

Foundations of Freedom:

DEMOCRATIC ENDURANCE AND FAILURE IN ISRAEL AND TURKEY

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hile many other regions in the world have experienced significant advances in social and political reform, the Middle East and North Africa remain anomalies in both categories. Over the last 30 years the Middle East and North Africa were rife with conflict, power struggles, and transitions from secular autocracy to Islamist government. However, despite the turmoil in the broader Middle East, Israel has remained a stable democracy. In contrast, Freedom House has recognized Turkey as a partly free democratic government since the late 1990's, but over the last ten years Turkey has experienced the second highest decline in political and social freedoms in the entire world.¹ Which factors caused the democratic institutions in Israel to endure and which factors caused the same institutions in Turkey to deteriorate over the last fifteen years?



Electoral democracies in the Middle East. Darkest signifies unfree countries, lightest, partly free, middle shades, free. Freedom House, 2018.

This paper will first review the scholarship concerning the general causes of democratic endurance and collapse. Next, this paper will rely on a comparative case study of democratic institutions, as a cross-sectional time-series analysis, of Turkey and Israel between 2002 and 2017, to uncover any differences in civil and political liberties. It is hypothesized that the factors that will most directly support democratic endurance are stable government coalitions and the absence of deep societal cleavages. This paper will conclude by analyzing the effects of democratic endurance and foreign policy on the emergence and proliferation of a global civil society.

Neither institutional nor societal democracy appears in countries overnight. It would be premature to judge a country's success in democratization after a single popular uprising or election. "Democratic institutions" are structures existing in codified law that protect the democratic nature of a government. "Democratic society," meanwhile, refers to interpersonal relationships and associations—including religious institutions—that either support or detract from democracy. True "democratization" stems from the endurance of both democratic institutions and society. This section will attempt to operationalize this dependent variable, as well as key institutional and societal independent variables through the parameters of the ordinal classification system utilized by Freedom House. It will then

analyze scholarly debate surrounding the impact of societal variables on democratic stability versus the effect of institutional variables on democratic endurance.²

There is comparatively little research surrounding the endurance of democracy, as opposed to its consolidation and emergence. The literature is further limited by its predominant focus on *either* societal *or* institutional causes. Very little research has examined the two causes together, or compared their relative power in explaining democratic stability. In one study that does consider both these dimensions of democratization, Diskin et al. present two categories of independent variables to assess why democratic regimes collapse or endure: "The first group is made up of institutional variables, and addresses

elements ranging from the type of regime to the concentration of powers within it. The second group includes societal variables, and focuses on factors ranging from the democratic historical background through to social cleavages."³ This grouping offers a framework for defining, operationalizing, and enumerating the independent variables used to measure relative democratic endurance in this study. In this paper, a country will be defined as democratically stable if it has experienced two or more successive elections and multiparty electoral systems.

The first politico-institutional variables that will be discussed is federalism, "which distinguishes between unitary governments and governments with federal or semi-federal features."⁴ A unitary government is characterized by, "a system of political organization with a central supreme government, which holds the authority over and makes the decisions for subordinate local governments. An example of a unitary government is the United Kingdom overseeing Scotland."⁵ On the other hand, a federal system is one in which a higher government shares authority with subordinate governments and allows the subordinate governments to have certain powers of their own, such as the governments of Germany and the United States. Scholarship relating to federalism generally holds that federal states are more prone to democratic collapse than unitary ones, as federalism can lead to center periphery struggles, as evidenced by the American Civil War.⁶

The second institutional variable is presidentialism, which distinguishes between presidential systems—such as those in United States or France, where government branches hold authority independent of one another—and parliamentary systems, where the executive branch derives its authority from the support of the legislative branch. The scholarship in this case suggests that “presidential or semi-presidential regimes are more prone to democratic collapse than parliamentary ones due to the conflicts that can arise between the legislative and executive branches.”⁷

The last institutional variable, proportionality, is defined in one major sense as an electoral system that represents each political party in proportion to its actual voting strength. Proportionality coincides with another binary variable: stability of government coalitions, which measures the amount of infighting that occurs within the various factions comprising a coalition. These variables are often addressed together as governments with high proportionality are prone to have low stability of government coalitions as a result of popular tension. In certain cases, such as postwar Germany, stable government coalitions coupled with high proportionality have not fallen victim to democratic collapse. A government that boasts high levels of proportionality coupled with low coalition stability will generally be more likely to experience collapse than the same government with high coalition stability. However, both of these will be more prone to government failure than a system that has low levels of proportionality, which decreases fragmentation within the government.⁸

Just as there are several politico-institutional variables that affect democratic stability, so too are there multiple socioeconomic variables that contribute to this phenomenon. The first of these variables is the democratic background of a country—its historical

experience, political culture, and the degree of development of its civil society.⁹ It is hypothesized that countries with undemocratic or mixed backgrounds will be more prone to democratic collapse than those with a strong history of democracy.¹⁰

An additional societal characteristic is the degree of a economic inequality, which many studies have concluded is strongly correlated to violence.¹¹ It is therefore hypothesized that a country with a malfunctioning or weak economy will be at a greater risk of democratic collapse than a country with a stable economy.

The last societal variable, cleavage, is a compound variable, just as proportionality was in the institutional group. Deep societal cleavages marks polities that are divided by rigid ideological boundaries, such as might exist between secular and religious groups. Low societal cleavage describes polities that operate harmoniously with minor policy disagreements. This variable is linked to polarization, which denotes the existence and size of anti-system parties. Research suggests that high polarization leads to the proliferation of extreme ideologies, deepening societal cleavages.¹² Although these two variables are closely intertwined, it is possible that even if a society has deep cleavages, such as those between Sunni and Shia Muslim populations, it will not experience democratic collapse without high levels of political polarization to instigate conflict.

Eva Bellin asserts that the causes of democratic collapse are inherently societal, and stem from a weak civil society, which can include a low rate of civil participation, state run economic models, and poor democratic culture. She concludes that weak civil society often occurs if, “Labor unions and businessmen's associations [lack] credible autonomy [and] nongovernmental organizations

“Despite the turmoil in the broader Middle East, Israel has remained a stable democracy. In contrast, ... Turkey has experienced the second highest decline in political and social freedoms in the entire world.”

[lack] indigenous grounding.¹³ The weakness of associational life undermines the development of countervailing power in society that can force the state to be accountable to popular preferences. It also contracts the opportunities for citizens to participate in collective deliberation, stunting the development of a civic culture, that essential underpinning of vibrant democracy.”¹⁴ This argument supports the notion that even if a democracy emerges or consolidates, societies that have had nondemocratic backgrounds will be more likely to see democratic collapse as they lack the culture needed to support those ideals.

Furthermore, Bellin—in agreement with Diskin et al.—argues that in “state run economies, the public sector continues to account for a major share of employment and GNP generation, and this legacy of statist ideologies and rent-fueled opportunities undermines the capacity to build autonomous, countervailing power to the state.”¹⁵ Bellin suggests that if there are few opportunities for prosperity apart from the state, society will be more prone to accept an autocratic leader who will reinstate rent-fueled economies, and it will be easier for autocratic governments to emerge when people do not have the power to vote with their money. This is corroborated by Larry Diamond, who posits that such governments lack the organic expectation of accountability that emerges when states make citizens pay taxes, and therefore a country with a statist economy will be more prone to democratic collapse.¹⁶ Even if many robust institutions are in place to secure democratic stability, societal underpinnings are a crucial bulwark against collapse.

There are also compelling reasons to conclude the institutional variables take primacy over societal ones. Knutsen and Nygård argue that semi-democratic regimes are much less durable than either full democracies or full autocracies, as authority patterns need to be congruent with social institutions in order to achieve lasting stability. Drawing on this conclusion, they ask, “if introducing democratic institutions in otherwise authoritarian regimes harms regime survival, why would any incumbent create or tolerate them?”¹⁷ The same logic also applies to fully democratized countries: the stability of democratic institutions is in the best interest of the incumbent parties. This line of reasoning implies that the operative variable in the study of democratic stability is not societal, but institutional, as societal variables

can be controlled for if they are not favorable to the instituted government. In their study, Knutsen & Nygård examine regime type and strength of institutional coalitions as variables for stability, either democratic or autocratic.

Knutsen and Nygård first examine the type of authority in place and how that affects democratic stability. They argue that regime characteristics, especially those distinguishing between different semi-democratic types along lines of executive recruitment, participation, and executive constraints are statistically significant in predicting when regimes will endure and when they will collapse.¹⁸ This argument reflects the fact that political institutions perform better if their authority patterns are congruent with social institutions and, more importantly, if they are internally consistent.¹⁹ For instance, unitary governments, which Diskin et al. show are internally consonant, are inherently better at maintaining stability than federal governments, which are not internally congruent, and therefore present opportunities for political rivalry.

This paper will compare the cases of Israeli and Turkish democratic stability between 2002 and 2017, as the democratic institutions of these two countries underwent considerably different changes over this time period. In 2002, Turkey displayed strong democratic elections and appeared close to attaining EU membership, while Israeli politics saw a plurality of political thought and expression despite the Second Intifada. In 2017, the paths of these once-promising democracies have diverged considerably. Start and end-point analysis of these two countries could prove to be an effective marker for tracking and predicting the resurgence, decline, or stability of democratic institutions in the Greater Middle East.

This paper will use William Cleveland and Martin Bunton’s *A History of the Modern Middle East* to explore the origins of the governmental style in Turkey and Israel, and in conjunction with other scholarly sources, it will provide explanatory bases for the change in democratic institutions and society in both Turkey and the lack of such change in Israel. Furthermore, this paper will examine the politico-institutional and socioeconomic variables at play in each country at the given snapshot date (either 2002 or 2017) and at the latter juncture, it will analyze the

explanatory power of each argument across years and countries.

In order to understand the political and social movements within Turkey and Israel, it is first necessary to know the historical democratic background of each country. Turkey's modern political history began with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, "who designated six principles as the foundations of the doctrine known as Kemalism: reformism, republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, and statism."²⁰ Under Atatürk, Turkey experienced increased Westernization and sowed the seeds of a democratic culture and political participation that has fueled the hopes and expectations of its people until this day. Israel, meanwhile, "was established as a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral legislature...and Israel's election law further encouraged the existence of numerous political parties."²¹ Since Israel's independence, its society has developed a tradition of political participation sustained by steady coalitions constructed during the Ben-Gurion era—traditions of representative participation and stability that endure today, despite a contentious political climate.²² In short, both countries have a strong history of democratic culture, which makes the comparison intriguing, as the modern deviation from this original standard is clear in Turkey, but not apparent in Israel.

Country	Year	Political Rights	Civil Liberties	Status
Turkey	2002	4	5	Partly Free
Turkey	2017	5	6	Not Free
Israel	2002	1	3	Free
Israel	2017	1	3	Free

Table 1: Political and Civil Liberties in Turkey and Israel 2002 and 2017²³

In 2002 Turkey underwent an increase in the strength of democratic institutions, as Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's coalition government managed to push through key economic measures. However, there was not an equal degree of progress regarding the political and legal reforms required to promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The Turkish parliament did pass a series of 34 amendments to the constitution, which covered increases in freedom of expression, association, gender equality, and the role of the military in the political process.²⁴ The hesitance of Turkish leadership to undertake the political reform necessary to promote democratization, which resulted from a divide between those who saw EU membership as a pathway to prosperity and those who wanted to continue to adhere to the principles of Kemalism, dictated a much more nationalist foreign policy.



The Israeli Knesset celebrating its 61st anniversary. Wikimedia Commons 2010.

In 2002 Turkey operated as a primarily unitary government, meaning that "the general characteristic of the framework within which Turkish local government units were established and expected to function has been centralization, with the central government exercising its power and authority over their functioning."²⁵ Dirkin et al. argue that unitary governments are less likely to cause the collapse of democratic institutions due to the lack of center-periphery struggles, which in the case of Turkey are manifested in divisions between urban and rural areas.

Secondly, Turkey operated on a primarily parliamentary

system, and in the 2002 elections “the Justice and Development Party (AKP), headed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, took 363 of the 550 seats in the national assembly.”²⁶ Again, Dirkin et al. conclude that parliamentary governments lead to a more stable democratic institution, as presidential governments allow for the possibility of conflict between the executive and legislative branches.²⁷ Lastly, Turkey exhibited relatively high instability among government coalitions in 2002, despite the election of Ahmet Necdet Sezer as president by the ruling coalition in parliament. This instability was partially expressed in the dissolution due to corruption charges of a ruling coalition formed by the center-right Motherland (ANAP), the social-democratic Democratic Left (DSP), and the conservative Democratic Turkey parties. Turkey’s instability was also reflected in the disintegration of the Virtue Party into the Happiness Party and the AKP.²⁸ The high levels of instability in government coalitions, when combined with the high proportionality observed, indicate an increased level of fragmentation in the political atmosphere that hints at the source of Turkey’s current struggles.

Socially, Turkey exhibited relatively minor cleavages in civil society in 2002, as it experienced significant interparty cooperation most likely resulting from its EU candidacy. During this period, “Major constitutional amendments expanded the formal freedoms of expression, association, press, and religion, while expanding minority rights and civilian

authority over the military which were legislated with cooperation across Islamist-secularist ideological fault lines.”²⁹ A popular army, a pro-secular president, and the possibility of EU membership, curbed skeptics’ fears of democratic instability. Despite a history of deep social cleavages, the societal landscape—heavily influenced by the EU—encouraged secular-religious cooperation that pointed to a greater chance for democratic stability, yet the fragility of the EU’s offer meant this minor cleavage had the potential to reemerge. This societal cleavage, however minor at the time, was exhibited in low levels of polarization in Turkey’s parliament, most likely stemming from the same causal factor: EU membership. In overall terms, however, the potential of EU membership depolarized the Turkish parliament as the sense of cooperation in pursuit of a greater cause smoothed over the ever present secular-religious cleavage.

The Turkish economy was also affected heavily by EU candidacy, which led the Turkish government to “[lift] obstacles to privatization, [attract] foreign direct investment, and [tackle] corruption.”³⁰ Just as Dirkin et al. would predict, Turkey’s flourishing economy provided a foundation for democratic stability. However, as was the case in the discussion of societal cleavages, it is important to note the causal importance of Turkey’s EU candidacy in 2002. Without the prospect of joining the EU, it is very likely that Turkey would have experienced less economic growth and deeper social cleavages.



Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1921. Wikimedia Commons.

The 2002 summary on Israel provided by Freedom House reflects not only the ongoing and intensifying conflict that was the Second Intifada, but also the landslide election of “the right-wing Likud Party leader and hawkish former general, Ariel Sharon.” The authors observe that “feeling the Palestinians were ultimately unwilling to compromise for peace, the Israeli populace, including those on the left, shifted dramatically to the right, with security issues and the specter of war looming large in the Israeli psyche.”³¹ In tandem, the election of Ariel Sharon and the intensification of the Second Intifada limited Israeli civil liberties as security interests were granted greater importance. Despite the relatively lower civil liberties standard reported by Freedom House, Israeli citizens still could change their government democratically and freedoms of assembly, association, and religion were respected.

“Since Israel's independence, its society has developed a tradition of political participation”

Since independence, Israel has successfully maintained a low likelihood of democratic collapse arising from inter-institutional conflict. Israel has a unitary government under the authority of the parliament, or Knesset, which, in conjunction with a popular vote, elects a coalition government every four years. Although Israel has an independent judiciary not under the control of the Knesset or Prime Minister's Office, the Knesset retains a higher elective authority. Due to the lack of competition between the central and peripheral authorities, Israel's unitary government suggests a lower risk for democratic collapse.³²

Although it lacks a unitary constitutional document, Israel has “developed a parliamentary democracy with a vibrant party system where Israelis have directly elected members of parliament and a prime minister, who is head of government, drawn directly from the parliament itself.”³³ In this category, Diskin et al. argue that the ability of a parliamentary system to prevent zero-sum elections and infighting between the executive and legislative branches, lowers the risk of democratic collapse.³⁴

Israel is marked by a distinctive tandem of stable coalitions and high electoral proportionality. As Israeli parliamentary elections are held according to a system of party-list proportional representation, it follows that proportionality in Israeli democratic life was and is relatively high. This conclusion is borne out in numbers: “a party receiving 25 percent of the vote would be awarded thirty seats in the 120-member Knesset.”³⁵ High proportionality, however, has not coincided with continuous turnover and reorientation of political coalitions, but rather with prolonged dominance of the Likud and Labor parties in the Knesset.³⁶ Accordingly, it is uncertain in Israel's case whether proportionality constitutes a factor enhancing risk of democratic collapse, as theorized by Diskin et al.³⁷

Societal variables raise more serious challenges to Israel's democratic stability. One central difficulty of the country's politics that has drawn notice from a broad range of observers is “tension between Israel as

a Jewish state and Israel as a democratic state, [which] sometimes impedes Israel's ability to implement reforms.”³⁸ This secular-religious divide, “so intense, pervasive and lasting that for the better part of two generations it all but sapped Israel's political energies,” constitutes a deep social cleavage that has the potential to severely destabilize Israeli democratic institutions.³⁹ This divide, so significant to Israeli society that it affected party deliberations for more than half a century, indicates a heightened risk for party polarization and democratic collapse.

Lastly, Israel's status as a leading economy in the Middle East is evidenced by its high rate of innovation as well as its ability to allow citizens to participate in their collective economic wellbeing.⁴⁰ 75% of Israel's employable population belongs to the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor), suggesting that Israel encourages its citizens to engage in collective bargaining, giving them a personal stake in the economic wellbeing of their country.

Institutionally speaking, Israel and Turkey exhibited a great deal in common in 2002, as they both had unitary, parliamentary democracies. There was, however, one marked difference that separated the two, and posed a potential threat to the future of Turkish democratic institutions: the relatively weaker stability of government coalitions in Turkey. Due to rampant corruption, many parliamentary coalitions in Turkey were disbanded, and subsequently restructured into entirely different entities. The resulting political gridlock and party infighting put Turkey at greater risk of encountering problems in its attempts to pass necessary legislation, further destabilizing its democratic institutions.

Socially speaking, Turkey's political climate in 2002 was greatly influenced by the prospect of EU membership, and as a result the deep secular-religious social cleavages were temporarily ignored, likely motivated by the massive boost to the Turkish economy that EU membership would provide. Conversely, Israel continued to show deep societal cleavages along religious-secular lines, despite the

temporarily unifying effect of the Second Intifada that rallied the country behind Ariel Sharon.⁴¹ This fleeting consensus indicates that security in Israel, like economic prospects in Turkey, has a unifying effect on a population that usually exhibits deep sectarian divides. With this history in mind, it is possible to analyze whether institutional or societal factors have a greater effect on democratic endurance as a strictly cross sectional analysis. The longevity of the deep societal cleavages in both Turkey and Israel suggests that this variable does not have significant influence on the endurance of democratic institutions, as they have survived despite these cleavages. Rather, it appears that the instability in Turkish government coalitions was a larger source of democratic instability, given Turkey's history of military coups when the secular order of the government is compromised.⁴²

The information provided by Freedom House suggests that by 2017 the Turkish government had restricted many of the civil and political liberties that its citizens once enjoyed, and saw a political restructuring of the parliamentary government as a result of the attempted military coup. Although Turkey still holds multiparty elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dominated the government since moving from the premiership to the presidency in 2004. In addition, Turkey has suffered terrorist attacks by both ISIS forces and Kurdish militias, which it responded to by amending the Turkish constitution to allow for the removal of Kurdish parliamentary members from office.⁴³

The unitary status of the Turkish government has remained relatively unchanged since 2002 and the executive authority still holds power over subordinate governments, especially given Erdogan's recent consolidation of power following the military coup. The most important change in Turkey's institutional variables has been Erdogan's transition from prime minister to president. As stated by Diskin et al., a



Turkish journalists protesting the imprisonment of their colleagues. Wikimedia Commons, 2016.

presidential regime is less stable than a parliamentary regime because of the conflict that can arise between the executive and the legislative branches.⁴⁴ By moving from the office of prime minister to that of the president, Erdogan introduced the possibility of conflict with the legislature if it established a majority opposed to his rule. While this would not have a lasting effect in a country such as the United States due to the assurance of regular elections, Erdogan's move in Turkey suggests a shift toward a greater degree of autocracy.

The cancellation of the most recent elections due to the Turkish parliament's failure to form a coalition, supports the hypothesis that an inability to establish stable coalitions could be correlated with instability of democratic institutions.⁴⁵ It may be further postulated that Erdogan's made his transition to the office of presidency—which he won with an extremely small majority—in order to ensure his continued power, since the likelihood of forming a majority coalition would have been low.

As previously predicted, the end of any serious consideration for EU membership, has led to deepening societal cleavages in Turkey and the reemergence of the conflict between secular and religious groups. Since 2002 many analysts have predicted that the denial of EU membership would reopen the wound that existed just below the surface

in Turkish society. For instance, Kirsty Hughes writes that, “The lack of influence of either the US or the EU on the unfolding crisis is remarked on by many. The EU’s lacklustre approach on negotiating EU membership for Turkey—including the opposition to Turkey’s accession from French President Nikolas Sarkozy—has reduced European influence sharply... ‘The tragic thing is that the EU lost its leverage.’”⁴⁶ Hughes’s argument is convincing, as the secular-religious divide in Turkey has long been a source of contention among Turkey’s populace. Nikolas Sarkozy’s rejection of Turkey’s bid to join the EU isolated Turkey and left no reason for cooperation between secular and religious factions.

According to the Freedom House annual report, Israel saw a wave of stabbing attacks in 2017, despite the easing of tensions with Palestine earlier in the year. While Israel still hosts a diverse and competitive multiparty system, and independent institutions that guarantee political and civil liberties for most of the population, the Knesset continued to enforce a policy of intolerance for organizations and individuals who deny Israel’s Jewish character, oppose democracy, or incite racism.⁴⁷ Additionally, following the end of the Second Intifada, Israel has reduced the restrictions on civil liberties that it created to protect the security of its citizens.

Israel exhibited little institutional change between 2002 and 2017, perhaps an effect rather than a cause these institutions’ stably democratic character. A more noteworthy change occurred in regard to proportionality; an Israeli-Arab coalition party was introduced in the Knesset, which gave a voice to the previously unrepresented Arab minority in the country.⁴⁸ This increase in proportionality suggests Israel’s democratic institutions could become less stable as it increased political fragmentation. This change occurred alongside the destabilization of government coalitions, which also points to a decrease in democratic stability in a country already gridlocked along secular-religious lines.⁴⁹

The deep societal cleavages that were suppressed by the Second Intifada and the united support for security it caused have resurfaced, and renewed the debate of the true inheritors of Zionism: religious society or secular-democratic society. Steven Erlanger suggests that “those who hold to the secular and internationalist vision of the nation’s founders are once again at odds against the nationalist religious settlers who create communities beyond the 1967 boundaries and seek to annex more of the biblical land of Israel.”⁵⁰ Since Israel operates on a system of proportional representation, this sectarian societal cleavage will likely not be resolved on the political level until it first is resolved on the societal level.

On a cross sectional basis, the growing change in Turkey’s political system fuels the ongoing collapse of its democratic institutions, and Erdogan’s move from prime minister to president demonstrates his use of existing government institutions in order to enable a more authoritarian rule. Israel on the other hand exhibited no change in democratic institutions, aside from the emergence of increasingly unstable government coalitions. On a time series basis, Turkey, as hypothesized, saw increased instability in government coalitions primarily due to the end of any serious EU candidacy coupled with Erdogan’s attempt to increase his power. Although Israel has begun to see instability in government coalitions, likely due to the higher proportionality of the parliament, its institutions have remained relatively unchanged. These institutions have shown no signs of devolving, perhaps due to Israel’s uninterrupted history of vibrant democratic culture.

The societal variables demonstrate a clear similarity between Israel and Turkey, as political life largely operates along deep societal cleavages between secular and religious groups in both countries. In 2002, these cleavages were dampened by the economic prospects of EU membership and the security concerns of the Second Intifada respectively, but, as predicted, in the absence of these external variables, sectarianism

“Israel encourages its citizens to engage in collective bargaining, giving them a personal stake in the economic wellbeing of their country.”

has reemerged in both societies and will likely result in increased polarization. As the prospects of EU membership became increasingly improbable, Turkey's economic health worsened, culminating in the appropriation of many Turkish businesses and much personal property in the wake of the attempted coup.⁵² While economic factors had little significance to the stability of Turkish democracy in 2002, there is now a fear that the economic downturn resulting from political instability will encourage further destruction to Turkish democracy. While Turkey has seen significant economic fluctuation due to the changing likelihood of its EU candidacy, Israel has enjoyed economic stability and relatively steady GDP growth and economic civil participation.

While Israel has remained the only stable democracy in the Middle East, Turkey, a partly free democratic government since the late 1990's, experienced the second highest decline in political and social freedoms in the entire world. In order to accurately assess the social and institutional causes for this discrepancy, this paper conducted a comparative case study of the democratic institutions in Turkey and Israel, as a cross-sectional time-series analysis, between 2002 and 2017. The evidence suggests that the institutional variable that changed most is the stability of government coalitions, which has a strong effect on the stability of democratic endurance in Turkey, although it remains to be seen if this same instability will have an analogous effect in Israel. From a societal standpoint, social cleavages that lead to political polarization effectively predicted democratic collapse in Turkey, but the same societal cleavages existed in Israeli society which has not yet experienced the egregious polarization of Turkish society.

This study has implications for advocates of deep engagement policy in US and European foreign affairs, as many times governments have advocated for intervention in another country's affairs without knowledge of which variables to change in order to benefit their own foreign policy. In order to maintain the strategic geopolitical access and alliances in the Middle East enabled by a stable Turkish government, it would be in the best interest of European leaders to reinitiate efforts to reintegrate Turkey into the European sphere of influence through EU membership. As most of the literature points out, the economic growth that Turkish society

expected to attain through EU membership calmed sectarian tensions, and even led to the formation of a relatively stable coalition government. Similarly, deep engagement US policymakers should push for negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, which would hopefully quell the sectarian debate in Israel over whether to follow the Greater Israel or Land-For-Peace school of foreign policy and help Israel remain a stable bastion of liberal democracy in the Middle East

However, this paper does not adequately discuss the implications of foreign intervention, or national identity as causal mechanisms of democratic stability, despite the expansive literature on how Zionism in Israel and Kemalism in Turkey shape democratic stability. This paper also ignored the differences in the respective religious identity of Israel and Turkey. Further scholarship should attempt to analyze the effects of both secular and religious national identity on democratic stability using these two countries as case examples. ♦

Endnotes

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