

# TÜRKİYE'DE SİYASİ PARTİ SİSTEMLERİ: 1980 SONRASI DÖNEM

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## Öz

Çoğunlukla uygulanmakta olan seçim sisteminin etkisiyle ortaya çıkan parti sistemleri, kendi içerisinde, tek partili, iki partili ve çok partili sistemler olmak üzere üçe ayrılmaktadır. Türkiye'de cumhuriyetin kuruluşundan itibaren tek partili ve çok partili sistemlerin geçerli olduğu dönemler yaşanmıştır. Bu durum çalışmada ele alınan dönemde de geçerlidir. Çalışmada 1980 sonrası parti sistemleri üç farklı alt dönem içerisinde incelenmiştir. Bunlar: I. 1980-1991 dönemi; II. 1991-2002 dönemi ve III. 2002-2018 dönemidir. İstatistikî verilere ve önemli siyaset bilimi uzmanlarının (örneğin Sartori) belirlediği ilkelere göre, 1980-1991 dönemi ve 1991-2002 dönemi çok partili sistem olarak; 2002-2018 dönemi ise tek partili sistem olarak tespit edilmiştir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Siyasi Partiler  
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# POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEMS IN TURKEY: POST 1980 PERIOD

## Abstract

The party systems, which are mostly formed by the influence of the electoral system, are divided into three groups as single-party, two-party and multi-party systems. In Turkey, since the republic's establishment, there have been periods of single-party and multi-party system. This is also the case in the period covered in the study. In the study, post-1980 party systems were examined in three different sub-periods. These are, I. 1980-1991 period; II. 1991-2002 period and III. 2002-2018 period. According to statistical data and the principles determined by important political science experts (for example, Sartori), the period 1980-1991 and 1991-2002 were identified as a multi-party system, and the period 2002-2018 as a single-party system.

## Keywords

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## INTRODUCTION

Many political parties have been established since the first party (CHP) of the Republican era, different electoral systems have been implemented and therefore different party systems have emerged. The period from 1923 to 1946 was called the single party period, and the period between 1946 and 1960 was called the multi-party period.

With the military coup in 1960, the multi-party system was interrupted, and with the 1961 election, the system started to be transform into multi-party model. In the 1965 and 1969 elections, the AP (Justice Party) became the power alone, and after this date the system continued in a multiparty until the 1980 coup. Since democratic elections could not be held until 1983 after the 1980 coup, it is not possible to refer to a party system in this period because there is a military government instead of political parties. In this study, party systems of the period from 1983 elections to today are discussed.

Although there are social, cultural and economic reasons that affect the formation of party systems in a country, the most effective reason is the election system. If the country in question has an electoral threshold or an electoral law that allows a single party to participate in the elections, this makes all other factors less effective and increases the influence of the electoral system in establishing party systems. It should be noted here that other factors are not trivial, but the electoral system and electoral laws are more influential than other factors.

In Turkey, there is an election threshold of 10%. Therefore, some voters in Turkey vote for their second or third preference, because they think their parties cannot pass the election threshold. This situation has been demonstrated by a survey study. According to the survey, 9.5% of the voters stated that if there were no thresholds, they would vote for different parties ([tepav.org.tr/tr/yayin/s/400](http://tepav.org.tr/tr/yayin/s/400) 08.09.2020).

In this study, social and cultural factors are not addressed, both because of the high effect of the electoral system in determining party systems, and because the study was not planned broadly enough to include other reasons. In addition, the main objective of the study was to analyze the party system in the specified period by statistical data and to expose what kind of party system in Turkey.

### 1. Party Systems

Downs states that: the political party refers to the groups that take part in a duly elected order to control the management apparatus (Schlesinger, 1994: 6). According to William Chambers, modern parties are characterized by a relatively resilient or orderly relationship between leaders and party

members, performing their functions of choosing candidates, managing public affairs, and distinctive perspectives (Epstein, 2000: 10).

The party system consists of regular and repetitive interactions between many parties. Although the concept of the party system is used before, the first systematic use of the concept emerged in Duverger's work titled "Political Parties". According to Duverger, if single-party states are excluded, multiple parties coexist in a country. Their combination and methods determine the party system in that country. Duverger states that: the party system is not defined according to a single feature. It is defined on the basis of the interrelationships of many features such as their numbers, alliances, political differences, and party sizes (Wolinetz, 2006: 52).

Duverger has accepted the number of parties as a criterion in classification of party systems. According to this, party systems are divided into three groups: single party, two parties and multiple parties. In single-party systems, power is in the monopoly of a single party through political and legal processes. Single-party systems have a diverse structure within themselves. This system does not always refer to the situation in which only one party is present in the political system. If there are no equal and free competition conditions in a system, and the same party is constantly coming to power, then one-party regime is also mentioned. In some cases where more than one party are legitimate and struggle with each other under equal conditions, a single party can hold power for long periods of time. Even if the system is basically pluralist, power does not shift between existing parties because of the power of a party over voters. When this situation arises, one can talk about the dominant party system, which is a kind of single party regime (Atılgan and Aytekin, 2014: 246).

A change of power is legally possible in the dominant party system. Power can change if circumstances change or if the dominant party is weakened for some reason. In the hegemony party system, which is another single party type, opposition parties are allowed to exist, but they cannot compete with the hegemony party under equal conditions and as its real opponents. There is no competition for power. The function of the opposition parties is not to try to change the power, but to enable the public to have a better opportunity to express and to provide information to the state administrators about the public's thoughts. (Özbudun, 1964: 41-42).

In a complete single-party system, there is no competition or power race, the activities of other parties are prohibited. A party holds all legislative and executive processes in the country. All organs of the state are controlled by one party. Typical examples of this system are generally totalitarian regimes in fascism and communism experiences. In addition, there are various single party practices in authoritarian regimes that are directed towards economic development, nationalization and modernization. In Turkey, up to 1945, it was defined as the authoritarian one-party system (Atılgan and Aytekin, 2014: 246).

In the two-party system, the majority parties do not tend to cooperate. Because a party that has a majority in the legislature does not need opposition parties to set a policy. The most obvious example of two-party systems is the United States. On the other hand, the two-party system does not mean that there are only two parties in that political system. What is decisive here are the rules that apply to the

representation of parties in the legislature and to obtain the power majority. These rules, even if there are more than two parties in the system, result in the shift of power between the two parties representing the majority (Atılğan and AYTEKİN, 2014: 247).

There are more than two political parties in the multi-party system and these parties closely follow each other in political competition. In this system, all parties have the power to influence the balance of power. According to Sartori, multi-party systems are divided into two as moderate (bipolar) and extreme (multipolar). In the moderate multi-party system, parties are clustered around two main poles or centers. If this cluster is based on a permanent union of forces, especially a common behavior in parliament, the operation of the system approaches a two-party system. As seen in the two-party system, political balance and stability are achieved between the two different power groups. The concept of polar here does not imply ideological polarization. The ideological distance between the poles or centers around which political parties meet is not too great. There is no disagreement on the basis of the regime, but on the contrary there is a consensus among different ruling groups. The extreme right and left parties against the system are powerless. Examples of such systems are Scandinavian countries, Belgium and Switzerland. The main feature in the multi-party system is not the large number of parties, but the distance of political poles. In addition, the ideological distance between these poles is considerably greater. To put it another way, there is almost a complete split between parties, and consensus on the regime is also low. In this case, an unstable system emerges. Government crises are frequent because of incompatible coalitions. The most obvious example of this system is Italy. In addition, the 4th Republican era in France is another example of this system (Kapani, 2007: 201-203).

## 2. Election Systems

According to Duverger, there is a close relationship between election systems and party systems. In the proportional representation system, there are many party systems consisting of rigid, independent and stable parties. In the one-round simple majority system, there is a two-party system in which power changes hands between large and independent parties. Here, the importance given by Duverger to election systems can be understood (Özbudun, 1964: 30-31).

Election systems are divided into two as majority systems and relative representation systems. Majority systems are divided into two as single tour and two tours.

### 2.1. Majority Systems

Majority system is the first election system used in the election history and is easy to implement. In this system, the party or candidate who receives the majority of the valid votes cast in an electoral district is entitled to receive the representative or all of the representative offices in that election. This system is defined by the phrase “winner takes all” (Aydoğdu, 2015: 52).

#### 2.1.1. Single Round Majority System

It is the most suitable formula to create a two-party system among the majority systems (Erdoğan, 2013: 103). In this system, candidates with the highest number of votes in a certain election or all

candidates of the party with the highest number of votes are considered elected. This system is also called the “simple majority system” since it is sufficient for a candidate to get more votes than other candidates to be elected or for a party to get more votes than other parties in order to get all the deputies in that election. The single round majority system can be implemented in two ways: single name (single-member district) and listed (Yılmaz, 2004: 30).

The system with a single name is generally applied in Anglo-Saxon countries such as England and USA. In this system, first of all, the country is divided into electoral districts so that a representative from each of them is elected. The candidate with the highest number of votes in the first round in each election is elected without the requirement of a qualified majority. This system is also called single-member district system. The reason for this is that, in the countries where the system is applied, the electoral districts are kept narrow (small) since only one representative will be elected from each constituency. The functioning of the system is similar to horse racing. Like the winner of the race by running faster than the others, the candidate who gets the most votes in the elections wins the election. This system, which was developed to facilitate stability in management, has been criticized for ignoring the principle of fair representation. Given the positive aspects of the system, political parties and candidates must constantly improve their campaigns for voters, as only one representative will be elected from an electoral district. The system also allows for closer relations between voters and representatives after the elections (Aydođdu, 2015: 53-55).

In the listed system, the country is divided into electoral districts, each with more than one parliamentarian. The parties list as many candidates to be listed by that constituency. The voter votes for a party, the list. The election takes place in a single round, and in this round, the party with the highest number of votes in the election district wins all the seats. This system has been implemented in Turkey during the period 1946-1960. At that time, when each province was considered an electoral district, the party that received the highest votes in a province was deemed to have won all the deputies of that province. This system has been criticized for its unfair consequences (Yılmaz, 2004: 31).

### **2.1.2. Two Round Majority System**

According to this system, in order for the candidates or parties participating in the elections to win the election, they must get the absolute majority of the valid votes cast in the electoral districts. In the absence of the candidate or party that provides this majority, the “second round elections” to be held after a certain period of time determine the election results. Two candidates or parties with the highest number of votes in the first round, or candidates or parties with more than a certain number of votes in the first round, can participate in this round. Absolute majority is not sought in the second and final round; the candidate or party with the most votes wins the election. Two-turn majority systems were implemented in parliamentary elections in major European countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain in the first quarter of the 21st century. Today, it is mostly used in presidential elections in European and Latin American countries. In Turkey, the amendment to the Constitution on 31 May 2007 (Law No. 5678) has decided to implement this system in presidential elections. In this system, in order for the candidates or parties to win the election, they must get the

absolute majority of the valid votes cast in the electoral districts. This makes the system more suitable for the principle of fair representation than the single-turn majority system (Aydoğdu, 2015: 57-58).

## 2.2. Proportional Representation System

Proportional representation system started to be implemented since the mid-19th century, especially in countries with more than two political parties, in order to eliminate the drawbacks of the majority system in terms of fair representation and to provide representation to each political party in proportion to the votes they receive from voters. The system was first implemented with the Belgian Election Law in 1889. This system is the common name for a group of systems that allows political parties to be represented in parliament in proportion to their power. The purpose of this system is to prevent the wasted votes and to ensure that every party wins seats in proportion to the votes it receives. Thus, every thought can have the right to be represented in parliament. But how to achieve this relativity or proportionality is explained by various mathematical formulas. In these systems, the principle of fair representation is prominent (Yılmaz, 2004: 40).

There are different types of relative representation system in itself. In this study, d'Hondt system will be discussed. The system takes its name from the Belgian mathematician Victor d'Hondt. In this system, the wasted vote problem is eliminated. The functioning of this system, in which representative offices around a certain election are shared between party lists and independent candidates, is as follows: First, valid votes of each party and independent candidates are written one after the other. These numbers are then divided into 1, 2, and 3 etc respectively, until they reach the number of representatives to be elected from that election circle. After the completion of these transactions, the numbers obtained are ranked from small to large, and representative offices are distributed to parties (and independent candidates) according to this order. This system has been implemented in Turkey since 1961 (except for the 1965 general election and the 1966 midterm elections) (Aydoğdu, 2015: 77).

## 3. Party Systems in Turkey After 1980

Post-1980 period in Turkey can be divided into three sub-periods within itself. These are the period between 1980-1991; secondly, the period between 1991-2002; thirdly, it is the period between 2002-2018. Each sub-period is similar in itself in terms of party systems.

### 3.1. Party System in 1980-1991 Period

According to the election law issued in 1983, parties that do not exceed ten percent of valid votes could not win seat (Özbudun, 1995: 530).

The results of the first election after the 1980 coup (1983) are as in Table 1:

**Table 1. 1983 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (400)
ANAP (Motherland Party)	45.1%	211	52.75%
HP (Populist Party)	30.5%	117	29.25%
MDP (Nationalist Democracy Party)	23.3%	71	17.75%

(www.ysk.gov.tr 02.05.2019)

Thus, in a parliament with a total number of 400 members, ANAP won the majority, by winning 211 seats. The effects of the 10% threshold can be seen in these election results. Although ANAP received 45% of the votes, it obtained 52.75% of the deputies. While the election threshold positively affected ANAP, it negatively affected other political parties.

The voting rates and MP numbers of the 1987 election are as in Table 2:

**Table 2. 1987 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (400)
ANAP (Motherland Party)	36.3%	292	73%
SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party)	24.8%	99	24.75%
DYP (Right Path Party)	19.1%	59	14.75%

(www.ysk.gov.tr 02.05.2019)

There is a significant difference between the number of votes received by ANAP and the number of MPs it obtained. While the voting rate it received was 36.3%, the rate of its deputies in the parliament is 73%. This reveals that ANAP obtained twice as many seats as the votes it won. The main reason for this situation is the election system stipulated in the election law. ANAP, which was the party with the highest number of votes, had been profitable from this situation since many parties could not exceed the 10% threshold. When the 1987 elections are examined, it is seen that many parties could not pass the election threshold and could not have any seats in the parliament. In this election, the voting rates of IDP (Reformist Democracy Party), MCP (Nationalist Labor Party) and RP (Welfare Party) are as follows: 0.8%, 2.9% and 7.2%. Therefore, the votes of the parties that did not pass the election threshold were distributed to the parties that passed the threshold, and the biggest share in this distribution was obtained by ANAP, which was the first in the elections.

In the 1991 elections, the votes and MPs numbers of the parties are as in Table 3:

**Table 3. 1991 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (450)
DYP (Right Path Party)	27%	178	39.5%
ANAP (Motherland Party)	24%	115	25.5%
SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party)	20.8%	88	19.5%
RP (Welfare Party)	16.9%	62	13.7%
DSP (Democratic Left Party)	10.8%	7	1.5%

([www.ysk.gov.tr](http://www.ysk.gov.tr) 02.05.2019)

In the 450-seat parliament, no party has been able to achieve the majority of votes alone. It can be said that the party most negatively affected by the election system is DSP. Because while the DSP's voting rate was 10.8%, the number of seats it won was limited to 1.5%. This situation caused injustice in representation.

In this period, ANAP won two elections in a row and came to power alone. Therefore, it can be said that the system went towards the dominant party system in this period. However, according to Sartori (2005: 175), in order to say that a system is the dominant party, a party must win at least three elections in succession. Therefore, even if there is a move towards the dominant party system, it would not be correct to call the party system of this period a complete dominant party system since the third election could not be won.

### 3.2. Party System in 1991-2002 Period

The voting rates and MP numbers of the 1995 and 1999 elections are as in Table 4:

**Table 4. 1995 and 1999 Election**

Political Party (1995)	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (550)
RP (Welfare Party)	21.4%	158	28.72%
ANAP (Motherland Party)	19.6%	132	24%
DYP (Right Path Party)	19.2%	135	24.54%
DSP (Democratic Left Party)	14.6%	76	13.81%
CHP (Republican People's Party)	10.7%	49	8.9%
Political Party (1999)	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (550)
DSP (Democratic Left Party)	22.2%	136	24.72%
MHP (Nationalist Movement Party)	18%	129	23.25%
FP (Virtue Party)	15.4%	111	20.18%
ANAP (Motherland Party)	13.2%	86	15.63%
DYP (Right Path Party)	12%	85	15.45%

(www.ysk.gov.tr 02.05.2019)

In the 1995 and 1999 elections, the situation in the 1991 election continued, and no party was able to achieve the majority alone. This reveals that the party system of the period from 1991 to 2002 is a multi-party system. Because there are more than two political parties in the multi-party system and these parties follow each other more closely in political competition. Indeed, no party has achieved a majority in this period alone, and the voting rates were close to each other.

The voting rates and MP numbers of the 2002 election are as in Table 5:

**Table 5. 2002 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (450)
AK Party (Justice and Development Party)	34.3%	363	66%
CHP (Republican People's Party)	19.4%	178	32.36%
Independents	1%	9	1.63%

(www.ysk.gov.tr 02.05.2019)

For the first time after 1987 elections, a party gained the majority alone. In the 2002 elections, just like the 1987 elections, there was a significant difference between the votes of the first party and its MP numbers, due to the election law and the system. While the vote received by AK Party was 34.3%, the rate of MPs it won was 66%. With the 2002 election, the door of the dominant party system was thus reopened.

### 3.3. Party System in 2002-2018 Period

In the 2007 election held after 2002, AK Party seized the majority for the second time in a row, with 46.6% of the votes and 341 MPs. The votes of the other parties and the number of MPs are as follows:

**Table 6. 2007 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers
CHP (Republican People's Party)	20.9%	112
MHP (Nationalist Movement Party)	14.3%	71
Independents	5.2%	26

([www.ysk.gov.tr](http://www.ysk.gov.tr) 02.05.2019)

However, another election was needed to talk about the dominant party system. In the 2011 elections, AK Party took 327 MPs with 49.83% of votes and reached the parliamentary majority three times in a row. Therefore, in Turkey, the party system said to be dominant party system since 2011. Because the condition of "reaching the majority alone at least three times in a row" has been fulfilled.

The dominant party system was interrupted by the June 7, 2015 election held after 2011. During this period, a party had to win at least 276 MPs to reach the majority. However, no party has achieved this majority alone in the June 2015 elections. The results of the June 2015 elections are as follows:

**Table 7. June 2015 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (450)
AK Party (Justice and Development Party)	40.87%	258	46.9%
CHP (Republican People's Party)	24.95%	132	24%
MHP (Nationalist Movement Party)	16.29%	80	14.54%
HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)	13.12%	80	14.54%

([www.ysk.gov.tr](http://www.ysk.gov.tr) 02.05.2019)

When the efforts to establish a government in this election failed, a new election was held in November of the same year. With this election, the dominant party system, which was interrupted in June, continued from where it left off a few months later. The results of the November 2015 elections are as follows:

**Table 8. November 2015 Election**

Political Party	Voting Rate	MP Numbers	Seats/Total Members (450)
AK Party (Justice and Development Party)	49.5%	317	57.63%
CHP (Republican People's Party)	25.32%	134	24.36%
MHP (Nationalist Movement Party)	11.9%	40	7.27%
HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)	10.76%	59	10.72%

([www.ysk.gov.tr](http://www.ysk.gov.tr) 02.05.2019)

Thus, if the interim period between June and November is not counted, AK Party won the elections for the fourth time and continued the dominant party system.

In a referendum held in 2017, in Turkey, "presidential government system" was adopted. Accordingly, unlike the parliamentary system, the executive has now turned into a single headed structure and the head of the executive has been the president. Another difference from the parliamentary system occurred in terms of the relationship between the president and political parties. With the presidential government system, the president no longer needs to sever his ties with his party and the concept of a party-member president has emerged.

In 2018, one year after the referendum, Law 7102 was adopted. This law made some changes to the election law. The most important change for our topic is electoral alliances. According to Article 15 of Law No. 7102, it has been accepted that political parties can participate to elections in alliance. Alliances after this new law participated in elections under the name of "alliance of the people" and "nation alliance". The parties included in the alliance of the people have been AK Party and MHP. Nation alliance is composed of CHP, İYİ Party, SP (Felicity Party) and DP (Democrat Party).

According to the parliamentary elections held in 2018 with the presidential elections, AK party gained 295 MPs with 42.56% of the votes. However, in the 600-member parliament, 6 MPs are needed to take the majority alone. For this reason, it can be stated that the dominant party system was interrupted again after June 2015, albeit with a slight difference. In practice, however, the situation is different from official results. Because AK Party entered these elections together with the MHP under the name of the "alliance of the people". When the number of MPs of the Alliance is evaluated together, the total number of seats of AK Party and MHP is 344. Therefore, if the alliance is considered as a single party, it can be said that the dominant party system still continues, albeit at the alliance level.

## CONCLUSION

After the 1980 coup, Turkish politics remained far from an environment where democratic elections and political parties competed until 1983. With the 1983 election, a system with political parties was restored. In this election and in the election held in 1987, ANAP seized the majority alone twice in a row. In this respect, it can be said that the course of the system is towards the dominant party system. However, ANAP lost its majority in the 1991 elections. The party system of this period remained in the trial phase on the way to the dominant party system and the system started a new course towards the multi-party system. In the period from 1991 to 2002, no party was able to achieve a majority alone and this period was spent with coalitions. Therefore, the party system of the period became a multi-party system.

In the election held in 2002, AK Party reached the number of seats that would provide the majority and the door of the dominant party system, which remained in the trial phase, was reopened. However, this time the process has progressed more successfully than the ANAP period and AK Party won the 2007 and 2011 elections after 2002. Thus, AK Party seized the majority three times in a row. As a result, the party system of Turkey has become dominant party system.

## Research and Publication Ethics Statement

I confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

## Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

This article was prepared by a single author.

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