grounded in the resentments of the majority of the population against social and cultural hierarchies and inequalities.

practical achievements of the party, was much more flexible and solid and was much more suitable for the electoral aims of the party. In the following sub-section I focus on this low appeal of the JDP through my interviews with JDP members, examination of the JDP elite's speeches and writings, and the writings of the pro-JDP columnists.

3.5.2 Elitist centre versus the JDP, the defender of the peripheral and downtrodden majority: the “low” in Turkish politics

The strategic calculations of the JDP elite entailed the gradual downplaying of the conservative democratic framework or “high” appeal of the party. This is why, in most of my interviews, conducted mainly in 2014, participants rarely identified themselves with the official narrative of the party, namely, conservative democracy (Interviewee 10 2014, January 18). Instead, in some of my interviews, party members tended to refer to a rather abstract notion of the party “cause” (*dava*) (Interviewee 11 2014, January 22). In one of my interviews I had a chance to listen to the content of the JDP's “cause” from a high-ranking party member in a provincial city (Interviewee 48 2014, May 6). Surprisingly, the content of the party cause was very much in line with the centre-periphery analysis of Turkish politics provided by Mardin (1973), as outlined above. According to my interviewee, this narrative refers to the domination of minority elites over the peripheral majority of the country. Here, as illustrated through further examples in the following sections, a social-scientific narrative, namely the centre-periphery approach, was transformed into a crucial element of the JDP's political appeal.

This plot (used by my interviewee in particular and the JDP elite in general), which also deploys some of the rightist stereotypes of the country such as “international Jewish conspiracies”,³⁸ identified the authoritarian modernist and Westernist political traditions of the country since the late Ottoman period as a minority yoke over the segmented religious and traditional “silent majority” of the country. This narrative also evaluated the Republican People's Party as a continuation of the central minority oppression over the silent majority until the centre-right Democrat Party's coming to power in 1950. Nevertheless, this same discourse, despite the rightist parties' long-lasting rule in Turkey since the 1950s, also suggests that Turkey could not get rid of the central elite's oppression over the conservative majority until the rise of the JDP.

³⁸ Hence, one should locate the conspiratorial speeches of the JDP elite and the conspiratorial style in the pro-JDP media in recent years within the context of the consolidation of the party's “low-populist” political appeal.

According to the same interviewee, with the help of American imperialism, “White Turks, White Kurds, capitalists and elite” owned 90% of the wealth of the country while the rest, the unprivileged majority, had only 10% of the wealth. Hence he identified the cause of the party, “Great Turkey” (*Büyük Türkiye*) [or “New Turkey” (*Yeni Türkiye*) in its contemporary interpretation by the JDP elite], which has always been a centre-right motto, as the changing of this order by the JDP. As one of my interviewees, a close observer of the party and one of the experts of centre-right politics in Turkey, underlined, it seems that this narrative, perhaps without strong emphases on the centre-right stereotypes such as Jewish conspiracies, also had a deep impact on the worldview of the central JDP elite (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). According to one of my high-ranking interviewees from the JDP headquarters, a particular minority segment of society had, since the late Ottoman period, enjoyed disproportionate power compared to its social support. As such, according to the same interviewee, large parts of society that were conservative and religious in orientation had an insignificant influence over the politics of the country despite the fact that they were the majority (Interviewee 36 2014, April 24). In the following subsections, I give other examples of this centre-periphery narrative from the speeches, interviews and writings of the prominent party figures as well as the writings of the JDP supporters in the media. I will also illustrate the highly exclusionary socio-cultural or, more precisely, “high” attitudes of some of the JDP critics.

3.5.3 The JDP’s “low” appeal and its “high” critiques

Particularly since 2008, Prime Minister Erdoğan’s speeches were dominated by elements recalling the centre-periphery divide in Turkey. Here one should also note that, in the JDP discourse, the periphery was not simply a geographical entity but a metaphor representing the excluded social segments in urban-metropolitan as well as provincial Turkey that the JDP elite tried to reach through the low appeal. Erdoğan frequently complained about the bureaucratic oligarchy in the judiciary and the state (Sabah, 2012). He frequently argued that the JDP represented the “nation” against the “happy minorities, privileged classes and shadow power holders” (Zaman, 2011). He frequently defined the mission of the JDP as the “liberation of the social segments despised and excluded by people who think that they are superior” (Bugün, 2012). He ridiculed old diplomats and academics who criticized his reaction to the Israeli Prime Minister for being inappropriate and

undiplomatic³⁹ in the Davos Economic Forum in 2009⁴⁰ and called them “*monşer*”⁴¹ (Ensonhaber, 2009), a term that apparently denoted a pejorative meaning in Erdoğan’s vocabulary and which implied the so-called westernized elite’s lack of courage and responsiveness.⁴²

The salience of the high-low divide in Turkish politics became clearer with the presidential elections in 2014. A conservative candidate of the opposition in this particular elections led the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media to an extensive use of low appeal. In the 2014 presidential election, Erdoğan called the joint candidate of the Republican People’s Party and the Nationalist Action Party, who was a reputable academic and the former secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, “*monşer*” (Aktifhaber, 2014b). The following parts of Erdoğan’s address to the crowd on the day he declared his candidacy for Presidency of the Republic were rather typical of the abovementioned motives characterizing the discourse of Erdoğan and the JDP elite. Here we also find a symptomatic identification of religiosity with poverty and exclusion, which reproduced a certain distinction between secular, bourgeois, metropolitan segments and religious, poor, peripheral-provincial groups:⁴³

We are in politics for our worker brothers who try to earn their life decently in the mines. We are in politics for the poor people in the suburbs of the İstanbul Sultangazi and Diyarbakır [...] We are in politics for our girls who returned from the gates of the universities due to their headscarves [...] We are in politics for the man who is despised just because he is poor. We are in politics for those with clean hearts who were ill-treated and despised in hospitals, schools and government offices [...] My brothers and sisters, from our early youth years those who did not understand us and did not want to understand us tried to keep us out of the equation by using disparaging adjectives. They tried to despise us when we were studying in Imam and Preacher Schools. They called us cleaners of the dead.⁴⁴ They called us reactionaries just

³⁹ “The low generally does not worry overly much about appearing improper in the eyes of the international community and also at times apparently seems to enjoy it” (Ostiguy, 2009c: 10).

⁴⁰ For the details of the event, see CNN (2009).

⁴¹ It seems that the term originally comes from the French expression *mon cher*, which means “my dear”. However, in Turkish it has gained a derivative meaning which refers to the elitist, somewhat feminine and out of touch attitudes of highly educated bureaucratic cadres and upper classes.

⁴² See De la Torre, quoted in Ostiguy: “[Bucaram] ridicules his rivals’ delicate manners and tastes, which he contrasts to his own and the common people’s masculine ones. The representation of the oligarchy as imitators of foreign and effeminate lifestyles is well received by his audiences” (2009: 38).

⁴³ Pamuk, son of a rich Istanbulite family, emphasized in his memoirs of childhood and early youth years that when he was a child he used to think that religion was something belonging to poor people (2012: 167–176).

⁴⁴ Most of the JDP politicians had their secondary and high school education in Imam and Preacher Schools in Turkey, which are hardly the most elite educational institutions in the country and are usually ridiculed

because we were using the salute to God, just because we were praying to God. They looked at people coming from among the nation from a different angle just because they were taking off their shoes in their homes,⁴⁵ crossing their legs when sitting for their meals.⁴⁶ They called these people reactionaries. They looked at us from a different angle just because we were defending the values of this land. They tormented our girls just because they were using headscarves for their faith. As our resistance became stronger they increased their insults and assaults. Sometimes they shut down our parties. They imprisoned us for reading a poem. They used headlines arguing that we cannot even become a village headman.⁴⁷ They argued that we cannot become Prime Minister or President and did not consider us human when it came to elections for high office [...] They excluded us but we increased our effort, we have become stronger by every blow. We confronted statutes, headlines against us. We did not look at who said what; we only looked at what justice said, what God said (Haberler.com, 2014a).

The motives and ideas outlined in Erdoğan's speech can hardly be seen as episodic and spontaneous reactions of the party elite, but they are deeply embedded in the worldview of the JDP cadres. Hence, many examples of speeches referring to the centre-periphery narrative by high-ranking JDP members could be found. According to Şentürk, the former vice-chair of the JDP organization in İstanbul, for example, the JDP was the representative of the "masses and values called the peripheral". On the other hand, according to Şentürk, the Republican People's Party has always been the representative of the "centre", in other words of "elites" and their values (Şentürk, 2008b: 53). Şentürk argues that the ruling elite never digested the success of the representatives of the peripheral segments of society – the centre-right parties – and even the victory of the JDP, supported by huge numbers of votes, was seen by the elite as the mistake of the "ignorant and mindless" masses. For Şentürk, elite cadres reflected their vision of the periphery by

by their opponents as the "home of reactionaries" (*irtica yuvası*) and schools of "cleaners of the dead" (*ölü yıkayıcı*). The latter term is used because one of the duties of the imams is washing the corpses before they are buried with a religious ceremony.

⁴⁵ After the appointment of Durmuş Yılmaz, a highly competent technocrat, as the director of the Central Bank of Turkey by the JDP, a hot debate was triggered by the publication of a photo in a Turkish daily. In this photo, the new director's wife was seen with a headscarf and there were a couple of pairs of shoes in front of the main entrance of his home. After the publication of this picture, an influential columnist, Ertuğrul Özkök, openly showed his distaste of the scene reflected in the photo in his column (2006). Another columnist from the daily rather vulgarly criticized this scene and argued that leaving shoes outside the house was an uncivilized attitude belonging to peasants (Uluengin, 2006). The attitudes of these two columnists, who were also fierce political opponents of the JDP, illustrated the predominantly socio-cultural content of the political divisions in Turkey.

⁴⁶ A low-legged portable ground table was common in poor rural and urban houses where people had to sit on the ground to have their meals.

⁴⁷ After Erdoğan was found guilty by the High Court of Appeals and banned from politics for an indefinite time due to a poem which was argued to incite religious hatred among the people, a Turkish daily used the following heading for describing the political prospects of Erdoğan: "He would not even be a village headman" (*Muhtar bile olamayacak*) (Radikal, 1998).

calling the majority of the country's citizens "fool" and "ignorant" just because they voted for the JDP (2008b: 58).

This perception of Turkish politics by the JDP elite was not unsubstantiated and the JDP elite could usually find material to use to reproduce the low political appeal which constantly marked the JDP as the representative of the downtrodden majority of the country. However, in contrast to the common belief, this material did not usually stem from the distinction between the secular state and religious society. As the following example will make clear, the material originated in socio-cultural inequalities. It was not unusual to see that opponents of the JDP tended to belittle the JDP supporters, and the JDP elite skilfully exploited this tendency. In a highly debated blog post published after the local elections in 2014, the blogger told of his experience in a huge JDP meeting in İstanbul, which he attended "undercover" – in other words, he pretended to be a JDP supporter:

We have to talk about this mass of people. Who are these one million people? They are the ignored ones [...] yes, they are the people that we did not recognize, who we got bored of speaking to for a while, who we tended to ignore despite their existence in front of our eyes. They are these people [...] Our child's babysitter, Nermin [...] The security guard of our gated community, Kadir [...] Hatice, who is working in a textile factory without insurance. Her mother, Meliha [...] Her brother, Şanlı [...] Uncle Necati, who retired from the municipality. They are the police, [...] the firemen, [...] a bus driver, [...] workers in the subcontractor's building sites. [...] They are the people who work without CVs. [...] They are those people who did not bring a single newspaper with them. [...] They are those people who do not look at their smartphones, look at the internet, who do not know about Twitter, who do not know how to take a "selfie". [...] They are the people who raise their flags with an order, [...] who obey. They are the people who are shorter than I am because of malnutrition. [...] They are the ones who have always been given orders throughout their lives. [...] They are the people who obey lest they starve (Öztop, 2014).

One should also add that not only the supporters of the JDP but the JDP elite were usually despised by their opponents and, as is the case with Latin American populists, it is very common to hear such statements against the JDP politicians: "this kind of people should not be in the government" or "this kind of people cannot rule over me".⁴⁸

⁴⁸ "These characteristics are important not only or mainly as cultural markers of social differences, but as cultural modes, or ways of being, that play a large part in the 'economy of affection and dislikes' in social relations—whether direct or imagined. This phenomenon comes to the fore in common utterances such as:

In addition to popular bloggers, some very well-known columnists and fierce opponents of the JDP also despised JDP supporters. Just after the JDP victory in the 2007 early general elections, a columnist and well-known opponent of the JDP in the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* blamed the JDP voters and argued that their votes were for sale at a very low price. He called anyone who voted for the JDP a “barrel head” (*bidon kafalı*) (Özdil, 2007). In the same daily, another columnist rather openly despised the JDP voters in his article titled “*the man who rubs his belly*” (*göbeğini kaşıyan adam*):

He rubs his belly. [...] He does not like news. He likes TV entertainment shows. [...] He does not read. [...] He does not know newspapers. The only newspaper that he knows is the newspaper of the previous year that he spread under the pickle jars. His most comprehensive view on leaders is “he is a Muslim guy” and on democracy is “let him steal but get things done”. Then, he rubs his belly. This is the man that Tayyip Erdoğan trusted when he says “ballot box for everything” (Coşkun, 2007).

As I tried to illustrate, not only the self-identification of the JDP elite but also the opponents of the party helped to create a very solid high-low divide in Turkish politics.

3.5.4 The pro-JDP media and intellectuals against “white Turks”: 2014 presidential elections

Another stereotype that became quite fashionable in recent years, that of “white Turks”, is deeply embedded in the centre-periphery narrative outlined above, and therefore in the high-low divide of the country. One could quite frequently come across the use of this term by the members and supporters of the JDP to identify the opponents of the party.⁴⁹ According to a columnist who writes for the pro-JDP *Yenişafak*, for example, the white Turks were deeply disturbed by the fact that conservative people have become their flatmates instead of being their apartment staff (*kapıcı*). He also argued that white Turks could not take Erdoğan’s rise, as he is an Imam and Preacher School graduate and has his background in provincial Turkey, in Rize (Esayan, 2014b).

The abovementioned narrative and the images embedded in it were diligently reproduced by the pro-JDP media for the presidential elections in 2014. Although there was no doubt about his religious beliefs due to his previous position as the Secretary General of the

⁴⁹ ‘I don’t want to associate with *ese tipo de gente*’ (‘that kind of people’) or ‘I don’t want people like that in government,’ or even more simply: ‘Yes, I can relate to [name of politician]!’ (Ostiguy, 2009c: 10–11).

⁴⁹ One of my interviewees also used the term to describe the critics and opponents of the JDP. See Interviewee 37 2014, April 24.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation, even the joint candidate of the opposition parties, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, was delegitimized by the pro-JDP media on the grounds of his alleged elitism. According to Barlas, a pro-JDP columnist, the candidate for the opposition parties was the candidate of the “white Turks” because they wanted a president who knew English and whose wife was not veiled (Barlas, 2014). Another columnist in another pro-JDP daily, *Türkiye*, argued that there was a crude elitism in every compliment to İhsanoğlu. According to the columnist, İhsanoğlu was a “devout of the lounge” (*salon dindarı*) who was much closer to the “white Turk circles” than to religious masses and who was always “praised by the elite and the mainstream media due to his academic career” (Oğur, 2014a).

In contrast, pro-JDP journalists framed the story of Erdoğan as the son of a modest immigrant family in İstanbul who received his education in an Imam and Preacher School. According to this narrative, Erdoğan knows the streets of İstanbul. He played football and came from within the political organizations of the Islamist National View by working within its every echelon. He suffered for his political ideals. In short, “he has a story that does not miss the people. [...] In his story we encounter someone who has come from the lower class and has climbed the ladder of life despite suffering due to various impediments” (Kaplan, 2014). According to Kaplan, “Erdoğan’s story is the history of our democracy, history of the march of the destitute, who were oppressed by the regime and the centre” (2014). According to Selvi, on the other hand, İhsanoğlu knew little about Turkey and the Turkish people and he did not know the problems of the country: “he has not smelled the sweat of this people and shared their bread. He has lived abroad three times longer than he lived in Turkey” (2014). Hence, while Erdoğan was described as a “man of the people”, his opponents were called a “cosmopolitan elite”.

However, it would be misleading to evaluate the comments of the pro-JDP media on Erdoğan as a PR activity, a distorted public-image-making process. Some news reports indeed confirmed the “low” political style of Erdoğan. According to a news article in *Radikal*, in a meeting with the JDP deputies Erdoğan harshly criticized some of them for not going to their electoral regions frequently and for spending too much time on Twitter. It was argued that he warned the deputies with the following words: “Is it possible to be such a thing as a deputy who does not visit his electoral region? You either do not become the candidate for parliament or, if you do, you have to do what this position requires. You cannot fulfil this requirement by using Twitter. You have to go in person and hug them,

you have to smell the dung” (Radikal, 2010). It was also argued by an opposition deputy that he slapped some of the deputies and ministers, and also insulted them quite frequently (Radikal, 2013). There were also some news reports on how Erdoğan scolded the deputies of the JDP (Radikal, 2004).⁵⁰ These incidents were indicators of the “low” leadership style of Erdoğan. Erdoğan decisively, and to a great extent naturally, deployed the assets of “low-populist” appeal/style.⁵¹

The use of the term periphery in order to identify the social segments represented by the JDP also allowed the party elite to locate the party within a longer historical tradition of previous centre-right parties and thus into a wider social, cultural and political milieu.⁵² The concept of periphery and thus the low appeal, which lacks rigid boundaries, might have helped the JDP elite to reach more radical segments of the electorate, such as Islamists and Turkish nationalists, at the same time that they reached the median voter. It seems that the concept of the periphery as the marker of a loose political identity, which flexibly included people from different political, social and ethnic backgrounds, was at the same time the framework of the elite alliance of the JDP. Since most of the members of the JDP high echelons, such as the Central Executive Committee (*Merkez Yürütme Kurulu*) and the Central Decision and Administration Board (*Merkez Karar Yönetim Kurulu*), came from different political backgrounds such as the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*), the Motherland Party, the Islamist National View tradition and the Nationalist Action Party, overplaying a rigid party identity that explicitly referred to an Islamist, nationalist or liberal ideological framework would have been detrimental to the elite alliance of the party. It would have also limited the JDP’s space for flexibility in terms of policies by decisively ruling out some of the options that might be seen as mutually exclusive with a less flexible political identity. Instead, the party leadership practically embraced the distinction between the centre and periphery, which to a great extent overlapped with the high-low divide in politics. This also helped the party to contain seemingly contradictory social and economic policies at the same time.

⁵⁰ Compare this with Ostiguy’s arguments: “[the low] values and displays physical contact, use of slangs. The body of the low is always at the forefront” (2013: 12–13).

⁵¹ I analyse Erdoğan’s centrality to the party and his low appeal (more precisely the political cultural axis of the JDP’s low appeal) in detail in the chapter on the JDP leadership.

⁵² Many discussions can be found on the role of the JDP with regards to the history of Turkish political parties. The party elite made a deliberate effort to place the party within the longer history of the centre-right tradition in Turkey. See Akdoğan (2004).

3.6 Form of the message: a conscious engagement with the “low”

In the use of communication instruments, the JDP elite and cadres followed a strategy which was also consistent with the place of the “low” in the party’s political appeal. Simplicity, modesty and consideration to “popular realism”⁵³ can be defined as the main stylistic characteristics of the JDP’s communication activities. The JDP was always much more successful at interpreting its message into the receivers’ language.

3.6.1 Simplicity

One of the main pieces of advice given to JDP candidates by the party headquarters and the party elite was to use simple language for the electoral campaigns. According to Şentürk, a former JDP vice-chair in İstanbul, messages sent by the parties or individual candidates should be aimed at the targeted constituency (2008a: 104). Şentürk’s recommendations also reflect the wider relevance of the high-low divide in Turkish politics:

Socialist discourses in particular have no influence over large segments of society in our country. Why? There are of course many reasons, but the form of the message has a significant place among them. In our country, the academic community in particular uses a very heavy language. They not only use invented words instead of the words used by the people, but they also use very complicated words. On the other hand, rightists shape their messages using the language of the man on the street and adapt it to their level. Thus, while the impact of the message of the leftists decreases, the impact of the message of the rightists increases. In our country, the average education level of the electorate is fourth year of primary school. Therefore, the message to the masses should be at the level of the fourth year of primary school. Whereas our politicians, perhaps partially for satisfying their egos, like intellectual speeches, and then they complain that the society does not understand them. But it is not society who does not understand the intellectuals; rather, the intellectuals do not understand the society (2008a: 105).

Şentürk contends that slogans like “we are uncompromisingly going to protect the secular republic” or “we will develop the welfare state” do not make any sense to the “average citizen”, the “man on the street”: “How many people know the concept of welfare state?”

⁵³ I borrow the term “popular realism” from Bourdieu’s seminal work *Distinction* in order to identify the practical worldview of the working people, the majority of the electorate, who evaluate practices on the basis of their function, outside aesthetical and abstract frameworks (1984: 200). In politics, popular realism would also lead the majority of the electorate towards a much more cautious attitude regarding unrealistic economic promises of politicians, as well as towards political propaganda that depends on abstract concepts like welfare state, democracy and liberties.

In the coffee houses of the slums how many times is the concept of welfare state is used?” (Şentürk 2008a: 97). Hence it is safe to argue that the JDP elite had a sharp awareness of the importance of the use of “low” in Turkish politics.

The guide to candidate deputies published by the JDP headquarters also repeatedly underlines the importance of modifying the message according to the circumstances and keeping it simple and straightforward. According to this guide, candidates and election office workers should have clear and straightforward answers to the questions of voters: “The language should be understandable, obvious and clear or relevant to the question without rambling on the topic. The language should be at the level of understanding of the electorate. [...] We should [...] avoid polished narratives. We should not ramble and we must not forget that our main aim is not to feel good but to transmit our message to our addressee” (Ak Parti, 2007: 14). According to the JDP elite, election periods cannot take “being seen as intellectual”, “polished expressions” and “heavy concepts” (Şentürk, 2008a: 84). Hence, the JDP embraced concrete language and defined concrete political targets in its electoral propaganda, for the JDP elite contended that the lower the education level of the electorate, the more they are prone to concrete over abstract thinking (Şentürk, 2008b: 41).

This was why the most widely known and enduring slogans of the JDP were those with a concrete and a simple message designed to appeal to large segments of society. The slogans such as “we don't stop, we keep going” (*durmak yok, yola devam*), “it used to be a dream, it is now realized” (*hayaldi, gerçek oldu*) and “always nation, always service” (*daima millet, daima hizmet*) had simple and concrete messages that underlined the achievements of the “hard-working” JDP cadres and their service-oriented outlook.⁵⁴ The JDP propaganda always pointed out the practical achievements of the party and always implied how resourceful the JDP cadres could be. Here one is also reminded of the electoral slogan of the JDP: “I do not look at words, I look at accomplishments!” (*lafa değil icraata bakarım!*). Hence, there has always been a classic statement about Turkish politics, particularly for ruling centre-right parties: “They steal but they work hard!” (*çalıyorlar ama çalışıyorlar!*).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ See Yavuz (2009) and Çınar (2013) for the importance of the emphasis on service delivery in the JDP propaganda and politics.

⁵⁵ For a very similar situation in Latin America, see Ostiguy: “These leaders often also claim that they ‘don’t talk, but get things done,’ although most of them do talk more than their share. In a classic statement

3.6.2 Modesty

Not only the simplicity of the message but also the modesty of the candidate is apparently seen as an important political asset by the JDP elite. For instance, according to Şentürk's recommendations, candidates should avoid expensive clothes lest the electorate feel a status gap (2008a: 123). Similarly, in her column, Ayşe Böhürler, one of the founders of the JDP, warns the individual candidates against "branded, shiny or ostentatious accessories" (2013). Both the image and style of candidates and party members in general were taken seriously by the JDP elite. Hence, Böhürler also warned the candidates against drawing an arrogant image (Böhürler, 2013). The JDP guide for deputy candidates underlined the importance of being modest, too: "you should not create the mood that you know the best, you should be moderate and you should avoid exorbitance" (Ak Parti, 2007: 12). According to the same guide, candidates should not use didactic language: "The way to approach the people is by revealing that you are a part of the life they have" (2007: 13).

Strikingly, the guide also emphasizes that the "electoral process is not a didactical but an emotional one" (Ak Parti, 2007: 15). In JDP propaganda candidates are told to be "friendly and sincere", and that they should avoid "pretentious" attitudes (Ak Parti, 2007: 11). This is why one of the founding figures of the JDP warns the candidates against excessively devout images: "an excessively religious appearance makes people think that you are pretentious" (Böhürler, 2013). This recommendation is rather important since there is still a widespread belief that the JDP exploited the religious feelings of the masses. It seems that the JDP's appeal to the lower segments of the society had less to do with religious symbols rather than a genuine engagement with the "low" through simplicity, modesty and sincerity.

Another incident mentioned in the guide by Şentürk illustrated the importance of modesty as a political asset in Turkish politics. It is hard to verify whether this anecdote conveyed by Şentürk is true or not. Yet even the fact that it was related by one of the JDP elites was emblematic of their stylistic approach to politics.

You know candidates and chairs who, when they visit houses, let the ones they're visiting know beforehand. This is like saying, "We are coming, prepare the things that you are going to serve." Especially if

on Adhemar de Barros in Brazil, it was said without shame that: '*Rouba, mas faz!*'—that is, 'He steals, but he gets things done!'" (Ostiguy, 2013: 8-9).

the household you are visiting is poor – oh, my God! What kind of an attitude is this? He does not like the chair in which he sits, he clearly displays that he does not like the smell and appearance of the inside of the home in his facial expression; if it is dinner time he cannot cross his legs and sit down at all. If he makes it at all, he makes it clear that he is uncomfortable. This is obviously insulting for the members of the household. Let me tell you what is told about Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: ‘They went to a poor household and inside it was dirty and smelled. While people around Erdoğan did not know what to do and their disturbance could be read from their faces, Erdoğan immediately crossed his legs and sat down in front of the table on the ground. He started to drink the soup in the common bowl with a spoon with such a great appetite that this established a warm connection between him and the owner of the house.’ (2006: 155).

The main importance of this example is that it clearly illustrates the limits of understanding populism “as mere words” and demonstrates the centrality of “manners” and “ways of doing things” in grasping the populist phenomenon as repeatedly underlined by Ostiguy. Hence, party programs and speeches of party elites help to understand the populist phenomenon only to a certain extent. This example also tells a lot about the content of the direct and unmediated link between the leader and the supporters, and underlined the importance of the style as well as emotions in developing the populist rapport.

3.6.3 Taking “popular realism” into account: “cautious promises” and “managerial competence”

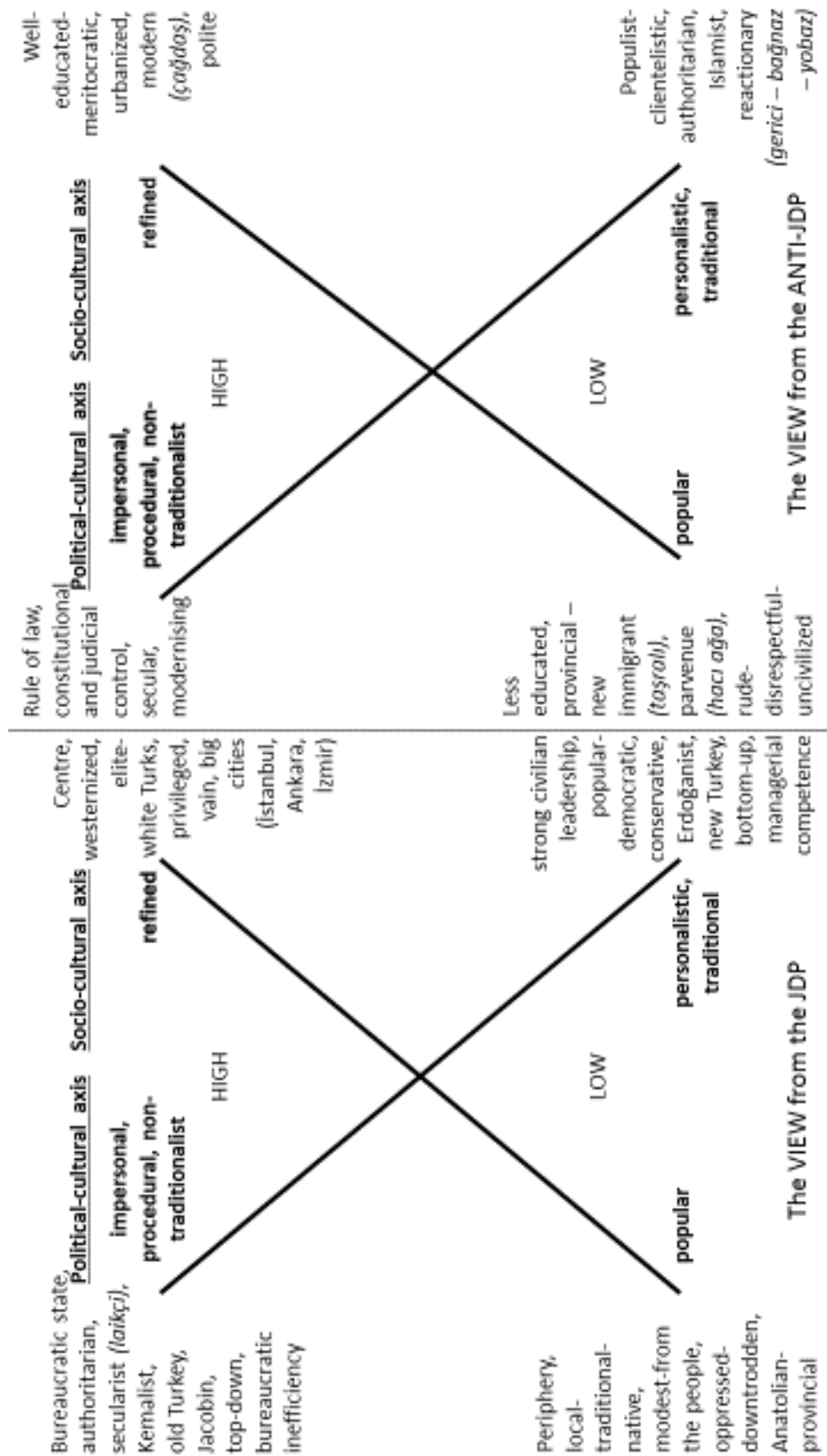
The necessity of simplicity, modesty and having concrete content as put forward in the political propaganda did not mean that the JDP used a simple strategy of abundant promises. The JDP elite contended that the electorate was not illogical and that they easily distinguished realizable promises from unrealizable ones (Şentürk, 2008a: 46). As Çaha and Guida observed, this was indeed the practice in the JDP campaigns. In contrast, the Republican People’s Party, for instance, was not really careful with its promises in the 2009 local elections. According to the authors, the Republican People’s Party’s generous promises were not found convincing by the majority of the electorate (2011: 78–79). In contrast, according to Çınar, the JDP always kept its promises limited, avoided binding redistributive strategies and gained a lot from fulfilling these “downsized promises” in their time in office (Çınar, 2013: 38). Indeed, as one of my interviewees, a senior researcher for the JDP, emphasized, the party always avoided binding redistributive

promises and this contributed to the credibility of its leadership in the eyes of the electorate:

You know, in the first election campaign of the JDP, the Prime Minister [Erdoğan] said this: “do not expect anything from us for three or four years”. [...] Citizens voted for such a party. [...] What was our presumption? If you do not promise to the citizens... I mean communication experts say such things like they should find the answer to “what’s in it for me?” [stated in English]. What is that? Unreserved promises. Citizens can find the answer of “what’s in it for me” in the other strategy, too. He says, “Dude, I do not want anything from the state in a stable economy. It only should not steal the money in my pocket through inflation and interest rates, etc. I can already earn my life. May it not make a shadow”. It was the concern of citizens. These were the results of our research (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25).

Apart from the abovementioned stylistic characteristics of the JDP propaganda, the party leader and his managerial achievements occupied a special place in the party’s political appeal. This was why one of the frequent assaults of Erdoğan (also in line with low appeal) against the opposition leaders of Republican People’s Party and the Nationalist Action Party, highlighted their managerial incompetence: “Never trust three Karaman sheeps to Baykal and Bahçeli. Believe me, they would lose them even in this Tayyare Square; they cannot herd them at all” (Gazetevatan, 2009). The JDP propaganda heavily relied on Erdoğan, his projects, achievements, and his managerial competence.

Figure 3.3: Assets of low and high in Turkey: engagements from the low and high



Source: Adapted from Ostiguy's original exposition (2009c: 8) for the Turkish case

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, after a broader theoretical discussion on concepts of cleavages, divides and populism, and after some brief information about the importance of socio-cultural divides and the socio-economic profiles of the voters in Turkish politics, I illustrated how the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media situated the party and its leadership within the space of political appeals in Turkey. I argued that, contrary to widespread assumptions, the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media constituted the party's political appeal neither predominantly along the left-right divide nor primarily along the secular-religious divide. Instead, they located the party somewhere close to the low end of the high-low divide in Turkish politics. Indeed, religiosity had a place in the JDP's political appeal, as underlined by many commentators. However, as the evidence from interviews, speeches of the JDP elite, writings in the pro-JDP media, the presidential elections in 2014, and the JDP's communication style illustrated, the role of religious symbols and rhetoric was subordinate to a wider "low-populist" appeal of the party.

Hence, as can be seen in Figure 3.3, in the political cultural axes of the high-low divide the JDP's political appeal situated the party in the low by emphasizing Erdoğan's strong leadership and managerial competence *vis-a-vis* the so-called inefficient and bureaucratic style of his opponents. On the other hand, the JDP's political appeal also situated the party in the low along the socio-cultural axis of the high-low divide by emphasizing the peripheral, local-traditional, Anatolian and downtrodden character of the JDP cadres and the masses represented by the party. At the same time, the JDP elite depicted the opposition as a Westernized, privileged elite or as the "white Turks" located in big cities. As a response, the opponents of the JDP usually identified themselves with the high by emphasizing their well-educated, urban backgrounds *vis-a-vis* the less educated, provincial, lower-class backgrounds of the JDP elite and JDP supporters. In the political cultural axis of the high-low divide, the opponents of the JDP tended to locate JDP politics in the low by emphasizing the JDP's authoritarian and personalist politics while locating themselves in the high by underlining the importance of rule of law, secularism, and constitutional and judicial control.

From a broader, theoretical point of view, this discussion of the JDP's political appeal illustrated the insufficiencies of looking at Turkish politics through the lenses provided by the left-right or religious-secular divides. In fact, in Turkey, although religious symbols and rhetoric are highly visible components of political appeals, they have always

been subordinate to the overwhelming reflection of social and cultural inequalities in politics, namely the high-low divide.

4 The JDP and ERDOĞAN: NON-CHARISMATIC PERSONALISM

4.1 Introduction

Between the general election in 2002 and the presidential election in 2014, the Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey, under the leadership of Erdoğan, won several elections by receiving around 35–50% of all votes. Many studies underlined the role of Erdoğan in this unprecedented electoral achievement of the JDP, and some of these studies explicitly argued that the achievements of the party could be understood primarily on the ground of Erdoğan’s “charisma” and his direct appeal on the electorate.¹ In this chapter I argue that, contrary to this widespread belief, Erdoğan was not a charismatic leader and that his authority over the JDP organization derived from another source: “robust action” or “diligence in organization building”.

Before analysing the relationship between Erdoğan and the JDP I discuss the relationships between the concepts of personalization, personalism, charismatic personalism, non-charismatic personalism and personal party personalism in section two. In section three I evaluate the case of Erdoğan and the JDP. I argue that, despite his very strong and popular public image (broadly his “low-populist” appeal) and autonomy of leadership, Erdoğan’s political ascent occurred within a stable political climate and he did not have any transformational impact on his followers, supporters and organization. Details of Erdoğan’s biography demonstrated the fact that he was a diligent, innovative and pragmatic “organization man” (*teşkilatçı*) exclusively focused on achieving and maintaining power. In order to do this, Erdoğan heavily relied on a large and pervasive organization personally constructed and firmly controlled by him. Defining the true nature of Erdoğan’s leadership style was crucial, because as long as researchers evaluate him as a charismatic leader they would continue to ignore the remarkable contribution of a large and pervasive organization in the electoral achievements and the political resilience of the JDP.

¹ Many accounts of the rise and success of the JDP highlighted the role of its leader. For instance, Hale and Özbudun (2010: 154–155), Tuğal (2009: 176), Cizre (2008: 5), Tezcür (2012: 122) and Heper and Toktaş (2003: 160) stressed the role of Erdoğan. Some other accounts, such as Yıldırım et al. (2007) and Sambur (2009), explicitly argued that Erdoğan’s “charisma” was vital in the party’s electoral achievements.

4.2 Three faces of personalism

In this section I discuss the relationships between the concepts of personalisation, personalism, charismatic personalism, non-charismatic personalism and personal party personalism. I firstly demonstrate the difference between personalization and personalism. From the perspective of this distinction I respectively examine the concepts of charisma, non-charismatic personalism and personal party personalism as different reflections of personalism in politics.

4.2.1 Personalization and personalism

The rising role of personalities in politics in the last several decades has been underlined by many political scientists. From the perspective of studies on political communication, the “mediatization of politics” (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) was strongly connected to the increasing importance of group leaders at the cost of collective identities. This was seen as one of the reasons behind personalized political leadership (Mazzoleni, 2000). From the perspective of studies on party politics, as the role of individual candidates within parties became more important, personalization in the media increased, and this in turn enhanced the personalization of the behaviours of politicians (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007). The rise of catch-all parties and new communication technologies, combined with the gradual retreat of squarely programmatic and ideological mass parties, has provided a suitable ground for the increasing prominence of the candidates and, most notably, the party leaders. This wider process of personalization of politics – in other words, the increasing role of personalities and the decreasing role of ideologies and programmes, together with the salience of political parties – has strong connections with the change of communication technologies (McAllister, 2007).²

A very broad description of the “personalization” of politics was made by Rahat and Sheafer (2007), according to whom “personalization should be seen as a process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group i.e., political party declines” (2007: 65). Ansell and Fish very similarly and broadly defines “personalism” as “loyalty to persons rather than to impersonal ideologies, institutions, or rules” (1999: 286). However, personalization and personalism should be seen as different notions despite the common

² Also see Balmas et al. (2014).

ground. As a broader phenomenon, personalization has implications for local and national leadership as well as the representation of politics in the media.

Thus, I tend to see personalism as a more specific concept, something particularly related to styles of top national leaders in political groups and organizations that are mostly working against collective-institutional arrangements and identities. Following this differentiation, the phenomena of charismatic personalism, non-charismatic personalism and personal party personalism can be considered to be different reflections of personalism in contemporary politics. However, these different reflections of personalism can be easily conflated due to their many common features, and this confusion could lead researchers to quick and misleading overestimations of the role of personalities in politics. In the following sub-sections of this theoretical section I try to distinguish these different reflections for a better understanding of contemporary political leadership in context of its interaction with followers, supporters and organizations.

4.2.2 The concept of charisma

Like many other social scientific concepts, the concept of charisma has a much wider use beyond the academic sphere. This broad usage led to unsystematic and descriptive uses of the term “charisma”, which was frequently used as a plain adjective referring to a superior leadership performance or a popular image. In fact, the concept has a very specific meaning in its original use by Weber. In his wider discussion regarding the pure types of legitimate authority structures, Weber separately evaluates charismatic authority and distinguishes this form from the rational-legal and the traditional legitimate authority (Weber, 1974: 46–47). In the case of rational-legal authority, obedience is owed to the “legally established impersonal order”, and in the case of traditional legitimacy structures, it is owed to the “traditionally sanctioned position of authority” (Weber, 1974: 47). Unlike these pro-status quo legitimacy structures, in the charismatic authority, obedience is mainly produced on the ground of the personal qualities of the leader (Weber, 1974: 47).

Charisma was seen as an exceptional occurrence by Weber. According to Weber, the phenomenon of charisma can be observed under the circumstances of “distress”, when the followers usually attribute “supernatural gifts” to the charismatic leader (Weber, 1946: 245). Weber also defines charisma in contradistinction to any kind of bureaucratic, institutional and permanent structure (1946: 248). He underlines the role of personal strength and complete surrender of the followers to the charismatic leader as other

indicators of the phenomenon (Weber, 1946: 249). According to Weber, charismatic personalities are, most of the time, outside the family life and its routines (Weber, 1946: 248). In contrast to the conservative and institutional routines, Weber states that one of the indicators of charisma is a revolutionary spirit:

Genuine charismatic domination therefore knows of no abstract legal codes and statutes and of no 'formal' way of adjudication. Its "objective" law emanates concretely from the highly personal experience of heavenly grace and from the god-like strength of the hero. Charismatic domination means a rejection of all ties to any external order in favour of the exclusive glorification of the genuine mentality of the prophet and hero. Hence, its attitude is revolutionary and transvalues everything; it makes a sovereign break with all traditional or rational norms: "It is written, but I say unto you" (1946: 250).

Given the indicators, circumstances and examples Weber has provided, such as "national distress", "prophets" and "heroes", "the attribution of supernatural powers to the leader" and a "revolutionary spirit", it is clear he considered charisma a genuinely rare and exceptional phenomenon. From the perspective of Weber's discussion, charisma could be seen as an original-mythical source for new, stable, and legitimate authority structures. This is why Tucker underlines the fact that charismatic leaders were also defined by a concrete proposal of a new way of life and existence (1968: 746).

In his later examination of Weber's notion of charisma, Tucker also underlines another important feature of charisma. According to Tucker, there would be a spontaneous formation of at least a small circle of followers identifiable at the early phases, before the leader became politically powerful, if the concept of charisma is relevant for a given case (Tucker, 1968: 739–742). The concept of charisma should therefore be seen as something strongly affiliated with the circumstances of political crises as well as a revolutionary spirit which breaks ties with the current regime and existing institutional and traditional authority structures. Charismatic leaders usually introduce new ideological and intellectual narratives to their followers and expect them to follow this transformational narrative embodied by their personality. Charisma does not only refer to superior leadership qualities or a popular image, but also to an intellectual and moral authority that re-shapes its followers and provides them with a new identity.

A clear distinction between charismatic and other forms of leadership from the perspective of political organizations can be found in the seminal work of Panebianco on political parties. Panebianco differentiates usual occurrences of prestige and authority

from charisma. To a great extent Panebianco follows the distinction made by Weber and underlines the revolutionary character of charisma as well as its anti-institutional and anti-bureaucratic tendencies which observe no legal, permanent pattern except the charismatic leader's will (1988: 143–144). Panebianco also applies the Weberian concept to the party organizations and underlines several indicators of a “charismatic party”. For Panebianco, charismatic parties are defined by a “cohesive dominant coalition held together by loyalty to the leader” that has no room for factional politics (Panebianco, 1988: 145). Charismatic parties, according to Panebianco, do not reveal bureaucratic characteristics. He also asserts the “revolutionary”, “anti-party” character of charismatic parties as well as the “total symbiosis between leader and the organizational identity” in these kinds of political organizations (Panebianco, 1988: 147). In a sense, Panebianco tends to see strong, highly routinized and remarkably bureaucratized organizations in contradistinction with the charismatic party, while underlining the importance of a revolutionary, “transformational”³ leadership with a high degree of autonomy *vis-a-vis* the leader's followers and supporters.

4.2.3 Non-charismatic personalism and “robust action”

Non-charismatic personalism is a much more ordinary phenomenon compared to charismatic personalism. This is why Ansell and Fish strongly underline the exceptional features of charisma, stating that “charismatic leadership is no ordinary occurrence. It transforms the audience [...] The charismatic leader is prophet not merely a personality” (Ansell & Fish, 1999: 284). In addition, Ansell and Fish contend that “leaders of charismatic parties assume – or attempt to assume – transformational roles. They regard themselves as agents of massive social change transcending the party or even any particular ideology or program. Their main source of identity is themselves, and their personal style is messianic. They maintain power by holding their followers in thrall” (1999: 288). In contrast to the exceptional transformational roles of charismatic leaders, non-charismatic types of personalist leadership have “transactional roles” (Ansell & Fish, 1999: 288). Non-charismatic personalist leaders are mainly brokers of power among different segments and groups within party organizations, and their authority derives from

³ The distinction between transactional and transformational leadership is a well-established one in the literature on leadership studies introduced by MacGregor Burns during the 1970s (2010). For Burns, transactional leadership is based on exchange of goods or valued things between leaders and followers whereas the transformational leadership is based on strong emotional, ideological and moral bonds. In contrast to transactional leadership, transformational leadership seeks to provide a new identity and morality to its followers.

this role. In other words, their identity is rooted in the party itself and they attach greater importance to the party cohesion and effectiveness than to political principles (Ansell & Fish, 1999: 288). According to Ansell and Fish, they maintain this role and make themselves indispensable through “robust action”, which refers to “an aptitude for speaking effectively to multiple, often diverse, audiences within the party and for convincing each audience that he or she represents its interests and aspirations” (1999: 288–289).

For Ansell and Fish, in non-charismatic personalist parties, leaders have great personal authority and are symbols of their organizations. However, they lack the exceptional features of charismatic leaders who aim to transform their followers (1999: 283). In its place, non-charismatic personalist leaders use “robust action” – a “multifaceted”⁴, proactive and energetic effort – to deal with multiple flows of requests coming from diverging groups and local settings within the organization. In the original exposition of the concept of “robust action” by Ansell and Fish (1999) and Padgett and Ansell (1993), the authors put a strong emphasis on its transactional role in conciliating diverse interests. However, I see extremely tiring physical, bodily activity as equally essential to robust action, which requires endless travelling, speeches and negotiations undertaken by the party leader. This is why I tend to define “robust action” as the transactional role undertaken by the party leader via an extremely proactive political style that consists of extensive travelling, numerous meetings and countless speeches with diverse audiences within the party for intraparty governance. Robust action increases the party leader’s control over the local and centrifugal tendencies within the party, and it also increases party cohesion. Hence, in line with Ansell and Fish, it seems important to distinguish charismatic forms of personalism from the more common form of non-charismatic personalism. As underlined above, revolutionary and transformational roles exceptionally

⁴ I am using this term in order to describe a certain intermediating leadership quality which connects diverse social, political and cultural networks. This is very similar to a dynamic highlighted previously by Padgett and Ansell (1993). In the earlier exposition of the concept of robust action through the example of Medici rule in Florence, Padgett and Ansell (1993) put great emphasis on the “multivocal” or “sphinx-like” political style of the Medici. By the term “multivocal”, the authors underlined the importance of usually obscure and ambiguous political moves and reactions of leaders in extracting support from heterogeneous and often contradictory networks. According to Padgett and Ansell, multivocality is “the fact that single actions can be interpreted coherently from multiple perspectives simultaneously, the fact that single actions can be moves in many games at once” (1993: 1263). When I use “multifaceted” I have in mind a slightly more active multivocal action in which the leader does not wait for the flow of demands but actively tries to persuade different – and, from time to time, contradictory – networks for support.

claimed by charismatic personalist leaders are differentiated from non-charismatic personalism, which relies on a diligent organization building effort or “robust action”.

4.2.4 Personal party

Another common reflection of personalism in contemporary politics which can help us to better understand the case of JDP and Erdoğan is the “personal party”⁵ and the overwhelming centrality of political leaders in rapidly rising and falling contemporary political parties. Apart from the ideal typical example of Berlusconi’s various parties in Italy as analysed by McDonnell (2013), the rapid rise and fall of parties of many populist leaders in Latin America could be seen as examples of personal party personalism. According to McDonnell, personal parties are defined by the centrality of the leader’s decisions and presence in the rise and fall of the party, the lack of any stable, permanent grass roots organization, the absolute concentration of power in the hands of the leader and the centrality of the party leader in the campaign strategies of the party (2013: 222). Given the features underlined by McDonnell (2013), personal parties strongly resemble non-charismatic personalism. However, in line with Ansell and Fish (1999), one should strongly emphasize the fact that unlike personal parties, in non-charismatic personalism leaders put enormous effort in organization building and attach importance to permanent organizational structures. Hence, while strategically the emphasis in non-charismatic personalism is on the organization, in the personal party the emphasis is on the leader.

Thus, it would be better to think of charismatic personalism, non-charismatic personalism and personal party personalism as related yet different – but not exclusive – reflections of the broader notion of personalism in politics. I summarize the common and distinguishing features of these three faces of personalism in Table 4.1. Strong public image of the leader and the excessive concentration of power in the hands of leaders (leadership autonomy) represent the common ground of these different forms of personalism. This could also lead researchers to conflate these different forms of personalism since the prominence of a “leader’s persona” is essential to all. However, there are also decisive differences among these forms with regards to political and social circumstances and the linkages between leaders and their followers and between supporters and organizations. While charismatic personalism is an outcome of

⁵ The first systematic use of the concept of “personal party” could be found in a book titled *The Personal Party* by an Italian political scientist, Mauro Calise, which was published in Italian in 2000 (McDonnell, 2013: 221). Also see a short description of the concept by Calise (2005: 96-99) in English. In this part of the chapter, however, I extensively rely on McDonnell (2013) since I do not know Italian.

extraordinary political and social circumstances, non-charismatic and personal party personalism are products of the status quo. In charismatic personalism, the leader enthral the followers and supporters and transforms them in line with the leader's particular worldview – either a narrow and specifically interpreted ideology, a new religion, or a loose yet peculiarly radical outlook.

In contrast, in non-charismatic and personal party personalism leaders have a transactional role. They are either located in the centre of various politically salient social and individual actors through the use of media and extensive patronage networks, and/or within a large and pervasive organization through robust action. Instead of transforming the audience, they connect various segments of their followers to unified political action in return for material-selective and/or ideational-collective benefits. However, while the grass roots organization in particular, and the party organization in general, can be seen as a secondary instrument in this transactional political activity in the personal party, organization building has been the basis and the main aim of the transactional role of leader in non-charismatic personalism as the case of JDP revealed.

Table 4.1: Three faces of personalism

Types of personalism	Charismatic	Non-charismatic	Personal party
Features			
Public image of the leader	Strong	Strong or weak	Strong
Degree of leadership autonomy	High	High	High
Political and social context	Crisis/distress	Status quo	Status quo
Engagement with followers/supporters	Transformational	Transactional	Transactional
Organization building efforts	Low	High (robust action)	Low

Source: Author's compilation

4.3 The case of Erdoğan and the JDP: non-charismatic personalism

In this section of the paper I examine Erdoğan's personality and leadership style from the perspective of the discussion in the previous section. Following the features defined in

Table 4.1, I first look at the public image of Erdoğan. Afterwards I demonstrate some indicators showing the high degree of autonomy of Erdoğan within the JDP. I also look at the context of his political ascent and his personal qualities. In the last, key sub-section of this section I focus on the “robust action” of Erdoğan, which mainly relied on a massive organizational leverage constructed by him and kept under his firm personal control.

As early as 2004 the relationship between Erdoğan and the JDP was defined as a “charismatic” one by one of the party ideologues (Akdoğan, 2004: 151). It is true that Erdoğan’s personality had a dominant role within the JDP and it is the one of the grounds of the elite coalition of the party as well as its broad electoral base. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate, this dynamic was not charisma but non-charismatic personalism, which has always been a resilient aspect of Turkish politics. Through the personality of Erdoğan, like previous centre-right political forces, the JDP overcame the potential centrifugal impacts of a lack of a well-defined ideological position, program and institutional structure as well as a lack of a socially cohesive electoral base.⁶

It is not uncommon to see the term “charisma” used as an adjective describing the leaders of every major political party in Turkey by various scholars. This situation also represents one of the most common yet rarely interrogated truisms of Turkish political science. Prominent leaders of the centre-right and right in Turkey, such as Menderes, Demirel, Özal, Erbakan and Türkeş, as well as social democrat Ecevit, were called charismatic by students of Turkish politics.⁷ Thus, mainstream political science literature on Turkey has an unsubstantiated claim that Turkish politics has produced several charismatic political

⁶ See Wikileaks document dated 2004 March 27: “8. (C) AKP [JDP] insiders as diverse as deputy party chairman for policy Dengir Firat, iconoclast conservative Ankara M.P. Ersonmez Yarbay, Istanbul Alibeykoy’s veteran activists Erhan Senol and Suat Sar, and Gaziantep’s Nizip district party board member Salih Uygur readily admit that, despite AKP’s formidable grassroots campaign organization, it will take years to mold the current formation into a coherent, internally democratic party with a variety of compelling personalities. Instead, just as at the national level, at the municipal level AKP is trading on Erdogan as the party rather than on the identity and capabilities of its candidates.” https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04ANKARA1842_a.html (accessed: 27.5.2016). Also see another Wikileaks document dated as 2005 December 8: “12. (C) AKP MPS are as divided by personality as by politics, but personality-based fault lines crosscut ideological ones. PM Erdogan is the glue that holds AKP together.” https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05ANKARA7215_a.html (accessed: 27.5.2016).

⁷ See Acar for “Demirel’s personality and charisma” (1991: 191). See Kalaycıoğlu’s study on the “charismatic leadership” of Özal (2002). For Ecevit’s charisma see Kınıklioğlu (2000: 1 and 16). Perennial leader and the founding father of the Islamist National View parties, Necmettin Erbakan, was also called charismatic (Şimşek, 2004: 124). Also see Gümüşçü and Sert for “Erbakan’s charisma” (2009: 963). Cornell calls the founding leader of the Nationalist Action Party, namely Türkeş as well as Erbakan, “charismatic” (1999: 211). According to Gürgür, until the military coup on 27 May 1960, Adnan Menderes, the leader of the Democrat Party, “was definitely the most charismatic and popular personality of the Turkish politics” (2009: 3).

leaders in last seven decades.⁸ Erdoğan was a stronger case of charisma in the eyes of scholars since his direct appeal to the electorate and his authority over the JDP organization was much stronger than that of the previous leaders in Turkey.⁹ A closer look at the allegedly most charismatic leader ever in Turkish politics, the JDP leader Erdoğan,¹⁰ would also reveal the weakness of this sort of approach to political leadership in Turkey.

4.3.1 Erdoğan's public image¹¹

An outlier to Ansell and Fish's presupposition that non-charismatic personalist leaders are not usually telegenic characters (1999: 290), Erdoğan was a highly impressive public figure.¹² He was also a remarkable orator, which was partly a result of his secondary and high school education in Imam and Preacher School in İstanbul.¹³ One of his advisors in his first significant electoral victory in the 1994 local government election for İstanbul implied that he was a very good actor and argued that "when there is a script, when there is a game plan, he easily understands his role in this framework, easily adopts himself to the situation and undertakes this role with his body language, with his speeches" (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 121).¹⁴

⁸ From the perspective of this chapter, all of these previous so-called charismatic leaders represented cases of personalism. In terms of personalistic leadership style, Erdoğan revealed very similar features to former centre-right leaders in Turkey. However, the importance attached by him to the construction of a large and pervasive organization as his power base differentiated him from some of his personalist predecessors.

⁹ See Yıldırım et al. (2007). Throughout their study Yıldırım et al. repeatedly underlined the charismatic appeal and personality of Erdoğan but did not make a satisfying conceptual discussion on the term. They also did not refer to the Weberian sources of the concept but explained charisma on the grounds of "anthropology".

¹⁰ For instance, Sambur argued that "the charismatic personality of Erdoğan is its [the JDP's] real power" (2009: 121).

¹¹ All translations of excerpts from personal interviews and Turkish sources in the text are mine.

¹² One should also note that Erdoğan was much taller than the Turkish average and his sympathizers in the [social] media sometimes called him the "tall man" (*uzun adam*). He also had a slightly bulging posture, neither challenging nor subservient. Yet this did not make him look weak but resembled traditional Turkish roughneck posture, which enhanced his "low-populist" appeal/style. Not unrelated to his posture, he frequently argued that his political attitude was neither challenging nor obedient with the following expression: "we were not aggressive but we stand tall" (*dikleşmeden dik durduk!*).

¹³ In Imam and Preacher Schools in Turkey students are taught in rhetoric, and they are expected to become good public orators because one of the duties of imams is to give speeches to the congregation in Friday's sermons in mosques. Çakır and Çalmuk also mentioned in their oft-cited biography of Erdoğan that when he was a youth branch leader of the Islamist National View party of the 1970s he used to rehearse public speeches on his own (2001: 26).

¹⁴ In an interview with an experienced Motherland politician, he underlined the impact of the body image as an important political asset in Turkey: "In politics, height, a neat figure (*boy, pos, endam*) is extremely important" (Interviewee 17 2014, February 25). It was not surprising that one of the members of the youth organization of the party told me during a lunch that it was even sufficient reason for casting people's vote for the JDP because of Erdoğan's stature, his figure (*boyu, posu, duruşu*) (Interviewee 42 2014, May 3).

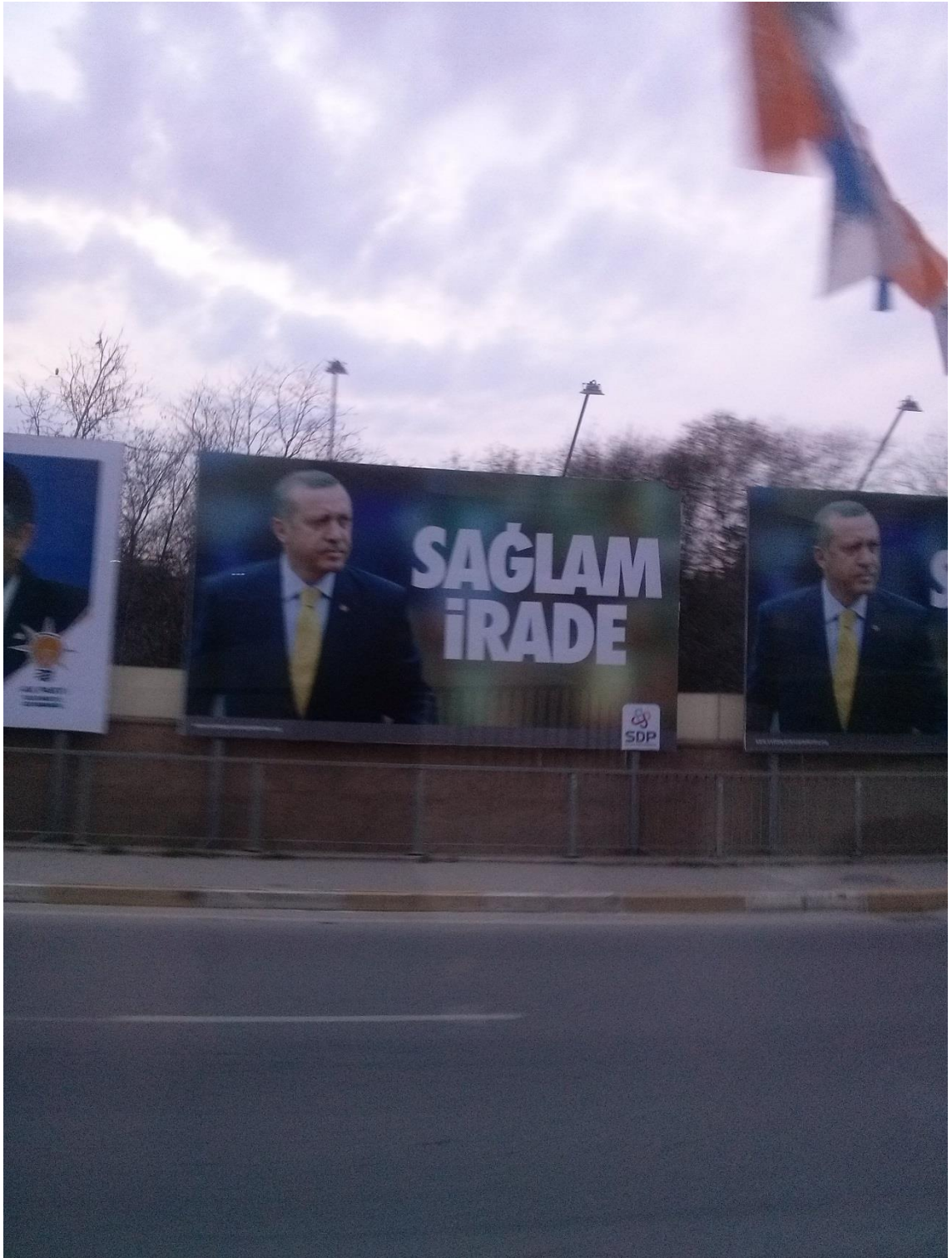
Even before the foundation of the JDP, Erdoğan was a very popular political figure. One of my interviewees, a former provincial chair, related the following incidents that indicate the popularity of Erdoğan in the distinct corners of the country around the time of the official foundation of the party. This particular interviewee was a former chair of another right-wing party before the foundation of the JDP, and he joined Erdoğan during the foundation of the party, later becoming the first chair of the party in his province. The incidents he portrayed are especially important as he made some striking comparisons that indicated Erdoğan's popularity:

At the end of August [2001] the JDP sent a commission to X. They called me, too, and had also a meeting with me. [...] On 24 September [2001] Abdüllatif Şener called me and told that I was appointed as the X chair [of the JDP]. He called me to Ankara for the appointment. [...] In this way I became the provincial chair of [the JDP]. [...] As I said, just three months before I was the chair of another party in X. When I reached X airport [from Ankara] I saw that forty or fifty people were there for the reception. I hadn't even told anybody that I went [to Ankara for the chairmanship]. Most of those people were willing to work in the party. [...] After this, I started to work. [...] For instance, for [my former] party to find people, establishing a party branch anywhere was extremely difficult. We could not establish party branches in most sub-provinces. We had had this experience just three months ago. For the Y sub-province that I mentioned previously, as I remember, three or four days after I became the provincial party chair [of the JDP], three or four different groups came to me. In addition, I was called by several people recommending various persons to me for the foundation of the party branch in Y. [...] Later on, when we were founding party branches, chairman [Erdoğan] came to Z [a provincial city close to X]. I think it was October. We went to Z. There is a huge square in Z called [redacted] Square. We had a meeting with Mr. A., [chairman of my previous party] there. That square is a huge one. I think it can take up to fifty thousand people. In our meeting with Mr. A. there were a thousand, maximum two thousand people. Four months later in a meeting in the same square, you might not believe, but that space was not enough. Every corner was full; the avenues were full, too (Interviewee 25, 2014, March 21).

Hence, since the very beginning of his political activity as the JDP leader there was a striking public sympathy towards Erdoğan and he was in the centre of the party activity. His image has also been an extremely valuable asset for the JDP in the party's communication activities. A poster prepared by a non-governmental organization close to the JDP also strikingly illustrated the central role of Erdoğan for the party (see Figure 4.1). In my fieldwork I also examined catalogues of election posters in the library of the JDP headquarters. Not surprisingly, almost all posters officially published by the JDP

contained the image of Erdoğan and underplayed the party identity. One of my interviewees explained this situation to me as a communication strategy (Interviewee 49, 2014, May 8). Nevertheless, as I will try to illustrate, Erdoğan's role in the organization was always much more important than a shortcut for the party identity.

Figure 4.1: “*Sağlam irade*” (Iron will)



Source: Picture taken by author

Note: A billboard poster and a full-page newspaper advertisement prepared by a non-governmental organization that supported the government after the corruption investigations initiated on 17 December 2013.

The striking thing about the poster seen on the billboards and newspapers is that the identity of the party cannot be seen and the poster refers to the personal “will” of the Prime Minister rather than that of the party. Since its foundation, as one of the JDP executives underlined in his book, the JDP strategically and intentionally used the image of Erdoğan in its electoral campaigns (Şentürk, 2006: 185). Even in the local elections, the JDP mostly relied on the personal image of Erdoğan. According to Çaha and Guida’s study of the campaigns for the 2009 local elections, “the JDP carried out its electoral campaign mostly relying on the strong leader image of the Prime Minister. The JDP highlighted the walking full-length portraits of the Prime Minister in its advertisements in the media and posters on billboards and posters and banners they use on the streets” (2011: 64).

However, unlike the charismatic appeal in which followers are drawn in by the extraordinary personal qualities of the leader, and transformed by the new moral and/or ideological proposition by her/him, in the case of Erdoğan there was a strong affinity between the existing values and morale of the masses and the leader as delineated in the previous chapter. Erdoğan’s popularity could be explained through an overwhelming sense among followers and supporters that they share many common values and characteristics with the leader – instead of admiration by the masses of the superior personal qualities of the leader and their consent to his new ideological and intellectual propositions.¹⁵ The following narratives by the two of my high-ranking interviewees indicated this situation: “A taxi driver told me this. He said, when this man talks, implying Erdoğan, the man inside me is talking” (Interviewee 36 2014, April 24).

Not only Erdoğan’s personality but also his family life was relatively similar in the eyes of the average, low-income, conservative electorate. After emphasizing the electorate’s sense of identity with Erdoğan and his rise from humble origins, one of my high-ranking interviewees from the JDP underlined the people’s affinity with Erdoğan’s family. According to her, in the eyes of the majority of the electorate, Erdoğan’s family life and particularly his veiled but highly educated daughters represented an ideal: a “Turkish

¹⁵ Also see Yıldırım (2013): “Today, conservative masses consider Erdoğan more than a party leader. They view the unjust treatments against Erdoğan not simply as against a prime minister or a party leader but as if it was against the conservative masses, values and existence. They see these as a violation of their identity and worldview.”

Dream” which implied a better future for conservative and low-income families (Interviewee 35 2014, April 22).

As a previous study on Erdoğan underlined, “in the eyes of ordinary people, he is a leader who speaks articulately, refrains from *haram* (wrong deeds), and takes the poor under his wing. He reflects the people’s deprivation and oppression to the political arena using their body language” (Yıldırım et al., 2007: 13). Yıldırım et al. also argued that “the masses looked at how Erdoğan spoke rather than the content of what he said. His gestures, appearance, lifestyle, and tone of voice seemed more impressive than his words” (2007: 19). According to the authors, “the unprecedented success of the AKP [JDP] was a result of the familiarity that the party successfully exhibited in the eyes of voters” (2007: 21).¹⁶ Hence, as İnel ironically underlined in order to illustrate Erdoğan’s difference from the former generation of political leaders in Turkey, he was not simply a “populist” – he was the “people” (2002: 24). Therefore it was not uncommon to come across people arguing that they cast their votes for Erdoğan instead of the JDP. However, this situation hardly indicated the charismatic-transformational effect of Erdoğan’s leadership, but revealed his highly convincing “low-populist” appeal¹⁷ that relied on a strong sense of similarity with the electorate.

4.3.2 Leadership autonomy in the JDP

According to Ansell and Fish, the most remarkable benefit of non-charismatic personalism for leaders and parties is an “exceptional degree of latitude for public manoeuvre in advertising their programs and their positions” and a “tactical flexibility” (1999: 308). In the case of the relationship between Erdoğan and the JDP, a similar pattern could be observed. Nevertheless, unlike Ansell and Fish’s examples of non-charismatic personalist leaderships, such as Kohl in Germany and Zhiuganow in Russia, Erdoğan also benefitted from a very popular public image. Hence, in the case of Erdoğan, one should talk about something beyond “tactical flexibility”, perhaps about a remarkable degree of “leadership autonomy” constructed through robust action and the use of “low-populist” appeal/style.

¹⁶ Throughout their study they argued that this situation indicated the charisma of Erdoğan. I think this was not the case. Instead, this familiarity derived from the non-charismatic situation and the highly successful “low-populist” appeal/style of the JDP leadership discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ As discussed in length in the previous chapter, I define populism as a political appeal/style and a cultural-affective bond between parties and their supporters in line with the works of Ostiguy. Particularly see Ostiguy (2009c; forthcoming).

Figure 4.2: A portrait of Erdoğan in a provincial JDP branch



Source: Picture taken by author

In my fieldwork, a high-ranking interviewee from the JDP implied that Erdoğan actually did not need to have intensive consultation meetings (as will be discussed below) because he was so powerful and above the party organizations (Interview 37 2014, April 24). Another interviewee also underlined the fact that nothing could happen in the JDP against the will of Erdoğan (Interviewee 9, 2014, January 17). Most of the JDP members would confirm the firm control and undisputable authority of Erdoğan in the party and how he was able to make decisions without any limitation stemming from within the party. Hence, from the perspective of the JDP members and supporters, Erdoğan's "robust action" seemed to be a politeness granted by him to the party rank-and-file. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate, from the perspective of this study, Erdoğan's leadership autonomy was constructed through these intensive meetings, endless travels and numerous speeches to the party rank-and-file, in other words, through "robust action". Erdoğan's power heavily depended on his organizational existence and diligence, rather than his unique personal qualities and ideological inventions.

In the case of JDP and Erdoğan, the impact of the JDP's position in power should also be underlined. The party's position in power changed the nature of personalism since many resources, most notably public posts, were available to the JDP and its leader. Since Erdoğan had the power of identifying provincial chairs and candidate deputies, as well as ministers and mayors, his role in the party became much more indispensable than the non-charismatic personalism in opposition. The power in the hands of Erdoğan as party leader, as well as the cabinet, provided him with an upper hand in negotiations with other power foci within the party. Hence, Erdoğan did not only emerge as an above-faction leader but actively prevented the formation of factions and any other minor, centrifugal power-holding groups within the JDP as illustrated in chapters on the JDP organization.

As illustrated in Table 4.1, with regards to leaders' public image and autonomy, all three forms of personalism, namely charismatic, non-charismatic and personal party personalism, tend to produce highly autonomous leaderships with strong public images. From the perspective of these features it is highly plausible to argue that the relationship between Erdoğan and the JDP can be defined as a type of personalism. Nevertheless, these features usually led researchers to think that Erdoğan was a charismatic leader. However, as I illustrated in Table 4.1, charismatic leadership emerges under extraordinary political and social circumstances, and it usually has a decisively transformational impact on its followers and supporters. In the following sub-sections, with regards to the context

of his political rise and his relation to his followers, supporters and organization, I demonstrate the fact that Erdoğan was not a charismatic leader and that his authority was not a result of a transformational impact on his followers, but that it derived from his organizational intelligence, pragmatism and diligence.

4.3.3 The context of Erdoğan's political ascent: ordinary times

As underlined by Weber and re-emphasized by Tucker, charismatic authority is usually associated with massive distress. In other words, just like charismatic personalities, charismatic situations are not ordinary occurrences. While exceptional personal qualities represent the supply-side of charisma, exceptional circumstances form the demand-side. Charismatic leaders usually emerge in the context of the demise of the legitimacy of existing political regimes (Rustow, 1968: 794). Hence, it is no surprise that the rise of charismatic personalities has been usually accompanied by critical historical events such as revolutions, state collapses, wars, civil wars, national liberation movements and decolonization.

Turkish politics has always been turbulent since the foundation of the Republic in 1923 due to military coups, social protests and ethnic violence. Nevertheless, it has not produced a charismatic situation so far within the Turkish military and political elite. The specific period that covered Erdoğan's political rise was not a particularly extraordinary one, either. After the military coup on 12 September 1980, Turkey witnessed a restoration of the political regime in line with a new conservative-nationalist identity and culture, in other words, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. Although Erdoğan started his political career in the youth movement of the Islamist National View tradition in the turmoil of 1970s, his political ascent was defined by the circumstances of the 1980s: a relatively stable period compared to the polarized 1970s.¹⁸

Apart from the lack of a demand side of a charismatic situation, authoritative biographies of Erdoğan do not include any sign of at least a small group of early followers. Instead, Erdoğan had, for a long time, been one of the figures of a promising younger generation of the Islamist National View tradition. He was by no means an ideological shaper of this circle. He was not intellectually superior to his friends, either. On the contrary, this younger generation had provided a brotherly solidarity until their split from the Islamist National View tradition and Erdoğan was, at most, a very active organization man

¹⁸ For this polarised period see Landau (1974).

(*teşkilatçı*),¹⁹ but not an undisputable leader even after his mayoralty in İstanbul.²⁰ It was also known that, despite his disputes with the party leader Necmettin Erbakan and the Islamist National View gerontocracy, he was, at the same time, very obedient to Erbakan to the degree that he named one of his sons “Necmettin”. He was by no means an intellectual or ideological trendsetter. He was rather a committed follower, albeit an active and highly visible one, of a loose Islamist outlook just like his peers. In short, Erdoğan had neither an intellectual distinction nor did he impose a unique moral-ideological outlook of his own over his friends and supporters.

4.3.4 Early life and personality: not a “prophet” but “a man of the people”

Biographies and studies about Erdoğan usually imply the impact of his childhood and early upbringing as the son of a low-income immigrant family in the tough neighbourhood of İstanbul, Kasımpaşa, on Erdoğan’s later political career.²¹ Kasımpaşa is located in the periphery of the cosmopolitan Beyoğlu sub-province of İstanbul, alongside other conservative and low-income neighbourhoods, and has always been home to new provincial and poor immigrants of the city. Kasımpaşa has a peculiar location: it is neither completely isolated from the cosmopolitan city centre, such as the faraway slums, nor completely identical to it. Hence, this neither urban nor provincial context of his early upbringing might have provided Erdoğan some rich experiences about different lifestyles and identities, and probably established the emotional grounds for his “multifaceted” political style targeting diverse audiences.

One should also keep in mind that Kasımpaşa is also known for its strict conservative, moralist and macho subculture.²² It has always been home to certain criminal tendencies, as is the case with other similar İstanbul neighbourhoods (Çakır & Çalmuk, 2001: 11–13). According to the introduction of one of Erdoğan’s biographies, Kasımpaşa has

¹⁹ See Kaplan (2007: 62–66) for Erdoğan’s intense political activities as the leader and the orator of the youth branches of the Islamist National View party of the 1970s.

²⁰ It seems that among Bülent Arınç, Abdullah Gül and Erdoğan there was, at least, a balance of power when they were splitting from the Islamist National View tradition. See Çakır and Çalmuk (2001: 191). Also see Yılmaz (2001: 204–226). Dindar also highlighted the brotherly solidarity of the JDP elite until 2005 from a psychoanalytical point of view (2014). In a book length interview, Abdüllatif Şener, one of the founders of the JDP, argued that “at the beginning no one had envisaged this kind of charismatic leadership. Everybody was seeing each other as equals” (Toker, 2009: 308).

²¹ See Yılmaz (2001: 30–32) and Çakır and Çalmuk (2001: 12–14).

²² Heper and Toktaş’s study highlighted these features and their effects on Erdoğan: “Erdoğan is not an easy going man, which seems to be related to the fact that he was brought up in Kasımpaşa. In Erdoğan’s own words, in that neighborhood ‘there were very close relations between families. There existed a shared conscience of the neighborhood. The people who lived there acted like the members of the same family.’ Kasımpaşa is well-known for its bravado culture. Erdoğan has pointed out its impact on him” (2003: 162).

always been home to “celebrated roughnecks” (*kabadayı*) in the past (Yılmaz 2001: 31). According to Yılmaz, these roughnecks fight well, but at the same time they observe certain manners (*racon*), help the poor, respect the elderly and find solutions to the district’s problems (2001: 31). Erdoğan argued in an interview that “my manliness, bluntness, and principled conduct derive from my roots [in Kasımpaşa]” (Heper & Toktaş, 2003: 162). In a meeting with sport columnists, Erdoğan also implied that he knows “every kind of world”.²³

As a result of this early upbringing, Erdoğan was frequently called *delikanlı* or *reis* by his supporters, and *kabadayı* or *külhanbeyi* by his opponents. While *delikanlı* literally means “lad” and *reis* means “captain” in Turkish, referring to a moralist and macho attitude of a [young] man, the latter expressions, particularly *külhanbeyi*, pejoratively mean “bully”. In both of these cases, in terms of political appeal/style, Erdoğan’s personality was close to the “low-popular” pole of the political cultural axis of the high-low divide as defined by Ostiguy (2009c) with its macho and moralist features. This is why the official biography of Erdoğan put a special emphasis on Erdoğan’s background: “Coming from Kasımpaşa (*Kasımpaşalılık*) [...] echoes being a bully yet in daily language it refers to the situation of being a lad (*delikanlı*). [...] In a sense being a *delikanlı* is a reaction and the opportunity of challenge developed by the periphery against the elitist lifestyle of the centre” (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 22).

It should also be kept in mind that one of the main slogans praising Erdoğan was the following: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: a man like a man! (*Adam gibi adam Recep Tayyip Erdoğan!*). I also observed how ordinary supporters and members of the party were attaching great importance to a “strong male leader” (Ostiguy 2009c: 9). While I was waiting for an interviewee in a sub-provincial JDP branch in Anatolia, one of the supporters of the party sitting in the waiting room told me the following as he pointed to Erdoğan’s small portrait on the wall: “Why are we here? Because this guy is a real man!” (*Biz buradayız çünkü bu adam heriftir herif!*).²⁴

²³ In a meeting with sports columnists in Turkey, Erdoğan was reported to have said: “I am in a serious business now but I came from the heart of the vagabonds (*kulağı kesik*). I am first of all Tayyip Erdoğan from Kasımpaşa. I know every world (*alem*). My best friends are still playing cards in coffee houses. I have chosen a different path due to the manners I got from my family and due to my education. Yet I know this kind of business, too. Do not think that I am a fanatic (*sofa*). Most of you have not met the kind of people I know” (Güven 2005).

²⁴ Compare with Ostiguy: “Leaving high-brow political theory for the discourse of the actors, a central element on the populist low is, as reiteratedly stated in Latin America, the valuation of (strong,

It is also well-known that Erdoğan played football for several years and was on the edge of becoming a professional player. However, his father did not allow him to make progress in a football career (Yılmaz, 2001: 49–50). After his primary school education, Erdoğan started at the Imam and Preacher School in İstanbul on the recommendation of one of his father's teachers. According to Erdoğan's biographies, he was not an exceptionally successful or intelligent pupil, and his records from his school years support this (Yılmaz, 2001: 40). All the evidence from his early years suggest that his personality was shaped in accordance with the "low-popular" political appeal and he was seen as a particularly familiar figure by low-income, peripheral sectors of Turkish society: son of a provincial low-income immigrant family, a moralist and macho youth, and a football lover.

To a great extent, his later years bore the marks of the conditions of this upbringing. His quick temper and lack of diplomatic manners,²⁵ his macho and, from time to time, bullying style and harshness,²⁶ and his lack of interest in "refined", intellectual debates remained constant.²⁷ Nevertheless, he was extremely successful at converting these features of his personality into political assets through a conscious engagement with the "low-populist" political appeal as can be seen in one of his many similar speeches: "How dare the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) ask for your votes? They are segregationist: they are the party of the upper crust (*kaymak tabaka*). They say that they are the white Turks and we are the Negro. We are here as the servants of the nation. If being the servant of this nation is being a Negro, yes, I am a Negro" (Yenişafak, 2014).

This background had a decisive influence over Erdoğan's leadership style, too, and was the dynamic behind his "low-populist" leadership style or "strong personalistic male leadership" (Ostiguy, 2009c: 9) in the JDP. Instead of care or attention to institutional

personalistic) leaders 'with balls'. 'Ballsyness,' however exactly defined, is a central attribute of the low in this political-cultural dimension." (2015: 18–19).

²⁵ In the Davos Economic Forum, after a harsh discussion with the Israeli Prime Minister, Erdoğan left the panel (CNN 2009) and thousands of supporters were present in the airport for celebrating his attitude in the Davos (Radikal, 2009).

²⁶ An opposition deputy stated that Erdoğan physically and verbally assaulted some of the deputies and ministers and also insulted them quite frequently (Radikal, 2013). There was also some news regarding how Erdoğan scolded the deputies of the JDP (Radikal, 2004).

²⁷ According to a pro-JDP columnist, although Erdoğan was not very liberal or intellectual, he was the right candidate for Turkey's presidency: "Yes, Erdoğan is not a Danish Prime Minister who goes to his job by bicycle. Yes, he has no titles, nor is he a good intellectual. He does not know any languages, either. He is not a monument of tolerance, either. But he is the right person who would solve Turkey's hundred-year-old problems" (Oğur, 2014b).

mediation of state bureaucracy, “procedural normalcy” (Ostiguy, 2009c: 10) and legal restrictions imposed by judiciary,²⁸ Erdoğan usually preferred to rely on his personal authority and relations in conducting the day-to-day affairs of government. (Also see Figure 3.3 in the previous chapter in order to see where Erdoğan’s leadership style could be located.) It should be noted that the leadership style Erdoğan embraced “political culturally” complemented the “low-populist” “socio-cultural” appeal of the JDP, as elaborated upon in the previous chapter. It is also important to re-emphasize that excessive concentration of power in the hands of the leader is an outcome achieved via non-charismatic personalist leadership. Non-charismatic personalism is regarding the mode of relationship between the leader and the party, and which is characterized by the personal presence and control of the leader in organization building and in the micro-management of organizational affairs that otherwise would be managed and controlled via organizational intermediaries and institutionalization. The following sections will provide evidence regarding this dynamic between the JDP and Erdoğan.

4.3.5 The “organization man” (*teşkilatçı*): diligence and pragmatism

Erdoğan was not an intellectual-ideological trendsetter and he did not undertake a transformational role as a leader. Nevertheless, he was always known as a very innovative and diligent “organization man”.²⁹ A biography co-authored by Hüseyin Besli, one of Erdoğan’s close friends and a JDP deputy, underlines the innovations made by Erdoğan in the early years of his political career during the sub-provincial local government elections for which he was a candidate. According to this official biography, women started to actively work on the field for the first time in this particular election, and Erdoğan had to struggle with the intraparty reactions of his Islamist colleagues to this new method (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 44). According to the authors of the same biography, women’s branches helped Erdoğan to reach the vital “arteries” of the city and were key to his political success (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 66).

According to a balanced biography on Erdoğan, he introduced the use of women in the electoral campaigns around the year 1990 despite the conservative reactions coming from within the ranks of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*). This method was dependant on house visits and vote canvassing of women members, and included the distribution of

²⁸ Erdoğan has been usually accused of disregard for judicial decisions and bureaucratic institutional restrictions by his opponents coming from very different backgrounds.

²⁹ See Çakır & Çalmuk (2001: 48–54) and Yılmaz (2001: 59–60).

a small package of Turkish coffee and a flower. This was so successful that, according to the biography's author, other parties started to imitate the Welfare Party's women's organization (Yılmaz, 2001: 59). Indeed, one of my interviewees underlined this aspect of the Welfare period, arguing that it was the "discovery of the women electorate" in Turkish politics (Interviewee 19, 2014, February 26). Other interviewees also underlined the central role of Erdoğan in the active participation of women in electoral campaigns (Interviewee 29, 2014, April 16) and in the introduction of other new electoral strategies (Interviewee 14, 2014, February 10).

Public opinion surveys began to be used extensively under the direction of Erdoğan when he was a sub-provincial chair of the Beyoğlu, İstanbul branch of the Islamist Welfare Party. Although not professionally administrated, Erdoğan started to use teams of university students in order to conduct public opinion surveys. Authors of the official biography of Erdoğan argued that he found the results of questionnaires and the strategic directions pointed out by these "as clear as a photograph" (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 45). According to the same biography, the abovementioned electoral methods –the use of women's branches and public opinion surveys – later on became a model for the entire Welfare Party organization (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 61).

Authors of his official biography repeatedly underline his diligence, too. Perhaps there would be a degree of exaggeration in these comments simply due to the authors' sympathy for Erdoğan. Nevertheless, anecdotal remarks about his diligence pointed out a very specific feature of his leadership: intensive effort put in organization building and intraparty governance. According to the authors of Erdoğan's official biography, even in his early youth he was always a participant or the producer of the activities of youth organizations of the Islamist National View parties: "He is always in action" (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 32):

Apart from training and football matches he is either in the party building in a meeting, or in a house chatting with sympathizers, or travelling daily. Without dispute he is one of the politicians who most uses the country's highway network, either asphalt or paved roads – perhaps he is the first. It was not only the case when he was working in the youth branch; it has always been the case, both when he was a provincial chair and afterwards. [...] He used to go every place he was invited, regardless of whether it was a village, town or a city (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 33).

In the same biography, one of Erdoğan's colleagues says, "If you are working with the captain (*reis*), you should keep pace with him. You should always rush" (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 36). One of his political and electoral advisors also made a similar point in an interview: "He is an extremely hard working person. I had not witnessed this to this extent until this campaign [for the 2011 general elections]. He starts in the morning at seven or eight o'clock. Every day he has two meetings and five or six other programs. Such a pace as if he is new in politics. Until the very last moment he did not lose anything from his determination and concentration. If I was him, after a while, I would get exhausted" (Aydıntaşbaş, 2011).

One of the focal points of Erdoğan's pro-active style was organization building and dynamism, and he always expected a similar devotion and punctuality from other ruling cadres of the party, as well. According to Besli and Özbay, in a meeting in 1993 with the ruling cadres of the Welfare Party, Erdoğan warned them as follows: "Among provincial administration board members there are some friends who neither join the administration board meetings and the activities of the sub-province for which they are responsible nor remain in the party for their turn. They do not show the sufficient accuracy. Sorry, I condemn these friends" (2014: 103).

It is plausible to argue that Erdoğan's effort and vigilance in building a dynamic organization was a result of the lack of reliable financial sources for the Islamist National View parties. Hence, the most reliable source for the electoral campaigns was an active and pervasive organization that was tightly controlled by the leadership. This was why one of Erdoğan's advisors in his local electoral victory in 1994 in İstanbul, Nabi Avcı, underlined the critical role played by an organization "which was present even in the remotest neighbourhoods of the city" (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 121):

The most striking part of the campaign was the volunteers. All of the members of the organization worked so hard and devoted themselves to the campaign. Mr. Tayyip did not have the material means that the other candidates had. He had to work with an extremely limited budget. Nevertheless, the loyalty of the organization to the Mr. Tayyip and their determination to win was an advantage that the other candidates did not have (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 122).³⁰

³⁰ It must be noted that in the 1994 local elections for İstanbul mayoralty, Erdoğan competed with very popular candidates and he was not expected at all to be the winner. Hence, in the mainstream media there was apathy towards him (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 123).

These components of Erdoğan's "robust action", his inventiveness, pro-active style and diligence devoted to organization building, were also supported by other personal qualities usually common to similar non-charismatic personalist leaders (Ansell & Fish, 1999: 293). Erdoğan was also known for his pragmatism, multifaceted style, ambitions and tactical intelligence. As early as the end of 1980s, according to Yılmaz, Erdoğan was aware of the limitations of a narrow Islamist discourse. In the elections around the turn of the decade, Erdoğan was pushing party members to reach beyond the Islamist electorate: "We are going to reach everybody, we won't distinguish anybody, we will embrace everybody" (Yılmaz, 2001: 60). Yılmaz also argued that, despite his radical speeches, Erdoğan was always telling party members that the Islamist Welfare Party should become the "party of Turkey" (2001: 60).

Erdoğan's nomination for the mayoralty of İstanbul in 1994 made his ideological flexibility even greater. In this election, according to Yılmaz, "Erdoğan's strategy was actually simple. He was aware of the fact that it was impossible to win the elections with the conventional votes of [the Welfare Party] and he was trying to get the support of other voters too." According to Yılmaz, Erdoğan was constantly telling members of the Welfare organization, "do not forget that we are not a religious community, we are a party. We are the party of Turkey, we have to embrace everybody without distinction..." (2001: 80). A very similar point was made in Erdoğan's official biography, as well. In 1989, with regard to moving the Welfare Party's İstanbul provincial centre building outside Fatih, a conservative neighbourhood heavily populated by devout people, Erdoğan argued that "the Welfare Party must go beyond Fatih. Being in Fatih isolates the party, and presents it as the specific representative of particular groups. [...] If the Welfare Party is to reach broader social segments it has to get rid of this community-style image" (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 57).

A particular incident about Erdoğan shed light on the transformational power of participation in electoral politics on radical political actors. According to an incident described by two different biographies of Erdoğan, during their search for more votes, the Islamist political elite realized how unreliable and unsustainable it was to depend on the votes of devout social segments. According to Besli and Özbay's biography, during a 1986 election campaign, Erdoğan could not get in touch with a member of a certain religious community. Despite of all of Erdoğan's attempts to speak to him this particular person rejected Erdoğan's proposal and told him that he was a supporter of the centre-

right Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*). According to the biography, at that same moment, a man approached Erdoğan and his friends and invited them to his shop. His shop was a local pub, and there Erdoğan and his friends were very welcome and their electoral propaganda was listened to with enthusiasm by the customers. A witness of this event later commented that “we have wandered in the wrong places for years, we wasted our time in the yards of mosques. This [pub] is the real spring” (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 89–90).

The same incident, with minor differences, was also noted in an earlier biography of Erdoğan. According to Çakır and Çalmuk, after this event Erdoğan started to consider a strategic renovation and targeting the votes of a broader constituency than a narrow, Islamist one (2001: 53): “For Erdoğan this event and conversations have revealed the necessity of going to coffee houses and even pubs and winning the votes and hearts of the people spending time in these places” (Çakır & Çalmuk, 2001: 54).³¹ Erdoğan also literally started to re-shape and deploy the party’s cadres accordingly. For example, for the local election in 1989, according to his official biography, he did not find the excessively religious appearance of one of the candidates of the Welfare Party appropriate and ordered him to shave and to wear a suit (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 58–59). Another incident described in his official biography revealed his tactical intelligence and flexibility. In the local elections in 1989 he sent unveiled women to the secularist regions of the sub-province instead of veiled members of the party (Besli & Özbay, 2014: 44–45). This pragmatism and multifaceted style that targeted different segments of the electorate had a deep impact on Erdoğan’s personal and ideological convictions. According to Yılmaz, “in his early years in politics [Erdoğan] did not shake the women’s hands because he thought it was a ‘sin’. But now he does” (2001: 269).

All of these experiences and his strategic learning eventually led Erdoğan in a very pragmatic direction, and this was why he rejected an “ideological party” just on the eve of the foundation of the JDP (Yılmaz 2001: 274–275). His words, “we took off the [Islamist] National View shirt” (Radikal, 2003) during the foundation process of the JDP, expressed that he and the JDP cadres changed. This was the final declaration of the

³¹ In Çakır and Çalmuk’s biography it was even argued that Erdoğan started to visit brothels for his electoral campaigns and promised the women there that he would save them from their “dark world”. Later on it was also argued that some of those women worked for Erdoğan and the Welfare Party’s electoral campaigns (2001: 66–67).

gradual transformation of the Islamist National View cadres on the basis of the electoral concerns outlined above. Within Erdoğan's personality we see a pragmatic and ambitious³² politician after more votes, rather than a charismatic leader who imposes an ideological, intellectual and moral domination upon his followers in order to enthrall and transform them. Erdoğan's personality and biography was characterised by a tactical and organizational intelligence directed towards coming to power rather than transforming his followers and the wider circumstances of the country.

The abovementioned components of his personality, biography and the circumstances of his political rise and, more importantly, his political style after he became Prime Minister support the argument that Erdoğan's approach was that of non-charismatic personalism instead of charismatic leadership. The primary indicator of this was Erdoğan's "robust action": his endless travelling to meet with party members and attend mass rallies and the excessive effort he put into intraparty governance. Through his pro-active style and diligence Erdoğan built a large and pervasive organization and tightened his direct grip on it, making himself the sole cement of the diverse political, social and ethnic segments within the JDP's electoral base and within its elite coalition.

4.3.6 Erdoğan's "robust action": diligence in organization building

In contrast to the features of charismatic personalism and personal party personalism as discussed in section two, the electoral achievements of the JDP depended on the formation of a large and pervasive membership organization personally constructed and tightly controlled by Erdoğan. According to the official records, in 2013 the JDP had almost eight million members (Milliyet, 2013). These members came from distinct backgrounds, and thousands of party branches that penetrated into even the smallest corners of the country were kept under the control of the central JDP elite, keeping Erdoğan's leadership intact throughout the organization. Erdoğan invested intense political effort in the construction of this organization, and afterwards, this massive yet highly hierarchical and disciplined organization was kept under Erdoğan's firm control through his robust action. In order to keep his organization together and under his control,

³² An incident described by one of the deputies of the JDP, as highlighted in Dindar's book, revealed this point. In 1991, Erdoğan became a deputy, but due to a dispute over the distribution of votes within the party he lost his position. According to Mehmet Metiner, "when Erdoğan heard that Mustafa Baş was elected with the help of the preference votes – I know because I was beside him – he lost consciousness and fell down" (Dindar, 2014: 45). This incident was also confirmed by another essay on Erdoğan's political life (Kalyoncu, 2011).

Erdoğan spent much time on intraparty governance by travelling to distinct corners of the country, speaking to diverse audiences within the party, and by controlling minute details of candidate selection processes and the formation of provincial governing bodies. Erdoğan's robust action became visible in his central role in regular consultation activity within the JDP, his active and decisive involvement in the elite recruitment of the party, and his occupation of the centre stage in meetings and mass rallies organized by party branches across the country. In addition, the technological surveillance of the party on the ground provided him with superior information over the membership organization of the party as well as against other national and local power holders inside and outside the party, and consolidated his grip over the massive JDP organization.

4.3.6.1 Consultations (*istişareler*)

During my fieldwork, from many interviewees I heard the importance attached to consultation meetings by Erdoğan and the JDP elite. As a JDP deputy underlined, the JDP is a "party of consultations" (Interviewee 29, 2014, April 16). In fact, the party leadership attached great importance to the regular consultation meetings. Intense consultation activity of the JDP started at the top of the organization. The JDP held strict weekly Central Executive Committee (*Merkez Yürütme Kurulu*) consultation meetings and monthly Central Decision and Administration Board (*Merkez Karar ve Yönetim Kurulu*) consultation meetings besides the regular weekly meetings of the cabinet (Interviewee 14, 2014, February 10). All these regular consultation meetings were held under the control and personal presence of Erdoğan (Interviewee 14, 2014, February 10). Apart from these regular consultation meetings, Erdoğan and the party elite consulted frequently with local as well as national political and economic elites. They called these meetings with the political and economic elite and opinion leaders "private consultations" (*özel istişareler*) (Interviewee 36, 2014, April 24).

As one of my interviewees underlined, Erdoğan spent considerable time and attached greater importance to these meetings than did leaders of other parties in Turkey (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10). In the middle of this intense consultation activity Erdoğan had a vital role. He was present in monthly regular consultation meetings with the provincial chairs and the elite of the party as well as with JDP representatives for local governments. As some of my interviewees emphasised, he was also highly accessible by

even the junior party members from the provinces (Interviewee 35 2014, April 22).³³ In other words, aside from bureaucratically arranged consultation meetings, Erdoğan also had direct control and communication with the provincial party elite and the base.

4.3.6.2 Tight control over the elite recruitment

Erdoğan closely supervised the formation of the provincial branches as well as the candidate selection processes within the JDP. This was why one of my interviewees argued that no one can exist within the party organization against the will of Erdoğan. As the same interviewee argued, the JDP was “his store” (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17). As one of my interviewees underlined, the party headquarters always encouraged provincial party organizations to have a single candidate and thus a single party administration list in provincial party conventions (Interviewee 16 2014, February 20). It was apparently much easier for the party leader to influence discussions behind closed doors than in the transparent competition of different candidates and lists in conventions.

The tight control over the provincial organizations and local politics was also complemented by the close supervision of the candidate selection processes by the party leadership. During my interviews, I have observed that questions regarding the candidate selection processes within the party had a straightforward answer. Headquarters, and particularly party leader Erdoğan, had the ultimate say in the process (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17). One of my interviewees defined the ultimate criteria in the candidate selection process within the party as “loyalty and fidelity” to Erdoğan (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15). It also seems that a personal relationship with Erdoğan provided great privileges for the competing candidates within the JDP (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10).³⁴

4.3.6.3 Meetings

Meetings and mass rallies held by Erdoğan should be seen in the context of this tireless and all-encompassing activity for intraparty governance (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). It should also be noted that meetings and mass rallies that Erdoğan attended should not be seen as only targeting the electorate. The intensive meeting activity of the JDP leader also served to enforce Erdoğan’s control of leadership over the provincial organizations and kept the membership party of the JDP active.

³³ Also see Interviewee 49 2014, May 8.

³⁴ Also see Interviewee 23 2014, March 7.

4.3.6.4 Technological surveillance

Erdoğan's robust action targeting a much more coherent organization was also facilitated by other instruments. While regular public opinion surveys provided Erdoğan with superior knowledge of public tendencies *vis-à-vis* centrifugal and local forces within the party, use of technologically sophisticated central communication instruments such as *AKBİS* (*AK Parti Bilgi Sistemi* – AK Party Information System) and *AKİM* (*AK Parti İletişim Merkezi* – AK Party Communication Centre) provided Erdoğan with direct feedback from the party base and the electorate. Extremely loyal women's branches also enhanced Erdoğan's control over centrifugal tendencies within the party. Thus, Erdoğan's pro-active leadership style and his political and organizational diligence were supported by a specific organizational mechanism outlined here and delineated in Chapter 6. As a result Erdoğan became the most vital element of the elite coalition as well as of the party's electoral coalition, which consisted of diverse social, ideological and ethnic groups. In the eyes of this diverse electoral base, Erdoğan's importance was increased by the personalist electoral campaigns.

In this section I analysed Erdoğan's public image, the degree of his autonomy within the JDP, the context of his political ascent, his personal and biographical background and, most notably, the nature of his organizational activity. This examination illustrated the fact that, despite his very strong public image and highly autonomous leadership within the JDP, the context of Erdoğan's political ascent and his personal and biographical features did not support the claim that he was a charismatic leader. Instead of personal and intellectual qualities that transformed his followers and supporters, Erdoğan's authority relied on the fact that he was a very pragmatic, diligent and innovative organization man. On the other hand, unlike leaders of personal parties, Erdoğan depended heavily on a massive, highly hierarchical and disciplined organizational leverage that he personally constructed and firmly controlled.

4.4 Discussion: are “personalism” and “mass membership organization” mutually exclusive?

At first glance, personalist leadership and mass membership organizations – like the one the JDP had in Turkey – could be seen mutually exclusive political phenomena. After all, personalism also means the rising importance of leaders, and in the case of the JDP in Turkey we also encounter a highly popular and visible leadership. One could assume that, just like personal parties of Berlusconi in Italy, Erdoğan could solely rely on his

popularity, his “low-populist” appeal and the pro-JDP media. It could even be claimed that the absence of a mass membership organization would be a better ground for personalism since there would be less constraint over the leader’s will and autonomy.

This kind of approach to personalism, on the one hand, conflates personalism with personal party – a single reflection of the personalist phenomenon – and, on the other hand, conflates institutionalization with the mass membership organization. Personalism in personal parties should be considered a specific reflection of the phenomenon of personalist leadership. It should be considered a very specific political response by certain leaders to very specific political circumstances underlying the rapidly rising and falling parties in Europe and some parts of the Latin America. In contrast, as discussed in previous chapters, the JDP phenomenon and the rise of Erdoğan in Turkey emerged under the circumstances of deeply entrenched historical and political conflicts and it was a continuation of a much older historical tension in the country – perhaps similar to that between Peronists and anti-Peronists in Argentina (Ostiguy, 1997; 2009b). Under these circumstances, simply relying on the popularity of the party leader, media and capital intensive electoral strategies would be a fatal error not only detrimental for the electoral fortunes of the personalist leader but for the survival and interests of a wider social dynamic represented by the leader and the party. Hence, in the specific context of Turkey, the personal party would not be a feasible organizational strategy for Erdoğan and the social segments represented by him.

Another line of reasoning which would lead to the view that personalism and mass membership organizations are mutually exclusive phenomena might stem from seeing institutionalization as identical to a highly routinized and bureaucratized mass membership organization. Indeed, mass membership organizations could be institutionalized, particularly if they survive after the disappearance of their founding leaders and if they strictly follow written regulations they produced for themselves.³⁵ In this sense, it would not be easy for institutionalized organizations to co-exist side-by-side personalistic leadership. Nevertheless mass membership organizations are not always and necessarily institutionalized organizations. And it is even possible to come across highly routinized and remarkably bureaucratized organizations such as the JDP without high degrees of institutionalization. In short, “mass membership organizations” should not be

³⁵ See Panebianco (1988: 58–59) for some of these traits of institutionalization.

conflated with “highly institutionalized organizations”. While logically it would be less likely to come across personalism in highly institutionalized organizations simply because of the predominance of rules and codes the organization produced in its long history for its own survival, it is much more likely to see personalism in new but highly bureaucratized and routinized organizations as long as the founding leader is present and central to the party routine and bureaucracy.

This also contains two potential routes for the personalistic mass membership party, unlike with personal parties. As McDonnell (2013) and Albertazzi and McDonnell (2015) illustrated, personal parties are destined to fail if the leader disappears, decides to leave or dissolve the organization. Hence, institutionalization and organizational survival is extremely unlikely for the personal party. The predominant possibility for the organization without the leader in the personal party is dissolution since the organization is actually nothing more than the personal network of the leader, comprised of friends and aides. In contrast, in the “personalistic membership party” (as defined so in the following chapters) there are two potential trajectories. Given their highly routinized and bureaucratized intraparty structure with permanent presence in localities and regular interactions within the party (which also creates a unique party sub-culture), these organizations gradually create a life of their own independent from the leader; they always have a chance to survive the disappearance of their leader, and therefore institutionalization, besides the possibility of rapid decline. I elaborate on these strategic and organizational points in the rest of the dissertation.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the JDP leader Erdoğan was not a charismatic leader but that his authority over the JDP was an outcome of robust action or diligence in organization building. In order to support my argument I first discussed closely connected concepts of personalization, personalism, charismatic personalism, non-charismatic personalism and personal party personalism. I proposed thinking of personalization as a wider phenomenon in politics characterized by the increasing prominence of individual politicians and the decline of the role of collective actors as a result of institutional change and advancement of communication technologies. Although personalism is related to this phenomenon, I proposed to take the concept particularly as referring to the relationship between national leaders and environments surrounding them: their followers, supporters

and organization. In this theoretical discussion I argued that charismatic, non-charismatic and personal party personalism are different reflections of personalistic leadership.

Although all forms usually contain a very strong public image and a highly autonomous leadership, I argued that charismatic personalism was distinguished from more common forms of non-charismatic and personal party personalism. Relying on the original exposition of the term by Weber, I defined charisma as a very exceptional phenomenon that is characterized by extraordinary political and social circumstances and the transformational role of the leader on the followers stemming from a particular intellectual-ideological worldview. In cases of non-charismatic and personal party personalism, one can find neither such a transformational role nor an extraordinary political and social condition. In these forms, leaders have transactional roles among their diverse segments of supporters instead of a transformational effect that enthralls and transforms followers. However, while the non-charismatic form depends on extremely tireless political activity by the leaders that focuses on organization building, in personal party personalism one can hardly find this emphasis on organization building and intraparty governance.

In the sections that followed, I used this perspective to analyse the case of Erdoğan and the JDP. I examined Erdoğan's public image, the degree of his autonomy within his organization, the context of his political ascent, his personal qualities and his political style. I have demonstrated that, while Erdoğan had a very strong public image and a high degree of autonomy within the JDP, he was lacking the personal-intellectual qualities of most charismatic leaders that helped them to transform their followers. Unlike charismatic leaders, his political ascent emerged in a quite stable political period. However, the biographical details of his personality and political activity illustrated the fact that his "low-populist" appeal was extremely vital for his political salience, and at the same time he was a very diligent, innovative and a pragmatic organization man (*teşkilatçı*) focusing exclusively on achieving and maintaining power.

In order to do this, unlike charismatic leaders and leaders of personal parties, he mainly relied on a large and pervasive organization constructed personally by him. In order to control this massive organization, he put a great amount of effort into intraparty governance through robust action. Erdoğan devoted considerable time to consultations with the rank-and-file of the party, to the elite recruitment processes of the party, and to

meetings and mass rallies. This robust action, consisting of extensive travelling to distinct corners of the country, numerous speeches to diverse segments inside and outside the party, and the remarkable time spent on the intraparty governance, was the basis of Erdoğan's authority. The wider implication of the case of Erdoğan and the JDP is as follows: discussions over personalism should particularly focus on the relationship between the leader and the supporters, followers and organizations surrounding him or her instead of exclusively focusing on leaders. From a much narrower perspective this discussion demonstrated the crucial distinction between charismatic and non-charismatic personalism. In conclusion, a non-charismatic personalist leader is not a prophet but, first and foremost, a diligent and pragmatic organization builder. The non-charismatic personalist leader's success is reliant on a large and pervasive organization that he or she personally constructs and firmly controls. Another theoretical contention of this chapter was that personalism and highly routinized and bureaucratized organizations are not mutually exclusive political phenomena.

5 The JDP STRATEGIES: MOVING BEYOND the BASICS of TURKISH PARTY POLITICS

5.1 Introduction

The Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) won eight elections between its foundation in 2002 and the presidential election in 2014 despite many political crises. Unlike its rightist predecessors, such as the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*) of 1950s, the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*) of 1980s and 1990s, and the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) of 1990s (at the end of the 1990s it became the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*)),¹ the JDP showed signs of neither electoral failure nor any considerable intraparty discontent throughout this period. What distinguished the JDP from its rightist predecessors? What made the JDP a novel force in Turkish politics? In this chapter I argue that the combination of a year-round active, large and pervasive membership organization, tension-increasing electoral propaganda, and a strong and decisively pro-JDP media was vital for the electoral achievements and political resilience of the party.

The management of different and mostly diverging expectations of party members, supporters and the electoral base was central to the JDP elite's strategies. In order to understand members' and supporters' engagements with the party, I borrowed – and, to a certain extent, reinterpreted – two interrelated concepts from Panebianco (1988). These are “collective incentives” and “selective incentives”. Relying on Panebianco's explanations (1988: 21–32), “collective incentives” have been identified as the extra-material ideological and emotional bonds between the party and its members and supporters. I attribute a rather broad meaning to the term to refer to every possible connection between the party and its members and supporters other than links such as patronage and clientelism based on material benefits. These bonds can be ideological, programmatic and emotional, but they can also be a product of traditional political preferences of families as well as a strong affection for party leaders. In line with Panebianco's explanations (1988: 21–32), I define “selective incentives” mainly as

¹ For brief information on these and other parties cited throughout the chapter see, Appendices 1 and 2.

individual benefits including every kind of social, symbolic, economic and cultural capital gains expected from being a party member.

It should be also underlined that this distinction between collective and selective incentives had a very concrete reflection in the party life. During my interviews I frequently came across the use of two different expressions in order to describe party members. One of these expressions was *partili* and the other one was *partici* (Interviewee 48 2014, May 6).² While the former term referred to the party members with a sincere and altruistic engagement with the party, the latter term was used by my interviewees in order to define party members who were expecting benefits such as jobs, promotion, aid, and posts, and a wider network of potential friends and customers from the party. While *partili* represented JDP cadres driven by “collective incentives”, *partici* represented the JDP members driven by “selective incentives” in the vocabulary of my interviewees. The balance struck between these different modes of engagement of the members and supporters with the party was central to the JDP’s success.

In section two, I briefly touch upon the potential contributions of party members coming from various different political backgrounds to the strategic inclinations of the party. In this section I demonstrate the aspects in which the JDP was different from its rightist predecessors in terms of organizational dynamics and electoral strategies. In the same section, I identify the JDP elite’s long-term strategic aim as “maintaining predominance”. Despite their short-term electoral benefits, the JDP elite embraced a rather controlled approach to redistributive strategies and particularism. The party also did not compromise extensively with local power holders in order to protect the autonomy of the party and, thus, the technocratic capacity of the JDP governments.

In section three I briefly look at what was substituted by the JDP elite in place of the overwhelmingly patronage- and clientelism- based strategies and agreements with local and national politically salient individuals and social groups. As the electoral effectiveness of “classical patronage politics” and particularism decreased, the party elite started to invest heavily in discursive-emotional techniques in electoral propaganda in

² A similar differentiation was also made by Interviewee 12 2014, February 6. One should also note that the suffix *-li* in Turkish usually indicates an organic, spontaneous, mostly ascriptive and usually emotional membership relationship. On the contrary, suffix *-ci* usually indicates somebody’s trade or profession. If someone sells fabric (*kumaş* in Turkish), for example, she is called *kumaşçı*. Hence, while the *partili* implied an emotional, sincere, organic relationship with the party, *partici* implied a less emotional and, in a sense, professional relationship depending on material expectations.

order to consolidate its electoral support. In section four I give a detailed picture of the JDP's communication instruments in which conventional, organization-based communication methods were supported by the strong pro-JDP media. I argue that, without the combination of these two, the JDP elite's and Erdoğan's interventions in public debate would have been much less effective and the party's predominant role in Turkish politics would not have been protected.

5.2 Rightist predecessors and the JDP organization: striking a balance between the Islamist past and the centre-right present

In this section, I draw attention to the difference between the JDP's organizational dynamics and electoral strategies and those of its rightist predecessors.

5.2.1 The JDP and its rightist predecessors: moving beyond the basics of Turkish politics

The JDP had always been seen as a grand coalition of the rightist politicians from various diverging backgrounds under the control of a previously Islamist elite. This characteristic of the party was underlined by many students of Turkish politics as well as the party's members. Tuğal, by referring to a sub-provincial (*ilçe*) organization of the JDP, underlines the fact that even this local branch was a coalition of Islamists, the centre-right and nationalists (2009: 151). Furthermore, some prominent social democratic politicians were also involved in the foundation process and this greatly enhanced the pluralist appearance of the party organization. As Hale and Özbudun note, particularly in the 2007 general election, the JDP deliberately nominated almost 170 deputies with liberal and centre-right backgrounds, and even a politician with a social democratic background could become a minister in the JDP government after this election (2010: 43). According to the statement by Hüseyin Çelik, one of the founding figures of the party, made in 2003:

It cannot be said that everybody in the JDP has broken their ties with the tradition symbolized by Erbakan [Islamist National View tradition]. Nevertheless the important thing is the attitude of the staff committee and the change at this point is clear. [...] The JDP was founded by the people from different backgrounds and tendencies. [...] It is true that most of the people who established the JDP have their origin in the [Islamist] National View tradition. However there are people like me from the [centre-right] Motherland Party, the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*) and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) and even people from the left. This is not only valid for the high echelons of the party, it is also valid for the party branches as well (Çakır, 2003a).

It should also be mentioned that this coalitional character of the party was complemented by the diversity of its electoral base. According to the statistical analysis of the JDP's electoral base in 2002, with reference to voters' choices in the general elections in 1999, 26% of the JDP's constituency voted for the first time in 2002, 22% came from the Nationalist Action Party's base, 28% from the Islamist National View background, 9% from the Motherland Party, 7% from the True Path Party and 7% from the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*) (Erder, 2002: 129). As Hale and Özbudun argue, "AKP [JDP] appears to have successfully rebuilt the Özal-ANAP [Motherland Party] coalition, bringing together former centre-right voters, moderate Islamists, moderate nationalists and even a certain segment of the former centre-left" (2010: 37). This situation was usually evaluated as a potential problem for the party since it might have a detrimental effect on its cohesion. Yet there was also a positive contribution of this pluralism to the JDP in terms of its elite's strategic inclinations and skills. Although the JDP located itself in the history of a longer centre-right tradition, the elite of the party were always aware of the weaknesses of the previous centre-right parties as well as the Islamist Welfare Party thanks to their previous experiences.

It can be argued that the most crucial lesson the JDP took from the experience of its predecessors was the problems entailed by the heavy reliance on "classical patronage politics". During the JDP years, social expenditure by the state increased (Karagöl, 2013: 57) and this, apparently, contributed remarkably to the party's lasting electoral achievements. Nevertheless, the party was extremely successful at reducing the state budget deficit (Karagöl, 2013: 42) and during the JDP years the number of public employees did not increase significantly, either (DİSK, 2014: 3–4). Limitations on the rise in the number of public employees and the balanced public budget during the JDP years suggested that the party had moved beyond "classical centre-right patronage" in Turkey. The main indicators of classical patronage in Turkey were significant increases in the number of public employees and generous public expenditures that caused public budget deficits. Another component of the classical patronage and clientelism in Turkey was the influence of powerful local and traditional actors in politics, such as tribal leaders, notable families, religious authorities and large landowners of provincial cities, leading to the "induced participation" of rural and urban poor to politics via these powerful intermediaries.

“Induced participation” (Özbudun, 1975) or “vertical mobilization” (Sayarı, 1975) refer to the incorporation and mobilization of, particularly, rural popular sectors of Turkish society by political parties through negotiations with local and traditional power holders. Hence, since the transition to multi-party politics in the middle of 1940s, local patronage networks, and local and traditional elites together with the resources provided by the import substitution economy created the main ground of the “classical patronage politics” in Turkey.³ Nevertheless, since the 1980s, economic liberalization, domestic immigration and the rise of urban poverty drastically dissolved the socio-economic basis of the classical patronage.⁴

As Kopecky and Spirova (2012: 27) underline, it might be misleading to use public employment numbers and expenditure as “proxy indicators” of party patronage. Instead they recommend the use of expert interviews to see the full extent of the phenomenon. In line with this perspective, when I argue that the JDP did not depend on classical patronage politics as much as its rightist predecessors, I also depend heavily on my personal observations in the fieldwork.⁵ However, it does not mean that the party leadership did not deploy new methods of patronage which heavily relied on suspicious links between private sector and public resources.⁶ Highly publicized corruption probes against the JDP governments at the time of writing had something to do with these novel methods of patronage and party finance. However, from the perspective of the explanations I gave above on “classical patronage politics” of the centre-right in Turkey, the JDP definitely represented a novel force in Turkish politics and moved beyond conventional political-electoral strategies of the right in Turkey.

³ The volume edited by Akarlı and Ben-Dor is a classic demonstration of the classical patronage in Turkey (1975).

⁴ See Kemahlioğlu (2012) for the gradual dissolution of this classical patronage politics after the introduction of neo-liberal reforms.

⁵ I illustrate details supporting this claim in Chapters 6 and 7.

⁶ I briefly mention these new methods of patronage in the next chapter. It should also be noted that, particularly in the peripheral and poor urban contexts, the JDP deployed redistributive strategies and created clientelistic networks. And the JDP’s “low-populist” appeal delineated in Chapter 3 was central to the smooth functioning of these redistributive strategies and the transformation of clientelistic networks into votes. After all, as Auyero’s excellent account on “Peronist survival and problem solving networks” illustrated, without the proper emotional and cultural bond between the supplier and receiver in clientelistic exchange, the clientelistic relationship cannot be sustained and cannot be transformed into electoral gains. The only difference to the JDP’s redistributive strategies in localities was that, unlike Peronist personal mediation for problem solving, the JDP leadership to a large extent did not allow any sedimentation of brokers or patrons in localities. High degrees of circulation in JDP local governments as well as local-provincial executive branches was evidence that this rather bureaucratized clientelism depended more on “organizational networks” than personalized ones.

As one of the prominent public opinion researchers of the party emphasized, “the JDP was aware of a Demirelist (*Demirelci*) rightist tradition which heavily relied on limitless promises to voters” (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25). Süleyman Demirel was always a symbolic name in Turkey, and he represented the pragmatic inclinations of the centre-right politics as well as a strategy that relied heavily on classical patronage politics, generous subsidies for agricultural products and highly unrealistic promises to the electorate. This was why JDP cadres usually tended to ignore his place among their centre-right predecessors. They tended to refer to Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal, not Demirel, as the party’s predecessors. Hence, it is fair to argue that the party, unlike its centre-right predecessors, deployed a rather “controlled”⁷ approach to redistributive policies and cautiously engaged with local power holders in order to remain in power for a longer time. In this sense, it is important to have a closer look at the differences between the JDP and previous rightist parties that deeply shaped the JDP politics, namely the Islamist Welfare Party and the Motherland Party.

5.2.1.1 Legacy of the Welfare Party: the importance of a year-round, large and pervasive membership organization

Most of my interviewees tended to see the main difference between the Islamist National View parties and the JDP on an ideological basis. It is known that the founding leader of the National View tradition, Erbakan, said many times that “if you have faith you have opportunities” (*iman var imkan var!*) and “I do not have supporters; I have believers”, which indicated the role of ideational-emotional links between the Islamist National View tradition and its followers. Another interviewee, a knowledgeable sympathizer and bureaucrat, also underlined the same motivations of the members of the Islamist National View parties. According to him, Islamist National View members did not really observe the “benefit–cost balance” (*nimet-külfet dengesi*) in their engagement to the party (Interviewee 19 2014, February 26). A high up member of the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*), the most recent party of the Islamist National View tradition, also emphasized that “belief” was the basis of the organization in the National View tradition: “Erbakan Hodja had this expression: ‘if you have belief, you can squeeze milk from a male goat’ (*inanç tekeden süt çıkarır*)” (Interviewee 1 2013, September 2).

⁷ Öniş draws attention to this fact (2012).

As Delibaş (2015: 54–64) underline, all of the Turkish political parties headed towards capital intensive⁸ and media-based electoral strategies during 1980s and 1990s. In contrast, the Welfare Party of the Islamist National View tradition was busy since the beginning of the 1990s constructing a large and year-round active membership organization that relied heavily on a membership profile motivated by strong collective incentives. Poor government performance, the increasing organizational decline of centrist parties, electoral volatility and the fragmentation of the political system (discussed in length in Chapter 2), gave an advantage to the Welfare Party's strategy of using a year-round active, ideologically motivated and large membership organization over the clientelistic and media-oriented strategies of its electoral competitors, particularly during the mid-1990s. Beyond strategic inclinations, the Islamist Welfare Party past of the JDP made a direct contribution to the party's human resources. One of my interviewees, a sub-provincial JDP chair with a National View background, described this organizational legacy of the Islamist past of the JDP succinctly:

The organizational work and approach (*teşkilatçılık*) of the people coming from the [Islamist] National View past is different. There were people in the party from the Motherland Party, the True Path Party or the Republican People's Party. They cannot stand our activities. You may ask why this was the case. Our organizational activity is ballot box based. In other words it targets ballot boxes. The main things are the ballot box representative, the neighbourhood administrations above him or her, and establishing these governing bodies in neighbourhoods. Every week there is a neighbourhood meeting. In these meetings we check whether our ballot box representatives are OK. Our work is entirely targeting the base. I still could not overcome this. There are protocol meetings and inaugurations. Believe me, I cannot attend them. Because the organizational work makes you exhausted. Why? Every week we have different meetings in 15 neighbourhoods. Every week, [we had] regular neighbourhood meetings, neighbourhood consultation meetings including our ballot box representatives. We put enormous effort into the organization of these meetings. People coming from other parties are not really used to this kind of party activity. They are usually used to "high" politics. This is to say that: you go and see influential people, you talk to a single person and expect "this many votes would come [through this person]". They have always done this kind of politics. But it is not the case in the JDP. We try to establish one-to-one contact with every voter. You gain votes one-by-one, by registering [individual] members. [...] Membership enhances the link between the

⁸ For the distinction between labour intensive and capital intensive campaigning techniques, see Farrell (1996: 171). While the former depends on party workers, volunteers, canvassing, mass meetings and individual contacts with voters, the latter relies upon a network of professionals, consultants and television.

party and the voter. [...] The people coming from other parties are not really prone to this kind of approach (Interviewee 26 2014, April 4).

From the perspective of the distinction I made between selective and collective incentives in the introduction, it seems that “collective incentives” had a major role in the engagement of the members of the Islamist National View parties to the organization. The JDP elites with a National View background were aware of the benefits of collective incentives as well as having a large and pervasive membership organization that established a direct connection between the party and the electorate, without the mediation of other channels such as influential persons. This led the JDP elite to strike a very fine balance between “collective” and “selective” incentives, unlike the previous centre-right parties which heavily relied on classical patronage politics and clientelistic networks. As one of my interviewees underlined, the JDP’s organization “mainly relied on the National View tradition. And the organization in the National View stemmed from the fact that the party had a strict ideology, a specific cause (*dava*) relying on a political movement” (Interviewee 40 2014, May 2).

Nevertheless, the JDP could not have survived by remaining an overwhelmingly ideological Islamist party given the electoral and political circumstances outlined in previous chapters. The party had to sacrifice some of the benefits that might stem from strong collective incentives – in other words, the ideological, programmatic and emotional engagements of its members – in order to appeal to the median voter and come closer to a centre-right position. In this sense, the Motherland Party cadres had a quite decisive influence on the strategic inclinations of the JDP organization (Aydın & Dalmış, 2008: 201).⁹ This is why it is crucial to look briefly at the difference between the organizational dynamics of the Motherland Party and the JDP.

5.2.1.2 Legacy of the Motherland Party: the failure of overwhelmingly patronage-, clientelism- and media-based strategies

Just after the military coup in 1980, the centre-right Motherland Party unexpectedly won the general elections in 1983 and formed a single-party government. The Motherland Party captured the centrist and pragmatic inclination of the Turkish electorate through a discourse around economic rationality, the free market and service delivery (Ergüder, 1991: 156–157). What characterized the Motherland Party in organizational terms were

⁹ For the influence of Motherland Party cadres on the JDP, also see Çakır (2003b).

its solid factions. Factions in the party were kept together, to a certain extent, through the personality of the party leader Turgut Özal and, to a greater extent, by “intraparty clientelism” (Türsan, 1995: 177). After Özal became President and left the party, and after the victory of Mesut Yılmaz, the representative of the liberal faction in the 1991 convention, conservative and religious figures in the party gradually started to split away from the organization (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 51). As one of my interviewees, a top Motherland Party politician, argued, “the religious, conservative masses did not enjoy the leadership of Yılmaz as they enjoyed the leadership of Özal, Demirel or Erdoğan” (Interviewee 22 2014, March 5). As another of my interviewees, a former local Motherland Party executive member who would go on to become a member of the JDP, underlined, the exit of the conservative elite and thus the split of conservative figures from the party base had a corrosive effect on party activities on the ground (Interviewee 13 2014, February 7).

The response of one of the abovementioned top Motherland Party politicians to a question regarding the superiority of the JDP over the Motherland Party accurately summarized the differences between the JDP and its centre-right predecessor:

What is different in the JDP is the fact that they are coming from the “school of Erbakan” (*Erbakan mektebi*). The school of Erbakan is highly disciplined and attaches great importance to technology. [...] and they work for the God’s sake (*Allah rızası*). Once Yılmaz told me that we should organize like the Welfare Party. I told him that this is impossible. Because these people take part in the [Welfare] party to sacrifice not to receive benefits. [...] National Salvation [the predecessor of the Islamist Welfare Party] was organized even in the apartment blocks [...] They were all spending from their own pockets. [...] They were closely interested in all apartments and neighbourhoods. [...] They use their own car for the party activities. They fill their cars with the people and bring them to the meetings and ballot boxes. This is an amazing discipline. No other party can come close to this. Because they do this for the God’s sake. [...] The person who takes part in the Motherland, first of all, either seeks a job for his son or he wants to be a deputy or mayor. Nevertheless, the JDP has started to change as well. Some of them say “we were jihadists and we turned into contractors” (*mücahitken mütahit olduk*) (Interviewee 17 2014, February 25).

Despite the decrease in the motivations of the party members, and the corrosive effects of power on collective incentives, it would not be an exaggeration to highlight the role of the Islamist National View tradition, most notably the importance attached to the “collective incentives-driven pervasive membership organization”, in the survival and

electoral performance of the JDP. The most crucial lesson the JDP elite took from the Motherland Party experience must have been the problems entailed by heavy dependence on classical patronage and clientelism as well as on media- and capital-intensive strategies, which ignored the vital roles played by the party on the ground. The JDP elite were aware of this strategy's detrimental impact on the Motherland Party's electoral and political destiny.

5.2.2 The JDP's long-term political aim: "maintaining predominance"

Considering the failures of its rightist predecessors, it is highly plausible to argue that the JDP elite did not simply want to increase its vote share by any means at hand. Instead, the JDP struck a balance between the short-term requirements of the electoral processes (responsiveness) and the long-term requirements of being in office (responsibility). One of my high-ranking interviewees from the JDP vividly described this balance: "doing politics [for the JDP elite] is this kind of business, and I think it is the hardest part: you have to be the man inside the taxi driver and you have to convince the academic at the same time. In other words, you have to convince academics and intellectuals as well as the taxi driver" (Interviewee 36 2014, April 24). The key instrument of this balance between the short-term requirements of elections and the long-term requirements of being in office was the highly autonomous leadership and party structure.¹⁰

Furthermore, as some of my interviewees mentioned, the party elite started to see the JDP as the predominant force of Turkish politics. According to a deputy from the JDP, "this party will remain in power for a very long time. Not even ten or twenty years, it might remain in power even for fifty years. I have studied other examples of parties that remained in office for long terms. [...] In Japan we have seen that the Liberal Party had remained in power without interruptions for 56 years. In Sweden, Canada, South Africa, Malaysia [you have similar parties]" (Interviewee 29 2014, April 16). Hence, given the JDP's long-term aims and the party's electoral potential as revealed by previous elections, deploying full-scale vote maximization strategies such as highly redistributive policies and generous promises was not a preferable option for the JDP elite. This was why, in an answer to a question about redistributive strategies, one of my interviewees, an advisor to party leader Erdoğan and an expert on social policies, gave the following answer:

¹⁰ I elaborate on this organizational architecture, which is characterized by a highly autonomous leadership and party, in the following chapters. In this chapter, I only give the general framework of this organizational-electoral strategy.

The JDP's aim of creating a welfare state is supported by the careful conduct of the economy and resources generated by this. The JDP's social policy expenditures are made carefully. The party has been very careful about embracing an electoral economy,¹¹ a redistributive strategy, particularly requested by mayors before elections. Nevertheless, by the time the JDP came to power, poverty was a problem and this was why the party also had to apply short-term solutions as well.¹² But we have told ourselves at the beginning that we won't surrender to the populist style of rightist politicians (Interviewee 35 2014, April 22).¹³

Given the abovementioned interviewee's point, it is plausible to think that the party leadership frequently encountered the demands of the provincial party elite, provincial chairs and mayors of initiating redistributive policies. However, given the state budget balance protected throughout the JDP rule, it is possible to think that the leadership firmly rejected these demands in general. From the same perspective, it is also plausible to think that the leadership also inhibited a move towards the other extreme, protecting the party from falling into a purely technocratic, long-term political strategy that depended on drastic decreases in public spending given the volume of the social policy expenditure by the party since the beginning of JDP rule. As Şentürk, a former JDP vice-chair in İstanbul, underlined, the electorate can bear unpopular measures for overcoming political and economic crises for a while, but politicians should not think that this goes on forever (2007: 186–187).

In sum, the JDP must be considered as a party outside the classical patronage-based centre-right politics of Turkey explained above. Since the social and economic structure (particularly import substitution economy) that gave rise to classical patronage politics of the centre-right had already started to decline (by the rise of neo-liberal policies and regulations which target privatization and reducing the role of state in economy), the JDP

¹¹ "Electoral economy", in this context, means increasing social expenditures and state subsidies immediately before the elections.

¹² Distributing coal and food in poor neighbourhoods became a well-known practice throughout the JDP years as well as other social policy reforms and expenditures in favour of low-income social segments.

¹³ It should be noted that, in the JDP discourse revealed by the written material such as the party program and speeches of its leaders and prominent figures, populism referred to highly redistributive strategies. Just after the Syriza victory in Greece, and the declaration by party leader Tsipras that the country would not pay its foreign debt, one of the comments of Erdoğan regarding Tsipras was the following: "He has to be quite cautious in some of his messages. Politics does not bear being sentimental. You have to balance populism" (Milliyet, 2015). This was also emblematic of the fact that populism was seen as an unrealistic economic outlook by the JDP elite. Yet at the same time, this comment also illustrated that the JDP leader Erdoğan saw "balanced" redistributive policies that relieved the popular masses to be, to a certain extent, necessary and legitimate.

was required to adapt new strategies. This peculiarity of the party was accurately captured by Özdan (2014), a critical commentator:

In Anatolia, there was a centre-right politics which was under the monopoly of the families whose large lands were primarily a result of unjust enrichment. These people were also the lords of politics (*siyasetin ağaları*). Without the support of these people, becoming a candidate and winning elections were almost impossible. Later on, agriculture ceased to provide money. Big families started to dissolve and migrate to big cities. People who were previously day workers or share croppers became land owners and their children got university educations and have become professionals in their hometowns. [...] Economic dependence on land and land owners decreased and the era of the lords of politics came to an end. People found the JDP cadres that they saw around them, and who live according to the similar customs like them, familiar. This gap was occupied by younger and more ambitious JDP cadres who got mature enough in the local governments, and who addressed the problems of Turkey from a proper perspective under the circumstances of a suitable political and economic global conjecture.

As discussed above, and as will be elaborated in the following chapters, as a part of its long-term aim of maintaining predominance, the JDP elite avoided relying heavily on provincial patronage networks. The party also avoided recruiting its political cadres extensively from local power holders in provincial Turkey.¹⁴ Instead, the party tended to replace these kinds of cadres with younger, highly educated, more ambitious, career-oriented yet submissive people. As Özdan underlined, “Prime Minister [Erdoğan]’s most important skill is to create continuous expectation and keep these expectations alive [among the party cadres]. The JDP’s constant renewal of the party cadres, except the core team, creates continuous energy and enthusiasm in the party. This situation successfully addresses the new generations’ inclinations of quickly becoming rich and prominent, gaining privilege through appearance, prioritizing individual interest” (2014).

This dynamic was also underlined by a Central Executive Committee member of the party. According to him, the possibility of getting elected to a post provided an enduring energy to the party:

There is the motivation stemming from the possibility of being elected. [...] There are many elections. If you cannot become a deputy, you can become a provincial (*il*) chair, if not a provincial chair you become a provincial administration board member. If you are a member of the sub-provincial administration board and wanted to become a local

¹⁴ I elaborate on the JDP’s relationship with local political elites in Chapter 7.

assembly member and could not make it, you become one of the members of the administration board of the ruling party. [...] In short, motivation comes from frequent elections. Normally it is hard to motivate the organization when the amateur spirit is replaced by an institutional one. Nevertheless, as a result of these elections, the possibility of gaining new titles provides motivation. This enhances the engagement to the organization (Interviewee 37 2014, April 24).

Hence, the predominance of the party provided wider flexibility to the party elite for finding required human resources: young and ambitious people. Nevertheless, the leadership also carefully dealt with an overwhelmingly careerist inclination in the party. This was why one of the commentators close to the JDP underlined Erdoğan's talent at striking a balance between "interests" and "mission" (Koru, 2012). It should be also by noted that this frequent circulation in executive cadres of the party also inhibited any sedimentation of power holder intermediaries within the party and in localities. As a result of the strategic experience from the previous centre-right parties and the socio-demographic change which undermined classical patronage politics, the JDP became a genuinely novel political force in Turkish politics.

In this section, I illustrated the difference between the JDP and its rightist predecessors, most notably the Motherland Party and the Islamist Welfare Party. In terms of its organizational dynamics, the JDP neither embraced a strategy entirely depending on selective incentives, like the Motherland Party, nor a strategy overwhelmingly dependent on collective incentives and strong ideational links with party members and the electorate, like the Islamist Welfare Party. Instead, the party elite observed a balance between these two and was able to keep collective and selective incentives-driven party cadres together through a high degree of leadership and party autonomy. The JDP elite also identified the long-term political aim of the party as "maintaining predominance". In order to achieve this, JDP cadres avoided relying on unrealistic promises and overwhelmingly redistributive strategies. The JDP elite and strategists tended to maximize the party's vote, like every other party, but they also carefully avoided full scale maximization of votes through uncontrolled redistributive strategies, unsubstantiated promises, classical patronage politics and negotiations with local power holders. A year-round active, pervasive and highly motivated membership organization under the control of an autonomous leadership – a legacy of the Islamist National View tradition – was essential

in providing this balance. The abovementioned differences of the JDP from its rightist predecessors have been summarized below in Table 5.1.¹⁵

Table 5.1: The JDP and its rightist predecessors

Parties	Islamist Welfare Party	Centre-right Motherland Party	JDP
Strategies			
Incentive structure	Collective	Selective	Hybrid (balance between collective and selective incentives)
Organization	Year-round active, highly motivated, pervasive membership organization	Periodically active party on the ground for ballot box safety	Year-round active, pervasive membership organization
Campaign technique	Labour intensive (based on party members and volunteers)	Media and capital intensive	Hybrid (labour and capital intensive)
Electoral strategy	One-by-one vote canvassing	Negotiations with local and national politically salient individuals and social groups and classical patronage	Hybrid (with a special emphasis on one-by-one vote canvassing and avoiding extensive patronage and clientelism)
Degree of party autonomy*	High	Low	High
Degree of leadership autonomy*	High	Low	High
Mode of intraparty governance*	Authoritarian (no room for factions and powerful local and national figures)	Tolerant (with factions and local and national powerful figures other than the party leader)	Authoritarian (no room for factions and powerful local and national figures)
Party type*	Mass-based	Elite-based	Hybrid (personalistic membership party)

Source: Author's compilation

Note: These distinctions marked with “*” are discussed in length in other chapters.

¹⁵ In this chapter I only briefly mentioned the difference of the organization and intraparty governance of the JDP from its rightist predecessors. In the following chapters I elaborate on these dimensions of the JDP politics with reference to Table 5.1.

5.3 Controlled tension: the JDP as the representative of the “downtrodden” majority

In this section, I look at what mainly was substituted by the JDP elite in place of the highly redistributive strategies and classical centre-right politics of patronage and clientelism.

5.3.1 Playing with emotions

In the previous section, I illustrated how classical centre-right patronage declined in Turkey and how the JDP’s long-term aim of becoming a predominant party ruled out highly redistributive electoral strategies. As a result, investing in discursive and emotional techniques by drawing mostly upon the party leader Erdoğan’s personality and political interventions became a crucial electoral tactic for the JDP elite. Erdoğan was usually accused of “polarising” society and politics through his public speeches.¹⁶ Commentators in Turkey usually pointed out the potential dangers of the discriminating tone of his speeches and complained that Erdoğan was a highly divisive figure who separated society into camps according to people’s attitudes towards conservative hegemony in Turkey.

I would like to call this electoral tactic of the JDP “controlled tension”.¹⁷ Controlled tension can be described as artificially increasing political tensions in pre-election periods by subtle discursive attacks on political rivals with reference to the high-low, democracy-anti-democracy and secular-religious divides. This, in turn, helped the ruling party to enlarge the boundaries of its electoral base in pre-election periods by antagonising its electoral rivals and pushing undecided voters to choose camps. Relying on the party’s low political appeal/style elaborated in Chapter 3, the tactic of controlled tension helped the JDP to consolidate its electoral base by labelling its electoral competitors, depending on the context, as either elite, anti-democratic or anti-religious forces against the JDP government. Yet, in every possible case, the logic remained the same: the JDP elite intentionally created simple dualities before elections and ensured the existence of a mood

¹⁶ Although political commentators in the media tend to call this tactic “polarisation”, the term in fact denotes a structural quality of party systems which is characterized by the distance of political actors on a given cleavage dimension such as left and right (Sani & Sartori, 1983). For instance, as competing political actors cumulate at the extreme poles of a left-right dimension, this means a high degree of polarisation in a given party system. In the Turkish case, Erdoğan increased tensions among competing political actors, yet his constant interventions in Turkish politics did not create a polarized party system. Instead it caused a “bifurcation”.

¹⁷ The term “controlled tension” originally belongs to Duran (2013), and by this term he implied the resistance and counter-attack of the JDP to secularist actors such as army and bureaucracy. In this text when I use the term I imply a wider tactical inclination of the party than the one pointed out by Duran (2013).

that elections were held mainly between the JDP and others. These interventions by the party elite, more often than not, defined the electoral drama of the country and drew the JDP's political opponents into a discursive struggle defined by the JDP.

In the use of the tactic of "controlled tension", the JDP elite tended to either put electoral rivals in a single hostile group or only took one of its electoral rivals seriously, according to the political circumstances. The tactic of controlled tension always appealed to the fears of the electorate. In pre-election periods, the JDP elite convincingly created a mood that only the JDP was capable of protecting the long-lasting traditions and values of society and only it was strong enough to provide political (and, to a lesser extent, economic) stability to the country. The JDP elite made great efforts to present the party as the true representative and the authentic defender of the common cultural and political values of the nation. High voter turnout in elections as well as the declining vote share of smaller, more ideological parties in the electoral system could be considered indicators of the tactic of "controlled tension".¹⁸ Through increasing the fears of the low-income, conservative-religious majority of the country *vis-a-vis* the alleged threat of the elite-secularist oppression, the tactic of controlled tension consolidated the party vote¹⁹ by transforming undecided voters into decisive supporters, decisive sympathisers into party members and party members into party activists.²⁰ Although it created a much more decisive opposition against the JDP, the tactic of controlled tension consolidated party cohesion as well as the party's electoral base, and at the same time increased the number of voters. For instance, in the 2014 local elections, the JDP's electoral propaganda framed the election as the "independence struggle of the new Turkey" and depicted Erdoğan as the leader of this struggle (Aktifhaber, 2014a). It should also be underlined that personalization of politics also played its part in this strategy, and political divides in the

¹⁸ In Turkey, voter turnout has always been very high compared to the Western democracies. Nevertheless, there was a considerable change over time. In the 2002 general election and 2004 local elections voter turnout was below 80%. After the introduction of "tactic of controlled tension", voter turnout in elections started to increase. In the 2011 general election it was 83% and in the local elections in 2014, 89%.

¹⁹ When the JDP discourse was mainly reliant on a pro-democracy and pro-EU conservative democracy narrative, the JDP vote started to decline and hit rock bottom in the local elections in 2009 with 38%. Since that election, the JDP elite, and most notably the party leader Erdoğan, tended to use a tension-increasing, exclusionary language in their public speeches, particularly in pre-election periods. Since 2009, the party vote started to increase considerably. In the 2011 election the JDP got almost 50% of the votes, and in the 2014 local elections the party got remarkably higher than the previous local election with 43% of the popular vote. Although the decline and subsequent rise of the party vote over this period cannot be explained only by the tension-increasing interventions of the JDP elite, there appears to be a strong correlation.

²⁰ I borrow these distinctions between supporters, members and activists from Duverger (1974: 138).

country, most notably the high-low divide elaborated upon in previous chapters, also became an anti-Erdoğanism-Erdoğanism divide.

Deploying controlled tension was a less risky strategy for the JDP given its “low-populist” appeal outlined in previous chapters. After all, according to the narrative constructed by the JDP elite and the pro-JDP media, JDP cadres already came from humble social and political backgrounds. This in turn provided, to a great extent, historical legitimacy for the assaults by the JDP elite that increased political and social tensions in Turkey. However, the party elite took great care to not be perceived as the aggressive side of the tension in the eyes of the electorate and worked hard to protect the JDP’s victimized image. This was why Erdoğan usually used the expression “we were not aggressive but we stand tall” (*dikleşmeden dik durduk*). In other words, the party tried to protect an image that it had always suffered the attacks of its opponents but resisted them. One can also see great efforts of the supporters and members of the JDP in discrediting the critiques of intellectuals and political opponents of the party who argued that in order to get votes Erdoğan increased tensions. This kind of defensive position mostly justified Erdoğan’s attacks on his opponents.²¹

The nature of the opposition to the JDP and the assaults usually made by the Republican People’s Party helped the JDP elite to consolidate its victimized and defensive image. By relying on the “low” appeal of the party, which depicted the JDP as the representative of the downtrodden peripheral majority, the JDP elite also easily exploited the secularist critiques of the main opposition and reflected these critiques to its supporters as potential threats to the values of the conservative-religious majority of the country that stemmed from the allegedly “elite” secularist opposition.²² It should also be underlined that criticism towards the religiosity of JDP politicians by the Republican People’s Party was usually interpreted by the JDP elite and JDP supporters as evidence of the main opposition’s disdain for devout and ordinary people.

²¹ According to Esayan, a pro-JDP columnist, the reason behind the “polarisation” in Turkey was not Erdoğan but those “arrogant” and “reactionary” forces who resisted demands of equality for religious people. According to Esayan, “Erdoğan’s talent at managing polarisation politics does not mean that he prefers this or, at least, does not mean that he started this. [...] He only protects himself” (2014a).

²² Many speeches of Erdoğan can be found that drew upon the theme of “assaults by the Republican People’s Party to religion”. For a news report on Erdoğan’s claims with “documents” that the Republican People’s Party sold some mosques and turned some of them into storehouses during 1930s and 1940s, see Aktifhaber (2012). Erdoğan also said the following: “Our nation remembers well how the mosques were shut, how the call-to-prayer (*ezan*) were silenced, how they intervened into the way people dressed” (Aktifhaber, 2012).

Furthermore, the Republican People's Party's secularist critique of the JDP also provided the party elite with the upper hand in presenting the JDP as the only capable protector of the conservative-religious sectors of society against the assaults of the secularist establishment and the elite (Çınar, 2013: 46). Thus, by reframing and presenting secularist critiques as a threat to the religious, conservative sectors, the JDP elite reminded its electorate that its survival in power was vital for the interests and survival of the Islamic identity in the cultural, intellectual and economic realms (Çınar, 2013: 45). This defined the character of "survival politics" (Çınar, 2013: 45) as a primary component of the JDP's discursive strategy. Hence, as one of my interviewees underlined, conservative-religious (*muhafazakar-mütedeyyin*) segments of society always had this fear that if the JDP fell from power, they would be treated unjustly (Interviewee 20 2014, February 26). As noted by Duran, "the *politics of controlled tension* [Duran's emphasis] and Erdoğan's superior performance in manipulating public debate allowed the AK Party [JDP] to effectively take advantage of these polarizations and to solidify popular support" (Duran, 2013: 102).

In this section, I underlined the fact that, in the absence of widely available redistributive strategies for elections, the JDP elite invested heavily in emotional-discursive techniques in order to protect its share of the electorate. In order to do this, the JDP elite depicted the party as the only true representative and the protector of the downtrodden and conservative majority against the allegedly "elite" secularist opposition of the country. Erdoğan's tension-increasing interventions in politics had a special role in this propaganda method.

5.4 Communication strategy: "strong organization" and the pro-JDP media

The JDP strategy with regards to organizational dynamics and electoral propaganda was also complemented and supported by its communication instruments. In this section I give a detailed picture of the two-fold communication strategy of the JDP. On the one hand, the JDP had the advantage of having a "strong organization". This is to say that, from the practical point of view of the JDP elite, the party was organized at the neighbourhood level and had large numbers of motivated and qualified members (Şentürk, 2008a: 21). On the other hand, the JDP leadership also supported the efforts of its large and pervasive membership organization with the construction of a decisively pro-JDP media. These complementary aspects of the JDP's communication activity distinguished the party from its political competitors as well as its rightist predecessors.

5.4.1 “Strong organization”

As will be illustrated in detail in the next chapter, the JDP had a highly developed organization with large numbers of members organized even in the smallest corners of the country. In this section I focus firstly on the uses of the JDP’s large and pervasive membership organization as an effective communication channel.²³ As illustrated by the study of Çaha and Guida (2011) on the campaigning activities of the JDP and the Republican People’s Party in the 2009 local elections, the JDP had a clear superiority over other parties in preparing and motivating its organization for party activity on the ground through education (2011: 66). In my fieldwork, too, my questions about the educational activities of the JDP were usually met with an emphasis on the education of members on electoral issues (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15). An examination of the official JDP publication, *Turkey Bulletin (Türkiye Bülteni)*, also revealed the prominence of topics on electoral affairs in the party’s education activities. In addition to highly educated members on electoral affairs, the JDP also had a very pervasive organization which extended to villages and neighbourhoods (Çaha & Guida, 2011: 66).

According to Çaha and Guida’s observation on the eve of the 2009 local elections, other parties were lacking an organization like the JDP’s, which was not only active during the elections but during in other periods, as well. Indeed, as one of my interviewees underlined, the JDP had a sensitivity towards keeping party organizations active even during the regular periods when there was no election approaching: “you know the expression: ‘you come only around election time’. [...] We are going to every door lest people think that we only go for elections. [...] This is the impression we had from the previous era” (Interviewee 10 2014, January 18). According to Çaha and Guida, the JDP constantly kept its organizations active through education activities and the periodic and routine activities imposed on the provincial, sub-provincial, neighbourhood and village organizations of the party (2011: 67).

According to Şentürk, a former JDP executive from İstanbul, “despite a shorter institutional history and a mass party base, the JDP members have a stronger loyalty to the party. Because the party has a strong and active organization, and a large and active party organization enhances the loyalty of the members” (2008: 287). Indeed, the observations of Çaha and Guida in the 2009 elections were in line with Şentürk’s

²³ In the next chapter I mainly focus on the intraparty governance and dynamics of this massive organization.

statement: ‘In the Republican People’s Party there was a scattered mass and a limited number of volunteers who had no belief in the leadership, whereas in the JDP there was an army of volunteers who were disciplined and hardworking and also work with a sense of duty and mission and who sanctified the leadership of the party’ (2011: 72). One should also bring the robust and hardworking women’s branches of the JDP into the picture. According to Çaha and Guida, for example, in Küçükçekmece, a sub-province of İstanbul, the JDP was able to mobilise a large army of volunteers consisting of youth and women. In line with my findings on the vitality of the women’s branch of the party, Çaha and Guida argued that the JDP derived most of its dynamism from the work of young people and women (2011: 103).

5.4.1.1 Face-to-face interaction

The first contribution of such a pervasive and effective organization to the JDP was the leverage that it provided to the party for face-to-face interaction with the electorate. The JDP elite always considered face-to-face interaction as the most important method for reaching the electorate and this situation should not be dismissed as mere rhetoric. According to Şentürk, a former JDP executive from İstanbul, the most important instrument of communication is face-to-face interaction because it is always more persuasive than other methods (2006: 119). Face-to-face interaction included house visits, work place visits, coffee house visits and meetings organized in private halls (Şentürk 2006: 154). Indeed, as Çaha and Guida (2011) observed in the 2009 local elections, the party took face-to-face interaction seriously in its electoral campaigns. For instance, the JDP candidate for the mayoralty in one of the central sub-provinces (Üsküdar) in İstanbul told researchers that he relied heavily on the strategy of “warm contact” (*sıcak temas*) with the electorate (Çaha & Guida, 2011: 113).

One of the strategic assumptions of the JDP elite which led them to take face-to-face interaction seriously was the predominance of oral culture in Turkish society:

In societies where oral culture is predominant and which are characterized by a low degree of reading habits, the strength of party organizations gain a special significance. Parties with a strong and active organization are able to send their message to the electorate through one-to-one communication established by its members. [...] Today the JDP runs its campaigns with its strong organizational structure. [...] The JDP particularly attaches a special importance to women’s branches and hundreds of thousands homes have been visited by women and exposed to the JDP propaganda (Şentürk, 2008b: 269).

Nevertheless, the JDP elite, members and strategists were also aware of the limitations of face-to-face activity. According to one of my interviewees, face-to-face interaction became less and less effective because of the change of information technologies and the rise of the social media: “soon we might not find any people on the streets to shake their hands” (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25). On the other hand, one of the vice-chairs of the party’s İstanbul branch also told me that they saw professional campaigns and conventional face-to-face interaction as complementing each other (Interviewee 11 2014, January 22). Therefore, the JDP had a hybrid approach to campaign techniques which blended capital and labour intensive strategies (also see Table 5.1).

The contribution of face-to-face interaction should not be understood only in the context of immediate electoral benefits. It seems that the importance attached to face-to-face interaction also had something to do with the desire of the JDP elite to keep party organizations active and alive with electoral work even in the periods when there was no election approaching. In addition, an active membership organization that visited the electorate and worked in the field motivated party members and supporters as well as provided crucial visibility to the JDP in elections. One should also underline the practical importance of “strong organizations” in providing ballot box safety. As one of my experienced interviewees underlined, one of the primary roles of party organizations in Turkey was to protect the ballot boxes on election days from potential fraud (Interviewee 17 2014, February 25).²⁴

In this sense too, the JDP had a clear advantage. In the 2014 local election in Ankara, for example, the Republican People’s Party organizations were quite unsuccessful at providing ballot box records, which were necessary for appeals against disputed election results. An interview with one of the leading figures of a neutral civil organization for observing the elections highlighted this superiority of the JDP organization. According to Ayberk Yağız, “the Republican People’s Party organization was in such bad condition [on the election day of the 2014 local elections] that we thought that there was a conspiracy behind this. We had to collect ballot box records from the Nationalist Action Party and the Great Union Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi*) independently from the Republican People’s Party organizations. People did not enter results and the Republican People’s

²⁴ It was really striking to see that this particular interviewee, a top Motherland Party politician, had a very limited perspective on the importance of membership organizations and evaluated its role simply as a tool for safeguarding ballot boxes in election days. This was emblematic of the perspective which caused the organizational decline of centre-right parties in Turkey during 1990s.

Party's [online] system was down. Therefore they searched ballot box records through the internet. [...] The most well-organized party was the JDP. They had at least one representative per ballot box, and there were people who were serving tea and food in the breaks. In the afternoon, other people came as replacements. While the ballot box staff of other parties were tired, the JDP brought fresh and new people. The Nationalist Action Party was quite organized too. The Republican People's Party was the worst. It had something to do with the general organization of the party" (Güvenç, 2014).

5.4.1.2 Meetings

Face-to-face interaction should not be seen only in the context of the work of junior party members. As one of my expert interviewees underlined, Erdoğan's meetings and mass rallies of JDP should also be seen in this context (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). For example, before the 2007 general elections, it was reported that Erdoğan visited 54 provinces out of 81, whereas his closest rival, Deniz Baykal, then the chair of the Republican People's Party, had only been to 31 (Hürriyet, 2007). Similarly, Erdoğan's performance before the 2009 was better, too. According to a news article published a couple of days before the elections, Erdoğan had visited 57 provinces, whereas his closest rival Baykal had only visited 30 by then (Zaman, 2009). Erdoğan had also visited 68 provinces during the 2011 election campaign (Memurlar, 2011). Before the 2014 local elections, Erdoğan had been to 56 provinces for meetings, although this time the opposition leader, the Republican People's Party's new leader Kılıçdaroğlu, had a better performance by participating in meetings in 60 provinces (Milliyet, 2014a).

The participation numbers were also usually remarkably higher in Erdoğan's meetings. For instance, for the 2011 general election in İstanbul, parties had meetings in the same square and the participation numbers were significantly different. According to the police records, while 400,000 people participated in the JDP meeting in Kazlıçeşme, the Republican People's Party could attract only 82,000 people to the same square (Milliyet, 2011). Participation in the JDP mass rally just prior to the 2014 local elections was also another indication of its organizational capacity. Although the numbers of participants had been an issue of dispute since then, during the meeting Erdoğan claimed that there were two million people in the meeting space (Radikal, 2014a).

Mass rallies provided a remarkable visibility for the JDP. It is also plausible to argue that, just like face-to-face interaction, organizing meetings might be considered as a way of

keeping party organizations active given the demanding work for “filling the meeting space”. As one of my interviewees, an expert academic on the centre-right, underlined, one of the reasons why Erdoğan organized this meeting was to revitalise the party branches: “When the Prime Minister will be coming there, [for example], the Kayseri branch of the party will start to work a week before” (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). The organizational workload for the meetings also enhanced the hierarchical cohesion and solidarity of the party. Central decisions of organizing mass rallies in any part of the country started a chain reaction that went all the way down from the headquarters to the neighbourhood branches. The plans prepared by the headquarters were realized by the work of the subordinated segments of the party. For example, for a meeting in İstanbul, the party headquarters in Ankara asks the provincial party branch to organize the meeting and the provincial party branch asks the sub-provincial branches to call as many people as possible from their own regions. Sub-provincial party branches also push neighbourhood representatives under their control to call as many people as possible from their neighbourhoods.

Apart from that, it also seems that Erdoğan had a special appetite for meetings, and he found refuge in mass rallies during the political crises that the JDP encountered. As one of my expert interviewees underlined, mass rallies had a therapeutic effect on Erdoğan (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). For instance, as a response to the summer 2013 mass protest movements in Gezi Park in İstanbul, the JDP organized two mass meetings in Ankara and İstanbul under the title of “respect for the national will” (AA, 2013). One should also note that Erdoğan was always present at these meetings, which were organized around his personality. It should also be underlined that Erdoğan was always a remarkable orator and the texts of his speeches were written by talented propagandists. The JDP’s use of mass rallies constructed around the presence of Erdoğan should also be seen as a dimension of the party’s personalistic communication style (Interviewee 49 2014, May 8).

Lastly, it should also be highlighted that the “strong organization” had a meaning beyond electoral purposes for the JDP elite and, as elaborated upon in previous chapters, it was also seen as as a power base and/or a mobilizational resource by the [formerly Islamist] party elite against potential threats by the powerful non-party political actors in the country, such as the military, the judiciary and the bureaucracy, as well as against social discontent. Hence, besides immediate electoral benefits, the degree and nature of political

conflict in the country elaborated upon in previous chapters (particularly in Chapters 2 and 3) were other factors making a year-round, large and pervasive organization indispensable for the JDP elite.

5.4.2 The pro-JDP media

Relying only on the JDP organization was not felt to be sufficient by the JDP leadership and this was why the party started to construct a strong and decisively pro-JDP media. One would think that it would be misleading to call a part of the media pro-JDP. Nevertheless, it makes sense since the people in the executive positions of these media channels had no problem with being affiliated with the party. A former chief editor of the pro-JDP daily newspaper *Star* explicitly underlined the necessity of having a media for the 50%, which apparently denoted the vote share of the JDP (Karaalioglu, 2014).

Hence it is safe to talk about a pro-JDP media consisting of at least five highly influential and strongly pro-JDP newspapers such as *Sabah*, *Türkiye*, *Star*, *Yenişafak*, *Akşam* besides minor ones such as *Yeni Akit* and *Milat*. According to the figures of the official Press Notification Institution (*Basın İlan Kurumu*), the total circulation rate per day of the abovementioned newspapers at the time of writing was close to one million.²⁵ One should also mention the appointments of pro-JDP columnists to mainstream newspapers such as *Hürriyet* and *Habertürk* as another instrument of the JDP's grip over the media. It is also known that Erdoğan, in person, directly tried to control the news through his relationship with media bosses (Radikal, 2014b). There were also several pro-JDP TV channels broadcasting nationally such as *24*, *Ülke TV*, *Beyaz TV*, *TGRT*, *A Haber*, *ATV* and *Kanal 7* besides many local newspapers and TV channels under the control of the local and provincial JDP elite. One should also add the unprecedented tight control over the official Turkish Radio Television (*Türkiye Radyo Televizyonu*) to the picture.

One of my expert interviewees underlined the importance of media control for the JDP through a very illustrative comparison between the politics of the 1990s and the JDP. This quotation is rather important since it also underlined a couple of important features of political conflicts in Turkey, most notably the deep involvement of non-party actors in party politics:

Tayyip Erdoğan realized how important the support of the media was for his survival in power and therefore he created his own media. [...]

²⁵ See the circulation rates on <http://www.bik.gov.tr/istanbul/temmuz-2014-tiraj-raporu/> (accessed: 21.7.2014).

In the past the Motherland Party [and] the True Path Party tried to keep the mainstream media under their control through granting them privileges in state contracts. But it was a very risky strategy. We saw this in the example of Aydın Doğan [most influential media boss of the country]. [...] The True Path Party period was a clear example of this. [...] I think somehow Berlusconi was a source of inspiration for him [Erdoğan] in this sense. [...] For instance, Erbakan, in the Welfare Party period, did not use a similar strategy. He thought that *Milli Gazete* alone would be sufficient. This was a huge mistake. [...] At that time, during the Motherland Party period, Aydın Doğan had such an enormous influence on politics that he could push governments to change ministers. [...] For instance, Aydın Doğan waged war [through his newspapers] against the minister of internal affairs of the era, Saadettin Tantan, because of his words over *Dış Bank*. [...] And the Motherland Party had to change him. [...] For the sake of this media power Motherland Party sacrificed him (Interviewee 39 2014, May 2).

Another interviewee from the JDP also had similar observations. According to him, without the pro-JDP media created by the support of pro-government business circles, the JDP could have been crushed by the powerful non-party actors such as the military and bureaucratic elite (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15). Hence it seems that the former media order in Turkey, and its influence on Turkish politics throughout 1990s, led the JDP elite to construct their own media. The JDP elite strategically learned lessons from the political failures of former centre-right parties and the Islamist National View parties that had partially stemmed from the lack of a full grip over the media.

According to a news report based on the leaked audio recordings of some businessmen and government members, the JDP leadership actively collected money from businessmen into a “pool” in return for some privileges in state bids in order to buy and run two highly influential newspapers and a TV channel as pro-JDP instruments (Zaman, 2014). Thus, the JDP managed to create an effective pro-JDP media, ironically enough at the cost of its newspapers and TV channels being referred to by opponents of the party as the “government bulletin” (*hükümet bülteni*), “partisan media” (*yandaş medya*) and “pool media” (*havuz medyası*). Lastly, it should be mentioned that the pro-JDP media did not only contribute to the JDP’s visibility and electoral campaigns, but also played a vital role in the manipulation of the public opinion by the interventions of party leader Erdoğan. Without the support of the pro-JDP media, the political crises that the party encountered would definitely have left much deeper wounds in the JDP organization.

In this section I have illustrated how, on the one hand, a large, pervasive and a year-round active membership organization and, on the other, a decisively pro-JDP media were vital

in the party's communication activities and in its electoral campaigns. While the efforts of this large and pervasive membership organization provided an upper hand to the party for face-to-face interaction with the electorate and for ensuring the safety of ballot boxes on election days, the pro-JDP media also supported the activities of this massive membership organization and helped party leader Erdoğan to easily manipulate public opinion. As a result, I underlined the importance of the combination of these two communication instruments for increasing the visibility of the party, reaching large numbers of voters and influencing public opinion for the JDP's electoral benefit.

5.5 Conclusion: the JDP and its rightist predecessors

The electoral achievements of the JDP were much more enduring than previous rightist and centre-right parties in Turkey. While the Democrat Party rule between 1950 and 1960 was marked with a steady decline of the party's votes, the ruling Motherland Party of the 1980s also started to lose momentum at the beginning of the 1990s. In addition, the votes of the Islamist National View parties started to decline after reaching their peak in the mid-1990s. In contrast, the JDP increased its votes in almost every election between 2002 and 2014 and remained in power as the single-party majority government. The discussion in this chapter has pointed out a couple of distinguishing features with regards to organizational dynamics, electoral tactics and communication strategies which, together, contributed to the JDP's unprecedented electoral predominance as well as political resilience in Turkish political history.

First of all, previous centre-right parties in Turkey usually depended heavily on highly redistributive strategies such as classical patronage and clientelism for party cohesion as well as for vote maximization. Hence, the role of selective incentives had played a major role in those parties' survival and electoral achievements. Unlike those parties, thanks to its Islamist National View past, the JDP leadership also attached great importance to the role of collective incentives. In order to consolidate its rank-and-file and its electoral base it frequently appealed to a tension-increasing discourse in which Turkish politics was depicted as a struggle between the JDP, the representative of the conservative downtrodden peripheral masses, and the allegedly "elite" secularist opposition.

Secondly, although previous centre-right parties had robust membership organizations, their elite usually viewed the role of 'membership organization' from a very limited perspective: a simple device for preventing electoral fraud. Instead of relying on their

membership parties' efforts, those centre-right parties mostly depended on the support of local elites, religious communities and tribal leaders in order to protect their electoral bases. In addition, the Motherland Party in particular tended to rely on professional campaigning and gave up being interested in the membership party at the beginning of 1990s. Hence, the membership party lost its significance for those parties and their leadership had to further compromise with particularistic interest groups outside the party. Unlike these parties, the JDP elite attached great importance to the membership party and relied on its effort in extracting votes from local constituencies through individual interactions with the electorate, in addition to the effective use of a highly developed pro-JDP media. This increased the party's autonomy *vis-a-vis* local and national power holders outside the organization.

Last but not the least, although the predecessors of the JDP were very centralized centre-right parties, historical evidence also showed that there was a much more tolerant intraparty atmosphere in those parties. Unlike the JDP, those parties' mode of centralization created space for the accumulation of power in the hands of local and national elites other than the leadership. Hence, despite the influence of the leadership in those parties, they also had to struggle with various local and national power holders. Unlike previous centre-right parties, the JDP elite embraced a much more disciplined yet consensual intraparty political conduct (delineated in the next chapter) and carefully inhibited the accumulation of power in the hands of local and national elites other than the party leadership. All these organizational dynamics and electoral strategies depended on the autonomy of the leadership and the party and, under the circumstances of the diminishing effectiveness of classical patronage, provided better grounds for the implementation of technocratic policies. Better government performance,²⁶ in turn, also increased the party's lasting electoral support. In the following chapter, I elaborate upon the organizational architecture on which the strategic approach of the JDP outlined in this chapter has been constructed.

²⁶ When I mention government performance, except for the increase in the GDP and the decrease in consumer price inflation, I am not referring to the objective and real achievements of the JDP governments. Illustrating the government's performance in those senses would require a different research agenda and method. Instead, I am referring to the perception of the government's performance. In line with this position, relying on statistical analysis, Gidengil and Karakoç's (2014) study on the reasons for the JDP's success illustrated that the party owed its electoral achievements to a large extent to the perception of the majority of the people that the party's government performance was successful regarding issues such as the economy and social policies.

6 The JDP ORGANIZATION: a PERSONALISTIC MEMBERSHIP PARTY

6.1 Introduction

According to records, in 2013 the Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) had almost eight million members (Milliyet, 2013). These members, coming from distinct backgrounds, were channelled by the party to the ballot boxes along with their friends and relatives by the thousands of party branches that penetrated into even the smallest corners of the country, each of which was kept under the control of the central JDP elite. When the numerous political crises that the JDP had encountered since its foundation are taken into account, the resilience and electoral predominance of such an enormous organization seems puzzling. How was the central JDP elite able to keep this massive membership organization under its control and successfully deploy it for electoral success?

In this chapter I propose that three practical organizational factors were central to the electoral achievements and the political resilience of the JDP. First, the JDP had a year-round active, very large and pervasive membership organization. Second, the JDP leadership exerted very tight control over this massive membership organization. Third, the JDP elite also paid great attention to the “controlled participation” of the party base in order to absorb potential dissent against this firm control. These organizational factors have led me to identify the JDP as a “personalistic membership party”.

In this chapter, before focusing on the JDP organization, I first take a closer look at theories on party typologies in section two. In this literature I paid particularly close attention to studies by Duverger (1974) and Epstein (2000), which focused on the relationships between organizational structures and changes in the electoral market. This literature led me to understand the organizational dynamics of the JDP as a specific response to the electoral market and to the broader political conflict in the country, rather than an institutional unfolding of a genetic origin, as did Panebianco in his approach (1988). Hence, one of the presumptions in this chapter, and throughout the dissertation, is that the organizational model of the JDP was directly connected to the party’s electoral achievements. I consolidate the theoretical assumption expanded upon in section two with a brief discussion on Turkish party organizations in section three.

These rather theoretical considerations surrounding the case of the JDP also justify the necessity of having a relational perspective for understanding the organizational dynamics' contributions to the party's electoral achievements and political resilience. In other words, neither a perspective exclusively focusing on the high echelons of the party – the party central office and the party in public office – nor an approach solely focusing on the grass roots would give a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of organizational dynamics to the JDP's electoral success. Instead, I preferred to focus on the relationship between these two faces of the party, both of which are central in the electoral processes: the party central office (and more precisely the party leadership) and the party on the ground (the massive membership of the JDP). While the latter was an extremely important nexus for the JDP in reaching out to the electorate, the former was key to the identification of the electoral and organizational strategies of the JDP,¹ and the mode of relationship between these two faces was central to the party's lasting electoral success and political resilience.

In section four, I briefly describe the legal framework relevant to the JDP organization such as the Law on Political Parties (*SPK - Siyasi Partiler Kanunu*) and the JDP statutes. In this section I also give an overview of the formal organizational structure of the party: its territorial dispersion, the party's local presence, and its membership structure. In section five and six I illustrate the kind of instruments through which the JDP elite exerted a tight control over this massive party base without causing discontent amongst party activists. After this empirical exposition, I evaluate the JDP organization from a broader theoretical perspective in section seven, and I argue that the JDP organization represented a hybrid party, or more precisely a "personalistic membership party", with regards to ideal typical models of the "mass-based" and "elite-based" models discussed in section two. This situation also demonstrated that, in certain aspects, the mass party model still has been shaping party organizations, particularly in the developing world.²

¹ See Kumbaracıbaşı for the importance of the Central Decision and Administration Board of the party in the policy making processes (2009: 133).

² I use the term "developing world" for referring to a context where liberal democratic architecture is considerably weak and socio-economic development (as we saw in advanced industrial countries), which gave rise to a certain party organizational development in Western democracies, remained far from being complete. In these contexts, political systems are usually labelled as competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy or hybrid regimes. But the term "developing world" indicates wider circumstances that include socio-economic and socio-cultural features. For a discussion of the term and consideration of Turkey as an upper-middle-income developing country, see Calvert & Calvert (2014). The world systems analysis was also one of the approaches behind my understanding of the socio-economic conditions of the party politics in the [semi-]periphery. See Wallerstein (2000; 2006).

6.2 Concepts and theories on organizational models: a view from the periphery

This analysis of the JDP organization mainly focuses on the complex relationships between the membership organization of the JDP and its central office.³ The analysis, both in this chapter and throughout the dissertation, has mostly excluded the discussion regarding the party's position in the public office *vis-a-vis* party on the ground and within the central office. I benefitted greatly from Levitsky's (2003) account in terms of my main approach to the fieldwork, which puts a special emphasis on the relationship between the various levels of a party's organization. In addition, I see parties "as clusters of relationships rather than as unitary 'black boxes'" (Massicard & Watts, 2013: 4).

In this analysis I have used several conceptual tools derived from the literature on party organization. I use the concept of centralism to refer to the domination of the party's central office over the party's units on the ground and to the lack of any meaningful power placed in the hands of these subordinate units (Duverger, 1974: 94). The JDP centralism and their organizational mechanics also worked in favour of "leadership autonomy", and did not allow the formation of other strong power foci inside the party. Following the perspective of Levitsky (2003), I define "leadership autonomy" as the party leader having a great degree of flexibility and room for manoeuvre in quick decision-making without needing approval from competing individual or collective power holders within the party. A related concept here is that of "party autonomy" and, following Panebianco (1988: 56–57), I define the term as the exclusion of politically salient actors outside the party – whether national or local, collective or individual – from the decision-making processes, drawing neat boundaries between the party and the wider environment surrounding it.

I also draw on the literature on party typologies to develop a comprehensive view of the JDP organization. Since this research aims to explain the relationship between the electoral success of the JDP and its organizational dynamics, it adapted an "electoral competition approach" rather than an "institutional" or "sociological" approach to the party typologies and organizations (Ware, 1996: 92–112). This is to say that my main understanding of party typologies is based heavily on the approaches of Duverger (1974) and Epstein (2000) and, more recently, literature which followed the discussions

³ For the separation of party organizations into three levels as "party in public office", "party on the ground" or the "membership party" and "the party in central office", see Katz & Mair (1993).

developed by these scholars that understands party organizational development mainly as a response to changes in electoral markets.

Although the literature on party typologies is a very rich one, it is possible to define a basic distinction that is present, either implicitly or explicitly, in the majority of the works. This distinction is between “elite-based” (cadre, catch-all, electoral-professional and cartel) and “mass-based” (mass party) models.⁴ One of the sources of this distinction, not surprisingly, is the seminal work of Duverger (1974). In his work on political parties published in the early 1950s, Duverger (1974) differentiated the “committee” or “caucus” organization of the “elites” from the “branch” organizations of the “working classes”. Duverger associated the committee or caucus organization with cadre parties and the branch organization with mass parties (1974: 114). According to him, the difference between these two parties was related to a structural quality rather than the quantity of their members (1974: 106). To Duverger, mass parties were distinguished from the cadre parties with the importance attached to the local presence⁵ of the party and the regularity-permanence of the party activities as well as the centrality of indoctrination and education of party members (1974: 60). Another distinguishing point of the mass party that Duverger pointed out was the importance of the financial contributions of ordinary members in this kind of organizational structure (1974: 107). In contrast, cadre parties depended on the financial means of limited interest groups as well as on technicians who know how to run campaigns (Duverger, 1974: 107). According to Duverger, electoral achievements of mass parties led many elite-based parties to adopt the organizations of mass parties and started a process of “contagion” from the left (1974: 61–62).

More than a decade after Duverger, as a result of the rise of television and the social transformations that started to dissolve the class bases of the mass parties in Western democracies, Epstein argued that the mass party was not the rule but the exception with regards to party organizational change (2000: 100). According to Epstein, the golden age of the mass parties was a very short period during the 1950s (2000: 251), which was followed by the rise of “Americanization” or “heavily financed mass media campaigns” (2000: 257). Epstein contended that social and technological transformations triggered counter-organizational tendencies, and therefore a process of “contagion from the right”

⁴ It should be noted that Ware uses a very similar distinction between “elite-based” and “membership-based” models (1987: 8).

⁵ Szczerbiak (1999) also draws attention to this aspect of the mass party.

(2000: 260), where active members of the parties started to be seen as liabilities more than assets (2000: 258). Epstein even tended to see these counter-organizational trends as the future of the political party (2000: 260).

These two main analyses of the party organizational typologies gave the main lines of two ideal typical party models and two main strategic inclinations: a mass-based approach depending on tight control over a massive membership organization, and an elite-based one depending on mass communication, centralized finance, campaign technicians and professionals. Relatively recent literature has also confirmed this distinction between mass parties and more modern elite parties that relied on technological instruments instead of a massive membership organization. For instance, Panebianco differentiated the “mass bureaucratic party” from the “electoral-professional party” and pointed out the decline of the *classe gardee*, or the particular, insulated social segments in which parties took root as the main reason for the decline of the mass party (1988: 263). According to Panebianco, electoral-professional parties were distinguished from the mass parties by the importance they attached to campaign professionals and experts instead of the party bureaucracy (1988: 264). Electoral-professional parties targeted the “opinion electorates” while mass parties were based on the “electorates of belonging” (Panebianco 1988: 264). While mass parties depended on the sources created by members, electoral-professional parties depended on financial means provided by interest groups and the state (Panebianco, 1988: 264). Panebianco also pointed out the central role of ideologies in mass parties, whereas the emphasis shifted to leaders’ competence and managerial issues in electoral-professional parties (1988: 264).

Other contributions to the party organizations’ literature usually followed this main distinction and elaborated on the features of the mass-based and elite-based parties in line with Duverger (1974). According to Kirchheimer, for instance, the “mass integration party” was aimed at the “intellectual and moral encadrement of the masses” (1966: 184). There was a strong tendency in the literature to define the mass party model through the size and structure of its membership organization as well as the ideological-programmatic convictions of the party elite and members. In contrast, the catch-all party, or the elite-based parties in general, have been defined by the decline of the party’s “ideological baggage”, the “strengthening of the top leadership groups” and the “decline of the role of individual members” (Kirchheimer, 1966: 190), which were compensated for by the closer relationship between the party and the state (Katz & Mair, 1995) and the extensive

use of mass media and technology to connect the party leadership directly to the electorate (Katz & Mair, 1993: 615). Political marketing techniques, such as the frequent use of public opinion surveys, were also at the heart of catch-all strategies and elite-based parties in general (Scammell. 1999: 726–734).

As the works of Katz and Mair (1995; 1996; 2002; 2009), Mair (1992) and Blyth and Katz (2005) illustrate, more contemporary studies tended to introduce more sophisticated distinctions than the one between elite-based (cadre and catch-all) and mass-based (mass party) parties. For instance, Katz and Mair differentiated between the catch-all party and what they described as the “cartel party” (1995). According to them, the catch-all party had been a short-lived phenomenon that emerged after the historical achievements of the mass party such as the improvement of the conditions of the working classes through generous welfare regimes established under mass party rules (Katz & Mair, 1995: 12). The dissolution of the class bases of mass parties under these improved social and economic conditions led political parties in Western democracies to target a more heterogeneous electorate than before, “an electorate made up of voters who were learning to behave more like consumers than active participants” (Katz & Mair, 1995: 7). According to Blyth and Katz, the catch-all parties were creatures of the Keynesian economies (2005: 42) and as they increased promotion of public goods in order to appeal to a heterogeneous electorate they reached certain fiscal limits and created apathy towards party politics (2005: 40). Hence, the catch-all model was replaced by the cartel party as parties in Western democracies moved closer to the state and started to depend on public resources increasingly (Katz & Mair, 1995).

Meanwhile, parties started to invest less and less in the party on the ground or membership parties (Mair 1992: 4–5). According to Katz, the fall of the mass party and the rise of increasingly elite-based catch-all or cartel parties required the “de-activation of activist members” within the parties.⁶ Another important feature of the cartel party for Katz and Mair was that they established “stratarchical” connections with (what was left of) the party on the ground instead of creating hierarchical-vertical ties (2002: 129).⁷ Katz and Mair also underlined the importance of professionalized and capital-intensive campaigns for the cartel party model (2009: 755). Hence, according to Katz and Mair, for parties in

⁶ Katz, Richard. “Political Parties and Democracy”. ECPR Summer School on Political Parties and Democracy, Leuphana University of Luneburg, Germany. 9 Sept. 2013. Lecture.

⁷ Also see Carty (2004) for an elaborate analysis of the stratarchical relationship.

Western Democracies, being in government has become extremely crucial for the organizational survival and, hence, party systems dominated by cartels started to make it as hard as possible for other parties to gain prominence. This was the point at which the term “cartel” became crucial and the label of “cartel parties” mainly underlined the collision – or proximity – between main parties in terms of policies and organizations in a given party system (Katz & Mair, 1995: 17). Despite the theoretical elegance of Katz and Mair’s studies (particularly the one published in 1995), as Koole underlined later, the cartel party model used a systemic property to identify individual parties (1996: 508). Another criticism was that the distinction made by Katz and Mair between the state and society was far from grasping the blurred boundaries between the two (Koole, 1996: 513).

Apart from these general theoretical concerns about the concept, one of the main problems with these theoretical sophistications in the recent literature was that, from the perspective of the particular case of the JDP, and from the perspective of party politics in the developing world in general, these discussions on the nuances between various types of elite-based parties did not address the uneven socio-economic developments (the weakness of the welfare regimes and the much slower development of communication and technological infrastructures) outside the Western liberal democratic contexts. Furthermore, the cartel party hypothesis presumed orderly and legitimate alternation of power among parties of the cartel, but this simple condition was usually lacking in many electoral democracies or competitive authoritarian regimes in the developing world where political developments were interrupted with coups, revolutions, insurgencies and states of emergency. Hence, the cartel party hypothesis assumed a basic political regime stability with peaceful alternation in power, historically based on the dissolution of the working classes as an outcome of the achievements of a once robust welfare state.

Hence, in the context of Western liberal democracies, functions of party organization could easily be restricted to the electoral processes, and therefore it would be plausible to assume the fall of the party on the ground and “warm bodies” (Mair, 1992: 15), the decline of the party central office, and the rise of the party in public office since nationalized, professionalized campaigns backed by state resources would be sufficient to secure remaining in power. But when party politics and electoral politics are perceived as a game played by powerful and politicized non-party actors such as armies, powerful judicial and bureaucratic elites, and allegedly mainstream but deeply partisan media groups who interfere on the grounds of uneven technological and socio-economic development, party

organizations should be considered something more than a professional player in an ordinary game of electoral politics. In these kinds of circumstances, it is better to understand mobilizational functions of party organizations as “power capabilities” available to “power contenders”.⁸

As Roberts (2006: 137) underlined in the context of Latin America, the deeper the political conflict between a party and its opponents – whether other political parties or non-party politicized veto players – parties tend to have more solid organizations. After all, in such circumstances, “followers not only vote; they may be called upon to mobilize for rallies and demonstrations, participate in strikes and occupations, or even take up arms to defend their leader in times of peril” (2006: 137).⁹ Under the conditions of uneven socio-economic development – including a weak welfare regime and lack of state capacity to fulfill some of the social policy responsibilities as well as the slower development of communication and technological infrastructure – mass-based organizations did not only provide superior mobilizational capacities to leaders, but they also undertook crucial roles for distributing aid in cash or kind to the low-income segments of the electorate by providing “warm bodies”. This canvassing and pork-barrel function of party organizations made an invaluable contribution to the electoral fortunes of parties in the developing world. This is also to say that at least some of the traits of the mass party model were highly relevant for many parties outside the Western liberal democracies, and particularly in the context of electoral democracies or competitive authoritarianisms. Hence, the need to “foster a presence on the ground” for these parties was not simply due “to the legacy of the past and to the inheritance of earlier models” (Katz & Mair, 2002: 127), but emerged as a real necessity which deeply influenced the electoral and political resilience of parties outside the Western liberal democracies.

One of the main concerns regarding the cartel party model is also the fact that the depiction of the party organizational change in Katz and Mair’s approach implicitly

⁸ For the terms “power capabilities” and “power contenders”, see Anderson (1967: 91).

⁹ Here some evidence comes from the case I know best. During the massive street protests against the JDP government in the summer of 2013, one of Erdoğan’s first reactions to protesters’ occupation of the Gezi Park in Taksim was to threaten them with mobilizing his supporters – the 50%. During negotiations with the representatives of protestors, Erdoğan told them that, “At the moment we hardly keep the 50% of this country’s people at their homes. We tell them to be patient and do not be provoked by these tricks” (Hürriyet, 2013b). Not surprisingly, in the middle of June 2013, and approximately two weeks after the protests started in İstanbul, Ankara and other parts of the country, Erdoğan held two mass rallies in Ankara and İstanbul under the title “Respect for National Will” (AA, 2013). The resilience of the JDP elite against the systemic veto players in Turkey described in Chapter 2 also had something to do with the mobilizational capacity of the JDP organization.

envisaged an irreversible development towards the cartel model.¹⁰ In other words, according to Katz and Mair, the mass party model has become obsolete, a thing of the past “at least across Europe” (2009: 760). However, the social and technological transformations which led to the decline of mass parties and the rise of elite-based parties have not been as complete in the developing world as they were in Western liberal democratic systems. Although the rise of television and other mass communication technologies was a global phenomenon, in vast areas across the world the degree of technological development remained highly uneven, and therefore tightly controlled membership parties remained as highly effective linkages between parties and electorates. This is to say that while some social segments in these kinds of political settings could be easily reached by television, mass media or the internet, to reach certain low-income segments of these societies required the presence of robust organizational leverages with strong vertical ties – more precisely, a mass-based organizational strategy. Hence, it is more plausible to expect to see in the majority of the countries outside the Western liberal democratic settings a move towards the hybridization of party models instead of an irreversible trend towards the “Americanization” or “presidentialization” of party politics.

Even in liberal Western democracies, recent studies on party organizations and party membership underlined the vital roles assumed by members and the party on the ground and the inadequacy of the exclusively elite-based strategies. According to Seyd and Whiteley, for example, Labour’s main mistake which led the party to a series of electoral failures in the second half of the twentieth century was the extensive use of centralized communication and campaigning (1992: 11) while ignoring an energetic grass roots organization. Susan Scarrow’s studies also demonstrate the crucial role played by the membership parties in terms of providing legitimacy and establishing contacts with the electorate (1996; 2000; 2014). According to Scarrow, the mass party in its original historical form as defined by Duverger and Neumann (1954; 1956) could be considered to be a thing of the past, as something historically exceptional (2000). Nevertheless, Scarrow also drew attention to the fact that, even in Western democracies, parties were still organizing themselves as “membership-based organizations” (2000: 80).

As Scarrow’s work on prominent British and German parties illustrates, even parties in liberal Western democracies attached great importance to building massive membership

¹⁰ Koole also underlined how problematic this perception on parties, which understands organizational variance as “stages of development” towards an up-to-date “one best” party type, is (1996: 520).

organizations (1996). Hence, Scarrow identifies these parties as “membership parties” (1996: 20), which could be seen as something short of the original mass party model in terms of the party structure and ideological encapsulation of party members. However, Scarrow also argues that efforts of “membership parties” to enrol members and to involve them in year-round activities were not merely inspired by tradition; in these parties, leaders view members as potentially valuable electoral assets. This definition suggests that “indicators of strategy, not of size, will be needed in order to answer the question of whether membership parties are disappearing” (1996: 20). Scarrow’s works demonstrate the fact that, even in Western liberal democratic settings, empirical realities of party organizational change have been much more complicated than the irreversible trends envisaged by the clear-cut theoretical schemes regarding party typologies.

Instead of the demise of a certain model and the rise of another one, what we overwhelmingly witnessed could be considered to be the rise of hybrid forms (Ware, 1996: 102). Hence, despite the discussions and theoretical sophistications developed after Duverger and Epstein, a fundamental, ideal typical strategic distinction between elite-based and mass-based parties remained highly useful in understanding empirical realities of organizational change and typologies. Nevertheless, it is enormously important to underline that this distinction should not be seen as a simple, nominal dichotomy. Instead, in line with Ware (1987; 1996), I view elite-based and mass-based party models as the ideal types or extreme ends of a continuum: “two poles on a continuum, rather than with two sharply defined categories into which all parties have to be fitted” (Ware, 1987: 6). Given the theoretical discussion above I see the ideal typical elite-based and mass-based parties as related to the following features and locate the JDP somewhere in between these two ideal types as demonstrated in the following Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Mass-based and elite-based parties as ideal types and the relative situation of the JDP

Party types	Mass-based	Elite-based	JDP: a personalistic membership party
Features			
Ideology and programme	Important - square	Less important - vague	Less important - vague (Political marketing)
Membership salience	High	Low	High
Local presence	High	Low	High
Attachment to a specific social segment	Strong (social class or denominational groups)	Weak (heterogenous electorate)	Weak
Relationship between party on the ground and party central office	Strong - hierarchical	Weak - strataarchical	Strong - hierarchical
Main campaign technique	Labour intensive	Capital intensive	Hybrid
Loci of power	Party central office	Party public office	Leader - Party central office
Source of financial resources	Members	State and interest groups	Hybrid (predominantly state and elite-based)
Organizational presence and activity	Permanent – year-round	Inflates during elections	Permanent – year-round
Professionals	Not important	Important	Important
Top leadership	Not visible	Highly visible	Highly visible
Party bureaucracy	Developed	Weak	Developed

Source: Author's compilation of indicators addressed in various theoretical sources discussed above

6.3 Party organizations in Turkey and the novelty of the JDP

Turkish politics has always been overwhelmingly party-based (Özbudun, 2001: 238). However, the literature on party politics in general, and the literature on party organizations in particular, remained unusually underdeveloped for decades until the rise of the Islamist Welfare Party¹¹ in the middle of the 1990s on the ground of its robust organizational structure. Until then, only a few major studies focused on party organizations in Turkey.¹² A pioneering work in this sense was Sayari's *Aspects of Party*

¹¹ For a brief overview of the Welfare Party and other parties mentioned in this section, see Appendices 1 and 2.

¹² Apart from Özbudun's studies cited in this section, exceptions to this lack of interest to party politics are editions by Heper & Landau (1991), Rubin & Heper (2002), Sayari & Esmer (2002), Kabasakal's *Political Party Organizations in Turkey* (1991) and Bektaş's *Leadership Oligarchy in the Process of Democratization, the Republican People's Party and the Justice Party* (1993). There are also some up-to-

Organization in Turkey (1976). One of the assertions of Sayarı in this article was that, despite the rise of new social groups in Turkey, such as working class populations in urban centres, party politics remained under the control of notable families (1976: 187). The depiction of Turkish political parties in the middle of the 1970s by Sayarı drew a picture in which parties were only active during the electoral campaigns and did not pay attention to recruiting new members (1976: 188). According to Sayarı, local party organizations in Turkey during the 1970s were weak (1976: 197) and, particularly in provinces, politics was under the control of traditional elites (1976: 198). Hence Sayarı argued that “in general [...] Turkish parties have more in common with the cadre than with the mass membership model” (1976: 188). In this analysis, party politics in Turkey appeared mainly as a reflection of local patronage networks in relation to the import substitution economy and heavy dependence on patronage through state resources.

Later major contributions to the analysis of the main characteristics of the Turkish parties underlined similar tendencies. Özbudun, at the very beginning of his oft-cited study, argued that Turkish parties were closer to the “cadre, catch-all or cartel” models than the “mass party” model (2000: 74). In a more up-to-date study, Özbudun (2001) also argues that some parties in Turkey could be considered cartel parties. He pointed out trends of professionalization, claims regarding managerial efficiency in the image-building processes of parties, rising importance of capital-intensive methods in electoral campaigns, and parties’ dependence on the state for financial resources (2001: 250).¹³ He also underlines the centrality of “personalism” and lack of issue orientation in Turkish parties (2000: 86). Özbudun argues that patronage and clientelism inhibited the rise of organizations relying on common class and group interests in Turkey (2000: 82). Yet he also underlines Turkey’s relatively more institutionalized parties as superior to many new democracies (2000: 73) along with the presence of remarkably active grass roots organizations of Turkish parties for electoral mobilization (2000: 84).

Özbudun emphasizes that the organizational capacities (and grass roots presence in particular) of Turkish parties disappeared after the decline of the role of the state in the economy due to the privatization and economic liberalization processes started in the

date studies on party politics in Turkey approving the recent interest. Particularly see Uysal and Toprak (2010) and Massicard and Watts (2013).

¹³ The trends mentioned by Özbudun in Turkish party politics are undeniable. Nevertheless, because of the reasons discussed above on the wider theoretical problems of the cartel party hypothesis, and specific difficulties regarding its application to the political context of the developing world, I would refrain using the concept for identifying any Turkish party including the JDP.

1980s (2000: 84). At the same time, during the 1980s and 1990s, Turkish parties started to rely more on “media appeals and image building with the help of professional public relations experts” (Özbudun, 2000: 84). According to Özbudun, as a result of the convergence of these dynamics, there was a dramatic decline in the organizational capacity of the main Turkish parties (mainly centre-right parties: the Motherland Party and the True Path Party but also other parties on the left), particularly during the 1990s (2000: 84).¹⁴ Hence Özbudun underlines the overall organizational decline in Turkish parties at the end of the 1990s and argues that “Turkey seems to have made a direct leap from the cadre party to a catch-all or cartel party without having gone through a mass party phase” (2000: 99). The only exception Özbudun underlines in this sense is the Islamist Welfare Party in the 1990s: the predecessor of the JDP (2000: 99). Here Özbudun considers the connection of the Islamist Welfare Party with the urban lower classes, the party’s robust local presence, year-round active grass roots organization and the importance attached by the party elite to the political indoctrination of members as indicators of being a mass party (2000: 91–92).

Despite the marked agreement on the robust organizational presence and “mass partyness” of the Islamist Welfare Party (White, 2002; Delibaş, 2015), the literature on the organizational characteristics of the JDP use various labels for it. For instance, while Kumbaracıbaşı identifies the party as a “modern party with traits of an electoral-professional party” (2009: 137), Hale and Özbudun argue that the JDP approximated a “mass party” model (2010: 47). Although she does not use the categories of the party typologies, in one chapter of her study Eligür also demonstrates the robust organizational presence of the JDP which helped the party elite to reach out a heterogeneous electorate including low-income social groups, and she identifies the JDP as a “people’s party” (2010: 254). This disagreement in the studies on the JDP organization could be considered proof of the hybrid nature of the JDP organization. In other words, the JDP organization should be seen as a very innovative mixture of mass-based models (its organizational past) and elite-based methods (its organizational present).¹⁵ Hence, as can be seen in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, I describe the JDP as a hybrid organization, and more precisely as a “personalistic membership party” that blended a year-round active, pervasive, highly

¹⁴ Also see Özbudun (2001) for a detailed exposition of organizational decline of Turkish parties.

¹⁵ Also see Chapter 5 for the senses in which I tend to see the JDP as a novel force in Turkish politics. Besides incorporating a robust organizational network with a decisively pro-JDP media and political marketing techniques, the JDP also broke ties with “classical centre-right patronage” and heavy dependence on local political elites, and introduced novel, more centralized forms of patronage.

bureaucratized, routinized and tightly controlled membership organization with a diligent personalistic leadership relying on capital intensive campaign methods and political marketing techniques. In the following parts of the chapter I present the empirical findings of my research that led me to this conclusion.

Table 6.2: Islamist National View Parties and the Motherland Party: predecessors of the JDP

Relationship with the JDP	Direct Predecessors (Islamist National View tradition)		Partial Predecessor	
Parties	The Welfare Party (1983–1998)	The Virtue Party (1998–2001)	The Motherland Party (1983–2009)	The JDP (2001–present)
Organizational characteristics				
Membership salience	High	High	Low	High
Ideology	Square	Vague	Vague	Vague - political marketing
Finance	Mixed	Mixed	State	State and private elite resources
Campaign technique	Labour intensive	Labour intensive	Capital intensive	Hybrid
Regularity of organizational activity	Year-round	Year-round	Inflating around elections	Year-round
Local presence	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong
Party Type	Mass-based	Mass-based	Elite-based	Hybrid – a personalistic membership party

Source: Author's own compilation of data and comments in sources cited in the section above

6.4 The formal organization: a large, pervasive and year-round active membership organization

In this section I briefly outline the legal framework in which the JDP's organizational structure was formed. I also demonstrate the territorial dispersion and the membership structure of the party. The Law on Political Parties (*SPK – Siyasi Partiler Kanunu*), issued in 1983, regulates the structure of parties' central, provincial and sub-provincial units. The SPK defined the central organization of a party as a grand convention, a party

chairman, and other decision-making, administrative, executive and discipline organs (SPK, 1983: 5706). The SPK also regulated the provincial (*il*) and sub-provincial (*ilçe*) organizations of parties. The main organs of provincial and sub-provincial organizations are the convention, party chair and the administrative and disciplinary committees (SPK, 1983: 5708).

Given this highly restrictive legal framework, every political party in Turkey had a very similar hierarchical organization, both centrally and in the provinces and sub-provinces.¹⁶ In this sense, the JDP was not an exception. However, since the mid-1990s, the Islamist National View tradition, the predecessor of the JDP, had begun developing grass roots units such as neighbourhood representatives, ballot box committees and women's branches. Following this organizational tradition, the JDP also had neighbourhood representatives and ballot box committees as well as women's and youth branches (Ak Parti, 2012a: 28). According to the JDP statutes, in line with the SPK, every level in the JDP organization consisted of the following elements: a convention, a chairman, an administration board, an executive board (the highest ruling organ of party branches), a women's branch and a youth branch. Under the sub-provincial branches, special attention was paid to the neighbourhood representatives and ballot box committees (AK Parti, 2012a: 29) through which the JDP derived its main strength.

6.4.1 Local presence of the party

In order to understand the hierarchical ties and territorial penetration of the party it would be helpful to have a closer look at a concrete example. In İstanbul, the JDP's provincial executive board consists of 14 people while the administration board consists of 50 people at the time of writing. 39 sub-provincial branches were under the control of the provincial branch of the JDP in İstanbul. Under these sub-provincial branches one can find neighbourhood representatives (see Figure 6.1). The Bakırköy sub-provincial branch of the party in İstanbul consists of an executive board, administration board, women's branch and youth's branch. These units include 14, 17, 30 and 28 people respectively at the time of writing. And under the Bakırköy sub-provincial branch of the party, one can find 11 neighbourhood representatives.¹⁷ These neighbourhood representatives (*mahalle*

¹⁶ See Kabasakal (2014) for the illustration of this formal similarity of organizations of different parties in Turkey. Works by Sayarı (1976) and Özbudun (2000) also underline this similarity. Bektaş's (1993) and Musil's (2011) studies underline the predominance of leaders and authoritarian party structures in Turkish parties in general. Musil's (2011) study also points out the variance in authoritarianism in Turkish parties.

¹⁷ These numbers can be seen on the party branch websites of İstanbul provincial and Bakırköy sub-provincial branches of the party.

temsilcileri) also form ballot box administration committees (*sandık yönetim kurulları*), each consisting of nine people. For instance, in Cevizlik, a neighbourhood of İstanbul, Bakırköy sub-province, there are 4450 electors and 14 ballot boxes (Interviewee 27 2014, April 5).

Another important thing that one should bear in mind about the JDP organization in these localities is that it did not inflate in the pre-election period and deflate in the rest of the year,¹⁸ but was a year-round active organization constantly in touch with the electorate. As one of my interviewees underlined, the JDP activists “wander from door-to-door” throughout the year “lest people think that they only come before the elections [...] like previous parties” (Interviewee 17 2014, January 18). Even if we think that my interviewees from the JDP were prone to exaggerate the local presence of the JDP and the party’s attention to allocating people to ballot boxes, there were still other observations confirming that the JDP was very successful at the local level as well as at keeping ballot boxes under this kind of tight control, particularly on election days. Eligür, for example, gives vivid details about the robust local presence of the JDP and confirmed the superiority of the party on the ground (particularly see 2010: 259). Not surprisingly, Tosun and Tosun’s study also confirms the superiority of the JDP organizations in local-provincial contexts statistically. According to their study, compared to other parties in Turkey, the organizational density of the JDP in the 80% of provinces in Turkey were much greater than other parties (2010: 55). This is to say that in the majority of the provinces of Turkey, the share of JDP members in total numbers of party members was larger than any other party (2010: 52).

¹⁸ Most of the populist-personalistic parties, and most notably the personal parties of Berlusconi, inflated during election periods and deflated in other times when there is no election approaching. For this see McDonnell (2013) and Albertazzi and McDonnell (2015). For this reason, their structures are rather different from permanent membership parties and they approximate the elite-based parties. In other words, while Berlusconi’s parties are elite-based “personal parties”, the JDP in Turkey, despite the central role of Erdoğan, was a “personalistic membership party” simply due to its massive and permanent membership organization.

Table 6.3: Formal structure of the JDP organization, its hierarchy and the approximate number of party branches

Numbers	Branches	
1	JDP headquarters in Ankara	
	Grand convention and chairman	
	CEC and CDAB	Main unit
	Executive committee and administration board	Women's branch
	Executive committee and administration board	Youth branch
81	Provincial branches	
	Provincial convention and chair	
	Executive committee and administration board	Main unit
	Executive committee and administration board	Women's branch
	Executive committee and administration board	Youth branch
957*	Sub-provincial branches	
	Sub-provincial convention and chair	
	Executive committee and administration board	Main unit
	Executive committee and administration board	Women's branch
	Executive committee and administration board	Youth branch
394*	District branches	
20,000*	Neighbourhood administrations	
170,000*	Ballot box committees	

Source: Author's compilation

*Approximate numbers

Figure 6.1: An example from İstanbul of the territorial and hierarchical relationships among branches in the provinces, sub-provinces and neighbourhoods



İstanbul Province



Bakırköy Sub-province



Cevizlik neighbourhood

Source: Visual material from the Wikipedia, (accessed: 1.12.2015)

The territorial and hierarchical relationship between party branches of the JDP can be seen in Table 6.3 and Figure 6.1. Table 6.3 demonstrates the vertical, hierarchical order of the JDP branches. On the top of numerous provincial, sub-provincial branches, neighbourhood representatives and ballot box committees, the JDP headquarters exerted a tight control even on the smallest local party base –the ballot box committee – through the vertical ties cutting all the way down through provincial, sub-provincial branches and neighbourhood representatives. Figure 6.1, by using the example of İstanbul province, demonstrates the deep territorial penetration of the JDP organization. Turkey is officially divided into 81 provinces. These provinces in turn are divided into various sub-provinces, and the sub-provinces are further divided into neighbourhoods. The JDP sub-provincial branches divided these neighbourhoods into ballot box regions and attempted to allocate a committee to every single ballot box. There are approximately 170,000 ballot boxes in urban Turkey (Hürriyet, 2014a) and the party formed almost an equal number of ballot box committees. Each ballot box sought to include 300 voters. The JDP tried to control every ballot box through a committee of nine people: three representatives from the party's main units, three from women's branches and three from youth branches (Interviewee 4 2013, September 6). Even at their most cautious, the JDP strove to keep each ballot box under the control of at least five members (Interviewee 13 2014, February 7).

An interview with one of the leading figures of a neutral civil organization for observing the elections confirmed this ability of the JDP organization at “safe guarding ballot boxes” (frequently called “*sandıkları kollamak*” or “*sandıklara sahip çıkmak*” by my interviewees). According to Ayberk Yağz, on the election day of the 2014 local elections, the “most well-organized party was the JDP” (Güvenç, 2014). Nevertheless, even the JDP could be unsuccessful at appointing ballot box observers at times and in certain localities but this would not change the overall superiority of the JDP organization to competing parties on the ground. Considering that the JDP had 170,000 ballot box committees across Turkey, the JDP would have required around 850,000 active members in order to keep these ballot boxes under its firm control through ballot box committees consisting of five members. The claims of the JDP members, however, were that the party's total membership was much higher still. In the following section I will have a closer look at the membership structure of the JDP.

6.4.2 The JDP's membership structure: "speed membership" *a la turca*

In Kumbaracıbaşı's study it was indicated that the JDP had around 1.8 million members in 2004 (2009: 127). Hale and Özbudun's study claimed that the JDP had 3,688,761 members in 2008 (2010: 47). Tosun and Tosun's study on party membership in Turkey, however, contended that the JDP had only 1,796,799 members in 2008 (2010: 187). The difference between the numbers indicated by Hale and Özbudun's and Tosun and Tosun's studies should be explained on the ground of legal-institutional changes. According to Tosun and Tosun, during the period from 2005 to 2008, total party membership numbers in Turkey decreased more than 2.5 million due to a new electronic registration method which eliminated dual and false membership records (2010: 47). Nevertheless, a couple of years after these reforms in the official registration methods of party members, in a news report in the daily *Milliyet* it was argued that the JDP had 7,551,472 members in 2013 (Milliyet, 2013). In 2014, one of the founders of the JDP, Bülent Arınç, also claimed that the party had over 9 million members (Hürriyet, 2014b).

These dramatic inconsistencies among various figures, and particularly these huge leaps in membership figures of the JDP from 2008 to 2013, indicated an important feature of party membership in Turkey as underlined by students of Turkish party politics. According to Özbudun, in Turkey, what a party member usually means is something little more than a supporter (2000: 80). If we take a party member to mean someone who has the right to vote in intraparty candidate selection processes and participate in decision-making processes and who, at the same time, has the obligation of paying dues and not being registered to any other party (Scarrow, 1996: 16), then most of the JDP members would not be qualified as party members in its strictest sense since most of them have no right to vote in intraparty elections and do not pay dues. However, I am inclined to think that these figures later indicated by the party elite and published in the national media pointed out a particular strategic inclination of the JDP leadership. What we see in these inflated membership figures is a kind of strategy, a "speed membership"¹⁹ *a la turca*, through which the JDP leadership tried to encapsulate voters by registering as many of them as possible as members. For instance, JDP activists register members during election

¹⁹ In her study, Scarrow (2015) defined "multi-speed membership" as new methods introduced by political parties in order to increase membership numbers. One of the main inclinations in this process has been multiplying membership status with varying degrees of rights and obligations and by using the internet for enrolment. This dynamic's emphasis on "speed" was highly relevant for the JDP although the party did not officially have multiple forms of membership.

periods in mobile registration vehicles and during spontaneous contacts with the party's supporters and sympathisers.

This tendency to register as many official party members as possible could be viewed as an inheritance of the classical strategies of the Islamist National View organizations.²⁰ As one of my interviewees, a sub-provincial chair of the JDP in Konya, underlined, the JDP elite, too, pay particular attention to registering as many members as possible: "As our Prime Minister said, 'we are the most alive party in the world with the largest membership'. Every year our member numbers increase. We always have membership forms nearby. If someone wants to become a member we immediately fill out these forms" (Interviewee 6 2014, January 14). Registering as many members as possible might have been seen as a successful electoral strategy from the perspective of the JDP elite, similar to that of Austrian parties (Müller, 1994: 66–67). The JDP elite might have expected that a single member would bring at least one vote, if not two, in addition to his or her own and, to a great extent, previous elections demonstrated the credibility of this expectation.²¹

The importance the JDP elite attached to forming a year-round active, large and pervasive membership party was a legacy of the Islamist National View politics of the 1990s and a response to the weakening and eventual demise of centre-right parties in Turkey during the same period as a consequence of their heavy dependence on the media-based and capital-intensive organizational strategies as well as their underestimation of the critical functions played by the party on the ground (Delibaş, 2015: 54–64).²² Hence, the JDP developed a mass-based face – a massive membership organization firmly controlled by the centre – to counterbalance the insufficiencies of the elite-based models in the Turkish context. The JDP elite also developed appropriate organizational solutions that kept this massive membership organization under firm central leadership control without alienating the party base. Hence, the massive membership of the party was, in a sense, monitored and contacted by a large, tightly controlled activist organization. In the following section I will have a closer look at these mechanisms.

²⁰ An instruction by the Islamist Welfare Party on organization-building revealed the party elite's attention to "registering members" (Güney, 1995: 122).

²¹ For example, in the local elections in 2014, the JDP received almost 18 million votes, around twice the number of its members.

²² Tanıyıcı also emphasized how the Islamist Welfare Party "avoided the organizational decline" of the Turkish political parties throughout the 1990s (2003: 469).

6.5 Leadership control

It has already been emphasized that the JDP exerted very tight control over the party base (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 78), yet little effort has been made to illustrate the instruments and methods of this control. In this section I illustrate the crucial instruments of control for the JDP over party activities on the ground. First, I look at the role of centrally-conducted public opinion surveys. I then draw attention to the role of technologically sophisticated communication channels. I also underline the importance of centrally-appointed party coordinators, the circulation of ministers and deputies by the party leadership and the party finance by the elite in the tight central control of the provincial and local party life of the JDP.

6.5.1 Public opinion surveys or “questionnaires” (*anketler*): the JDP and political marketing

One of the most important instruments for the JDP leadership in maintaining control of the party base was public opinion surveys. These surveys were demanded by the headquarters and provincial branches of the JDP and conducted by professional research companies close to the party. Surveys were conducted nationally or among the electorate of a certain region in order to understand the electoral inclinations as well as the attitude of the people with regards to certain, mostly unpopular, policies of the party. Since the JDP's coming to power, there was a remarkable increase of news in the media on these public opinion surveys, which particularly focused on the electoral inclinations of voters and were conducted by several different research companies. In addition, the owners of these research companies gained considerable visibility and some of them became well-known public figures.

It was frequently mentioned both in the media and in popular comments that the JDP relied heavily on public opinion surveys for its decisions.²³ Indeed, most of my interviewees underlined the importance attached to public opinion surveys (or “questionnaires” (*anketler*), as they were called by my interviewees, in the decision-making processes of the party (Interviewee 5 2014, January 14).²⁴ Besides regular monthly public opinion surveys on the general inclinations of the electorate, the party

²³ Dalay, a researcher in a think-tank close to the JDP government, underlined how extensively “questionnaires” were used by the JDP (2014). In an interview, the former İzmir chair of the party said: “But you know, one of the most important things for Mr. Prime Minister is public opinion research. He frequently orders questionnaires. He evaluates them personally and follows the performance of the prominent figures of the provinces and sub-provinces” (Soyoğul, 2013).

²⁴ Also see Interviewee 35 2014, April 22.

also used many specified opinion surveys on its important national as well as minor and regional decisions (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25). Several of my interviewees noted that the party did not rely on a single research company but used a few different companies in order to get reliable results.²⁵

In discussions of the opinion polling activity of the party, a remarkable difference occurred between the narratives of high-ranking party members and the narratives of junior members, failed candidates and former party members. While the former tended to underline the importance of public opinion surveys for overcoming the blindness caused by “the provincial-local organizational solidarity” (*teşkilat taassubu*) (Interviewee 18 2014, February 26), the latter – in other words, failed candidates, junior party members and former party members – underlined the problems of opinion surveys.²⁶ This difference could be seen as evidence of the role of public opinion surveys as a central control mechanism.

An interview with the owner of one of the research companies working for the JDP provided some solid information on the use of public opinion surveys by the party. My interviewee emphasized that “questionnaires” (*anketler*) was a decision support mechanism and the party regularly conducted research once a month. He underlined that when there were specific agendas the JDP tended to conduct surveys much more frequently. According to my interviewee, it was the public opinion surveys that illustrated to the party leadership that they should get rid some of the ideological-programmatic principles of the Islamist National View tradition right on the eve of the foundation of the JDP. He argued that the research conducted by his company prior to the foundation of the JDP revealed that the anti-EU and anti-globalisation discourse as well as the redistributive “just order” (*adil düzen*) promise of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) were not embraced by the majority of the population. He argued that, through these surveys, the party leadership could see the “pro-market” orientation of the electorate.

Hence, the rise of the JDP could also be seen as the decisive victory of political marketing techniques over redistributive, contentious and somehow more idealistic Islamist politics in Turkey. The rise of the JDP in a sense was an outcome of “tailor[ing] the product according to consumer taste” (Scammell, 1995: 8). As my interviewee bluntly put it:

²⁵ See Interviewee 23 2014 March 7; Interviewee 29 2014, April 16; Interviewee 35 2014, April 22.

²⁶ See Interviewee 8 2014, January 15; Interviewee 10 2014, January 18; Interviewee 15 2014, February 19.

“There is this concept of ‘political marketing’ (said in English). The JDP uses this with fidelity. In other words, the party conducts a careful market analysis before the decision-making process” (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25).

Relying on the data gathered via public opinion surveys, the party also began to change its strategy towards local power holders in some provinces (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25). My interviews with failed candidates just before the local elections in 2014 strengthened this impression. For example, one of those failed candidates – most probably a local boss located in the middle of a local patronage network – complained that after the failure of his candidacy within the party, he did not know what to do with his hundreds of supporters in the sub-province (Interviewee 15 2014, February 19). It seems that the party did not trust the claims of the local elite. Instead, the party centre conducted surveys in these regions and measured the real support of local bosses. Even if the claims of local bosses were proven true by the surveys, the JDP leadership tended to choose more competent and obedient people if it was possible to win elections with such candidates.

Nevertheless, one of my interviewees, a chair of a provincial party branch, also highlighted the fact that the party carefully handled the local power holders and networks, too (Interviewee 43 2014, May 3). Although the party did not rely on specific persons or families, it could get the votes from tribal families and religious communities as well in that particular province. This was to say that although the party leadership, to a great extent, did not compromise with local, regional power holders, they did not alienate them, either. It is plausible to think that extensive and frequent use of public opinion surveys provided the party leadership with superior knowledge regarding the inclinations of the electorate and enhanced leadership control over provincial and local branches of the party and local elites.

6.5.2 Use of technology for the surveillance of party activity on the ground: unmediated connections between the electorate, activists and leadership

The knowledge generated by the public opinion surveys was also supported by the knowledge gathered by the party headquarters about local and provincial party life. Regarding the control of party activities, one of my interviewees mentioned the highly sophisticated monitoring of the activities of the local-provincial organizations. According to the numbers she provided, 1.2 million households in İstanbul were continuously contacted by teams of three party members (each team consisting of a woman and two

men). These visits were recorded and monitored by a barcode system (Interviewee 11 2014, January 22).

In 2003, the party also launched a centralized communication centre. According to official party documents, every year tens of thousands of applications were received by *AKİM* (*AK İletişim Merkezi* – AK Communication Centre) via phone, email or in person, and the majority of demands and problems expressed in these applications were responded to by the party's professional staff (Ak Parti, 2004). According to Eligür, in these communication centers – both in headquarters and in provinces – all citizens were allowed to express their complaints and demands and discuss them with party members (2010: 245). She also underlined the fact that all of the problems expressed in these communication centers were transmitted to the relevant state authorities by *AKİM* workers and followed up by the party staff until they were responded to (Eligür, 2010: 245).

AKBİS (*AK Parti Bilgi Sistemleri* – The Justice and Development Party Information Systems), an intraparty online system for the surveillance of the party activities of provincial branches, should also be included in the picture (Interviewee 13 2014, February 7). In an interview, the İzmir party chair described how *AKBİS* worked:

Our deputies make us aware of their activities in the provinces by saying, for example, “Today I went to Tire, to these villages”. We enter these activities into *AKBİS*. She [the deputy] also enters her activities, but first she has to get permission from the provincial branch. Headquarters can see the deputy's performance by pressing a key. For instance, Ali Aşlık, our deputy, where does he go? [Headquarters] sees this. Our sub-provincial chairs and the vice-chairs of municipal assembly groups are told, “Who are the ones who participate in the meetings for the municipality assembly, who are the ones who attend the party's activities? Who are the ones who pay their dues?” This is party identification. “Does this member do the work she's been assigned by the party? Does she visit villages, does she visit the citizens, does she participate in the party activities?” The provincial vice-chair responsible for the local government there provided us with records for all members of the municipality assembly. Who participated and how many times did they participate in the group meeting about the metropolitan municipality? We even know how long they stayed in the meeting. Sometimes, they just show up, sign the sheet and leave. But we have records. Sooner or later you definitely face these records (Soyoğul, 2013).

The party directly evaluated and controlled local-provincial party activity via *AKBİS*. As one member of headquarters told the system's users in local-provincial party branches, “the headquarters can watch provincial and sub-provincial party activity by pressing a

single key” (Ak Parti, 2011). The party heavily relied on technology to surveil local-provincial organizational activity (Interviewee 28 2014, April 10). Thus, while the party leadership established a direct connection with the electorate via *AKİM*, the party headquarters used *AKBİS* and its knowledge of the minute details of party activity on the ground to enhance its position against provincial and local party branches, by-passing the organizational medium between the party leadership and the electorate on the one hand, and party activists on the ground and the party headquarters on the other.

6.5.3 Party coordinators: the bureaucratic face of the JDP

The party coordinators also tightened the control of JDP headquarters over the provincial and sub-provincial branches through their in-person presence. The JDP headquarters divided Turkey into several regions, and each region was supervised by a regional coordinator from either the Central Executive Committee (*Merkez Yürütme Kurulu*) or the parliamentary group of the party. These regions were further divided into sub-regions according to the provincial borders, with each sub-region supervised by the deputy of another city. Kumbaracıbaşı gives a detailed picture of these regions created by the JDP headquarters (2009: 133). He indicates that the JDP divided Turkey into two main domains: east and west. While the east comprised of seven regions, the west comprised of six regions. And these regions were comprised of several cities and kept under the control of JDP deputies (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 133).

As Kumbaracıbaşı indicates, these deputies were not locals of these regions and cities and this was why they could take an objective stance against the local politics and give detailed accounts to JDP headquarters about the details of the local political situation (2009: 133). Thus, provincial politics were kept under control by centrally-appointed party coordinators who were not a part of the local politics. For example, a deputy from an inner Anatolian city could be the coordinator of the Eastern Black Sea region (Haberler.com, 2013). The role of city and regional coordinators was to provide constant and neutral feedback to the party leadership from the provincial branches. Particularly during the candidate selection processes, reports from the regional and city coordinators might have provided neutral information to the party leadership that was oriented to the general party interest.

The same model was applied to the provincial level as well. Sub-regions created by the provincial party branch of a city were supervised and kept under control by coordinators

appointed by the provincial party branch.²⁷ Thus, the control exercised over provincial party branches by the headquarters was complemented by the control exercised over sub-provincial party branches by the provincial party organizations (Interviewee 6 2014, January 14). Regions comprising only a few neighbourhoods were also supervised by coordinators appointed by the sub-provincial party branch.²⁸ The party exerted intense central control even over the most capillary segments of the party organization. To this end, the party leadership carefully appointed outsiders to these settings in order to protect their neutral, central stance against local politics. These control mechanisms alone created a considerable bureaucracy in the JDP.

6.5.4 Control by ministers and deputies: elected elite as the agents of the JDP central office

The circulation of JDP ministers and deputies also played a crucial role in the central control of party activities in provinces and local settings. One of my interviewees drew attention to the fact that the formation of the JDP cabinets revealed a certain pattern in the distribution of ministerships (Interviewee 29 2014, April 16). For example, a look at the JDP cabinets formed after the 2011 general elections revealed that the party leadership allocated and distributed ministerships to as many different influential cities as possible. Not only İstanbul and Ankara, but also other major provincial power centres of Turkey such as Bursa, Konya, Kayseri, İzmir, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Gaziantep, Mersin, Kocaeli, Samsun and Rize were represented by ministers in the cabinet. These ministers were not necessarily locals of these provinces, and some of them were intentionally nominated by the party headquarters for these cities. The result was the headquarters' tighter control over these cities through the intervention of ministers in some of the important decision-making processes at the provincial level, such as candidate selection and the identification of governing bodies of the party. These ministers, under the control of the party leadership, also responded to the particularistic demands of the electorate in these cities without entirely surrendering to local politics. Hence, allocating ministerships to different cities

²⁷ In a news article, it was indicated that İzmir had been divided into six sub-regions by the provincial party branch and each of these regions, consisting of five or six sub-regions, was allocated a coordinator by the provincial branch (Milliyet, 2014b).

²⁸ On the website of one of the provincial branches of the JDP it was reported that a certain neighbourhood of the Kepez sub-province was visited by the coordinator appointed by the sub-provincial branch (Akpártikepez, 2013).

enhanced the party centralism²⁹ and, at the same time, absorbed the reactions of local party bases through the centrally supervised direction of selective resources.

A very similar dynamic was followed in the use of deputies. For example, a member of the JDP elite from İstanbul, based on her familial origins in a provincial city in Anatolia, could be nominated to represent this city by the demand of the party headquarters. This, in turn, provided the party leadership with stronger leverage over both the deputy and local politics because in the general elections, as most of my interviewees underlined, the electorate usually voted for the personality of Erdoğan and the party rather than for the individual candidates. As a consequence, most, if not all, JDP deputies were more likely to defend headquarters' opinion against local dynamics. As one of my interviewees from a provincial city said, "here, deputies are like civil servants [of the party headquarters]" (Interviewee 44 2014, May 4). Although Turkish politics have always been prone to the predominance of party leaders in candidate selection processes in localities, the presence of many colourful and powerful figures (mostly relying on extensive local patronage networks) have always been one of the characteristics of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. As discussed in the next chapter, the JDP central elite had a surprisingly deep suspicion towards local elite and local politics and this was one of the reasons behind the JDP elites' strategy of effectively inhibiting the presence of powerful local personalities in the parliament. In this context, circulation of ministers and deputies and the detachment of individual JDP politicians from their local settings gave the central party leadership an upper hand over both provincial and local settings as well as over the ministers and deputies themselves.

6.5.5 Party finance by the JDP elite

The essential component of the highly centralized JDP organization was party finance by the elite. Central party finance has always been a consolidating element of party centralism in Turkey (Gençkaya, 2002: 44–45). Within the framework of existing laws regarding political parties, state subsidies to the parties were allocated centrally, and the party headquarters had the power to decide how to distribute these resources. At the same time, parties could collect only scant membership dues, and most of the party branches relied on the central funding of activities and on resources generated by local party elite (Uysal & Toprak, 2010: 209). This picture of party finance in Turkey was, to a great

²⁹ Bayraktar and Altan (2013) also illustrate a very similar dynamic.

extent, applicable to the JDP as well. As the ruling party and winner of several elections, the JDP received a considerable amount from the state for party activities,³⁰ and the party also used public facilities for its electoral campaigns.³¹

Two of my interviewees told me some typical incidents revealing the dynamics of party finance in the JDP. One of them was about the central finance of the party in its foundation and pointed out one of the origins of the leadership domination within the JDP. It seems that, besides the role of state aids, party leaders' financial autonomy in the foundation of parties is a crucial element for the future domination of party life by the leader:

Finance is important because of this: he who financially supports a party actually owns the party. [...] [When the JDP was founded] Mr. Tayyip rented a headquarters building at the monthly cost of 36 billion liras. We had 73 founders and no one among them put hands in her pocket. This is very important. The whole rent was a serious amount by then. [...] Mr. Tayyip paid the rent alone. When saying this – of course perhaps he had collected money from various sources – I am trying to underline that he did not receive any money from the founders. And at that moment, Mr. Tayyip actually owned the party. Like an asset, like owning a flat. The property of the party belongs to Mr. Tayyip (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4).

Another interviewee, regarding a question about the party finance in the sub-provinces told me the following:

Where does the water for the mill come from? (*değirmenin suyu nereden geliyor?*) [...] The share you get from the headquarters or the official budget only pays for the regular expenditure of the [local] organization. [...] We, as the members of administration board, pay our dues. You are done; what else you can do? [...] We define our election budget as 100 billion. [...] If we get 8 billion from the headquarters where does the rest come from? We ask the candidate for mayoralty and candidates for the municipal assembly, administration board members and then we go to our elders that we know they are JDP supporters and request help for the party. [...] If he cannot support in cash we say, “you rent a car and cover it and we do not pay for it”. For instance if we need furniture and refurbishment for the branch building we ask these of some of our elders [who have a relevant business] (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15).

Apparently, the party heavily relied on the resources generated by its central and provincial elite for its activities. Predominance of the JDP in local governments should

³⁰ According to the website of the JDP, 96.9% of the party's income comes from state subsidies. See <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/akparti/gelir-gider> (accessed: 25.2.2015).

³¹ Ferries and buses of the Municipality of İstanbul brought thousands of people to the meeting space in Yenikapı for the JDP meeting in the summer of 2013 (Ntvmsnbc.com, 2013).

also be kept in mind since municipal resources provided a considerable financial resource to the local JDP elite. However, the autonomous financial resources provided by the JDP municipalities for the local JDP elite should not be considered something that enhanced the local elites since the central JDP elite always had a close eye even over the minor centrifugal dynamics within local politics (as elaborated upon in the next chapter). Close relationships with business circles were also vital for the central party finance, particularly for the building of a strong pro-JDP media.³²

In this section as a whole, I have illustrated the mechanics behind the “tight leadership control” the JDP exerted over its base. I have argued that, through the use of public opinion surveys and technologically sophisticated surveillance instruments, as well as the “appointment” and circulation of party deputies, ministers and coordinators, the JDP headquarters maintained firm control over the party base. Central party finance had a vital contribution in the construction of this control. This situation provided the central party leadership with the upper hand over provincial and local branches, the party base and provincial and local elite both inside and outside the party. Yet this very tight control over the party base posed dangers to the stability of the JDP simply by increasing discontent amongst party activists against the central control. In the following section I will address how the JDP elite overcame this problem through the introduction of controlled participation channels for party activists.

6.6 Controlled participation

In this section I focus on three key mechanisms of the JDP organization that provided a very strong sense of participation to the party base and diminished the potential corrosive effects of tight central control over the massive membership organization of the party. These are “regular consultations”, “non-binding elections among selected party members” and the “extensive use of women’s branches for the party activity”.

³² As an initial evaluation, these relationships between businessmen and the JDP elite could also be considered “new patronage relationships” of the JDP years which replaced the old-style, centre-right patronage in Turkey (explained in the previous chapter), which mainly relied on heavy state subsidies and massive public employment. The examination of this aspect of JDP politics would be very interesting, yet it is beyond the scope and extent of the dissertation research. For a very detailed account of the patronage triangle among the JDP elite, pro-JDP business and JDP voters, see the paper by Esen and Gümüşcü (2015).

6.6.1 Regular consultations (*istişareler*): listening to activists and keeping them busy

The most pronounced instrument revealed through my interviews for controlling the participation of the party base in the decision-making processes of the JDP was that of “consultations”.³³ The intense consultation activity of the JDP started at the top of the organization. The JDP held weekly Central Executive Committee consultation meetings and monthly Central Administration Board Consultation meetings besides regular weekly meetings of the cabinet (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10). All of these regular consultation meetings were held under the personal presence of Erdoğan. One of my interviewees, a former JDP member and a critical observer of the party, very neatly described this attention of Erdoğan with a humorous exaggeration: “I do not think that there has ever been a single meeting in the history of the JDP without the attendance of Erdoğan” (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4).

Erdoğan was also always present in the regular monthly consultation meetings with the 81 provincial chairs, provincial mayors and sub-provincial mayors of the party (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10). One of my interviewees, a provincial chair, described the function of regular consultation meetings and pointed out the reasons for the great importance attached to these meetings by the party leader Erdoğan:

At the moment Prime Minister [Erdoğan] is in his twelfth year as the party chair. Is he not? If he does not gather provincial party chairs for the [monthly] consultation meeting for three or five months no one would say why this party does not conduct the [monthly] consultation. But he gathers these people for the monthly consultation meeting. We also do consultation meetings here [in the province]. In other words we always come together through this consultation meetings and people sometimes criticize this. Other parties do not bother themselves for such meetings. In the sub-provinces, too, [you have] weekly sub-provincial meetings and extended consultation meetings (*genişletilmiş danışma meclisi toplantısı*), weekly provincial meetings as well as weekly meetings of the executive committee of the provincial party branch. In addition you have the meetings of provincial mayors and the meetings of members of the provincial municipality assembly. Sometimes even we criticize this: “we should do these meetings in three months time, monthly meetings are too frequent”. But even the constant movement for these meetings increases the motivation. This was one of the reasons why the JDP was so dynamic and alive. The Prime Minister knew this. We learned this by experience. [When you do these meetings] people [party members] do not speak [about the problems of the party] in

³³ See Interviewee 14 2014, February 10; Interviewee 29 2014, April 16; Interviewee 34 2014, April 22.

coffee houses or in other irrelevant places. They come to the meeting and criticize the provincial chair in the party and you get something from him/her. You say, “There is a problem in one of our sub-provinces. I shall go there.” But if you want to know these problems you have to conduct these frequent meetings. You also transmit to them what you have received in Ankara. He/she [the provincial party activist] does not know every detail. You cannot learn everything from the TV and from newspapers. You [as the provincial chair] go to Ankara and come back and transmit these details to them. [...] And you also discuss “what are works to be completed?” You control [the sub-provincial organizations]: “are your ballot box observers OK? Have you conducted your consultation meetings?” (Interviewee 4 2013, September 6).

It is apparent that regular consultations enhanced the intraparty connections of the hierarchical units of the JDP, and frequent meetings also kept the JDP activists busy permanently. One could also presume that these regular meetings had also contributed to the emergence of a party sub-culture. The JDP headquarters also carefully controlled whether the local-provincial branches held their own weekly consultation meetings for party administration and monthly consultation meetings with the sub-provincial chairs (Interviewee 6 2014, January 14). The provincial governing bodies of the party also ensured that the same meetings were held at the sub-provincial and neighbourhood levels (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15). One of my senior interviewees argued that the intensity and frequency of these consultation meetings were unique to the JDP, and that other political parties in Turkey hardly ever gave such importance to consultations (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10).

For example, one of my interviewees, a sub-provincial mayor who previously had a political experience in the centre-right Motherland Party, and later in the JDP, related an incident where he missed a consultation meeting at the JDP headquarters in Ankara due to his work in his sub-province. Unlike in the Motherland Party period, he told me that he was immediately called by a vice-chair from the headquarters and was asked for the reasons for his absence (Interviewee 30 2014, April 19). As one of my interviewees pointed out, these meetings not only provided feedback to the party headquarters from local-provincial branches, but also motivated the local-provincial activists of the party: “[when you do these meetings] you also provide motivation. These people say that ‘they [the headquarters] are taking me seriously’” (Interviewee 39 2014, May 2).

It should also be noted that *istişare* has a religious connotation as well and implies the political superiors’ obligation to consult subordinates before making decisions in

accordance with verdicts of the *Quran*. Nevertheless, one of my interviewees, a highly critical member, told of an interesting incident that provided vivid details about the nature of central consultation meetings of the party:

[In Islamic thought] there is indeed the consultation concept but there are also some requisites of it on the basis of equality and freedom of expression. How are consultations held in the JDP? [...] [In a consultation meeting], we had to vote on whether participants should talk for two minutes or three minutes. People chose two with the wide margin of votes. [...] And you spend half of it with greeting the protocol. [...] I raised my hand and said ‘you call it a consultation meeting but you sit two meters above us. One of the traits of the consultation meeting is the fact that people consult with each other and sit around a table at the same level.’ (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4).

Nevertheless, most of my interviewees who had high-ranking positions in the party implied that, despite the authoritarian appearance of Erdoğan from the outside, he was tolerant towards intraparty negotiations and he opened room for vivid discussions (Interviewee 35 2014, April 22). Yet it would be really misleading to consider the results of these meetings binding for the leadership (Interviewee 34 2014, April 22). Instead, it was evaluated as a method by the JDP leadership that replaced intraparty democracy (Interviewee 37 2014, April 24).³⁴

A Central Executive Committee member of the JDP explained to me why the consultation meetings were not binding through a distinction he made between “mass oriented” (*kitle temelli*) and “principle based” (*ilke temelli*) tendencies (Interviewee 34 2014, April 22). According to him, it was not always healthy to follow the tendencies of the majority, or mass oriented inclinations, in consultation meetings since the majority might be prone to observe day-to-day interests and solutions. Hence, for him, there was no problem at all about the fact that consultation meetings were not binding in the JDP. His narrative implied an identification of elite choices with long-term, general interests and principles. One should also note that, as one of my interviewees highlighted, consultation meetings were much more binding for the provincial administrators than the party chair and the national party elite (Interviewee 40 2014, May 2). This also entailed a lesser autonomy for provincial chairs *vis-à-vis* provincial junior administrators and kept them weaker

³⁴ According to one of my interviewees, a Central Executive Committee member of the JDP, consultations “are extremely important in the Islamic world. [...] Consultation tradition is a more developed form of democracy. The JDP is the only and most important party using the consultation tradition and never gives concession on this point” (Interviewee 37 2014, April 24).

before the provincial party base as well as before the party headquarters. This situation should also be evaluated as a side effect of consultation meetings, which increased the party leadership's autonomy *vis-à-vis* provincial party bosses and local power holders.

At first glance these consultation meetings appeared to be an opportunity for junior party members and the party base to express their ideas and demands. However, these meetings were not only a means of getting feedback from the party base, but were also an instrument through which the party leadership could persuade less senior and junior party administrators and the party base to accept headquarters' decisions.³⁵ One should therefore note the double role of these regular consultation meetings: feedback and control/persuasion. As one of my interviewees implied, in cases where the leadership made unpopular decisions, they also made great efforts to convince the provincial and local party branches to accept them (Interviewee 36 2014, April 24). However, it is plausible to argue that regular consultations provided a strong sense of participation for the party base and provincial organizations. Hence, the party base tended to embrace even the most unpopular decisions made by the party leadership, and consultations increased the legitimacy of the JDP leadership in the eyes of the party on the ground.

6.6.2 Non-binding elections among selected party members (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*): giving a voice to party members

Another important instrument used to control the participation of the party base in the party's decision-making processes, as outlined by my interviewees, was that of non-binding elections among selected members of the party. According to the statutes of the JDP, the party could conduct "elections for defining organizational tendencies" (*teşkilat temayül yoklaması*) in order to choose its candidates (Ak Parti, 2012a: 74). But just like the consultation meetings, these elections did not produce binding results for the party leadership. Instead, the results of these elections, which were conducted among the party elite, high-ranking party members and members of the administration boards in a given province, were only considered a component of a wider decision-making mechanism. The results of these elections were not usually publicized and were only made available to the party leadership. Since the party base had no information on the results of these non-binding elections, the party leadership did not take the risk of facing bottom-up dissent,

³⁵ Numerous videos of consultation meetings of the JDP in which the provincial and local party leaders explained the JDP policies to the party members can be found on YouTube. For example, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3c9DUIm6_k , (accessed: 27.5.2016).

and since the results were not publicized, the party leadership could also use these elections to explain the failure of certain candidates who were not approved by the headquarters.³⁶

As one of my interviewees underlined, there were many examples in which the results of non-binding elections did not match the desires of the party leadership (Interviewee 4 2013, September 6). In these cases, the decisions of the party leadership were usually accepted by the provincial and local organizations since there was a widespread trust in the personality and political experience of Erdoğan. Non-binding elections provided feedback to the party leadership about the organizational inclinations by officially asking the opinion of the party base via a simple vote-casting procedure. More importantly, non-binding elections fulfilled the party base's desire to participate in the decision-making process. This is why one of the elites of the JDP and the Islamist National View organizations, in his guide to aspiring politicians, argued that non-binding elections were held to appease the party base (Şentürk, 2006: 99).

During the interviews, a certain pattern appeared when high-ranking party members tried to explain why the results of intraparty elections for defining organizational inclinations (*teşkilat yoklamaları*) in the JDP were not considered binding by the party leadership. Senior party members frequently argued that provincial organizations and local politics were prone to particularistic tendencies and driven by local interests. Some of my interviewees called this tendency "organizational conservatism" (*teşkilat taassubu*) or "organizational nationalism" (*teşkilat milliyetçiliği*), which denotes a local organizational solidarity that is not considerate of the general interest of the party and the country.³⁷ It was, therefore, not surprising that party leader Erdoğan, in a party consultation meeting prior to the 2014 local elections, emphasized that non-binding elections would not be the only decision-making instrument in the candidate selection processes: "Our aim is not to provide posts to some people. Our aim is to produce service for our cities. We know, in too many places, there is serious institutional nationalism (*kurumsal milliyetçilik*). Non-binding election (*teşkilat yoklaması*) results would not be decisive. We know how, sometimes, these elections are held" (Hürriyet, 2013a). This shows that Erdoğan himself thought that local politics and local organizational solidarity could produce inappropriate

³⁶ I elaborate on candidate selection processes in the next chapter.

³⁷ See Interviewee 15 2014, February 19; Interviewee 18 2014, February 26; Interviewee 35 2014, April 22.

candidates for elections. Non-binding elections were therefore another instrument for controlling the participation of the party base while helping the leadership avoid so-called “organizational conservatism” in the provincial and local branches.

6.6.3 Women’s branches as the main tool of the party activity: reaching out to low-income, conservative households

Another channel that fulfilled the JDP base’s desire to participate in politics and which remarkably helped the party get in touch with the electorate was the activity of women’s branches. Most of my interviewees underlined the extraordinary role played by women’s branches in party activity,³⁸ and even neutral observers confirmed their vital role (Interviewee 39 2014, May 2). As one of my interviewees described it, the Welfare Party phase of the Islamist National View tradition was the ‘discovery of the women electorate’ (Interviewee 19 2014, February 26). And, it seems that one of the most crucial organizational inheritances of the JDP from the National View tradition was women’s branches and the importance attached to the women electorate (Interviewee 1 2013, September 2). In fact, Erdoğan attached great importance to women throughout the JDP years, too. Hence, there was a remarkable women and youth quota in the JDP, albeit an unofficial one.³⁹

According to my interviewees, the primary benefit of strong women’s branches was the opportunities that the presence of women provided to access conservative, low-income and religious households in Turkey.⁴⁰ According to my interviews with party members involved with women’s branches of the JDP, the women in the household could change the men’s decision (Interviewee 10 2014, January 18). At least, the activity of women’s branches helped persuade women to vote differently than their husbands (Interviewee 49 2014, May 8). Hence, the women’s branches had also a particular importance as the primary medium of one of the important communication methods of the party underlined in the previous chapter: “face-to-face interaction with the electorate”.

³⁸ See Interviewee 4 2013, September 6; Interviewee 29 2014, April 16; Interviewee 35 2014, April 22.

³⁹ There used to be an official quota implemented by the party but this was removed later on. Nevertheless, according to a research regarding women’s branches of the party, there was an unofficial quota which anticipated 30% female participation (Tür & Çıtak, 2010: 620). Also see Soyoğul (2013). In this interview, Akay, the İzmir chair of the JDP, mentioned that “in our sub-provincial conventions we have a scheme provided by the headquarters. [Among the party’s candidates] 30% would be women, 30% would be youth, 30% would be university graduates.” Also see Interviewee 49 2014, May 8.

⁴⁰ See Interviewee 10 2014, January 18; Interviewee 28 2014, April 10; Interviewee 49 2014, May 8.

One of the founders of the party argued in the official publication of the party, the *Turkey Bulletin (Türkiye Bülteni)*, that “to us the healthiest way of connection with the people is face-to-face communication” (Mercan, 2003: 12). He elaborated on the importance of the face-to-face communication method with the case of the first electoral success of the JDP in 2002. In this text Mercan argued, “if you look at the period before the November 3rd [2002] election you would see that we did not use any advertisement in newspapers. In order to explain ourselves in the November 3rd election we focused on two methods. One of these was the use of billboards in every city in the country. The second one was the efforts of our organization, most notably the effort of the women’s branches, in visiting every neighbourhood and tradesman and petty merchant” (Mercan, 2003: 12). Women’s branches also played a vital role in distributing aid in cash or kind in low-income neighbourhoods (Interviewee 10 2014, January 18). Hence, active women’s branches also cut the connection between local power holders and selective resources distributed to the low-income electorate, therefore inhibiting the development of local political machines.

The work of JDP women’s branches also established an emotional link with the electorate (Interviewee 32 2014, April 20). During my interviews I observed that members of the women’s branches tended to be motivated more by collective incentives than the selective incentives that party life provided as a result of the charity-like nature of the party activity conducted by the women’s branches. It is plausible to think that most of the members of the women’s branches enjoyed the spiritual satisfaction of helping the poor and viewed the party activity from this perspective. The women’s branches of the JDP also showed a striking loyalty to Erdoğan. One of the substantial reasons behind women’s participation in the JDP was their affection for Erdoğan and their belief in his “rightness, sincerity, manners, diligence, charisma, leadership and the importance he attached to women” (Tür & Çıtak, 2010: 622).

In accordance with the vital duties of the party’s women’s branches, as one of my interviewees underlined, the party leadership systematically privileged women: “sometimes [...] the party nominates women from some provincial cities and local politicians of these cities just argue that ‘this region cannot tolerate women’. In these cases the party leadership strongly supports the women” (Interviewee 49 2014, May 8). This statement was confirmed by another study as well, where participants from the women’s branches of the party argued that Erdoğan himself attached great importance to the representation of women in the party life and in elected positions (Tür & Çıtak, 2010:

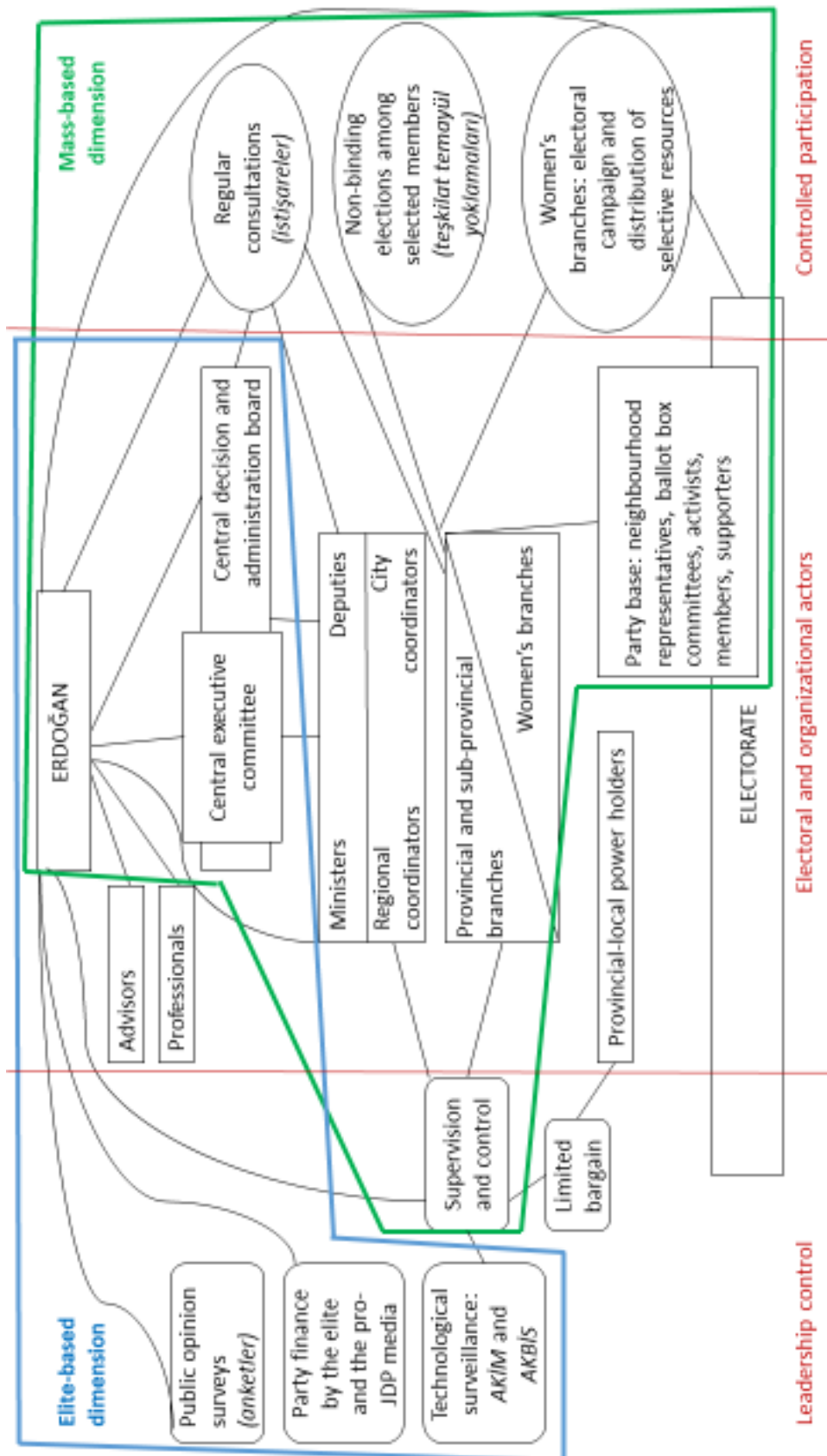
620). As one of my interviewees argued, the JDP strongly encouraged the participation of women and youth in politics (Interviewee 29 2014, April 16).

The importance attached to women's branches, as well as to the youth, also had a centralising effect. Since women and young people tended to be more loyal to the leadership and less competitive over selective incentives as a consequence of the charity-like nature of their engagement with the electorate, relying on these secondary branches for party activity could be considered a deliberate strategy of party centralization. After all, as one of my interviewees from a sub-provincial women's branch pointed out, "actually women are not into politics, they are mainly concerned about the spiritual (*manevi ve vicdani*) aspect of the activity" (Interviewee 32 2014, April 20). However, the main reason behind the intensive use of women's branches was to easily get in touch with the low-income, conservative and religious households of Turkey. Greater autonomy of the party leadership *vis-a-vis* the provincial-local party bosses and the elite was an unintended consequence of the extensive use of women's branches.

In this section, I have illustrated that the potential dissent towards the tight central control of party activity on the ground was carefully managed by the JDP elite. To this end, the party elite attached great importance to regular consultations, held non-binding elections among selected JDP members in the provincial and local branches and intensively employed its women's branches. These methods together provided the party base with a strong sense of participation and remarkably increased the legitimacy of the party leadership. As a result, authoritarian intraparty governance of the JDP was tolerated remarkably by the JDP activists since they had a strong sense of participation to the decision-making processes and activities of the party.⁴¹

⁴¹ "Controlled participation" should also be seen as central to the "clandestine authoritarianism" in Turkish parties as identified by Musil (2011). According to Musil, in this sort of intraparty authoritarianism, ideational interests play a central role (2011: 164). It seems that rigorous intraparty participation mechanisms could also play an important role in absorbing the dissent against firm central control.

Figure 6.2: The JDP as a personalistic membership party: elite-based and mass-based dimensions



Source: Author's compilation

6.7 The JDP organization in perspective: a personalistic membership party

The organizational dynamics of the JDP, as elaborated above, paint a remarkably different picture than that of party organizational change in Western democracies. As discussed above in the section on concepts and theory, many students of party organizations have contended that the mass party lost its significance with the rise of elite-based “catch-all” or “cartel parties”. The literature usually argued that massive membership organizations lost their importance in most Western democracies.⁴² In contrast, the JDP elite carefully protected and improved the party’s membership organization, increased the number of JDP members and made great efforts to build party branches in even the remotest and smallest corners of the country. This situation was also a divergent strategic choice compared to those made by most of the JDP’s predecessors in the 1990s and its current competitors in the Turkish party system.

The JDP elite, primarily through central interventions, created a year-round active, highly centralized, large and pervasive membership organization, and as a result the JDP came to resemble a mass-based party. Nevertheless, the JDP also attached importance to public opinion surveys, direct communication channels with the electorate and a communication strategy that placed Erdoğan at its centre. The party leadership created a strong, pro-JDP media and used political marketing techniques in general. Hence, the JDP also had the face of an elite-based party. Figure 6.2 illustrates these two faces of the party and provides a general diagram of the JDP’s organizational mechanics. (Also see Table 6.1, Table 6.2. and Table 5.1 in the previous chapter for various organizational and strategic characteristics of the JDP that made the party a hybrid electoral machine and distinguished it from its rightist predecessors in Turkish politics, namely the Islamist Welfare Party and Virtue Party and the centre-right Motherland Party.) The blue lines indicate the components of the elite-based dimension of the party, and the green lines cover the elements in which the JDP resembled a mass-based model. Thus, I am strongly inclined to identify the JDP as a hybrid electoral machine: an organization that blended the mass-based and elite-based party models and which targeted electoral predominance

⁴² For a critical discussion on the party decline literature, see Ignazi (1996). According to Ignazi the literature on “the crisis of party” misled researchers into thinking that there was a general decline in party politics. Ignazi drew attention to the fact that the decline analysed by “the crisis of party” literature was actually about the decline of a particular party model: the mass party (1996: 550). Despite his attention, Ignazi’s work still remained within a euro-centric view on party organizations where the mass party represented a thing of the past. But as the case of the JDP in Turkey illustrates, in the context of developing countries, the mass party remained as a useful organizational model particularly for outsider elites.

through robust organizational leverage supported by political marketing techniques. Given the centrality of the party leader Erdoğan in this massive membership organization it could be called a “personalistic membership party”.

In this innovative mixture of various traits of the mass-based and elite-based party models, the JDP elite were also able to overcome the potential problems entailed by both models.⁴³ Bureaucratic and ideological rigidity and lack of flexibility (a problem of the mass party model) were ruled out by the creation of an autonomous party leadership through the use of public opinion surveys, technological surveillance techniques, and central party finance. The party also overcame its members’ lack of motivation (a problem of the elite-based models). Through regular consultations, non-binding elections among selected members and active women’s branches, the JDP elite was able to provide a strong sense of participation, and thus motivation, throughout this massive membership organization. As a result of the simultaneous use of these instruments, the JDP was able to form a highly autonomous leadership, as well as a highly autonomous party, and overcome the problems entailed by the purely mass-based and elite-based parties while benefitting from the electoral advantages of both models.

As briefly discussed in the section on theories on the party typologies, this mixture achieved by the JDP was a response to the electoral market and the political context which gave rise to the JDP. Under these circumstances, the JDP could not risk exclusively relying on elite-based models given the resistance triggered among powerful non-party political actors by the rise of the JDP and due to the party’s strictly Islamist past. Apart from this, the JDP elite also took lessons from the previous centre-right parties’ organizational decline in the 1990s and the electoral costs entailed by this organizational decay. Hence, the JDP adopted techniques from modern elite-based parties but carefully combined them with a mass-based model. This did not only provide an upper hand to the party in elections, but also consolidated its resistance against hostile non-party political opponents. The case of the JDP illustrates that, in the context of developing countries where social and technological change did not match the pace of that of liberal Western democracies, some aspects of the mass party model have been still shaping party organizations. Here, the broader theoretical implication is this: a non-critical engagement with party models predominantly based on theories of the cases of Western liberal

⁴³ For these problems, see Ignazi (1996).

democratic settings might be misleading in explaining the party organizational development in the developing world.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, after a theoretical discussion on party typologies and a brief evaluation of party organizational development in Turkey, I have argued that one of the reasons behind the JDP's electoral predominance and political resilience was a particular organizational formation. The JDP elite exerted tight control over a year-round active, large and pervasive membership organization with eight to nine million members – in a country with a population of approximately 80 million – and created JDP branches in even the remotest corners of the country and the smallest provincial neighbourhoods. The votes received by the JDP in previous elections were around twice the number of the party's members, which showed that the JDP's electoral strategy of encapsulating its supporters as members were successful. The JDP leadership gathered comprehensive knowledge of the subordinate segments of the party and electorate, and exerted tight control over this massive membership party through public opinion surveys (*anketler*), sophisticated technological and communication tools, party coordinators, ministers and deputies. The JDP elite also made great efforts to create a strong sense of participation in the party base through regular consultation meetings (*istişareler*), non-binding elections among selected party members (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*) and the intensive use of women's branches for party activity. The JDP leader Erdoğan was located in the centre of this organizational circuit, and the simultaneous use of these instruments did not simply enhance the JDP centralism but also that of the autonomy of the party leader, preventing the accumulation of effective power in the hands of any individual or collective competitor within the organization.

From a much broader theoretical perspective, I have argued that these organizational features of the JDP located the party in between the ideal typical mass-based and elite-based party models elaborated upon in the theoretical section. While the JDP overcame the bureaucratic and ideological rigidity of the mass-based models through instruments of leadership control, controlled participation also helped the party to overcome the lack of motivation among the party activists found in elite-based models. The control of leadership over participation within the JDP prevented any fragmentation and dissolution of this large organization. Relying on the organizational dynamics delineated in this chapter, the JDP developed a highly autonomous leadership and party structure. As a

result, the JDP emerged as a hybrid electoral machine, or more precisely a “personalistic membership party”, achieving remarkable political resilience and electoral predominance. The case of the JDP therefore demonstrated that the mass-based models cannot be seen as a thing of the past as their various organizational legacies continue to shape political parties, particularly in the developing world.

From the perspective of this chapter, a couple of future trends could also be identified with regards to the evolution of the JDP’s organizational dynamics. It is plausible to think that, while the JDP remain in power, as the party elite start to feel themselves more secure against the non-party political opposition, and as the party’s supporters take advantage of the party’s position in power for upwards socio-economic mobilization, the party might move closer to elite-based models. It can also be expected that, as the party remain in power, its incorporation with the state apparatuses might also enhance this trend towards the adaptation of elite-based models. The wider socio-economic transformation of Turkey throughout the JDP years might also have a deep impact on the JDP’s long-term evolution. As income levels of voters increase, internet use becomes widespread, and the rise of consumerism in Turkey gains a new momentum and provides more interesting social activities than party activism to the conservative JDP supporters, the party elite might increasingly need to adapt elite-based models. Hence, the depiction of the JDP organization in this chapter should be considered as a picture taken at a certain point rather than a comprehensive story of the party’s organizational evolution.

7 ELITE RECRUITMENT in the JDP: “*YOU DO NOT WANT THESE KINDS of PEOPLE in the PARLIAMENT*”

7.1 Introduction

Since its foundation, the JDP’s ruling cadres were considered highly competent by the majority of the electorate and this perception contributed significantly to electoral support for the party, as previous research (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2014) has illustrated. This was why the JDP’s political appeal always contained the claim that “service delivery” (*hizmet*) by the “hard-working”, “competent” cadres was essential to the party’s mission. Hence, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of the JDP’s elite recruitment processes in order to understand its claim of managerial competence and the party’s electoral support that partly relies on this claim. How did the JDP define its candidates for crucial posts like local and national government? In this chapter I argue that the party leadership¹ was able to select and support competent (in other words highly educated and experienced) and obedient candidates instead of popular local bosses by inhibiting factionalism through robust interventions to local and provincial party life. The JDP leadership carefully designed the formation of provincial governing bodies of the party, and this in turn provided it with almost indisputable authority over the party candidate selection processes, inhibited centrifugal tendencies and opened up room for the JDP elite to elevate competent candidates.

In this dissertation, party organizations are seen “as clusters of relationships rather than as unitary ‘black boxes’” (Massicard & Watts, 2013: 4). Hence, it is vital to elaborate upon the recruitment processes since this is one of the most important activities in intraparty politics where researchers are able to see “clusters of relationships” among party hierarchies. As Hazan and Rahat underlined, candidate selection processes are “the best points at which to observe the distribution of power within the party” (2010: 8).

¹ The term leadership with regards to JDP intraparty politics specifically refers to party chair Erdoğan. It also covers some other high-ranking, but not very visible, JDP members and advisors around Erdoğan who had strong leverage in the party’s decision-making processes. Although it is hard to single out names of these people, one of my interviewees, for example, underlined the influence of a powerful group around Erdoğan, three or four people who ultimately defined the candidates of the party (Interviewee 9, 2014 January 17). Regarding other fields of decision-making in the party, the leadership can refer to a wider group such as the Central Executive Committee. However, it would not be unfair to argue that Erdoğan had an overwhelming dominance over these secondary segments of the leadership whose positions were usually granted personally by him.

Candidate selection dynamics illustrate vital features of party organization (Hazan & Rahat, 2010: 10). In line with Hazan and Rahat, I understand the various methods of candidate selection processes to fall mainly on a scale between the “most exclusive” and “most inclusive” extremes, where the former represents the selection by one person [the party leader] and the latter represents selection by all voters (2010: 35).

In section two I briefly describe the rise of leadership domination in the JDP and the formation of provincial governing bodies since these were key to inhibiting factionalism within the party and, therefore, central to bringing the candidate selection processes under the control of the party leadership. In section three, I elaborate on the candidate selection processes. I pay a special attention to the different perceptions of candidate selection processes by people at different hierarchical levels of the party. I demonstrate that the party leadership had the ultimate say in the candidate selection processes and, despite the “official story” (Katz & Mair, 1994) described in the party statutes, the JDP elite embraced a highly exclusive selection method. The party leadership mostly took the results of public opinion surveys into account and made great efforts to make the party base feel that they had an influence over the candidate selection processes through the use of non-binding elections among selected party members.

7.2 Inhibiting factionalism: leadership domination and provincial-local JDP branches

In this section I firstly demonstrate the legal basis for the rise of central leadership domination in the JDP over both the central and provincial party elite, and the consolidation of party centralism in general. Afterwards, I illustrate briefly the extent and functioning of this central control over the provincial and local branches of the party through the example of the contentious JDP provincial branch convention in İstanbul in 2009. In the last part of the section I draw attention to the general lines of the JDP elite’s outlook towards provincial-local politics.

7.2.1 The rise of leadership domination in a young organization: “*this is his store*”

Most of my interviewees agreed that there was tight control of the party leadership over provincial organizations. Some of my interviewees argued strongly that no one could remain within the organization, in central or provincial branches, against the will of Erdoğan (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17).² As one of my interviewees told me, there was

² Also see Interviewee 10 2014, January 18.

a well-known expression used by party members which indicated the tight grip of Erdoğan even over the smallest localities of the organization: “this is his store” (*dükkan onun*) (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17). According to the JDP statutes, the party leadership had the right to remove and change party chairs on the grounds of loosely defined reasons which weakened the legal protection of subordinate segments of the party *vis-a-vis* the central leadership (Ak Parti, 2012b: 36; articles 58 and 58.1). Apart from this, the party leadership also had the right to appoint party chairs and the governing bodies of the party (Ak Parti, 2012b: 36; article 57).

According to one of my interviewees, a former JDP deputy, the first party statute of the JDP was written by a commission chaired by Hayati Yazıcı, a figure close to party chair Erdoğan (Interviewee 23 2014, March 7). The same interviewee also argued that the first statute of the party was “unrealistically” democratic and it gave too much power to ordinary party members and too little authority to the executive positions within the governing bodies of the party. Therefore, the same interviewee asked the commission to re-write the statute before it was too late and to place more power in the hands of provincial and sub-provincial chairs as well as the chairman of the party. As he mentioned, this statute of the party changed repeatedly even before the first general convention of the party.

The amendments to the first party statute in 2001, where provincial party administrations and delegates were selected according to the “blanket list” (*çarşaf liste*) method, should be particularly highlighted. The “blanket list” method in the identification of party governing bodies was much more democratic since the delegates had a chance to identify individual members among a larger set of names for governing bodies of party branches instead of voting using an already prepared committee list for a given candidate for the chairmanship, as is the case with the “listing method” (*blok liste*). With the amendments to article 30.7 and 46.7 of the JDP statute in 2003, these positions started to be filled by the demands of the provincial party chairs. In addition, later amendments also granted the provincial and sub-provincial party chairs the right to define the composition of the local party executive committees.³ These amendments to the first party statute pushed the JDP in a much more hierarchical and centralised direction.

³ See article 33 and 38 of the JDP statutes (Ak Parti, 2012b: 25–26).

This picture was also complemented by the consolidation of the party leader's power *vis-a-vis* the Central Decision and Administration Board (*Merkez Karar ve Yönetim Kurulu*)⁴ of the party in 2003. The tight control of the leadership, and of Erdoğan in particular, was gradually constructed within the JDP through the collaboration between Erdoğan and the founders' committee of the party and sustained through regular interventions by the party headquarters. This was mainly done through the consolidation of the party leader's say in the appointment of national and provincial party executive committees and by truncating every potential accumulation of power at the local level through careful candidate selection processes. One of my interviewees, who was one of the founders of the party in a province, described the development of leadership domination in the JDP right at the beginning of the party's political life in a detailed way. It should also be underlined that, in the beginning, the JDP had some really high standards, ideals and goals about intraparty democracy.⁵

We had the general election in 2002. Two months before the general election they [most probably Erdoğan and his close colleagues] called upon the founders' committee to make a statute change. In that meeting Mr. Tayyip told that "we are approaching the general election". When we were approaching the general elections we were [around] 120 people: 73 founders and 51 deputies. He [Tayyip Erdoğan] said, "We are approaching the general elections. Dear founder friends, I do not want to put you in a bad position before provincial and sub-provincial chairs. If we go to the election with these articles [granting too much power to the party base and ordinary members in the identification of candidates], in order to become candidate deputies you might be a toy to provincial and sub-provincial chairs and members. And probably most of you would not be able to be nominated. This is why we have to change these articles". I raised my hand and said, "I am here for these articles. This aspect distinguishes us from parties in the past. I know there are many problems with this method but it also puts our party in very close touch with ordinary people. Strong names, people who have strong representation capacity might come as deputies [as a result of this method]". [...] At the end, the committee voted through the changes [proposed by Erdoğan]. The result was this: 117 people voted yes for the changes and 3 people voted no. And people gave the chairman a five-minute standing ovation (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4).

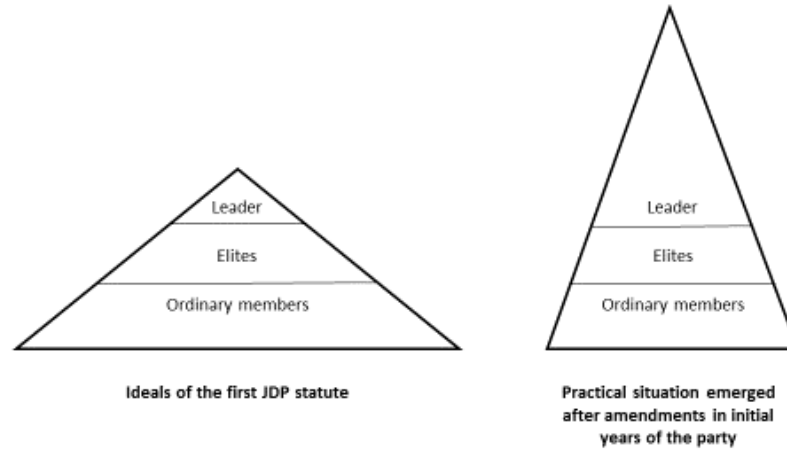
⁴ The Central Decision and Administration Board of the party is a large central decision-making body in the JDP headquarters consisting of around 50 people. But the highest official ruling segment of the party is the Central Executive Committee which consists of only around 20 people.

⁵ The first promotional video of the JDP in 2001 can be seen on YouTube. In this video, one of the repeated themes is the importance attached to intraparty democracy within the JDP. See the video titled *Ak Parti'nin ilk tanıtım filmi* (the JDP's first promotion video) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZrGqyKnIPY> (accessed: 27.5.2016).

The centralisation within the party and the accumulation of power in the hands of the party leader continued after the abovementioned changes. In 2003, the party leadership abolished the articles on the election of the Central Decision and Administration Board of the party via a “blanket list” and instead adopted the “listing method”, where a single list prepared by the candidate for the chairmanship was voted on in the party’s grand convention. In addition to this, articles in the party’s first 2001 statute regarding the formation of the Central Executive Committee (*Merkez Yürütme Kurulu*) with an election among the Central Decision and Administration Board members of the party was amended in 2003 as well (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4). The new regulation reduced the strength of the Central Decision and Administration Board *vis-a-vis* the party leader (Interviewee 21 2014, February 28–March 4). According to the new regulation, “all members of the central executive board other than the general chairman, as well as the chairman and deputy chairmen of the party’s GNAT [Grand National Assembly of Turkey – *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*] group, shall be nominated by the general chairman from among members of the central decision and administrative committee” and “all or some of members of the central executive board can be replaced by the general chairman” (Ak Parti, 2012b: 47; Article 79).

Figure 7.1 illustrates how the first JDP statute envisaged a more or less even distribution of power within the party and how quickly this idea was abandoned by amendments to the first party statute. At the beginning, ordinary party members had a greater say in the formation of governing bodies in the localities and the party elite (the Central Decision and Administration Board) also had some sort of control over the formation of the Central Executive Committee – and, therefore, over the party leader. After the amendments, the party leader acquired the right to select all members of the Central Executive Committee, and the headquarters gained the right to define minute details of the provincial governing bodies through the abolition of the blanket list method. As a result, the party leader’s power *vis-a-vis* the party elite and the party base increased enormously in formal terms and the JDP organization became very hierarchical and centralized.

Figure 7.1: Approximate graphic representation of the change in the distribution of power, degree of centralisation and hierarchy within the JDP after amendments to the party statute of 2001



Source: Author's compilation

The party leadership not only exerted a tight control over the formation of party governing bodies in provinces but also took great care in creating an image of a highly unified and cohesive party organization in the eyes of the electorate. The party headquarters encouraged provincial branches to decide who would be party chair by an internal discussion within local organizations before provincial-local conventions. That is to say, most of the JDP provincial conventions were only held to vote on a single candidate and a single party administration list: “The JDP has recommended a single list for conventions. There was an effort of reconciliation between groups supporting different lists” (Çarkçı, 2006: 9). Needless to say, it was much easier for the party leadership to shape provincial intraparty politics behind closed doors than in open competition between different lists in party conventions.

7.2.2 An example of the central intervention in provincial organizations: the JDP İstanbul branch convention in 2009

There were several exceptions to this imposition of the party leadership over the provincial branches in previous years. A particularly important exception was the 2009 party branch convention in İstanbul, where two candidates – and, therefore, two different lists – were presented to the provincial party delegates. The convention resulted in the victory of the then existing İstanbul chair, who was supported personally by Erdoğan and

the party headquarters.⁶ In this convention, despite his support among the party base, the failed candidate could not overcome the support of the party leadership for the existing party chair of İstanbul. According to an observer of the convention process, one of the reasons behind the support of the party leadership for the existing chair was the failed candidate Külünk's influence on the party base: "Külünk is liked by the party organization [in İstanbul]. It is unacceptable for a party leader to support a candidate for the İstanbul party chairmanship who has high leadership potential and is loved and respected by the party organizations" (Çetiner, 2009).

Here, one should also note that Külünk had a very similar political background to that of Erdoğan. He came from the party base and worked at almost every level of the Islamist National View parties. He was also a remarkable orator. Hence, it is highly credible to think that Erdoğan did not want a potential competitor at the top of the İstanbul organization. However, one should also add that, during this period, Külünk carefully refrained from open confrontation with Erdoğan and publicly praised him (Aktifhaber, 2009). Eventually, Külünk was nominated as a candidate in the 2011 general elections and became a deputy in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Although the new title sounds like a promotion, it was hardly a better and more influential position than being the İstanbul chair of the ruling party.⁷

This convention indicated that the party leadership carefully designed and supervised provincial organizations and inhibited the rise of powerful local bosses. Yet, one should also note cautiously that, given its importance, İstanbul was too big a party branch for the party leadership to lose its grip over the local organization. However, throughout this

⁶ According to a news article, the party convention was held in a tense atmosphere where there was a competition between Metin Külünk, who was supported by the party base, and Aziz Babuşcu, who was supported by the party headquarters (Milliyet, 2009).

⁷ It could be possible to consider Külünk's candidacy for the İstanbul chairmanship as a deliberate tactic to make himself more visible and gain a position within the party. Thus, he was able to be nominated by the party for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. This tactic of aspiring politicians "gaining position by candidacy" was underlined by various sources. According to Şentürk's guide to aspiring politicians, "if the conjecture is suitable, even if you do not have a chance to be nominated you should be a nominee for candidacy. As a result, party administrators would later nominate you for another post [albeit a smaller one]" (2006: 72). A very similar situation was indicated by the İzmir chair of the party: "A guy tells me that I am a candidate for the mayoralty within the party. Hence, he thinks that his candidacy for the municipal assembly is fixed then. For instance the candidacy for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey ... He puts some money and becomes a candidate for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey within the party. There is no doubt that he would not be nominated as a candidate for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey by the party. But what does he do? He tells me that 'I was a candidate for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey within the party' and expects a promotion within the bureaucracy" (Soyoğul, 2013). This can be considered a well-established pattern, a "tactic" (De Certeau, 2002) of the weak within the ruling parties.

dissertation, I have illustrated that the party leadership wanted to tighten its grip even over less significant local-provincial segments of the party. This was why, as one of my interviewees underlined, the party headquarters always encouraged provincial party organizations to have a single candidate and, thus, a single party administration list in provincial party conventions (Interviewee 16 2014, February 20). It was apparently much easier for the party leadership to influence discussions behind closed doors than the transparent competition of different candidates and lists in conventions. Nevertheless, if the party leadership encountered such open competition, they did not refrain from explicitly supporting one of the candidates. According to one of the abovementioned observers of the 2009 İstanbul party convention, one of the vice-chairs of the party and a member of the Central Executive Committee said that “no party leaves its conventions to the chance. We have worked on this too and one and a half months ago decided to continue with Aziz Babuşçu [the then existing party chair in İstanbul]” (Çetiner, 2009).

7.2.3 Legitimizing rationales behind the central interventions: central suspicion towards local politics

It is safe to argue that the party leadership attached great importance to the formation of provincial governing bodies of the party. According to one of my interviewees, a hard-working provincial chair always made a huge difference and the supervision by the headquarters over the provincial organizations was necessary for inhibiting the development of so-called “particularistic relations”, in other words centrifugal, provincial power holding groups/coalitions and local political machines, in the local branches (Interviewee 49 2014, May 8). The same interviewee also told me that the party paid great attention to the formation of party governing bodies in order to eliminate the presence of, for example, two members with a business partnership or familial relationship. The party leadership usually did not allow the existence of strong particularistic coalitions at provincial levels.

Another interviewee, an executive committee member of a provincial party organization, argued that, unlike previous parties in South East Turkey, the JDP was always careful not to be seen as strongly identified with a specific social group in the city (Interviewee 46 2014, May 6). Hence, according to my interviewees’ narratives, the party tried to reflect the plurality of the electorate in party governing bodies. And this situation was often used as the justification for regular interventions by the party headquarters in local politics. The party leadership usually pointed out the potential damage to the general interests of

the party that may arise from the nature of local politics and its particularistic tendencies, and used this as the basis for central interventions. Hence, the party leadership had a firm belief in the necessity of close supervision by headquarters and a weak trust in the spontaneity of local politics.

This picture should also be complemented by the frequent circulations in party governing bodies due to interventions by the party leadership. As one of my senior interviewees underlined, the benefit of this circulation was the revitalization of the party governing bodies by new, enthusiastic, aspiring people (Interviewee 37 2014, April 24). But it seems that another benefit of the frequent circulation of provincial governing bodies as well as parliamentary deputies was inhibiting any potential consolidation of factions or particularistic interest circles other than the leadership within the party. Another indicator of this strategy was the discussions within the JDP over the “three-term rule” in the party statute. According to these articles, the party leader, deputies, mayors, provincial, sub-provincial and town chairs from the JDP could not run as candidates for a fourth subsequent term.⁸ Although at the time of this writing this regulation would affect 73 existing deputies of the party, including several ministers and executive committee members, it was not changed (Sabah, 2014).

In this section of the paper I have illustrated that, despite the party’s high standards with regards to intraparty democracy at the time of its foundation, the leadership constructed the legal grounds for a firm grip over provincial party life and over potential centrifugal tendencies within the higher echelons of the party through amendments to the party statutes at the very beginning of its political life. As the example of the İstanbul convention of the party illustrated, the party leadership actively inhibited spontaneous developments in the provincial branches and carefully designed governing bodies in localities. The party leadership often legitimized central interventions on the grounds that local and provincial politics were prone to defending particularistic interests instead of the general interests of the party and the country.

7.3 Elevating competent candidates

In this section I take a closer look at the JDP’s candidate selection processes. I firstly illustrate the formal regulations of the party and draw attention to the difference of the processes in practice from those in written regulations – or the “official story”, as Katz

⁸ See articles 24, 31, 36, 75 and 132 of the JDP statute (Ak Parti, 2012b).

and Mair (1994) have termed it. Afterwards, I demonstrate two competing views on the candidate selection processes, those of the party elite and the party rank-and-file. These different points of view specifically illustrated the highly “exclusive” approach to candidate selection in the JDP. In the last part of this section, I illustrate the strategy of the central JDP elite towards local and provincial power holders in the party’s candidate selection processes.

7.3.1 Formal regulations and practical realities

According to the written party regulations, three methods were used in the identification of the candidates for local and general elections and the party had the right to use different methods in different instances of candidate selection: “primary elections” (*önseçim*), “non-binding elections among selected party members” (or “organizational roll call” as they described it in the English translation of the JDP statute) (*teşkilat temayül yoklaması*) and the “central roll call” (*merkez yoklaması*) (Ak Parti, 2012b: 69). According to the JDP statute, “an organizational roll call is an event which is held for the purpose of [the] identification and ranking of candidates of the party by [...] members of the party, who are considered as voters for the organizational roll call, using the method of secret ballot and open classification under judicial supervision and audit in accordance with the principles and methods laid down in the Law on Political Parties” (Ak Parti, 2012b: 70). On the other hand, the “central roll call”, according to the JDP statute, “is an event which is held for the purpose of [the] identification and ranking of candidates of the party directly by the central decision and administrative committee” (Ak Parti, 2012b: 70).

What distinguished the organizational roll calls from primary elections was the specific definition of the people eligible to vote in these elections, most of whom came from the executive positions of the party organizations. More importantly, unlike primary elections, organizational roll calls did not produce binding results for the party headquarters and were only seen as a decision support mechanism, a single component of a wider set of data received by the party headquarters. One should also add that “organizational roll calls”, or “non-binding elections among selected party members” as they are termed in this dissertation, were used for examining the inclinations of party branches. This is why it was called *teşkilat* or *temayül yoklaması* in Turkish, which literally translates as “organizational inclination examination” in English. Although the party statute indicated that there would be an open classification for the organizational roll calls there was also evidence that the results of these elections were usually not

declared to the party base by headquarters (Çarkçı, 2006: 6). According to the JDP statute, the individuals eligible to vote in the “organizational roll calls” or “the non-binding elections among selected members” were mostly active and former members of the party with high-ranking, executive positions (Ak Parti, 2012b: 70).

However, most of my interviewees underlined three methods in their narratives on candidate selection processes, and it seems that the practical realities of these processes were quite different from those set out in the written regulations of the party. The methods indicated by my interviewees were “non-binding elections among selected members” (known as *teşkilat temayül yoklaması* in Turkish), “a public opinion survey conducted by the party headquarters” (popularly known as ‘questionnaire’, or *anket*, among the party members) and “the consultations of the party headquarters” (popularly known as *istişare* among the party members). According to the views of a high ranking member in the official publication of the party, the *Turkey Bulletin (Türkiye Bülteni)*, the candidate selection process appeared to be an evaluation of the data in the party headquarters received through questionnaires, consultations and non-binding elections (Çetinkaya, 2003: 51). Apparently, the last word in the candidate selection process belonged to the party headquarters as it was with the formation of provincial governing bodies. Apart from these mechanisms, the role of the deputies and ministers from the region was influential in the process (Interviewee 8 2014, January 15).⁹

Thus, the tight control over provincial organizations and local politics by the party leadership described above was complemented by the close supervision of the candidate selection processes. Nevertheless, candidate selection processes reflected the main problems of tight leadership control over provincial branches: the tension between provincial organizations, the party base and the party leadership, or the tension between “inclusive” and “exclusive” methods in candidate selection processes. This tension paved the way for two different narratives of candidate selection processes: the narrative of the party elite vs. the narrative of the “true democrats”, junior members and failed candidates. Here I argue that, these two narratives were two sides of the same coin and the JDP leadership was usually successful at striking a fine balance between these segments’ diverging expectations within the organization. The autonomy of the JDP leadership,

⁹ See also Interviewee 5 2014, January 14; Interviewee 9 2014, January 17; and see Soyoğul (2013) for an interview with the JDP İzmir chair. In this interview the JDP chair described an incident where a deputy asked him to add a particular person to the candidate lists of the JDP for municipality assembly in the sub-province.

which was reliant upon the tight leadership control, on the one hand, and the controlled participation of the party base on the other hand, as illustrated in the previous chapter, was key to this capacity of the JDP leadership.

7.3.2 Two narratives: the party elite vs. “true democrats”

There was a particular advantage in interviewing party members from different hierarchical levels of the organization and with different positions within the party. These different points of views illustrated the uneven distribution of power within the organization and demonstrated how the lack of any meaningful power in the hands of the party base was justified and explained by more senior members. These narratives of the members of different levels of the party also illustrated the fragile balance between the leadership and grass roots organization. They revealed how important it was for a party to protect the balance between “responsiveness and responsibility” and “popularity and merit”. In other words, as discussed in previous chapters, striking a fine balance between the “short term requirements of electoral processes” and the “long term requirements of being in office” was one of the the main achievements of the JDP leadership. Overcoming the discontent of the party base stemming from the central interventions was key to this achievement.

During my interviews I observed that questions regarding the candidate selection processes within the party received a straightforward answer. The headquarters, and particularly the party leader Erdoğan, had the ultimate say in the process (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17). Most of my interviewees told me that public opinion surveys (questionnaires) were the main instrument used in the decision of the party headquarters.¹⁰ Nevertheless, one of the interviewees also told me that organizational roll calls or non-binding elections among selected members made a difference if there were two good candidates from the same branch of the party (Interviewee 18 2014, February 26).

Apart from this, my interviewees often told me that even very limited personal contact with Erdoğan provided a huge advantage in party candidate selection processes. One of my high-ranking interviewees, who occupied a senior ministerial post, told me that he had just been physically present with Erdoğan in the same place a couple of times and Erdoğan did not forget this (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10). Another interviewee, who was a former deputy, also underlined the importance of personal contact with

¹⁰ See the section on “public opinion surveys” in the previous chapter.

Erdoğan. The crucial part of this example was that it showed how a personal reference from Erdoğan by-passed the local dynamics:

From my electoral province the party had six deputies [in parliament]. Three of them were directly chosen on the demand of the Prime Minister [Erdoğan]. None of those three had any stable connection with my province. One of those deputies was the [relationship redacted] of the Prime Minister, one of them had [...] ties with him and the third one was another person who had a personal contact with Prime Minister (Interviewee 23 2014, March 7).

According to my interviewees, Erdoğan's main criteria in this selection were loyalty and obedience to the leadership (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15). This dynamic in the candidate selection processes should also be considered as one of the very fundamental aspects of personalism in the JDP, elaborated upon in depth in Chapter 4. Thus, in his book, written in an ironic style, Şentürk (a former member of the Islamist National View parties and the JDP) illustrated the leadership domination over the candidate selection processes in Turkey's political parties with the following joke:

A deputy who had been elected to the parliament for a couple of consecutive terms was asked about the reasons for his achievement. He neatly replied, "I do whatever my electorate says." Then he was asked, "How is it possible to do whatever you are told by thousands of people?" He replied, "I do not have thousands of voters. I have only a single electorate. He is my chairman. I do whatever he asks." (2006: 43).

In the following sub-sections I demonstrate how this overwhelming domination of the party centre and this highly exclusive method of candidate selection was rationalized and legitimized by the party elite and to what extent these justifications were accepted by the party rank-and-file.

7.3.2.1 Party elites assessing the candidate selection processes: "you do not want these kinds of people in the parliament"

During my interviews I observed that there were some regular patterns of justification used by the party headquarters against local branches. For example, one of my interviewees told me that when the party needed some people with particular expertise for bureaucratic positions, it became natural – and, most of the time, inevitable – to ignore the choices of local party branches (Interviewee 12 2014, February 6).

The need for experts within parliament, local governments, and local assemblies was underlined repeatedly by my interviewees as one of the reasons for central intervention

into provincial-local politics. It should be noted that the higher the position of the party member, the more likely that s/he highlighted the necessity of having experts and well-educated people within the party ranks. High-ranking party members were also more likely to say that “tricks” and “ruses” were used by the people in the lower party hierarchies in candidate selection processes. One of my interviewees told me that organizational roll calls or non-binding elections among selected party members cannot be considered a reliable method without reservation. He explained this opinion with a fictional example: “if the only criterion in candidate selection process was the success of the candidate in the non-binding election (*teşkilat yoklaması*), a local mafia boss could have easily provided the support of some of the members of the local branch through money. You do not want these kinds of people in the parliament” (Interviewee 14 2014, February 10).

Another high-ranking interviewee highlighted a similar explanation for the necessity of mechanisms other than “non-binding elections” in candidate selection processes. According to this interviewee there was a tendency called “organizational conservatism” (*teşkilat taassubu*). This tendency simply referred to the local party branches’ tendency to support candidates from within the local organization. He argued that:

Local party branches might tend to support their own people even if they are incompetent. This is why there are questionnaires [public opinion surveys] and reliable people who provide references for candidates. Take a candidate with a graduate degree from abroad and who is really competent and has the required skills and expertise as an example. The local organization and electorate of the region do not know this candidate (Interviewee 18 2014, February 26).

Indeed, it seems that the party elite usually did not rely on the view of the provincial-local party branches and the base, and thought that relying on them might be misleading, as Şentürk, one of the JDP elites, implied in an interview:

Sometimes, the selectorate attaches too much importance to themselves and tends to choose candidates among themselves. However, the party has to provide a vision to society. They have to make some people visible but these kinds of people do not really have a chance in the party base. The party base tends to protect their own members. [...] When you ask the party base, they point out each other. Especially neighbourhood representatives have a very strong solidarity and they vote each other. Hence, candidates who are not neighbourhood representatives have no chance at all (Çarkçı, 2006: 6).

Hence, the party elite thought that “it would be misleading only to rely on views stemming from the party branches” (Çarkçı, 2006: 11). Thus, it seems that in order to solve the contradiction between organizational belonging vs. merit, and responsiveness vs. responsibility, the party elite saw the headquarters’ intervention as inevitable. In other words, in order to provide competent enough cadres, the JDP elite sometimes had to intervene into local politics and implant candidates preferred by the party headquarters in place of candidates proposed by local JDP organizations. However, these interventions were made in such a way – through the use of non-binding elections and consultations – that the party base did not feel that they did not have any say in the process. To a certain extent, ignoring local-provincial choices was, in fact, necessary to elevate competent candidate profiles within the party for a massive organization like the JDP. Yet these explanations could also be considered as justifications for central leadership domination within the JDP.

7.3.2.2 Reflections of disappointed candidates, the rank-and-file and “true democrats”

Not surprisingly, lower-ranking members or members with looser links with the party due to their failure in candidate selection processes tended to be more critical of the processes. The party rank-and-file complained about the interventions and resistance of high-ranking members to the wishes of local JDP branches. Nevertheless, the party rank-and-file usually had no problem with the final say of the party leader Erdoğan, but they tended to complain about the “manipulative interventions” of deputies, ministers or influential people in the decisions of the leader (Interviewee 8 2014, January 15). As the party became more and more centralised, as illustrated in the previous section, public opinion surveys conducted by the party headquarters became much more effective than non-binding elections among selected party members in the identification of candidates. It also seems that candidates close to decision makers in the headquarters were always much more advantaged than other candidates with weaker ties to the centre (Interviewee 10 2014, January 18).

Nevertheless, particularly in the identification of candidates for local elections, local party branches had some leverage in the process, especially through non-binding elections among selected party members. For example, in local elections, according to one of my interviewees, it was almost impossible to nominate a candidate for the mayoralty if the entire local branch of the party was against her/him (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17).

This was why, in his guide to aspiring politicians, Şentürk, a former JDP vice-chair in İstanbul, underlined the necessity of being supported by the local party organization and the base:

If you are done with getting the support of the high-ranking party members you need to get the support of lower levels of the party as a legitimizing factor. They [high-ranking party members] are less hesitant to support the candidate who is supported by the party rank-and-file. But they hesitate to support the candidate who is absolutely disliked by the party base. [...] They [high-ranking party members] need to write the candidate who is liked by the party branches to the middle of the list if not to the top (2006: 71).

Hence it seems that, especially in local elections, local party branches might not have been successful at identifying a candidate supported by the local branch but they could stop the nomination of a candidate who was disliked by the entire branch. Thus, local party branches had a kind of negative force in the candidate selection processes within the party, particularly in local elections.

There were also other factors and instruments influential in the party candidate selection process. According to one of my interviewees, a deputy from a different province was sent to another province as a neutral observer of the local candidate identification process (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15). Another interviewee, a neighbourhood representative, also told me that regions with deputies and ministers were less successful in the local elections due to the influence of these people from the higher levels of the party in the local candidate identification process. He also expressed his doubts about the public opinion surveys used by the party headquarters in the identification of candidates (Interviewee 8 2014, January 15). Indeed, it seems that public opinion surveys could also be manipulated. As Şentürk underlined, “there were parties in the past which wanted to decide [only] by relying on public opinion surveys. But what have we witnessed? All these public opinion surveys were manipulated. [...] These have been distorted in favour of particular candidates” (Çarkçı, 2006: 7).

Another interviewee also described the candidate selection process within the party in line with the above accounts. According to her, people close to the headquarters always had an upper hand in the candidate identification processes (Interviewee 10 2014, January 18). Another interviewee described the process in a similar vein. According to him, particularly in the identification of candidates for the parliament, local party organizations were not really influential. He told me that the effect of local party branches was, at most,

10%. For instance, non-binding elections (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*), according to him, had almost no effect in the identification of candidates for parliamentary elections (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17). This statement was confirmed by Şentürk in his interview on intraparty democracy. According to Şentürk:

If we consider the identification of the candidates according to non-binding elections (*teşkilat yoklaması*) which was especially deployed by the Welfare Party in the past... Here again, there is a problem. Usually particular people had been already defined by the party headquarters. They ask the organization in order to legitimize this decision. They do not declare the results either. In other words there is a secret ballot, and secret counting. Votes are secret but counting should be transparent. But in those years no single result of non-binding elections were declared to the organizations. Because they usually did not observe the results. If they thought it was appropriate they just told people that “brother, you wanted this” but usually they remained silent. This was a pretence. This is cheating the people. This is an appeasing meeting, it is not a consultation. You should not abuse the concepts. It is appeasing the [local] organization by telling them you had a consultation, a non-binding election. In this sense [these instruments] do not make sense for intraparty democracy (Çarkçı, 2006: 6).

Instead, according to one of my interviewees, candidates for the parliamentary group were chosen by Prime Minister Erdoğan and his three or four close colleagues (Interviewee 9 2014, January 17). As underlined above, a question regarding the criteria used by decision makers in the candidate selection process also revealed the hierarchical, centralized and personalist characteristics of the JDP organization. Not surprisingly, one of my interviewees defined the ultimate criteria in the candidate selection process within the party as “loyalty and fidelity” to Erdoğan (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15).

Despite the tight grip of the leadership over provincial organizations, during my interview process I also noticed that there was also a particular gap between provincial and sub-provincial party branches in big cities such as İstanbul, Ankara and Konya. One of my interviewees told me that local dynamics played a major role in the sub-provincial branches of the party. According to him, sub-provincial party chairs were directly exposed to the local demands. He argued that sub-provincial and neighbourhood levels were the main levels where you “do politics” (Interviewee 12 2014, February 6). As a result, despite the tight control of the party leadership over provincial organizations, it seems that a particular gap started to appear between sub-provincial party organizations and the provincial and national leadership. This gap could even be observed between the two different narratives of the party members on the dynamics of the organization. While

the party elite tended to underline the necessity of leadership interventions due to the technocratic requirements of the governmental processes, the party base tended to complain about the weakness of the leverage of ordinary members in the formation of governing bodies and identification of candidates. While the former legitimized its intervention through defending the general interests of the party and the country, the latter complained about the party's disregard of local dynamics. Yet the latter did not show massive dissent against the central interventions at the level of provincial-local politics due to their trust in Erdoğan and the controlled participation channels illustrated in the previous chapter.

7.3.3 Coping with local bosses and centrifugal tendencies

As illustrated in the previous section, the formation of provincial party branches was closely supervised by the headquarters and the party leadership constantly impeded the development of centrifugal tendencies or accumulation of power in the hands of local elites. In order to do this, the party mainly relied upon specific candidate and local chair profiles in provinces and localities. These people in the key executive positions of the party in the provinces revealed a particular socio-economic similarity. For instance, none of my interviewees from the executive circles of the party in the provinces came from rich, influential local families and they did not have any power base of their own. Most of them were rather submissive, civil-servant-type administrators with white-collar jobs and a fairly good education instead of rich, local bosses with influence in the city politics. Indeed, more than half of the party provincial chairs had white-collar jobs at the time of writing of this dissertation.¹¹ Only 13 of these provincial chairs were businessmen or owners of small businesses (*esnaf*). The rest of the provincial chairs were lawyers, engineers, financial advisors and pharmacists; in other words they had white-collar occupations and highly educated backgrounds compared to the average Turkish citizen. The professional distribution of JDP provincial chairs could be seen in the following Table 7.1.

¹¹ In order to see the backgrounds of JDP executives I mainly relied on the short biographies of the provincial JDP chairs on the websites of the party's provincial branches.

Table 7.1: Professions of the JDP provincial chairs by 2014

Professions	Numbers
Lawyer	28
Businessman - small commerce	13
Engineer	8
Financial advisor	3
Pharmacist	2
Civil servant - bureaucrat	2
Dentist	1
Unidentified	24
Total	81

Source: Author's compilation of the information in short biographies of JDP provincial executives on JDP provincial branch websites

This pattern is also compatible with the importance attached to the candidates' educational level by the party leadership. Despite the "low-populist" political appeal of the party illustrated in Chapter 3, there was a strong tendency in the preferences of the party leadership towards competency and education over popularity in the recruitment of its national and local elites.¹² It seems that, to a great extent, the same pattern was valid for deputies of the party and candidate profiles in general in provincial cities. The party leadership preferred relatively more obedient but well-educated candidates for general elections. Hence, this pattern is a concrete evidence of the fact that the party leadership had a remarkably "high" attitude towards intraparty politics.

All of these methods, in the context of the abovementioned identification of the local and provincial party governing bodies and deputies, provided strong leverage to the party leadership *vis-à-vis* local and provincial power holders. In interviews, party members tended to underline the strength of ordinary people before local elites through the support of party headquarters (Interviewee 49 2014, May 8). To a great extent this was, indeed, the strategy of the JDP leadership. One indication of this strategic tendency was, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the women and youth quotas that the party implemented. Nevertheless, it seems that the party leadership also did not hesitate to nominate local bosses as long as they remained loyal to the leadership. This was why one of my interviewees, the chair of one of the South Eastern provinces, underlined the success of the party in his region, where traditional-local elite such as elders of tribal

¹² See Interviewee 12 2014, February 6; Interviewee 36 2014, April 24; and Interviewee 49 2014, May 8.

families and religious figures had a decisive influence over politics (Interviewee 43 2014, May 3).

However, compared to its rightist predecessors (as elaborated upon in Chapter 5), the JDP leadership tended to establish less compromising links with those groups that had the potential to cast bloc votes consisting of thousands. In other words, instead of accepting all the demands raised by powerful groups and individuals in localities and negotiating with the representatives of these communities for votes, as the former centre-right parties did, the JDP elite preferred reaching voters individually through its robust membership organization and through by-passing powerful intermediaries whenever it was possible. After all, as one of my interviewees explained in great detail, relying on powerful intermediaries also entailed specific problems that the JDP wished to avoid:

When you put a tribe's candidate [on the candidate list for the office] and when he is elected by a slim margin by the support of his tribe you usually lose the votes of other electors in the region. What the JDP underwent in 2009 was this. [...] When you ignore all these options and nominate ordinary candidates from among the people you get 63%. [...] These guys [candidates of tribes] come to interviews for the candidacy and argue, "I have this many guaranteed – bloc votes (*paket oy*). Therefore nominate me and win the election. For if you do not nominate me you won't win." There is this arrogance (*küstahlık*) too. Until now, every right-wing party believed this and was afraid of challenging this force [of local power holders]. It is pragmatical too: "Why shall I fight with these people. Put the guy on the list, after all he has bloc votes." This [strategy] even has short-term [negative] consequences. Because when you put tribal candidates you make them happy but you upset the rest of the electorate. [...] When you do not develop alliances with the tribes the only option remains for protecting your power is collaborating with masses in the region. This is what JDP does (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25).

In order to target voters individually the JDP, as mentioned in the previous chapter, developed elaborate ballot box committees.¹³ As one of my interviewees from the South Eastern region of the country underlined, "through a ballot box-based approach, the JDP tries to activate all individual members of the party. [...] A ballot box-based approach is this: there are approximately 350 members in each ballot box [region]. [...] and in these ballot box [regions] the party has approximately 20–30 members. The party defines an administration board from among these members of the ballot box [region]: the ballot box committee. This committee organizes a meeting with all party members in this ballot box

¹³ The importance of these nerve ends of the JDP organization was examined in the previous chapter.

[region]. We call this a ballot box consultation meeting. And in these meetings [the party] tries to activate the members and tries to reach all the voters in this ballot box through its members. This is to say that party members are constantly in touch with voters on behalf of the party” (Interviewee 46 2014, May 6). As another interviewee pointed out, “the aim here is to reduce the election campaign to the level of the ballot box. One-to-one marking! (*Bire bir markaj!*). This is a much more effective method than speaking to an audience in a coffee house, in a meeting with the microphone in your hand” (Interviewee 7 2014, January 15).

A strong indication of this strategic tendency was the JDP’s approach to the powerful İzol tribe in Urfa in the 2011 general election. In this election, the JDP headquarters did not nominate the candidate of the İzol tribe. Apart from him, it seems that the party leadership avoided nominating any tribal leader in the city.¹⁴ Indeed, as I illustrated in the previous chapter, the JDP headquarters used public opinion surveys in order to examine the validity of the claims of the provincial-local power holders. As one of my interviewees underlined, party research conducted prior to the 2011 general elections in Urfa revealed that the existing local political elite in the city at that time had not really been embraced by the electorate of the province (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25). Thus, the party leadership was able to reject the demands of local power holders.

It seems that not only in Urfa but also in Diyarbakır the JDP leadership was able to nominate people other than local power holders (Gürses, 2011). This situation illustrated the role of public opinion surveys in the concentration of power in the hands of the central JDP leadership. As some of my interviewees underlined, there was already a weakening of the local political elites’ power base in the region due to the PKK’s (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers’ Party) assaults on tribal leaders and the accelerating urbanisation and improvements of mass communication channels (Interviewee 38 2014, April 25).¹⁵ Hence, tribal vote blocs had already started to dissolve. As one of my interviewees underlined, even if a tribal leader decisively supported another direction than the JDP, due to their sympathy towards Erdoğan, a considerable number from that tribe would vote for the JDP (Interviewee 44 2014, May 4).

¹⁴ According to a news article, except for one person, the JDP did not nominate any tribal leader for the 12 chairs allocated to Urfa in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in the 2011 general elections (Takvim, 2011).

¹⁵ Also see Interviewee 44 2014, May 4.

It seems that public opinion surveys provided the party with a much more solid idea about the inclinations in local politics, and thus encouraged the party leadership to deploy a centralized strategy in the region for candidate selection processes. Indeed, particularly in Urfa in the 2011 general elections, the JDP was very successful using the abovementioned strategy, winning 10 seats out of 12. As underlined by a local journalist, as a result of coming from a different background than tribal families, candidates of the JDP were more prone to cooperation in that particular election and this convinced the electorate that the JDP would be beneficial as a team to the city. He also argued that “the election in Urfa revealed the following truth: the predominance of tribes’ influence on politics in Urfa is over. From now on tribal candidates should not argue that ‘I have this many votes’. [...] Now in every tribe every individual has dared to cast his/her vote according to his/her logic” (Kapaklı, 2011). It seems that, as much as the gradual decline of feudal ties in the city, the local election results in Urfa also indicated the firm grip of the JDP leadership on provincial organizations and local politics. This was even the case in a city like Urfa where informal-primordial networks had such a remarkable influence on party politics.¹⁶ Thus, it would be plausible to argue that the JDP leadership established unprecedented control over provincial, local politics across Turkey.

In this section I have illustrated that there was a certain gap between the formal regulations and practical realities and between the official and the real story regarding the candidate selection processes in the JDP. In practice, the JDP’s candidate selection processes were highly exclusive, in other words, there was almost only a single selectorate: the party leader Erdoğan. In this section I have also illustrated that there was a certain difference in the perception of the candidate selection processes in the JDP. While the party elite saw the central interventions in the candidate selection processes as inevitable and necessary due to the so-called “organizational conservatism” in the provincial-local party life, the party rank-and-file, “true democrats” and failed candidates tended to underline the problems of central interventions and complained about the lack of any meaningful leverage in the hands of the party base. However, the party base usually did not show any massive dissent against these interventions, mostly because of their emotional engagement with the leadership and partly because of the organizational mechanics of the party, described in the previous chapter, which created a strong sense of participation in the party base. This tight control over the party base in the JDP was

¹⁶ For the influence of tribes on the local politics of Urfa, see Çelik and Uluç (2009).

complemented by a less compromising attitude towards local and provincial power holders with regards to the candidate selections processes. This also increased party autonomy and opened up room for the JDP elite to promote well-educated and competent – yet, at the same time, highly obedient – candidates.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated how the central JDP leadership constantly intervened in the formation of local-provincial governing bodies of the party across Turkey and how they elevated competent yet obedient candidates within the party. The party leadership decisively tried to inhibit the formation of strong local particularistic coalitions through constant interventions and frequently changed governing bodies in local branches. The JDP elite legitimized central interventions in local politics through highlighting the potential dangers to the party's general policies that could stem from the popular but incompetent candidates chosen by local party branches. Therefore, the JDP candidate selection processes were "highly exclusive". Total control by the JDP leader Erdoğan over the identification of candidates for local and national governments inhibited the rise of local political elites with strong support bases. Instead, the JDP leadership preferred highly obedient but well-educated and competent candidates. These candidates selected by party leader Erdoğan, in turn, remained loyal to the general party policies and Erdoğan, and could not develop strong particularistic interests or local political machines.

The potential dissent against the highly exclusive candidate selection processes was also absorbed by the party leadership. On the one hand, on the basis of their trust in Erdoğan's personality and political experience, the party base tended to approve the interventions of the centre in local politics. Intensive consultation meetings (*istişareler*) and non-binding elections among selected party members (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*) also provided a strong sense of participation by the party base in candidate selection processes. On the other hand, the direct appeal of Erdoğan to the electorate and public opinion surveys conducted by the headquarters left the provincial-local power holders in a weaker position *vis-a-vis* the central JDP leadership and made resistance to the central elite interference in local politics a highly risky strategy. Despite its "low-populist" political appeal, the JDP elite had a strikingly "high" attitude with regards to the party's recruitment processes. This highly exclusive candidate selection strategy, without the alienation of the party base and local elites, gave rise to more competent yet obedient candidates within the party and enhanced the local and national government performance of the party in the eyes of the

electorate. The image of the party's managerial competence, in turn, consolidated the JDP's electoral achievements.

8 CONCLUSIONS: FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 The puzzle, main arguments and empirical findings of the research

This dissertation has focused on the reasons for the electoral success and political resilience of the Justice and Development Party (JDP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey between 2002 and 2014. At the time of writing, the JDP had recently come to power for the fourth time with a snap election on 1 November 2015, receiving almost 50% of the votes after losing power, or the ability to form a single-party majority government, on 7 June 2015. One of the most striking aspects of the JDP's first major electoral failure was that the party received around 40% of the votes in the thirteenth year of its incumbency. Even a major electoral failure did not distort the picture of extremely steady popular appeal, which provided the JDP and its leader Erdoğan between 35–50% of all votes in the last ten Turkish elections. At the time of writing, despite many social, political and economic crises, which would have destroyed many governments in liberal democratic settings, the subject matter of this dissertation was still very much alive and perhaps stronger than ever. In this dissertation, I have proposed answers to the puzzle of the JDP's electoral and political resilience from a party agency perspective.

The proximity to the people through diligent organizational activity as well as through a “low-populist” political appeal/style were always central to the JDP's electoral and political resilience. In other words, party agency – organization, strategies and political appeals – was the key to the JDP's electoral and political resilience. In empirical terms, I have argued that the combination of a “low-populist” political appeal/style and a year-round active, large and pervasive membership organization tightly controlled by a diligent leadership and supported by political marketing techniques and extensive media control (a personalistic membership party), was central to the electoral achievements and political resilience of the JDP for over a dozen years. Hence the primary contribution of this dissertation is the detailed empirical illustration of the functioning of the JDP's organization and the demonstration of the party's “low-populist” political appeal to the economically disadvantaged majority of the country who were also usually looked down on socio-culturally. Thus, from a broader, theoretical point of view, this research has highlighted the importance of party agency alongside external-structural economic, social and political reasons when it comes to explaining electoral success.

In the introduction of the dissertation I focused on existing explanations of the JDP's electoral and political achievements. I have pointed out how the majority of these explanations highlighted external-structural economic and social reasons as the basis for the rise and electoral predominance of the JDP. While some of these explanations focused on the role of economic growth and redistributive mechanisms as the main reasons for the JDP's electoral rise and achievements, some of them illustrated the impact of Islamic business as the catalysing factor behind the transformation of Islamism and the JDP's hegemony (the JDP's cross-class coalition between low-income social segments and the Islamic-leaning dominant classes in Turkey). Although these structural factors were vital for the rise of the party, the rise and electoral achievements of the JDP as a post-Islamist party in Turkey was made possible by a specific "party agency" that capitalized on these suitable social, political and economic circumstances. Hence, I highlighted the importance of focusing on party agency for a better understanding of the JDP's electoral and political predominance.

In Chapter 2, I analysed the historical, political and social background of the transformation of Islamism and the rise of the JDP in Turkey. Here, in contrast to many studies relying on the secular-religious dichotomy, I began with underlining the "virtual consensus" between the Islamist elite and the so-called secularist establishment elite of Turkey, which became particularly visible after the September 1980 military coup. In the post-coup period, while the main enemy for the establishment elite was leftists, particularly Kurdish separatists, Islamists were seen as more or less benign political players compatible with the status quo. The Islamist elite's attention and the tight leadership control over the Islamist grass roots provided an upper hand to Islamist organizations (predecessors of the JDP in terms of human resources and organizational culture) in avoiding political violence in the pre-coup period. Islamist elite also continued to observe the rules of the game imposed by the military junta after the coup. This virtual consensus granted a remarkable tolerance for the Islamic activism in the country that other political forces, which had the potential to channel lower class support, could not enjoy. Hence, I argued that the destruction of the leftist organizational networks after the coup in 1980, the introduction of the new conservative and nationalist official indoctrination programme of Turkish-Islamic synthesis, and new legal and constitutional regulations implemented in line with the strategy of "selective pluralism" opened up an unexpected room for manoeuvre for the Islamist elite in the post-coup Turkish politics.

The strategy of “selective pluralism”, or the exclusion of particular elite groups and their organizations from political competition and representation through legal and coercive means, while including others who are seen as compatible with the status quo, as defined in Chapter 2, after a certain period of time started to work against the secularist establishment elite and in favour of the electoral and political resilience of the post-Islamist JDP. Not surprisingly, the JDP elite did almost nothing to change this restrictive political framework, including the unusually high 10% electoral threshold and many other legal and constitutional impediments for new political entrepreneurs and other elite groups. Other empirical evidence in this chapter showed that not only the external systemic pressure but, first and foremost, the internal debates of the Islamist elite and their revising of strategies as a consequence of electoral failures were the main causes for the transformation of Islamism and the rise of post-Islamist JDP. In this particular chapter, I also drew attention to a couple of other characteristics of the political conflicts in Turkey. The most important feature of the political struggles in the country in this sense was that it did not only include political parties competing for power, but other significant non-party power contenders such as the army and the high judiciary. This particular nature of political conflicts in the country deeply shaped the organizational formation of the Islamist parties and, later, the JDP as discussed at length in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 3, after a theoretical discussion on concepts of cleavage, divide and populism and a brief illustration of the relevance of the high-low divide in Turkey (also see Appendices 1 and 2), I elaborated on the JDP’s political appeal and demonstrated how the party elite and the pro-JDP media located the party and its leader within Turkish politics. I argued that, more than the left-right or secular-religious divides, the high-low divide as the “manifestation in politics of social and cultural inequalities” (Ostiguy, 2009c: 2) was the main framework of the JDP’s political appeal. Although emphases on religious sentiments and rightist-conservative motives were also central to the JDP’s political appeal, all these motives were turned into political assets through a “low-populist” political appeal/style in which the JDP leadership and the pro-JDP media decisively depicted JDP cadres as the authentic representative of the despised, belittled, socially and culturally excluded, and downtrodden segments of the society.

In order to support my argument I analysed the 2014 presidential election race between Erdoğan and the other highly conservative-religious candidate, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu. This example clearly demonstrated the fact that the “low-populist” appeal was the main

basis of the party's propaganda in which the pro-JDP columnists highlighted Erdoğan as the "man of the people" *vis-a-vis* the conservative but highly educated joint candidate of the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) and the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*). Here it should also be noted that, particularly for Erdoğan, the "low-populist" political appeal/style was not simply the product of an artificial image-making activity but was embedded naturally in his biographic background, political experience and style (this was a point I delved into further in Chapter 4 on the JDP leadership).

In this chapter, I also demonstrated how the fierce "secularist" opponents of the JDP helped the consolidation of this "low-populist" appeal through belittling JDP voters and even the JDP elite. I illustrated that the JDP elite consciously engaged with the "low-populist" appeal, too. In order to show this I examined a guide prepared by the JDP headquarters for the party's local and national candidates and advice of some of the party elite that repeatedly underlined the importance of modesty and simplicity in electoral campaigns. Hence, the JDP elite were able to convincingly deploy socio-cultural inequalities, resentments and frustrations of the masses for political purposes. This not only provided the party with a great degree of flexibility in terms of its programme and ideology, but also helped the JDP elite to protect a strong emotional link with low-income, conservative and peripheral segments, and thereby provided collective incentives for the masses comprising very diverse social, ethnic and political groups.

In Chapter 4, I gave a detailed picture of the JDP leadership. In this chapter, in contrast to the loose uses of the concept of charisma in studies of Turkish politics, and by relying on the original exposition of the concept by Weber (1974), I proposed to take charismatic personalism as a genuinely rare phenomenon characterized by the strong transformational impact of the leader on his followers, supporters and organization. Drawing on an analysis of secondary sources such as biographies of Erdoğan as well as my interviews, I described the case of Erdoğan's leadership as an example of "non-charismatic personalism". Following Ansell and Fish (1999), I identified the transactional role undertaken by the party leader through "robust action", or the extensive effort put into organization building and consisting of extensive travelling, numerous meetings and countless speeches with diverse audiences, within the party for intraparty governance as the key trait of non-charismatic personalism. Yet, Erdoğan's very strong public image, mainly stemming

from his “low-populist” appeal was, most of the time, considered to be evidence of his “charisma” by scholars of Turkish politics.

This was not the case, and unlike charismatic leaders whose hallmark is “transforming their audience” (Ansell & Fish, 1999: 284), non-charismatic leaders diligently pursue series of procedures to achieve certain concrete-functional aims. In this sense, while charismatic leaders are akin to architects in terms of introducing novel narratives – which could be integrative as well as divisive, plausible as well as irrational – to their followers, non-charismatic personalist leaders such as Erdoğan resemble engineers focusing on achieving concrete-functional and pragmatic goals. In the case of politics, non-charismatic personalist leaders are actors who are literally engineering electoral success through deploying robust organizational leverage and supporting this leverage with whatever other means necessary – such as political marketing techniques and media.

In this sense, non-charismatic personalism should also be distinguished from the very similar phenomenon of personal party personalism, which puts a great emphasis on the party leader but ignores the critical functions of a tightly controlled, highly routinized organization and permanent membership party. Thus, non-charismatic personalism could be considered as a much more resilient phenomenon than personal party personalism. The ideal typical examples of the latter were the parties of Berlusconi in Italy (McDonnell, 2013). From a broader, theoretical point of view, in this chapter I also drew attention to the compatibility between personalism and the mass membership organization despite the seeming contradiction between two. In order to do this I pointed out the distinction between institutionalization and routinization-bureaucratization. I argued that the JDP was a highly routinized and bureaucratized massive membership organization under the control of a highly personalistic leadership, but it was by no means a highly institutionalized one at the same time.

The “populist emphasis”, as well as personalist dynamics of Turkish party politics, or the “low-populist” appeal and the personalistic leadership of the JDP analysed in Chapter 3 and 4, led many researchers to focus on the role of patronage, clientelism and redistributive strategies in general as the main grounds of the JDP’s electoral and political resilience. In Chapter 5, in contrast to these widespread evaluations, I argued that the JDP had a highly cautious approach to classical redistributive strategies used by its centre-right predecessors in Turkey. I underlined how the JDP’s politics diverged from “classical

centre-right patronage” in which generous state subsidies for agricultural products, massive public employment and “induced participation” of poor rural and provincial masses through traditional-local elites had been central pillars of party politics for a very long time.

In this chapter, I also demonstrated that, with regards to organizational and electoral strategies, the JDP diverged remarkably from its rightist predecessors and targeted electoral and political predominance; they strategically aimed for long-lasting rule since the very beginning of the JDP’s term of office. In order to maintain predominance, the JDP diverged remarkably from the Islamist National View tradition in terms of its communication strategy and put heavy emphasis on having a tight grip over a decisively strong pro-JDP media and political marketing techniques in general. In addition, the party also diverged from its centre-right predecessor, the Motherland Party, in terms of its attention to protect the tightly controlled, year-round active, large and pervasive membership organization for one-to-one vote canvassing activities. The main benefit for the party elite of this autonomous party structure and leadership, supported by a pro-JDP media, was the ability to strike a balance between the short-term requirements of elections (responsiveness) and the long-term requirements of being in office (responsibility), and between the collective and selective incentives, the mission and interest, and, last but not least, between the idealist and pragmatist cadres of the party.

A remarkably autonomous party structure and a highly autonomous leadership were central to the electoral and political achievements of the JPD. Inheriting the organizational culture of the Islamist National View tradition, in which a great importance was attached to a year-round active, large and pervasive grass roots organization (Delibaş, 2015), the JDP also relied upon year-round activity and a massive membership organization consisting of 8–9 million members (or supporters encapsulated as members) that penetrated into even the smallest corners of the country such as sub-provincial neighbourhoods. In Chapter 6, I have highlighted that this massive membership organization was kept under the tight control of the central JDP elite through public opinion surveys (*anketler*, as popularly known in Turkish), technological surveillance instruments such as *AKİM* (*AK İletişim Merkezi* – AK Communication Centre) and *AKBİS* (*AK Bilgi Sistemi* – AK Information Centre), and through party coordinators, deputies and ministers in person. Yet this firm control was also balanced through “controlled participation” channels within the JDP such as regular consultations (*istişareler*), non-

binding elections among selected members (*teşkilat temayül yoklamaları*) and an active women's branch which, together, created a very strong sense of participation in decision-making processes and party activities among the activists of this tightly controlled, massive membership organization.

From a broader theoretical perspective, and through a critical evaluation of the recent literature on party organizational change and party decline, I argued that, given the importance attached by the party elite to a tightly controlled massive membership organization and political marketing instruments such as public opinion surveys as well as a decisively pro-JDP media, the JDP organization should be identified as a "personalistic membership party". In other words, in Chapter 6 I described the JDP as a hybrid electoral machine which blended the mass-based party (a year-round active, tightly controlled, hierarchical, massive membership organization) and elite-based party (a party with a less ideological orientation and highly visible leadership supported by political marketing techniques and extensive use of media) models. The theoretically significant point related to the specific case of the JDP in this chapter was that later sophistication in the literature on party typologies, such as the distinction between catch-all parties, electoral-professional parties and cartel parties, had some important shortcomings when it comes to applying these concepts to the contexts outside Western liberal democracies. In the specific case of Turkey, where the party organizations represented something more than an instrument of electoral mobilization for political entrepreneurs (a wider power capability against non-party political challengers as well as an instrument of redistributive tactics in poor urban contexts), various traits of the mass-based party model were still indispensable for electoral success.

In Chapter 7, I elaborated further on the JDP's intraparty governance through focusing on the rise of the leadership domination just after the party's foundation and the formation of provincial governing bodies and candidate selection processes within the party. I have demonstrated that, immediately after the foundation, the JDP's remarkably democratic first statute was changed through the collaboration of the party leader Erdoğan and the founding committee. A series of amendments to the first statute granted extensive rights to party chair Erdoğan and created leadership domination at a very early stage of this organization's life. I also argued that the party centre designed the minute details of the provincial-local branches of the JDP through careful interventions and this, in turn, enhanced the say of the party leadership in the candidate selection process. I showed that

the candidate selection was highly “exclusive” (Hazan & Rahat, 2010: 35) within the JDP: party leader Erdoğan was almost the only selectorate of the party’s candidates, even for those coming from relatively insignificant local settings.

Considering the separate accounts of senior party members, junior members, critical former party members and “true democrats” regarding the candidate selection process within the party, I have also shown how these frequent interventions in local politics were legitimized by the JDP leadership. Some of my interviewees, as well as other sources written by the JDP elite, repeatedly mentioned a tendency called “organizational conservatism” (*teşkilat taassubu*), which referred to the local party branches tendency to observe day-to-day interests of local politics but not to consider the general interest of the party and the country and their inclination to support so-called incompetent candidates coming from among the ranks of the local branch. Another consequence of this deep suspicion towards local politics by the JDP elite was the party’s cautious approach to the local political elite and power holders inside and outside the party, and it revealed itself particularly clearly in the JDP strategies in the 2011 general election in Urfa. This discussion in Chapter 7 also revealed the fact that, despite the party’s “low-populist” political appeal/style, the JDP leadership had a remarkably “high” attitude with regards to intraparty politics that attached great importance to the education and competency (as well as obedience) of its candidates and local administrators, and which exhibited a deep suspicion towards the spontaneity of local politics.

8.2 Methodological and theoretical implications

These findings of the research primarily enlarged our empirical knowledge of the JDP’s organization and Turkish party politics in general, but they also have the potential to contribute to larger literatures on party organizations, in particular those on party typologies, intraparty governance, and party leadership and candidate selection processes. In its each chapter, this research has proposed some new ways of thinking about the broader, theoretical issues: the importance of party agency in electoral success and in production of consent in the introduction; elite strategies, Islamism and post-Islamism in Chapter 2; populism and cleavage structures in Chapter 3; the distinction between various kinds of personalisms in Chapter 4; changing patterns of patronage, electoral predominance and organizational strategies in Chapter 5; intraparty governance and party typologies in Chapter 6; and legitimation patterns regarding central interventions in party organizations in Chapter 7.

8.2.1 Importance of focusing on intraparty organizational dynamics

In this dissertation, I have primarily pointed out the importance of looking at the internal organizational dynamics of parties in power in order to understand the contribution of their organization to their electoral success and political resilience as well as to the larger hegemonic impact of a political movement on society in general. The literature on the JDP's hegemony (its cross-class political and electoral coalition) usually assumed the JDP to be an already unified political actor and a simple reflection of the social forces behind it, such as the Islamic bourgeoisie or the low-income conservative and religious segments of society.

One of the theoretical implications of this dissertation in line with a recent study (Massicard & Watts, 2013) is that political parties should not be seen as unified actors exerting hegemony over society or as unified mediums used by dominant sectors for producing consent. On the contrary, various chapters in this dissertation have shown that consent was produced primarily within the organization by incorporating subordinated and dominant segments through organizational techniques. The production of consent, in other words, requires a great amount of party organizational effort on the part of the elites or dominant sectors.

From a methodological point of view, understanding party organizations as complex power relationships also indicates the necessity of looking at intraparty political dynamics and informal interactions among various components of parties beyond formal organizational features. Researchers should take formal, informal and practical intraparty organizational dynamics into consideration if they want to properly understand the contribution of organizations to the electoral success and political resilience of parties.

8.2.2 What is party agency? A critical approach to loosely used concepts

Focusing on the role of agency in the electoral success and political resilience of the JDP also required a very careful handling of a couple of interrelated concepts regarding the analysis of Turkish politics. These are populism, personalism and charisma. Various loose uses of these concepts led many researchers either to simply underline the role of Erdoğan's image and his direct appeal to the electorate or highlight the redistributive methods used by the party as the basis of the JDP's popular durability. When, on the one hand, populism was understood as referring to redistributive mechanisms or discourse and, on the other hand, charisma and personalism were understood as signifying a popular

image of a national leader, a very narrow understanding of party agency automatically prevailed in the literature.

One of the main contentions in this dissertation when arguing that “agency matters” is that the electoral success of the JDP was not simply an outcome of the image of a popular leader and redistributive mechanisms, as many studies on the party using concepts of populism, personalism and charisma implied. Behind the electoral success and political resilience of the JDP there was a much more complicated, agency-based dynamic: not simply the image of the party leader and redistributive mechanisms but a specific mode of interaction between the leader and various diverse elements of a broader organization.

In addition to the fieldwork, careful theoretical considerations on concepts of populism, personalism and charisma were essential for understanding this specific mode of agency in this dissertation. Hence, in this dissertation, in line with Ostiguy (forthcoming) I avoided seeing populism as a set of redistributive tactics, as a [thin] ideology/discourse [as mere words], or as an [organizational] strategy, and I proposed instead to understand it as a political appeal/style emotionally connecting the JDP with the popular sectors (the low-income, conservative, peripheral and provincial majority) of Turkish society. In the case of charisma, too, by remaining loyal to Weber’s original use, I proposed to embrace a very cautious approach to the concept, which particularly focuses on the transformational impact of the leadership. In the use of the concept of personalism, I again tried to define a specific dynamic with the concept that surpasses the centrality of the leader’s image and focuses on his/her organizational role. The discussions on these concepts might be helpful in the future, too, on the analyses of actors in Turkish politics other than the JDP.

8.2.3 Moving beyond the secular-religious polarization perspective

This cautious approach to commonly used concepts in the literature on Turkish politics in this dissertation was also complemented by a similarly cautious evaluation of the paradigmatic centre-periphery approach to Turkish politics. Thus, another implication of the research was that the centre-periphery or secular-religious divide, which formulates the struggle between Islamists and so-called secularist establishment elites as an antagonism, could be misleading for the analysis of the political opportunity structures available to the Islamists and post-Islamists across the Muslim world. After all, the rise

of Islamism – and then post-Islamism – in Turkey benefitted greatly from the conservative and nationalistic views of the so-called secularist establishment elite of the country.

A secular-religious divide does not help a full understanding of political appeals in Turkey, either. In this dissertation, it has been made clear that the JDP's political appeal had something to do with the "populist emphasis" (Worsley, 1969) of Turkish politics, and the secular-religious divide was only a single element of this wider "populist script" (Ostiguy, forthcoming) deployed by the JDP. Hence, the dissertation findings might have also implications regarding the study of politics of other Muslim countries. Approaching these contexts either primarily or solely through the "secular-religious polarization perspective", as Turam (2012) terms it, could lead scholars to ignore vital elements of political divisions such as the manifestation of socio-cultural inequalities in politics.

Another problem with the centre-periphery narrative was that it also led many analysts to outdated perceptions of Turkish politics in which the "induced participation" of the "peripheral" and conservative majority of the country through powerful local and traditional elites was central. The examination of the case of JDP (particularly in Chapter 5) presented some evidence about the fact that, at least since the 1980s, the central role of local-provincial power holders and "classical patronage networks" deteriorated as a result of Turkey's socio-economic change. This classical patronage politics (and rural poverty as the basis of it) was replaced, to a large extent, by new, more centralized forms of patronage (with urban poverty in the background), which gave rise to the unprecedented electoral success of the JDP. Understanding these new circumstances requires researchers to think outside the box of the "basics of Turkish party politics" and move beyond the centre-periphery narrative.

8.2.4 A critical engagement with the literature on party typologies

In this dissertation I also critically reinterpreted some of the concepts derived from the party politics literature. In contrast to the party decline literature, which argued that the mass party died many years ago, this dissertation has revealed the fact that various features of the mass-based party models such as hierarchical and massive membership organizations are still alive and can produce electoral success in combination with other contemporary electoral tactics. Despite their great relevance, the clear-cut dichotomous approaches that emerged from the analyses of party politics in Western liberal democracies do not help us fully understand the true strategic and organizational

characteristics of political parties in the developing world. In other words, instead of pushing the empirical reality to fit into already existing ideal types and theoretically rigid categories, it is much more fruitful to focus on the interaction within organizations and hybrid forms in the analyses of party organizations outside Western liberal democracies.

In sum, this dissertation demonstrated the importance of looking beyond the formal structures of party organizations and focusing on practical internal organizational dynamics of parties for the better understanding of the contribution of party agency to the electoral success of parties. Focusing on party agency also required a very careful approach to certain concepts closely related to the analysis of the JDP's political agency such as populism, personalism and charisma. In addition, the approach embraced in this dissertation necessitated a very cautious approach to some of the well-established conceptual tools in the literature on Turkish politics, such as the centre-periphery approach, and required a critical reinterpretation of the perspective. Another major theoretical implication of the thesis is in regards to the party typologies literature, and highlighted the importance of cautiously approaching it in the analyses of party organizations outside the Western liberal democracies. Apart from these, this dissertation has further specific and systematic implications regarding the effects of organizational factors in the transformation of Islamism. I will elaborate on these implications of the dissertation after a brief comparative evaluation of the role of agency-based factors in the transformation of Islamism and the rise of post-Islamism.

8.3 The rise of post-Islamism in perspective: political institutional structures and the party agency

In this part of the conclusion I will evaluate the JDP from the perspective of two closely related cases, and then point out a couple of significant theoretical and methodological implications of this evaluation. I will locate the transformation of the Islamist politics and the rise of the JDP in a wider global dynamic regarding the transformation of political actors from Islamism to post-Islamism in Iran and Egypt. I borrow my definitions of Islamism and post-Islamism from A. Bayat (1996). Very roughly, while the former term refers to a strictly Islamist politics that follows a top-down strategy to Islamicize the society, particularly through the seizure of the state, a post-Islamist movement refrains from such top-down strategies, adapts a perspective prone to conciliating religiosity with rights and liberties, and embraces a pluralist stance in which Islam is not considered the single truth and remedy for all social, political and cultural problems (Bayat, 1996: 44–

46). This discussion reveals the fact that certain organizational formations are more conducive to the rise and electoral success of the post-Islamist parties and represents solid evidence that analysing organizational structures is crucial in understanding the electoral and political resilience of post-Islamist political movements/parties (or normalized political parties with a strictly Islamist background).

The transformation of political Islam and the rise and electoral success of the JDP in Turkey have been the subjects of lively scholarly discussions. Most of these studies tended to underline structural factors as the main basis of this transformation. One of the oft-cited studies by Mecham (2004) on the success of the JDP, for example, underlined the role of institutional constraints and democratic incentives. According to Mecham, there were “several institutional factors” behind the moderation of the Islamism and success of the JDP. He summarized these factors as “freedom to make strategic choices in a political system that rewards political entrepreneurship with credible opportunities for power”, “public institutional constraints on the movement's behaviour” imposed by “the state and elements of civil society”, and “iterated interaction between Islamist leaders, their constituency and the state” which “provided the movement with increased information about its potential appeal and strategic options over time” (Mecham, 2004: 339). Mecham argued that “constraints alone did not change the movement's behaviour, but constraints within a context of democratic rewards did” (2004: 350).

In order to illustrate the importance of the party agency – namely its political appeals and organization – in addition to these well-illustrated structural reasons, I focus briefly on three cases, including the JDP in Turkey, the Reform Front in Iran, and the Centre Party (*Hizb-al Wasat*) in Egypt. This comparison illustrates that, apart from relatively permissive political and institutional settings, the combination of a strong and autonomous party organization and leadership as well as a carefully designed political appeal (the party agency) that could connect the post-Islamist party's leadership to popular sectors (the low-income, peripheral segments of society) appeared to be vital for the rise, electoral success and political resilience of post-Islamist actors. I will start with Egypt, looking briefly at the role of the political institutional structures, organizations and political appeals of the Centre Party, a moderate offshoot of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. After this, I will apply the same analysis to Iran and Turkey.

8.3.1 Post-Islamism in Egypt: The Centre Party

The emergence and the rise of the Centre Party, a moderate splinter of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, in the middle of 1990s encountered strong resistance from the political system of Egypt, which was dominated by the authoritarian rule of the president and affiliated state institutions such as the “Political Parties Committee”, which had the right to authorize the existence of political parties. As one of the prominent historians of the modern Egypt noted, the “Egyptian regime constantly opposed the creation of new parties through restrictive interpretation of the law” and political parties were “structurally isolated from the masses” (Roussillon, 1998: 381–382). A “highly centralized” political system “with authority concentrated in the presidency” (Brown & El-Din Shahin, 2010: 205) in Egypt imposed decisive restrictions upon the development of post-Islamist politics in Egypt during the 1990s and 2000s despite the limited liberalization of the regime. The emergence of a moderate Islamist party was seen as a great danger by the Egyptian political order (Wickham, 2004: 222–223). The Centre Party in Egypt was not officially recognized as a political party despite repeated attempts (Wickham, 2004: 213).

The founders of the Centre Party also had very limited connections with the widespread grass roots organizations of the Muslim Brotherhood (Wickham, 2004: 223). In other words, after the Centre Party left the Muslim Brotherhood, the leadership could not inherit its grass roots organizations – in contrast to the JDP¹ – and remained as a quite isolated intellectual-elite circle. If they had not lost the connection with the low-income, conservative and provincial popular sectors, the Centre Party would have been much more successful and resilient before the restrictions of the political institutional structures of Egypt by enabling the party to mobilize its heterogeneous constituency for democratic demands. Nevertheless, an account of the founding cadres of the party witnessed the fact that most of the Centre Party’s members came from professional backgrounds such as “engineering, law and medicine” (Stacher, 2002: 431). Hence there is evidence that the leadership of the Centre Party in Egypt lacked a kind of populist appeal and was hardly in touch with the popular sectors of Egyptian society through a robust organizational medium controlled by an autonomous leadership. This agency-based weaknesses of the

¹ In the case of the JDP’s break away from the mainstream Islamist National View tradition in Turkey, the overwhelming majority of grass roots organizations followed the reformist group, namely the JDP leadership.

Centre Party should also be taken into account alongside the extremely restrictive political framework of Egypt in the failure of post-Islamist “rumblings”.

8.3.2 Post-Islamism in Iran: The Reform Front

While in Turkey post-Islamist political actors encountered restrictions imposed by the non-elected institutions such as the military, the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) and elected executive institutions such as the Presidency of the Republic,² in Iran the reformist movement, namely the Reform Front, has since its emergence in the mid-1990s encountered constraints imposed by the non-elected Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader (*Velayet-i Faqih*), who was elected by the Guardian Council. As Tezcür asserted, “the Guardian Council makes the final decision and [can] disqualify any candidate. The Guardian Council does not provide a public rationale for its decisions” (Tezcür, 2010: 107). The Supreme Leader also had “extensive supervisory” and “executive powers” in Iran (Keshavarzian, 2010: 237–238). The Reform Front in Iran also encountered much more severe restrictions than its counterpart in Turkey. The Guardian Council repeatedly restricted the participation of many reformist candidates to elections, vetoed elected candidates and, at times, used coercion as well (Tezcür, 2010: 91–98).

In the case of Iran, the weakness of the reformists, who were led by intellectuals and former revolutionists from the Islamist establishment of the country in their struggle with the Guardian Council, was primarily due to the lack of an organized mass movement behind the Reform Front. As Tezcür underlines, political parties in Iran “tend to be loose elite associations with little vertical linkage with the voters” (2010: 106). In addition to this, it is also evident that leaders of the Reform Front were not willing to deploy confrontational strategies at critical political junctures. It was noted in Bayat’s study that “Khatami’s [the moderate leader of the Reform Front] advisor [...] urged Khatami to move beyond being merely a symbol of the reform movement and to act as its leader by establishing and heading a political party” (Bayat, 2007: 109). As also emphasized by Tezcür, the cost of unwillingness to show strong leadership and a lack of organizational capacity resulted in the dissolution of the social base of the Reform Front in Iran after waves of repeated repression by the regime. In other words, “the Reform Front lacked a

² For the restrictive nature of these institutions and actors and their impact on the transformation of the Islamist politics in Turkey, see Yeşilada (2002: 68), Hale & Özbudun (2010: 10–11), Duran (2008: 82), and Sayarı (2007: 201).

decisive leadership and pursued an accommodative and moderate strategy regardless of the consequences, lest it increase the repression it faced” (Tezcür, 2010: 138). Indeed, “the weakness of the Khatami’s leadership” and “the absence of a real political party” were behind the failure of the reform government (Bayat, 2007: 131).

In other words, the lack of a well-organized party under the control of a strong leadership was decisive in the failure of the Reform Front against the establishment elite in favour of the status quo in Iran. The Reform Front also heavily depended on upper-middle-class intellectual circles, as was the case for the Centre Party in Egypt, and could not establish grass roots organizations under a tight leadership control. In the case of Iran, reflections on the leadership of the movement by various scholars revealed that they were mostly critical religious intellectuals coming from within the Islamic establishment (Bayat, 2007: 84–94). This movement, which was led mainly by intellectuals, tried to grasp the support of the urban, professional, new middle classes (Bayat, 2007: 104). Hence, the remark of one of the theoreticians of political reform in Iran on the Reform Front was highly illustrative: “the Reform Front remained elitist” (Tezcür, 2010: 208). Hence, the Reform Front “failed to broaden its constituency and establish horizontal linkages with large segments of the society” (Tezcür, 2010: 207).

8.3.3 Post-Islamism in Turkey: The JDP

Comparison of the electoral and democratic experience and environment in these cases would reveal the fact that the Turkish Islamist parties had a very long electoral experience since the beginning of the 1970s, albeit with short periods of interruptions caused by the decisions of party closure by the Constitutional Court and military interventions. Thus, there was the plural and relatively healthy electoral environment for the Turkish Islamists that rewarded the normalization (the adaptation to the existing political system and becoming less unique compared to other parties in the system, not ideological moderation, per se) and facilitated the rise and electoral success of the post-Islamist JDP in Turkey, as illustrated at length in Chapter 2. The contribution of a long experience of Islamist parties in electoral politics should also be defined as a better context for “political learning” in the Turkish case. As could be seen in the very accurate definition of the JDP’s ideology as “conservative democracy”, the party leadership very carefully avoided any Islamic symbolism which could create a confrontational situation. This contributed significantly to the normalization of the JDP and made the party’s rise remarkably difficult to resist for the guardians of the regime in Turkey. On the other hand, political institutional structures

in Turkey have historically been more accommodative to party politics and supportive of the rise and electoral success of post-Islamist politics compared to Egypt and Iran.

Nevertheless, the failure of the “guardians” in the case of Turkey, but not in Iran and Egypt, also pointed out the distinctive characteristics of party agency in the case of JDP. What can be observed in the case of the JDP, as illustrated throughout this dissertation in terms of organization, was “a highly centralized and hierarchical” (Özbudun, 2006: 552) party controlled firmly by a strong and autonomous leadership. “Normalization”³ of Islamist political parties and movements created a very specific gap between the reformist leadership and the Islamist grass roots. A specific tension occurred between the expectations of the core Islamist constituency or grass roots, the median voters and the expectations of the elites in favour of the status quo. In order to overcome the problems caused by these diverging expectations and to protect and enlarge its electoral base, the JDP leadership deployed “tight [...] control over the party base and factions that may be more partisan in nature” (Kumbaracıbaşı, 2009: 78) through the organizational methods and instruments demonstrated and analyzed in this dissertation. In the implementation of this tight leadership control, the JDP could also refrain from alienating its core, Islamist, low-income constituency.

The rise and electoral success of the JDP relied heavily on the protection of the connections with the Islamist grass roots movement through a strong leadership primarily dominated by an experienced and diligent organization man (*teşkilatçı*): Erdoğan. The disappearance of the coherent Islamist ideology and the concessions gradually entailed by normalization was balanced by the consolidation of the “low-populist” appeal, the mass-based dimension of the JDP organization and the leadership control over this massive membership organization. It seems that, in the case of Egypt and Iran, post-Islamist leaderships could not find similar solutions to this specific problem entailed by normalization.

It should be also noted that, unlike the Reform Front in Iran and the Centre Party in Egypt, the rise of the JDP was not simply led by a dissident intellectual or professional group within the traditional Islamist politics, but by highly experienced political entrepreneurs. In the case of Iran and Egypt, the leadership of reformist movements mainly remained

³ This term was explained in the introduction. For the theoretical hypothesis regarding “normalization” and “dual constituency”, see the volume edited by Mecham and Hwang (2014).

within upper-middle-class intellectual and professional circles that had very limited connections with the popular sectors of their societies. In the case of Turkey, however, the post-Islamist leadership enhanced its linkages with low-income, popular sectors through the “low-populist” appeal and a robust organizational medium, and kept the core constituency of Islamism together with the new, post-Islamist orientation and constituency of the reformed (initially post-Islamist) party. In other words, the combination of the “personalistic membership party” and the “low-populist appeal” (together they comprise the party agency) was the key to successful normalization, electoral success and political resilience. When evaluated from this wider theoretical perspective, this dissertation also represented an initial analysis of this crucial element of successful Islamist party normalization: party agency or, in other words, political appeal and organization.

8.3.4 Implications of the research for the literature on [post-]Islamist parties: organization and normalization

From a much broader theoretical perspective, thus, this dissertation has highlighted the importance of taking party agency seriously (political appeal, leadership, party strategy, intraparty organizational dynamics – such as the control over the party grass roots – and elite recruitment processes) in explaining electorally successful “normalization” of Islamist parties and, therefore, the rise of post-Islamist party. The analysis of the JDP in this dissertation illustrated several important organizational aspects regarding the dynamics of normalization of Islamist parties.

The rise of Islamist parties, and later post-Islamist parties, emerges in relatively permissive political contexts. These contexts could be “electoral democracies” or “competitive authoritarianisms”, but even in full-scale authoritarian regimes, establishment elites have allowed the formation and grass roots organization of various Islamist actors.⁴ One of the main characteristics of political conflict of these contexts is the presence of powerful non-party political actors, such as armies, monarchies, excessively strong presidents, self-proclaimed dynasties and restrictive state institutions

⁴ For this dynamic see various country studies in the volume by Bayat (2013). In this volume it is made clear by various authors that many authoritarian and hybrid regimes allowed the formation and grass roots work of various Islamist groups, either in order to increase the regime’s legitimacy or in order to keep dissident Islamists under surveillance through legal incorporation. Also see the studies on “upgraded authoritarianisms” in the Middle East by Heydemann (2007) and “liberalized autocracies” by Brumberg (2002) for reportaires of various authoritarian regimes for absorbing dissent.

including high judicial and bureaucratic authorities. In addition, due to uneven socio-economic development in these contexts, large sectors of society cannot enjoy some of the basic comforts of voters in Western liberal democracies such as generous welfare regimes and access to mass communication channels, most notably the internet. Therefore, the peripheral, considerably poor and politically extremely salient rural and urban popular sectors is a decisive social force in these countries. Islamist parties need to respond organizationally and strategically to the abovementioned external circumstances in order to achieve electorally successful normalization and to pave the way for the creation of post-Islamist parties.

In addition, the major organizational and strategic (or agency-based) problems encountered in the process of Islamist party normalization are the pluralisation within the party organization (both in the central leadership groups and in local-provincial branches) and the problem of “dual constituency”; in other words, the fragmentation of the formerly homogenous leadership, membership structure and electoral base of the Islamist party due to its enlargement after normalization. In the socio-economic context in which Islamist parties emerged, this problem was corroborated by another one: the socio-economic diversity of the post-Islamist party’s electorate, which includes low-income and peripheral segments of society with relatively better-off middle class median voters at the same time. If the post-Islamist party is going to remain unified and reach these diverging segments of its electorate, its leadership should strike a balance between elite-based and mass-based party models, collective and selective incentives, careerist and idealist party cadres and labour-intensive and capital-intensive campaign techniques. At this point, the post-Islamist leadership encounters a specific problem regarding the rights- and liberties-based post-Islamist discourse and identity, which would only appeal to the reformist Islamist intelligentsia and upper- and middle-class median voters. This would be a very restrictive discursive framework for the post-Islamist party elite in striking a balance between components of the party leadership and membership, its dual constituency and between mass-based and elite-based approaches.

The case of the JDP revealed that one way to overcome these problems could be “the personalistic membership party”, or more precisely an organizational-strategic model combining highly autonomous leadership with a year-round active, tightly controlled, large membership organization supported by a strong partisan media and political marketing techniques. In the case of the JDP, this organization also adapted a “low-

populist” appeal which could articulate diverging segments of the dual constituency of the party and, most notably, incorporate popular sectors.⁵ For, if the post-Islamist party returns to an Islamist discourse in order to consolidate support among radical-leaning grass roots and fails to appeal median voters, it would cost the party the strong electoral support that could provide it with electoral legitimacy against the pressures from the establishment elite. And, if the post-Islamist party insists on the rights- and liberties-based discourse of post-Islamism and fails to appeal to the popular sectors, this would cost the post-Islamist party the electoral support and organizational capacity to resist the interventions of the powerful non-party actors through non-violent mobilizational techniques. To appeal to these diverging segments within the post-Islamist party and its electoral base at the same time requires a very specific organizational and discursive strategy elaborated upon in detail in this dissertation: the combination of a “low-populist appeal” with the “personalistic membership party”.

The main contradiction in this process, however, is this: in order to remain in power as a unified political actor and survive, the normalization of the Islamist party should become deeper – it should increasingly adapt the “rules” of the democratically already deficient contexts and it should abandon the rights- and liberties-based post-Islamist discourse together with a decisively Islamist one. As a result, the rights- and liberties-based post-Islamist identity declines and the majoritarian kernel of Islamism fully unfolds in the form of a “low-populist” appeal and personalism with conservative, nativistic and nationalistic repercussions.⁶

As the case of the JDP revealed, a successfully normalized post-Islamist party starts to exploit the political, legal and institutional framework created by the strategy of selective pluralism and eventually ceases to be post-Islamist. In other words, as a personalistic membership party, the post-Islamist party starts to take advantage of the already existing restrictive political, institutional framework – or the weakness of the liberal democratic

⁵ Also see Schwedler (2006: 195–196) for how, in terms of “moderation”, the better-organized Islamist Action Front (the party of the Muslim Brotherhood) in Jordan was much more successful than the loosely organized Islah Party in Yemen, which relied on a fragmented coalition of various Islamist and tribal groups.

⁶ If the developments in Egypt and the rise of the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood was not interrupted by a military coup after the January 2011 revolution, it was highly likely that we would see a very similar process in Egypt. The Islamist party of Muslim Brotherhood (The Freedom and Justice Party), after a short post-Islamist period, would probably embrace a populist appeal and exploit the restrictive legal and political institutional framework left by the Egyptian authoritarianism in order to survive and remain in power. For early signs of the development in this course, see Hamid (2014).

architecture in the political context in which they emerged – and becomes highly reluctant for further democratization of the system. In addition, the robust organizational leverages inherited by the successful post-Islamist party from its Islamist past, together with the advantages of being in power, create a fundamentally assymmetric electoral competition for its opponents and increase frustrations and hostilities in the political system. Hence, successful normalization of an Islamist party in a democratically deficient context, to say the least, does not create highly propitious conditions for further democratization.

8.4 Future research

In this final section I briefly discuss three potential research projects for the future that could be built upon this dissertation. At first glance, these different projects might seem rather disconnected. Yet all of these projects are conducive to further generating and enriching our theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding the broader normative questions of political science on the relationships between party institutionalization, democratization and political stability.

As the recent volume of studies by Mecham and Hwang (2014) made clear, the analyses of the transformation of Islamism – in this respect it does not matter that scholars use different terms such as “moderation”, “normalization”, “liberalization” or “post-Islamism” – have usually focused on the external social, economic and political causes of the phenomenon, as in the case of the JDP as illustrated in the literature review in Chapter 1. As Mecham and Hwang underlined (2014: 10) in their introduction to the volume they edited, in the literature on the transformation of Islamism, “there are some important caveats” such as the lack of analysis of “the effects of internal party organization” on the process. This research – including the brief comparison in this conclusion – led me to formulate the following hypotheses for potential future research:

The more autonomous the party and its leader are from the Islamist movement (this is to say that the post-Islamist party and its leader should rely on its own robust organizational leverage rather than the social and organizational networks of the broader Islamist movement), the more successful its normalization. In addition, the more autonomous the party and leadership, the more successful it is at striking a balance between its Islamist past (core constituency) and its centrist present (its new supporters). The more successful the party is at keeping its ‘dual constituency’ intact, the more successful it is in elections.

One should also argue that the “low-populist” appeal is a highly convenient way of conciliating these different segments of the successful post-Islamist party’s constituency.

In this context, the JDP, as a highly autonomous party, represents the most successful normalization of an Islamist party in the Muslim world and has become a pioneering post-Islamist party (which, later, adapted a highly populist appeal). Of course, these hypotheses need to be tested with a couple of cases which could include the Reform Front from Iran and the Centre Party mentioned above, and the Freedom and Justice Party (the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood after the Egyptian Revolution) from Egypt and perhaps other potential cases from Tunisia and Morocco in particular. A research agenda focusing on relationships among normalization, organization and populism of Islamist and post-Islamist parties seems very promising.

Apart from this potential research, the case of the JDP and the contribution of its specific organizational model to the party’s electoral success and political resilience could also be framed from a comparative perspective focusing on the relationships between populism, personalism and mass membership organizations. It seems very promising to evaluate the case of the JDP from the perspective of a systematic comparison that focuses on rapidly rising and falling personal and populist parties in Europe and Latin America, such as the parties of Berlusconi, Fujimori and Chavez as well as organizationally more rigorous and historically more resilient entities such as the Peronist Justicialist Party in Argentina.

This kind of comparative research could shed light on the dynamics of the relationship between party institutionalization and personalistic leadership. Under which kind of political and social circumstances do personalistic leaderships prefer more rigorous and stable organizational leverage that could be potentially institutionalized? What kind of social, economic and political conditions are conducive to create, on the one hand, erratic personal parties and, on the other hand, much more entrenched organizational structures such as the JDP? This potential research might propose some hypotheses with regards to these kinds of questions.

A rather restricted potential study that could be built on this dissertation might either focus further on the JDP or apply the same approach to the other parties of Turkey in order to see the reasons for their inability to challenge the JDP in elections. At the time of writing, as underlined at the beginning of this conclusion, the JDP had, for the first time, fallen from power in the 7 June 2015 general election. Given the fact that this happened in the

official absence of Erdoğan, the first electoral failure of the JDP could be considered an indication of the importance of Erdoğan for the party's electoral fortunes. But when it is taken into account that Erdoğan did not refrain from fully supporting the JDP for the June 2015 elections, the picture becomes more complicated and indicated the relevance of this dissertation's argument.

The JDP's success was not simply an outcome of its leader's popular image, but was built upon the specific mode of relationship between Erdoğan and the organization – which, at least officially and constitutionally, changed dramatically after Erdoğan became president despite his efforts to the contrary. In addition, towards the end of the writing of this dissertation, the Prime Minister and the new chair of the JDP, Ahmet Davutoğlu, seem to have accumulated enough power to draw remarkable hostility from Erdoğanists in the JDP and the pro-JDP media. These current developments in Turkish politics, in fact, underline a curious and important question about the personalistic membership party that can not be authoritatively answered until the (political) passing of its founding leader: what is more important in the personalistic membership party, the personality of the leader or the office of the chairmanship? Hence, further observations on the future course of the JDP seem fruitful, too, since they might provide invaluable new insight into the reasons and circumstances of the potential trajectories of the personalistic membership party: institutionalization or decline.

Appendix 1 – Brief information on the political parties in Turkey

Parties	Brief information
Republican People's Party (1923–present)	<p>The Republican People's Party was established by the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his supporters just after the victory in the National Independence War. The party was the ruling one-party state between 1923 and 1945 and it was, to a large extent, incorporated with state institutions. The party have always been seen as the representative of the secularist establishment elite of the country. The party pursued predominantly statist economic policies throughout its one-party rule. Among its various principles, secularism later became the party's hallmark in its struggles against a series of conservative and populist parties ranging from the Democrat Party of the 1950s to the JDP of present-day Turkey. Except for a brief period during the 1970s, the party's continuous attempts to become a genuinely left-wing populist party failed. Organizationally, the Republican People's Party was not different from the rest of Turkish parties in terms of the leadership domination over provincial politics. But its grass roots organizations have been usually much weaker and less active than the JDP (and its rightist predecessors), the size of its membership has been much smaller and its intraparty communications were irregular. For further information see Karpat (1991), Ayata (2002) and Turan (2006).</p>
Democrat Party (1946–61)	<p>At first, the Democrat Party was founded by a small group of dissident Republican People's Party members. Initially the Democrat Party attempted to take a more liberal political and economic position than the Republican People's Party. However, the party received unexpected support from the provincial and conservative popular sectors of the country and, although it was remarkably more liberal than the Republican People's Party in terms of economic policies, it was by no means more liberal in political terms. The party, immediately after its foundation, started to represent the victims of the secular nation-building process initiated by the Kemalist Republican People's Party and became the first party of a series of populist and conservative centre-right parties including its followers, the Justice Party of Demirel, the Motherland Party of Özal, the True Path Party of Demirel and, finally, the JDP of Erdoğan. When the party was at the peak of its strength, its majoritarian inclinations started to make secularist segments of society, and most notably the army, deeply uncomfortable. Overlapping this creeping authoritarianisation was a deteriorating economy, which paved the way to a military coup and, hence, to the end of the Democrat Party. The Democrat Party was organizationally a remarkable force that could develop party branches even in the remotest provincial corners of the country. However, the influence of local bosses over the local-provincial branches of the party and the local patronage was always central. For further information, see Sarıbay (1991), Eroğul (2003) and Demirel (2011).</p>
Justice Party (1961–81)	<p>The Justice Party was founded just after the military coup in 1960 as the continuation of the Democrat Party. After its initial years the party chose Süleyman Demirel as its leader. Unlike the leadership of its</p>

	<p>predecessor Democrat Party, Demirel neither came from a provincial notable family nor from the traditionally predominant educational institutions of the Republic such as <i>Mülkiye</i> and <i>Harbiye</i>. Economically the Justice Party was very pragmatic and more pro-free market compared to the Republican People's Party. The Justice Party was often in government throughout the period between two military coups in 1960 and 1980. The military junta after the 1980 coup closed down the parties, including the Justice Party, and banned their leaders. This ban on leaders was lifted with a referendum in 1987. The Justice Party also inherited the organizational effectiveness of the Democrat Party and was always more successful in poor, urban contexts of Turkey than left-wing parties, with its robust grass roots presence and through better incorporation of local elites. For further information, see Sherwood (1967), Levi (1991) and Demirel (2004) .</p>
<p>Labour Party of Turkey (1961–80)</p>	<p>The Labour Party of Turkey was founded by leftist intellectuals and representatives of trade unions under the conditions of the relatively pluralist political and legal environment of the post-coup period during the 1960s. The party was the first influential socialist organization of the country represented in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The chair of the Party, Mehmet Ali Aybar, was a lawyer, and came from a notable Istanbulite family. He advocated a more liberal form of socialism, which drew much criticism from hardliners in his party and from the wider left-wing circles in the country. Despite the socialist discourse, the party's touch with low-income and provincial social segments of the country was remarkably weak. The party, organizationally, always suffered from factionalism on an ideological basis and its grass roots presence, despite its efforts in shantytowns of big cities, was not impressive. The party was banned twice in 1971 and 1980. For further information, see Lipovsky (1991) and Ünsal (2002).</p>
<p>National Order Party (1970–1) (Islamist National View Tradition I)</p>	<p>The National Order Party was founded by Erbakan as the first representative of the Islamist National View tradition in Turkey. The party was supported by more religious, conservative and provincial small- and middle-range businessmen of the country as a reaction to the uncomfortable situation created by the Justice Party's encouragement of foreign capital and trade. The party did not live long and in 1972 faced the first of a series of interventions by the establishment elite that the Islamist National View parties would face throughout their long political journey. For further information see Eligür (2010).</p>
<p>National Salvation Party (1972–81) (Islamist National View Tradition II)</p>	<p>The National Salvation Party was the second party of the Islamist National View tradition. This time, the National Salvation Party managed to survive until the military coup in 1980. Under the rule of Erbakan, it achieved an influential position in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and was part of various coalition governments throughout the 1970s. The party's position in economy was, if not statist, extremely protectionist and the political worldview of the party was a softer, legalist version of Islamism. The party's founders were coming from notable provincial families and it was supported by provincial small- and medium-sized businessmen in Turkey. The party was banned in 1980 by the military junta alongside other Turkish</p>

	<p>parties. Organizationally, until the rise of the Welfare Party in the mid-1990s, the National View parties were not effective entities. They mainly relied on isolated, religious, informal networks and lacked rigorous grass roots presence, particularly in low-income regions of urban centres. For further information see Eligür (2010).</p>
<p>Nationalist Action Party (1969–present)</p>	<p>The Nationalist Action Party was founded by former colonel Alpaslan Türkeş towards the end of the 1970s. The party's views on economy were eclectic and their political stance during the 1970s was one of authoritarian Turkish nationalism. The party found the opportunity to take part in a couple of conservative-nationalist coalition governments during the 1970s alongside the Justice Party and the National Salvation Party. Another mark the party left on Turkish politics was its engagement in political violence against leftist groups in the country. The party, despite the background of its leader in the Turkish military, received much sympathy from lower- and lower-middle-class urban and rural social sectors. The party was banned by the military junta after the coup in 1980 but reappeared several years after. After the death of its founding leader and under the new leadership of Devlet Bahçeli, the party carefully avoided street violence and embraced a softer nationalistic stance during the 1990s and 2000s. The leader has always been extremely powerful in the party as a result of the authoritarian nationalist ideology and the party always had a remarkable grass roots presence that mainly relied on its youth branch, The Grey Wolves (<i>Ülkü Ocakları</i>). For further information see Landau (1982), Çınar and Arıkan (2002) and Can and Bora (2004).</p>
<p>Motherland Party (1983–present)</p>	<p>The Motherland Party was founded by Turgut Özal, a former bureaucrat, just after the military coup in 1980. The foundation of the party and its participation in the first elections in 1983 was an extremely unexpected development for the military junta. Another rather unpleasant development for the junta was the Motherland's electoral victory in this election against parties supported by the military regime. The Motherland Party embraced a radical liberal economic programme including drastic international trade liberalization and privatization, and politically it claimed to contain four different tendencies: nationalism, conservatism, liberalism and social democracy. The party was supported by urban and upwardly mobile middle classes as well as low-income conservative social segments, at least during its initial years. The party was seen as an attractive option for conservative and religious people since Özal was also a spontaneously religious man. The party started to lose momentum in the 1990s after a leadership change and in the 2002 election it was <i>de facto</i> erased from Turkish political life. Organizationally, the party always suffered from intraparty factionalism. The grass roots presence in localities for the party was not a priority and was evaluated from a very limited perspective as a tool for ballot box safety. For further information see Ergüder (1991) and Kalaycıoğlu (2002).</p>
<p>Nationalist Democracy</p>	<p>The Nationalist Democracy Party was one of the two parties that emerged after the coup in 1980 by the open encouragement of the military junta. The chair of the party was a retired general and</p>

Party (1983–86)	ambassador and it was expected to be the centre-right party submissive to the military regime. In the first election after the coup, the party received much fewer votes than expected and two years later dissolved itself. Some of its deputies joined the Motherland Party group and some of them founded the True Path Party in the parliament. See Turan (1988)
Populist Party (1983–85)	The Populist Party was the other party the military junta allowed to participate in the first “free” elections in 1983 after the coup. At first, the party received a degree of support from former Republican People’s Party supporters (the Republican People’s Party was banned by the junta after the coup in 1980) and secured more votes than the Nationalist Democracy Party, which was explicitly supported by the junta and became the main opposition. Nevertheless, with the emergence of the Social Democratic Party as the true heir of the Republican People’s Party, the Populist Party lost much of its support and merged with this party in 1985. See Turan (1988).
Social Democratic Populist Party (1985–95)	The merger between the Populist Party and the Social Democratic Party, which was established by Erdal İnönü, created the Social Democratic Populist Party in 1985. The Social Democratic Populist Party attempted to locate itself in a modern social democratic position and the party also took part in coalition governments in the first half of the 1990s. After the removal of the ban on the parties of the pre-coup period, the Republican People’s Party re-emerged and some of the deputies of the Social Democratic Populist Party joined the Republican People’s Party. These very similar parties co-existed in the parliament for a short period and they merged in 1995. For further information see Mango (1991).
True Path Party (1983–present)	After the removal of the ban on politicians of the pre-coup period, Demirel could participate in elections with the True Path Party that he founded in 1983. The True Path Party, under the leadership of Demirel, was seen as the direct heir of the Democrat Party and the Justice Party. The only difference this time was that the True Path Party had to share the votes of this political tradition with Özal’s Motherland Party. Economically, the True Path Party was slightly more in favour of state intervention compared to the Motherland Party, and his supporters were slightly more rural than supporters of the Motherland. Other than this, the difference between these two centre-right parties was nothing more than personal hostilities between their second-generation leaders, Tansu Çiller of True Path Party and Mesut Yılmaz from the Motherland Party. The True Path Party de facto disappeared from Turkish Politics after its leader Süleyman Soylu joined the JDP in 2012. A rigorous local presence in provincial Turkey side-by-side with the local patronage was a main organizational trait of the party. For further information see Acar (1991) and Cizre (2002).
Democratic Left Party (1985–present)	The Democratic Left Party was founded in 1985 by the spouse of Bülent Ecevit, the prominent leader of the Republican People’s Party before the 1980 military coup. The party was slightly more nationalist than other left-wing parties of the era. The party’s best time occurred in 1999 when it secured the biggest share of chairs in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and took part in a coalition government

	with the Nationalist Action Party and the Motherland Party. This coalition government was under pressure after its inability to cope with the devastating consequences of the İstanbul earthquake in 1999 and had to call for a snap election in 2002 after the economic crises in 2000 and 2001. The party de facto disappeared from Turkish political life after its votes plummeted from 22% in 1999 to 1% in 2002. In organizational terms, the party was not more impressive than other left-wing parties and the leadership was extremely cautious against the expansion of the party's membership organization. For further information see Kınıkloğlu (2002).
Welfare Party (1985–98) (Islamist National View tradition III)	The Welfare Party, established in 1985, was the third and the most influential party of the Islamist National View tradition. After the removal on the ban on the political leaders in 1987, the founder of the National View tradition, Erbakan, returned to politics and the Welfare Party, for the first time after the coup, reappeared in the parliament through an electoral coalition with the Nationalist Working Party (which would later become the Nationalist Action Party). The Party, through its redistributive promises that appealed to the urban and rural poor and through its robust organization, started to gain momentum in the middle of 1990s and became the first party of the 1995 election. The coalition government formed by the Welfare Party and the True Path Party came to an end when the military openly declared its reaction to the sensational public activities of the Welfare Party including pro-Sharia speeches by its prominent members. The party was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1998 on the grounds of anti-secular activities. The party, with its attention to rigorous local presence in low-income settings, a year-round active membership organization and Islamist indoctrination of these members, was the closest organization to the classical mass party model in the history of Turkish party politics. For further information see White (2002), Eligür (2010) and Delibaş (2015).
Virtue Party (1998–2001) (Islamist National View Tradition IV)	The Virtue Party was founded just before the ban on the Welfare party and was used by the former Welfare Party members. Although the Virtue Party was the direct continuation of the Islamist Welfare Party, the normalization of the Islamist movement in Turkey started with the Virtue Party. On issues such as the European Union, relations with the West, free-market economics and secularism, the Virtue Party was remarkably more liberal than the Welfare Party. Nevertheless, this liberalization did not stop the Constitutional Court – and therefore the establishment elite of the country – and the party was closed down in 2001. The Virtue Party period of the Islamist National View tradition also witnessed intraparty factionalism between so-called “traditionalist” (<i>gelenekçi</i>) old guard and the younger “reformist” (<i>yenilikçi</i>) wing, resulting in the foundation of two parties after the ban on the Virtue Party. One of these parties was the JDP of Erdoğan and the other was the Felicity Party of the old guard under the influence of Erbakan. For further information see Yeşilada (2002) and Eligür (2010).
Felicity Party (2001–	The Felicity Party was founded just before the foundation of the JDP and it represented a return to the mainstream Islamist politics by the

present) (Islamist National View Tradition V)	old guard National View elite after the Virtue Party period. The party remained loyal to the Islamist National View tradition's founder Erbakan and his teachings and ideas. It could not gain any seats in the parliament after the 2002 elections. See Şen (2004).
Pro-Kurdish Parties (1994– present)	Since the beginning of the 1990s, parties defending Kurdish rights appeared in the parliament through various methods (such as running as independents and being nominated from other parties' lists) despite the unusually high 10% national threshold. These parties are the People's Democracy Party, Democratic People's Party, Democratic Society Party, Peace and Democracy Party and, more recently, the Peoples' Democracy Party. All of these parties represented an ideology which was a blend of socialism and Kurdish nationalism. Pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey have been predominantly supported by the Kurds living in poor urban and rural Turkey and by certain segments of the left-wing Turkish voters. However, the relationship between pro-Kurdish parties and the armed Kurdistan Worker's Party has been extremely problematic for the former since the armed Kurdistan Worker's Party has usually been the predominant part of this close relationship. Recently, the last chain of the tradition, the People's Democracy Party, created an optimism among left-liberal circles of the country with its radical democracy program and its strategy of becoming the party of Turkey (<i>Türkiyelileşme</i>), but this normalization was blocked after the Kurdistan Worker's Party engaged in armed struggle with the security forces following a two-year-long ceasefire. Organizationally, pro-Kurdish parties have always had an almost unchallenged rigorous local presence in South East Turkey and this has been complemented by its presence in low-income Kurdish majority neighborhoods of big cities such as İstanbul and Ankara. Pro-Kurdish parties also have always been highly capable of mobilizing their supporters for elections as well as for protest marches and mass rallies. Given the centrality of nationalist-socialist ideology for its members and supporters, and its overwhelming reliance on Kurdish ethnicity, pro-Kurdish parties have approximated the mass-based party model. For further information see Watts (2010).
Young Party (2002– present)	The Young Party was founded by a business tycoon, Cem Uzan, just a couple of months prior to the 2002 election. As a genuinely personal party without any permanent membership organization, the Young Party solely relied on its leader's highly telegenic image, oratorical skills and the television and financial resources owned by Uzan. The Young Party unexpectedly received 7% of votes in the 2002 election simply by relying on its leader's image and several redistributive promises. The party disappeared from Turkish politics after corruption investigations targeting Uzan's companies and Uzan's flight to France. For further information see Türk (2008).

Appendix 2 – The high-low (or anti-populism/populism) and left-right divides in Turkey

	Far-left (Kurdish nationalist since 1980s)	Left	Centre-left	Centre-right	Right-Islamism	Far-right (Turkish ultra-nationalist)
High 4			Republican People's Party I (1923–1945)			
High 3			Republican People's Party II (1945–1960)			
High 2	Labour Party of Turkey	Social Democratic Populist Party	Republican People's Party IV (1987–2015),			
High 1		Republican People's Party III (1960–1980)	Democratic Left Party			
Low 1		Pro-Kurdish (II) Peoples' Democracy Party		Democrat Party, Motherland Party, True Path Party, Justice Party	National Order Party, National Salvation Party, Felicity Party (Islamist National View I, II and V respectively)	Nationalist Action Party II (1983–2015)
Low 2	Pro-Kurdish (I) parties of 1990s and 2000s				Virtue Party (Islamist National View IV)	Nationalist action party I (1969–1980)
Low 3				Justice and Development Party - Erdoğanism	Welfare Party (Islamist National View III)	Young Party
Low 4						

Note: Currently active and major parties are indicated with bold characters.

Appendix 3 – Information on interviewees

Distribution of interviewees according to the hierarchical position and proximity to the JDP:

Headquarters, deputies, vice-ministers of the JDP	Provincial organizations of the JDP	Sub-provincial organizations of the JDP	Journalist, academics, bureaucrats, researcher, and professional campaigners	Non-JDP politicians
Headquarters:4	Active chairs:1	Active chairs:5	Journalists:1	Former ministers:3
Active deputies:2	Active vice-chairs:5	Active vice-chairs:4	Academics:3	Former deputies:1
Former deputies:2	Former chairs:4	Active mayors:1	Bureaucrats:3	Executive committee members:2
Vice-ministers:1	Failed candidates:2	Neighborhood representatives:2	Researchers:1	Islamist National View members:3
	Active administration board members:2	Failed candidates:4	Professional campaigner:2	Center-right Motherland Party members:3
Total: 9	Total: 14	Total: 16	Total: 10	Total: 6
Total number of participants: 55				

Distribution of interviewees according to cities and participants' relationship with the party

Relationship with the JDP	JDP members	Non-JDP participants
Cities		
Ankara	11	15
İstanbul	8	1
Trabzon	6	
Konya	6	
Mardin	5	
Urfa	1	
Diyarbakır	1	
Batman	1	
Active JDP members	26	
Former JDP members	13	
Total	39	16
Total number of participants: 55		

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