Recurrent authoritarian revivals: Evidence from Ottoman and Republican Turkey

Abstract

This study considers why societies oscillate between democratic and authoritarian regimes despite constitutional systems in place. Regime scholars focus on democratic breakdown and authoritarian durability. I shift focus from static regime outcomes to dynamic patterns. I theorize periodic regime changes as a dynamic equilibrium and test it with a diachronic comparative analysis of Ottoman and Republican Turkey. Building on game theory, I show that societies are likely to swing between authoritarian and democratic regimes so long as governments perceive opposition as a threat. Opposition groups repressed by the government assume the power to liberalize the regime; but when in government, they face dissent, feel threatened, and strengthen the executive. Strong executives make authoritarian revivals more likely. This cycle may reiterate under new elites if the experience of repression and distrust perpetuates the fear of survival. This article contributes to the institutions and regime literatures by theorizing oscillation as a form of equilibrium.

Why do some societies oscillate between authoritarian and democratic regimes despite constitutional systems in place? [1] Democratic theory advocates for checks and

[1] Earlier versions of this paper were presented in 2017 at the Northwestern University Law & Politics Conference https://keyman.buffett.northwestern.edu/events/annual-conference/past-conferences/2017.html and in 2019 at the Complex Systems and data science workshop and the seminar at Ataturk Institute at Bogazici University https://uzay00.github.io/kahve/calistay/2019a/index.html and at Bilkent University (https://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/ir-seminar-history-repeats-itself-basak-taraktas-bogazici-university-a-130-1230pm-december27-en/. I would like to thank my discussant Onur Bakiner, Rachel

balances and the rule of law to prevent the tyranny of majority (Madison 1788). However, constitutional arrangements do not necessarily prevent power abuse (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). From Chavez in Venezuela to Fidesz in Hungary, many are examples of popularly elected leaders turning authoritarian despite constitutional arrangements.

This article considers recurrent authoritarian revivals. This is a timely question, since democratic institutions have come under pressure in Europe and North America and authoritarianisms have toughened in Eurasia (Freedom House 2019). It is also a long-existing puzzle. 19th century France transitioned to the First Republic, the First Empire, the Bourbon Monarchy, the Second Republic, the Second Empire, the Third Republic. Under each of these regimes, anti-status quo elites overthrew authoritarian governments chanting liberalisation, began implementing reforms once in power, faced dissent, repressed opposition, lost legitimacy, and were eventually overthrown by some other revisionist groups. Why did different French regimes end similarly? Compared to democratic survival or authoritarian durability, recurrent authoritarian revivals have sparked little interest. Building on the authoritarianism literature, I address this undertheorized issue.

I study recurrent authoritarian revivals with respect to government-opposition interactions. Existing explanations of authoritarianism focus on (formal/informal) institutions (Bermeo 2016; Geddes 1999; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009), economic factors (Adserà and Boix 2007; Boix and Stokes 2003;

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Przeworski et al. 2000; Svolik 2008), society's welfare dependence on the state (Bellin 2000; 2002; Bermeo and Yashar 2016; Collier 1999), and state capacity (Geddes 1994; Hanson 2018; Levitsky and Way 2012). These factors shape regime outcomes by changing the balance of power between governments and opposition groups. From a game theoretical perspective, governments and opposition groups observe each other's moves and decide on whether to cooperate. Cooperation refers to interactions that benefit to both parties. Non-cooperative interactions make at least one party worse off. Concomitantly, government-opposition interactions may yield a cooperative, polarized, non-polarized but uncooperative environment, or a combination of these. Scholars have long theorized effects of government-opposition interactions on regime stability (Lipset 1959; Dahl 1971). However, recently, this variable has fallen out of scope. This article contributes to the literature by delving into this variable.

I argue that oscillation is likely in situations, where a previously repressed libertarian[2] group[3], say, *A,* comes to power to change the status quo and perceives dissent as a threat. The argument has two steps: Concerning authoritarian turn in one regime cycle, libertarian elites (*A*) assume power, implement reforms, and dissent arises. Under uncertainty and distrust, *A* choose between accommodating dissenters' concerns and carrying on with reforms. If they accommodate, government-society cooperation eases reform implementation, but *A* cannot build the kind of regime that they want. Alternatively, since they control state infrastructures, A can simply impose

[2] Libertarian refers to those who demand rights, liberties, and liberalization within the status quo, and not the adherents of the ideology of minimal state intervention (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/libertarian).
[3] Libertarian elites refer to all dissenters in society demanding rights, liberties, and liberalization within the status quo, e.g., opposition parties, extra-parliamentary groups, or military officers.

reforms. If they carry on with reforms and dissent escalates, *A* choose between the strategies "back down" and "repress." If *A* play "repress" and opposition groups do not back down, polarization ensues. Under polarization and uncertainty, *A* perceive dissent as a threat to their regime, while dissenters become militarized. As tension escalates, the government increasingly uses repression to maintain order and alleviates checks on the executive via constitutional changes to overcome societal dissent. Eventually, this authoritarian regime is brought down by some group demanding liberalization, say, *B*. The second part of the argument concerns how transition from a libertarian to authoritarian regime reiterates under new governing elites. Upon assuming power, *B* begin implementing reforms. Remember that *B* were repressed while in opposition and (just like A) pursue a reformist agenda in an environment of distrust and uncertainty. Experience with repression adding to distrust and uncertainty, *B* perceives cooperation with dissenters to be too risky. Instead of compromising, *B* become defensive of reforms. If dissent escalates and neither the government nor the opposition backs down, threat perception intensifies, *B* turn repressive and change the constitution to strengthen the executive to ensure survival. In other words, governments and opposition groups play a version of iterated prisoners' dilemma (PD) game. Those who were repressed while in opposition tend to repress opposition groups to their government when they get in power. Cooperation does not arise in such environments, because, uncertainty, distrust, and experience with repression make governing elites more likely to perceive dissent as a threat and play non-cooperative strategies to defend their reforms and regime.

What is oscillation?

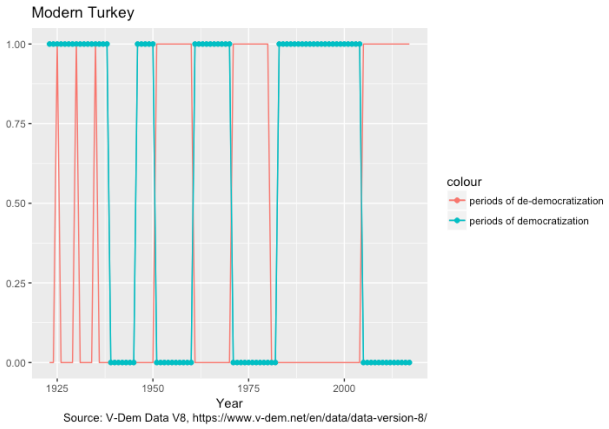
This section shows what oscillation looks like using the Ottoman and Turkish cases. Oscillation refers to the back-and-forth movement along the democracy-authoritarianism axis. Democratization brings regimes closer towards the democracy end and authoritarian measures bring them closer to authoritarianism. Note that this is a continuum, a regime approaching the democracy end becomes *more democratic* (not necessarily fully democratic) and moves away from the authoritarianism end. Conversely, a regime that becomes less democratic comes closer towards the authoritarianism end (not necessarily fully authoritarian). Within this framework, oscillating regimes democratize, de-democratize, democratize, and so forth. What does oscillation look like in modern Turkey?

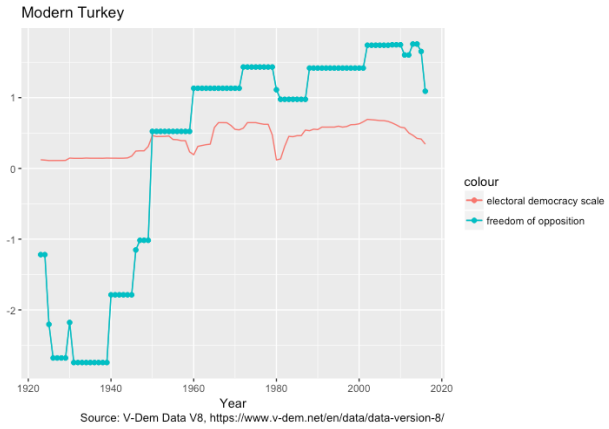
Using the V-Dem dataset, I examined the evolution of Turkish regimes on the electoral democracy and freedom of opposition scales—electoral democracy is defined as a regime where decision makers are held accountable through elections.[4] According to Figure 1, Turkey never becomes fully democratic. Fluctuations in the electoral democracy and freedom of opposition scales seem to go hand in hand after transition to multiparty system (1946). They incline during (1946–1950), (1961–1970), (1972–1978), and (1982–2004). Between (1951–1961), electoral democracy deteriorates, whereas between (1970–1971) and (1979–1980), and post-2004, the

[4] Further characteristics of electoral democracy include extensive suffrage, freely operating political and civil society organizations, and systematically held free fair elections that can change in the composition of the chief executive of the country (Alkan 2015).

freedom of opposition and electoral democracy scales decline together. Along the democratization–authoritarianism axis, democratization happens during (1946–1955), (1961–1968), (1971–1974), and (1983–2004), while democratic reversals happen during (1958–1961), (1968–1971), (1978–1982), and (2004—today). Considering the timing of constitutional changes (1946, 1961, 1982, 1987, 2007, 2010, and 2017), a pattern stands out: authoritarianism & liberalization demands (1923–1945) → constitutional developments under authoritarianism (1946) → liberalization (1946–1954) → authoritarian revival & liberalization demands (1955–1960) → Coup (1960) → constitutional developments under authoritarianism (1960-1961) → liberalization (1961–1968) → authoritarian revival & liberalization demands (1971–1974) → Coup (1980) → constitutional developments under authoritarianism (1982) → liberalization (1983–2004) → authoritarian revival & liberalization demands (2004–2016) → constitutional developments under authoritarianism (2016).

Figure 1



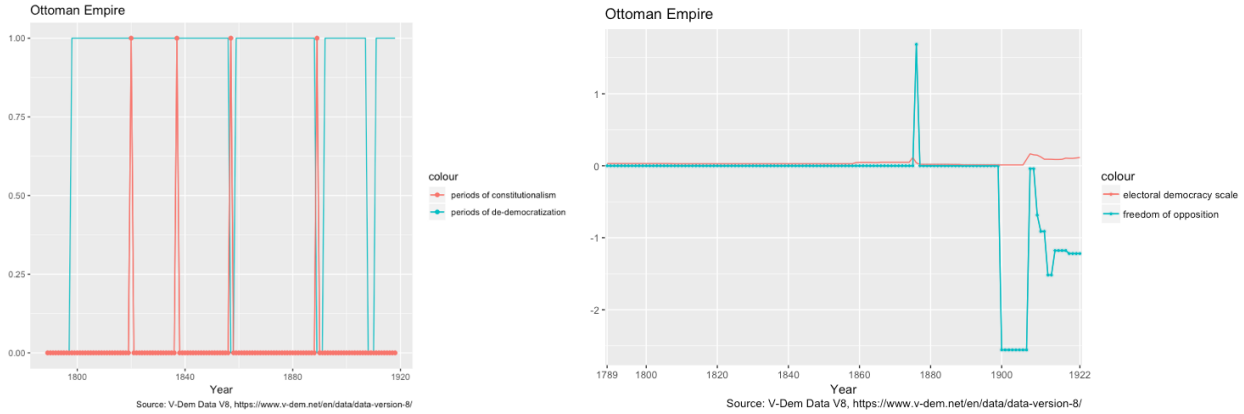


Scholars explain democratic breakdowns in modern Turkey by civil-military interactions, the structure of the party system, or legacies of Kemalist reforms (1923–1938) on secularization, liberties, and minority rights (Carkoglu, 2011; Cizre, 2004; Çınar, 2011; Güler & Bölücek, 2016; Sayari, 2016; Toprak, 2005b). I do not dispute these arguments and do not seek to explain causes of democratic breakdown in Turkey. I study reiterating patterns across regime transitions. Where do these patterns originate?

Looking at the evolution of Ottoman regimes on electoral democracy and freedom of opposition scales (Figure 2), we notice the similar pattern of constitutional developments followed by authoritarian revivals. Note that democratization in a 19th century empire means transition from absolutism to limited government—where parliament and constitution tie the hands of the sovereign. Authoritarian revival means entrenchment of absolutism. The Ottoman Empire was an absolute monarchy governed by customary law and the Sharia. The Sharia bound the sovereign, and the clergy checked the conformity of laws (İnalcık, 2000). In practice, monarchs ruled in consultation with religious, military, and bureaucratic elites; absolutisms were rare

(Findley, 1980). Constitutionalism began via top-down reforms in the early 1800s. The Sultan unilaterally limited his power and guaranteed lives and liberties of the people with the decrees of (1808), (1839), and (1856). Societal demands for constitutionalism emerged in the 1860s. The first Ottoman Constitution was promulgated in 1876 and prorogued in 1878. Authoritarianism triggered new societal demands for constitutionalism in the 1890s. In 1908, revolutionaries restored constitutionalism. In the 1910s, the elected civilian government turned authoritarian and the Empire stayed authoritarian until its collapse.

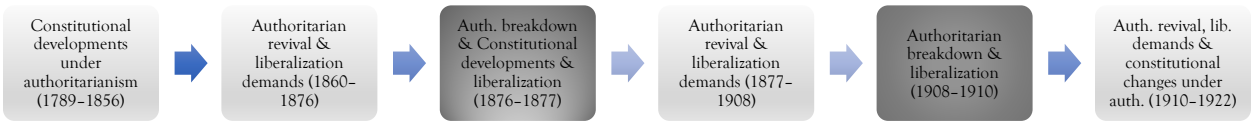
Figure 2



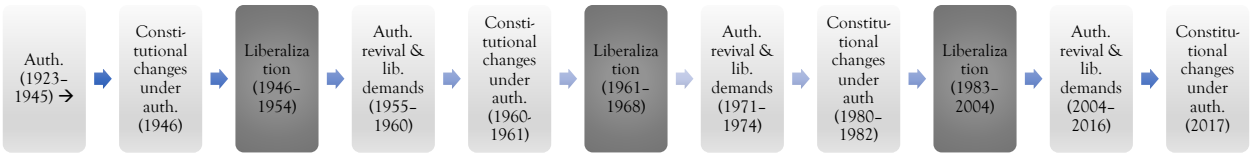
According to Figure 2, improvements on the electoral democracy and freedom of opposition scales happen around the same time except between (1900–1908). Between (1909–1922), the freedom of opposition declines faster than electoral democracy. As in Republican Turkey, periods of de-democratization succeed periods of democratization between 1856 and 1908. The three unilateral constitutional developments from 1789 to 1856 are represented as peaks. The freedom of opposition does not improve, since the Empire remains an absolute monarchy. Constitutionalism

and authoritarianism evolve in Ottoman Turkey as follows: constitutional developments under authoritarianism (1789–1856) → liberalization demands (1860s) → authoritarian breakdown & constitutional developments (1876)→ authoritarian revival (1877–1908) → liberalization demands (1880–1908) → authoritarian breakdown & constitutional developments (1908)→ authoritarian revival (1910–1922). I summarize democratic developments in Ottoman and Modern Turkey in Figure 3:

Figure 3



Ottoman *Empire*



Modern Turkey

In both cases, (a) constitutional developments mostly happen under authoritarianism, (b) regimes oscillate between authoritarianism and democracy, and (c) authoritarianism revives despite constitutional rules. What explains the oscillatory trajectories of Ottoman and Republican regimes?

Democratization & Constitutionalism

Before theorizing oscillation, we should establish the relationship between democracy and constitutionalism. The two concepts are related but different. Constitutions check

arbitrariness by institutionalizing accountability and disincentivizing power abuse, but do not necessarily prevent the tyranny of majority (Waldron, 2013).

In most democratization theories, constitutional developments propel democratization by checking executive arbitrariness (North & Weingast, 1989; Stasavage, 2002; Weingast, 1997). For example, in 17th century England, the elimination of confiscatory government secured property rights and boosted democratization (North & Weingast, 1989). In continental Europe, "taxation for representation" bargains between monarchs and parliaments spawned representative systems; monarchs agreed to sharing power due to financial constraints (Tilly, 1993). Although authoritarianisms revived in Western societies—e.g., the Interwar period—democracy has consolidated since World War II. Yet, democratization is ongoing in many non-Western societies. What explains this variation is an unsettled debate in the literature. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into this debate. But it is necessary to note that, when it comes to the constitutionalism–democratization relationship, Western societal actors were not alone in trying to tie monarchs' hands. If the Belgian Constitution was proclaimed in 1831, the Japanese Constitution was established in 1868; the Russians and Persians carried out constitutional revolutions in, respectively, 1905 and 1906 (Sohrabi, 1995). Yet, constitutionalism did not prevent authoritarian comebacks in Japan, Russia, and Persia as in Belgium. Again, theorizing this variation is beyond the purpose of this article, as I am not explaining the rise/fall of a certain authoritarian/democratic regime. I compare theories of non-Western democratizations to those on Western democratizations to establish similarities as to how government-opposition interactions are conceptualized.

Consider the following arguments: In resource-rich societies, alternative sources to tax revenue allowed monarchs to skirt power sharing arrangements (Anderson, 1987; Clark, 1997; Crystal, 1995; Karl, 1997). In resource-poor societies, authoritarianisms emerged because authoritarian policy making found greater support in the context of economic inequality, economic backwardness, or vested interests (e.g., strong landed interests, large peasantry) (Gerschenkron, 1962; Moore, 1967; Tilly, 1993). In certain 20th century negotiations, authoritarian regimes triumphed due to inequality (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Boix, 2003; Boix & Stokes, 2003), or because societal actors prioritized economic development and welfare over freedoms and participation (Linz, 2000; Rueschemeyer, Huber, & Stephens, 1992). Thus, from Western monarchs acquiescing to limited government to democratic opposition groups bargaining with supporters of authoritarianism, actor-centric approaches explain regime outcomes by the power balance between pro-authoritarian and pro-liberalization groups (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Casper & Taylor, 1996; Colomer, 1995; Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen, & O'Halloran, 2006; McFaul, 2002; Przeworski, 2005; Zak & Feng, 2003). Following this scholarship, I classify government-opposition actors with respect to the authoritarianism-liberalization axis in examining their confrontations.

Explaining oscillation

Regime transition happening at a certain time *t* is a discrete phenomenon. In contrast, oscillating systems systematically revisit certain regime types, e.g., France oscillated

between monarchy, republic, and empire from 1789 to 1945. The unit of analysis is regime cycle defined as the period from the rise to the decline of some ruling elite. To establish cycles, I examine the sequencing of regime transitions. Regimes are evaluated along a democracy-authoritarianism continuum; democratization represents "net movement toward broader, more equal, more protected, and more binding consultation" (Tilly, 2007, p. 14). I establish the mechanism underlying oscillation by case studies of government-opposition interactions.

The independent variable is government-opposition interactions. I conduct historical analyses to identify patterns of these interactions. Government-opposition relations can be cooperative (both gain equally or asymmetrically), zero-sum, or stalemate. In theorizing government-opposition interactions, I refer to the prisoner's dilemma (PD). Game theory has been used to explain regimes before (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001; Colomer, 2000; Crescenzi, 1999; Marks, 1992; Przeworski, 1991). In this work, I use PD to explain cooperation failure among rational actors. In PD, two prisoners, who have been convicted of a crime, are held in different cells and asked to confess their crime. If they both confess, they each get five years in prison. If they remain silent, they each get a year. If one confesses when the other does not, the confessor goes free and the other is sentenced to ten years (Moreira & Wichert, 2016).

In PD, "defect" is the dominant strategy, since each prisoner is better off if he cheats when the other confesses (Axelrod & Dawkins, 2006; Dixit & Nalebuff, 1993). When played once, PD does not foster cooperation. Cooperation arises if the game is played multiple times (Axelrod & Dawkins, 2006). Knowing that the opponent will be encountered in the future diminishes incentives to cheat. Researchers identify tit-

for-tat (TFT)—punish if the opponent cheated in the last round and cooperate otherwise— as the most successful strategy in repeated PD (Queiroz & Sichman, 2016; Rapoport, Seale, & Colman, 2015). For other successful strategies like Pavlov, see (Axelrod & Dawkins, 2006; Cardinot, Griffith, O'Riordan, & Perc, 2018; Nowak & Sigmund, 1993; Rapoport et al., 2015). Below, I show that TFT may not generate cooperation in the uncertainty of post–regime transitions, because (a) ruling elites can simply impose reforms via state infrastructure, and (b) having been repressed while in opposition makes ruling elites distrustful of opponents and defensive of their reforms. What differentiates these situations from standard iterated PD is the power asymmetry. The government exclusively controls the state's coercive and noncoercive apparatus, which enables government elites to play "repress" to intimidate or incapacitate the opposition over the next rounds.

Government-opposition interactions under uncertainty

Situations, where some previously oppressed opposition group overthrows an authoritarian government and assumes power, evoke iterated PD games. Uncertainty and distrust reign. Consider these interactions: Upon assuming power, new elites contemplate (a) reforming the old regime, and (b) whether to punish or forgive old elites. Forgiveness fosters cooperation but is risky, while punishment deters from cheating. Note that new elites were repressed (cheated on) under the previous regime. TFT demands that they punish old elites. Regarding reforms, if dissent arises, elites choose between "accommodate" and "carry on with reforms." Accommodate generates cooperation but diminishes payoffs from reforms. Carrying on with reforms

implies discarding critiques, which fuels discontent and undercuts government support. If the government does not cooperate and dissent escalates, governing elites choose between "repress" and "accommodate." If accommodation, dissenters win, softer reforms are implemented, and the government cannot fulfil its reform agenda; but the regime does not turn authoritarian. If repression and dissenters back down, the government carries out reforms but loses support and legitimacy; authoritarianism revives. If neither the government nor dissenters back down, both lose resources and credit; political instability arises (see the summary of the game in Figures 4& 5).

Figure 4

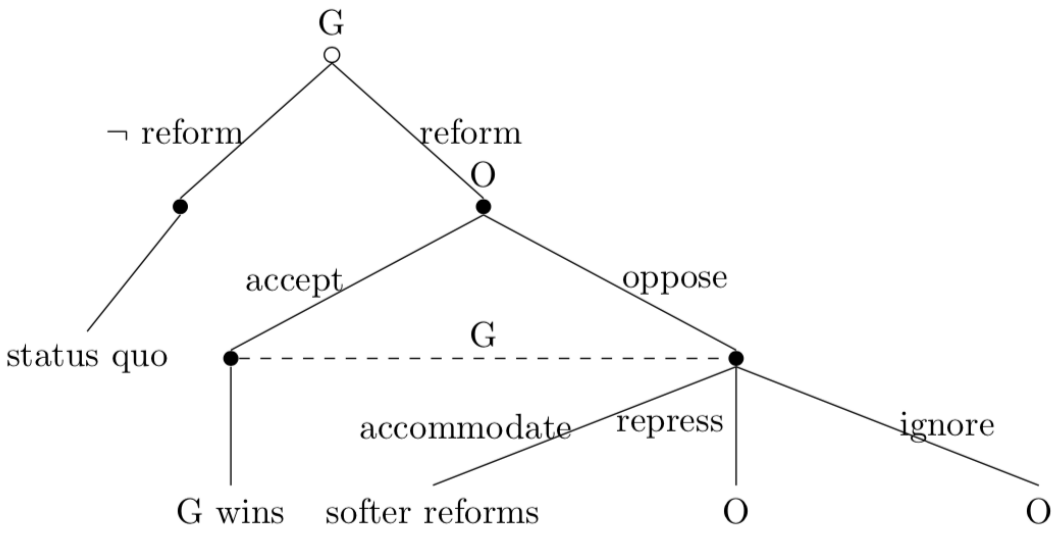


Figure: Reform & the rise of dissent

Figure 5

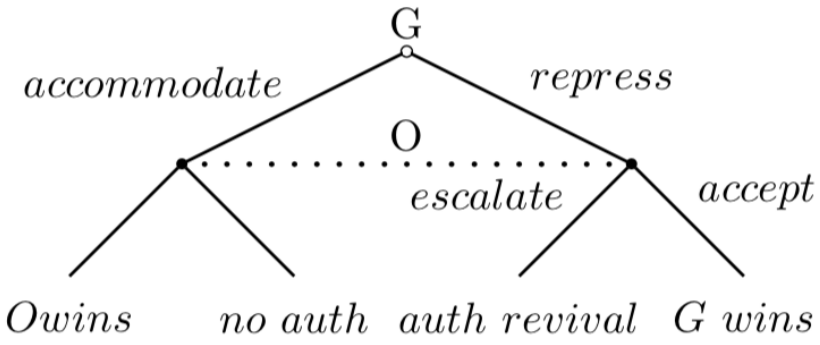


Figure: Polarization & zero-sum interactions

Notice that the cooperate/forgive and defect/punish strategies correspond to, respectively, "compromise" and "repress." In compromise, elites accommodate their opponent's concerns and settle on a satisficing outcome (a good enough but not maximum outcome) (Simon, 1955). Following existing game theoretical work on regimes, I conceptualize punishment as repression (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001; Colomer, 1995; Przeworski, 2005). Repression can be violent (e.g., exile, capital punishment) or non-violent (e.g., changing the constitution, restraining media coverage of the opposition, or legal persecution).

These interactions deviate from the standard iterated PD. In standard PD, cooperation arises if the first player cooperates in the first round and mimics the other's moves in subsequent rounds. This outcome depends on two assumptions: there is no power asymmetry and neither player can prevent the other from playing at the next rounds. These assumptions do not hold in politics. Controlling the state apparatus, the government can—if necessary— intimidate dissenters or hinder their activities to

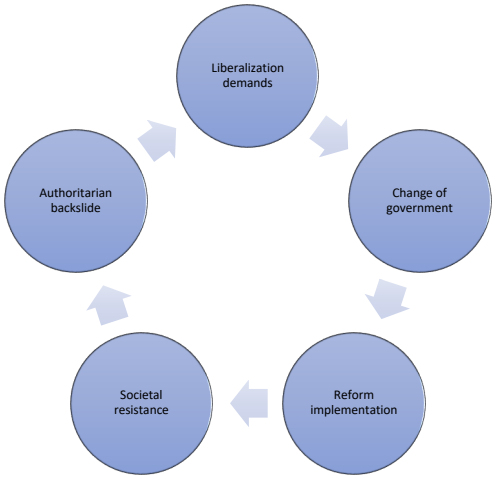
the point of incapacitating them over the next rounds. Thus, the government need not cooperate in the first round, especially if it militantly wants to change the status quo. If the opposition follows TFT, it will respond by cheating; the government will respond by punish, and so on. Cooperation will not arise.

This game incentivizes players to pursue private interests. From best to worse, the government's payoffs are "implement reforms & stay in power," "accommodate concerns & only partially implement reforms," and "impose reforms, repress dissenters & lose legitimacy." For dissenters, payoffs are "oppose & stop reform implementation," "oppose & get softer reforms," and "not back down, escalate the conflict, and lose resources and credibility while the government implements reforms." Therefore, under distrust and uncertainty, actors are better off not cooperating when the other cooperates than if they both cooperate. Also, mutual defection makes everyone worse off; the government loses legitimacy if it represses and opposition groups lose credibility and resources.

While all outcomes are probable, I argue that the government and the opposition are more likely to play non-cooperative strategies because of uncertainty, distrust, and experience with repression. In the first cycle, governing elites have little incentive to cooperate, because they want to change the old regime and enjoy exclusive access to state infrastructures to make this possible without having to compromise with dissenters. In response, dissenters pursue contention and escalate the conflict. Following TFT, the government retaliates by repression. However, evidence suggests that repression radicalizes the opposition and generates polarization (Dahl, 1971; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Peterson & Wahlström, 2014). Fearing

for survival, the government is likely to change the constitution to strengthen the executive. Thus, government-opposition interactions turn zero-sum. In the second cycle, some libertarian group assumes power by overthrowing existing elites, and implements reforms. Cooperation is still unlikely, because past repression makes new elites wonder whether dissenters oppose the content of reforms (in which case the discord may be settled via negotiations) or their regime (in which case a settlement is unlikely). Cooperation seems too risky so long as the government perceives dissent as a threat. To overcome dissent, the government alleviates checks on the executive via constitutional changes and government-opposition interactions become zero-sum, which induces more zero-sum interactions. Figure 6 recaps iterating cycles.

Figure 6



The alternative explanation is ideology. Ideologies are *systems* of beliefs, values, and ethical and moral principles, which provide an interpretation of the

environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be (Beck, 2009; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Following other game theoretic regime studies, I classify ideologies along the authoritarian-libertarian axis (North et al., 2009; Przeworski, 2005). Ideology could also have been defined along the left-right axis. Yet, "the left-right division is not a meaningful characterization of Turkish politics" (Öniş, 2009). I sort actors by their positions on inclusion and consultation. Actors are democratic to the extent that they endorse inclusion and checks and balances, and authoritarian to the extent that they favor a strong and/or unchecked executive.

Some studies find that ideology affects political behavior (Adams, Merrill III, & Grofman, 2005; Gerber & Huber, 2010; Stokes, 1963). If correct, libertarian ideology should check authoritarian tendencies—given severe reputation costs for doing otherwise, and governments following authoritarian ideologies should be more likely to repress. I test this idea with the null hypothesis that "libertarian ideologies make governments less likely to turn authoritarian." However, others report that ideology does not perfectly predict behavior for reasons, such as, strategic concerns (Engstrom, 2012; Indridason, 2011; Penn, 2009). My argument parallels the latter; but below I adjudicate both hypotheses.

Methodology

I test the oscillation theory using historical analyses and discourse analysis. Historical analysis establishes whether Ottoman and Turkish regimes feature the sequencing "democratization, reform, dissent, authoritarian revival, liberalization demands." Note

that this paper seeks to explain impacts of government-opposition *interactions* on regimes for over (approximately) 200 years.[5] Therefore, I summarize historical developments with broad-brushes. Second, to establish actors' ideologies, I conduct discourse analysis on official documents and derive actors' positions based on their own definitions of their ideology.[6] I use this data to test the hypothesis that "libertarian ideologies make governments less likely to turn authoritarian."

DATA

I use the V-Dem dataset to study the evolution of Ottoman and Turkish regimes from 1789 to 2017. The V-Dem data is best appropriate for the purposes of this study for it provides measures of dimensions of democracy from 1789 to today (Engstrom, 2012; Indridason, 2011; Penn, 2009). I chose the electoral democracy scale, because modern Turkey has never been fully democratic (Freedom House, 2018), and evaluating the Ottoman Empire on a liberal democracy scale would be anachronistic.[7] Other sources include official documents (party programs, election manifestos, and legal documents), newspaper articles, and secondary sources. Official documents are available at the repository of the Turkish Parliament's official website.

[5] Those who are interested in more in-depth analyses should consult the sources indicated in footnotes or references.
[6] Groups' positions could also have been derived from observed behavior based on the assumption that actors act in line with their ideas and principled beliefs. Yet, social psychologists show that behavior often deviates from principled beliefs because of cognitive biases, short-term biases, and the lack of information (Camerer, Loewenstein, & Rabin, 2011; Schüll & Zaloom, 2011).
[7] I ran the analysis also using the liberal democracy scale, results remain the same.

Government-opposition interactions & episodic regime transitions

This section presents the results of historical analyses and discourse analysis. Historical analyses examined patterns of ruling elite–opposition interactions and the sequencing of regimes. Specifically, I looked at when governments used the strategy "repress" and changed the constitution, and opposition groups "escalated" the conflict. If the theory is right, governments should, respectively, (a) make libertarian demands before coming to power, (b) reform the existing regime once in power, (c) feel threatened when dissent arises, and (d) turn repressive and change the constitution to overcome dissent. In response, I expect opposition groups to challenge authoritarianism and demand liberalization. The discussion proceeds chronologically from Ottoman to modern Turkey.

Cycle 1: Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire

Constitutional reforms began in the early 1800s with the edicts with which sultans unilaterally restrained their power (Shaw & Shaw, 1977). The Young Ottomans were the first societal group to demand constitutionalism. Therefore, I start the analysis of opposition-government interactions from 1860, when these constitutionalists emerged. In this cycle, the constitutionalists challenged the sultan's government with liberalization demands and the government repressed.

Liberalization demands: In the 1860s, the Young Ottomans proposed constitutional reforms to Sultan Abdülaziz, who turned these proposals down and exiled the constitutionalists. In Europe, some Young Ottomans pursued

constitutionalist propaganda but the movement had died by the 1870s (Mardin, 2000). In 1876, Abdülaziz was deposed, after the brief reign of Murad V, political elites offered the crown to Abdülhamid II.[8] Abdülhamid II's enthronement was conditioned on transition to constitutionalism, which he fulfilled in 1876.

Constitutional reforms: Elite push for constitutionalism was decisive in Abdülhamid II's enthronement. Yet, the constitutionalists did not assume power after the transition. Some, such as Mithad Pasha, worked in the committee that drafted the constitution (Mardin, 2000). Being in a position to steer constitutional developments, one would expect the constitutionalists to press for a veritable parliamentarian regime. They did not. The Constitution relied on the Sharia; the Sultan could dismiss the Parliament, while the Parliament had substantive power only on budgetary matters and lacked the power to dismiss the cabinet (*Kanun-u Esasi*, 1876). Hanioglu explains why the constitutionalists abandoned their ideals by the tradeoff between imperial integrity and commitment to constitutionalism (Hanioğlu, 2008, p. 151): A strong parliament was desirable to check the executive; but, such a parliament could also enable Christian deputies to pass laws undermining the Sharia and generate pro-independence propaganda. To ensure imperial survival, the constitutionalists agreed on a weak parliamentarianism.

Authoritarian revival: In 1877, the Russo-Ottoman War broke out and the Sultan called on citizens to join the army. Yet, Christian parliamentarians called on their co-ethnics to disobey the order (Shaw & Shaw, 1977, pp. 181–185). In response, Abdülhamid II prorogued the Constitution and Parliament and centralized decision-

[8] For more information on this process see (Hanioğlu, 2008).

making. The Sultan incarcerated and/or exiled the constitutionalists, imposed censorship, and began implementing modernization reforms. A detailed discussion of the Hamidian regime and its reforms goes beyond the scope of this paper. It suffices to note that—as predicted—repression rekindled constitutionalist demands.

Liberalization demands: In 1889, the Young Turks emerged to restore constitutionalism. This movement formed the Committee of the Union Progress (CUP), an umbrella organization bringing together societal groups from bureaucrats to students and from intellectuals to clerics. Despite the Sultan's attempts to contain ("repress"), the CUP ("escalate the conflict") formed branches in Cairo, Damascus, Tripoli, London, and Geneva (Hanioğlu, 1981, pp. 25–42). CUP members stood united against authoritarianism but diverged on their post-transition plans for the state and society. Plans included a constitutional secular nation state via revolution, an Islamist constitutional state via revolution, and a federal state governed by British style parliamentarianism via revolution (Hanioğlu, 1981, 2001). Discussing these model goes beyond the scope of this paper. What matters for our purposes is that ideological heterogeneity divided the constitutionalists and played into the Sultan's hands.

In 1895, the CUP closed. The movement continued along various factions scattered over Europe until 1908. In this period, the Sultan exploited ideological differences (the "repress" strategy) to divide and incapacitate them. Yet, the constitutionalists persisted, e.g., they organized the Opposition Congress in 1902 to reunite the factions—which failed, some cooperated with the independence-seeking minority organizations and British bureaucrats. In 1908, the Young Turks known as the Committee of Progress and Union (CPU) overthrew the Sultan's government.

Cycle 2: The (1908–1914) Period

In 1908, the CPU restored constitutionalism, formed the government, and changed the Constitution to deprive the Sultan from his power to dismiss the Parliament. Elections were held in November-December 1908 (Hanioğlu, 2001, p. 151). In this period, the CPU begins implementing reforms; parliamentary and societal dissent arises; and the regime reverts to authoritarianism.

Reforms & authoritarian revival: The CPU envisioned a parliamentary regime to protect civil rights and freedoms, in which modern political parties—not notable houses and religious orders— would channel national will, a secular Turkish nation to encompass citizens of all ethnoreligious background, and state-sponsored economic development (Hanioğlu, 2001). This agenda faced strong parliamentary opposition. Christian deputies found the nation state model unappealing, since their constituencies preferred independence, regional autonomy, or to regain their religion-based privileges from under the old regime.[9] The socialists attacked the CPU's economic policies, the liberals criticized top-down secularism, and all opposition groups collectively contested the CPU's military branch's influence on politics (Hanioğlu, 2008, p. 153).

Dissent burst out in March 1909; clerical students revolted demanding the restoration of the Sharia. The military suppressed the rebellion. To ensure stability,

[9] The old regime administered society based on religious affiliation. Non-Muslims included all religious and denominational groups officially recognized as "millet" (e.g., the Armenians, Catholics). Millets were autonomous in its administrative and religious affairs and enjoyed privileges such as exemption from the military service (Cottrell, 2007, pp. 18–40).

the government curtailed civil liberties, imposed censorship, and arrested certain politicians. In response, opposition groups conjointly reclaimed civil liberties and political pluralism disregarding their disagreements on other issues, which the CPU repressed again (see Appendix for opposition groups' positions). Between 1909 and 1912, the Constitution was twice amended to reinforce the executive. In 1912, the Parliament was suspended. From 1913 to 1918, the constitutionalists banned political parties and singularly ran for elections.

Overall, the CPU regime follows the pattern "liberalization demands while in opposition → assume power & liberalization → reform → dissent → authoritarian revival → novel liberalization demands." Let us see if modern Turkey also displays this pattern.

Modern Turkey

Cycle 1: The Single-Party Period

Liberalization demands: The foundation of the Turkish Republic is the story of a libertarian group coming to power after overthrowing an authoritarian government. The Turkish Parliament convened in April 1920 claiming to represent the will of people against the established Ottoman government. Earlier, the Ottoman government had signed on to a treaty that had relinquished sovereignty in North Africa, the Balkans, and parts of Anatolia. Not recognizing this treaty, the Turkish Parliament fought an independence war and won; the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed in 1923. Thus, what was previously a rebellious opposition group demanding liberalization built a new state.

The CHP was founded in 1923 within the Parliament. Just like the CPU, this party rejected foreign rule and despotism, and advocated for a secular parliamentarianism in a nation state (Karatepe, 2018; Tunçay, 1981). Under the 1924 Constitution, the President was also the head of the ruling party, which led to the rise of what came to be known as the Single-Party regime The Single-Party regime became authoritarian following a brief period of multiparty system. In 1924, the Progressive Republican Party was formed and claimed religious freedoms contra the government's authoritarian secularism. Despite its specific policy position, the party attracted all sort of dissenters and posed a serious challenge to the ruling party. The opposition party was banned with the outbreak of the Sheik Said Uprising —a Kurdish uprising— for supporting the Caliphate and Sultanate (Erik Jan Zürcher & Çağalı-Güven, 2010). Thereafter, the government limited the freedom of speech (Koçak, 2005). Overall, two years after coming to power, ruling elites had turned authoritarian. Below, I examine government-opposition interactions until the transition to multiparty system. Anti-establishment groups of this period included contenders of authoritarian secularism and classless single-nation policies.

Reforms, dissent & authoritarian revival: Without an opposition party to contend its policies, the CHP adopted significant reforms, such as the dismantling of the Caliphate, the Sultanate. It goes beyond the purpose of this paper to discuss these reforms.[10] What matters for our purposes is that discontent about the regime manifested itself via a series of insurrections among the Kurds, the Islamists, and the sects from 1926 to 1930, which the government repressed using via military means.

[10] For detailed information see (Findley, 2010; Karatepe, 2018; Erik J. Zürcher, 2010a, 2010b).

In 1930, to alleviate discontent with the regime, the government requested a deputy—also a former military officer who fought in the Independence War— to found an opposition party. The Liberal Republican Party ensued. Its program was not much different from the ruling party's program—also republican secularist and nationalist—except demanding economic liberalization. Yet, once founded, the party attracted all sort of dissenters, including contenders of secularization and single-nation policies. History was re-iterating the first multiparty experience. The liberal dissolved itself in November 1930. Overall, as hypothesized, the government's reforms triggered dissent; the government perceived dissenters as a threat and turned repressive. As in the Ottoman case, liberalization reforms happened under authoritarianism. Let us see whether the multiparty period features the same pattern.

Cycle 2: The (1946–1960) Period

Turkey transitioned to the multiparty system in 1946 (Karpat, 2015, p. ix). The Democrat Party (DP) was founded in the same year within the Parliament. The DP rapidly organized across towns and established itself as an alternative to the CHP. Their 1946 electoral propaganda—"Enough, it's time for the nation to speak!"—attacked the CHP's bureaucratic authoritarianism (Alkan, 2015). The DP pledged to legalizing call for prayers in Arabic (which was in Turkish), extending the freedom of speech, and economic liberalization. The Party presented itself as a nationalist but inclusionary party—which allowed attracting votes of the Christians and the religious conservatives (Karpat, 2015, p. 258).

Reforms & authoritarian revival: The DP came to power in 1950. Until 1954, the DP worked to undercut the CHP support in provinces, closing peasants' institutes (Köy Enstitüleri) and public houses (Halkevleri) established by the CHP. Concomitantly, the DP softened the single-nation policy and cooperated with Kurdish notables and sheiks to attract these policy losers of the Single-Party period (Uçar, 2016). The government ignored criticisms about these reforms. By 1954, discontent had become to intense to ignore. The government persecuted intellectuals and journalists, closed opposition newspapers, restricted academic freedom, and closed the Republican Peasants' and People's Party— its rival on the votes of religious conservatives (Özçelik, 2010). Repression met intensified demands for judiciary independence and the freedom of expression (Tuğluoğlu, 2017). After 1957, rising inflation, stagnation, foreign debts, and devaluations increasingly diminished government support. The government tried to maintain order by censorship, repression towards university students and workers, and banning CHP meetings (Özçelik, 2010). These measures did but intensify protests. The government went as far as declaring martial law. In May 1960, the military made a coup. Overall, the DP followed the pattern; a libertarian group coming to power, implementing reforms, and turning repressive when dissent arises.

Cycles 3: The (1960–1980) Period

The military officers, who carried the 1960 Coup, explained their motivation as protecting the secular progressive Kemalist state and national unity, and pledged to holding free and fair elections (*1960 Darbe Bildirisi*, 1960). This regime closed the

DP, and tried and executed three cabinet members for power abuse. In 1961, they promulgated a new Constitution to extend civil rights and freedoms, which also liberalized the formation of socialist parties ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasasi," 1961). Elections were held and the military relinquished power in 1961. Thus, as hypothesized, military elites—representing a group of dissenters in society—overthrew an authoritarian government perceiving themselves as "the guardian of the state" (Ahmad, 1993; Demirel, 2004). However, despite relinquishing power to the civilians, they continued to pull the strings until 1980. Therefore, military elites defending the secular classless single-nation project (which I will call the establishment view from here on) represents ruling elites of this period. Antiestablishment groups included the proletarian Turkey's Workers' Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tuzugu*, 1961), the revolutionary workers' socialist trade union (DISK) ("DİSK Etkinlikler Dizini," n.d.), the liberal conservative Republican Peasants and People's Party (*Millet Partisi Programı ve Tüzüğü*, 1961), the Islamist National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, n.d.), and the nationalist conservative anti-communist Justice Party (AP) (*Adalet Partisi Programi*, 1961), as well as Kurdish nationalism and Turkish ultranationalism.

Liberalization demands: The (1961–1965) period was the triumph of democracy with the leftwing, nationalist, and conservative movements actively expressing themselves and mobilizing citizens. On the flipside, political pluralism produced coalition governments, which proved dysfunctional due to disagreements among partners. In 1965, the AP— an antiestablishment group claiming to the DP's

legacy– formed a single government and stayed in power until 1971 (*Adalet Partisi Programi*, 1961).

Under the single-party government, democracy did not thrive. Society polarized with respect to the leftwing and the establishment view—classless nation-state. Remember that this was the Cold War Period. Turkey, though within the Western Camp, neighbored the USSR. In this climate, socialist and communist parties appeared as a threat to proponents of classless nation-state. The anti-communist AP government adamantly repressed leftwing dissenters only to see protests, strikes, and trade union activism escalate (Ahmad, 1993). Political violence ensued. The military restored order with a memorandum in 1971. Ruling elites had thus revived authoritarianism to defeat what they perceived to be "the leftwing threat."

Authoritarian revival & constitutional changes: In the aftermath of the Memorandum, military elites closed Turkey's Labor Party and affiliated youth organizations, repressed trade unions and leftwing NGOs, persecuted intellectuals, and declared martial law in Kurdish regions (Gaines & Aaronson, 2017). In power were nationalist coalition governments. Yet, none of these governments lasted long. Governmental instability triggered protests of leftwing unionists and students ("DİSK Etkinlikler Dizini," n.d.). Kurdish terrorist attacks also commenced in this period. Governments passed multiple constitutional amendments to curtail civil rights and liberties, union meetings, and strikes (İleri, 2015); but, trade unionist and students did not back down. In 1980, the military made another coup to cease political violence.

This cycle was characterized by polarization with respect to the classless nation-state policy. Interactions between ruling elites standing for the establishment

view and antiestablishment groups were zero-sum. As theorized, zero-sum interactions reproduced zero-sum interactions, and ruling elites changed the Constitution to strengthen the executive, thus locking the system into a repression–contention cycle.

Cycle 4: The (1980–2004) Period

In 1980, the military committee that carried the coup explained their motivation as restoring order and stopping political violence (*Kenan Evren'in Darbe Konuşması*, 1980). Between 1980 and 1982, the military government banned major parties and their leaders, incarcerated leftwing supporters, and repressed Kurdish demands for liberalization (Head, 2010). The government also promulgated a new constitution to establish a strong executive capable of restraining civil rights and freedoms for reasons of public order (*1982 Anayasasi: Metin ve Degisiklik Bilgileri*, n.d.). Thus, ruling elites of this period were again military elites. Differently than their predecessors, these elites softened the official secularism ideology and promoted a synthesis of nationalism and Islam (Toprak, 2005a). We shall see, however, that the military continued to pull the strings and Islam continued to cause confrontations between ruling elites and anti-establishment groups claiming religious freedom-- the center-right neoliberal Motherland Party (ANAP) (*Anavatan Partisi secim beyannamesi*, 1983), the Islamist Welfare Party (RP) and daughter (*Refah Partisi*, 1983), and the Kurds.

Liberalization: In 1983, Turgut Özal, a former technocrat with no affiliation to the existing parties, formed the government (Kalaycıoglu, 2002). Özal formed single-party governments between 1983 and 1991, which allowed him to liberalize the economy and activities of religious networks, acknowledge Kurdish groups and dialogue with them, and curb military influence in politics (Uçar & Akandere, 2017). In implementing these reforms that weakened old elites, Özal drew support from middle and upper classes, the Kurds (given his Kurdish background), and religious conservatives (given his affiliation to the Naksibendi sect) (Uçar & Akandere, 2017). After he became president in 1991, his party lost support.

Authoritarian revival: The 1990s was the decade of coalition governments, the empowerment of Islamist movements, and Kurdish demands. Towards the Kurds, the military was using force. Regarding the Islamist movement, the major military intervention was the 1997 memorandum.[11] The Islamist party, the Welfare Party, had unprecedentedly won local elections in Istanbul in 1995 and had become a coalition partner in 1996. To defeat the Islamist "threat" to secularism, the military forced the coalition government to resign and banned the Welfare Party in 1997 (Gaines & Aaronson, 2017). Between 1997 and 2001, the Islamist movement resurrected through a series daugther parties, all of which were banned by the Constitutional Court.

Liberalization: Liberalization resumed with the EU accession process. In 1996, Turkey joined the Customs' Union. Popular support for EU accession brought a pro-EU coalition to power in 1997. From 2001 to 2004, constitutional amendments

[11] For reasons of space, I do not elaborate on Kurdish demands; but Kurdish demands certainly constitute a major part of the confrontation between the establishment and anti-establishment views. For a good summary see (Somer, 2004, 2005).

extended the freedom of expression, abolished death penalty and the ban on political parties, and brought the military under civilian control (*Türkiye'de siyasi reform*, 2007). In this democratizing environment, the AKP —a daughter party to the RP— was formed, won the 2002 elections, and previously banned politician Erdogan was allowed to return to politics. Erdogan assumed power in 2003.

Overall, in this cycle, ruling elites intervened to defend the status quo, repressed dissent, and changed the constitution to reinforce the executive. Under the civilian rule, liberalization happened when an anti-establishment group came to power (Özal government). Subsequently, Kurdish and Islamist movements were empowered; but, they both met with repression by military elites. Overall, in this cycle, as in the previous cycles, ruling elite–opposition interactions were zero-sum.

Cycle 5: The AKP regime

In this cycle, the AKP—descendent of the Islamist movement—came to power, liberalized the regime, and punished military elites. When dissent intensified, the government turned repressive and eventually transitioned Turkey to presidentialism with a constitutional referendum.

Liberalization: Before coming to power, the AKP used a libertarian discourse.[12] From 2002 to 2005, the AKP government followed the European Union's liberalization agenda. Improvement in civil rights and minority rights regime and

[12] "Our party acknowledges that political power and the bureaucracy should not intervene in (…) civil rights and liberties, and pledges to enforce the civil rights and freedoms regime" (*Ak Parti Secim Beyannamesi*, 2002).

economic development increased AKP support among the liberals, some intellectuals, and middle classes (Tugal, 2016). In 2007 and 2010, the AKP amended the constitution to reinforce the executive—e.g., curbing the military's power in politics, removing the judiciary's control of laws for conformity to the Constitution, and allowing the president to be elected by popular vote.[13]

Authoritarian reversal: In the late 2000s, domestic criticism to AKP reforms grew and the government reversed liberalization. By implication, various European Union resolutions condemned Turkey for violations of physical, economic, and social and cultural rights of the Kurds (Alexander, Brenner, & Tutuncuoglu Krause, 2014). Concurrently, the AKP began to punish old elites. During the trials known as Ergenekon and Sledgehammer, the government incarcerated and detained without trial journalists and former high-level military officers to (using Acemoglu's & Ucer's words) "weaken and remove enemies" (Acemoglu & Ucer, 2015). Since, persecution has extended to other dissenters, including the religious network led by Fethullah Gülen and the Kurdish parties. Executive decrees and martial law reversed existing improvements in civil rights. In response, libertarian demands escalated and were repressed; e.g., the 2013 Protests, the solidarity platform for persecuted academics, the March for Justice led by the CHP, mothers' vigil for those who disappeared after the 1980 Coup, the businessmen association TUSIAD, and journalists ("Barış İçin Akademisyenler," 2016; "The Guardian view on Turkish press freedom," 2017; "TÜSİAD da 'özgürlük' dedi," 2018; Gall, 2017; Times, 2018). Repression had

[13] See (*1982 Anayasasi: Metin ve Degisiklik Bilgileri*, n.d.)

undercut international support to the AKP by the 2010s (Tugal, 2016). As dissent grew, the AKP changed the constitution to strengthen the executive.

Constitutional changes: In 2017, the referendum on presidentialism were held. The AKP's propaganda centered on "stronger executive, stronger Turkey;" a strong executive would allow bypassing dissent in the areas of foreign policy and the Kurdish question and bringing stability (Cagatay, 2015). President Erdogan's definition of dissenters included CHP supporters, pro-Kurdish groups and parties, academics, and intellectuals (Erdogan, 2016, 2017). The first presidential elections were held in May 2018. Four opposition parties challenged Erdogan using the slogan "rendering justice and restoring freedoms" ("İnce'den '5 sütunda' seçim manifestosu," 2018). Since Erdogan got reelected, Turkey also held municipal elections in March 2019. The government questioned the legality of elections results, where the CHP won.

Overall, as hypothesized, the AKP demanded liberalization while in opposition, reformed the regime once in power, turned authoritarian upon facing dissent, and changed the constitution to ensure its survival.

Discussion

This paper conducts a historical survey with broad brushes, which may seem oversimplified to those who were expecting in-depth analyses of Ottoman and Turkish regimes. Yet, I seek to explain not the rise/fall of particular elites/regimes but *patterns of regime changes over time*. My analysis spans a period of over two centuries to identify how the terms of ruling elites–opposition interactions affect democratic

reversals and authoritarian revivals—an in-depth study of such a long period cannot be covered in an article. Certain periods neatly fit the theory: the (1908–1914) period, the single-party regime, the (1946–1960) and AKP regimes. The theory captures the (1960-1980) and (1980) periods less well. In that, these periods open with a military coup; military actors of these periods punish the old elites, promulgate a new constitution, and relinquish power. The theory would have expected these actors to hold on to power as did the Latin American junta regimes; but, they did not. Still, the theory accounts for these cases, because the military continues to pull the strings until the 2000s, as evinced by the memoranda of 1971 and 1997. Also, I conceptualize the military as a pro-establishment group in society. From the military's perspective, intervention in politics represents an act to neutralize an "anti-establishment" threat and liberalize the regime. Consequently, interactions between the army and antiestablishment groups follow the theorized trend "repress dissent → escalate opposition → repress dissent → escalate → repress & change the constitution." Of course, dissent to the military regime surface only after the civilian rule resumes, namely the (1961-1971), (1983–1997), and (2003–2009) periods, when the AP, the ANAP, and the AKP assume power.

Second, I find that ideology does not explain authoritarian revival in Turkey, because the data indicates that authoritarian revival does not happen under governments of a particular view. Authoritarian turns happened under the CHP's single party government, the DP, the AP, military officers intervening in politics in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1998, and the AKP. Based on their self-defined positions, the CHP and military officers intervening in politics in 1960 and 1971 defend Kemalist

principles; carriers of the 1980 coup and the 1998 memorandum argue for nationalism and Islamism; while the DP, AP, and AKP oppose strict secularism and are conservative. Thus, whether they are Islamist, or Kemalist, or something else does not alone predict whether some elites will turn authoritarian. Elites' position becomes meaningful only when it is evaluated with respect to establishment values. Finally, in this study, libertarian refers to demands for liberalization, freedoms and rights. Note that what liberty consists of depends on who defines it. Neither the military interventions of 1960 and 1971 nor the AKP's majoritarian understanding of democracy supports democracy as defined by the respect of minority rights. Yet, from their own standpoint, the latter defend the values that they associate with liberty and liberalization. This inference would not follow if I had used a particular scale or expert opinions to classify ideology —but, I define ideological positions based on actors' own definitions of their positions.

Conclusion

This article throws a novel perspective to regime transitions. Existing studies focus on why democracy breaks down or fails to consolidate, or authoritarianism revives or persists. This study flips the question: Could be oscillation between democratic and authoritarian regime forms a pattern? Can society converge to two alternating states? Conceptualizing oscillation as systematic back-and-forth movement along the authoritarianism–democracy axis, I conducted a diachronic comparative study among periods of democratization and de-democratization in Ottoman and Republican

Turkey—cases that show both continuity and change in terms of actors, statecraft, and environments. I used these cases to test the theory that different systems behave similarly if interactions between their governments and opposition groups generate a similar dynamic. Specifically, I argued that societies are likely to swing between authoritarian and democratic regimes if government-opposition interactions are zero-sum. Each government comes to power to liberalize and reform the regime; but, when dissent arises, they feel threatened and change the constitution to strengthen the executive. One key finding was that, in such settings, governments lack the incentive to cooperate, because experience with repression, uncertainty and distrust in the environment perpetuate the fear of survival. Consequently, cooperation seems too costly; governments prefer the "repress" strategy to "cooperate." A central message of this article is that the system may not return to checks and balances even after authoritarianism breaks down. The system might remain in the cycle "liberalization, authoritarian revival" under different governments so long as the fear of survival characterises government-opposition interactions.

This argument offers a relational explanation to reiterating patterns of regime changes. Building on the findings that similar shocks produce context-specific outcomes, I conceptualize government-opposition interactions. The finding that Turkish society could not break the oscillatory trajectory from the Ottoman times despite institutional, environmental, and social transformations makes a fundamental contribution to the theories on institutional change. I theorize oscillation as a form of equilibrium and evince how zero-sum interactions among oppositions and ruling elites create a feedback that periodically triggers transitions from and to authoritarianism.

This theory shifts the focus on dynamic behavioral patterns from static regime outcomes. For regime studies, this implies that, in such cases, neither authoritarian nor democratic regimes consolidate.

Equally important is the finding that constitutional developments happen under authoritarianism, because governments change the constitution to strengthen the executive. Strong executives lead to arbitrariness says, Tocqueville (Tocqueville, 2004), to which I add that constitutional systems cannot prevent authoritarian backslides if governments see constitutional arrangements as a means to weaken the opposition. To the extent that constitutional changes remove checks on the executive, opposition groups grow militant. Escalating tension continuously shrinks the room for cooperation. The cycle reiterates so long as the environment cultivates the threat perception, and breaks if government and opposition actors cooperate. As in the case of 19th century France—where society finally converged to a parliamentarian regime under the Third Republic after having oscillated among empire, republic, and monarchy, cooperation requires acknowledging dissent as a natural part of the political life.

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