

# Autocratic Consolidation in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes Through Party-Social Movement Alliances

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## Abstract

There have been a plethora of studies on social movements and their relations to political parties. The social movements literature explains how social movements foster democratization by promoting civil rights and liberties. For this thesis, I analyzed social movements in an effort to explain how political parties in competitive authoritarian regimes could utilize social movements to increase their control over society instead of social movements helps the democratization of the country. Social movements are the non-institutional aspect of political representation. In other words, citizens use social movements to voice their demands, which are not represented by institutional politics. Therefore, this thesis argues that, as in the case of other democratic institutions within a competitive authoritarian regime, social movements must be controlled and absorbed by the ruling party for full-fledged control over society. Hungary and Turkey have been used as case studies as they are countries that followed a similar political trajectory when it comes to experiencing a certain level of democratization and then ruled by a right-wing party that corrupted the country's institutions to get a firmer grip on power. My findings indicate that in both cases, despite their differences in their political structure, historical background, and culture, both government parties of the respective countries use social movements to increase their hegemony over society.

**Keywords:** Social Movements, Political Parties, Competitive Authoritarian Regimes, Turkey, Hungary

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## Introduction

The interplay between social movements and political parties is an understudied area in political science literature. Many scholars of the field (Arato 1981; Paxton 2002; Putnam 1993; Wuthnow 1991) analyze the activities of social movements in relation to democratization. This has been the case, especially in scholarship using Tocquevillian theories to analyze the wave of democratization after the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Former communist countries citizens' growing dissatisfaction with political parties reignited discussions about political representation, political parties, and democracy.<sup>1</sup> The social movements literature suggests that the interaction between political parties and social movements consolidates democracy.<sup>2</sup>

However, this applies to countries where structural conditions guarantee the political participation of citizens. In other words, in the context of consolidated and responsive political institutions, interactions between social movements and political parties facilitate democracy. However, this thesis aims to explain social movements' relations with parties arguing that parties require social movements to facilitate authoritarianism and develop hegemony over society.

Kriesi et al. differentiate between party-movement relations in "normal" times and in times of representational crises.<sup>3</sup> However, there is little emphasis on how this interplay occurs in competitive authoritarian regimes, which is a term coined by Levitsky and Way to describe

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<sup>1</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi, Hutter Swen, and Lorenzini Jasmine. "Social Movements in Interaction with Political Parties." In the Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements. European University Institute, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The Tocquevillian analysis of authoritarianism and civic associationism explains civil society from this perspective. Many authors thought that strong associational spheres should present an obstacle to the formation of authoritarian parties and hegemonic authoritarian regimes (Arendt 1958:323; Gannett 2003:11–12; Goldberg 2001; Kornhauser 1959:76–90; Lerderer 1940:72; Tocqueville 1988:516)

<sup>3</sup> Kriesi, Swen and Jasmine, "Social movements in Interaction with Political Parties".

regimes that use democratic institutions as façade to legitimize themselves meanwhile abusing their power to keep the office.

Apart from Kriesi et al. 's typology of party-movement relations, I will investigate the interaction between parties and social movements within competitive authoritarian regimes. Two countries will be used as case studies – Hungary and Turkey. First, I will investigate the Hungarian case in which the Fidesz party founded a social movement after losing elections in 2002 to overcome its inadequate presence in the social sphere, especially in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, I will investigate the case of Turkey. The Turkish case is particularly relevant to the purpose of this thesis as the government party has always had vibrant relations with social movements since its foundation.

Hungary and Turkey are compared because they are two typical cases of competitive authoritarian regimes which use social movements to consolidate their power.<sup>5</sup> The types of the interaction between the ruling parties and movements differ from each other regarding the origin of their relations. The literature also distinguishes between cases where the party forms a social movement from cases where parties allied with a social movement for a particular common political goal.

The incumbent AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party) in Turkey grew out of a political Islamist social movement. The party's political power increased tremendously by the time it stayed in the office by abusing its legislative and executive powers meanwhile the party intensified its social hegemony by mobilizing its social movement roots. On the other hand, Fidesz, the currently governing party in Hungary initially lacked the support

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<sup>4</sup> Bela Greskovits, and Jason Wittenberg. "Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation in Hungary in the 1990s and 2000s." 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. This is how democracies die. January 21, 2018.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2018/jan/21/this-is-how-democracies-die> (accessed June 23, 2020).

of a social movement, and after losing elections in 2002 the party leader, Viktor Orban, founded the Civil Circles Social Movement<sup>6</sup> which help the party to assert its hegemonic power on the societal level. Both cases are examples of parties fostering authoritarianism with the help of social movements. However, the analysis of these examples can be generalized to other competitive authoritarian regimes. I will discuss the similarities and differences between these cases by taking their political, ideological, and cultural elements into account.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows. After the introduction, I provide a theoretical background by drawing on the scholarly literature on social movements and their relations to political parties, democratization, and democracy, particularly with respect to authoritarian regimes. I will then introduce the reasons why ruling parties in competitive authoritarian regimes need social movements to stabilize their regime and extend hegemony in the context of such regime's inherent instability. On the basis of this theoretical framework, I will examine how the two countries developed competitive authoritarianism and why parties formed relations with particular social movements, and what the characteristics of these social movements are. I will then conclude with an examination of the characteristics these social movements have in common.

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<sup>6</sup> Béla Greskovits. "Rebuilding the Hungarian right through conquering civil society: the Civic Circles Movement." *East European Politics* (European University Institute), 2020: 247-266.



## CHAPTER I: Theoretical Background

### I.I. Social Movements and Authoritarian Regimes

During the post-communist years, the importance of civil society and social movements for developing democracy was strongly emphasized by the theorists of democracy.<sup>7</sup> The early scholars of the field drew inspiration from theorists ranging from Adam Smith to Alexis Tocqueville.<sup>8</sup> Warren notes that, among the scholars of democratic theory, the consensus is that the social movements are one of the essential components of democracy.<sup>9</sup> This consensus is gathered around the appreciation of collective decision-making and organizing collective action through associations, extolling the virtues of citizenship, and providing alternative forms of governance. Therefore, as Chambers and Kopstein note, "the gist of the civil society argument [...] goes like this: a robust, strong and vibrant civil society strengthens and enhances liberal democracy."<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to the democratic theory's suggestions, this thesis develops a Gramscian approach and argues that major political parties can instrumentalize social movements to expand their hegemony over society. Gramsci argued that civic organizations have the potential to be a basis for an oppressive regime. He explains that the "social relationships of civil society are relations of power just as much as (though in a different way) are the coercive relations of the state".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Walzer. *Toward a Global Civil Society*. New York: Berghen Books, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Although Civil Society and Social Movements are empirically and theoretically overlapping concepts, their emphases and importance in democracy are different. While the latter are analyzed within the structure of conflict, the former refers to the autonomous public sphere separated from market and state. Donatella Della Porta describes the difference between these two concepts as "two fields to focus either on rebellious, grassroots, and contentious groups or on tamed, well-structured, and consensual ones" (Porta 2014). They have thus practically different functions in democracies.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Warren. *Democracy and the Terrain of Association*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001: 3.

<sup>10</sup> Simone Chambers, and Jeffrey Kopstein. "Bad Civil Society." *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001): 837.

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. NY: International Publishers, 2014.

Moreover, an associational sphere is important because it creates new forms of political power that allow governments to pervade society. Walzer supports this idea by saying that "civil society, left to itself, generates radically unequal power relationships."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the state could potentially abuse the civil society and turn it into a useful instrument to expand the state's area of influence by using the civil society.

In the following section, I investigate studies that focus on party-movement relations in democratic contexts and consider how this can be applied to the regimes where democratic institutions are undermined. Then I continue with an examination of the literature on competitive authoritarian regimes, which constitutes the backbone of my analysis of authoritarian consolidation through party-movements interactions.

## I.II. Party-Movement Relations

Political science literature considers political parties and social movements as two separate vital channels of political representation, which often play complementary roles for democratic representation.<sup>13</sup> While political parties hold the "insider" position in politics with direct access to the political system through the means of conventional politics, social movements are "outsiders" attempting to press their demands on the political sphere, and pursue their interests by using various social movement repertoires which are accumulated in time such as demonstrations, boycotts etc.

The literature on social movements as well as on contentious politics assumes that there is always a dichotomous relation between the state and society, in which the state takes a passive but dominant role while holding institutional power, and society utilizes social movements and

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Walzer. *Toward a Global Civil Society*. New York: Bergham Books, 2009: 1

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Kitschelt. "Social Movements, Political Parties, and Democratic Theory." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1993: 14.

parties in order to be politically represented and to benefit as much as possible from state resources. Two crucial factors of representation, namely social movements, and parties, take on different responsibilities when it comes to representing the society.

The parties take on conventional politics to voice the needs of society and target broader audiences. They aggregate their constituents' interests and assume a quintessential role in mediating the relations between the state and civil society. Meanwhile, social movements use various ways of pressuring political parties, including protests, to represent smaller communities or underrepresented ideas in political representation. The social movements literature suggests that the relations and interactions between the two as distinct entities improve the repertoire of political participation.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, movements use protests to draw public attention to specific issues disregarded by political parties ruling the country. Namely, social movements utilize pressure politics and lobbying by using their organizational characteristics to achieve their goals. Movements apply such means so that parts of society that are not represented due to structural constraints within the political system, such as an electoral threshold, can also be represented. Social movements, therefore, are seen as separate entities from political parties that increase democratic representation in the society. Apart from democratic representation, social movements provide a medium for citizens to participate in political deliberation. Thus, social movements are theoretically highly beneficial for democracy.

However, the assumption that political parties and social movements are two different entities with a neat boundary between them is an abstraction. The literature only sees an alliance or conflict relation between the two: there is a consensus that they can mutually influence and

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<sup>14</sup> John Keane. *Civil society*. Stanford: CA: Stanford University Press., 1999.

shape each other, but the literature does not see more profound and fundamental relations between them.

Following Kriesi's argument<sup>15</sup>, this thesis claims that the boundary between institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics is fuzzy and permeable. Therefore, the distinction between parties and social movements is not as significant as the literature suggests, and in fact some political parties have deeper interactions with social movements on more fundamental levels. Namely, their interactions do not only occur as two completely separate entities, but sometimes they can be entangled with each other or even gather under the same roof. Moreover, interactions and alliances between the two can even undermine the non-institutionalized political representation by enabling the political parties to use the social movements as a tool to expand their influence.

Before analyzing these types of relations and how political parties use social movements for that purpose, I will investigate how social movements and contentious politics literature talks about the relations between political parties and social movements.

Kriesi distinguishes four strands of relations between movements and parties in democratic countries in "normal" political times.<sup>16</sup> Each strand shows a different type of party-movement interaction that has been analyzed in the literature. Furthermore, Kriesi adds his understanding of party-movement relations during times of representational crisis in democratic countries. The times of crisis are characterized by citizens' dissatisfaction with democratic institutions and means of representation. Such crises pave the way for new cleavages and grievances, which create new social movements. Thus, times of crisis, along with new social movements, create

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<sup>15</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi. "Party systems, electoral systems, and social movements." Edited by Donatella Della Porta, & Mario Diani. *The Oxford handbook of social movements* (Oxford : Oxford University Press), 2015: 667-680.

<sup>16</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi, Swen Hutter, and Jasmine Lorenzini. "Social Movements in Interaction with Political Parties." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. European University Institute, 2018.

new kinds of party-movement relations as the two important elements of representational democracy try to adjust to the demands of citizens. Drawing on the literature, I will investigate different party-movement relations starting with "normal" times, and continue with the times of crisis of representation according to Kriesi's account.

The first strand of literature focusing on party-movement relations follows the political process approach. Following McAdam and Tarrow, Kriesi argues that the conventional political process approach holds that parties enter politics as "part of the alliance and conflict structure in which social movements are embedded."<sup>17</sup> The second strand of the literature focuses on the rise of new cleavages within society, and develops its theories deriving from long term developments in politics.<sup>18</sup>

The third strand of the literature studies the capacity of social movements in agenda making. Therefore, short term goals are the focus of this strand. The unit of analysis in this strand is the level of attention the social movements can attract for specific issues through protests. Welgrave and Vlieghehart demonstrate that there is a causal mechanism between the protests and parliamentary, governmental, and legislative attention, in which the media plays an intermediary role.<sup>19</sup> The contentious politics approach accounts for the last strand of the literature analyzing party-movement relations. McAdam and Tarrow argue that the relationship between parties and movements is primarily formed during election periods.<sup>20</sup> However, electoral victories stemming from party-movement relations might trigger a reaction from the movements because parties might not have the same eagerness to collaborate with the movements after the elections.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Stefaan Walgrave, and Rens Vlieghehart. "The Complex Agenda-Setting Power of Protest. Demonstrations, Media, Parliament, Government, and Legislation in Belgium, 1993-2000." *Mobilization*, 2012: 129-56

<sup>20</sup> Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow. "Ballots and Barricades: On the Reciprocal Relationship between Elections and Social Movements." *Perspective on Politics* 8(2) (2010): 529-542.

In addition to the relations during "normal" times, Kriesi examines party-movement relations during the times of crisis of representation. The crisis surfaces as citizens grow distrustful of and dissatisfied with the political elites, and believe that they are not represented well enough.<sup>21</sup> Besides, voters' electoral behavior changes in such periods, which eventually leads to the hollowing and backsliding of democracies. The crisis of representation opens a space for new political parties and social movements to emerge as the existing ones do not function properly in the task of representing society.

Kriesi's understanding of party-movement relations is based on Goldstone's interpretation of institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics.<sup>22</sup> Goldstone argues that "social movements constitute an essential element of normal politics in modern societies, and that there is only a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics".<sup>23</sup> This has been interpreted in different ways by several scholars of social movements and parties. Charles Tilly's understanding of social movements as challengers seeking a way to enter institutionalized politics has been very influential in shaping the literature perceiving social movements and political parties as separate entities.<sup>24</sup>

Kriesi's understanding of blurred lines between movements and parties is the reason why his analysis of party-movement interactions diverges from the four strands of party-movement relations that other scholars had put forward. He argues that parties and movements, as forms of representation, are not as separate as suggested by this literature. He goes further by claiming that parties and movements not only mutually influence each other but also have the capacity

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Goldstone. "Introduction: Bridging Institutionalized and Noninstitutionalized Politics." In *States, Parties, and Social Movements*, 1-24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 1.

to transform each other, especially during the times of representational crisis. He explains the three ways of party-social interactions during the times of crisis.

However, as with the so-called classic social movements literature, Kriesi also keeps his analysis of social movements within democratic contexts. He acknowledges that the studies can be expanded beyond democratic countries and proposes "broadening the perspective"<sup>25</sup> by looking at party-movement relations in non-democratic settings. Yet, he concludes that social movements interact with parties during transformative periods when there is an opportunity for regime change. Kriesi gives examples from the Arab spring and from nationalist movements at the end of the Soviet period. In these cases, mass protests supported regime change in the direction of democracy. Thus, social movements, in this account, are deemed as the "weapons of the weak" for society to press issues on the state, and in this way to balance or even circumvent the state power in favor of society.

### I.II.I Bad Civil Society<sup>26</sup>

The definition of hegemony thus is crucial to understand. Following Dylan Riley's definition, which he developed from Gramsci's understanding of political hegemony, hegemonic power is the power of a government to shape society's ideology so that the society could consent to the regime.<sup>27</sup> Riley defines hegemonic authoritarian regimes as regimes which "tend to eliminate the distinction between the public and private existence penetrating the associational sphere and reducing the realm of nonpolitically relevant activities."<sup>28</sup> In other words, creating hegemony means politicizing the masses with the state's ideology and extending the state's reach to every

<sup>25</sup> Kriesi et al. *Social Movements in Interaction with Political Parties*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> The term bad civil society was coined by Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein in their article "Bad Civil Society".

<sup>27</sup> Riley Dylan explains his understanding of hegemony as "political organization of consent". Dylan, Riley. "Civic Associations and Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe: Italy and Spain in Comparative Perspective." *American Sociological Review*, 2005: 289.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 290.

part of the society. Ultimately, the state owns an instrument to control the society beyond its capacity to control through institutions. This is a Gramscian understanding of civil society. Riley states, "for Gramsci the sphere of associations is important because it produces technologies of political rule that potentially can extend the reach of state".<sup>29</sup>

According to Gramsci, civil society can be a very efficient tool to help governments to create an authoritarian regime.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Tocqueville, Gramsci argues that civil society is compatible with authoritarian regimes (or even complementary) and not in itself good for democracy. Dylan explains the fundamental differences between Tocqueville and Gramsci: "Gramsci rejects two basic arguments of the Tocquevillian position. First, for Gramsci associations are not necessarily opposed to Authoritarian parties. [...] Second, although associations may start as opposed to the state, they can be reabsorbed by it."<sup>31</sup> Completely opposite of what Tocqueville suggested, we can understand from Gramsci's account that a vibrant civil society can provide a congenial environment for the construction of authoritarian regimes.<sup>32</sup>

That is, in addition to the typology of party-movement relations Kriesi mapped out within a democratic context, we can argue that there is another typology of party-movement relations which contribute to an increase in state hegemony over the society. In the following sections, I will discuss why competitive authoritarian regimes generates suitable conditions for parties to take advantage of social movements and how these conditions create a new party-movement relation in addition to the ones I reviewed above.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 289.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 289

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 290.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 290



### I.III. Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

Competitive authoritarian regimes are neither democracies nor full-scale authoritarian states. According to Levitski and Way, competitive authoritarian regimes are distinguished from democracies by regularly violating the four minimum criteria of democracies, which are: open and fair elections; citizens' right to vote; protection of political rights and civil liberties; and the right to govern without any outsider and illegitimate influence.<sup>33</sup> Competitive authoritarian regimes retain their democratic institutions as a façade to gain protection from the immense international and domestic pressure on authoritarian regimes.

Although the regimes are non-liberal, they maintain democratic institutions in order to be part of the international system. Yet, the democratic institutions, unsupported by the other factors of democracy, are not enough to make the regime into a democracy. At the same time, such regimes are not full-scale authoritarian regimes, as the ruling parties do not explicitly violate democratic institutions. Leaders of such countries instead use "bribery, co-optation, and various forms of 'legal' persecution [to] limit opposition challenges without provoking massive protest or international repudiation".<sup>34</sup>

The existence of democratic institutions, despite governments' attempts to implicitly undermine the institutions' functionalities, makes this regime type a useful category for this thesis' purpose. As stated above, social movements and political parties are the two essential channels of democratic representation. Therefore, similar to other democratic institutions, in competitive authoritarian regimes, social movements as another vital component of democracies also exist. However, autocratic rulers are aware of potential challenges that these movements can pose and control their impact through their legislative and executive powers. So, while the leaders take

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 57

<sup>34</sup> Levitsky Competitive Authoritarianism, 59.

action against the movements, they must keep a balance between provoking democratic backlashes against their regime and giving the movements enough freedom to damage the regime. The difference between social movements and other democratic components is that parties can ally with social movements, which gives autocrats a third option in balancing between too much freedom and too much oppression.

In the following section, I will delve into competitive authoritarianism in the case countries, and how the ruling parties of the case countries established their relations with movements, and how their relations differed from each other. In particular, I will talk about how and why the Fidesz party founded "Civic Circles" in Hungary as an ideological alliance in the social sphere after losing elections in 2002, and how the regime has evolved into a competitive authoritarian regime since regaining power in 2010. Subsequently, I will investigate how AKP constructed its relations with the associational sphere in Turkey. I will then conclude that despite the different origins of party-movement relations, the parties' reasons to mobilize social movements stem from similar goals – namely, asserting political and ideological domination and hegemony over the society by penetrating into the associational life.

## CHAPTER II: Competitive Authoritarianism In Hungary And Turkey

### II.I. The Emergence Of Competitive Authoritarianism In Hungary

#### II.I.I. A Brief Overview of Hungarian Democracy and The Emergence of FIDESZ Party

During the dramatic changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s, scholars of democratic theory deemed civil society and contentious politics as necessary complementary elements of democracy and hoped they would assist the post-soviet countries to transition to the new liberal system. Particularly, Hungary's adaptation to the Western democratic institutions and its economic growth became an example for its neighboring countries in the region.

Three-decades after this period of transition, we observe a populist surge and backslide of democracy in Hungary, which is gradually becoming an example for its diminishing democratic values. As an important component of democracy, it is crucial to examine both the historical and contemporary role of social movements in the country to come to a conclusion about the current political situation of Hungary. Now, I will elaborate on the process of democratic consolidation and its later backsliding in Hungary to provide a clear understanding of how and why the current Hungarian government is interacting with civic associations to maintain its survival.

It was until 2010 elections, Hungary had not been considered as a country with authoritarian tendencies. Bozoki describes the first two decades of the country's democracy as follows: "the last twenty years were far from being unproblematic. But still, what we all experienced was a genuine liberal democracy. Governing parties lost elections. The media aggressively criticized

politicians. Democracy was consolidated, and the country successfully joined the European Union".<sup>35</sup>

Yet, after the 2010 elections, the rollback of Hungarian democracy has been described by several observers.<sup>36</sup> The general consensus among the observers is that Hungarian democracy is falling into the crisis of democratic deconsolidation due to problems in institutions, civil society, and politics. The country started to backslide democratically, and the government shifted to an "illiberal" model of democracy as Prime Minister Viktor Orban describes. To put it briefly, by using parliamentary supermajority the current government has been attacking key democratic institutions which had made the country a consolidated democracy and convinced the world that the country will be an example of a consolidated democracy that transitioned from an autocracy after 1989. Controls over foreign-funded NGOs were tightened<sup>37</sup>, the independence of Hungarian courts was heavily undermined<sup>38</sup>, and lastly, an independent liberal university is forced to move out of country<sup>39</sup>.

## II.I.II. Democracy in Crisis: Competitive Authoritarianism in Hungary

In this section I will investigate how the Hungarian government created an unequal playing field for democracy and created a competitive authoritarian regime which eventually used social movements as a part of its strategy to impose hegemony over society. Following Levitsky and Way's lead, we can say that in Hungary, especially after Fidesz party came to power in 2010,

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<sup>35</sup> András Bozóki. The Hungarian Shock: Transition from Democracy? February 2011. <https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/the-hungarian-shock/> (accessed May 13, 2019).

<sup>36</sup> See Bozóki 2011; 2018, Greskovits 2015; 2017, Freedom House 2019, Way and Levitsky 2019

<sup>37</sup> In June 2016, the law on transparency of organizations funded from abroad (also known as Lex CEU) passed parliament. The law suggests that NGOs receiving more than 27,000 EUR in funding from abroad have to register as an organization funded from abroad. Labeling the NGOs as such opens a way for the government to "discredit" these NGOs' works. (See Timmer and Docka-Filipek 2018; Amnesty International 2017 for more information)

<sup>38</sup> In December 2018 a law passed the Hungarian parliament suggesting a new executive control over the courts by the executive branch (Novak ve Kingsley 2018 ).

<sup>39</sup> Due to a new legislation that passed Hungarian parliament as of 1 January 2019 Central European University cannot accept new students. <https://www.ceu.edu/article/2018-12-03/ceu-forced-out-budapest-launch-us-degree-programs-vienna-september-2019>

"formal democratic institutions are [...] principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. Incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy".<sup>40</sup>

Although the elections under the Fidesz government were efficient and transparent, according to the 2014 OSCE report on elections, "the main governing party enjoyed an undue advantage because of restrictive campaign regulations, biased media coverage, and campaign activities that blurred the separation between political party and the State".<sup>41</sup> A similar report was published following the 2018 elections, pointing out the unfair electoral environment with overlapping state and governmental resources. The report also drew attention to "xenophobic rhetoric" and "media bias" among other interventions, which considerably interfere with voters' ability to make fully informed choices.<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned in the OSCE report, control over the media is a vital component of the regime's efforts to control public opinion and to create an echo chamber for the Hungarian voters. For this purpose, the Fidesz government worked step-by-step to dominate the media. After the 2010 electoral victory, the government introduced a new media legislation to "correct" leftist bias in the country. The government appointed loyalists as the member of Media Council.<sup>43</sup> Public media was also regulated by collecting all public media outlets under a new umbrella organization called MTVA, which is controlled and managed by the Media Council with the permission of the same legislation introduced in 2010.<sup>44</sup> The government increased its attempts

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<sup>40</sup> Levitsky Competitive Authoritarianism, 63.

<sup>41</sup> ODIHR. Parliamentary Elections Report 6 April 2014. Election Observation Report, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE, Warsaw: OSCE, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> OSCE. Parliamentary Elections 8 April 2018. Election Observation, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE, Warsaw: OSCE, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Media council is a state organization which is authorized in controlling the media companies in the country. Its president and four members are elected by the general assembly for a term of nine years <http://english.nmhh.hu/media-council>.

<sup>44</sup> Marius Dragomir. The state of Hungarian media: Endgame. August 27, 2017. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2017/08/29/the-state-of-hungarian-media-endgame/> (accessed May 19, 2019).

to dominate the ownership of media companies, and by 2019 Fidesz managed to control more than 500 media companies which accounts for 89% of Hungarian media outlets.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, Hungary's place in Freedom House's press freedom ranking fell from the 40<sup>th</sup> place in 2010 to 87<sup>th</sup> in 2017.<sup>46</sup> Subsequently, Fidesz government created a competitive authoritarian regime by attacking vital democratic institutions of the country.

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<sup>45</sup> Steven Levitsky, and Lucan Ahmad Way. How autocrats can rig the game and damage democracy. January 4, 2019. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/04/how-do-you-know-when-a-democracy-has-slipped-over-into-autocracy/?utm\\_term=.e4862755573d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/04/how-do-you-know-when-a-democracy-has-slipped-over-into-autocracy/?utm_term=.e4862755573d) (accessed May 17, 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Freedom House. The Rise of 'Illiberal Democracy'. 2018. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/modern-authoritarianism-illiberal-democracies> (accessed May 15, 2019).

## II.II. THE MAKING OF COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM IN TURKEY

Since its establishment in 2001, AKP has won six general elections, four local elections, two presidential elections, and three referendums.<sup>47</sup> During this period the Turkish political system has gone through two regime changes. First, the military tutelary regime ended; a competitive authoritarian regime replaced the former status quo.<sup>48</sup> Turkey became an authoritarian country with its weak democratic institutions, the eroded rule of law, and media institutions became controlled by the government party. In this section, I will demonstrate how the "playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents"<sup>49</sup> in the Turkish political context.

AKP's rapidly increased popularity in the early 2000s predicated on the party's reactionary stance against the secular status quo and its liberal agenda. It centered its election rhetoric around the country's need for democratic reforms, more freedoms, and individual liberties. However, Turkish prime minister Erdogan's discourse of democracy and freedoms was not enough to convince the secular military because of his religious background. The secular camp heavily criticized him for planning to undermine the secular character of the state.

During the first term of the AKP government, Erdogan responded to the criticisms against AKP being a religious party and undermining secularism by saying that "Defending the freedom of religion and conscience does not mean establishing a religious state."<sup>50</sup> The AKP consistently rejected the claims that the party is trying to Islamize the political system and the public sphere and emphasized that they aim to expand the freedoms and liberalization. Erdogan's democratic appearance, achieved with economic reforms and his emphasis on individual liberties, was appealing for Western leaders in the early post-9/11 world. A liberal country populated

<sup>47</sup> Wikipedia contributors. Justice and Development Party (Turkey). n.d.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice\\_and\\_Development\\_Party\\_\(Turkey\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_and_Development_Party_(Turkey)) (accessed January 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Berk Esen, and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly*, 2016: 1581-1606.

<sup>49</sup> Levitsky Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism* 5.

<sup>50</sup> Editor, *Hurriyet*. Erdoğan: Din özgürlüğü, din devleti değil. September 8, 2003.

<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-din-ozgurlugu-din-devleti-degil-170080> (accessed January 2020).

predominantly by Muslims increased the hopes of Western democracies as it had the potential to constitute an example for the rest of the Muslim world. A new model of "Islamic liberalism" had emerged and had brought lots of hope to oppositional groups in other Islamic countries and Western audiences that want to expand liberal democracy beyond the borders of the Western world. Erdogan stated in his speech at Harvard in 2003 that "I do not subscribe to the view that Islamic culture and democracy cannot be reconciled."<sup>51</sup> Erdogan's early rhetoric is followed by many reforms and initiatives, including E.U. accession negotiations and forging a "model partnership" with the U.S. during the Presidency of Barack Obama to bring Turkey closer to the Trans-Atlantic fold.<sup>52</sup>

During this time, domestically, AKP's boldest and most notable move was to curtail the tutelary power of the secular military. Then, AKP empowered the social groups with Kurdish and Islamic identities, which had been marginalized and not recognized by the state.<sup>53</sup> AKP's success in politics and economy increased the party's political capital to fight against the secular status quo at the time. In order to do that, "AKP ha[d] undercut the military's political power by opening up a greater space for elected officials in decision making through a series of reforms and has redesigned the higher courts via judicial reforms enacted through a constitutional referendum."<sup>54</sup> AKP's electoral success enabled the party to implement structural changes in Turkish politics, which later transformed into AKP's way of legitimizing its actions through the ballot box.

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<sup>51</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "Democracy in the Middle East, Pluralism in Europe: The Turkish View." Speech. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, January 30, 2003. <http://www.belfercenter.org/files/erdogan%20speech,%20full%20-%20english%20version.doc>.

<sup>52</sup> Kirişçi, Kemal, and Amanda Sloat. "The rise and fall of liberal democracy in Turkey: Implications for the West." Brookings Institute. February 2019: 2. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-and-fall-of-liberal-democracy-in-turkey-implications-for-the-west/>.

<sup>53</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, Competitive Authoritarianism.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 1584.



Despite early reforms and Erdogan's promising liberal rhetoric, democracy in Turkey has backslid over time. Many observers expected that Turkey's liberalization would end up in a "marriage" of a consolidated democracy and an Islamic country.<sup>55</sup> Instead, Erdogan took an authoritarian path which eventually eroded all meaningful limits over the ruling party. Although it is difficult to pinpoint a particular time for Erdogan's illiberal turn, his oppressive character against the opposition became evident during the Gezi Park protests in June 2013, after the police's brutal attack on a group of demonstrators who were protesting urban development plans in Istanbul. In response to police brutality and the government's increasing intervention into citizen's lives, demonstrations erupted across the country.<sup>56</sup> These protests also marked a turning point: the political sphere became more and more polarized as the politicians continued to use increasingly polarizing rhetoric. During the years following the Gezi Park protests, AKP strengthened its grip on the state and formed a competitive authoritarian regime.

Turkey is not a fully authoritarian regime. It falls into the category of competitive authoritarianism, as democratic institutions are still functioning albeit heavily controlled by the government. AKP used its electoral strength to eliminate the secular status quo and then undermine the democratic institutions in its favor. Turning to Levitsky and Way's criteria to define a competitive authoritarian regime again, AKP's legislative interruptions to the democratic institutions can be analyzed as the violations of "three defining attributes of democracy: (1) free elections, (2) broad protection of civil liberties, and (3) a reasonably level playing field."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Omer Taspinar. Turkey the New Model. April 25, 2012. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/turkey-the-new-model/> (accessed March 25, 2020)

<sup>56</sup> Kemal Kirişçi and Amanda Sloat, *Fall of Liberal Democracy in Turkey*: 3.

<sup>57</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*: 7.

### *II.I.I.I. Elections*

Turkish citizens historically pay the utmost importance to elections. The average voter turnout in Turkish elections is 82.5%.<sup>58</sup> This high percentage allowed the current party to legitimize its actions by constantly referring to the ballot box. On 30 March 2014, a local election was held in Turkey after the biggest corruption scandal in the history of Turkish politics, which involved important names from the government party, including some ministers and Erdogan's son.<sup>59</sup> In the elections with a turnout of 89%, AKP received 42% of the votes, which was enough popular support to vindicate the government from the allegations. Erdogan made one of his famous "balcony speeches," which he does after every election. In this speech, he compared the elections to the "Turkish independence war." He said, "Today, our nation gave a crucial message to Turkey and the world through the ballot box. They said, 'we are here, and we are the owner of this country.' [...] The enemies of our country are disappointed with these results."<sup>60</sup> Erdogan used the election results to delegitimize the investigations that targeted the party. Therefore, to strengthen its political power in the country, AKP was making sure to win elections by creating an uneven playing field for the opposition.

AKP's interference in elections reached unprecedented levels during the 2014 local elections.<sup>61</sup> Serious voter fraud allegations remained unanswered by the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK). During the vote-counting process, in major cities, including Istanbul, Ankara, and Antakya, power cuts occurred.<sup>62</sup> Counting the votes lasted more than 24 hours in the capital city Ankara, and eventually, AKP won the election despite the early indications showing that the

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<sup>58</sup> Editor. Election Guide Democracy Assistance and Election News. n.d.

<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/218/> (accessed January 25, 2020).

<sup>59</sup> Tim Arango. Corruption Scandal Is Edging Near Turkish Premier. December 25, 2013.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/26/world/europe/turkish-cabinet-members-resign.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Editor. Başbakan Erdoğan'dan "balkon" konuşması. March 31, 2014.

<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/basbakan-erdogandan-balkon-konusmasi-122734.html>. (translated by Fatih Cungurlu)

<sup>61</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, competitive authoritarianism: 1586.

<sup>62</sup> I personally witnessed one of the power cuts in Istanbul when I attended vote counting in 2014 elections

Republican's People Party (CHP) would win the elections.<sup>63</sup> In the run-up to the general elections of June and November 2015, Erdogan openly supported AKP despite the constitutional requirement banning a sitting president from taking sides in general elections. At the same time, the opposition's access to state media as well as the media, which is controlled by the government, was limited.<sup>64</sup> OSCE's report on the 2015 elections states that "these instances blurred the line between party and state."<sup>65</sup> In 2017, before the constitutional referendum that introduced a new presidential system that increased presidential powers and removed the role of prime minister, the YSK changed the elections law radically and "decided to consider unstamped ballots as valid," which was criticized by the opposition for paving the way for the government.<sup>66</sup> Following the 2017 elections, Erdogan insisted on snap elections to implement the new presidential system. In 2018, under the state of emergency, the first presidential election of Turkey was held and Erdogan was elected as the president of Turkey.<sup>67</sup>

#### *II.I.II.II Civil Liberties*

Civil liberties, especially freedom of expression and media, have been a controversial area for many years in Turkey. During the E.U. accession negotiations, the E.U. urged Turkey to improve, especially in this area. The AKP government established an incredible media control with a media empire controlled by the party. Oppositional voices are not allowed to be present in the media. After the failed coup attempt in 2016, more than 150 media outlets were shut

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<sup>63</sup> Kozok, Firat. Ankara'da 24 saatlik skandal . April 1, 2014. [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/56167/Ankara\\_da\\_24\\_saatlik\\_skandal.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/56167/Ankara_da_24_saatlik_skandal.html) (accessed January 22, 2020).

<sup>64</sup> Kemal Kirişçi and Amanda Sloat, Fall of liberal democracy in Turkey: 3.

<sup>65</sup> Republic of Turkey: Constitutional Reform, 16 April 2017, OSCE/ODIHR Limited Referendum Observation Mission: Final Report. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/324816?download=true>, Warsaw: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2017

<sup>66</sup> Kareem Shaheen. Erdoğan clinches victory in Turkish constitutional referendum. April 16, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/16/erdogan-claims-victory-in-turkish-constitutional-referendum> (accessed January 2020, 22).

<sup>67</sup> Freedom House Country Report: Turkey. 2019. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2020> (accessed January 2020, 22).

down with the accusation of terrorism propaganda, and since then, 319 journalists have been arrested in total.<sup>68</sup> Turkey had been a leading country for many years for jailing the most journalists.<sup>69</sup> Since AKP came to power, Turkey has dropped from 99th to 157th place on the *World Press Freedom Index*, according to the Reporters Without Borders.

Moreover, Turkey has been strictly controlling the internet as well. According to a report published by Twitter, Turkey has the largest number of tweet takedown requests by court orders.<sup>70</sup> Thousands of defamation lawsuits are filed due to social media posts that allegedly insulted President Erdogan. According to the latest Freedom House Report, citizens are not free to express their personal opinions on political or sensitive topics online due to a fear of prosecution or detention.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, in 2019, Turkey expanded its control over the internet "by placing online video services under the purview of the High Council for Broadcasting (RTÜK)."<sup>72</sup> That is, the Turkish government enabled itself to censor more websites.

### *II.I.II.III. Competing on an Uneven Playing Field*

Competition in the Turkish political sphere is mainly under the control of the ruling party. Elections are not fair, and the media cannot be used to voice opposition voices. In other words, Turkey perfectly fits the standards of an uneven playing field determined by Levitski and Way: the ruling party heavily abuses state institutions; the ruling party is systematically favored by

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<sup>68</sup> Journalists arrested in Turkey after July 15, 2016. n.d. <https://turkeypurge.com/journalism-in-jail> (accessed January 25, 2020).

<sup>69</sup> 47 journalists are imprisoned in Turkey in 2019 while 48 journalists are imprisoned in China. McCarthy, Niall. The Countries Imprisoning The Most Journalists In 2019 [Infographic]. December 12, 2109. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/12/12/the-countries-imprisoning-the-most-journalists-in-2019-infographic/#6e93180c13d6> (accessed January 25, 2020).

<sup>70</sup> Turkey leads in social media censorship: new Twitter transparency report. March 21, 2017. <https://turkeyblocks.org/2017/03/21/turkey-leads-social-media-censorship-new-twitter-transparency-report/> (accessed February 25, 2020).

<sup>71</sup> Freedom House Turkey, 2019

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

the help of state institutions and media, and oppositional voices are silenced to the extent that the opposition's ability to compete in elections is limited.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, despite all these difficulties, the opposition in Turkey has won a significant victory in the 2019 local elections. The opposition won nine out of the ten largest urban areas of Turkey, including Istanbul and Ankara. Yet, it wasn't an easy run for the opposition as the Supreme Electoral Council, which the government party effectively controls, decided a rerun of the elections in Istanbul due to the government party's objection to the results.<sup>74</sup> However, just like a stopped clock shows the right time twice a day, the institutions under the competitive authoritarian regimes can also work as it is supposed to be despite all the flaws. The opposition managed to run a successful electoral campaign and mobilized the masses to win the local election twice in Istanbul.

This was, however, not the first time AKP was disappointed with the election results, and the elections were repeated. In the 2015 June general elections, the pro-Kurdish HDP (People's Democratic Party) passed the 10% threshold for the first time, and as a result, AKP could not obtain the majority of the seats in the parliament, which forced AKP to start coalition talks with other parties. Yet, the talks were never concluded. A surge of violence between Turkish Security forces and PKK, alongside with the parliaments' inability to form a coalition government, was enough reason for the government to ask for a snap election in November 2015. In the rerun election, AKP won the majority of the seats, and HDP could not pass the electoral threshold. During the electoral campaign, the government utilized state institutions to maximize the effects of the campaign.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 10.

<sup>74</sup> Freedom House 2019 Turkey

<sup>75</sup> AKP has increased its votes 5 million in 5 months which corresponds to 49% of the vote share. See: Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, *Competitive Authoritarianism*.

In a nutshell, the Turkish political sphere is a perfect example of a competitive authoritarian regime with its uneven playing field and rigged institutions. In the following section, I will discuss Fidesz and AKP's relations with civil society and how they used civil society just like they controlled other democratic institutions to extend their hegemony.

## CHAPTER III: Social Movements in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

### III.I FIDESZ AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The gradual development of a more robust associational life in Hungary in the early 1990s created an optimistic atmosphere for the democratic future of the country. The number of registered NGOs between 1989 and 1993 tripled.<sup>76</sup> New forms of groups voicing different opinions and ideas emerged in this more pluralistic and democratic environment following the Kádár era.

During the 1990s, the civic sphere was dominated mainly by leftist social movements as they inherited social networks from the late Soviet period, which was also strengthened by their political capital.<sup>77</sup> Greskovits and Wittenberg's findings demonstrate that these networks weakened during the government of left-wing parties in Hungary. The contentious politics and protests that were once pervasive in the political sphere had diminished noticeably as the citizens were able to channel their demands through institutional ways or conventional politics.<sup>78</sup>

The Fidesz party also transformed its strong anti-communist social movement character into a political party during 1990s and gradually became more central-right party. The founders of Fidesz as a social movement stayed in the party and became professional politicians. Eventually, the party came to power in 1998, albeit in a coalition, after a few years of economic hardship in the country.<sup>79</sup> The newly emerged right ruled the country until the 2002 elections, which did not favor the Fidesz party and led the party to look for changes in its strategy.

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<sup>76</sup> Andria D., Timmer, and Danielle Docka-Filipek. "Enemies of the Nation: Understanding the Hungarian State's Relationship to Humanitarian NGOs." *Journal of International and Global Studies* 9, no. 2 (2018): 44.

<sup>77</sup> Wittenberg and Greskovits, *Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation*

<sup>78</sup> András Bozóki. "Consolidation or Second Revolution? The Emergence of the New Right in Hungary." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 24:2 (2008): 191-231.

<sup>79</sup> Mate Szabo. "From a suppressed anti-communist dissident movement to a governing party: the transformations of Fidesz in Hungary." *CORVINUS JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL POLICY*, 2011: 47-66.

The electoral loss in 2002 urged Fidesz to reemploy the tactics from its social movement background to mobilize on the grassroots level. During its time of opposition between 2002 and 2010, Fidesz worked on its weaknesses in the social sphere and rebuilt the Hungarian right.<sup>80</sup> In the early years of Hungarian democracy, civil society was mostly dominated by left-wing organizations as a practical result of the dominance of left-wing social movements in civil society during the Soviet years. However, right-wing civic organizations gradually overtook the once left-wing-dominated social sphere. The reason for the diminishing left-wing civil society can be explained by the change in left-wing voters' preferences. After the 1990s, they preferred conventional politics to voice their opinions rather than protests or other means of contentious politics. After all, the new regime enabled citizens to be represented in conventional politics, whereas right-wing civil society realized the importance of the associational sphere in politics and worked on strengthening it.<sup>81</sup> In a nutshell, left-wing civic organizations could not maintain their advantageous position they inherited from the Soviet years.

At the same time, Prime Minister and Fidesz president Viktor Orban understood that the party was not influential enough on the grassroots level without the civil society's help. Therefore, he wanted to strengthen the party's grassroots level by offering an organizational network where an environment is created for people to participate in politics more. These small organizational networks became the so-called "Civic Circles."<sup>82</sup> They were a remedy for a problem of political apathy faced by constituents of losing parties,<sup>83</sup> who were attracted back to political participation through these associations where the constituents could discuss and share their political ideas. In other words, Orban prompted an organizational network that enables the party

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<sup>80</sup> In my presentation to of the movement below I draw extensively on Béla Greskovits article on Civic Circles. Béla Greskovits. "Rebuilding the Hungarian right through conquering civil society: The Civic Circles Movement." *East European Politics* (European University Institute), 2020: 247-266.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*



and its ideology to pervade deep down into the society as a non-conventional political body while keeping the constituencies intact and interested in politics.

#### III.I.I.I. Civic Circles

The Civic Circles were established following Viktor Orban's speech on 7 May 2002 after his party lost the election. During his speech, he exhorted his followers to gather around these Civic Circles and to mobilize. He stated his need for a more organized grassroots support in order to gain electoral success by: "the legal form is not what is needed, but being together, holding together and being ready is what we need [...] our strength which lies in high numbers, is a real strength if we can organize ourselves."<sup>84</sup> He also drew out the new social movement outlines during the speech: "Now we are faced with a new task. I would like to ask you to form small groups of a few people, groups of friends, civic circles over the coming months. [...] We need to know about one another so that if fate determines that we need to move, we can move together."<sup>85</sup> Orban's call was a success and appealed to many right-wing groups. The number of Civic Circle communities reached 11,000, with the membership of 163,000 individuals, which is high enough to be comparable to the membership numbers of Hungarian parties.<sup>86</sup>

According to Greskovits' findings, the Civic Circles were instrumental in helping the party to create a grassroots base, expanding the right-wing public sphere, forging alliances between large- and small-scale organizations, and restructuring the party's organizational structure.<sup>87</sup> Many small right-wing organizations joined the Circles, which increased the party's reach tremendously. More importantly, it allowed the party to create an opportunity for increasing its degree of hegemony by creating organizations on the ground that follow the party ideology.

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<sup>84</sup> I would like to thank Anne-Sophie Henrich for the translation from Hungarian. Transcript of the speech in its original Language: <http://mkdsz1.freeweb.hu/n22/orban020507.html>

<sup>85</sup> Eric Beckett Weaver. National Narcissism: the intersection of the nationalist cult and gender in Hungary. Bern: P. Lang, 2006

<sup>86</sup> Greskovits Rebuilding the Hungarian Right, 252.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 256.

Therefore, during its time in opposition, Fidesz built its grassroots base successfully. After coming to power in 2010, the Fidesz government used legislative and executive power to favor the pro-government civil society organizations. These organizations returned the favor by supporting the government through demonstrations, statements, and, most importantly, through building an ideological grassroots base.

In the beginning, the movement's activities aimed to control the civil society domain by transforming Hungarians' everyday lives.<sup>88</sup> By reinventing holidays, national symbols, and heroes, the movement drew the outlines of being a real Hungarian. It was a complementary strategy to Orbán's speech after the 2002 election loss where he said, "Civic Hungary is not one smaller or larger part of this country. It is the whole..."<sup>89</sup> As a result, the movement was also able to create a hegemony over the nation's history – even Hungarianness - that allowed the movement to claim that they represent the whole nation. The empirical study of Greskovits shows us that such carefully planned activities were mainly participated by educated conservative middle-class population.<sup>90</sup>

Between 2002 and 2010, the movement was functional at enabling alliances created between Fidesz and different right-wing groups, which eventually paved the way for an electoral breakthrough in 2010 in favor of Fidesz. Most importantly, the Civic Circles acted as centers of communication for scattered right-wing groups while preserving their practices and organizational identities. The constellation of right-wing groups powered by Civic Circle's extensive network capacity allowed Fidesz to mobilize masses readily both before and after the party's landslide victory in 2010.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 252

<sup>89</sup> Orbán, Viktor. "A Dísz téren elmondott beszéd." 05 07, 2002. <http://mkdsz1.freeweb.hu/n22/orban020507.html> (accessed 10 10, 2020). Quoted in Greskovits, "Rebuilding the Hungarian Right"

<sup>90</sup> Greskovits, "Rebuilding the Hungarian Right", p. 264.

Especially after the party's structural change and the party is renamed as Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz-MPSZ), many Civic Circle members became part of the Fidesz party.<sup>91</sup> The incorporation of Civic Circles members into party structure consolidates a Gramscian argument emphasizing the importance of civic associations in the mobilization of masses for various political projects.<sup>92</sup> The creation of the Civic Circles by the Fidesz was remarkably successful. The party could, in fact, dominate the Civil Society through various tactics and strategies and provide an enabling and legitimizing structure to the social movements.

After 2010, when the Fidesz government had the parliamentary majority, Orban started structural legislative reforms to rewrite the constitution and place party loyalists to high-rank offices.<sup>93</sup> However, in order to consolidate its power in the country, the party still required support from civil society that it received before the 2010 elections and eventually helped the party in creating its grassroots base. One year before Fidesz victory in the 2010 elections, an umbrella organization, The Civil Cooperation Forum (Civil Összefogás Fórum, or CÖF) was formed as a continuation of the Civic Circles movement.<sup>94</sup> Like its predecessor, CÖF showed its support for Fidesz and claimed that they are the voice of Hungarians. The organization has organized seven pro-government Peace March (*Békemenet*) demonstrations between 2012 and 2018, six in Budapest and one in Gyula. Alongside with CÖF, five other influential pro-government people were active in the organization of the protests, including “pro-government journalists András Bencsik (chief editor of the weekly Magyar Demokrata), István Sefka (managing editor of the news website pestisracok.hu) and Zsolt Bayer (program host on Echo TV and Magyar Hírlap editorialist); businessman Gábor Széles (owner of Magyar Hírlap).”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 255-256.

<sup>92</sup> Riley, “Civic Associations and Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe”, p. 306.

<sup>93</sup> Pál Susánszky, Akos Kopper & Gergely Tóth (2016) Pro-government demonstrations in Hungary – citizens’ autonomy and the role of the media, East European Politics, 32:1, 63-80, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2015.1128900

<sup>94</sup> Greskovits, Building Hungarian Right, p. 263.

<sup>95</sup> The Orange Files. Peace March Demonstrations. May 15, 2018. <https://theorangefiles.hu/pro-government-peace-march-demonstrations/> (accessed 12 15, 2020).

The government did not finance the peace march protests directly. However, local Fidesz organizations took part in organizing the logistics of the protests.<sup>96</sup>

Hundreds of thousands of people have joined the demonstrations to show their support for the government. The organizers claimed that they organized the Peace March demonstrations to protect the government from domestic and foreign critics, and it emerged as a counter-protest to an anti-government protest.<sup>97</sup> The goals of the protests were explained as follows:

Time is ripe for us to organise a march for the government and for Hungary. There are voices all around Hungary calling for a march or a demonstration because this cannot be tolerated anymore ... we are under serious threat, which should be understood by all ... that is why we organise our Peace March next Saturday. For our country, our freedom, our freely elected government, for our beliefs and for our truth.<sup>98</sup>

Despite being in power, demonstrations to protect the government, the country and its freedom from external and internal threats attracted many people. Given that the civil opposition is usually against the state power, rallying thousands in these demonstrations to protect a government with an overwhelming majority shows the organizational and network power of the legacy of Civic Circles. The central theme of peace marches has been freeing Hungary from the colonization by external powers.<sup>99</sup> The lead banners carried during the demonstrations summarized the collective grievances that the government supporters had.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Susánszky et al, Pro-Government demonstrations, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Greskovits, Building Hungarian Right, p. 263.

|   | Official Slogan<br>(Translated)                                   | The Referred Event   | Estimated Attendance |
|---|---|--|----------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Peace March<br>January 21, 2012 | “We Will Not Be a Colony!”  | Orban’s Conflict with the International Monetary   | 400,000              |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Peace March<br>March 15, 2012   | “With United Force!”  | Participation from Polish social movements   | 250,000              |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Peace March<br>October 23, 2012 | “We Will Not Remain Debtors—The Homeland Is One!”                 | Exiting the European Union’s Excessive Deficit Procedure   | 150,000              |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Peace March<br>February 5, 2013 | “Bajnai-Gyurcsány: Together They Destroyed the Country!”          | The former prime ministers who led the country between 2004 to 2010  | 30,000               |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Peace March<br>October 23, 2013 | “Those Who Are Aggressive Are Frightened. We Are Not Frightened!” | Anti-government protests during which protesters took down a replica Stalin statue that has Orban-like facial features | 400,000              |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Peace March<br>March 29, 2013   | “The Country Is One – April 6, 2014”                              | Upcoming 2014 General Elections  | 450,000              |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Peace March<br>March 15, 2018   | “The Homeland Before All Else” and “Hungary Protects Europe       | The Refugee Crisis   | 90,000               |

*Table 1 List of the Peace Marches*

Source: The Orange Files. Peace March Demonstrations. May 15, 2018. <https://theorangefiles.hu/pro-government-peace-march-demonstrations/> (accessed 12 15, 2020).

The demonstrations were a vote of confidence for significant incidents in which the government required public support. The most recent example is the 2018 peace march demonstration. It took place to protest the decisions of the European Union during the refugee crisis. The Orban government ran an anti-immigration campaign blaming speculators for changing the demography of Europe since the beginning of the 2015 refugee crisis when refugees started to cross the Hungarian border in groups, and public spaces of the Hungarian capital were filled with refugees desperately looking for help and a way out from their ambiguous situation. The pro-government media featured negative news about the refugees daily. The 2018 peace march was a demonstration of Orban's grassroots support for his decisions and ideas about the refugee crisis.

Forming a public opinion on the refugee crisis is an example of the Fidesz government's hegemony over society. The governing party has utilized every possible institution in conventional politics to control the migration issue and stigmatize refugees, scapegoating them for all political problems on the domestic level. Levitsky and Way also demonstrate the competitive authoritarian characteristics of these attacks in Hungary, as the Fidesz government uses the legal framework, the media, and ballot box (public opinion) to legitimize these attacks.<sup>100</sup> However, this cycle of a competitive authoritarian regime is completed by the government-supported Civic Circles movements' (or the Civic Union Forum in its new form aka CÖF) support for the government. The movements did not merely support the government rhetorically but also took action domestically, even internationally, to perpetuate the

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<sup>100</sup> Steven Levitsky, and Lucan Ahmad Way. How autocrats can rig the game and damage democracy. January 4, 2019. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/04/how-do-you-know-when-a-democracy-has-slipped-over-into-autocracy/?utm\\_term=.e4862755573d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/04/how-do-you-know-when-a-democracy-has-slipped-over-into-autocracy/?utm_term=.e4862755573d) (accessed May 17, 2019).

government policies. CÖF appealed to the European Commission through a proposal that asks for financial support from the commission to send the migrants back to their homes.<sup>101</sup>

The movement subsequently became part of the top-down agenda-making process of the Fidesz party, which is an attribute of social movements according to Kriesi's party-movement typology. Drawing on Welgrave and Vliegthart,<sup>102</sup> Kriesi outlines the details of the agenda-setting power of movements in interaction with parties.<sup>103</sup> The agenda-setting capacity of social movements lies mainly in protest activities that grab public attention and eventually push the party to respond to their demands. This thesis goes further and draws a reverse relation where a party uses its network, in particular social movements, instrumentally to legitimize its political activities, or at least to shape public opinion to fit the political ends of the party. Levitsky and Way emphasize that the political playing field does exist in competitive authoritarian regimes, but it is heavily rigged against the opposition parties as the governing party uses legislative and executive powers to shape it.<sup>104</sup> Adding up the use of civic associations instrumentally on top of a party's control over institutions further consolidates competitive authoritarian regimes with hegemonic aspirations, which Riley has demonstrated in the context of Fascist Italy. Riley demonstrates the importance of civic associations in authoritarian regimes and argues that the Italian fascist hegemonic authoritarian regime could emerge only because of the strong associational sphere that worked alongside a strong party.

In addition to the party's short term political aims (e.g., the migration issue), Fidesz voters' mobilization aimed to restructure the country's cultural community according to a conservative

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<sup>101</sup> Béni, Alexandra. Pro-government Civil Unity Forum NGO wants EU to help move migrants back home. August 28, 2018. <https://dailynewshungary.com/pro-government-civil-unity-forum-ngo-wants-eu-to-help-move-migrants-back-home/> (accessed 10 18, 2020).

<sup>102</sup> Walgrave and Vliegthart. The Complex Agenda-Setting Power of Protest

<sup>103</sup> Kriesi, Hutter, and Lorenzini. "Social Movements in Interaction with Political Parties."

<sup>104</sup> Levitski and Way, Competitive Authoritarianism

cultural value system in the long term.<sup>105</sup> The values emphasized are Christendom and European and Hungarian identity, which are consistently repeated by Viktor Orban in public speeches before and during his rule. The repetition of certain values both on the grassroots and party level creates an ideological coherence. Media campaigns, which are dominated by the government, opened ground for the party to form public rhetoric on particular issues such as migration and national identity. Exposure to the saturated media allowed Fidesz to consolidate its votes even further and prevented ideas countering the official rhetoric to be circulated. The party also won the votes of those who lacked a clear political identity and politicized those who were feeling apathetic towards politics through the Civic Circle movement.<sup>106</sup>

The government also took action to disseminate the official narrative of nationalism and securitization of immigration as a war between civilizations further to younger generations by restructuring the education system and including this rhetoric into the school curriculums. The cultural narrative coherence at the societal and political level that Orban seeks to establish is also repeated in the educational system. With major educational reforms, the government centralized overseeing the public schools, which includes supplying textbooks and outlining new curriculums for the public schools. School books feature political rhetoric blatantly and emphasize Christian and traditional values to establish anti-immigrant and anti-liberal language.<sup>107</sup>

The government intervened with higher education to interrupt its freedom and autonomy as well. A tighter control and centralization process in higher education has been implemented

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<sup>105</sup> Bozóki, András, and Dániel Hegedűs. "An externally constrained hybrid regime: Hungary in the European Union." *Democratization*, 2018: 1173-1189.

<sup>106</sup> Greskovits *Rebuilding the Hungarian Right*, 251.

<sup>107</sup> Krekó, Péter, Bulcsú Hunyadi, and Patrik Szicherle. *Anti-Muslim populism in Hungary: From the margins to the mainstream*. July 24, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/anti-muslim-populism-in-hungary-from-the-margins-to-the-mainstream/> (accessed January 10, 2021).



after the Fidesz government came to power in 2010 with a new reform wave.<sup>108</sup> The Ministry of Education merged 41 university-level institutions into 17 universities and 22 college-level institutions into 13 colleges.<sup>109</sup> Also, various committees and boards were gathered under the Bologna Board.<sup>110</sup> The government targeted Central European University as part of a broader attack on liberalism and academic freedom.

The government's attacks on the higher education and its restructuring of the primary and secondary education could be investigated through the perspective of the Hungarian government's vision of creating a Hungarian identity which is mainly based on a common culture that includes language, history, religion, and the stance against the multiculturalism. While younger generations are taught a curriculum that favors government ideology the higher education is repressed to curb academic freedom. Similar to Civic Circle's attempt to rewrite history, national holidays and heroes the government dictates the official ideology to the younger generations by using education policies. Eventually, the government leaves no space in the society that has not been under the effect of the Fidesz's ideology either through conventional political channels or civil society channels.

In conclusion, Fidesz did not confine itself to institutionalized politics to consolidate its competitive authoritarian rule and facilitated the Civic Circles movement and then later CÖF to extend the party's ideological hegemony over all aspects of Hungary's political and civic spheres. In other words, although Orban successfully used conventional politics to solidify competitive authoritarianism and extend his party's hegemony over the country's institutions, as analyzed in detail above, for more comprehensive societal control, he needed to bring the other component of political representation, namely social movements, under Fidesz control.

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<sup>108</sup> Pinar E. Dönmez and Anil Duman. "Marketisation of Academia and Authoritarian Governments: The Cases of Hungary and Turkey in Critical Perspective." *Critical Sociology*, 2020: 7.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

Therefore, the line between institutional and non-institutional politics is blurred in Hungarian politics. Specifically, Fidesz's competitive authoritarian rule transferred its relations with the Civic Circles movement onto another instrument to consolidate the regime and extend its hegemony.

### III.II. National Outlook Movement and Gulen Movement

Historically, the military and the judiciary in Turkey assumed a safeguarding role to protect the secular establishment from any attacks that could potentially undermine the regime and its secular characteristic. The military coups and interventions and the judiciary's interruptions of politics can be understood from this perspective. For that matter, religious movements and parties have always been deemed as a potential threat to the Kemalist status quo for two main reasons. First, religious movements were not seen as compatible with the secular state system; thus, the regime did not hesitate to dissolve any type of religious association that could potentially gather people around.

Secondly, independent religious groups with social influence were against the *étatist* understanding of the status quo, aiming to control every aspect of the society in its hands. Since such movements provide an "alternative atmosphere of socialization within the secular Republican context,"<sup>111</sup> the secular state did not allow such organizations to operate. Therefore, religious organizations were banned from working independently from the surveillance of the Directorate of Religious Affairs.<sup>112</sup> This has caused reactionary movements to appear despite the state's attempts to curb them.

<sup>111</sup> Inalcik, Halil. "Tarihsel Bağlamda Sivil Toplum Ve Tarikatlar [Civil Society and Religious Orders in Historical Perspective]." *Global-Yerel Ekseninde Türkiye [Turkey within Global-Local Axis]*, 2005: 593–616. Cited in: Kirdiş, Esen. "Immoderation: comparing the Christian Right in the US and pro-Islamic movement-parties in Turkey." *Democratization*, 2016: 422.

<sup>112</sup> Esen Kirdiş. "Same context, different political paths: Two Islamic movements in Turkey." *International Area Studies Review*, 2016: 249–265.

As a response to that, Turkish political history witnessed two influential religious groups that could have the capacity to mobilize masses and be considered an important political actor in the eyes of the secular state. The first one is the National Outlook Movement (NOM), founded by Necmettin Erbakan and became the ideological root of the AKP. The second one is the Gulen Movement, which later became Turkey's most influential religious and social movement that runs schools, media organizations, and charity organizations all over the country and around the globe. The Gulen Movement is founded by an Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen, currently living in Pennsylvania, US. Due to the state's approach to religious groups and the peculiarity of the political climate in Turkey, these social movements had two choices:

*"They could either participate within the regime, thereby widening their political influence and societal appeal through state institutions yet risking cooptation within the process of avoiding regime repressions, or they could remain outside of party politics thereby mobilizing on the alienation of the masses from state institutions while protecting their organizational solidarity but risking political stagnation as unrecognized and thus illegal political actors."*<sup>113</sup>

Although both the National Outlook Movement and the Gulen Movement aimed to address the limited opportunity for the conservative Sunni population to have upward mobility,<sup>114</sup> they followed different methods from different branches and traditions of Islam. While the Nationalist Outlook Movement preferred institutionalized politics and participated in party politics, the Gulen Movement abstained from party politics and followed non-institutionalized

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid 255.

<sup>114</sup> Taş, Hakki. "A history of Turkey's AKP-Gülen conflict." *Mediterranean Politics*, 2017: 395-402.

politics to achieve its goals as a social movement. Similar to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Nationalist Outlook Movement followed a political path, also known as political Islam, which envisions Islam as both religion and state (al-Islam din wa dawla).<sup>115</sup> Therefore, the movement turned into a political party shortly after it was founded; however, its electoral success did not come until the 1990s.

Erdogan's first appearance in Turkish politics happened in this period when he won the municipal elections in Istanbul as the candidate of the Welfare Party, one of the parties founded by the Nationalist Outlook Movement. A political Islamist movement's political upsurge unnerved the secular establishment. The leadership of the military reacted to these developments with a memorandum, which led to the overthrow of the Islamist Welfare Party.<sup>116</sup> The military intervention in 1997 is also known as the "28 February Process", or the "postmodern coup", as it was coined by one of the generals who directed the process. After the military intervention and the party's closure, a reformist group within the party led by close pupils of Erbakan (i.e., Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Abdullah Gul, and Bulent Arinc) split from the movement and founded AKP on 14 August 2001.<sup>117</sup>

Meanwhile, the Gulen Movement gained high publicity thanks to the civic approach it is using for its activities. Turkish media endorsed the Gulen Movement's educational and humanitarian activities, as it provides a moderate alternative to political Islam, which does not challenge the secular establishment, unlike the National Outlook Movement. As a social movement abstaining from participating in institutionalized politics, the movement aimed to reach a wider population by building communal ties on the local level and promoting the need for

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 396.

<sup>116</sup> Çandar, Cengiz. Post-modern darbe (translated as "post-modern coup" from Turkish). June 28, 1997. <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1997/06/28/y12.html> (accessed February 5, 2020)

<sup>117</sup> Hakki Taş, History of AKP-Gulen.

volunteering and service for the greater common good in society.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the movement's rapid development and growing network capacity stem from the active civil society sphere, which started to grow and proliferate in Turkey after the 1980s and the opening of markets, which led to the emergence of a new Turkish middle class.<sup>119</sup>

The movement's followers took advantage of the newly opening markets and opportunities to elevate the movement financially. Therefore, the Gulen Movement's approach to "the reconciliation of Islam and capitalism is reminiscent of the Protestant Ethic in that material success is interpreted as an indicator of proper faith – if it remains subservient to contributing to the common good."<sup>120</sup> This approach has also led the movement to transform into a transnational social movement, as the movement's activities were seen as more compatible with Western values and could be legitimized outside of Turkey's borders.

The two movements' differing approaches had different results for both themselves and Turkish politics. The movements' area of influence is differentiated from each other, yet they both became organizationally extraordinarily successful in their own fields. On the one hand, the Nationalist Outlook Movement took on a top-down process of societal control and advised its followers to "capture the higher summits of social and political institutions in the country and establish control over the society."<sup>121</sup> They believed that institutionalized politics is an effective way of shaping public opinion and mobilizing the masses.

In 2002, the newly founded AKP eventually achieved what its predecessors were trying to achieve for decades and won the parliamentary elections to become the governing party of Turkey. However, this was mainly achieved after fierce internal debates over moderating the

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<sup>118</sup> Esen Kirdiş, Same Context.

<sup>119</sup> Hakan Yilmaz, Democracy and Freedom.

<sup>120</sup> Scott T Fitzgerald. "Conceptualizing and understanding the Gülen movement." *Sociology Compass*, March 2017: 1-10.

<sup>121</sup> Şerif Mardin. "The Nakshibendi Order of Turkey." In *Fundamentalism and the State*, by R. Scott Appelby Martin E. Marty. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

party to avoid backlashes from the secular establishment, which eventually resulted in the aforementioned split of the moderates from the National Outlook Movement. The new party realized that "they could [...] win the elections if they lowered their ideological commitments and stressed pragmatic policy solutions."<sup>122</sup> Despite the initial debates over becoming more moderate and appealing to the broader constituencies, AKP achieved NOM's goal to shape the masses through a top-down approach and became a hegemonic authoritarian party.

On the other hand, the Gulen Movement chose a gradual, bottom-up Islamization process by staying a grassroots movement and forming public opinion through being active in education, business, and media, while simultaneously protecting its organizational structure by staying outside of the state hegemony. On the practical level the movement employed younger generations to reach out to the wider populations by mainly using educational activities, such as weekend schools, tutoring sessions, and private schools. The movement encouraged its followers to aim higher in bureaucracy at the cost of hiding their religious identity. The secular establishment's institutional practices would prevent a religious person from being employed in key state institutions such as the judiciary, military, or police forces.

Secular establishment interpreted Gulenists' intention for aiming higher ranks in bureaucracy as an attempt to infiltrate into the state institutions to destroy the secular state from within. In 2000 Ankara State Security court accused Gulen of undermining secular state order and eventually transforming it into an Iran-like religious state. The court defines "Gulen as 'the strongest and most effective Islamic fundamentalist in Turkey' and who 'camouflages his methods with a democratic and moderate image.'"<sup>123</sup> As a result, both movements breached

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<sup>122</sup> M Hakan Yavuz. *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>123</sup> Hakki Taş, *History of AKP-Gulen*, 397.

constraints on religious and conservative population's upward social mobility by using their strategies, i.e., top-down, and bot-up approaches.

As a result of their expansion in the social and political sphere, AKP and Gulen movement's relations have become more relevant to Turkish politics in the 2000s. Their strategies to enable upward mobility for the religious population in Turkey started giving results as AKP win the 2002 elections, which allowed the party to expand its constituency even further than NOM's grassroots base, and as the Gulen movement started its exponential growth in terms of its sphere of influence in the non-participant sphere with hundreds of educational institutions, media outlets including newspapers and T.V. channels, non-profit organizations, etc. During this period, both groups formed a strategic alliance by setting their differences aside to combine and complement their political and social power to survive in a hostile secular environment for religious groups.<sup>124</sup> Despite their success, counteraction from the secular status quo was posing a vital threat to both groups. Hence, the first decade of the 2000s witnessed an all-out war between the secular establishment and its Islamic challengers. Gulen Movement and AKP utilized their non-institutional and institutional resources, respectively, which they build up over the years to stand up against the secular status quo proactively and to change it.<sup>125</sup>

### III.II.I. Creating a Counter-Hegemony

Gulen Movement and AKP performed legal maneuvers to avoid attacks that aim to abolish both groups. Each group helped each other out cautiously in their capacity to survive in that political environment.<sup>126</sup> On 24 August 2004, during the Turkish Security Council meeting, "supreme coordination board of the State in the field of security and defense policy,"<sup>127</sup> the military made

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 397.

<sup>125</sup> Esen Kirdis, *Same Context, Different Political Paths*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> Hakkı Taş, *History of AKP-Gulen*, 398.

<sup>127</sup> "About the National Security Council." Republic of Turkey Secretariat of National Security Council. n.d.<https://www.mgk.gov.tr/en/index.php/national-security-council/about-the-national-security-council> (accessed October 1, 2020).

its position clear on Gulen Movement by issuing an advisory ruling that asks the government to create an action plan to prevent activities of Gulen Movement.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, Fethullah Gulen was acquitted from the lawsuit for undermining the secular regime thanks to a legislative change in counterterrorism law on 5 May 2006. Right after the parliament, where AKP had legislative majority, passed the new counterterrorism law, Gulen's lawyers appealed to Ankara Security Court which resulted in charges against Gulen to be dropped.

In the following year, the presidential election of 2007 was the most debated topic and a turning point in Turkish politics. The president used to be elected by voting in the parliament. That is, the ruling party's candidate would eventually be elected as the president, which was announced as Abdullah Gul, a prominent Islamist figure, and Erdogan's close friend. The opposition party decided not to attend the voting session to elect the president and claimed that the presidential election could not be completed unless more than 367 members of parliament were present in the session, which was impossible for AKP to achieve without the opposition's support. The constitutional court decided in favor of the opposition, and as a result, Abdullah Gul could not be elected as the president.

The military also opposed Gul's presidential candidacy and declared its partiality in this matter. Army chief of staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, said, "The president to be elected is also the Turkish army's commander-in-chief. This aspect closely concerns the army. I hope a president and also a commander-in-chief who is devoted to upholding basic values of the republic, the unitary structure of the state, and a secular and democratic state will be elected."<sup>129</sup> Following this statement, on 27 April 2007, a memorandum was released on the General Chief of Staff's

<sup>128</sup> Sozcu. 11 28, 2013. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2013/gundem/guleni-bitirme-karari-2004-mgkda-alindi-414756/> (accessed 10 1, 2020).

<sup>129</sup> Hurriyet. *Buyukanit'in Konusmasinin Tam Metni [Full Transcript of Buyukanit's Speech]*. 04 12, 2007. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/buyukanitin-konusmasinin-tam-metni-6321761> (accessed 03 2020, 10).



official website. The memorandum declares the army's concerns about developments that undermine the secular regime. The purpose of this declaration was seen as an interference to the presidential election by the army. Gulen Movement's media chastised the memorandum and criticized the army for interrupting the balance of power and interfering in state affairs. Ekrem Dumanli, Editor-in-chief of Zaman newspaper, criticized the Turkish Army for damaging democracy.<sup>130</sup> As a response to military's intervention on AKP's presidential candidate and constitutional court's decision, AKP called for an early election to get the public support in the midst of all the attacks, which resulted in increasing its vote from 34% in previous elections to 47%. Following the general elections, the party called for a referendum for a constitutional amendment.

The party's reaction to the military intervention was different from its predecessors or any other party in Turkish political history. The party was more proactive instead of defensive and gathered public support around itself.<sup>131</sup> Such a reaction from the party paved the way for further investigations on past coups such as the coup in 1980 and coup plots. The results of both election and referendum gave great confidence to the party, which shaped future actions taken by AKP against the status quo. After the landslide victory of AKP with 47% in the 2007 general elections, the opposition party appealed to the constitutional court, demanding the court to close AKP and ban its members from politics for being unconstitutional as another attempt to protect the secular establishment. AKP gained great confidence with electoral support. The closure case resulted in favor of the government party, and the constitutional court decided not to close the party and ban its member from politics.

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<sup>130</sup> Dumanli, Ekrem. *Demokrasi! Demokrasi! Demokrasi!* 4 30, 2007.  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070525225851/http://www.zaman.com.tr/webapp-tr/yazar.do?yazino=533701> (accessed 10 3, 2020).

<sup>131</sup> Ural, Abdullah. "Results of the April 27, 2007 Turkish Military's E-Memorandum." *Interdisciplinary Journal Of Contemporary Research In Business*, December 2012: 727-737.

In 2008 series of high-profile military trials that are famously named as Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials, had been launched and sent hundreds of retired and active military officers to jail and effectively put an end to the tutelary capacity of the military.<sup>132</sup> Gulen movement-affiliated media positioned itself against the secular status-quo and has become more critical than any other group about military, opposition, and other secular-dominated state institutions as an attempt to survive alongside its strategic partner AKP.

The alliance had its most important test in the 2010 constitutional referendum where Gulen movement and AKP utilized their bottom-up and top-down influence respectively, to alter judicial institutions to break the monopoly of secular establishment in these institutions.<sup>133</sup> Gulen himself personally campaigned for affirmative votes in the referendum. He asked his followers to vote for “yes” in the referendum.<sup>134</sup> The constitutional referendum resulted in 58% in favor of the amendments, which “gave both HSYK (Council of Judges and Prosecutors) and Constitutional Court a more representative and pluralistic structure.”<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, the amendments weakened the military privileges and immunities. Instead of military courts, civilian courts could try the military's crimes against the state's constitutional order.<sup>136</sup> European Commission reported the constitutional amendments as “a step in the right direction” for democracy and the rule of law to end the military tutelary and increase civilian control.<sup>137</sup> Gulen Movement and AKP had fundamentally morphed the state's power structure

<sup>132</sup> Hakki Taş, History of AKP-Gulen, 398.

<sup>133</sup> Esen Kirdis, Same Context, Different Political Paths, 13.

<sup>134</sup> HaberTurk. *Fethullah Gulen'in Referandum Yorumu*. 08 01, 2010.  
<https://www.haberturk.com/polemik/haber/537886-fethullah-gulenin-referandum-yorumu> (accessed 10 25, 2020).

<sup>135</sup> Özbudun, Ergun. "AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan's Majoritarian." *South European Society and Politics*, 2014: 156.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 156.

<sup>137</sup> European Commission. "Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011)." *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs*. 2010.  
[https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB\\_Iliskileri/Tur\\_En\\_Realitons/Progress/conclusions\\_turkey\\_en.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Progress/conclusions_turkey_en.pdf) (accessed 10 15, 2020).

due to their collaboration against the old secular status-quo. They brought a conservative periphery and represented their repressed demands.<sup>138</sup> By the end of 2010, civilian control over the judiciary and military was accomplished. AKP formed a formidable voter base, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan created an unquestionable leadership in the country thanks to his uninterrupted electoral success and personal charisma.

The two most prominent Islamic groups in Turkey fundamentally altered Turkey's secular status quo and created a new hegemony due to their increasing influence in conventional and non-conventional politics. Despite the positive changes in pluralism and democratization in the country thanks to increasing civilian control and more diverse politics compared to the times when secular status quo was dominating, the AKP government, barely constrained by any opposition, used its political power to make legislative changes further and allowed the party to strengthen its position in the country, which paved the way for competitive authoritarianism. After abolishing the old status quo, the tension within the strategic partnership increased as AKP was very reluctant at sharing power with the movement; meanwhile, the movement increased its presence in crucial bureaucratic institutions and policy-making.

This tension eventually grew into a conflict between the two groups. Following corruption allegations in December 2013, the AKP government accused the movement of being a parallel state. After the coup attempt in 2016, the movement was declared a terrorist group and banned from Turkey. As a result, the government party had utilized the Gulen Movement to complement its inadequacy in non-participant politics to stand against a powerful secular establishment and then later build another undemocratic regime.

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<sup>138</sup> Esen Kirdis, *Same Context, Different Political Paths*, 13.

## Conclusion

Although the existing literature on social movements investigates the relations between social movements and parties in various circumstances, there is little focus on how these relations occur in authoritarian regimes. Social movements are the non-institutional aspect of political representation. In other words, citizens use social movements to voice their demands, which are not represented by institutional politics. Therefore, this thesis argues that, as in the case of other democratic institutions within a competitive authoritarian regime, social movements must be controlled and absorbed by the ruling party for full-fledged control over society. Also, considering that an uncontrolled and autonomous civil society might become a counter-balance to the government's hegemonic aspirations, as suggested by the classical conception of social movements following Tocquevillian theory, the party requires a close relation with social movements. Lastly, considering its characteristics, as discussed in the literature review, competitive authoritarian regimes become more relevant when analyzing how party-movement relations could foster authoritarianism.

Despite the highly different political structure, historical background, and culture, the backsliding of democracy in Hungary and Turkey followed a similar political trajectory. A right-wing party uses its political power to dominate the state institutions and political system during its first term.<sup>139</sup> They were once-promising democratizing countries and started backsliding because of a party abusing democratic components, including social movements, in their countries. Therefore, these countries provide good examples of how close relations between parties and movements in competitive authoritarian regimes result in the consolidation of authoritarianism.

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<sup>139</sup> Esen, Berk. Democratic Backsliding in Turkey and Hungary. August 2020. <https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/53036> (accessed April 5, 2021).

There are a couple of reasons why the relations between the parties and the social movements became an indispensable component of both regimes' strategy to maintain their control over their countries.

In the context of Turkey, the government party formed an alliance with the Gulen movement to survive against the attacks of the secular status quo and complement its inadequacy in the grassroots networks. The coalition provided AKP with access to an educated and conservative middle-class population. Despite the difference between the two groups' ideologies, the communal ties the movement had created had been useful for the party to reach out to more people. In other words, the network capacity offered by the Gulen movement had expanded AKP's constituency beyond its ideological base.

On the other hand, in Hungary, the Civic Circles was founded as Viktor Orban asked his party's constituencies and some other right-wing parties to gather around small civic circles to be connected and act together as a group. The main difference from the Turkish case is that the party's efforts formed the movement. Therefore, the movement was shaped directly by the party ideology and agenda. The movement was founded because Viktor Orban realized that the party needs more grassroots support and an ideologically loaded base. Eventually, Orban's initiation paid off, and the Civic Circles movement has become a success. The Circles grew to the extent that the number of members of the Civic Circles could be compared to those of political parties in Hungary. Despite the difference between both government parties' relationship to the social movements, both parties achieved control over prominent social movements, which helped parties increase their constituencies.

Second, this connection allows the parties to create rhetorical coherence on the grassroots level. In both countries, the social movements served the role to perpetuate the government rhetoric on the grassroots level. For example, in Turkey, while the secular status quo was attacking

AKP, the party created a rhetoric of saving and maintaining democracy by fighting against the status quo and used it during political campaigns. The Gulen movement's media repeated this rhetoric during the years of the alliance. Meanwhile, in Hungary, the government's rhetoric on many issues ranging from immigration to Christian values was repeated by CÖF, a successor movement of Civic Circles, especially during the Peace Marches. Both countries' social movements used their repertoires and capacities to disseminate the government rhetoric to broader populations.

Third, on a related point, this relation gives the party an agenda-making power through social mobilization. A social movement's agenda-making power is mainly based on protests that grab public attention and eventually push the government party or the legislative power to respond to their demands. In both case studies, the governments use social movements to direct the public attention to a particular issue. In the case of Turkey, AKP's fight against the former status quo, which peaked during the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials, was brought to the public attention by mainly Gulen Movement media. The trials had become one of the significant challenges the AKP government faced to undermine the secular status quo and needed public support and attention to survive. On the other hand, in Hungary, the government used the Peace March protests to gather support for significant issues in the country, ranging from economic issues to refugees.

Fourth, following that logic, close relations allow the party to mobilize social movements, offer a remedy against the apathy of its constituency, and increase its votes by appealing to indecisive voters and weak supporters of the party. This relation helps the government to construct meaning and form an identity. As Tarrow argues, "all movements construct meanings and meaning construction is a social movement's primary function."<sup>140</sup> In this particular form of

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<sup>140</sup> Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

party-movement relation, we observe identity creation in Hungary through the "maintenance of old or erection of new monuments of local history, the publication of local calendars and almanacs, organization of balls, sports events, excursions, family programs (etc.)" organized by the Civic Circles.<sup>141</sup> In the Turkish case, the alliance brought in a more conservative middle-class population to politics. Especially, AKP's rhetoric and the Gulen movement's support that the party is fighting for the freedom of religion against the secular status quo convinced many undecided voters to vote for AKP.

Finally, the relation between the government party and the social movement allows right-wing ideology to rally under one roof to act in coordination. Founding the Civic Circles provided an organizational network for many scattered right-wing organizations to rally under one flag and act together as Viktor Orban envisioned in its speech that led the Civic Circles to be founded. In Turkey, despite the fundamental ideological differences between the Gulen movement and AKP, the alliance between the two groups gathered the conservative religious population together under the roof of fighting against the common enemy – the secular status quo.

There are two main issues with the social movements literature when it comes to assessing social movements in authoritarian regimes. First of all, the line between parties and movements is blurred and fuzzy; therefore, considering social movements as free agents from the political sphere is far too optimistic in an authoritarian context. Secondly, the interactions between movements and parties do not happen in a unidirectional way, where movements press specific issues on parties so that they can introduce their agenda to a broader audience, but parties could also use movements as an instrument to further their goals. Thus, the reverse direction of influence, where the government uses the social movements, I argue, eventually causes further

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<sup>141</sup> Greskovits, *Building the Hungarian Right*, 258.

state hegemony and consolidation of authoritarianism as the social movements act as tools of hegemony.

The alliances formed between government parties and social movements in competitive authoritarian regimes helps the government parties to consolidate their power in the country. As a government party in a competitive authoritarian regime corrupts democratic institutions to rig the game, the party could control civil society through the party's legislative power and form alliances with social movements. In other words, forming partnerships with movements allows the ruling parties to control the liberalizing and democratic component of the movements. That is, instead of a confrontational dichotomic relationship between state and social movements as the contentious politics studies suggest, the government party can choose to interrupt the social movement's autonomous agency by forming alliances with the social movements or founding new social movements to serve the party's agenda. Such an alliance allows the party to create hegemony over the society and consolidate its authoritarianism in the country. Therefore, the findings of this thesis indicate that the social movements could, in fact, undermine democracy. Although there are studies on how social movements interact with political parties under different circumstances, the literature tends to focus on the liberal aspect of the social movements. In this thesis, I addressed the patterns competitive authoritarian regimes employ to increase their powers by controlling social movements.



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