

This research project, which is generously sponsored by the British Institute at Ankara, brings together a host of academic scholars with expertise in British diplomatic history, Ottoman diplomatic history and Middle Eastern history. Making extensive use of the Ottoman archives in Ankara, our aim is to fund each of the scholars associated with the project to travel to Turkey and undertake research regarding their particular aspect of the research programme. Moreover, our findings will be published as a co-edited collection with I.B. Tauris, which has already contracted the project, and we plan to produce a further journal article. These publications will help raise the profile of British-Ottoman diplomatic relations, as well as the Ottoman archive and the British Institute at Ankara, while facilitating the creation of an international research network. To that end, the final phase of the research project anticipates an international conference which will help foster closer links between Turkey and Britain, and lead to academic collaboration and knowledge exchange on an international stage.

Though in its nascent stage, the research project has already signed on leading academics such as Professor Chris Wrigley (Nottingham), Dr Peter Caterall (Westminster), Professor John Young (Nottingham), Dr Neil Fleming (Worcester), Dr John Fisher (Western England), Dr Gaynor Johnson (Salford) and Dr Andrew Holt (Nottingham).

Our initial meetings with our scholars and publishers have lead us to the conclusion that this research programme will make a valuable contribution to the literature surrounding British-Ottoman relations, and diplomatic history as a whole, while also helping to develop a greater understanding of the creation of the modern Middle East.



“Who says ‘Sick Man’ now?”

Sir John Tenniel, *Punch* 1897

## The social rootedness of Turkey’s Islamist party spectrum

Marc Herzog | British Institute at Ankara

Turkey has had a tradition of multi-party democracy going back almost 65 years since the government introduced elections after World War II. However, due to the central prominence of the state in Turkey’s political tradition, the country’s party system remained weakly established within society. This was compounded by frequent military interventions in political life, in particular the three coups of 1960, 1970 and 1980, which time and time again reshuffled the cards of the party system. This brief article is based on broader research which is trying to map out the social rootedness and presence of Turkey’s party system since the 1980 military coup. Social rootedness as a concept examines the extent to which political parties manage to penetrate society and establish themselves as acknowledged organisations. The particular focus of this article will look at the social rootedness of Turkey’s Islamist party spectrum since the 1980 military coup.

Political party systems reflect the interactive totality of all parties that exist within a particular body politic. Therefore, the shape of the party system is an important determinant in the relationship between society and the state. Giovanni Sartori described it as ‘the traffic rules that plug the society into the state’ (1976: 41). Studies classifying party systems have traditionally focused on characteristics like the ideological space separating parties within the left/right spectrum or the number of parties within a system. A newer approach developed by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully concentrates on the degree of institutional strength that party systems possess. Institutionalisation in this sense means that there is a certain amount of stability in party competition and that the rules governing the electoral process have been internalised. Weakly institutionalised party systems in which parties disappear from one election to the next and have very weak social connections to their electorates are held to obstruct further democratic development, especially in developing countries.

The degree of parties’ rootedness in society shows how strongly they exist in the political imagination of the public. In Western Europe, mass parties like those of the Christian democrats or social democrats established close social and cultural bonds between themselves and their specific constituencies. They created grassroots structures, like youth groups, trade unions and recreational organisations, in order to address the different socio-economic needs of their main constituent groups. This helped to anchor the public to the party system and to the broader political process. It also gave parties a veritable social existence within their constituencies. However, when traditions of socially-rooted parties do not exist, voters feel more indifferent towards political life in general and parties find it more difficult to fulfill their function as the tools of popular representation that allow society to participate and engage in a country’s political life.

The genealogy of Turkish democracy and its party system finds its roots in the priorities and imperatives of the state's structures rather than deriving from a mixture of social and political pressures as was the more typical precedent in Western Europe. The highly state-centric nature of the Turkish polity and the weakness of civil societal actors meant that parties did not make any efforts to forge strong links within their constituencies. Rather than substantive ties, the politics of patronage and clientelism governed relations between mainstream parties, on the one hand, and voters, on the other.

The Islamist party movement is the one segment of Turkish politics that seems to succeed remarkably well at creating grassroots links with its constituencies. Party political Islam emerged in 1970 with the founding of the National Order Party (MNP). Although different parties existed up to 2001, they were effectively the same party only with different names, since military coups or constitutional decisions periodically closed them down. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Islamist party movement under the Welfare Party (RP) began to focus intensely on establishing a grassroots presence in the main constituencies it targeted. The party's religious orientation mixed with a discourse of social injustice and anti-systemic populism provided a basis that allowed it to connect well with constituencies of a working class or lower-middle class social background. The RP was also involved as an organisational umbrella in running social service programmes, hospitals and its own media, and had close ties with religious charities and social organisations.

*Genealogy of Turkey's Islamist party spectrum*

National Order Party (MNP)	1970–1971*
National Salvation Party (MSP)	1972–1980*
Welfare Party (RP)	1983–1997*
Virtue Party (FP)	1997–2001*
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	2001–
Felicity Party (SP)	2001–
People's Voice Party (HAS)	2011–

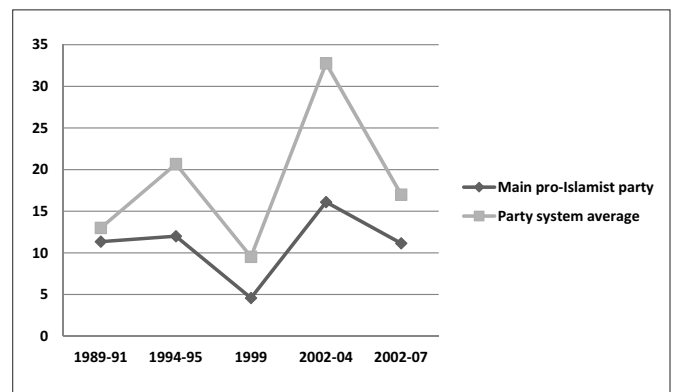
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The RP systematically used door-to-door canvassing methods during political campaigns, district by district, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, thus building up a reservoir of social capital through repeated face-to-face contacts and providing vital social services in poor areas (Eligür 2010: 36). It created very well-organised networks of partisan support that were constantly maintained and were of invaluable service during elections. Additionally, support networks at a local level were divided into different groups, such as youth or women's organisations, which also proved to be particularly effective tools in building up local networks of partisan support. Most other parties in Turkey were unable to replicate these campaigning efforts at the same level. Simultaneously

however, since the founding of the MNP in 1970, the Islamist party spectrum traditionally had its strongest voter basis in central Anatolia where its ideological orientation blended easily into the rural mores of religious, conservative piety.

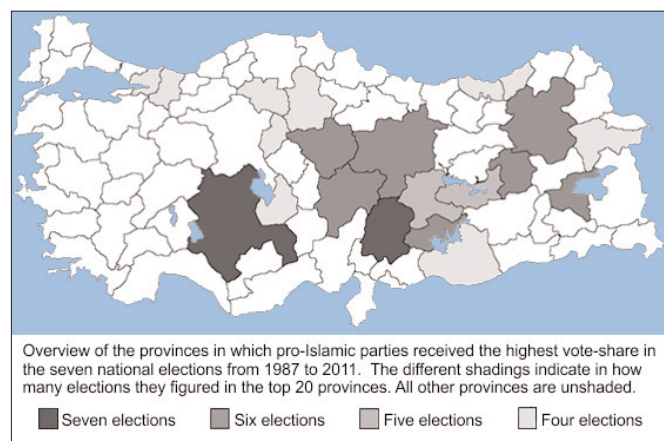
Although the Muslim Democrat Justice and Development Party (AKP) was founded in 2001 by a dissident faction of the main Islamist party movement, it inherited a lot of the grassroots structures established in the 1980s and 1990s. This factor has been of invaluable assistance in the AKP's drive to become a party of nationwide coverage, but questions remain as to whether the rootedness of Turkey's Islamist party spectrum has contributed towards the overall party system becoming more institutionalised and, if so, whether this has been a positive factor in driving democratic consolidation of the country's political system and culture. It is these general questions within which this research frames itself. As part of this, a series of statistical investigations and comparisons of electoral data were undertaken in order to identify the rootedness of the Islamist party spectrum in contrast to the rest of the party system and to map out from where it derives most of its electoral support.

In their research, Mainwaring and Scully (1995) employ several methods to examine the social rootedness of party systems. Firstly, they examine the age of political parties, stating that the higher the average age, the more likely it is that parties have managed to ground themselves sufficiently to become acknowledged in everyday society. However, in the Turkish context, this measurement is problematic due to the number of times that parties have been closed down during military interventions. A second method that relies on comparative examinations of electoral data was more suitable for this investigation. Mainwaring and Scully argue that where parties are strongly rooted in their constituencies and people vote on the basis of party labels, the difference in vote-share between national and local elections is less pronounced (1995: 9). To examine this, data from individual national and local elections were paired up and compared, by looking at each party's vote-share. This comparison encompassed all freely-held elections after the 1980 military coup. As seen in the graph below, when



Relative electoral difference (%) of the main Islamist party in each electoral pairing compared to the party system average

all provincial results are averaged, the main pro-Islamist party in each election did indeed seem to show far less difference in comparison to the average of all parties. Similar results also emerge at regional levels. A second means of examining the rootedness of Islamist parties aimed to map out the areas in which they were particularly successful and had continuously obtained their best electoral results. This was done by counting those provinces that repeatedly appeared in the best 20 results at each national election. As seen in the map below, the best results tended to be concentrated in central and eastern Anatolia, especially in provinces like Konya and Kahramanmaraş.



A first evaluation of these preliminary statistical findings would indicate that the Islamist party spectrum is by far more socially rooted in Turkey than any other ideological political grouping, giving it a crucial advantage over its electoral competitors. However, it will be far easier to arrive at more definite results after the next local elections which will be in 2014. Furthermore, the implications of such an imbalance in social rootedness between the Islamist party spectrum and the rest of the party system also needs to be examined at this point in terms of the implications for further democratic consolidation. Have other parties felt compelled to create genuine links with their electorates in order to compete meaningfully? It must also be seen whether this imbalance may indeed facilitate a long-term shift towards a party system dominated by one party actor like the AKP, which would be detrimental towards Turkey's further democratisation. If this were to be the case, this process would contribute towards entrenching one particular party at the expense of the party system and the wider democratic political process.

### Bibliography

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### The Church of the East and the construction of identity

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The Assyrian Church of the East, an international church with modern communities ranging from the US to Iraq, Australia to Russia, traces its origin back to Mesopotamia and the early Persian Church. Known commonly as the Syrian Church, or Nestorian Church following the fifth century schism, a portion of its members eventually settled in the southeasternmost corner of what is now Turkey. Here, the Syrians, or Chaldeans as they were often called, functioned within the boundaries of the Ottoman empire as an ethno-religious community, part of which was known as the Nestorian millet and part of which was self-governed. The major forces that helped shape their modern identity began in the early 19th century and continued for about a century. My research hopes to flesh out our understanding of the forces that contributed to the trajectory of this ethno-religious community, and particularly to the development and construction of its identity.

'Western' influence has often been cited as being majorly influential for the course the Church took, with American and European travellers (primarily missionaries and archaeologists) establishing a presence there as early as the 1830s and 1840s. And, indeed, much research has demonstrated how the interactions of East and West left their mark. Western publications presenting theories concerning the national heritage of the members of this community would later become very influential, as the community itself selected and gradually adopted an identity during the nationalist movements in the early 1900s. Among the heritages suggested by the English-language Western writers were the Lost Tribes of Israel, ancient Assyrians and ancient Chaldeans. Due to British and American dissemination and usage, the term 'Assyrian' rose in prominence and popularity, and was eventually the appellation selected by the community itself, and subsequently justified linguistically and academically. Since then, attempts have been made to show the continuity of the Assyrian race, and a number of ancient Assyrian motifs have been introduced into the modern Church's culture and identity projection.

My research looks at the role that other traditions played in the historical and cultural trajectory of the Church of the East, and explores, specifically, the extent to which the Russian Orthodox Church may have been influential in the process of identity construction. The Russian empire had interests in the region and the Church from the early 19th century. In 1898 a mass conversion of Eastern Christians to the Russian Orthodox Church took place and a Russian mission was sent to the Ottoman empire. This point of interaction between cultures, religions and empires remains an under-developed field of study; few of the primary documents have been explored. Perhaps an in-depth look at this aspect of Russian/Assyrian interactions will shed light on the history of a multi-faceted Church, in addition to furthering understanding of the way that identity formation occurred within the Ottoman empire.