

MEASURING THE DECLINE OF PARLIAMENTS: NEW INDICATORS AND TURKEY AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE*

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Abstract

Parliamentary systems historically represent the power of people and are based on parliamentary supremacy. The executive emerging from the parliament blurs the lines between the legislation and executive powers and results in more of a fusion of powers rather than separation. Thus, the relative power of parliament compared with the executive branch has been a subject of study. However, some empirical studies show that the executive branch has been increasing its power vis-à-vis the legislature in many parliamentary systems. As declining parliaments become a popular research topic, the development of indicators for declining parliament gains urgency. This paper revisits the indicators employed in studies on deparliamentarization. In addition to discussing the two commonly used indicators, *government stability* and *responsiveness of governments*, it introduces two new ones: *the parliament's role in government change*, and *the legislative initiative by the parliament*. Then, these four indicators are applied to a country case and analyze the changes in the power of parliament in Turkey. The data on these major indicators show that although not exactly linear, there has been a power shift from the parliament to a very strong executive, and “deparliamentarization” has been particularly rapid and profound since the 1980s.

Keywords: Declining Parliaments, Separation of Powers, Executive Power, Leader Dominance, Turkey

Parlamentoların Güç Kaybının Ölçülmesi: Yeni Göstergeler ve Türkiye Örneği

Öz

Parlamentar sistemler tarihsel olarak halkın gücünü temsil etmişler ve parlamentonun üstünlüğüne dayanmışlardır. Yürütmenin parlamentonun içinden doğması, yasama ve yürütme gücü arasındaki çizgiyi belirsizleştirmekte ve güçler arasında bir ayırmadan çok bir kaynaşmayla sonuçlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, parlamentonun yürütmeye oranla görece gücü incelemeye değer bir konu olmuştur. Bununla beraber, bazı ampirik çalışmalar birçok parlamenter demokraside yürütmenin yasama karşısında gücünü artırdığını göstermiştir. Parlamentoların güç kaybı popüler bir araştırma konusu haline gelince, bu güç kaybıyla ilgili göstergeler geliştirilmesi de öncelik kazanmıştır. Bu yazı, parlamentoların güç yitirmesi konusundaki çalışmalarda kullanılan göstergeleri yeniden ele almakta; yaygın olarak kullanılan iki göstergeye - *hükümetlerin görev sürelerinde istikrar* ve *hükümetlerin parlamentoya karşı duyarlılığı* - ek olarak, “*parlamentoların hükümet değişikliğindeki rolü*” ve “*parlamentoların yasa yapma yeteneği*” başlığıyla iki yeni gösterge ortaya koymaktadır. Daha sonra bu dört gösterge örnek ülke olarak Türkiye’ye uygulanmakta ve parlamentonun gücündeki değişim incelenmektedir. Ana göstergelerle ilgili veriler tümüyle aynı yönde olmasa da, 1980’den sonra Türkiye’de parlamentonun üstünlüğünden güçlü yürütmeye doğru büyük ve hızlı bir kuvvet aktarımını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Parlamentoların Güç Yitirmesi, Kuvvetler Ayrımı, Yürütmenin Gücü, Lider Hegemonyası, Türkiye

* Makale geliş tarihi: 28.09.2017
Makale kabul tarihi: 08.01.2018

Measuring the Decline of Parliaments: New Indicators and Turkey as an Illustrative Case

Introduction

In the process of democratization of European systems, parliaments gained power as the voice or representation of the people (no matter how exclusive the definition of eligible people might be) vis-à-vis the power of the monarch. This was first achieved following the English revolution of 1688, which led to the parliamentary supremacy over the executive office held by the monarch. In time, the monarch's power became symbolic, serving as the head of the state, and the executive power started to be exercised by the cabinet, which emerged from the parliament. Thus, although the parliamentary systems historically represent the power of people and are based on parliamentary supremacy, the executive emerging from the parliament blurs the lines between the legislation and executive powers and results in more of a fusion of powers rather than separation.

Thus, the relative power of parliament vis-à-vis the executive branch has been a popular subject of study. Some scholars note that “it is more realistic to see parliament as wielding power *though* the government that it has elected than to see it as seeking to *check* a government that has come into being independently of it” (Gallagher, Lever, and Mair, 2001: 69). In reference to the pure “Westminster model,” Epstein and O’Halloran writes that since “a majority party in parliament elects a cabinet,” it is “essentially delegating to that body all policy-making responsibilities” (1999: 242). Nevertheless, since the formation and continuation of the cabinet depends on the vote of confidence by the parliament, parliaments do exercise some control over the executive. In fact, laws in many countries imply that legislature enjoys more power than the executive (Powell, 1982; Laver and Shepsle, 1994).

However, some empirical studies show that the executive branch has been increasing its power vis-à-vis the legislature in many parliamentary systems such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Australia and Canada (Haynes, 2005, Liebert and Cotta, 1990: 8-13). This phenomenon, referred to as “decline of parliaments,” or “deparliamentarization,” has been

observed even in Finland, which has been a part of the Northern European tradition known for maintaining strong parliaments (Raunio and Wiberg, 2008). As declining parliaments become a democracy concern and a popular research topic, the development of indicators for declining parliament gains urgency.

In this paper, I revisit the indicators employed in studies on deparliamentarization. In addition to discussing the two commonly used indicators, *government stability* and *responsiveness of governments*, I introduce two new ones: (1) the parliament's role in government change, and (2) the legislative initiative by the parliament. Then, I apply these four indicators to a country case and analyze the changes in the power of parliament in Turkey.

The Republic of Turkey, established in 1923, started as a “parliamentary government” that allowed the parliament, the Grand National Assembly, to appoint, instruct and change each cabinet member at will. It was also dominated by a single party and functioned as a one-party rule for over two decades. After the transition to multiparty system in 1946, the political system of the country was transformed into a parliamentary democracy. Although it failed to fulfill the democratic aspirations of the public and became subject to several military interventions, the system maintained the institutional characteristics of a parliamentary democracy until 2014. Parties competed to gain the control of the parliament, and the largest party in the parliament formed the government and sought the parliament's vote of confidence. The chief executive, the Prime Minister, came out of the parliament and headed a government responsible to the parliament. The power of the President of the Republic remained largely symbolic. As the head of the state, the office was expected to be above party politics and filled through a near consensus of the members of the parliament (MPs).

In 2007, a change in the constitution allowed for popular election of the President of the Republic, and in 2014 the election of the ruling party's leader to the post resulted in a *de facto* presidential system, operating outside of the constitutional framework. This shift was legalized through a constitutional amendment adopted in a referendum held on April 16, 2017. The amendment transformed the regime into a presidential system that dwarfs the parliament and judiciary, thus effectively ends the checks and balances maintained in presidential democracies, and equips the office of the president with extraordinary powers that are common in authoritarian systems of one-person rule.

Even when it was an essentially a parliamentary system between 1946 and 2014, Turkey experienced a variety of government systems, as briefly outlined in Table 1. Given these changes in government systems over the years, Turkey appears as a convenient lab to test the relative strength of each indicator

employed in assessing power shifts between the executive office and the parliament. Documenting the shifts in Turkey would also allow us to understand how a pattern of declining parliament ultimately resulted in the above described regime change, from a parliamentary democracy to a presidential system run by a mighty executive.

Table 1. An Overview of Government Systems in Turkey, 1920-2017

Years	Type of Government Systems
1920-1923	Parliamentary Government (<i>Meclis Hükümeti</i>) There was no formal party system. Assembly could appoint, instruct and change each minister at will.
1923-1945	Parliamentary Government, One-Party Rule Both legislative and executive powers were concentrated in the Assembly, which could at any time dismiss the Council of Ministers, while the Council had no power to dissolve the Assembly to hold new elections. But the party leader controlled both the legislative and executive.
1946-1960	Multi-party Regime, without checks and balances Both legislative and executive powers were concentrated in the Assembly, which could at any time dismiss the Council of Ministers, while the Council had no power to dissolve the Assembly to hold new elections.
1960-1961	Military Government
1961-1980	Multi-party Regime, with separation of powers Westminster rules of checks and balances between the executive and legislative were established and judicial review was introduced. Election system changed as PR. Coalition governments appeared. After 1971 power of executive was increased by the Amendments of 1961 Constitution.
1980-1983	Military Government
1983-2014	Parliamentary system, with separation of powers Though, the President, with some appointment and veto powers. enjoyed more than symbolic power, After 2011, hegemonic party rule and very strong executive.
2014-2016	De facto Presidential system, weak checks and balances Partisan president exercising the authority of the prime minister.
2016- present	De facto Presidential system, with no checks and balances Partisan president exercising the authority of the prime minister and ruling by decree in a continuous state of emergency.

My application of the four indicators to Turkey between 1946 and 2015 showed that the power of the parliament has been declining gradually, though not always in a smooth linear pattern. The decline has been more profound since 1980 and gained momentum during the last decade.

The paper is organized into four sections. After a review of the thesis of declining parliaments, I introduce the indicators and discuss their merits. Then, I apply the four indicators to the case of Turkey. In conclusion, I briefly discuss the factors that contribute to the decline of parliaments.

1. The Thesis of Declining Parliaments

Functions of the legislative and executive branches and their power over each other are not new topics of interest for those who have been studying liberal democracies. Based on their comparative study of four political systems maintained in 17 countries that are located in six geographic regions (North America, South America, West Europe, Asia, Africa and Middle East), Gerhard Loewenberg and Samuel C. Patterson point to the intertwined functions of the branches:

A neat separation between legislatures making laws and executive carrying them out does not exist in any of the political system we have examined. Such separation probably does not exist anywhere, simply because policy making cannot be neatly separated into lawmaking and law implementing. As a result, legislatures and executives are separate institutions sharing policy making in different proportions in different countries (1988: 277).

However, this power sharing has not been in equal terms, and many scholars pointed to the weakness of the legislative branch. Lord Bryce brought it up as an issue as early as 1921. Concerned mostly about the quality of MPs, he discussed the problem of reduced “prestige and authority of legislative bodies” as a trend displayed by the major democratic regimes at the time (Bryce, 1990: 47-56). Observing the situation in the 1960s, Kenneth Wheare made a strong assertion:

If a general survey is made of the position and working of legislatures in present century, it is apparent that, with a few important and striking exceptions, legislatures have declined in certain important respects and particularly in powers in relation to executive government (1967: 148).

According to Jean Blondel, “in the postwar years, legislatures of Western European states often seemed to become increasingly streamlined and increasingly confined to obeying the fiats of strong executives backed by a disciplined party.” He concluded that “Legislatures are rarely ‘strong.’ Even in

'liberal democracies' many complain about their impotence, their decline, their ineffectiveness and if they are strong, they are often blamed for their inconsistency, their squabbles, and thus the same ineffectiveness" (1973: 3-6). Similarly, Loewenberg found the role of most parliaments in the process of policy-making rather limited (1971).

More recently, Graham Thomas argues that executive dominance over parliament could be seen in the context of "a generalized decline in the ability of legislature to control the executive branch." (2004: 8) His views regarding a shift in favor of the executive are shared by others (Elgie and Stapleton, 2006; Raunio and Wiberg, 2008). Hague and Harrop make a sweeping argument that legislatures are not governing bodies anymore, that "they do not take major decisions and usually they do not even initiate proposals for laws" (2001: 208). Haynes draws attention to "transitional democracies," noting that "in most cases both weaker and less institutionalized" (2005: 51). The decline of parliaments is noted to be most common in Westminster-style systems (Crimmins and Nesbitt-Larking, 1996; Dunleavy, Jones, and O'Leary, 1990; Liebert and Cotta, 1990; Raunio and Wiberg, 2008; Thomas, 2004).

How do these authors reach their conclusions regarding "the decline of parliaments," or increase in the power of the executives? While assertions are plenty, the empirical evidence has been scarce. Only few studies present some indicators that can be employed across time and place to assess shifts of power from one branch to another. Thus, it is important to understand the current indicators, their relative strength, and expand on them.

2. Indicators of Deparliamentarization

Measuring the strength of parliaments, and thus determining how and when a parliament is losing power, has been challenging. Although there is no single comprehensive measure (Arter, 2006), analysts tend to examine *government stability* and *government responsiveness* as indicators of the strength of the parliament. To these, I would add two more indicators: (1) the parliament's role in government change; and (2) the legislative initiative by the parliament.

2.1. Government Stability

One of the common indicators, or measures of the strength of the parliament, has been the duration of government (Lijphart, 1999), and longer cabinet duration is taken as an indicator of higher executive power. In his analysis of cabinet duration in 36 democracies for the period of 1946-96, Lijphart employs two definitions of cabinet duration developed by Dodd

(1976). According to Dodd's "*broad definition*", cabinets that are formed by parties that win several successive elections can be counted as the same cabinet, as long as the party composition of the cabinets remains the same. In the "*narrow definition*," two successive cabinets are considered different, if the latter one is formed following a new election, or if a change occurs due to changes in any of the following regardless of holding elections: party composition; prime minister; and, coalitional status.

Examining the cabinets that have been in power in the 31 parliamentary systems, Lijphart finds the average cabinet duration to be 3.09 years, in line with the broad definition that includes 297 cabinets, and 2.12 years, according to the narrow one that includes 504 cabinets (1999: 137).¹ He concludes that longer cabinet duration indicates a higher power of the executive, and this is more likely to happen when the governing party (or parties) has a strong majority within the parliament (Lijphart 1999).

While Lijphart's proposition may be generally true, it is also possible that in a fragmented party system with highly disciplined parties, the MPs would follow the orders of the party leaders who decide to form or dissolve coalitions, and the members of the parliamentary group simply support their leaders' decisions and actions (Kabasakal, 2014). Thus, the short duration of government may not necessarily correspond to a strong parliament.

2.2. Responsiveness of the Government

As some studies of the British and Canadian parliaments noted low levels of parliamentary activities by prime ministers (Burnham and Jones, 1995; Dunleavy *et al.* 1990; Dunleavy *et al.* 1993; Crimmins and Nesbitt-Larking, 1996), Robert Elgie and John Stapleton adopted "the low level of activity by the prime minister and other cabinet members in the parliament" as an indicator of deparliamentarization (2006). Their longitudinal study of Ireland examined the changing pattern of the parliamentary activity of the head of the government. Among parliamentary activities, they took the frequency of speeches delivered by prime ministers at the parliament as an indicator of the level of the executive's responsiveness to the parliament. Following the pattern

¹ Powell also compares the impact of party-system type on cabinet formation and durability between 1967 and 1976 in his book *Contemporary Democracies, Participation, Stability, and Violence*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. See table 7.2 in page 141. He writes that "In India, Turkey, Ireland and apparently Japan, the government did lose control of legislature due to splits within party" (1982: 145).

of change on this indicator, they concluded that the decline of parliament was *not* occurring in the Irish case (2006: 469-70).

The activity of the prime minister in the parliament can, of course, take many forms and different kinds of interventions. Even focusing on speeches would require attention to a range of activities. Among them we can include: delivering a prepared speech during a debate; making a minor or off-the-cuff intervention; answering oral questions; making a formal statement; and, presenting business and protocol items. As these may carry different weights and imply different levels of responsiveness, how they are counted matters. In Elgie and Stapleton's study of Ireland, multiple interventions of the same kind on any single session are not recorded individually, but counted only once (Elgie and Stapleton, 2006).

2.3. Parliament's Role in Government Change

In Westminster model, the prime minister is not only the chief executive but also the head of the main legislative party. The prime minister usually enjoys the authority of selecting and dismissing cabinet ministers (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair, 2001: 49-51). As the party leader, they can be a significant or the sole determinant of the party candidates running for parliament seats. The combination of these roles can create a position of very considerable power over the MPs. This can be most pronounced in countries with a tradition of single-party majority governments. In these countries, the only real threat to the prime ministerial power comes from the governing party itself. Even in coalition systems, the prime minister acquires the office usually by the virtue of having a powerful bargaining position in the legislature, and therefore operates from a position of strength.

Despite the power advantages of the party leaders and prime ministers, the fundamental, in fact the determinant, characteristic of parliamentary democracy is the executive responsibility to the legislature. A government cannot form, or stay in power, without acquiring the support of the majority of legislators. Therefore, the executive in a parliamentary system must have the explicit support of legislative majority. In a number of European constitutions or basic laws, the legislative vote on the government's annual budget is also treated as a vote of confidence (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair, 2001: 57).

Normally, governments in parliamentary regimes are expected to be established upon parliamentary elections and serve until the next elections. The majority party in parliament elects a cabinet, essentially delegating to that body all policy-making responsibilities and its execution. The cabinet then formulates and implements policies until the next elections. Thus, parliamentary elections are the normal procedure of replacing unsuccessful,

undesirable governments. However, an unwanted prime minister and her/his cabinet can be dismissed without waiting for the elections (the timing of which is normally determined by the prime minister) by some politicians controlling the votes of a majority of legislators; they may combine forces to replace the prime minister and the cabinet. A third way of dismissing the prime minister and the cabinet can take place within the governing party, when the party decides to replace its leader. Losing the party leadership means losing the PM office. Since parliamentary democracy works according to principle of “collective cabinet responsibility,” ousting the PM would also mean the replacement of the cabinet.

What is important for our purposes here is the extra-electoral replacement of the government and the extent to which the parliament is involved in the process of dismissal. In addition to what is listed above, several other factors such as disagreement among the coalition partners, the resignation of the prime minister due to health or to acquire another position, a vote of no-confidence by the parliament, or coup d'état may cut the term of the government short. Many of these factors do not speak to the power relation between the executive and legislature. However, the collapse of the government as a result of parliamentary pressure, such as casting vote of no-confidence, can be taken as an indicator of parliament's power over the executive.

2.4. Legislative Initiative by the Parliament

In parliamentary democracies, legislatures' main functions fall broadly in three areas. The first concerns the creation, sustaining, and possible termination of government; the second is legislating; and the third involves scrutinizing government activities and holding the government accountable.

European parliaments are dominated by political parties, which are usually powerful and disciplined. Almost all parliamentarians belong to a political party, and parties expect them to support the party line on all important issues when it comes to voting in parliament. Parliaments are usually dominated by party groups. In fact, it is noted that talking about the parliament is *not* talking about a monolithic body or about the interaction of independent legislators, *but* it is about the interaction of political parties (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair, 2001: 69). European governments are rarely keen on assigning the MPs a significant role in making laws. Governments try to maintain a very high level of party discipline in parliament, control a majority of the seats, and expect their MPs to act according to and in support of the government in the legislative process. Lijphart divide democratic regime into two categories, in regard to the lawmaking procedures in the parliaments: majoritarian and consensual models (1999: 2-47). In countries where governments tend to be

single-party majority governments and the opposition in parliament is effectively powerless, the government does not take into account of the views of the parliament. Almost every bill passed by the parliament is a government bill. Committees exist, but they are all chaired by ruling party members and have a majority of government supporters (Kabasakal, 2016). Some good examples of this type are the Greek, British and Irish parliaments. In Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Italy, on the other hand, parliaments operate as relatively more *consensual systems*. As long as the opposition does not obstruct the passage of bills, the government is usually flexible on the detail, and there is a good deal of negotiation and compromise between government and opposition (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair, 2006: 63-65).

The simplest and most common comparative statements about legislatures relate to the strength or weakness of particular legislative organs. Legislature's relative importance in policy-making should be the sole criterion for judging its strength. In his study of European legislatures between 1945 and 1979, Michael Mezey classifies parliaments according to their policy-making power as strong, modest, and little or none (Mezey 1990). He concludes that for the period studied, the European legislatures possessed modest rather than strong policy-making powers (1990: 168) but does not offer a study of change over time that would allow us to assess if or when deparliamentarization started.

However, we can adopt Mezey's approach and focus on policy-making powers of the parliaments in assessing the decline of the parliaments. Since parliamentary systems typically grant the authority to propose legislation both to the legislature and government, the relative role that each branch play in this initial process of legislation can speak their relative strength. Thus, as a concrete and quantifiable indicator of parliamentary strength, I suggest using the percent of legislation initiated by the MPs, as opposed to those initiated by the government.

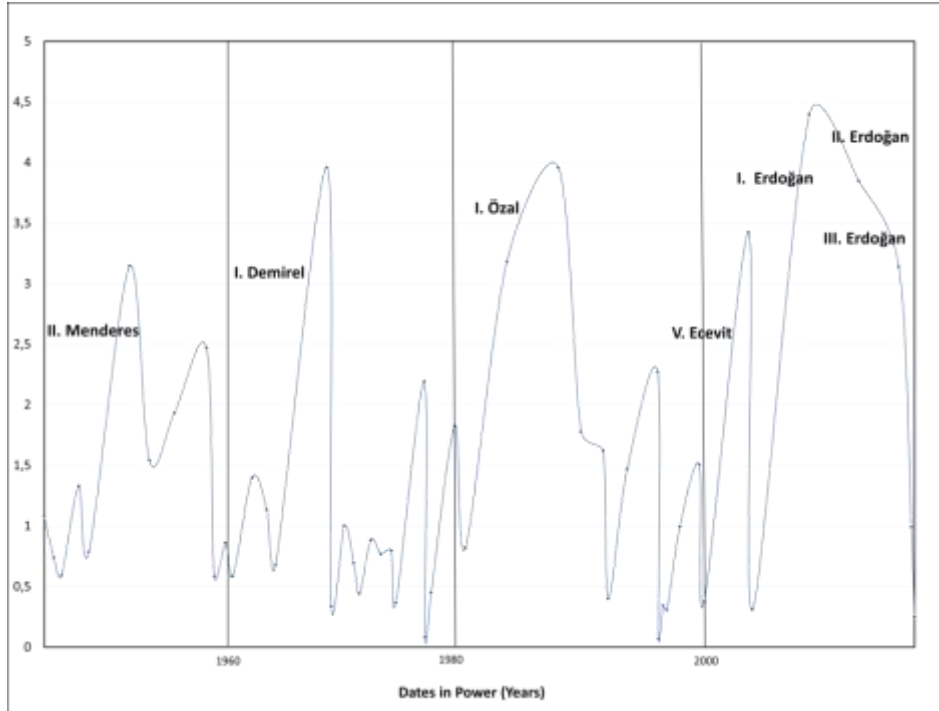
3. Testing the Indicators and the Evidence from Turkey

In this section, I employ the above discussed four indicators of parliamentary strength by focusing on the case of Turkey. The analysis cover the period between 1946 and 2015, during which the country lived under different constitutional arrangements but maintained the basic elements of parliamentary system.

3.1. Government Stability

According to this indicator, a longer cabinet duration indicates a more powerful executive. The elected governments in Turkey tended to be short lived. (See Graph 1) During the 1946-2015 period, 48 governments were established in Turkey, and on the average, they lasted for 1.41 years.

Graph 1. Durability of Turkish Governments (1946-2015)



During that period, the second Çiller government (5-30 October 1995) and the second Ecevit government (21.06.1977 - 21.07.1977) appear as the shortest-lived governments with durability of .07 and .08 years, respectively. Both of them were minority governments. The majority governments performed better. The Abdullah Gül government (18.11.2002 - 11.03.2003) was the shortest-lived majority government, with a durability of .31 year. The first Erdoğan government (2003-2007) was the most durable government, as it lasted for 4.40, and it was followed by the first Özal (1983-1987) and first Demirel governments (1965-1969), both with durability for 3.96 years.

These three, along with the second Erdoğan government (2007-2011) were the only governments that completed their electoral terms. They were all

single-party majority governments, holding over 53% of the total seats in the parliament. The rest of the governments had significantly lower durations. Even Adnan Menderes governments which were supported by a comfortable DP majority in the parliament (holding 70-93% of the seats) served for shorter periods. Five Menderes governments were established between 1950 and 1960, and the first Menderes government lasted for only about nine months.

However, although it is not a perfect relationship, government stability is intertwined with government type. As Powell indicates, “It is quite apparent, from analysis both within and across countries, that the most durable governments are single-party majority governments” (1982: 144-145). He also argues that “There is substantial predictability in the formation of cabinet governments and even more in their durability.” He expects party governments to be less durable when they do not command a majority of legislative seats (1982: 209).

While the head of a majority government that holds a significant percentage of seats in the parliament can afford to be firm with the party’s MPs, minority governments, barely winning majority governments, or coalitions would need to hold on to every single MP to stay in power, and thus they would be susceptible to threats from the MPs. Thus, majority governments established by a single party are expected to be more assertive and have stronger executives compared to minority or coalition governments.

The multi-party period in Turkey has witnessed a number of majority, minority and coalition governments (Kalaycıoğlu, 1990; Kalaycıoğlu, 2002; Özbudun, 2000). This variety allows us to use Turkey as a lab to test the validity of competing arguments. As illustrated in Table 2, although 21 of the 48 governments established in the multiparty era in Turkey were majority governments, they were not necessarily stable. On the average, they lasted for 1.84 years. The mean tests show that the relationship between the type of government and its duration is statistically significant, indicating that single party governments can be considered to be stronger executives compared to minority or coalition governments in Turkey.²

2 The mean tests show that the relationship between the type of government and its duration is statistically significant at probability level of .06 for all 48 governments and at .04, when military governments are excluded (yielding eta values of .397 and .399, respectively).

Table 2. Government Duration by Type of Government (1946-2015)

Type of Government	Number of Government	Average Duration (years)
Majority	21	1.84
Coalition	14	1.30
Minority	6	.48
Military	7	1.07
Total	48	1.41

Source: Compiled by the author mainly by using information reported in Erol Tuncer (2003), *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Seçimler 1877-2002*, 2'nd Ed. (Ankara: TESAV).

Minority cabinets, by nature, are at the mercy of legislature in parliamentary systems and thus cannot be expected to dominate the legislature. Although it is noted that coalitions with comfortable majorities may result in a strong executive branch with minimum threat from the parliament (Raunio and Wiberg, 2008), this has been hardly the case in Turkey, where coalition governments have been typically short-lived (lasted about 1.3 years on average), regardless of the number of their parliamentary seats. An exception was, the fifth Bülent Ecevit government (1999-2002), which was a coalition of his DSP (*Demokratik Sol Parti* - Democratic Left Party), MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* - Nationalist Action Party), and ANAP (*Anavatan Partisi* – Motherland Party) held a comfortable majority in the parliament (63.7%) and had a relatively long duration (3.42 years), but dissolved before completing its term like other coalition governments.

Although it may not be striking, Graph 1 also shows that there has been some changes in average government stability in certain periods. While the average durability of governments between 1946 and 1960 was 1.51, this figure dropped to .99 years for the 1960-1980, and increased to 1.81 in the post-1980 period. This period comparison suggests that the multiparty system in Turkey started with weak parliaments, then parliaments gained power under the 1961 constitution that emphasized separation of power. However, the post-1980 period showed a trend of deparliamentarization, according to the indicator of government stability.

3.2. Responsiveness of the Government

On this indicator, the low level of activity by the prime minister and other cabinet members in the parliament signifies strong executive and the lesser activity over time points to deparliamentarization. The frequency of speeches delivered by PMs at the parliament can be taken as a measure of the level of the executive's responsiveness to the parliament. If the government has a solid majority in the parliament, it is likely to take the parliamentary support for granted and may not bother with responding to the questions raised in the parliament. However, if the government faces a strong parliamentary opposition or thinks that a vote of no confidence is imminent or likely, the PM and senior cabinet members would be compelled to address the parliament and defend government proposals more frequently. Thus, the number of the PM speeches at the parliament may serve as a proxy measure of the parliament's strength.

This measure is particularly relevant to the case of Turkey, because in Turkey, prime ministers have been traditionally expected to attend the parliament to present the government program, participate in budget debates,³ and respond to some criticisms from the opposition. Table 3 shows the frequency of parliament speeches by four party leaders who served as the PMs of consecutive majority governments. Although the trend is not exactly linear, there is a decline in the total number of speeches delivered by the PMs of majority governments.⁴ However, there is a clear decline in PMs' participation in budget debates.

3 The budget process works as follows: The Council of Ministers submits the draft of general budget to the Grand National Assembly (GNA). The draft budget is first discussed by the Budget Committee and then at the Budget Plenary Session by the entire GNA membership. Leaders of the parliamentary groups and the Members of the GNA may express their opinions on each ministerial budget, as well as the general budget as a whole. Prime minister, cabinet members and all of the opposition leaders usually participate in the opening and closing of the Plenary Sessions. Generally, the finance minister submits the draft budget at the opening session. Opposition party leaders evaluate the budget and criticize the government activities; then, the prime minister responds to them. Budget plenary sessions usually take more than a week.

4 Özal's relative activism in the parliament may be stemming from the special timing of his governing. Following three years of military rule and heading the first civilian government, he might have tried to reinforce the democratic tradition and secure his power and visibility as a civilian leader, by being more vocal and active in the parliament.

Table 3. Number of Speeches in the Parliament by the PMs of Majority Governments

Years	Prime Minister	Speeches during the Budget Debates		Prime Ministers' Other Speeches		Total Speeches of PM in the Parliament	
		Number	Yearly Average of the Period	Number	Yearly Average of the Period	Number	Yearly Average of the Period
1950-60	Menderes	72	7.2	171	17.1	243	24.3
1965-69	Demirel	15	3.8	22	5.5	37	9.3
1983-89	Özal	21	3.5	48	8.0	69	11.5
2003-14	Erdoğan	24	2.2	30	2.7	54	4.9

Source: This table is derived by the author from archives of the Grand National Assembly (*Tutanak Dergisi*)

We may add that the declining trend in the PM's participation in budget debates is most conspicuous in later years. In December 2011, when the 2012 budget was discussed, Prime Minister Erdoğan delivered no speeches neither at the opening nor closing sessions, and in 2012 he only spoke twice, once to respond to the opposition's criticisms and then again to thank the parliament for approving his budget for 2013. In December 2013, he did not attend the opening sessions to listen to the criticisms raised by the opposition, yet he took the floor once to respond to the critics,⁵ and he did not participate in the closing sessions at all.⁶

3.3. Parliament's Role in Government Change

Since governments in parliamentary regimes are expected to be established upon parliamentary elections and serve until the next elections, the collapse of the government as a result of parliamentary pressure, such as a vote of no-confidence, can be taken as an indicator of parliamentary power over the executive.

As it can be seen in Graph 1 and stated earlier, governments in Turkey have been short-lived, and very few completed their electoral terms. Although,

5 <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil4/ham/b02701h.htm> (21.06. 2014).

6 <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/tutanaklar.htm> (21.06. 2014). Moreover, although the Law on the Court of Audit (*Sayıştay*), enacted in 2010, requires the Chief Justice of the Court to submit the audit reports to the parliament, this is ignored by the government.

we do not see a linear pattern, there has been some increase in government stability in the post-1980 period. Examination of the relative frequency of parliamentary pressure as a cause of government change for pre- and post-1980 periods implies a decline in parliament's power in the latter period.

As illustrated in Table 4, parliaments in Turkey exercised considerable power over the government during the 1946-2015 periods. Over 40 percent of governments (17 out of 41) collapsed due to parliamentary rejection or pressure (for example, vote of no-confidence, rejection of the government budget).⁷ However, most of such government changes took place during the pre-1980 period. Prior to 1980, 56.5% of the elected governments (13 out of 23) fell due to parliamentary rejection or pressure. On the other hand, in the post-1980 period, only 22.2% of the elected governments (4 out of 18) fell due to some parliamentary pressure. This difference between the periods appears significant at .03 level (Chi-square= 5.003).

Table 4. Elected Government Changes due to Pressure from the Parliament, pre/post-1980 Comparisons

Reason for government change	Period 1946-2015					
	Pre-1980 (1946-1980)		Post-1980 (1983-2015)		Total	
	Number	percentage	Number	percentage	Number	percentage
Due to Pressure from Party Groups	13	56.5	4	22.2	17	41.5
Due to Other Factors	10	43.5	14	77.8	24	58.5
Total	23	100	18	100	41	100

Chi-Square 5.003 p< .05

Source: Compiled by the author by using data mainly reported in Erol Tuncer (2003), *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Seçimler 1877-2002*, 2'nd Ed. (Ankara: TESAV).

⁷ Military governments (1961, 1980-83) and governments formed under military pressure (1971-74) were not included in the list.

3.4. Legislative Initiative by the Parliament

Parliamentary systems typically grant the authority to propose legislation both to the MPs and government. The percent of legislation initiated by the MPs, as opposed to those initiated by the government, can also serve as a measure of parliamentary strength.

The data limited to the post-1961 period show that, in Turkey, on the average only about 30% of the laws enacted are initiated by the MPs, while 70% are proposed by the government. (See Table 5) MPs' legislative success appears to be slightly more in the pre-1980 period. While 32.4% of the legislation in the pre-1980 period was initiated by the MPs, this figure fell to 27.9% in the post-1980 period, although the difference is not statistically significant.⁸ Mezey classified the Turkish parliament in the 1945-1979 period as a reactive legislature with modest policy-making power (1990: 168). Our indicator here suggests that the parliament lost more power since then.

Table 5. The Percent of Legislation Initiated by the MPs vs. the Government

Source of Initiation for Legislation	Pre-1980 (1961-1980)	Post-1980 (1983-2007)
Initiated by the MPs	32.4%	27.9%
Initiated by the government	67.6%	72.1%
Total	100	100
Source: This table is derived by the author mainly based on the figures in Kaboğlu's book. İbrahim Ö. Kaboğlu (2007) <i>Anayasa Yargısı, Avrupa Modeli ve Türkiye</i> , 4 th Ed. (Ankara: İmge).		

The application of the four indicators of parliamentary power to the case of Turkey over time shows that although there is an overall pattern of deparliamentarization, which became more pronounced since the 1980s, the patterns of change on a given indicator was seldom linear. Given that non-linearity, we may conclude that any claim on declining parliaments should employ as many indicators as possible, instead of relying on a single indicator.

⁸ $F=.75$ and is not statistically significant. The lack of significance may be attributed to the small sample size, since only 12 parliamentary periods are included in the analysis.

Conclusion

Although a trend of increase in executive power has been noted, especially in parliamentary democracies, the decline of parliaments has not been observed everywhere or to the same extent. Thus, the variation, especially among similar democratic systems, calls for a closer analysis of country cases. Here, I employed the commonly used indicators that measure the power of the parliament – the government stability and government responsiveness – to examine the Turkish case. But, I also added two new indicators – the legislature’s role in government change and MPs’ legislative initiative. The data on these major indicators show that although not exactly linear, the power shift in Turkey has been from parliamentary supremacy to a very strong executive, and “deparliamentarization” has been particularly rapid and profound since the 1980s.

The literature on deparliamentarization explains the increase in the power of the executive by multiple domestic and international factors that tend to occur simultaneously and reinforce each other’s impact (Pridham, 1990: 225-248). Thanks to the expansion of global governance, proliferation of global intergovernmental organizations, and their regulation of the states’ compliance, the *policy-making processes* have become even *more complex and technical*. The increased specialization and technical-focus in policy- help augment the executive power (Turan, 1997 and 2000; Kabasakal, 2016). Moreover, there is more reliance on parliamentary committees, and since committee chairs are typically held by the dominant party (Shaw, 1990: 241), which is likely to form the government, the system allows the executive to control or influence the activities of committees.

It is also noted that *strong party discipline*, as most common in the Westminster model, allows the party leader to control the party’s representatives in the parliament (Bowler, Farrell and Katz, 1999: 9; Sayari, 2002). Therefore, increasing *authority of party leadership and strong party discipline* facilitate the decline of parliaments (Puhle, 2002; Blondel and Cotta, 1996). *The electoral systems*, which affect the level of fragmentation within the parliament and the type of government (Lijphart, 1999), as well as *constitutions*, which stipulate the relationship between the different branches of government (Norton, 1998: 6; Crick, 1990), also determine the relative powers of the legislative and executive. Constitutional changes, which are not common in established democracies but may be frequent in new and fragile democracies, are considered among the factors that explain the declining power of parliaments.

How these factors work and interact, in general, and for the case of Turkey, in particular, deserve a separate and in-depth analysis, which I pursue

in another study. However, here I can briefly report the preliminary findings and note that all of the above mentioned factors have been operative in Turkey. Deparliamentization in Turkey can be explained by changes in electoral systems that helped increase the power of party leaders at the expense of local party organizations and MPs' autonomy, political party and election laws that similarly enhanced party leaders' control over the party apparatus and reinforced party discipline, and constitutional amendments that reinforced the power of the executive. Turkey's increased integration to global markets, participation in intergovernmental organizations, and particularly its aspiration to join the European Union, also facilitated the power of the executive branch and thus vindicate the arguments about the influence of the external, global factors.

However, before we attempt to explain deparliamentarization, we need to accurately assess if the process is taking place. This study is undertaken as a contribution to the efforts of developing indicators, in order to supplement the previous indicators and help produce multiple and better diagnostic tools.

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