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RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN AND DONALD TRUMP: DISTINCT POLITICAL ENTITIES, SIMILAR LEADERSHIP STYLES?

Introduction

Since the center-periphery cleavage is widely used in the rhetoric of two highly controversial political figures of R. T. Erdoğan and D. Trump, it is interesting to examine their political careers. Both of them perform their political routes and construct their electoral appeal on the base of the center-periphery divide; it is interesting to observe that R. T. Erdoğan consequently invokes to those who have been excluded from politics by the kemalist, secular elites of Turkey. At the same time D. Trump presented an antiestablishment attitude and an appreciation for the excluded/peripheral segments of the electorate in his recent election campaign.

The presented paper in general aims at qualifying the leadership style of both politicians. While these two leaders function in different political entities and traditions, their perception and understanding of politics seems to be quite similar. An analysis of the chosen public speeches of both politicians and their political actions should lead to conclusions about their leadership style and possible outcomes of their political activities. This is especially important in the case of D. Trump, while he is at the beginning of his rule and R. T. Erdoğan's views have evolved (he has been ruling Turkey since 2002) and have resulted in particular political actions.

The overall role of the rhetoric in leadership is crucial here, while obviously the leaders lead not only through their actions, but also through their words. By the act of speeches, leaders not only announce a particular political vision or political programme to the audience. They also try to do it better and more convincingly, thus revealing and communicating the style of their leadership to the followers and the opponents – as stated by Howard Gardner “Leaders achieve their effectiveness chiefly

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through the stories they relate”¹, and later “[...] it is the stories of identity-narratives that help individuals think about and feel who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed – that constitutes the single, most powerful weapon in the leader’s literary arsenal”². Thus, an effective leader should be aware of the needs, aspirations and sentiments of his/her electorate.

The two mentioned politicians seem to have much in common, although they function in different political entities – they both formulate their political rhetoric on the basis of the center-periphery cleavage. This political category was formulated by S. Lipset and S. Rokkan in the famous book entitled “Party Systems and Voter Alignments”, in 1967. The authors basically argue that there are four major cleavages dominating modern western party systems: (1) subject versus dominant culture (center-periphery), (2) church versus state (church-state), (3) primary versus secondary economy (land-industry), and (4) workers versus employers (workers-capitalists)³. According to them, these four cleavages stemmed from two revolutions, i.e. the National Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, and were crucial in the formation process of the modern European party system. The center-periphery cleavage basically means a conflict between two cultures: the central one and the peripheral one – in the process of state creation, the central culture is shared by the modernizing elites, who aim at the standardization of the legal system, economy and culture. At the same time, the peripheral culture becomes a domain of regional ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities, who are dissatisfied with centralistic and modernizing reforms of the central elite.

It is important to notice that the mentioned cleavage does not refer to the state creation processes and political parties’ logic only, but also it should be perceived as a feature of modern political processes in several countries. In this broad context, the ruling elite can be considered as the central one, while the peripheral one means all those who are/were excluded from vital political and economic processes. Thus, such an approach formulates a platform of comparison between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Donald Trump – the choice of these particular leaders was based on the factor that they seem to perceive politics as a struggle, or better to say, a confrontation between them and their political followers and the others. Obviously, the Turkish periphery differs from the American one, while R.T. Erdoğan claims to represent all those who have been excluded from the politics by the kemalist establishment i.e. the elite that created the modern Turkish statehood in 1923. As long as

¹ H. Gardner, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, Basic Books, New York, 1995, p.9.

² *Ibidem.*, p. 43.

³ S. Lipset, S. Rokkan, *Party System and Voting Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, The Free Press, New York, London, 1967.

he has been ruling Turkey since 2002, also the evolution of his perception is clearly visible – nowadays, together with his growing authoritarianism and control over the state apparatus, “the others”, usually some secret lobbies or the “deep state”, are described as enemies of Turkey and its successes. Since D. Trump also often refers to the “deep state”⁴ and portrays himself as the heroic champion of the forsaken, while underlying his anti-establishment attitude, one can claim that the perception of the politics shared by the two politicians is similar. His anti-establishment attitude has been fully revealed during his electoral campaign and harsh attacks on Hilary Clinton, who was exposed as an emanation of the “Washington elite”. With no doubt Trump would like to be perceived as the president closest to Andrew Jackson – a man of the people. His success in the big rural areas and Clinton’s relative ability to attract more votes in the cities⁵ enables Trump to consider himself as the president of those who are far away from Washington and its political elite, thus forming the American periphery.

Summarizing, one can claim that despite vital differences in the Turkish and American political system, both current political leaders share much in common in their rhetoric and perception of politics in general. This shall be considered as a boost to detecting a set of shared qualities in their leadership style.

Theoretical Framework

Political leadership studies are an inherent part of modern political analyses that reflect the current trends in attributing particular political functions with individuals. As their activities determine processes and decisions that have an impact on the lives of citizens and the whole state, an analysis of political leadership development in contemporary political entities is important in both explaining the present situation and anticipating future.

Leadership is a universal term that might be referred to the various spheres of human activities. Thus, the adjective “political” indicates that this kind of leadership is strictly related to power and politics, understood in general as one of human activities⁶. Another element is highlighting political leadership as a relation between

⁴ *Rumblings of a ‘Deep State’ Undermining Trump? It Was Once a Foreign Concept*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/06/us/politics/deep-state-trump.html> (accessed: 12.05.2017).

⁵ *Mapping How America’s Metro Areas Voted*, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/12/mapping-how-americas-metro-areas-voted/508313/> (accessed: 12.05.2017).

⁶ J. Blondel, *World Leaders. Heads of Government in the Postwar Period*, London, 1980, pp. 12–13.

political leaders and its supporters⁷. While describing political leadership, it can be claimed that it is a relation of voluntary nature between the political leader and his supporters, who make up a ground that is bound together by the realization of common aims⁸. As Northouse, among many, underlined “Leaders need followers and followers need leaders”⁹. Thus, leadership may be also realized within a political party and the party leader is a person occupying the highest position in the hierarchy of party authorities. This definition is based on an assumption that political leadership in general is done on the various levels of the state structures, in which the process of leadership occurs. Thus, we can actually indicate two levels: a) political leadership in formalized groups i.e. party leadership (in a political party), parliamentary leadership (in a parliament group), governmental leadership (in the government) and b) types of the political leadership that refers to the position of the individual in the state apparatus (the highest power institutions) i.e. presidential leadership (president) or premiership leadership (prime minister).

The leadership trait paradigm is most prominent in this paper, which will become obvious to the reader in the following section. As House and Aditya claim: “A large number of personal characteristics are investigated such as gender, height, physical energy and appearance as well as psychological traits and motives such as authoritarianism, intelligence, a need for achievement and a need for power”¹⁰.

Since we have to deal with two highly charismatic leaders, the charisma theory, which represents one of the trait paradigm elements, is also an immanent part of this study. As it will be showed, House and Aditya’s description is applicable for R.T. Erdoğan and D. Trump: “Charismatic leaders are exceptionally self-confident, are strongly motivated to attain and assert influence, and have strong conviction in the moral correctness of their beliefs”¹¹.

While various actions of the leaders were reviewed in this paper, the leader behavior paradigm is also useful in this study together with its basic assumption about the existence of some universally effective behaviours of leaders¹².

In the Turkish politics context, especially the term “presidentialization” gains its importance while the democracy in Turkey is a political leader democracy.¹³ As long

⁷ B. Dobek, *Uwarunkowania przywództwa politycznego*, “Studia socjologiczne”, 1985, no 1., p. 113.

⁸ J. J. Wiatr, *Typy przywództwa politycznego*, “Miesięcznik Literacki”, 1982, no 9., p. 101.

⁹ P.G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5th Edition, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, 2010, p. 3.

¹⁰ R.J. House, R.N. Aditya, “The Social Scientific Study of Leadership: Quo Vadis?”, 1997, no. 23(3), p. 410.

¹¹ *Ibidem.*, p. 416.

¹² *Ibidem.*, p. 421.

¹³ M. Heper, Sonuç, [in:] *Türkiye’de Liderler ve Demokrasi*, Heper M., Sayarı S., Kitap Yayınevi (Eds.), İstanbul 2008, pp. 247–248.

as the American political system can be considered as an ideal-type of presidential regime, R.T. Erdoğan's Turkey finds itself in transition after April 16th 2017 constitutional referendum, while the whole regime will get presidential regime features just in 2019. Thus, presidentialization in the understanding of Poguntke and Webb – “[considering presidentialization] rather than referring to a shift in the formal-legal context from parliamentarism to presidentialism, the informal changes in the working mode of political systems are the main interest, whereby they increasingly come to operate according to a logic resembling that of presidentialism”¹⁴ – has an important role in answering the question about particular leader motivations. It is important to notice that currently the Turkish political system, strongly dominated by Erdoğan and his growing authoritarianism, follows the functional logic of presidentialism in the context of personalization of the electoral process which “follows directly from the natural focus on the highest elective office and implies that all aspects of the electoral process are decisively moulded by personalities of the leading candidates”¹⁵. It should be interesting to observe how Erdoğan's political leadership led to the situation in which he managed to monopolize Turkish politics. Since he seems to share somehow similar worldviews with his American counterpart, one can ask here the question about possible results and influence of Trump's leadership on the American politics and political culture. In this context, the “presidentialization” served as a contributing factor in the findings formulation of this paper.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Donald Trump and Their Leadership

The leadership trait paradigm is closely associated with behavioral, observable personality traits. The personality in general can be considered as “ [...] that pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviors [personality traits] that distinguish one person from another and that persist over time and situations”¹⁶. In the literature five major behavioral personality traits have been indicated as follows: openness (which answers the question about a person being open to new ideas and experiences), conscientiousness (being careful and vigilant), extraversion (oppose to introversion, having and directing interests beyond self), agreeableness (having

¹⁴ T. Poguntke, P. Weeb, *The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies: A Framework for Analysis*, [in:] *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ E.J. Phares, W.F. Chaplin, *Introduction to Personality*, 4th Edition, Prentice Hall, New York 1997, p. 2.

a will to cooperate and being considerate and kind in general), neuroticism (having feelings of anxiety, anger, envy and depressed moods)¹⁷.

Since both R. T. Erdoğan and D. Trump share the presidential leadership in their countries, one can analyse their behaviour within the mentioned personality traits context.

It seems clearly visible that both have a relatively low degree of openness – both seem to be stubborn and reluctant to accept new ideas that are in conflict with their own beliefs. In the case of R. T. Erdoğan, this trait is clearly visible while analysing his political career and a will to change Turkey in general. Despite foreign policy failures and internal troubles, the “New Turkey” postulate has dominated his public discourse almost since 2002. In the case of D. Trump, the basic categorization of “good guys” and “bad guys” seem to dominate his discourse, despite visible challenges in the international environment.

While both politicians have a strong inclination to act quickly and without any deliberation, evidencing little concern about possible unexpected outcomes, their degree of conscientiousness shall be evidenced as rather low. Again, this is easily understood with the look over particular actions in the foreign policy making. For instance, storming out the Davos summit after the clash with Israeli President S. Peres over Gaza caused an unexpected and unprecedented crisis in traditionally good Turkish-Israeli relations and Erdoğan’s words towards Peres “You know how to kill [...] the Davos has ended for me”¹⁸ has been widely broadcast in the world media. Also firing the Russian jet in November 2015¹⁹, with which a great probability was accepted by president Erdoğan, led to a diplomatic and economic crisis in bilateral relations. In case of Trump’s actions, emotions also seem to have a priority since he does not demand rational analysis before he acts²⁰. His emotional decision to attack the Syrian airbase is a clear evidence of that.

An extraversion degree is what differs the two political leaders. A huge sense of self seems to dominate Trump’s personality. This might mainly be the result of his background; an extremely successive businessman and a rich-family kid. It is noticeable

¹⁷ For the discussion about these traits see: P.T. Costa, R.R. McCrae, *Four Ways Five Factors Are Basic*, “Personality and Individual Differences”, 1992, no. 13(6), pp. 653–665; L.R. Goldberg, *The Structure of Phenotypic Personality Traits*, “American Psychologist”, 1993, no. 48(1), pp. 26–34.

¹⁸ *Benim için Davos bitti*, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/benim-icin-davos-bitti-10886978>, (accessed: 20.05.2017).

¹⁹ *Türkiye, Suriye sınırında Rus uçağı düşürdü!*, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/suriye-sinirinda-bir-savas-ucagi-dustu-iddiasi,317770>, (accessed: 20.05.2017).

²⁰ *Trump has nothing but contempt for facts and reality-based policy. Now it's backfiring*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/03/30/trump-has-nothing-but-contempt-for-facts-and-reality-based-policy-now-its-backfiring/?utm_term=.f9247ba17d58, (accessed: 21.05.2017).

that Trump even speaks about himself in the third person – as Kim Schneiderman noted: “Trump talking about himself in the third person reflects his perception of himself as being a larger-than-life character in the world stage”²¹. Contrary, Erdoğan never speaks about himself in the third person, even hardly ever uses the first one. What dominates his public speeches is rather “we”, “biz” in Turkish. It has much to do with his ideological beliefs since from the very beginning of his political career: “hizmet – the service” (for the people) is one of the most important values shared by his supporters and he consequently tries to expose himself as the leader of the political movement which is supposed to change Turkey and serve the people unlike the former, kemalist elite. Just in 2009 he claimed: “We do not do the ideological politics. What we do is service [hizmet] politics. That’s the main difference”²².

Limited agreeableness, strong sense of superiority over the others, and strong conviction about the right to manipulate them, again features both leaders and is especially easy to notice while they deal with political opponents, revealing rather a disparaging attitude towards them. It is interesting to observe that Erdoğan often attacks his political competitors with references to their private life; during a political debate with Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the oppositional National Action Party, he criticized him for not having kids, thus being unable to discuss such issues as social policy in Turkey²³. Similarly, Trump is also well known for hostile responses and harsh criticism; this is for example evidenced by the way he responded to the rejection by the federal judiciary of his two Travel Executive Ban orders (“so-called judges”)²⁴.

Neuroticism is also a feature that both of them share. Erdoğan and Trump often become emotional when their ego is challenged. This might have a lot to do with low self-esteem and well-hidden emotions, mainly self-doubt. The difference between them is slight in this context since Erdoğan is nowadays an experienced politician with an ability to hide his emotional condition. Contrary, inexperienced Trump often reacts in an almost hysterical way and refers to the mentioned previously “others”, “deep state”, “secret lobbies” and various conspiracy theories.

The brief above-mentioned analysis indicates that Erdoğan and Trump have much in common; both have a low degree of openness and conscientiousness and a strong

²¹ *Why do some people refer to themselves in the third person?*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33943762>, (accessed: 22.05.2017).

²² *Erdoğan: Biz hizmet siyaseti yapıyoruz*, <http://www.ihya.com.tr/haber-erdogan-biz-hizmet-siyaseti-yapiyoruz-59698/>, (accessed: 19.05.2017).

²³ *Erdoğan'dan Bahçeli'ye ağır ifadeler*, http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_erdogandan-bahceliye-agir-ifadeler_2201194.html, (accessed: 10.05.2017).

²⁴ *Donald Trump travel ban: 'Blame judge and courts if America is attacked' – president hits out ahead of legal battle*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/04/donald-trump-slams-so-called-judge-blocked-ban-vows-overturn/> (accessed: 23.05.2017).

sense of superiority over others, both share a dose of neuroticism. What differs them here is extraversion – self-oriented Trump is here confronted with rather emphatic (at least in the public discourse) Erdoğan.

In this context, it is interesting to notice that the above-mentioned traits are, or better to say, may be responsible for shaping a particular leadership style i.e. the authoritarian leadership style that basically entitles leaders themselves to set goals and tasks for a particular political party, presidency or the whole political entity.

Conclusion

The revealed traits of R.T. Erdoğan and D. Trump prove particular similarities of two politicians whose perception of politics has much in common. As long as their rhetoric is built on the center-periphery cleavage, politics for them is limited to a zero-win game. What needs to be underlined here is that both of them seem to be, until now, quite successful with this rhetoric: R.T. Erdoğan has managed to make his Justice and Development Party and himself the center of Turkish politics while marginalizing his political opposition – however, it is easy to notice that during his rule, since 2002, his authoritarian tendencies have risen, making his leadership style even more authoritarian. His readiness to accept the risk, although sometimes unsuccessful in foreign policy making, has contributed largely to domestic fortune.

Trump's case is more sophisticated. As it has been shown above, his personal traits would also easily make his leadership authoritarian. His harsh rhetoric towards political enemies, anti-establishment attitude and self-presentation as a “man of the people” contributed largely to his electoral success in 2016. However, there is a huge difference between D. Trump the Candidate and D. Trump the President. The former might have been a populist, radical, self-confident political predator with clear authoritarian leadership style inclinations inherited from the business. Contrary, the latter is confused about the White House reality, while he functions within a fully democratic system larded with checks and balances powerful enough to constrain his political steps.

Summarizing, one can claim that the rather authoritarian leadership style shared by both politicians shall have a further influence on both political entities. R.T. Erdoğan most probably will soon centralize his power, while he has managed to implement a constitutional referendum transforming the whole political system of Turkey into the presidential one. Thus, his dominating personality will have even more influence on the country's politics. At the same time, Trump's presidency rather seems to be

blurry, unless he realizes that being the President in the USA differs highly from being a US President Candidate, while the former post limits or at least should limit potential authoritarian style leadership inclinations.

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Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Donald Trump: Distinct Political Entities, Similar Leadership Styles?

Since the center-periphery cleavage is widely used in the rhetoric of the two highly controversial political figures of R.T. Erdoğan and D. Trump, it is interesting to examine their political careers. Both perform their political routes and construct their electoral appeal on the base of the center-periphery divide. The presented paper in general aims at qualifying the leadership style of both politicians. While the two leaders function in different political entities and traditions, their perception and understanding of politics seems to be quite similar.

Keywords: Turkey, political leadership, personal traits, R. T. Erdoğan, D. Trump

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan et Donald Trump – entités politiques distinctes, styles de leadership similaires?

L'analyse des carrières politiques de R. T. Erdoğan et D. Trump constituent un problème de recherche intéressant dans le contexte de la rhétorique que les deux politiciens controversés utilisent se référant souvent à la division en centre et périphérie. Les deux prennent leurs actions et construisent leur appel électoral précisément sur la base de cette division. L'objectif principal de l'article est de définir les caractéristiques du style de leadership des deux politiciens qui, bien

qu'étant dans différentes communautés politiques et traditions, semblent percevoir la politique de la même manière.

Mots-clés: Turquie, leadership politique, traits de personnalité, R. T. Erdoğan, D. Trump

Реджеп Тайип Эрдоган и Дональд Трамп – разные политические сообщества, похожий стиль руководства?

Анализ политической карьеры Р.Т. Эрдогана и Д. Трампа является интересной темой для исследовательских работ из-за используемой этими политиками риторики, относящейся к разделу между центром и периферией. Оба предпринимают политические действия и строят свою привлекательность для избирателя на основе вышеупомянутого раздела. Главная цель этой статьи – охарактеризовать стиль руководства обоих политиков, которые, хотя они действуют в разных политических сообществах и традициях, похоже, рассматривают политику аналогичным образом.

Ключевые слова: Турция, политическое лидерство, черты личности, Р.Т. Эрдоган, Д. Трамп