

Toygar Sinan Baykan. *The Justice and Development Party in Turkey. Populism, Personalism, Organization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2018. 321 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1108480871

Reviewed by **Charlotte Joppien**
Hamburg, Germany
charlottejoppien@hotmail.com

For around 17 years the AKP (Justice and Development Party, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) has controlled the government in Turkey. During that time it has shown great resilience towards various crises, such as the Gezi protests, a large-scale corruption scandal, as well as an escalating conflict between president Erdoğan and *cemaat* leader Fethullah Gülen. Toygar Sinan Baykan's dissertation (University of Sussex, 2016), now turned into a book, aims to explore the strategic choices and actions that have contributed to the party's political success, its resilience against crisis and its transformation into the dominant party in Turkey. It seeks to determine what accounts for the AKP and Erdoğan's disproportional political success, when compared with other cases of populism. Baykan seeks to do so by analysing concepts such as authoritarianism and populism, and shifting the focus away from structural factors and replacing it with a more agency-centred approach that looks particularly at the leadership and organisation dynamics within the AKP.

Baykan, an assistant professor of political science and public administration at Kırklareli University, Turkey, draws on 50 in-depth interviews with deputies, central elites, provincial and sub-provincial chairs of the AKP, as well as activists and experts. These interviews were mainly conducted from January to March 2014. A first criticism may be that the data collection seems random and unsystematic. The AKP encompasses large regional differences, and its members have a range of ethnic and/or religious affiliations; in this context, it would be good to understand how the author engaged with this diversity, and we might expect him to explain its impact (or lack of impact) on party politics.

Chapter One introduces the dominant explanatory models for the AKP's electoral success i.e. economy-based approaches (e.g. Öniş 2012, Kalaycıoğlu 2010); ideology or discourse-based approaches (e.g. Hale and Özbudun 2010, Cizre 2008); those that focus on the Islamic bourgeoisie, and those that take a constituency-based approach (e.g. ESI-report 2005, Yavuz 2006), or a leadership-based approach (Kumbaracıbaşı 2009). Chapter Two presents analysis of structural factors contributing to the making and success of the AKP. It does so by giving a rather lengthy introduction to the rise and appeal of Islamist parties in Turkey, by introducing the historic, political and social background of today's AKP political activism, and by evaluating the role of political and non-political actors (e.g. the army, the judiciary, the bureaucracy). The author argues that the AKP as well as its predecessor parties used a 'selective pluralism'. However, I would argue that to make such a point the rather lengthy historic sum-

mary of the transformation of the Turkish party system seems redundant. Chapter Three situates the populist aspects of AKP policy within the wider realm of populism in Turkey and worldwide (this term, alongside authoritarianism, is quite popular among those working on contemporary Turkish politics). Here Baykan uses Ostiguy's understanding of populism, and particularly his ideas of a high-low divide, to situate the AKP in the political spectrum.

Chapter Four examines president Erdoğan as a 'product' of both Turkish history, as well as the structural dynamics underlying it. It proceeds by discussing concepts such as charisma, personalism and personalisation. Unlike most authors, Baykan refrains from simply pointing at Erdoğan's charismatic leadership and instead highlights his organisational skills. The author defines Erdoğan's approach as 'non-charismatic personalism'. Chapter Five focuses on strategic choices made by the party as a whole, and those made by various actors within the party. Here Baykan goes back to the 1980s and '90s again, and to the governmental experiences that Islamist parties had in this period, with regard to redistribution and communication. He defines the main pillars of AKP electoral success today as a sturdy party organisation and the powerful, pro-AKP media. The focus on the party's media relations and the comparison between both its Islamist predecessor parties as well as other competing parties is quite interesting, and the reader wonders whether it was the party as a whole or the party president himself that have led the AKP to distinguish itself in this area.

Chapters Six to Eight look at organisational and elite responses to structural challenges. The final, ninth, chapter seeks to situate the findings of the book in a more theoretical context. The book rightly draws on important work such as the edited volume on Turkish politics by Massicard and Watts (2013). In addition to this, a deeper reading of White's seminal study of the RP's Istanbul governmental experience (2002) would have been desirable. Important literature, such as Schüler's (1998) study on party organisation (written in German but widely cited) goes unnoticed by Baykan. Chapter Six is representative of the book's characteristic approach, which involves drawing wide (theoretical) circles before coming to the main questions and answering them. But one may ask whether the detailed repetition of theoretical work on party types developed by Duverger (1974) and Panebianco (1988) as well as others, describing parties in a Western liberal party system, add much to our understanding of the AKP. And one may ask whether a deeper look at the Turkish political party system and its characteristics, and at the country's political culture, would have been more productive. The summarising tables (as e.g. page 176) lining up different types of parties and comparing them to the AKP help enhance the reader's comprehension. In his conclusion to this chapter, Baykan defines the AKP as a 'personalistic mass party' – that is, as a party with a large and pervasive membership organisation, a leadership that exerts tight control, and with elites that pay great attention to controlled participation and to stopping dissent. Although the more fieldwork-driven insights into the AKP's party surveillance and evaluation mechanisms, as well as regular consultations and meetings, provide great insight into the party's internal functions, these arguments might have been analysed against wider discussions within the AKP

on its nature and *raison d'être*. The notion of politics as business – and the different behaviours associated with politics-as-business – is a critical path that the author could have valuably pursued here. Whereas Chapter Six delineates the party elite's central control mechanisms, it lacks to compare them to the practice of other parties, and to situate them in the wider realm of Turkish political culture. Chapter Seven, focusing on elite recruitment practice sheds light on an important (albeit largely understudied) subject, given the fact that Turkish parties' elites tend not to have significant grassroots experience, but are often appointed from outside. Chapter Eight provides an outlook on post-coup Turkey; it reads as a continuation of Chapter Two and one wonders whether these two chapters might have worked better together.

The main takeaway of the book is to classify the AKP as a 'personalistic mass party' that combines a low-populist approach with a robust organisational structure. Other findings – that the AKP conducts year-round political activism, that it has a tight leadership, and that it uses professional political marketing – are not new. The theoretically compelling sharp differentiation between structural and agency-based factors introduced at the beginning of the book does not always apply smoothly throughout. The reader would have profited more from having explained how structural and agency-based factors intertwine and influence each other. Chapters Two and Three are repetitive and seem to aim more at students of political science in general than at readers who already have a grasp of Turkish party politics and long for fresh data and new conclusions. The rather eclectic nature of the book is both its strength as also its weakness. The author does deserve praise for attempting to deliver a 360 degree analysis of the AKP as a phenomenon, but he may also be criticised for attempting to squeeze too much content into a book of 324 pages. In conclusion, the book is a good read for those interested in Turkish politics and the AKP in particular. It provides a range of supplemental knowledge to mainstream analysis of the party, new perspectives and overlooked sources – though it does not fundamentally alter our view on the AKP.