

Türkiye From the Perspective of the Theory of Pillarization

Ertuğrul GÖKÇEKUYU¹

Sütunlaşma Teorisi Perspektifinden Türkiye

Öz

Hollanda'nın toplumsal tarihi gelişiminde anlatan teorik araçlardan biriside *verzuiling* (*pillarization*) 'sütunlaşma' teorisidir. Bu sütunlaşma teorisi daha sonra Arend Lijphart (Lijphart 2008) tarafından daha jenerik bir uygulama için geliştirilmiş ve adına *consociationalism* veya *müşterek çıkarlar üzerine kurulan ortaklıklar* şeklinde de tercüme edebileceğimiz bir kavram siyaset bilimi alanına kazandırılmıştır. *Pillarization*, *consociationalism* ve *corporatism* kavramları Hollanda siyasi tarihsel gelişimi için karakteristik olmuş ve birbirleriyle karıştırılmıştır. Her üç kavram da azınlık gurupların kendi tercihleri ile sosyal izolasyona girerek siyasi özgürleşme ve ulus inşası süreçlerinde büyük öneme sahiptirler. Bu makale, Hollanda'nın yakın tarihini inceleyerek üç kavramın günümüz Türkiye sosyo-politik sürecini bu kavramlar üzerinden anlamlandırılmasını hedef edinmektedir. Sonuç olarak üç kavramdan en az ikisinin günümüz Türkiye'sinde sosyal-siyasal anlamda görünür olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sütunlaşma, Konsosyonalizm, Korporatizm, Özgürlük

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

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Abstract

One of the first theoretical instruments to understand the Dutch socio-political life was 'pillarization'. It was Arend Lijphart who developed the former into 'consociationalism' to applying to all societies in a generic sense. A third related concept is 'corporatism'. All three concepts are characteristic for the Dutch political historical development. All three instruments have played important roles in the social-historical processes in the emancipation of minority groups and in the building of a national identity. This article views the Turkish socio-political processes and how it applies to the Turkish public, political life and culture. I argue that the Turkish situation can also be characterised by the concept of *vertical pluralism* that was followed by a reversed process called *depillarization*.

Keywords: Pillarization, Consociationalism, Corporatism, Emancipation

Paper Type: Research Article

1. Introduction

Pillarization is a typical Dutch theory nested in the academic life for at least six decades (Rooy 2001). The theory has lent itself as being useful and explanatory for political and social matters in the Netherlands (Hoogenboom, Scholten, and Risico's en Veiligheid 2008:108). Inherently this theoretical frame is a typical Dutch theory that seems to only apply to a specific period in the Dutch communal history. The accent that lies on pillarization differs from consociationalism (Lijphart 1969:211). Consociationalism for Lijphart is deviant social groups with deep cleavages that are fragmented but deliver somehow stable democracies. Pillarization heavily leans on institutionalization of almost all

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Anadolu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi, egokcekuyu@anadolu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-5037-499X.

social, economic, cultural, political and recreational institutions that are isolated as religious or ideological factions (Irwin et al. 1987:136). As the theory of pillarization centres around social columns they surely resemble consociations but they are also reminiscent of corporatist traditions. Even though all three concepts are conceptual families of each other that were born in European states, they are conceptually different analytical instruments. During the eighties many Dutch scholars saw a 'destructive power' besides the usefulness of the concept of pillarization (Blom 2000:158). According to such scholars the theory was inadequately explanatory as the Dutch history was local and the idea of pillarization was metaphorical that was in need of re-evaluation. It was such academic debates that gave way for definitional problems concerning pillarization. These debates scrutinized the usefulness, the relevance and almost reduced this typical Dutch theory into a mere view of social segmentation. Other scholars such as Piet de Rooij (Rooy 1995) were much harsher and argued to abandon the term *verzuiling*, as the term basically referred to 'politics'. The question in this academic debate was whether the pillarization was just another way of referring toward regional and local government.

The pillarization model is an argumentation for a specific set of circumstances and it is this vertical pluralism or accommodation that was once criticized as not to be taken too literal (Wintle 2000). It was Lijphart who diversified the theory of pillarization and worked out some generic features of social identification as social, economic and political circumstances would be apt for variation in different countries around the world. Arend Lijphart came up with a model that may be labelled as accommodation of social groups around the world and developed categories for a variety of situations as a formula that could be applied to nations. The difference between pillarization and consociationalism in the most rudimentary sense comes down to this generic applicability as a universal theory. Even though the term consociation is derived from Dutch historical context of pillarization, it is adapted to the general scientific study of political sciences with the capacity to categorize other variations of general types.

Consociationalism is thus a theoretical frame that refers to generic situations with the hypothesis to surpass the cultural and geographical Dutch context. In either situation the theories feature communal segmentation also labelled as ideological columns. These societal columns exist side-by-side within a social-political context. Such a social-political existence can only exist as a consecutive result of historical events, beliefs and convictions that most likely will be different in every national history (Becker 1993). The general idea of pillarization in the Dutch context metaphorically resembles a structure, much like an ancient Greek temple that is held together by colossal pillars and on top of those strong pillars there is the supposed overarching roof that connects all pillars together. According to this metaphor the indication is that each pillar is a distinct socio-religious group within one society with shared geography, culture and language. No matter the differences between consecutive pillars, every pillar is nested within the notion of religious views and principles that dominated public life in each pillar independent of each other (Bax 1995:2). It is therefore important to note that the religious affiliation of the distinct groups were major factors that determined the boundaries of the social and political cleavages within the society. We may safely argue that the Dutch society during the twentieth century was one that featured deep segmentation. As argued above consociationalism is an attempt to oversee universality by Lijphart to explain political, religious and cultural emancipation. According to this universal theory nations around the world can present general features of pillarization where ideological groups are formed to withdraw into social and cultural isolation. These isolated groups would find political ways to equally struggle for political recognition in a way that is of proportional influence. One must admit that such specific conditions are hard to crystalize considering that nations have different paths of development. Yet, these are the sought-after conditions where groups are

represented by their own elites who legitimize rules of conduct without any form of superiority seeking a form of consensus.

Corporatism is the third concept in this article to be discussed from a theoretical perspective. Corporatism falls into a much wider political-economic context and is a form of clientelism that has gained popularity in Western European democratic regimes which was also the case in the Netherlands (Kickert 2003:119). This concept does have a ring to it that is inherent to cooperation just as it is the case with pillarization. We may perceive pillarization a political cooperation whereas corporatism is heavily an economic cooperation. Such a cooperation was a form of power-sharing with the economic elites in the country. From this cooperation with the economic elites in the country there was an opportunity to exert influence on decision-making and policy-making by way of official committees that were considered legitimate. Yet, the dark side of corporatism was that economic elites were more or less privileged to go beyond democratic electoral representation as a third wheel that needed to approve. Such a situation was highly controversial as the common people were considered to have mere influence once every four years. Corporatism in Europe was very much outdated by the time that new-right was gaining power. Soon new-right demanded more free-market discourse as corporatist compromise seemed to exert excessive amounts of undemocratic influence.

2. Arend Lijphart's Theory of Concociationalism

Bu As it is discussed in the above paragraphs the concept of pillarization is a theoretical model wherein the historical situation has been an inspiration for the international perceptions of vertical pluralism or consociation as it later was also applied within the European Union. Pillarization is a model that enables one to view how different social groups co-exist and need to fulfil to create a stable political system.

In Lijphart's view, the typical Dutch society between 1920 and 1960 were segmented and could be perceived as vertically divided between what Lijphart called ethnic groups. These ethnic groups were in essence poorly categorized as science today has seen more fragmentation and new categories. What Lijphart meant actually religious sects that were different than secular groups within the Dutch society. One may easily derive from this that Lijphart's theory was built on indicators such as ideology or beliefs. In this sense Lijphart's theory does not focus on the horizontal divisions in a society that is along the lines of socio-economic status. These vertical groups or divisions were the Roman Catholic, the orthodox Calvinist, the Socialist, and liberal groups. Lijphart labelled these ideological divisions vertical as they metaphorically are like pillars, hence the concept pillarization. Pillarization is the process wherein the people conglomerate into factions, and high up on top of these factions there were the leading actors. These leaders also known as the elites, represented their own flock and were entitled to represent the interests of their own groups around the table. It was an important factor that these elites were in charge of political representation as they structured the superstructure within the government. To run the administrative tasks in the country these elites formed a decisive role as they could block and veto each other's interests within the administrative structure. A logical step for every single faction within the superstructure was to consolidate the group interests and get vetoed. For this very reason the political culture to compromise became an important indicator for the pillarization for a political process that initially seemed to be fully isolated and paralyzed. According to Michael Wintle (Wintle 2000) the most neutral faction among the four groups were the liberals as this group was historically the most capacitated and therefore less isolated. The liberal faction was probably the only faction that was the most independent as liberals were great supporters of individual progress, development and growth. To assist the consensus model there was a great need of an impartial administrative apparatus. The task of the administrative apparatus was to regulate the interaction and it had to be an honest referee in distributing the budget, services and policies according to the reached

consensus. In this perspective the Dutch bureaucracy could be identified as corporatist as the four factions needed to be proportionally represented.

It must be admitted the Lijphart's theory is based on a typical Dutch social historical rationale and suggested that an open and modern society as understood under modernity, diversity and multiculturalism, as it is much easier due to ideological reasons for one to find oneself in disagreeing and opposing factions. Others criticised pillarization as an elitist mystification to pull support from innocent bystanders for elites to serve their own purposes (Stuurman 1991:453). Pillarization was an ingenious entrapment to maintain status quo as it was causing the override of democratic principles and postponing emancipatory movements. Beside the above criticism it is argued that pillarization has had structural outcomes as in social emancipation, toleration of the other and the ability to renegotiate national identity. Even though, only some scholars such as Lijphart were proponent of such social outcomes, there was no unified agreement that pillarization could bring about such beneficial outcomes. Even today it remains to be a difficult discussion whether pillarization is inherent of a general theory of emancipation as emancipation was considered to be a desired outcome for nations around the world. For pillarization to happen there must first of all be a socially isolated ideological group that struggles for consolidation of legislative gains. Then, there must be an isolated group that has no desire to connect to other existent groups and there must obviously be a leadership who vocalizes the interests of the group within the political arena from an ideology or belief to strive for social, political and economic freedoms and benefits. Such an independence was considered to be a socially separate creation unique within a group. This theory therefore dictates that to achieve emancipation there must be pillarization that brings about a common internal view on what emancipation must contain as a valuable asset to fight for (Dekker and Ester 1996:327). Again, this chain of thought and the theory of pillarization leading to emancipation is highly controversial as during the sixties of the last century these factions became obsolete being replaced by a new political culture known as the consensus culture.

The first observation after this argumentation is that there is definitely a rationale behind the idea of isolation, consolidation by means of struggle. Pillarization may not effectively bring about emancipation, but pillarization definitely influenced the Dutch political culture in terms of consensus making. As a second observation, pillarization has brought about consensus and a pragmatic tolerance. This type of tolerance is considered to be a negative rather than generous social attitude as it is about tolerating a social existence rather than truly acknowledging it. It may be due to centuries old struggles of the Dutch people are unlikely to leave and it is therefore a better strategy to incorporate something into the political system. For some scholars the so-called Dutch tolerance may be a form of social survival by either isolating oneself or to live in conflict manipulated by political elites; with the end in mind to gain certain political advantages. Such a political advantage would be in the form of a state that intervenes in the rights and freedoms of individuals. It is a common debate of how far a state may intervene as in negative rights of individuals. Such a state intervention even if it is for the common good of the people would be highly controversial as states are run by individuals and individuals may also be the cause of conflicts.

3. Perspectives of Pillarization in Türkiye

On basis of the analysis on pillarization and consociationalism in the above paragraphs, these paragraphs below provide an analysis how consociationalism in Türkiye unfolds. According to the theoretical aspects of consociationalism, it follows that consociationalism in Türkiye is very much existent. As with the Dutch case, the focus of the analysis should start with the onset of 1920's, yet the Netherlands had already been a democracy since 1848. The early start of the Dutch democratic parliamentary system together with the fact that pillarization is considered to take place between 1920 and 1960, makes it hard for the Turkish situation to compare. Nevertheless, if we consider the birth of

the Turkish republic as the beginning of the democratic rule then, we will have to consider the fact that pillarization in Türkiye also has had a late start. Even though democratic rule has had a late start in Türkiye, the Turkish history does demonstrate features of pillarization wherein groups can be distinguished to be isolated.

In the words of Lijphart, *ethnic* minorities or as argued above ideological groups in Türkiye are primarily the Laicists, Conservatives and Muslims. Lijphart had used the term ethnic, but in reality, what he meant was ideologically or religiously opposed groups. This coinage of the term makes it more convenient to categorize ideological or religious factions. Therefore, the pillars are constituted ideologically or religiously, which is why ethnicity is not a criterium unlike argued by Hakan Kolcak (Kolçak 2020). This excludes the many ethnic minorities such as Turks, Kurds, Cherkes, Alawi's and all the other truly ethnic minorities in Türkiye. Any of these ethnic minorities can be brought under any of the three blocks mentioned above. A similar situation could be found in the Dutch society as there were other minority groups such as the Jewish community, the Baptists, or the group who were called free-thinkers. None of these groups were considered to be a separate faction in the process of pillarization, as they could be brought under any one of the four factions. The Turkish political culture when viewed since the establishment (1923) of the Turkish republic actually started to consolidate in the fifties of the last century as the CHP (Republican People's Party) had lost the elections to the DP (Democratic Party) (Kapani 1992). The CHP was founded by the founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of the Turkish republic and was the only ruling party until DP won the elections in 1950. This national election was the first time in the history of the republic that popularly elected power was transferred to an opposition party DP and its leader Adnan Menderes (Şahin and Tunç 2015). We will place the CHP for obvious reasons under the faction of laicists (Parla and Davison 2008) and the DP under the faction of conservatives. One major difference with the Netherlands in the historical development of Türkiye is not only the late start of the democratic regime but also the contrived secularisation policies between 1923 and onwards. The period of secularisation was not a period wherein pillarization of religious institutions such as mosques were free (Laicists, Democrats, and Secularists 2013:255). In other words, religious institutionalization was subject to state intervention which was why Muslim factions had gone underground. This type of isolation is not the type of isolation that consociationalism requires for the theory of pillarization as religious factions did not have an elite cadre to express political representation. We should remember that pillarization requires a functional and proportional political representation, which was not the case as the leader of the ruling party (DP) was found guilty by a military court and was hung at the end of a short trial. The categorical factions in Türkiye were due to interventions reasons not able to exercise their religious social functions until the total end of military interventions in Türkiye. In a certain sense pillarization is not applicable to the specific period of 1923 and onwards up until the beginning of the twenty first century. If there was a process remotely reminiscent of pillarization in Türkiye, then it probably was truly salient with the electoral successes of the AKP (Justice and Development Party). One may argue that the religious salience of Milli Görüş and its leader Necmettin Erbakan in the political setting was a much earlier effort. Which may be partly true as these efforts were again frequently interrupted by military interventions or by way of party closures. The AKP was the religious connotation as a carrier of the political faction that worked out the growth of Muslim national sentiments as a pillar that was asserted to a location in the political context. In today's Türkiye the AKP, the MHP, the CHP, the İP (İyi Parti) and other parties such as the HDP, the DP and all other minority parties whether religious, non-religious or liberal find legitimation by way of legislation.²⁶ This is an important argument as consociationalism requires factions to be able to take part of the political process. The AKP resembles in some way to the *Gereformeerden* in the Netherlands who are labelled as Calvinists and were led by Abraham Kuyper. Abraham Kuyper was a political genius who had established his congregation into a political unity with an identity, and ran for office dominating politics between 1881 and 1901. It was only after this period that pillarization in the

Netherlands together with the wealth of the country jumpstarted pillarization. In the Dutch case the four factions that were isolated were isolated by choice and all factions had their own elite leaders who enjoyed political status rooted in legislation. All factions could negotiate according to their own distinct interests in social, cultural or public services. In contrary to the Netherlands, nation-building efforts in Türkiye were initially directed by way of government intervention and military interventions, whereas nation-building efforts were considered to be a result of the pillarization process until the 1960's. The new Turkish century is a plural nation with a diversity of identities and a culture of emancipation where factions demand respect and acknowledgement for their unique identities. The Turkish pillarization today also goes together with a certain wealth that is much better in historical sense. The Turkish pillarization has still not ended as it has just started and it may be predicted to deliver a common understanding, respect and national identities as depillarization process will set in. Today the religious factions in Türkiye are able to centre around religion and education, they can find political accommodation for yet to come emancipation for religious or non-religious constituents as freedoms and gains.

4. How the Turkish Pillarization Works

In this article I argue that Türkiye today seems to fit the pillarization picture as there are highly developed institutions that are centralized around religious and ideological ideas. Muslims, Laicists and Conservatives can be perceived as a system of vertical pluralism where elite political leaders have started cooperation in and between various political groups. The Turkish version of pillarization also shows remarkable cooperation efforts between on one side the ruling AKP and Conservative faction the MHP (Nationalist People's Party) as *Cumhur Ittifaki* (Majority Coalition) and on the other side CHP and the consociational smaller parties IP, DP, GP, DP and the religious SP Millet Ittifaki (National Coalition). These consolidated cooperations do not conform the classical view of pillarization which is not unusual in terms of finding consensus in a political regime that is not based on a coalition model. While Türkiye can be denoted as a segmented society with social differences that are vertical (ideological). What makes the pillarization theory so unique is its extensive system of government by elites. The Turkish version of pillarization today is one that conforms the apparatus of accommodation and consociation. While the Dutch version of pillarization is more basic in its form, the Turkish version in its current form is a little bit more complex variation of consociationalism.

As we know from the Dutch pillars the early stages were sealed off from the outside world, which has been the case for the Muslims with the exception of the laicistst. Laicists also fit the emancipation theory as they held fear of external influences, that worked emancipatory for the Muslim faction. The Muslim faction was very much inward-looking with on-and-off elite leaders who were either imprisoned, hang or intervened. Unlike the Netherlands Türkiye did not have an early industrialisation which did not create a horizontal working class that was absent in Türkiye. While the Dutch industrialisation allowed churches to retain influence in Türkiye such an influence was prevented to locate in pillars. The liberal pillar in the Netherlands, the laicistst never had an inward-looking tendency, and did not really fit into a pillar in the classic sense.

As a final remark the Turkish political process as pillarization in a strict definitional perception around ideological ideas, then there is merely difference in temporal sense and in terms of degree of complexity between the Netherlands and Türkiye. Assuming the Dutch *pillarization to be a* local form of a much broader consociationalism, one may see in Türkiye a tendency toward compromise and proportionality among separate groups. The pillarization process in Türkiye may be rationally another form of pillarization that is obviously unique to the Turkish situation which is therefore worthy of an empirical study and discussion.

5. Conclusion

I do not believe that the pillarization theory has been applied to the Turkish recent history as it is done in this theoretical article. I too perceive that most scholars in the field of political sciences are critical of the recent Turkish political developments, yet I dare to look at the theory of pillarization and foresee that the new Turkish society is one that seems to focus on a central authority that may even seem to be at the expense of emancipation, but the truth is that civil authority has prevailed over military coups and detrimental interventions that have led to a social, religious and political emancipation where factions in Türkiye have the capacity to be inward looking by choice and yet be autonomous. Most scholars criticize from modern linear views that are rather perceived to be a threat for the own political and national interests, yet it is profoundly significant for the people of Türkiye to find their own emancipation from a domestic sense of nation-building.

I believe that the theory of pillarization provides many tools and arguments to view Türkiye from a different perspective. The Turkish position may often be criticized as highly centralised and all-powerful, but this situation of centrality is not a threat to the integrity of the existing ideological pillars. If the pillarization theory applies for Türkiye as argued above, then the vertical pluralism analysis will lead to a depillarization that bring even more healthy criticism at the expense of elites making fragmentation worthwhile emancipating without being a threat to the ideological (or national) identity creating more egalitarian horizontal pluralism.

I believe that the Turkish pillarization has a much more complex structure when it is compared to the Dutch variant. As seen in the theoretical analysis above the Dutch case developed without military interventions and pauses in the political development of the country. The Turkish version had to go through a forced secularization causing involuntary isolation of religious factions to go underground. However, with the strong leadership of the AKP the result was a preceding emancipation of Muslims as factions in a political way, that seemed to be crucial in the process of nation-formation. I also believe that the political turning point at the beginning of the century has provided incentive for a modern Turkish democracy. The AKP's ideological stance and the Muslim emancipation may very well have been inspirational for the emancipatory zeal of other factions.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This study does not require Ethical Committee Approval and has been prepared in accordance with the rules of scientific research and publication ethics.

Author's Contribution to the Article

The entire study was created by a single author. Author 1's contribution to the article is 100%.

Conflict of Interest Statement

As the author, there is no conflict of interest situation. While preparing this article, there is no affiliation with any organization or individual related to any commercial, financial, or personal conflict of interest. Therefore, the content of the article is presented independently and impartially.

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