Factional Splits in Proto-Hegemonic Mass Parties:
The Case of the Welfare/Virtue Party in Turkey

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ABSTRACT
How does factional split occur in proto-hegemonic mass parties characterized by ideologies such as ultra-nationalism, socialism or religious fundamentalism? In our study, we show that the struggle of the opposition factions against the party leader’s policies resembles the struggle of the opposition forces in authoritarian regimes. We build a game-theoretic model of factional split borrowing from the collective action theory used in revolution studies: The collective action problem, together with the fact that the party leader possesses an extensive control over the party organization, makes the replacement of the party leader with the opposition’s candidate unlikely. We argue that it is *incomplete power transformation* that typically results in factional split in these parties: The opposition succeeds in accumulating some power vis-à-vis the party leader but this amount of power is insufficient for the leadership turnover to occur. On the other hand, it may be sufficient to establish the organizational and electoral basis of a new party. We apply our model to the case of the religious fundamentalist Welfare/Virtue Party (1994-2001) in Turkey.
1. Introduction

This study attempts to explain how factional splits occur in proto-hegemonic mass parties that operate in electoral democracies. The term ‘proto-hegemonic’ as called by Gunther and Diamond (2003: 178) refers to those parties that ‘strive over the long term towards the replacement of the existing pluralist society and democratic system with one that is better suited for the achievement of their radical transformative objectives.’ The ideology of such parties is usually based on ultra-nationalism, socialism or religious fundamentalism. The most important feature of these parties is that power is concentrated to the largest possible extent in the hands of the leader and as a result, extreme levels of discipline and loyalty are required from party members. In ultra-nationalist parties, for instance, the leader is usually ‘characterized as the ultimate source of power and authority, and the party’s bureaucracy will be supportive if not servile’ (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 178). In religious fundamentalist parties, given the strict reading of religious texts, ‘authority relations within the party are hierarchical, undemocratic and even absolutist, and members are disciplined and devoted’ (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 178). In other words, these parties are what Duverger calls (1964/1954: 63-71) ‘devotee parties’ or what Neumann (1956) calls ‘parties of total integration.’

The literature on factionalism is quite rich when it comes to understanding factional splits from democratic, pluralistic parties. The existing research suggests two main forces that trigger factional splits: External environment, i.e. competitiveness of the political market, events such as electoral defeats, a change in the party system, constitution or laws concerning political parties and internal factors such as intra-party rules; agents’ preferences, strategies and actions. The external environment and internal factors are often interlinked and it is their interaction that
brings change to a status-quo balance of power within the party (Barnea and Rahat 2007: 389; Ceron 2012: 188). In this study, we argue that studying these interactions should take into account a third variable: the type of the party. As aptly put in a study, strategic decisions are not made in a vacuum and it is the context that favors certain strategies over others (Hellman 2011: 473). Thus, it makes sense to presume a distinct path for factional splits within the context of proto-hegemonic mass parties where power resides only in one single leader, compared to the context of pluralistic parties. Within pluralistic parties, the outcomes of decision-making processes such as selecting candidates, electing leaders or developing policies are often democratic and reflect the preferences of several factions through the proportion of votes that each faction receives (Ceron 2012, Levy 2004: 251). Within proto-hegemonic mass parties, on the other hand, the struggle of the opposition factions over such decision-making processes resembles the struggle of the opposition forces in authoritarian regimes. Proto-hegemonic mass party leaders, just like authoritarian governments, are characterized by their power to reward the loyal and repress those who dissent (Wintrobe 1998).

In our study we build a game-theoretic model of factional split in proto-hegemonic mass parties. We borrow from the collective action theory as first described by Olson (1965) and used in revolution studies: Just like the citizens of an authoritarian regime attempting to organize a revolution, members of the proto-hegemonic party do not join the opposition unless they expect others to join. This collective action problem, together with the fact that the party leader possesses an extensive control over the party organization, makes the replacement of the party leader with the opposition’s candidate unlikely. If the opposition does succeed in accumulating some power vis-à-vis the party leader but this amount of power is
insufficient for the leadership turnover to occur, we speak of an incomplete power transformation in the party. We argue that in proto-hegemonic mass parties this incomplete power transformation typically results in factional split: On the one hand, the opposition is not powerful enough to replace the party leader; but on the other hand, it may be sufficiently powerful to establish the organizational and electoral basis of a new party.

Our article is organized in the following way. The first section provides a brief overview of the existing literature on factional splits and outlines the theoretical framework of this study based on collective action and revolution theories. In the second section, building upon these theories, we present our model. Third, we explain this model through the case of the factional split in Turkey’s religious fundamentalist Welfare Party (WP-Refah Partisi) renamed as Virtue Party (VP-Fazilet Partisi) in 1998. We derive the data from historical narratives and semi-structured interviews with ex-party activists. In conclusion, we provide some generalizations.

2. Literature Overview: Factional conflicts and the decision to split

Factions are organizations of political competition. They articulate interests, and do so in a way designed to win control as much as possible of the overarching party (Belloni and Beller 1976: 545). There are usually two possible outcomes for factional conflicts, which are dependent on both internal factors and external environment: Party change or factional split. Party change may take several forms such as a change in party policy, party strategy, leadership or ideology (Janda 1980; Boucek 2002: 458). An oppositional faction’s decision to split and establish its own party is influenced by similar factors that cause party change since they both reflect power games among the factions. That is why the study of factional splits involves a closer
consideration of party change theories; yet it is not limited with them.

Party change does not happen easily at least until the dominant faction deems a good cause (Harmel and Janda 1994: 265). Among the most noteworthy factors that might cause change in a party is elections. A calamitous or a disappointing election is usually viewed by party activists as confirming a party’s negative performance (Harmel et. al. 1995: 25-26), thus it weakens the power of the dominant faction. Even though electoral defeat is known to be the ‘mother of party change,’ one should look at any type of external or environmental impetus that may cause a party to reevaluate its effectiveness in meeting its primary goal (Harmel and Janda 1994: 264). As Harmel and Janda (1994: 276) clearly explain, an environmental event is ‘a specific happening that occurs at a particular time (or over a defined period) and that is publicly recorded.’ An election, in this sense, is an environmental event and so is a constitutional reform, or emergence of a new party. Yet, an environmental stimulus may also come in the form of a shock. The term shock refers to a special type of environmental event, one that has severe consequences, usually for specific parties. Some examples assigned to ‘environmental shocks’ would be the Watergate affair and President Nixon’s resignation, which affected the internal politics of the Republican Party in the US; or the collapse of the Berlin Wall, which ended the rule of communist parties in Eastern Europe (Harmel and Janda 1994: 276). In such environmental shocks, dominant faction is likely to move quickly and dramatically to refashion the party in ways, which better reflect its own preferences (Harmel and Tan 2003: 411).

Apart from external stimuli, party change can occur based on a number of internal factors, particularly those related to party leadership: When one leader is replaced by another of more positive orientation regarding change, the change of
leader itself may prove to be a facilitating event. Similarly, the leader's own wishes may be the ultimate cause of change (Harmel et. al. 1995: 4-5). On the other hand, internal conflicts arising from competing demands among different factions may produce a new dominant coalition/faction, and ultimately result in changes in the party (Harmel et. al. 1995: 7). At the time of conflicts, the oppositional factions in a party may proactively engage in strategies to achieve reforms without having to wait for an external window of opportunity such as an environmental or a leadership change (Hellman 2011a: 456). Strategies such as open mobilization of collective action against the dominant faction (i.e. displacement), or hidden preferences to change the ways in which the original rules structure behavior (i.e. layering) may help the opposition succeed in their efforts and bring party change (Hellman 2011b: 473).

When party change is considered to provide fewer benefits to the opposition, it is possible to expect their decision of split. In other words, the choice to stay or to leave depends, first of all, on the opposition’s share of benefits (Ceron 2012: 187). For instance, the split costs are excessive under a single member plurality system and high electoral thresholds (Boucek 2002: 475). On the contrary, proportional representation, preference vote and single non-transferable votes in multi-seat constituencies may promote intra-party competition, as was the case with Italy and Japan respectively until the early 1990s. Another encouraging factor for the decision of split may be the emerging crosscutting cleavages as new cleavages have the potential to factionalize existing parties (Boucek 2009: 474); and provide the necessary raw materials for the establishment of a new party. In short, factional split depends on the opposition’s own realization of its chances in winning seats in an upcoming election within the framework of the existing political conjuncture. Any new party would fail to win seats if it cannot mobilize at least a minimum amount of
resources, specifically a certain number of members, a certain sum of money, some mass media attention and effective leadership (Lucardie 2000: 182). Unless these conditions are met, split would be irrational since it would mean an exclusion from the spoils of office and from a guaranteed share of party resources (Boucek 2002: 479). This is especially the case when the party is in government having access to public resources, which can easily be distributed in the form of rewards and incentives to party members (Bolleyer 2009).

Particular strengths notwithstanding, all of the foregoing explanations on party change and factional splits tend to neglect another variable: the type of party organization. In proto-hegemonic mass parties, there is no dominant faction, but rather a single dominant leader who claims to be the owner of the party. Loyalty to the leader and his party is the mainstream trend among party members. A member’s forming or joining an opposition faction can further be punished through repression or marginalization in the party. In this respect, when considering the effects of external environment or internal factors on factional splits in such parties, one needs to take into account a context similar to authoritarian regimes: In order to sustain his power, the leader would constantly increase the costs of joining the opposition and provide rewards for loyalty to his leadership (Wintrobe 1998, Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, Magaloni 2006, Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). The costs of establishing a new party may be high for the opposition at the initial stage due to limited resources. Thus, we assume that the opposition would rather first aim to transform the balance of power within the party rather than split. Then, the context would be similar to the mobilization of rebellious collective action in authoritarian regimes.

As pointed out many times in the literature (e.g. Tullock 1974, Muller and Opp 1986, Lichbach 1995, Leeson 2010), the most fundamental collective action
problem in organizing a successful revolution is the ‘participation problem.’ In order for revolution to be successful, a sufficient number of individuals must participate. If an individual expects that more than this sufficient number will participate, she has an incentive to free ride since the revolution will be successful even without her effort. If on the other hand she expects that less than this sufficient number will participate she will abstain because her effort is not sufficient for revolutionary success. Hence, an individual participates in a revolution only if this participation can make a difference (Leeson 2010: 297).

The second problem in organizing a revolution is a ‘first-mover problem.’ Even if everyone is willing to participate in the revolution, no individual has an incentive to be its leader. If rebellion fails, the leader suffers from the severe levels of punishment. In contrast, following rebellion largely secures one against this possibility. Thus, among those desiring to revolt, everyone wishes to follow instead of lead. Without someone to initiate it, the rebellion doesn’t happen (Leeson 2010: 297).

While we consider the participation problem of collective action in our formal modeling of factional splits, we do not take into account the first-mover problem. We assume that the costs of being the opposition leader in an intra-party struggle is not as high as being the opposition leader in an authoritarian regime. All in all, we would not expect that the leader of the opposition faction to fear death penalty as in authoritarian regimes since our focus is the nature of proto-hegemonic mass parties functioning in electoral democracies. The costs of being in the opposition faction are considered to be similar both for members and leaders, which is based on ‘marginalization’ or ‘deprivation of material benefits’ in the party.

We argue that it is through incomplete power transformation from within that the oppositional faction starts calculating the costs and benefits of campaigning as a
separate party in the electoral system. In proto-hegemonic mass parties, we expect to find a low probability of leadership change due to the leader-dominant structure of the party. That is why the process of power transformation is expected to be ‘incomplete’. Incompleteness indicates a change toward a power equilibrium that is increasingly under stress. The stronger the opposition becomes, the more they want to rebel or retain power from the party leader. Full satisfaction of the opposition is not likely due to the lack of a leadership turnover. On the other hand, the growing organizational and electoral power of the opposition provides an opportunity for the opposition to start considering the split option.

We present our model in the next section.

3. The Model

We introduce a game-theoretic model that aims to explain the power transformation within proto-hegemonic mass parties. We show that if this transformation is incomplete, a factional split may occur. We think about the transformation as a result of a struggle between political programs within a party. In our model, we assume two competing political programs: ‘traditional’ (i.e. one currently pursued by the leader and his party) and ‘reformist’. These programs promise certain election results and coalition potential if they are adopted by the party. Each party member receives a benefit (material or non-material) which is derived from the election result and coalition potential ensuing from a particular political program: the better the election result and the higher the coalition potential, the higher the benefit. These benefits are denoted with $t$ and $r$, where $t, r > 0$, for the traditional and reformist programs respectively. We further assume that there are two types of party members, ‘believers’ and ‘careerists’. According to Panebianco (1988) the former actors are those who
identify themselves with the party goals and the latter are those who benefit from material or status-based incentives in the party. Believers under all circumstances stick to either traditional or reformist program and do not respond to changes in costs and benefits; careerists adopt one or the other program according to expected payoffs.\(^2\) We model only the decisions of the careerists, as the believers by assumption do not choose between the programs. For the sake of convenience, we refer to careerists as ‘party members’.

We assume \(N\) party members who decide whether to support the traditional (\(T\)) or reformist (\(R\)) program. At least \(n > 0\) members are needed for the success of \(R\) and complete transformation of power in the party. For now we assume that \(n \leq N\) and so the complete transformation is feasible. For each player \(i \in N\), the payoffs of this ‘Battle of Factions’ game are defined in Table 1.

\[<<\text{Insert Table 1 here}>>\]

If a party member supports \(R\), irrespective whether \(R\) eventually prevails or not, she suffers costs, \(c > 0\), imposed on her by the party leader in a form of repression. Due to the existence of these costs, there is the participation problem: if less than \(n - 1\) or more than \(n - 1\) other party members support \(R\), an individual is better off by supporting \(T\). If exactly \(n - 1\) other members support \(R\), member \(i\)’s choice is decisive for the success of \(R\). Whether she maximizes her payoff by supporting \(R\) or \(T\) depends on the values of the parameters \(r, t, l,\) and \(c\). These values can be influenced by both external environment and internal factors. In particular, in proto-hegemonic parties, the party leader can to a great extent control the parameters \(c\) and \(l\) as well as the difference \(t - r\) by incorporating elements of \(R\) into \(T\).
The model developed so far is incomplete because it ignores the possibility that the reformists may leave the party and campaign alone. This possibility is relevant if \( R \) receives a significant support, yet this support is insufficient for the complete transformation of power within the party. Formally, we assume that the split option is considered if \( R \) is supported by at least \( m \), where \( 0 < m < n \), and at most \( n \) party members.

The decision to split depends on additional factors, most importantly, a value of the ‘parent’ party brand and competitiveness of the political market. The value of the parent party brand derives from the fact that this party is known to potential voters, has certain reputation and media image. We assume that the value of a new party is zero (reputation and media image of the new party members translate into the parameter \( r \)). Competitiveness of the political market depends on electoral system, number of existing parties and their strength, as well as on intra-bloc volatility. According to Bartolini and Mair (2001), during the periods of high intra-bloc volatility, opposition factions may expect electoral benefits counting on the floating voters within the same ideological bloc. Hence, the higher the volatility and fragmentation of the ideological bloc to which the parent party belongs is, the higher the expected payoff of splitting.

Formally, the payoff from splitting is \( r - c - a - b \), where \( b \) is the value of the parent party brand and \( a \) measures increased competition for votes in the political market. We assume that \( b \) is typically positive but it can also sometimes be negative or zero (for example, if the party’s media image is bad). The parameter \( a \) is assumed to be always positive. Table 2 shows the payoffs of a party member \( i \) in the Battle of Factions game with the split option. This game has many Nash equilibria; we now identify some of them.
PROPOSITION 1: The outcome in which all the party members support T is always a Nash equilibrium (henceforth the ‘T-equilibrium’) of the Battle of Factions game. If $t + l > r - c$ and $t > r - c - b - a$, then the T-equilibrium is the unique equilibrium of the game.

PROOF: If all party members support T, each has payoff $t$; If any member switches to supporting R, she decreases her payoff to $t - c$. The outcome in which every member supports R is thus an equilibrium. If $t + l > r - c$ and $t > r - c - b - a$, then Support T is the dominant action of the Battle of Factions game and the T-equilibrium is the unique equilibrium of the game.

PROPOSITION 2: If $t + l \leq r - c$, then the outcomes in which exactly $n$ party members support R and $N - n$ members support T, are Nash equilibria (henceforth the ‘R-equilibria’) of the Battle of Factions game.

PROOF: $n$ members supporting R receive payoff $r - c$ while $N - n$ members supporting T receive $r$. Switching from supporting R to supporting T is not profitable as $t + l \leq r - c$; switching from supporting T to supporting R is also not profitable as $r > r - c$.

PROPOSITION 3: If $r - c \leq t \leq r - c - b - a$, the outcomes in which exactly $n - 1$ members support R and $N - n + 1$ members support T are Nash equilibria of the Battle of Factions game with split option. In these equilibria the reformists leave the party.

PROOF: $n - 1$ members supporting R receive payoff $r - c - b - a$, while $N - n$ members supporting T receive $t$. Switching from supporting R to supporting T is not
profitable as \( t \leq r - c - b - a \); switching from supporting \( T \) to supporting \( R \) is also not profitable as \( r - c \leq t \).

Note that the condition in the proposition 3 implies that \( -b \geq a \), i.e. the value of the parent party brand must be negative and sufficiently low. This, however, is not the only type of situation in which the factional split occurs. Another type is characterized by the impossibility to achieve the complete transformation of power in the party. We surmise that this impossibility is typical for proto-hegemonic parties where the party leader has large control over the party organization. To model this situation we now assume that \( m \leq N < n \) so that only incomplete transformation of power is feasible.

**PROPOSITION 4:** Let \( m \leq N < n \) and \( t \leq r - c - b - a \); then the outcomes in which all party members support \( R \) are Nash equilibria of the Battle of Factions game with split option.

**PROOF:** If all party members support \( R \), each receives payoff \( r - c - b - a \); If any member switches to supporting \( T \), she obtains \( t \). Since \( t \leq r - c - b - a \), the outcome in which every member supports \( R \) is an equilibrium.

In the next section we present our case study and apply our model to explain the incomplete power transformation and the split of the reformist faction within the religious fundamentalist Welfare/Virtue Party in Turkey in the 1990s and early 2000s.


Political parties in Turkey have long been dependent on the state elite (the military or judiciary) for their survival in office. Mardin (1973) situates this problem as the center-periphery cleavage in Turkey. The cleavage indicates the long-lasting conflict between a ‘nationalist, centralist, laicist, cohesive state elite’ and a ‘culturally
heterogeneous, complex, and even hostile periphery with religious and anti-statist overtones’ (Kalaycıoğlu 1994: 403). The religious parties in Turkey are one of peripheral forces and have been regarded as ‘security threats’ by the center, i.e. the military and judiciary. These parties have often been branded with coercive measures or been subject to ‘securitization’ (Yavuz 2003: 239). The military intervened in politics at the moments of what it considered an internal threat against the Republic, i.e. ethnic separatism or religious fundamentalism (Heper and Güney 2000: 637). Yet, in all cases of overt interventions, following a process of ‘securitization,’ the military went back to its barracks as it saw electoral competition among political parties as fundamental to Turkish democracy. On the other hand, the Constitutional Court, allying with the military, has for long pursued ‘selective activism’ based on the principle of secularism, which led to several dissolutions of religious parties (Belge 2006: 656). Thus while electoral defeats serve as external events, a military intervention or a court’s decision to ban religious parties constitutes the external shock in this context, which may intensify factionalism or affect intra-party politics.

Since the 1960 military intervention, the Turkish electoral system is characterized with proportional representation. The 1980 constitution further introduced a 10 percent national threshold in Turkey. Our case, VP, was established in 1998 as the successor of WP, which was banned by the Constitutional Court in January 1998 due to its religious discourse and activism. The party belonged to the pro-Islamist movement called National Outlook (Milli Gorus) aimed at forming an Islamic front together with other Muslim societies. The parties established under the National Outlook tradition have experienced a long record of being banned from politics because their identity claims were interpreted as a threat to ‘secularism’ by the military and judiciary (See Table 3).
Following a number of external events and shocks in the Turkish party system (military intervention in 1997, party ban in 1998, and electoral setback in 1999 – for more details see below), a reformist opposition emerged within the party, criticizing the radical policies of the traditionalist party leader, Necmettin Erbakan, who clashed with the secularist bloc of the state. Later on, the reformists strengthened their position vis-à-vis the leader to such an extent that the party had to experience a competitive leadership contest in 2000. The results showed the significant level of power of the opposition vis-à-vis the party leader. That is, 45 per cent voted for reformists while 55 per cent voted for traditionalists. Yet, the contest did not result in a leadership turnover. Shortly after the Constitutional Court’s decision to close VP; the reformists split and established JDP (Justice and Development Party / Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) whereas the traditionalists established the FP (Felicity Party / Saadet Partisi) in 2001.

5. Applying the Model of Factional Split
We divide the transformation of the Welfare/Virtue Party (WP/VP) into three periods: first period is before 1997 during which the WP gained large support and won elections; second period is between 1997-1998 during which the WP had to resign from the government and was eventually banned; and the third and final period is between 1998-2002 in which the successor of WP, the VP was established but suffered an early electoral setback. At the end of this period, VP was banned and replaced by two parties: JDP and FP.
5.1. Welfare Party before 1997

In midst 1990s, the WP emerged as a significant actor in the party system through two electoral victories, first in the local elections in 1994 and the national elections in 1995. In the local elections, the WP managed to win the municipal offices in two crucial metropolitan cities; Ankara and İstanbul. In 1995, the WP, for the first time, obtained the largest number of votes in the general election (See Table 2). Through forming a coalition with the center-right True Path Party (TPP – Doğru Yol Partisi), Erbakan became the Prime Minister of Turkey.

During this time, Erbakan established his domination over the party organization through developing an extensive grassroots clientelistic network, not only by offering its members and activists material benefits such as fuel, food and various commodities but also creating a personal atmosphere of closeness, affection, companionship (Ayata 1996: 52). These were effective incentives that sustained the loyalty of the party on the ground both in material and ideological sense.

Based on these observations, we surmise that during this period both \( t \) and \( b \) were high. There seem to have been no viable alternative to the traditional program of the party, and so we may assume that \( t > r \) and also \( t > r - c - b - a \). By proposition 1, supporting \( T \) was a dominant strategy in the Battle of Factions game and this game thus had a unique equilibrium, the \( T \)-equilibrium.


The party organization was in the form of a united front when it came to power in 1995 elections. The first conflict of interests within the party emerged, following the military intervention in 1997. At a monthly meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on 28 February 1997, the Council presented a program of 18 proposals to
prime minister to stop what the Council perceived as Islamization of Turkey. Erbakan had to resign when the pressure on his coalition partner, the centre–right TPP, was increased by the resignation of 15 of this party’s deputies (Tanıyıcı 2003: 474). The intervention is also recognized as the ‘February 28 case’ since it has significantly shaped the aftermath of Turkey’s political life. The February 28 case caused the rise of a conflict mainly between Erbakan supporters and the leading young activists in the party such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Abdulkadir Aksu and Bülent Arınç.

The February 28 case showed that it was not possible for the party to continue as a strong actor in the political system with its religious appearance against a strictly secular state elite (i.e. the military). Yet, the resignation of Erbakan from the governmental office raised the first reaction among the leading activists, as they considered that this act meant having accepted the ‘failure’ vis-à-vis the military. Together with his resignation, they believed that Erbakan was weakening the image of the party in the eyes of the voters and thus depriving the party and themselves of the party’s main power resources. Bekaroğlu (2007: 94), in his memoir book, explains that it was this reaction that caused the beginning of conflicts between the leading activists and Erbakan.

In the language of our model, these events meant a decrease in $t$ and an increase in $r$ and thus an increase in the attractiveness of the reformist program. These effects were even reinforced when it became evident that the WP was going to be outlawed by the Constitutional Court.\footnote{Erbakan responded with an increase in $c$ to discourage potential supporters of the reformists. His reaction was harsh, bringing more authoritarianism to the party: when Erdoğan stated that he wanted to play an active role in the establishment of a
new party, Erbakan made it explicit that he did not want him to be involved in this process. Moreover, Erbakan prohibited Erdoğan from continuing his country tours where he was trying to shape the political agenda of the new party (Hürriyet Daily Newspaper, 18 December 1997). Yet, Erbakan could not repress the reformists effectively, as he was spending too much time on personal issues, such as preparing defense declarations regarding the ban on his political career (Interview with Mehmet Bekaroğlu, 10 January 2010).

Based on the fact that the reformist program gained support from Erdoğan, Gül, and others, we conjecture that sticking to the traditional program ceased to be the dominant strategy, i.e. $r - c > t + l$ and/or $r - c - b - a > t$. By the propositions 2 and 4, in addition to the $T$-equilibrium new equilibria emerged in which party members support $R$.

5.3. Virtue Party between 1998-2001

In January 1998, WP was banned by the Constitutional Court due to its religious discourse and activism and was replaced by the VP. Erbakan was banned from political life, which meant that the leader of the new party was going to be someone else. The question of who was going to be the new leader to the successor party was a major problem: if the new leader was going to be one of the young leading activists, among whom Erdoğan was the strongest candidate due to the support he received from the grassroots, it would signal a significant change for the party (Hürriyet Daily Newspaper, 23 February 1998). Yet, Erbakan chose his loyal friend Kutan and made a call for obedience for his decision among the activists. In this way, he would still be able to control the party even though he was banned from politics. As a result of this choice, Arınç and Erdoğan as well as other parliamentarian activists supporting them
showed a big hesitation to join the newly established VP (Hürriyet Daily Newspaper, 24 February 1998). Yet, they later on decided to join. We assume they decided this way not only because the party was still in government (parameter $b$ was high) but also because the reformists aimed at complete power transformation through waiting for their turn to nominate their own candidate for party leadership in the upcoming party congress (they assumed that $n \leq N$).

In 1999 the VP experienced electoral setback in the national elections (see Table 4). The vote percentage of the party decreased by seven percentage points and the party entered the parliament only as an opposition. Due to this setback, the reformists for the first time explicitly mentioned that Erbakan had to give up his influence over the party. They demanded major changes within the party: change in leadership, organizational tactics, and party discourse (Hürriyet Daily Newspaper, 23 April 1999).

<< Insert Table 4 here >>

Erbakan’s response to this reaction was more coercive this time: He publicly stated that the electoral setback was the failure of the “so-called reformists who did not internalize the principles of our party” and that they would definitely be punished for their actions (Hürriyet Daily Newspaper, 24 April 1999). In this respect, he threatened the reformists with marginalization in the party.

These events again signify a decrease in $t$ and an increase in $c$. We believe that as the traditional program became less and less attractive, more people supported the reformists. This possibly had two effects: first, given that Erbakan’s resources were limited, the more reformists there were, the less repression on each individual
reformist could have been imposed; second, the more reformists there were, the less supporters of the traditional program there were and thus less people who could have performed the repression measures imposed by Erbakan. We are unable to decide how strong these effects were; in any case, Erbakan’s repressions were not sufficient to discourage the reformists.

Parameter \( t \) decreased even further as a result of the headscarf crisis during the oath-taking ceremony in the parliament on 2 May 1999. The VP parliamentarian Merve Kavakçı, who refused to take off her headscarf, was brought to the Grand National Assembly by another female VP parliamentarian. This incident led to breakout of a substantial parliamentary crisis. Once again the VP began to be perceived as the focus of religious activism by the secular state elite. Thus, once more, the Court of Appeals filed a petition to the Constitutional Court to ban the VP on 7 May 1999. The reformists argued to stand behind their parliamentarian who was, according to them, subject to maltreatment in the parliament due to her personal religious preferences. As Kavakçı-İslam later on points out:

The incident of May 2 revealed all that the reformists were a clearly separate and cohesive group opposing Erbakan’s policies. After the incident, I was left all alone by the top administration of the party. It was Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül who supported me most against the party leadership (Interview with Merve Kavakçı-İslam, 14 January 2011).

On the other hand, Erbakan’s team and Kutan wanted her to be silent and resign from her duty. Thus now, there was another conflict on this specific issue of headscarf between the reformists and Erbakan supporters. This time, the party leadership looked more weakened in the eyes of the grassroots activists because it was the leadership that refrained from the main principles of the party (Bekaroğlu 2007: 111).
The extent of the support of the reformist program was revealed at the VP’s party congress on 14 May 2000. Prior to this congress, the leading reformist, Abdullah Gül declared his candidacy for the party leadership against Kutan. In fact, the leader of the reformists was considered to be Erdoğan but he could not be a candidate since he was also subject to political ban after being convicted of inciting Islamization for reading a poem with martial Islamic images. Erbakan continued to increase his authoritarian measures by selecting delegates who would represent his interests in the congress and prevent the danger of leadership change. He stated that:

There is a custom, a tradition in the party. Abdullah is our son but he is too young. He was weak and became the victim of his own desire and inexperience. One cannot be a candidate for the leadership position through the encouragement of his friends and the grassroots. This act provokes the emergence of rival opinions, which undermines our unity. The party leader should be determined through advisement and the voting takes place according to that decision (Hürriyet Daily News, 12 May 2000).

Yet, these words did not prevent the leadership contest that was to take place in the congress. The Erbakan faction even changed the party bylaws in order to avoid a possible failure. The change in the party bylaws was designed to deprive some reformists of their voting rights (Hürriyet Daily News, 12 May 2000). Despite all these constraints, while Kutan received 633 votes, Gül managed to collect a total of 521 votes in the congress. The results showed the growing power of the new faction in terms of its support base, yet a failure to remove Erbakan/Kutan leadership, which we call incomplete power transformation from within (formally, the number of reformists was at least \( m \) but less than \( n \)).

In 2001 the VP was banned, following the headscarf crisis in 1999.$^5$ The two
competing factions now established two separate parties: JDP, built around the reformists and FP built around the traditionalists. In 2002 national elections JDP received 34.3%, while FP only 2.5% (see Table 2). This result confirmed the view of the reformists that their program (or perhaps their leadership) was more attractive to the voters than the traditional program (or Erbakan/Kutan’s leadership), i.e. $r > t$.

5.4. Decision to Split

We have seen that over time, the difference $r - t$ increased which resulted in a growth of support for $R$. This process did not bring about a leadership change which indicates that the power transformation in the VP remained incomplete. According to our model, both the increase in $r - t$ as well as the incomplete power transformation pave the road to factional split. In this section we focus on additional factors which in our view contributed to the split of VP.

During the period when WP was serving as the leading coalition partner in government, any news regarding its internal politics was covered extensively in the media. The public fame of the reformists and the weakened appearance of traditionalists had already spread throughout major newspapers such as Sabah and Hürriyet (Interview with Mehmet Bekaroğlu, 10 January 2010). In this sense, the reformists had already accumulated some sources necessary for successful campaigning in electoral competition. The media image was further strengthened with the charismatic leadership of Erdoğan. Prior to the factional conflict, Tayyip Erdoğan had been delegated a very important authority in the party: Erbakan who had prepared the major candidate lists for the 1994 local elections, assigned Erdoğan the candidacy for metropolitan mayor’s office in İstanbul. He later on was elected and served as an İstanbul mayor until 1998. Having shown his leadership as the mayor of the most
important metropolitan city in Turkey, Erdoğan was already appealing to the majority of party members (Interview with Merve Kavakçı-İslam, 14 January 2011). Merve Kavakçı-İslam, who served as a party activist in women wings and later on elected as a parliamentarian from the VP, states that:

Since 1994, in every place he visited, Erdoğan was welcomed in the party organization as if he was the prime minister although it was Erbakan who was leading the party. He was young and idealist. He was very successful as an Istanbul mayor. The members had endorsed Erdoğan as the future party leader and prime minister (Interview with Merve Kavakçı-İslam, 14 January 2011).

Thus, the raw materials to establish a new party were almost in place.

Regarding the competitiveness of the political market, we observe that the right-wing bloc was highly volatile and fragmented at the end of 1990s: The measure for intra-bloc competitiveness was 11.8 in the latest two consecutive elections (1995 and 1999) before the intensification of the factional conflict between reformists and traditionalists. Despite the 10 per cent national electoral threshold, which acts as a barrier against the entry of new parties into the parliament in the Turkish electoral system, there were high levels of fragmentation at the end of 1990s in multi-party politics. As Sayari notes (2002: 18), it was a period when ‘the number of parties represented in the parliament increased during the course of the legislative session with new parties forming after factional splits and through party switches by parliamentarians.’

What explains the split of the VP then? We have shown that the decisive factor leading to split was incomplete power transformation. The balance of power within the party had transformed in favor of the opposition, increasing its support base both in terms of new party members and a supportive electorate. Yet, the
transformation was incomplete due to the proto-hegemonic nature of the party: The result of the leadership elections in 2000 revealed that the change of the Erbakan/Kutan leadership was unlikely. This incomplete power transformation paved the way for the reformists’ calculation of the split option, which was justified following an electoral setback, a parliamentary crisis and the ban of VP (all of which contributed to the decrease in \( b \)) and realized in the context of a competitive electoral market characterized with a volatile right-wing bloc (low level of parameter \( a \)). The national election results of JDP and FP in 2002 indicate that \( r > t \) and thus it seems that the decision of the reformists to split was rational.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

We have shown that in proto-hegemonic mass parties in which power is concentrated in the hands of a single leader and party loyalty is the mainstream trend among the members, factional splits tend to occur because of an incomplete power transformation. We argued that due to the absolute authority of one single leader on programmatic issues and other decision-making processes, oppositional factions can hardly achieve a complete transformation, which motivates their decision of split.

In our empirical case, external shocks and events (military interventions, selective activism of the judiciary, electoral setback, parliamentary crisis) provided several windows of opportunity for the transformation of the balance of power in the party. However, we think internal strategies of the opposition may bring similar levels of power transformation within the context of other cases as some studies have shown (Hellmann 2011a, Hellman 2011b). What matters in the end in our view is the fact that the proto-hegemonic party goes through an incomplete power transformation from within; which ends with a factional split.
That been said, we think our study further contributes to the moderation theory of radical parties from the perspective of intra-party politics. A number of scholars, following the initial insights of Michels (1962/1915), have argued that vote maximization and organizational survival helps the moderation of radical orientations of socialist revolutionary parties (Kirchheimer 1966, Lipset 1959, Neumann 1956, Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The moderation theory has been utilized to explain the transformation of Islamist parties into Muslim reformists in the Middle East including the WP/VP case of our study (Tezcur 2010). In these studies, the focus has been to demonstrate how institutional and organizational settings led behavioral and ideological moderation of political elites. Yet, often neglected is the fact that such changes come as a result of a factional struggle. The reformists within the WP/VP established JDP in 2001 claiming to have a moderate ‘Muslim democrat’ identity in the Turkish party system. This outcome was surely a result of their learning process in a political setting where they had to cope with a secularist military and a religious electorate exhausted of party closures and military interventions. Yet, this study has further added an intra-party politics perspective to this outcome: It came as a result of a factional struggle in which the reformist faction had first faced a collective action problem, accumulated power sources in the way that altered the balance of power in the party and following a failure to remove the authoritarian party leader, decided to split.

Moderation may also occur if the party leader himself decides on an identity change allying with the opposition rather than trying to repress it as was the case with the WP/VP. However such decisions may often come at the expense of a loss in leadership powers. We think there is room for future research to explore such dynamics.
Bibliography


Alternatively, we may assume that there are two competing leaders – incumbent and challenger. These two interpretations of our assumption are usually interchangeable.
The distinction between believers and careerists corresponds to Kuran’s (1989) distinction between ‘activists’ and ‘non-activists’.

3 Remember that we mean ‘all careerist party members’.

4 The Court of Appeals had applied to the Constitutional Court for the closure of the WP in May, 1997.

5 The chief persecutor of Turkey initiated legal action to ban the VP already a few days after the crisis. Yet, it took two years to ban the VP through a serious scrutinization process.

6 Calculated by authors according to Bartolini and Mair (1990).
Table 1: Battle of Faction without the split option

\[ x, \text{ a number of other players supporting } R \]

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Member } i & x < n - 1 & x = n - 1 & x > n - 1 \\
\hline
\text{Support } R & t - c & r - c & r - c \\
\text{Support } T & t & t + l & r \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Table 2: The Battle of Factions with the split option

\[ x, \text{ a number of other players supporting } R \]

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Member } i & x < m & m \leq x < n - 1 & x = n - 1 & x > n - 1 \\
\hline
\text{Support } R & t - c & \max \{(t - c), (r - c - b - a)\} & r - c & r - c \\
\text{Support } T & t & t & t + l & r \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Table 3. Islamist Parties under the National View Tradition in Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Year led</th>
<th>Year dissolved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOP</td>
<td>Erbakan</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1971 (banned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>Erbakan</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1980 (banned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td>Erbakan</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1998 (banned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Kutan</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2001 (banned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP*</td>
<td>Kutan</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erbakan</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kutan</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurtulmuş</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kamalak</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JDP*</td>
<td>Erdoğan</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP**</td>
<td>Şener</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVP**</td>
<td>Kurtulmuş</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* After the VP was banned in 2001, the opposition members who had challenged the party leadership one year before, broke away and established their own party, the Justice and Development Party (JDP-Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi). The traditional faction continued its activities by establishing the Felicity Party (FP - Saadet Partisi).

** Related parties
Table 4. National Elections Selected Results 1991-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP/VP (RP/FP)</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JDP (AKP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP (SP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP (ANAP)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP (DYP)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP (MHP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPP (CHP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLP (DSP)</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDPP (SHP)</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP (HADEP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPP (DEHAP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr)

1) Numbers show the percentage of votes.
2) Parentheses indicate the Turkish abbreviation of the party names.
3) Italics emphasize the electoral performance of the parties from the ‘national view’ tradition; the WP and the VP, as well as their successors the JDP and the FP after the party split in 2001.