

Chapter 1

Is President Erdoğan Really a Dictator? The Illusion of the Opposition Parties in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The notion of dictatorship has been central in leadership exegeses the world over. Indeed, almost all leaders are alleged to be dictators at a certain point in time, once they side step expectations abound. Like in many, a country, talk of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan being a dictator in Turkey has been massive over the years. The interesting conundrum though defeating all analyses of such nature is the authority on which the claim of dictatorship owes its abode or rests. One wonders whether a leader's being a dictator is determined by opposition politicians in a country, the local media, the international media, foreign politicians or the local masses (those benefitting directly or indirectly and not). It is also interesting to question the yardstick used for justification of the same; whether it is simply over stay in power, the character and appearance of a leader or the modus operandi of a leader. This conceptual paper, therefore explored the so called Erdoğan dictatorship illusion of opposition parties in Turkey by examining the concept of dictatorship in leadership, Erdoğan's assumed dictatorial accusations, and an effort toward disengagement of Erdoğan from dictatorship claims. The paper has also shown that there are some dictatorship tendencies within opposition parties.

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INTRODUCTION

A nation's type of government refers to how that state's executive, legislative, and judicial organs are organized. All nations need some sort of government to avoid anarchy (Szilágyi, 2009). Democratic governments permit the citizens to manage their government either directly or through elected representatives such as presidential and parliamentary systems (Cheibub, 2010; Linz, 1985; Szilágyi, 2009). Different countries have had different political systems based on their culture or history.

Turkey follows a parliamentary model of leadership and the prime minister holds executive powers over a largely ceremonial president. Meanwhile, in parliament systems, the chief executive is not chosen by the people but by the legislature (Szilágyi, 2009). In this model, the electorate via universal adult suffrage, vote for political parties through an election wherein the party with the majority number of seats in parliament elects a prime minister. The party handles elections of its candidates for membership to parliament and thus take parliamentarians according to seats won via percentage of votes with %10 threshold. The number of seats in this case is 550 and the majority requires a party to obtain at least 278 seats (TBMM, 2015). Where no party obtains the majority, three options lie in wait:

- The party with the highest number of seats can run a minority government by picking ministers from other parties.
- A coalition government can be formed by parties which agree to work together (they should raise 278 seats between them though).
- Another election is organized in the event of failure of the above alternatives (this is done within expiry of the 45-day period granted for efforts to form a new government by law).

In 7 June election, Turkey experienced the catastrophic deadlock in political system. Issuing from the above premise, therefore, for the first time in 12 years, general elections were held without Erdoğan contesting on June 7, 2015. In the polls, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) obtained 40.87%, the Republican People's Party (CHP) secured 24.95%, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) obtained 16.29% while the Democratic People's Party scored 13.12% of the vote.

President Erdoğan, gave the leadership of AK Party as well as Prime Minister Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu a mandate to form the government since his party had accumulated the highest number of votes. However, despite all initiatives and negotiations, a government could not be established under any scenario whatsoever. Davutoğlu thus gave back to duty as Prime Minister. As a result of the expiration of the statutory 45-day period, President Erdoğan, in consultation with the chairman of Parliament Ismet Yilmaz, on the basis of the authority given to him by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Article 104 and 116 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey decided to renew the elections. This was to turn out to be the first time a President of the Republic of Turkey decided to renew the elections (The Guardian, August 24, 2015).

The Supreme Election Board set the election date as November 1, 2015. Besides AK Party, all other parties rejected the election despite being on different discourses throughout the 45-day period. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan again gave the mandate to form government to Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. In the selection of government ministries, the distribution featured 11 ministries to AK Party, 5 to CHP, and 3 each to MHP and HDP. Davutoğlu sent ministerial offers to people of all parties as deemed appropriate. While nobody from CHP accepted the offer of ministries in the government, one person from MHP who at the same time is a son of the founding chairman of the party Tuğrul Türkeş and two people from HDP

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