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Legitimation Strategies of Electoral Authoritarian Regimes: a Comparative Study of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey

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MD. SOHEL RANA

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The world we live in is increasingly becoming authoritarian. Although the majority of the world's states are now ruled by authoritarian regimes, there is no clear scholarly consensus on how the rising authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule to stay in power. This thesis investigates the central research question: how do electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule? The conventional literature broadly offers two key institutional legitimization strategies of authoritarian regimes: procedural and performance. However, it has largely overlooked non-institutional or ideological legitimization strategy. This thesis addresses this gap and offers a comprehensive theoretical framework by combining both institutional and non-institutional features. This thesis develops a three-fold regime legitimation framework, that includes three broad strategies – procedural, performance, and ideological. It argues that non-institutional or ideological legitimation strategy works in combination with institutional strategies to construct legitimacy in electoral authoritarian contexts.

The thesis insists that electoral authoritarian regimes concurrently apply these three regime legitimation strategies to legitimize their rule. This thesis then applies the three-fold regime legitimation framework in three dissimilar country contexts – Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey, to evaluate the theoretical framework's applicability and develop a generalized understanding on regime legitimation in electoral authoritarian regimes. The empirical findings

of this thesis strongly support the theoretical framework. The findings suggest that despite having dissimilar historical, geographical, political, institutional, cultural, and demographic characteristics, the electoral authoritarian regimes in Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey, apply three similar regime legitimation strategies to legitimize their rule. This thesis concludes that the three-fold regime legitimation framework is applicable to diverse authoritarian contexts and can be used to analyze the legitimation process in authoritarian regimes.

KEYWORDS: legitimacy, legitimation, electoral authoritarian regimes, ideology, populism, Bangladesh, Hungary, Turkey

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

How do electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule? More specifically, what strategies are employed by authoritarian regimes to construct legitimacy of their rule? Do authoritarian regimes concurrently employ a series of strategies to secure legitimacy? What are the tactics they apply to enforce their regime legitimization strategies? Do authoritarian regimes in dissimilar contexts apply similar strategies? These questions are highly relevant in the contemporary global politics with the rise of electoral authoritarian regimes and their attempts for legitimation. This thesis investigates the central research question: how do electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule? The conventional literature broadly offers two key institutional strategies for legitimation: procedural and performance. However, existing literature has largely overlooked non-institutional or ideological strategy for legitimation. This thesis addresses this gap and offers a comprehensive theoretical framework by combining both institutional and non-institutional strategies. My thesis deductively develops a three-fold regime legitimation framework that includes three broad strategies: procedural, performance, and ideological. I argue that electoral authoritarian regimes concurrently employ procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies to legitimize their rule. The thesis further insists that ideological non-institutional legitimation strategy works in combination with institutional strategies to construct legitimacy in electoral authoritarian regimes.

The inherent complexity in the concept of 'legitimacy' and the elusive nature of electoral authoritarian regimes have complicated the understanding of 'legitimation' strategies in these regimes. However, the purpose of this thesis is to understand 'legitimation', not 'legitimacy'. Following Barbara Geddes (2003), I understand 'legitimation' as a process, in which, legitimation strategies are applied, and legitimacy claims are made. This thesis is an academic

exercise of understanding how legitimation strategies and their tools are employed by the rising electoral authoritarian regimes. It is important to note that there are many dimensions of legitimation. This thesis, particularly, focuses on the perspectives of rulers and elites on legitimation in domestic political contexts. The thesis does not include autocrats' strategies to win legitimacy in the international context. Neither the thesis incorporates the perspectives of political opposition and the public in the legitimation process. Rather, this thesis investigates legitimation strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes, from the rulers' point of view, for domestic legitimacy.

To understand legitimation strategies and process in electoral authoritarian regimes, this thesis applies the three-fold regime legitimation framework in three dissimilar country contexts – Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. The thesis is, therefore, a work of theory-building and theory-testing.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides a brief description of the research problem. The second part presents a short review of the existing literature and highlights a research gap in the literature. The third part provides an outline of the chapters of this thesis.

Research Problem

The world we live in is increasingly becoming authoritarian. About 2.6 billion people (almost 35 percent of world's population) are now living under autocratizing nations, compared to only 415 million in 2016 (The V-Dem Institute, 2019, p. 5; The V-Dem Institute, 2020, p. 6). Although the majority of the world's states are now ruled by authoritarian regimes (The V-Dem Institute, 2020, p. 6), there is no clear scholarly consensus on how the rising authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule to stay in power. Since Juan J. Linz coined the term 'authoritarian

regimes' for the first time in 1964 and singled out their place in between democracy and totalitarianism (Linz, 1964), the regime legitimization strategies of authoritarian regimes have remained a popular field of inquiry for academics and researchers. As mentioned above, the conventional literature broadly offers two key institutional legitimization strategies of authoritarian regimes: procedural and performance. However, it has largely overlooked non-institutional or ideological legitimization strategy. Additionally, there is no comprehensive framework that combines both institutional and non-institutional features to theoretically conceptualize regime legitimization strategies of authoritarian regimes. This thesis addresses this gap and offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing regime legitimization strategies. The thesis aims to add new knowledge in the literature of electoral authoritarianism and regime legitimization by explaining how electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule.

My primary research objective is to theoretically conceptualize regime legitimization strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes, by synthesizing existing theoretical insights, and to develop a broader theoretical framework. Existing literature indicates that authoritarian regimes concurrently apply a set of strategies to legitimize their rule. As Schedler (2002) noted, authoritarian regimes apply a 'menu of manipulation' strategies for constructing legitimacy. These strategies play in combination with each other to serve the purpose of the regime legitimization. Therefore, a broader theoretical framework is essential to capture a diverse set of regime legitimization strategies. This thesis follows a deductive-theory theory building strategy to develop a three-fold regime legitimization framework, which is transferable and applicable across the world's regions. To demonstrate the transferability and applicability of the framework, this thesis applies the theoretical framework in completely disparate contexts, which formulates the secondary objective of this thesis. My secondary research objective is to employ the three-

fold regime legitimization framework in the comparative contexts of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey, and explore the extent of generalizability of the framework.

The significance of my research is three-fold. First, my thesis examines electoral authoritarian regimes, which are not only distinctively different from old authoritarian regimes, but also have been appearing increasingly resistant to democratic pressures (Hall and Ambrosio, 2017, p. 144). These regimes are on a rising mode and have managed to establish legitimacy in several countries such as Bolivia, Mali, Serbia, Ukraine, Zambia, and so on (The V-Dem Institute, 2020, p. 26). Thus, understanding electoral authoritarian regimes and their strategies of regime legitimization is now more important than ever. Second, the thesis highlights the role of ideological narratives to construct legitimacy in authoritarian regimes, which has received relatively limited attention in the literature as a regime legitimization strategy, especially in the comparative electoral authoritarian contexts. My research contends that non-institutional or ideological legitimization works in combination with institutional legitimization to construct regime legitimacy. The significance of this thesis lies in exploring this linkage, which aims to add new insights to the existing literature. Third, to establish legitimacy, authoritarian regimes, in general, use a wide variety of strategies, which are often very difficult to enclose in a frame. This thesis aims to make a theoretical contribution in the broader field of comparative politics by synthesizing these disparate theoretical insights and offering a regime legitimization framework to examine how electoral authoritarian regimes attempt to construct regime legitimacy.

Literature Review

The literature review covers both regime legitimization strategies in the global context and in the selected case studies' contexts. The existing literature on regime legitimization strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes in the global context broadly revolves around four

directions. The first body of literature focuses on elections or politicizing electoral procedures, which is the most common regime legitimization strategy of electoral authoritarian regimes. Soest and Grauvogel (2017) argued that elections are one of the dominant strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes. Schofield and Gallego (2011) also demonstrated that elections were used as a strategy in Tunisia, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe for regime legitimization (p. 17). Similarly, Brownlee (2007) revealed that elections were used by the authoritarians as a mechanism for regime legitimization in Egypt and Malaysia (p. 8).

The second body of literature highlights co-optation and repression as a key legitimization strategy of electoral authoritarian regimes. Frantz (2018) noted that authoritarian regimes use co-optation and repression to legitimize their rule (p. 104). Co-optation and repression as a regime legitimization strategy of authoritarian regimes have been recorded by several studies (Joshua, 2011; Frantz, 2018; Haldenwang, 2017). The third category of literature emphasizes economic growth and performance of electoral authoritarian regimes for constructing regime legitimacy. Guriev and Treisman (2015) argued that even incompetent authoritarians can survive as long as economic shocks are not too large. Several other studies argued that if authoritarian regimes can deliver economic growth and stability, people tend to accept less political participation for the sake of maintaining order (Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 9; Soest and Grauvogel, 2017).

The fourth body of literature investigates ideological narratives and populist ideologies for regime legitimization. While several studies have highlighted the central features and different avenues of populism (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018), other studies have emphasized populism as a political strategy under authoritarianism, fascism, constitutionalism, and democracy (McCarthhy, 2019; Torre, 2018; Brubaker, 2017). The use of

populism as a route to power have been found in numerous contexts such as India (Kinnvall, 2019), Turkey, Venezuela, Ecuador (Selcuk, 2016), Argentina, Bolivia, Peru (Weyland, 2013), and Hungary (Halmai, 2019).

The relevance of the above strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes can be traced in the selected cases of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. In Bangladesh, according to Mostofa and Subedi (2020), the electoral authoritarian regime has relied on four strategies to legitimize the regime in place: electoral manipulation, marginalization of political opposition, co-optation of religious leaders, and institutionalization of authoritarian policies. While Riaz (2019) and Moniruzzaman (2019) highlighted the manipulation of elections under the electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh, Lorch (2018) revealed co-optation of political and religious leaders. Similarly, Riaz (2018) and Siddiqui (2018) reflected on the manipulation of the legislature, the judiciary, and the constitution as tools of legitimization. Likewise, Khan (2013) and Savoia and Asadullah (2019) focused on the relevance of economic growth and development under the electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh. Alam (2017) underscored media manipulation in the same context, although their role in the construction of regime legitimacy remains unexplored.

In Hungary, a strong relevance of the above strategies can be traced from the available literature. Several studies have highlighted the manipulation of democratic institutions such as elections, media, and politicization of constitutional instruments for regime legitimacy (Beauchamp 2018; Fournier, 2020). Scheiring (2020) and Gyorffy (2020) showed the use of economic performance legitimization by the electoral authoritarian regime in Hungary.

In Turkey, Esen and Gumuscu (2016) argued that the Erdogan's electoral authoritarian regime has used elections as a source of authoritarian legitimization along with politicized state

institutions. Sarfati (2017) and Yabanci (2019) emphasized that the co-optation of civil society organizations and political opposition contributed to the legitimation of the authoritarian rule. Somer (2016), Eder (2014), and Dorlach (2015) highlighted financial and institutional reforms, and improvement of social services, which contributed to intensify the authoritarian rule. Bayulgen et al. (2018) upheld similar arguments on the improvement of socio-economic conditions under the concept performance-based transactional legitimacy. Although some studies indicated the spread of populist ideologies in Turkey (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016; Castaldo, 2018), they have not explained how such ideological narratives have worked in combination with other legitimation strategies.

The discussion of the existing literature on the regime legitimization strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes in both global and selected cases' contexts highlights democratic institutional aspects for constructing regime legitimacy. Previous studies broadly underscored authoritarian regimes' usage of political and economic institutions for legitimization but largely overlooked non-institutional or ideological aspects for regime legitimization. Though several studies have pointed out populism as a political strategy for legitimation, however they neglected other ideological narratives for legitimation such as nationalism, which can independently serve the legitimation purpose. Additionally, these studies have not analyzed how ideological features work in combination with other legitimation strategies such as procedural and performance. At the same time, the scope of current institutional aspects is narrow as it provides limited attention to the changes in the rules of the game for constructing regime legitimacy. Although few studies have explored the manipulation of media and the politicization of constitutions as tools of legitimization in the selected country contexts, adequate attention has not been given, particularly on how these tools interact with other strategies of regime legitimization. Similarly,

there are scant studies that combine these scattered theoretical insights in a framework to analyze the regime legitimization strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes. Therefore, there exists a big lacuna in the existing literature, and the current thesis aims to fill this gap by offering a three-fold regime legitimation theoretical framework for understanding the regime legitimization process of electoral authoritarian regimes.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The second chapter applies a deductive theory-building technique to develop the three-fold regime legitimation framework. The chapter highlights the weaknesses of existing normative and descriptive legitimacy theories and advances the supply cycle legitimation model. The chapter also enriches the supply cycle model by offering three key legitimation strategies and their tools and develops a comprehensive three-fold supply cycle legitimation framework. Additionally, the chapter presents the definition of the key terminologies and discusses the nature and characteristics of electoral authoritarian regimes.

The third chapter provides a detailed account of operationalization of the three-fold theoretical framework by highlighting research techniques and data sources. This thesis uses two techniques of qualitative research: case study and comparative methods. The rationale for selecting these techniques and the case selection criteria is discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the chapter elaborates the data sources and several measurement indices.

The next three chapters (Chapter four, five, and six) analyze the relevance of the theoretical framework in the contexts of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey, respectively. Each of these chapters is structured in the same way and tests the applicability of the three legitimation strategies and tools. Under procedural legitimation, four tools of legitimation are analyzed in each case: manipulation of elections, controlling political opposition, manipulation of the media,

and changing the rules of the game. Similarly, under performance legitimation, economic growth and social development under each electoral authoritarian regime are covered. Furthermore, each chapter has explored ideological legitimation narratives under electoral authoritarianism. Finally, each chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Chapter seven provides a comparative picture of these cases to develop a generalized understanding of the applicability of the regime legitimation framework. It combines the findings from each empirical chapter and compares them, and then provide a summary of the generalized insights. Finally, chapter eight provides a conclusion and discusses the theoretical implications of this thesis.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis investigates how electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule. The thesis argues that electoral authoritarian regimes concurrently apply procedural, performance, and ideological strategies to legitimize their rule. As opposed to the conventional literature, this thesis insists that ideological legitimation strategy works in combination with procedural and performance strategies to construct legitimacy in these regimes. The purpose of this chapter is to deductively develop a broader theoretical framework for regime legitimation in electoral authoritarian regimes by synthesizing existing theoretical insights. The chapter has five foundational blocks.

The first foundational block clarifies three key terms – regimes, authoritarian regimes, and legitimation. It adopts Geddes' (2003) definition of 'regimes' to incorporate authoritarian governments in the definition and understands 'legitimation' as a process, in which, legitimation strategies are applied, and legitimacy claims are made. It also briefly describes 'authoritarian regimes' to make a clear distinction between traditional authoritarian regimes and modern electoral authoritarian regimes. The second foundational block elucidates the concept of electoral authoritarianism and identifies its two key characteristics. Based on these characteristics, it further divides electoral authoritarianism into competitive authoritarianism and hegemonic electoral authoritarianism. It then defines these types and identifies their core characteristics to specifically locate the type and nature of the selected electoral authoritarian regimes in this thesis.

The third foundational block clarifies the complicated concept of legitimacy, by distinguishing between normative and descriptive grounds, and explains how the descriptive legitimacy paved the way to use the concept of legitimacy in authoritarian contexts. The fourth

foundational block elucidates the concept of legitimacy and legitimation in authoritarian contexts. It further divides the legitimation strategies into two cycles – 'supply' and 'demand', and then limits the focus of this thesis into the supply cycle. Finally, the fifth foundational block explores three regime legitimation strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes (e.g., procedural, performance, and ideological) by synthesizing the theoretical insights from existing theoretical literature. It also describes why and how each legitimation strategy is used by electoral authoritarian regimes to make legitimacy claims for their rule. The following sections provide a clear understanding of how these foundational blocks are perceived in this thesis.

Definition of Key Terms

This section describes three key terms – regimes, authoritarian regimes, and legitimation (or legitimization), which will appear numerous times throughout the thesis.

Regimes

Traditionally, 'regimes' are understood as sets of institutions, norms, and procedures that cover specific aspects of a political order (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 282). In this sense, political regimes can be democratic, autocratic, or any other type. Barbara Geddes, on the other hand, expanded the traditional conception of 'regimes' and insisted that informal rules must be included in the definition because many regimes, such as autocracies, often hide "the de facto rules that constrain and shape political choices behind a façade of democratic institutions" (Geddes, 2003; Geddes et al. 2014). According to her, "'regimes' refer to sets of formal and informal rules and procedures for the selection of national leaders and policies" (Geddes, 2003, p. 70; Geddes et al., 2014; Wright and Bak, 2016). For Geddes, informal rules, which are central to distinguish one autocratic regime from another, identify the groups from which leaders can be chosen, and determine who can influence leadership choice and policy (Geddes et al., 2014;

Wright and Bak, 2016). This thesis adopts Geddes' definition for 'regimes' due to its broader conceptualization to accommodate 'authoritarian regimes' – and its relevance as the subject of investigation. The next section conceptualizes 'authoritarian regimes', in general.

Authoritarian Regimes

Juan J. Linz coined the term 'authoritarian regimes' in 1964 by designating their place in the middle of democracy and totalitarianism (Linz, 1964). Linz characterized these regimes, not by ideological appeal, but by, what he called 'mentalities' (Linz, 1975). According to him, these regimes do not intend to mobilize the masses by referring to exclusive, autonomous, and elaborate ideology, but by arousing apolitical sentiments of the people (Linz, 1975, p. 191). Over the decades, many different types of authoritarian regimes have emerged such as personalist, military, party-based, oligarchic, monarchic (Geddes, 1999; Geddes et al., 2014), electoral, competitive, hegemonic electoral, and closed (Diamond, 2002), which differ from each other. Consequently, they are likely to differ in their designs of legitimation process and strategies (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 291). This thesis, however, limits itself only to 'electoral authoritarian regimes', which have been identified as sub-types of hybrid regimes as they combine both democratic and authoritarian elements (Diamond, 2002; Mufti, 2018). Before going into the concept of electoral authoritarian regimes, let us clarify 'legitimation' as a process of constructing regime legitimacy.

Legitimation/Legitimization

'Legitimation' or 'legitimization', which are used interchangeably throughout this thesis, refers to the process of establishing legitimacy in a society (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 269). In Weberian sense, legitimation is the process of gaining support, in which the relationship between legitimacy claims of the rulers and the acceptance of such claims by the ruled is sought and

established (The V-Dem Institute, 2019, p. 5; Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017; Mazepus, 2017). At this point, it is essential to make a clear distinction between 'legitimacy' and 'legitimation'. While 'legitimacy' is a property of an object (e.g., regime) and might or might not be normatively grounded, 'legitimation' is an action (process of gaining legitimacy), hence the latter is an empirically observable activity (Gerschewski, 2018, p. 654). As authoritarian rulers seek legitimacy through (empirically observable) the legitimation process, therefore, it makes more sense to study 'legitimation in autocracies', rather than 'legitimacy in autocracies' (Gerschewski, 2018). This thesis, thus, investigates 'legitimization strategies' of authoritarian regimes, particularly electoral authoritarian ones. The next section elucidates how electoral authoritarian regimes are understood in this thesis.

Electoral Authoritarian Regimes

Andreas Schedler defined 'electoral authoritarian regimes' as the regimes in which authoritarian leaders "hold elections and tolerate some pluralism and interparty competition but violate democratic norms so severely and systematically that it makes no sense to call them democracies, however qualified" (Schedler, 2002, p. 36). These regimes have a contradictory mix of democratic procedures and authoritarian practices (Schedler, 2013, p. 78). They, therefore, lie in between closed authoritarianism and liberal democracy (Schedler, 2013; Morse, 2011, p. 164). Identifying them as the most common form of non-democratic rule in the post-Cold War world, Schedler (2013) noted that under the façade of representative democracy, they employ various forms of authoritarian practices (e.g., banning political parties, prosecuting candidates, harassing journalists, intimidating voters, forging election results, and so on) (p. 1). Therefore, electoral authoritarian regimes suffer from a lack of free and fair political and electoral competitiveness, but they pretend to have formal democratic institutions such as

multiparty elections, which are often meant to mask "the reality of authoritarian domination" (Diamond, 2002, p. 24).

Based on the levels of restrictiveness in electoral authoritarian regimes, two important characteristics can be identified: limited electoral competitiveness and minimal political pluralism (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 292). Based on these two characteristics, electoral authoritarian regimes can further be classified into 'competitive electoral authoritarian' and 'hegemonic electoral authoritarian' regimes (Diamond, 2002; Howard and Roessler, 2006; Roessler and Howard, 2009). In competitive authoritarian regimes, "formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority, but incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy" (Levistky and Way, 2002, p. 52; Diamond, 2002, p. 28). These regimes allow regular elections with more meaningful competition, even if the incumbents manage to create an uneven playing field between the ruling and the opposition (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Levitsky and Way, 2002, p. 53).

In contrast, in hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes, elections and other democratic institutions are façades, yet they may provide some space for political opposition, independent media, and social organizations which do not seriously criticize or challenge the regime (Diamond, 2002, p. 26). In these regimes, any opposition activity is severely constrained and restricted due to the widespread intimidation and severe electoral fraud (Diamond, 2002, p. 29; Shedler, 2002, p. 38). One key feature of hegemonic electoral authoritarianism is that elections are widely 'an authoritarian façade' as the ruling party wins almost all parliamentary seats (Dimaond, 2002, p. 29; Simpser, 2013). Based on this categorization, both competitive and hegemonic electoral regimes fall under the broader concept of electoral authoritarian regimes. In

general, competitive authoritarian regimes can make stronger legitimacy claims (especially procedural) than that of hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes due to their relative political openness and extent of manipulation of democratic institutions.

However, holding elections for the positions of executive and legislative power fundamentally change how the rulers relate to society and claim legitimacy (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 292). According to Schedler (2013), "by establishing multiparty elections for the highest office, electoral authoritarian regimes institute the principal of consent – even if they subvert it in practice" (Schedler, 2013, p. 121). Even if the elections are manipulated and fraudulent, these regimes offer citizens a stronger oversight about the practice of democracy (e.g., the institution of elections, which they use to strengthen their procedural claims of legitimacy) (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 292). At this point, it is essential to understand the concepts of legitimacy and legitimacy claims of the rulers, which are described in the next section.

Legitimacy

'Legitimacy' has been one of the most crucial as well as contested concepts in political science (Lipset, 1959; Beetham, 1991; Barker, 2001). Huntington (1991) famously called 'legitimacy' a "mushy concept that political analysts do well to avoid," but it is "essential" in understanding democratization in the late twentieth century (Huntington, 1991, p. 46). There is no universal definition of the concept of legitimacy. Some scholars use legitimacy to explain stability or transformation of political orders, while others relate it to political support and government's credibility (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 269). Lack of specific criteria and different definitions, which are often divergent, make the subject of legitimacy confusing (Betham, 1991, p. 4). Despite being heavily researched, the concept of legitimacy remains stubbornly elusive,

especially in its operationalization and measurements (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 269). This is shown to be true especially for countries undergoing rapid political change, experiencing conflict, or authoritarian rule (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 270).

How we define 'legitimacy' makes a great deal of difference, especially in its dimensions, criteria, measurements, and fitness to a particular political regime. For example, in popular usage, legitimacy is "a form of rule that is seen in the eyes of the observer as fair and good" (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252). This definition insists on not only the fairness in the rule, but also the perception of the people about such fairness, which is mostly seen in democratic rule. In this sense, legitimacy is closely associated with democratic governments. If so, then, are non-democratic or autocratic regimes illegitimate? If these regimes are illegitimate, how do they stay in power? Can any regime rule without legitimacy? If yes, then why should authoritarian regimes care about legitimacy? If no, then what makes a regime legitimate? Does it make sense to use the concept of legitimacy in electoral authoritarian contexts where laws are severely manipulated, people's perceptions are fabricated, and public information is distorted? Can a regime be legitimate if it manipulates the ways to be legitimate? Several studies have raised and investigated these questions in the past decades, but there are no straightforward answers to these questions. Rather, the new scholarly interest in applying the concept of 'legitimacy' in diverse authoritarian contexts gave rise to the problem of, what Sartori (1970) called, 'conceptual stretching', that tends to render such concept vague, even meaningless (Collier and Mahon, 1993). Due to its widespread obscurity, Weeden (2015) argued that legitimacy is a concept that often lacks its pertinence because of its vagueness (pp. xi-xii).

Epistemologically, legitimacy referred to just and right rule (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252). In this sense, legitimacy is a virtue of a political rule (Peter, 2017, p. 1), that is

normatively grounded as a righteous, just, fair, and acceptable rule (Peter, 2010, pp. 4-10). Applbaum (2019) defined *normative legitimacy* as simply "the moral right to rule, that entails moral liability" (pp. 2-4). The author insisted that there are three principles – liberty, equality, and agency – which lie at the core of normative legitimacy. Under liberty principle, all citizens are entitled to the protection of basic rights and freedoms, while under the equality principle, each citizen must have equal say in selecting who bears decision-making powers. In agency principle, decision-making powers are to be exercised by the decision-makers who constitute a self-governing and an independent group agent that counts all citizens as self-governing and independent members. According to Applbaum (2019), serious violation of any of these three principles lead to a tyranny (pp. 4-5) and it is morally permissible to resist such rule with force (p. 24).

Normatively, there are two criteria for political legitimacy: legitimacy must have the consent of the governed and it must be acquired only through proper legal procedure (Applbaum, 2019, pp. 34-35). In normative sense, this consent must be without compulsion and citizens must be able to voluntarily and consciously choose whether to give their consent to the ruler (Betham, 1991; Gilley, 2006). According to Rousseau, for a government to be legitimate, "it would be necessary for the people to have the power to accept it or reject it" (Rousseau, [1762] 1994, p. 50). Similarly, Rawls (2005) noted that "the right to rule of the government is limited by the right to dissent of every member of the society" (Rawls, 2005). In addition to consent and legal procedure (or 'legality' which is clarified under descriptive legitimacy), Betham (1991) added justifiability (meaning that citizens must be able to morally justify the legitimate authority) as a third criteria for legitimacy.

The principles and the criteria of normative legitimacy insist that the term 'legitimacy' has been used mainly to denote a democratic regime type (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252; Gerschewski, 2018, p. 652). For Wurtenberger (1982), legitimacy can only be justified by the absence of dictatorship (pp. 680-681). Similarly, for Rousseau ([1762] 1994), "all legitimate governments are republican" (ruled by laws and govern only the public interest) (p. 75) and "the authority of a tyrant (who governs with violence without regard for justice and sets up himself against the law to govern according to the law) is not legitimate" (p. 120). Therefore, normatively, tyrants (e.g., wrongful, improper, monarchic, or autocratic rulers) are illegitimate even if they have a lawful title (Applbaum, 2019, p. 25). According to Applbaum (2019), "a ruler who engages massive human rights atrocities become illegitimate even if elected to office in a fair democratic procedure, and even if the massive atrocities are not violations of the conventional law of the land" (p. 28). In that case, it is mistaken to claim that a legitimate ruler is just a ruler who is properly selected or elected and conventionally lawful (Applbaum, 2019, p. 28).

However, many insisted that legitimacy had been an evaluative term and it is transformed throughout the progression of history, hence it is more descriptive (today) than normative (Giglioli, 2013, p. 13; von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 272). The genesis of *descriptive legitimacy* goes back to Max Weber who detached the normative underpinnings from legitimacy and opened it to analytical reasoning (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252; von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 270). According to Weber, "the most common form of legitimacy is the 'belief in legality' – conformity with 'formally correct statutes', that have been established in the usual manner" (Weber, [1920]2019, p. 116). For Weber, "custom, personal advantage, and ideal motives do not conform to a sufficiently reliable basis for legitimacy. There is normally a further

element, the ‘belief in legitimacy’. Every system attempts to establish and cultivate the belief in its legitimacy” (Weber, [c.1920]1968, p. 213). Weber described three pure grounds claimed by rulers to cultivate the belief in their legitimacy: rational-legal grounds, traditional grounds, and charismatic grounds. Weber introduced these as sources of legitimacy claims (Weber, [c.1920]1968, pp. 213-215; Applbaum, 2019, p. 16). However, Weber’s rational-legal type was the only one of the three which can be categorized as legitimate rule due to its democratic connotation (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252; Gerschewski, 2018, p. 654). The charismatic qualities of a ruler and the richness or rightfulness of a tradition is not based on democratic procedural understanding of legitimacy in which elections play a minimal role (Przeworski, 1999).

Three points warrant attention in Weber’s conception of procedural legitimacy. First, the legitimate ruler must come through a (formal) legal procedure, on which the people have faith in (Gilley, 2009, p. 6). In this sense, legitimacy must be procedurally proper, which is often called ‘procedural legitimacy’ (Rawls, 1971). According to Rawls (1971), legitimate authority arises only from ‘actual legislative procedures’ irrespective of the law’s content (p. 86). Second, people must have belief in the legitimacy of the ruler. It underscores the public perspective about the performance of the ruler (Gilley, 2006). Third, and most significantly, only when legitimacy claims of the rulers are met by legitimacy beliefs of the people, there is a legitimate rule (Anderson and Singer, 2008; Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 260).

However, although most of the studies use either normative or descriptive legitimacy theory to investigate legitimation in political contexts, both theoretical grounds have several weaknesses. First, normatively, a political regime is either legitimate or illegitimate, and all authoritarian regimes illegitimate (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 270) and there are no grounds for

choosing between them (Applbaum, 2019, p. 18). Therefore, in this sense, there are reservations about the usage of the term 'legitimacy' in authoritarian settings (Dukalski & Gerschewski, 2017, pp. 252-253). More specifically, if voluntary consent is an integral part of the concept of legitimacy, then legitimacy is a wrong concept to use for autocratic contexts (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 253). Additionally, the problem with the normative account is that it tends to interfere with the legitimation process (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 270). This is because normative grounds and norm internalization are hard to measure (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 273). Therefore, the normative theory is not suitable to investigation the legitimation process, especially in authoritarian contexts.

Second, it is understandable that Weber's insistence on 'belief in legitimacy' paved the way for using the concept beyond normative democratic contexts (Gerschewski, 2018, p. 654). Weber de-emphasized the normative grounds by insisting to study 'what is' in the social sciences, instead of 'what should be' (Weber, [1922], 1978). Based on this empirical connotation, it is possible to use Weber's term 'legitimacy belief' even in comparative authoritarian contexts (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252). However, the problem with Weber's descriptive (procedural) legitimacy is that it fails to ignore the normative grounds, especially in the question of legality. Benthan (1991) and Gilley (2006) insisted that Weber's descriptive legitimacy theory fails to recognize that the concept of legality cannot be separated from normative grounds. Similarly, Appalbaum (2019) asserted that the descriptive legitimacy theory has an inherent normative connotation, and these two theories cannot be separated from one another. Therefore, the use of descriptive legitimacy theory to investigate the legitimation process in authoritarian contexts is problematic because it raises normative questions.

The discussion on normative and descriptive legitimacy theories highlight that these existing theories are not suitable to investigate the legitimation process in authoritarian contexts. This thesis, however, concerns (electoral) authoritarian regimes and chooses to study 'legitimation'. Therefore, further theoretical exploration is essential to establish an appropriate theoretical framework for this thesis. It is important to note that this thesis does not investigate 'legitimacy'. Nevertheless, 'legitimacy' and 'legitimation' are often hard to separate from one another. The following section further clarifies these concepts and develops a three-fold regime legitimation framework, by advancing the supply cycle legitimation model.

Legitimacy and Legitimation in Authoritarian Contexts

Since the end of World War II, the term 'legitimacy' has been so pervasive and significant in political governance that even non-democratic regimes felt the need to pretend being democratic, hence legitimate (Dahl, 1971, p. 5). It then raises the question: why do authoritarian regimes care about legitimacy? To answer this question, one needs to pay attention to the effects of legitimacy. Betham (1991) identified three effects of legitimacy – enhanced law and order, stability in the rule, and effectiveness of the rule (Betham, 1991, p. 25-37), which are relevant to both democratic and autocratic regimes (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252). From an empirical point of view, even authoritarian regimes need to justify their rule to maintain longevity (Kailitz and Stockmer, 2015). They might have gained access to power using illegal means, but they are required to make legitimacy claims about why they are entitled to rule or stay in power (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 251). This is because no political regime can stay in power only through coercive means and all political regimes require some support (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252; von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 271; Sedgwick, 2010; Geddes, 1999, p. 125). This connotation leads to the understanding that all authoritarian regimes

attempt to become legitimate and make legitimacy claims. Therefore, the key empirical question then becomes how these regimes attempt to become legitimate (indicating the legitimation process), rather than whether these regimes are legitimate (Betham, 1991; Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 252).

Legitimation is a two-way process, which comprises a 'top-down perspective' (the rulers' aspects of legitimation) and a 'bottom-up perspective' (the public's aspects of legitimation) (Weatherford, 1992; Lemiere, 2019). This categorization is appropriate to investigate the legitimation process in authoritarian contexts because it is neither tied with any specific regime types, nor with any normative-descriptive debate. von Haldenwang (2017) further expanded both top-down and bottom-up perspectives and insisted on their applicability, especially in authoritarian contexts. The author redefined top-down and bottom-up perspectives as 'supply cycle' and 'demand cycle'[1] of legitimation, respectively, in which 'supply' is provided by the rulers and political elites, while 'demand' is generated by the public or society (p. 274). The 'supply cycle' legitimation is relevant and appropriate to use in this thesis. My thesis investigates how authoritarian regimes attempt to legitimize their rule. The thesis focuses on the legitimation perspective of the authoritarian rulers, instead of the people or the society. The 'supply cycle legitimation' covers the perspectives of the authoritarian rulers, and is, therefore, suitable for this thesis.

The 'supply cycle' includes "the operations carried out by the rulers to legitimize their rule, which shapes the process and outcome of political decision-making as well as the implementation of public policies" (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 273). Here, legitimacy claims are

[1] The 'demand cycle of legitimation' refers to the individual members of the society (citizens), who provide legitimacy through political collectivities such as parties, trade unions, business organizations etc. Citizens not only respond to either accepting or rejecting legitimacy claims, but also express legitimation demands such as expectations from the government. For details, see von Haldenwang, 2017.

spread by the rulers and the representatives of the regime based on the effective guidance of political behavior, in which citizens either endorse or reject such claims (von Haldenwang, 2017, pp. 273-274). In this sense, the 'supply cycle' has two steps in the legitimation process – application of legitimation strategies and spread of legitimacy claims. Rulers' claims, which are reflected in their discourses, are based on the ground that they hold power by the virtue of the procedural mechanisms of elections (Debre and Morgenbesser, 2017, p. 334). From this view, for the rulers, legitimation is successful to the degree that it allows the regime to guide the political behavior of the members of the society (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 273).

Although the 'supply cycle legitimation' has highlighted two essential steps in the legitimation process (e.g., application of legitimation strategies and spread of legitimacy claims), it has not clearly described the legitimation strategies and their tools. This thesis, therefore, develops three regime legitimation strategies of authoritarian regimes, by combining scattered theoretical insights. These strategies are discussed in the following section. Additionally, the 'supply cycle legitimation' model has not been empirically tested, especially in comparative authoritarian contexts. This thesis, thus, advances the 'supply cycle legitimation' to empirically test it in comparative contexts and to add significant insights in the existing literature.

Legitimization Strategies of Electoral Authoritarian Regimes

As legitimacy is a multi-dimensional concept (Alagappa, 1995; Burnell, 2016), there are supposed to be multiple legitimation strategies in the supply cycle. 'Legitimation strategies' can be defined as instrumental manipulations to safeguard political power (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 288). These strategies have strategic value and are the mode of expressing legitimation claims. The application of these strategies and the spread of legitimacy claims in the contemporary electoral authoritarian regimes are usually exercised with great finesse (Dukalski

and Gerschewski, 2017, pp. 253-255; von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 270). Broadly, there are both internal/domestic and external/international legitimation strategies in a political regime (Burnell, 2006; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 291; Sedgwick, 2010; von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 275). This thesis focuses on only internal or domestic legitimization strategies.

Regarding the legitimation strategies, most studies highlighted random tools of procedural and performance legitimation (such as election, co-optation, economic growth etc.), as discussed in Chapter 1. In contrast, this thesis argues that only procedural and performance legitimation strategies are insufficient to investigate regime legitimation in authoritarian contexts. It argues that ideological strategy works in combination with procedural and performance strategies to construct legitimacy in authoritarian regimes. Therefore, this thesis offers three legitimization strategies – procedural, performance, and ideological – that are concurrently employed by electoral authoritarian regimes. The section below elucidates these legitimation strategies.

Procedural Legitimation

Although some scholars define procedural legitimation in electoral authoritarian regimes as only "the introduction of multiparty elections" (Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 275), it is certainly not limited to only elections. Procedural legitimization is, in fact, based on Weber's rational-legal sources of legitimacy which insist on institutional arrangements and government processes for the procurement of legitimacy (Weber, [1922] 1978; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 289; Bentham, 1991). As Schedler (2002, 2013) argued, electoral authoritarian regimes often violate and manipulate democratic rules and procedures. Several key democratic institutions such as elections, parties, parliaments, and courts become their natural targets because these institutions provide these regimes with functioning avenues for controlling the

political opposition (Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi, 2008). Although the organization of elections is the main key for procedural legitimacy, they also target rule of law, other rule-based mechanisms for handing over power, implementation of policies, political opposition, democratic norms, information availability, and democratic avenues for deliberation, and other legal mechanisms under the procedural legitimation (von Haldenwang, 2017; Morgenbesser, 2016; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017; Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017). They even go to considerable lengths to operate within a legalistic framework despite having many arbitrary elements in their exercise of authority (Linz, 2000, p. 186).

To cover the wide range of democratic rules and institutions in the procedural legitimation, this thesis broadly distinguishes four key tactics as part of the procedural strategy: manipulation of elections, controlling political opposition (through co-optation and repression), manipulation of the media, and changing the rules of the game. The next section conceptualizes these four tactics and their relevance in the electoral authoritarian regimes.

First, elections can not only serve the autocrat's livelihood (Huntington, 1991, p. 174), but can also reinforce authoritarian rule (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 18; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007). Most dictators since Napoleon III held plebiscites or elections to show their popular support (Stillman, 1974, p. 38). For modern authoritarian regimes, manipulation of elections is common and is performed in subtle manners. Schedler (2013) argued that due to external and internal pressures, electoral authoritarian regimes face an uncertain environment, in which, they cannot know for sure about the security of their grip on power, hence, they allow limited yet multiparty elections. In such elections, multiple candidates are allowed, even from opposition political parties, to compete (Ezrow and Frantz, 2011, p. 67-68). These regimes may not only change electoral rules, but also harass voters and opposition candidates through using sub-tactics

such as threatening, blacklisting, surveilling, and blocking (Ezrow and Frantz, 2011, p. 72-73). The organization of semi-competitive and multi-party, albeit manipulative, elections demonstrate to both citizens and international community that these regimes follow the will of the people (Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 10). Thus, they often hold elections in the presence of national and international election observers. By deploying 'shadow' external election observer groups, instead of professional observation groups, they show international community that they uphold democratic procedures (Debre and Morgenbesser, 2017; Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 257).

The electoral authoritarian regimes understand that if elections can be manipulated, then legitimacy can be fabricated (Lemiere, 2019, p. 24). Using election as a means of legitimizing their authoritarian rules, they depict to citizens that they have people's compliance to authoritarian practices (Kaya and Bernhard, 2013, p. 734). In this regard, Schedler (2006) insisted that, by holding multiparty competitive elections, electoral authoritarian regimes establish "the primacy of democratic legitimization" (p. 13). Although the election level-playing field remains uneven in very subtle and refined ways that are difficult to detect (Schedler, 2002), through holding elections, authoritarian rulers attempt to establish that democratic procedures and norms and the will of the people are respected, hence, they project themselves as fairly elected leaders (Morgenbesser, 2016). Overall, it gives the authoritarian rulers the pretense of democratic legitimacy and using such pretense, they make procedural legitimacy claims and attempt to create legitimacy beliefs for their rule (Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 257; Debre and Morgenbesser, 2017, p. 328). They also seek procedural legitimacy claims from the international community by deploying shadow election observer groups pretending to have credible elections. The deployment of shadow election observer groups to legitimize elections

has become a globally applied strategy, that can be observed in Cambodia's 2013 parliamentary elections, Zimbabwe's 2013 general election, and Egypt's 2014 presidential election (Debre and Morgenbesser, 2017, pp. 335-342).

Second, the primary threat facing the electoral authoritarian regimes comes from political opposition. Although these regimes accept some degree of opposition, they employ co-optation and repression mechanisms, depending on the circumstances, to control political opponents. The purpose of the co-optation is to accommodate certain groups in power or extending benefits in exchange for their loyalty (Joshua, 2011; Gerschewski, 2013; Joshua, 2016). The authoritarian regimes co-opt members of domestic opposition into the regime by providing policy concessions within nominally democratic institutions (Gandhi, 2008a). Co-optation remained a major explanation for the sustainability of autocratic rule in the Middle East and the North African region (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004, pp. 382-383). The nature of co-optation also modifies the extent of repressive measures (Franz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014). Repression can be defined as actual or threatened use of physical violence against individuals, groups, or organizations within the jurisdiction of the state (Davenport, 2007, p. 2). The authoritarian regimes use repression for maintaining power, control, and order for the purpose of survival (Poe and Tate, 1994). Autocrats use several tools to implement repression such as torture, disappearances, killings, imprisonments, harassments, and legal restrictions (Davenport, 2007, p. 1; Levistky and Way, 2010, pp. 56-64). However, repression is a costly endeavor, especially in the long run, and can be counterproductive as it induces protest (Gerschewski, 2018, p. 652).

While repression can foment popular discontent and reduce political legitimacy, co-optation can open doors for rivals to cultivate their own support bases and plot to overthrow the autocrat from inside (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014, pp. 335-336). Though the selection of co-

optation and repression tools often occurs based on the personal preferences of the autocrats, one of the key incentives for autocrats to prefer co-optation to repression is to decrease the likelihood of isolated incidents of discontent and dissuade the rivals' efforts to unseat the autocrat (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014, pp. 336-338). Although it is believed that the cost of repression is high in comparison to co-optation, autocrats use whatever means available, be it repression, to stay in power. By co-optation and repression, they marginalize and weaken political opponents, which eventually makes their position stronger. Consequently, they tend to appear inevitable before the public, and declare the opposition undeserving (Scott, 1990, p. 220). Additionally, through co-optation, the authoritarian regimes seek to legitimize themselves in the eyes of the opposition.

Third, by and large, authoritarian regimes, in general, suffer from information deficits. Electoral authoritarian regimes use the manipulation of media as a key legitimization tactic, which has been investigated by several studies (Greitens, 2013; Gunitsky, 2015). These regimes may manipulate information environments in the media and perform censorship of information (Guriev and Treisman, 2015, p. 35). They can use harassment and repressive tools against media personnel, change media law, and establish government-sponsored media (Dukalskis and Patane, 2019; Cassani, 2017, p. 350). When it comes to manipulation of the media, censorship is the most common in authoritarian regimes. For instance, the Chinese government attempts to censor online content to curb collective action and social mobilization, that could negatively affect the regime's legitimization efforts (King et al., 2013). Such censorship not only marginalizes the voice of the regime critics, but also amplifies the legitimation claims of these regimes (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 261). Authoritarian regimes can also delegitimize political opponents using rhetoric through media and online (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 5). Additionally, they may

spread disinformation and employ troll armies in the online environment to distract people from real information (Tufekci, 2017, pp. 236-246; Howard and Hussain, 2013, pp. 75-82). For instance, the Chinese government attempted to influence online content by creating the so-called 'fifty-cent army', which is widely believed to receive material benefits from the government to write positive posts about the government (Han, 2015; Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 257). These online dimensions of autocratic legitimation are highly relevant in the modern electoral authoritarian regimes.

Additionally, authoritarian regimes can officially launch organized venues for citizen deliberation that provide the government with critical information on public sentiments (He and Warren, 2011). These venues not only serve the purpose of pre-empting protest by gathering information, but also portray the regime's responsiveness in the public (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 258).

Fourth, changing the rules of the game refers to changing constitutional, judicial, and electoral rules of the state to centralize power at the hands of the executive as well as undermine democratic procedures (Levitksy and Ziblatt, 2018, pp. 87-92). This has been a common tool of regime legitimization for the contemporary electoral authoritarian regimes (Toth, 2017). For legitimation purposes, every political regime produces several rules which may impact decision-making bodies, political parties, civil society organizations, mass media, governmental bodies (e.g., administrative, legislative, and judicial), and law enforcement agencies (e.g., police and security forces) (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 275). These rules can be formal as laws, executive orders, and court rulings, as well as informal (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 275). The informal rules such as limited freedom and civil liberties as modes of legitimation demands are more prevalent in autocratic settings (Borzel and Risse, 2016). Both formal and informal rules and

practices are employed for strengthening the regime's position in power as well as pretending to stay in power by the virtue of legal rules.

In addition, modern authoritarian regimes are often found to manipulate the judiciary as a tool of regime legitimization and survival (Moustafa, 2007), which has been marked in different contexts such as Turkey, Iran, and several other countries (Shambayati, 2008). These regimes can control the behavior of the judiciary by controlling the systems of rewards and punishments of the judicial careers such as promotion, important assignments (Magalhaes et al. 2007), and forced early retirements (Shambayati, 2008, p. 286).

It is important to note that these four tactics might be employed simultaneously as well as separately at different extents during procedural legitimation. Deliberate manipulation of these tactics not only serves the purpose of procedural legitimation, but also paves the way for these authoritarian regimes to stay in power (Ottaway, 2003, p. 17).

Performance Legitimation

All political systems, in general, and authoritarian regimes, in particular, emphasize performance legitimization to claim their right to rule. They highlight their performances in material welfare, law and order, and security (Lipset, 1959; Miller, 2015), to attempt to strengthen their legitimacy claims (Easton, 1965; Rothstein, 2009, p. 313). Socialist regimes have always justified their rule with a supposed superiority in terms of generalized welfare gains, while military regimes did the same by emphasizing on good performance on security and public order (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 278). The Chinese government significantly insists on economic growth and stability as a tool of performance legitimation (Holbig and Gilley, 2010, p. 414). Additionally, the 'rentier states', by relying on rents – mostly oil and other minerals, deliver prosperity in exchange of loyalty and acquiescence (Skopol, 1982; Luciani, 1987).

Performance legitimation insists on regime legitimacy that stems from the success in satisfying the citizens' needs (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 291). The central idea of this type of legitimation is that large segments of the population might accept or support authoritarian rule, if it is perceived as performing well (Geddes and Zaller, 1989). And people's perception about the government's performance is a major dimension of regime legitimacy (Letki, 2006; Weatherford, 1992). As long as the regime is able to deliver, less participation is accepted for the sake of consistent performance in growth and stability. In this regard, Ross (2001) argued that there exists a hidden social contract between the rulers and the people that as long as the regime delivers and provides public and private goods, there is no need for the people to resist and challenge the government. Therefore, authoritarian regimes make efforts to deliver public goods, as part of the performance legitimization strategy, to improve the living conditions of the citizens for the purpose of spreading legitimacy claims (Cassani, 2017, pp. 2-5).

Many different elements can comprise performance-based legitimacy claims such as equal redistribution and access to public goods (e.g., healthcare and education) and projection of the regime as a guarantor of security, stability, and territorial integrity (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2015; Radnitz, 2012). This can also include political decision-making, quality of public administration, and access to the legal system (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 276). In this legitimation, authoritarian regimes either deliberately cite their achievements in meeting societal demands or employ claims of achievements in the absence of real improvements, which Dimitrov (2009) called 'economic populism.' Overall, they make legitimacy claims by relating their performance to produce certain outputs (von Haldenwang, 2017, pp. 276-277; Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, p. 259).

Ideological Legitimation

Ideology refers to a belief system intended to create a collective identity and/or a specific political order (Linz, 2000). Ideological narratives insist on the righteousness of a given political order (Easton, 1975). Using such narratives, a political regime seeks teleological proclamation of a belief system to legitimize a political rule (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 290). The importance of ideological narratives has long been relevant in autocracies and dictatorships, as highlighted by Arendt (1951) and Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956). Arendt ([1951] 1966, p. 470) offered three distinctive roles of ideology in authoritarian contexts. First, ideologies aim at "total explanation of the past, total knowledge of the present, and the reliable prediction of the future." Second, pervasive use of ideologies make utopian promise and they become independent of empirical reality. Third, political ideologies present the authoritarian rulers as the bearer of ideologies, hence logical entities. Similarly, Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956) highlighted political ideological influence as one of the core characteristics of authoritarian regimes. Describing ideology as omnipresent in political and daily life in authoritarian contexts, they insisted that political ideologies lie at the core of the inner stability and working mechanisms in dictatorial regimes (Friedrich and Brzezinski, 1956).

Regarding modern authoritarian contexts, some argued that modern electoral authoritarian regimes have been facing a fundamental crisis of ideology (Linz, 2000, pp. 36–37). Others insisted that ideological manipulation is not a regime legitimization strategy anymore (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017). However, some asserted that ideology still plays an indispensable role in electoral authoritarian regimes (Holbig, 2013, p. 61; von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 279). This thesis, however, shares the views of Holbig (2013) and von Haldenwang

(2017) and argues that ideological legitimization is still used for the quest of legitimacy in electoral authoritarian regimes.

Through ideological legitimation, authoritarian regimes stress prospective societal order, transcendental nature of the regime, or superiority of the nation (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 289). When it comes to ideological legitimation, references to nationalism, religion (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 290), and ethnicity (Gerschewski, 2018) are the most common. Post-independence regimes often rely strongly on nationalism as a legitimization strategy (Linz, 2000, p. 227). Nationalism can also be pronounced following a change of government, with the new leadership seeking to strengthen national consciousness (Krastev, 2011). To legitimize their rule, rulers, elites, and parties all refer to historical accounts to arouse nationalist or foundational sentiments by highlighting their role in the state-building process (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 290). In this regard, Betham (1991) noted that historical accounts are significant because of their relationship to the legitimacy of power in the present (Betham, 1991, p. 103). Similarly, Levitsky and Way (2013) insisted that references to periods of violent struggle, such as war, revolutions, and liberation movements, not only establish strong solidarity ties, but also are often used as powerful legitimation narratives (p. 5). Parties that emerge from a successful national liberation struggle often use such narratives to claim an entitlement to steer the country's future based on past achievements (Schedler, 2013, p. 227). Ideological foundations and references to the genesis of the nation and to a heroic 'father of the nation' remain particularly salient for the authoritarian regimes, attempting to inhibit every opposition (Levitsky and Way, 2013; Dimitrov, 2013; Mayer, 2001). Frequent references to past achievements not only highlight the party and its leaders' role in the establishment of the country, but also boost their domestic legitimacy (von

Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 290). In this sense, references to these accounts not only help arouse nationalist sentiments, but also highlight the illegitimacy of the opposition.

Similarly, religion, as a system of beliefs which manifests itself through discourses, serves as a powerful instrument of social control and legitimation (Omelicheva, 2016; The V-Dem Institute, 2019, p. 4). Religion can be used in building collective identities or majoritarian identities (Appadurai, 2006, pp. 51-52). Thus, religion has long been used as a major legitimization strategy (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004; Wintrobe and Ferrero, 2009). Before the advent of modern political era, religion was the only ideology that granted legitimacy to the state (Fox, 2018, pp. 13-14). With the ability to provide grounds for the use of force, religion constitutes the ultimate legitimation of any political system (Green, 2003, p. 2).

Additionally, any political authority in all societies requires a cultural framework, by which, it can define itself, its purposes, and procedures, and advance its legitimacy claims (Geertz, 1977, pp. 267-268). Throughout the history, political authorities have predominantly used religion to highlight and re-emphasize their cultural positions, using it as a basic legitimizing tool (Wilson, 1982, pp. 33-34; Kokosalakis, 1985, p. 371). Furthermore, as legitimacy is essentially located in the collective beliefs of the people and religion arouses collective beliefs, hence, religion has an inherent legitimizing capacity (Fox, 2018, pp. 59-62). Thus, political elites in all societies utilize religion for legitimation. Yilmaz et al. (2020) highlighted that the use of religion by Turkey's electoral authoritarian regime under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to construct the legitimization of 'The New Turkey' has been successful even in the eyes of the opposition (p. 3). The use of religion as a tool for autocratic legitimization has also been found in numerous contexts such as Bangladesh, Tunisia,

Cameroon, and Turkey (Gerschewski, 2018; Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017; Lorch, 2018; Aguzzo and Sigillo, 2017; Letsa, 2017; Bayulgen et al., 2018).

Beyond nationalism and religion, this thesis further explores populism as a tool of ideological legitimation. Some defined populism as a discursive stance that appeals to the interests of the ordinary people or is perceived to be popular to a large majority of a country's population (Howarth, 2008, p. 180). Others described populism as a thin-centered ideology (a belief system with limited range), which is different from classical ideologies such as fascism and liberalism (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018). It is 'thin centered' because it has limited programmatic scope, which is obvious by the fact that it always appears attached to other ideological elements (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018, p. 1669). While right-wing populism relies on nativism to portray a narrow ethnic understanding of 'pure people', the left-wing populism usually focuses on socialism, highlighting socio-economic failures, to advance the 'pure people' (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018, pp. 1669-1170). Populism as tool of legitimation can be found in various countries such as India, Turkey, Ukraine, and Hungary (Kinnvall, 2019).

Francis Fukuyama (2017) offered three characteristics of populism, which are relevant to legitimation and electoral authoritarian contexts. First, populist regimes pursue policies (e.g., unusual subsidies, pension benefits, or free clinics) that are popular in the short run, but unsustainable in the long run. For performance legitimation, authoritarian regimes tend to pursue such policies. Second, (many) populist regimes do not refer to the whole population, rather certain ethnic or racial groups, who are considered 'pure people' (Fukuyama, 2017). Examples include Victor Orban's insistence on Hungarian ethnicity for Hungarian national identity and Narendra Modi's insistence on Hindu population for Indian national identity (Fukuyama, 2017). These instances of insistence on a particular community clarifies the thin-centered stance of

populism, which has been attached to nationalism and religion to be used for ideological legitimation. Third, populist regimes tend to elevate populist leaders for their cult of personality or charismatic style of leadership, which exist independently of institutions like political parties (Fukuyama, 2017). This tendency is widely apparent in authoritarian regimes, which frequently focus on the extraordinary personality and leadership qualities of the ruler to create an appeal among the people to make legitimacy claims (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 290).

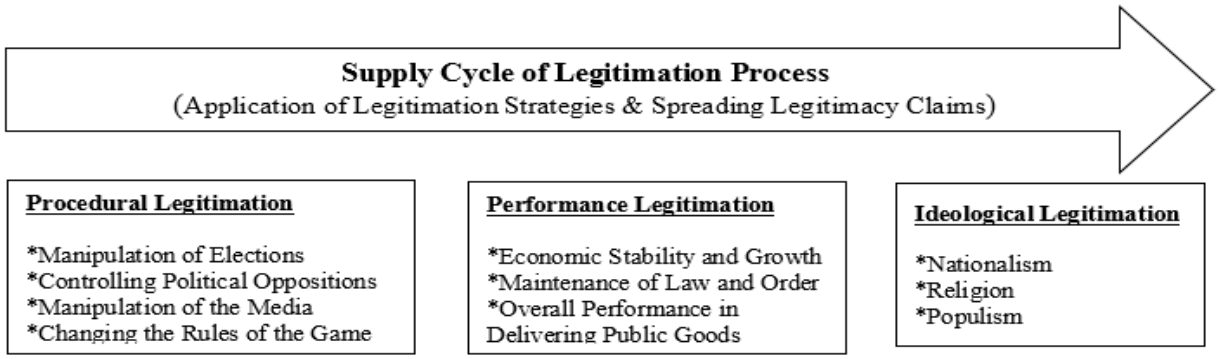
Another central feature of populism is its discursive stance, which is relevant to this thesis. Populist rulers spread discourses to make legitimacy claims in the legitimation process. Discourses encompass all forms of rhetoric and communication of ideas and ideals including political speeches and rumors (Liemere, 2019). Populist discourses can arouse social or collective imaginary that refers to myths and utopias. The myths are narratives on which a nation is built, while the utopias are the projection of the future of a nation (Lemiere, 2019, p. 26). Both can successfully be used for legitimacy claims, as such is found in Malaysia (Lemiere, 2019, p. 26). Populist discourses on the charisma or person of the ruler can arouse personalism-based legitimacy claims (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017, p. 289). Through populist discursive mechanisms, the ruler's centrality to certain achievements such as national unity, prosperity, and stability is often elevated (Nelson, 1984; Issac, 2010) for regime legitimation.

Overall, ideological legitimation stresses that political ideology imposed from above can influence the population to create a feeling of belonging, to produce a behavioral following, and to construct cognitive legitimacy beliefs in authoritarian contexts (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017, pp. 254-255).

Summary

This chapter theoretically conceptualizes five foundational blocks of this thesis. After conceptualizing key terminologies, electoral authoritarian regimes, and the broader concept of legitimacy, the chapter concentrates on exploring the concepts of legitimacy and legitimation in authoritarian contexts. It divides the legitimation process into 'supply' and 'demand' legitimation cycle and limits the empirical inquiry of this thesis into the former. Then the chapter identifies three key legitimation strategies – procedural, performance, and ideological –and their several tools. Figure 2.1. provides a summary of these three-fold legitimation strategies and their tools in the supply cycle legitimation process.

Figure 2.1.: Three-fold Legitimation Strategies of Supply Cycle Legitimation Framework



Source: Developed by the author.

Whether any of these three regime legitimation strategies is preferred to others is an empirical question. Considering the rise of electoral authoritarian regimes, procedural legitimization might even become more important in the future. Due to heavy reliance of these regimes on performance legitimation, performance-based legitimation is also expected to remain significant in the future. Similarly, procedural and performance legitimation can also interact with one another to construct legitimacy in electoral authoritarian regimes.

Although ideological legitimation in comparative electoral authoritarian contexts has been less emphasized in the existing literature, this thesis restores ideological legitimation and ideology-based legitimacy claims in the current contexts. This thesis maintains that electoral authoritarian regimes simultaneously employ the three-fold regime legitimation strategies (see Figure 2.1.) to construct legitimacy for their rule, which can be demonstrated empirically and analyzed comparatively. This thesis empirically investigates the relevance of the three-fold regime legitimation framework in the comparative contexts of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey in Chapter 4, 5, and 6, respectively. For the empirical investigation, the next chapter (Chapter 3) provides a description of research methodology, data sources, and measurement indices.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis investigates regime legitimation process in three electoral authoritarian regimes: Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. As highlighted in Chapter 2, existing normative and descriptive legitimacy theories cannot provide a clear guidance for analyzing legitimation process in authoritarian contexts. In general terms, analyzing any political process is complicated, especially when there is a lack of theories to explain them (Geddes, 2003, p. 2). Along with the lack of theoretical underpinnings, limited scholarly consensus about those theories have further contributed to the complexities, especially in operationalizing legitimation research (Bentham, 1991; von Haldenwang, 2017). This thesis, therefore, advances an alternative theoretical perspective to view the legitimation process as a 'supply cycle' for analyzing legitimation (instead of legitimacy) in authoritarian regimes. Taking the 'supply cycle' position, it offers a modification to the existing theoretical models of legitimation and proposes a better theoretical framework for analyzing legitimation in authoritarian regimes. It is, therefore, a work of deductive theory-building. The deductive theory-building approach formulates an expectation about some observations on real-world events based on a particular theory and sets out to see if the observations are consistent with that theory (Clark et al., 2013, p. 38). This thesis does the same, expecting that authoritarian legitimation is consistent with as well as better explained by the supply cycle legitimation.

Due to the limited scope as well as the focus of this thesis, I concentrate only on the supply cycle of legitimation to explore the strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes and legitimacy claims for legitimizing their rule. This thesis argues that electoral authoritarian regimes concurrently apply procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies to legitimize their rule. Previous studies insisted that ideology is neither relevant (Linz, 2000; Bell,

2000) nor a legitimation strategy of modern authoritarian regimes (Dukalski and Gerschewski, 2017). In contrast, this thesis insists that ideology is still significantly relevant in electoral authoritarian regimes and ideological strategy plays an indispensable role working in combination with procedural and performance strategies for legitimizing their rule. The deductive approach insists to see if observations are consistent with that theory (Clark et al., 2013, p. 38), which is to be tested empirically. This thesis, thus, tests the empirical validity of the proposed theoretical framework in the comparative contexts of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. This thesis is, therefore, an academic exercise of deductive theory-building and theory-testing.

This chapter provides a clear and precise operationalization of the 'supply cycle' of regime legitimation in electoral authoritarian regimes. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the research methods, highlighting case study and comparative methods. The second part provides a detail discussion on the rationale for choosing the selected cases and the benefits of using most different cases. The third part presents the details about the data sources and measurement indices, while the final part provides a summary of this chapter.

Research Methods

The thesis employs qualitative research methods to investigate the relevance of the proposed theoretical framework in electoral authoritarian contexts. The qualitative investigation of this thesis is highly focused because it asks one specific research question that concerns legitimation process in electoral authoritarian regimes, hence limits itself in specific theoretical and empirical literature. George and Bennett (2005), in their influential book, '*Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*', underscored that "situating one's research in the context of the literature is key to identifying the contribution the new research makes" (p. 70).

Keeping this in mind, this thesis theoretically locates itself in legitimation literature and empirically locates itself in the legitimation strategies in electoral authoritarian regimes. By doing such, it then develops the supply cycle of legitimation framework to empirically test it in the selected electoral authoritarian contexts.

Kachuyevski and Samuel (2018), in their seminal book '*Doing Qualitative Research in Politics*' insisted that if structured properly, qualitative studies can build and refine theory while also inform empirical applications (p. 2). Aiming to do the same, the qualitative investigation in this thesis is conducted in a structured manner. It is structured because it asks the same research question in the selected cases and uses a logical sequence to answer the question. It involves standardized data collection and data analysis, which allows a systemic comparison among the cases (George and Bennett, 2005, pp. 67-69). Also, each empirical chapter of this thesis is structurally divided into five parts. The first part discusses transformation of political regimes, while the second part identifies the electoral authoritarian period and reflects on the electoral authoritarian characteristics. The third part employs the 'supply cycle' legitimation framework to analyze the application of legitimation strategies and explore the relevance of the framework. The fourth part explains how the legitimation strategies relate to legitimacy claims attempting to legitimize the rule. The fifth part offers a summary of research findings. After the case-based empirical chapters, this thesis then dedicates a comparative chapter to make a focused comparison based on the findings from the structured analysis in the empirical chapters.

To conduct the focused and the structured analyses, this thesis chooses to use two significant techniques of qualitative research: case study method and comparative method, which are discussed below.

Case Study Method

The case study method is perhaps the most common form of research in the field of comparative politics and is often considered as the nonquantitative time-series research design because it allows researchers to closely study a few cases for a specific timeline to explain some phenomena (Geddes, 2003, p. 117; Yin, 2018, p. 33). It is a highly relevant and a widely used method to explore research question that seek to answer 'why' or 'how' phenomena (Yin, 2018, p. 33). Additionally, when it comes to deductive theory testing especially in investigating a political process, the qualitative case study method is very useful in identifying multiple aspects of the process (Bitektine, 2008, p. 162; George and Bennett, 2005, p. 115). These rationales for using the qualitative case study method are closely aligned with this thesis.

This thesis concerns the rising electoral authoritarian regimes in the contemporary world, which are the most common form of regime type in the post-Cold War era (Schedler, 2013). It particularly concerns the legitimation strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes, employed by elites and representatives, and 'how' these regimes manage to establish legitimacy (indicating legitimation). Although the attempt to employ legitimation strategies to win legitimacy by electoral authoritarian regimes can be found in diverse regional contexts (The V-Dem Institute, 2020, p. 26), this thesis seeks to explain the legitimation process in three electoral authoritarian regimes for a specific timeline in each case: Bangladesh (2009-present), Hungary (2010-present), and Turkey (2014-present). Based on these research objectives, the qualitative case study method is an appropriate research tool to use for conducting the empirical investigation in the current thesis. It is important to mention that the beginning year (e.g., 2009, 2010, and 2014) in the selected timeline for each respective case marks the beginning of the electoral authoritarian era. As all electoral authoritarian rulers in these countries are still in power, data are presented

covering the entire electoral authoritarian period in each selected case based on the availability of data and the feasibility of data analysis.

There are several advantages in using the case study method. First, it insists on in-depth examination of political and historical episodes for developing insights by accommodating different kinds of complex phenomena. It explains how certain phenomena occur that can be generalized across many cases of the similar domain (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 4; Levy, 2008; Gerring, 2007). Second, the in-depth and extensive investigation of the case studies permits the exploration of minute details that "bring light to the anomalies that the current theories often cannot accommodate" (Geddes, 2003, p. 129). Thus, the case study method makes a great contribution to validating proposed theories (Lijphart, 1971, p. 691; George and Bennett, 2005, pp. 4-5). Third, the case study method has higher levels of conceptual validity meaning that it can identify indicators or factors that best represent the theoretical concepts, and it allows researchers to conduct contextual comparisons by exploring analytically equivalent phenomena in different contexts (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 19; Geddes, 2003, p. 132). These advantages of using the case study method are reflected in this thesis. The detailed investigation of the cases reveals the reflection of the three key legitimation strategies of authoritarian regimes that are logically deduced from the legitimation theories and can be comparatively analyzed. Additionally, this thesis generates significant insights that can be generalized in diverse electoral authoritarian regimes beyond the selected cases, which adds to the existing theoretical underpinnings of legitimation in authoritarian contexts.

Apart from these advantages, there are several limitations facing researchers when using the case study method. First, the most common problem of using this method is that it leads to selection bias. The selection bias, which is the cognitive bias toward self-selected cases, may

lead to systemic errors, which can give misguided findings (Geddes, 2003, p. 117; George and Bennett, 2005, p. 31). To offset this limitation, George and Bennett (2005) suggested using 'most different type of cases,' that provides explanatory richness of specific factors as methodological safeguards (pp. 22-31). This thesis, therefore, uses most different cases, which are defined and described in the next section of this chapter. The thesis insists on explanatory richness for analyzing three specific legitimization strategies in each case to understand how the legitimation process works in comparative contexts.

Second, the case study method often suffers from the degree of freedom problem that insists on the potential inability to discriminate between competing explanations as there can be multiple ways to perform certain processes for an intended outcome (George and Bennett, 2005, pp. 28). One of the best ways to offset this limitation is to choose 'crucial cases' that best fit the theory because this demonstrates how evidence based on particular cases fit competing explanations (George and Bennett, 2005, pp. 30). This thesis, therefore, selects 'crucial cases' (e.g., most different cases).

Third, case study method often cannot find out the degree of influence of one factor (strategy, in the current context) over others in a certain outcome in a case. The best way to deal with this limitation is to settle for contributing factors, rather than necessary factors (George and Bennett, 2005, pp. 26-27). This thesis follows this prescription by highlighting three legitimation strategies as contributing factors to construct legitimacy in authoritarian regimes.

Comparative Method

This thesis uses the comparative method to conduct a comparative analysis of regime legitimization strategies in three electoral authoritarian regimes to develop generalized propositions based on the proposed authoritarian regime legitimation framework. The

comparative method, often known as Mill's Method (Mill, 1872), is one the basic methods for establishing empirical propositions and continues to remain highly significant in the field of comparative politics (Lijphart, 1971; Lijphart, 1975; Clark et al., 2013, p. 39). A key reason behind this significance is that in comparative politics, the cases are usually national political systems, therefore, the comparative method is appropriate to use to make effective comparisons (Lijphart, 1971, p. 685). The comparative method also inherently indicates the question of 'how' (Lijphart, 1971, p. 682), hence, is very relevant in the current thesis as it asks how authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule.

There are two popular methods within the comparative method: method of agreement and method of difference (Mill, 1872). The method of difference compares cases that 'differ' on the political phenomenon to be explained, while being similar on alternative explanations (Clark et al., 2013, p. 40). In contrast, the method of agreement compares cases that 'agree' with the political phenomenon to be explained, though they might differ on alternative explanations (Clark et al., 2013, p. 39). This thesis uses the method of agreement to compare three electoral authoritarian cases, which agree on the fact that they generate similar outcomes on the proposed legitimation strategies, while differing on significant background variables (such as size, population, religion, ethnicity etc.).

There are several advantages of using the comparative method. First, focusing on the comparative analysis of a limited number of cases, the comparative method insists on discovering empirical relationships among indicators (Lijphart, 1971, pp. 683-87). With the national political systems as the unit of analysis, it helps to compare a specific number of characteristics while being committed to theoretical parsimony (Lijphart, 1971, p. 689-90). It, thus, provides theoretical and analytical guidance, and has a great significance in theory-building

and theory-testing (Peters, 2011, p. 48; Peters, 2013). Second, the comparative method not only focuses on comparing macro level political systems in cases, but it also compares its sub-factors contributing to the systems in those cases (Lijphart, 1975, p. 165). It is, therefore, useful in explaining the similarities and the dissimilarities among the cases and how the processes of certain phenomena occur in these cases (Kesselman et al. 2013). Third, the comparative method helps to examine the intended question in a more useful and meaningful way for generating systematic knowledge that allows generalization (Pennings et al., 2006, p. 5). It is also useful for deriving information about the comparable indicators that are reliable and replicable (Pennings et al., 2006, p. 5). This thesis utilizes these advantages by using the comparative method. It compares not only the macro level electoral authoritarian regimes' characteristics in three selected cases, but also the specific legitimation strategies in each regime. With a focused and structured comparison, it aims to generate systematic knowledge that is generalizable, reliable, and replicable in diverse contexts.

The case study method and the comparative method are closely connected, even the former is considered a version of the latter (Lijphart, 1971, p. 691). Together they are highly useful in scientific political inquiry. Both case study and comparative methods indicate the selection of a small number of cases for empirical inquiry, and therefore again, fit the research objectives of this thesis. However, like the case study method, the comparative method often suffers from a small-N problem by selecting a deviant case (a case that does not fit within the existing theories) within a small number of cases, which creates the problems of generalizability (Lijphart, 1971, pp. 687-690). To offset this problem, Lijphart (1971) suggested that the selection of cases must be systemic to avoid a deviant case (Lijphart, 1971, p. 686). Thus, the case selection in this thesis has been done in a systematic manner. At this point, it is essential to

understand why and how the three specific cases are selected. The next section clarifies the details about case selection.

Case Selection

Use of multiple cases, instead of a single case, has stronger ability to make focused comparisons and generate comparative understandings (Peters, 2013, p. 69; Yin, 2018, p. 58). Therefore, this thesis chooses multiple cases – Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. It follows specific criteria for the systematic selection of the three cases. According to Geddes (2003), the deductive approach insists on concrete systematic criteria for selecting cases to test a theory and the selected cases must fit with these criteria (Geddes, 2003, p. 132-3). Geddes (2003) proposes two criteria and the selected cases in this thesis meet these criteria. First, the selected cases must be from the domain of the theory (Geddes, 2003, p. 132). The selected cases in this thesis fall within the domain electoral authoritarianism. Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey – all belong to the domain of electoral authoritarianism (The V-Dem Institute, 2020, p. 6). Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey have moved to electoral authoritarianism in 2009, 2010, and 2014, respectively.

Second, the selected cases must be different from the cases from which the theory was originally derived (Geddes, 2003, p. 132). The theoretical underpinnings of legitimation in authoritarian regimes are constructed from diverse old and traditional authoritarian contexts. Some of these contexts included totalitarian regimes (e.g., Nazi Germany, Soviet Union), closed authoritarian regimes (e.g., China), and traditional authoritarian regimes (e.g., Iran, Mali) (Bentham, 1991; Gilley, 2009; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017). The selected cases are the cases of modern electoral authoritarian regimes, hence, are different from the cases from which the theory is originally developed. A third criterion can be found in George and Bennett (2005),

which insists on the relevance of the selected cases with the research objectives and the theory testing (p. 67-69). The selected cases are relevant with the research objectives, which seek to explain the relevance of three legitimation strategies and their tools to investigate how authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule. As discussed in Chapter 1, the primary investigation on regime legitimation in Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey has found a strong relevance of the three legitimation strategies and their tools in these countries. Therefore, the selected cases are relevant with the research objectives and theoretical framework.

The relevance of theory-testing requires to identify specific types of cases from the universe of case types (typical, extreme, influential, deviant, crucial etc.). When it comes to theory-testing, the crucial cases, categorized as 'most-similar' and 'most-different' cases, best serve this purpose (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 80, Levy, 2008). It is relevant to mention that 'most-similar' and 'most-different' cases are the same as Mill's 'method of difference' and 'method of agreement', respectively. The most common form of case study research uses this dichotomy of 'most similar' and 'most different' cases, which are also known as theory-confirming cases (Lijphart, 1971; Przeworski and Teune, 1970). While the most similar cases seek to analyze a causal relationship across cases with similar background conditions (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, p. 304; Pennings et al., 2006, p. 10), the most different cases assume that the causal relationship remains identical despite systemic differences among background conditions (Pennings et al., 2006, p. 10). Though they are different in almost all aspects, the cases in this thesis are similar in the variable of interest and the outcome (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, p. 306), based on Mill's 'Method of Agreement' (Gerring and Cojocaru, 2016, p. 393). The three cases – Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey – in this thesis are most different cases. They represent three different geographic regions such as South Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle

East. These cases share very dissimilar historical, institutional, cultural, ideological, and demographical characteristics, which are discussed in case specific chapters as well as in the comparative analysis chapter. This is not to say that these cases cannot have commonalities. Peters (2013) argued that cases should not be compared unless they share some common properties (p. 38), hence, they must be identical in terms of some properties (e.g., elections) (Pennings et al., 2006, pp. 6-7). The three selected cases are also common in electoral authoritarian characteristics and their attempts in legitimation. The purpose of this thesis is to explain the application of similar regime legitimization strategies in dissimilar country contexts.

The benefit of using most-different cases is that as the cases belong to different cultural and historical regions, the generalized argument derived from these cases makes the argument more persuasive (Geddes, 2003, p. 107; Bates, 1997; Skocpol, 1979). The research results are valid when they yield similar causal relationships between independent and dependent variables in all different cases under observation (Pennings et al., 2006, p. 7). This thesis, therefore, aims to develop a persuasive generalized argument on the legitimation in electoral authoritarian regimes deriving from the most different country contexts. However, to meet this objective, it is essential to use standardized data collection and data analysis techniques. The next section, therefore, provides details on data sources and measurement indices.

Data Sources and Measurement

The qualitative research of this thesis uses both primary and secondary data and several quantitative indices to conduct the empirical investigation. Data are collected from various sources, specifically for the electoral authoritarian period in each country (e.g., Bangladesh: 2009-present, Hungary: 2010-present, and Turkey: 2014-present), as mentioned above. Nevertheless, the thesis often goes beyond the electoral authoritarian period in each country to

facilitate discussion and explanation. Additionally, although data for the beginning year in each case is presented, data for the ending year is provided based on the data availability.

Qualitative data for each case study are collected broadly from scholarly books and journals, government reports, election observation reports, organizational reports, survey reports, research articles, and media analyses. Constitutions, laws, rules and regulations, official decrees, and executive orders of the respective countries are used as key data sources. Election results are derived from respective election commissions of three countries (e.g., Bangladesh Election Commission, National Election Office of Hungary, and Supreme Election Council of Turkey). Only national parliamentary elections in Bangladesh and Hungary, which were held during the above timeline, are covered in this thesis. However, both parliamentary and presidential elections within the above timeline are covered in the Turkish context due to the country's transformation from a parliamentary system to a presidential authoritarian one. Additionally, the previous election through which the electoral authoritarian ruler assumed power in each country is covered for the identification purpose of electoral authoritarian regime type. The rationale for using the previous election to identify electoral authoritarian regime type is discussed below under the electoral authoritarian index section.

Data for legitimacy claims of the electoral authoritarian regimes in three countries are collected from the statements and speeches of the incumbents. The speeches are derived from official websites (e.g., the Prime Minister's Office of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister's Office of Hungary, and the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey). For systematic analyses of the speeches of the three incumbents, only their yearly addresses to the nation, speeches at the opening sessions of the parliament, and speeches during election campaigns are used, in which, their legitimacy claims are mostly highlighted. Furthermore, the comments, speeches, and statements

of the incumbents are collected from journalistic accounts and newspaper articles to understand their rhetoric for ideological legitimation. All these data for each case are crosschecked for reliability and validity. While data from the above sources are used in case study chapters, a comparative analysis is conducted to compare the findings from each chapter and to develop a generalized understanding of the applicability and the utility of the three-fold regime legitimation framework.

Additionally, three quantitative indices are used to assist the qualitative investigation: electoral authoritarian index of Roessler and Howard (2009), regimes of the world index of V-Dem, and authoritarian legitimation index (by compiling data from different sources). Identification of exact electoral authoritarian period for a country can be tricky due to the deceptive nature of the electoral authoritarian regimes. This thesis, therefore, uses both electoral authoritarian index and regimes of the world index to confirm the electoral authoritarian period in each country. Additionally, this thesis has created an authoritarian legitimation index by combining a series of sub-indices and statistical data to assist in the qualitative analyses of the regime legitimation strategies. Data sources for these indices and their sub-indices are discussed in the following section.

Electoral Authoritarian Index

This thesis defines 'electoral authoritarian regimes' in Schedler's terms. According to Schedler (2002), electoral authoritarian regimes are those in which authoritarian leaders "hold elections and tolerate some pluralism and interparty competition but violate democratic norms so severely and systematically that it makes no sense to call them democracies, however qualified" (Schedler, 2002, p. 36). To measure electoral authoritarian regime and its types (competitive and hegemonic), this thesis creates an 'electoral authoritarian index' by adopting Roessler and

Howard's (2009) operationalization, which has also been used by other studies (von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017).

To distinguish different political regimes, Roessler and Howard (2009) used both Freedom House (FH) score and Polity score, which have been popularly used by scholars to measure the level of democracy as well as regime performances. FH provides scores, ratings, and statuses of 195 countries and 15 territories from 1978 to 2020 based on their political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2021). FH rating for each country ranges from 1 to 7 (with 1 being the most democratic and 7 being the least democratic) (Freedom House, 2021; Freedom House, 2019). On the other hand, Polity score provides data for 167 independent states (a total population of 500,000 or more) for the period 1800-2018 (Polity V, 2020). Polity score is calculated broadly based on three key indicators: competitiveness and openness of executive recruitment, constraints on chief executive, and regulation and competitiveness of political participation (Polity V, 2020, pp. 14-16). Polity score measures a regime's performance on a scale of 21 points ranging from −10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic) and Polity score is computed by subtracting the autocracy score from democracy score (Polity V, 2020, pp. 14-16; Center for Systemic Peace, 2021).

According to Roessler and Howard (2009), the countries which have both FH ratings of 3 or higher and Polity scores of 5 or lower are considered electoral authoritarian regimes (p. 110). Based on this measuring criteria, any electoral authoritarian regimes including competitive and hegemonic can be categorized with the above FH ratings and Polity scores (see Table 3.1.). To distinguish between competitive and hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes, Roessler and Howard (2009) used the outcome of the last election. According to the authors, if the winning party or candidate in a regime received more than 70 percent of the vote or the seats in the

parliament in the last election, then the regime is a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime (p. 110). The regime holds this categorization until the next election unless there is a significant change in the rules and procedures for selecting the chief executive before the next election (p. 110). Similarly, if the winning party or candidate in a regime received less than 70 percent of the vote or the seats in the parliament in the last election, then the regime is a competitive authoritarian regime (pp. 110-11). This thesis adopts Roessler and Howard's (2009) operationalization to categorize electoral authoritarian regimes as this is useful to not only distinguish these regimes from others, but also to identify their types – competitive and hegemonic authoritarian regimes (see Table 3.1.).

Table 3.1.: Electoral Authoritarian Index

Regime Type	Measurement Criteria
Electoral Authoritarian	FH ≥ 3 and Polity V ≤ 5
Competitive Authoritarian	FH ≥ 3 and Polity V ≤ 5 and winner received < 70% of the vote or seats in previous election
Hegemonic Electoral Authoritarian	FH ≥ 3 and Polity V ≤ 5 and winner received ≥ 70% of the vote or seats in previous election

Source: Adapted from Roessler and Howard (2009, p. 112).

The data for FH ratings are extracted for Bangladesh (2009-present), Hungary (2010-present), and Turkey (2014-present) from FH's *Freedom in the World* reports for the selected timeline. It is important to note that apart from the FH ratings, additional data on electoral process and political pluralism are collected from the *Freedom in the World* reports and are presented to highlight two characteristics of electoral authoritarianism: limited electoral competitiveness and restricted political pluralism. However, the data for Polity scores are derived from the Polity Project of the Center for Systemic Peace. Although Roessler and Howard (2009) used Polity IV version, this thesis will use the latest version – Polity V for the above period for

each country. Election results for the elections are drawn from the websites of respective election commissions, as mentioned above.

Regimes of the World Index

In addition to the electoral authoritarian index, this thesis uses V-Dem's "regimes of the world index" to identify exact electoral authoritarian period in each country. V-Dem provides data on a wide range of issues for 202 countries covering the period between 1789 and 2020. V-Dem's regimes of the world index divides the world's regimes in four categories: closed autocracy, electoral autocracy, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy. The index measures the world's regimes on a scale of 0 to 3. While 0 means closed autocracy, 3 means liberal democracy. The score for electoral autocracy is 1. Thus, any country with a score of 1 in the regimes of the world index is an electoral autocracy. According to the index, the indicators for electoral autocracy included multiparty elections which fail to uphold free and fair status and minimum levels of institutional democracy. These indicators represent Schedler's definition of electoral authoritarianism, which is adopted in this thesis, as mentioned above. Therefore, this thesis uses the regimes of the world index. The thesis identifies any country as an electoral authoritarian regime if it reaches the electoral authoritarian scores in both electoral authoritarian index and regimes of the world index.

Authoritarian Legitimation Index

Instead of 'legitimacy', this thesis investigates 'legitimation', which is understood as the process of establishing legitimacy in a society (von Haldenwang, 2017, p. 269). Deriving from existing theoretical literature, this thesis offers three legitimization strategies – procedural, performance, and ideological. It argues that procedural, performance, and ideological strategies are concurrently employed by the electoral authoritarian regimes to construct legitimacy for their

rule. This thesis creates an 'authoritarian legitimation index' to assist in the qualitative investigation of these strategies, by compiling several measurement indices. Data for these indices and their sub-indices are collected mainly from five sources: The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), the World Bank, the Polity V, the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU), and the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP). The data from these sources are used for the electoral authoritarian period in each country based on their availability, as mentioned above. The V-Dem data are used for the indices under the procedural and the ideological strategy, while the indices under the performance strategy use data from Polity V, EIU, World Bank, and UNDP. Additional data sources are also used for the performance strategy wherever relevant. Furthermore, the V-Dem data are used to provide evidence for legitimacy claims (see Table 3.2.).

As Table 3.2. shows, under procedural strategy, clean elections, freedom of association, freedom of expression, constitution, and judiciary indices are used to show that the three electoral authoritarian regimes undermine and politicize democratic procedural institutions and practices. The data for these indices are derived from V-Dem. An in-depth qualitative analysis of these indices in the political context of each country demonstrates how these three electoral authoritarian regimes utilize democratic procedural institutions and practices in their legitimation strategies.

Table 3.2.: Summary of Measurement and Data Sources for Authoritarian Legitimization Index

Items	*Indicators*	*Measurement*	*Data Sources*
Procedural	Manipulation of Elections	*Clean Election Index* (3.1.2.3.) EMB autonomy, (3.1.2.7.) Election vote buying, (3.1.2.8.) Election other voting irregularities, (3.1.2.9.) Election government intimidation, (3.1.2.15) Election free and fair	V-Dem
	Controlling Political Opposition	*Freedom of Association Index* (3.2.0.1.) Barriers to parties (3.2.0.4.) Opposition parties' autonomy (3.5.1.7.) Legislature Opposition Parties (3.2.0.12.) National party control (3.10.0.2) CSO Repression	V-Dem
	Manipulation of the Media	*Freedom of Expression Index* (3.11.0.1.) Government censorship effort-Media (3.11.0.2.) Internet censorship effort (3.11.0.7.) Harassment of Journalists (3.11.0.9.) Media bias (3.11.0.10.) Media corrupt	V-Dem
	Changing the Rules of the Game	*The Constitution Index* (3.3.2.11.) Enforcement of constitutional changes through popular votes (3.4.1.1.) Executive respects constitution	V-Dem
		The Judiciary Index (3.7.0.1.) Judicial reform (3.7.0.2.) Judicial purges (3.7.0.3.) Government attacks on judiciary (3.7.0.4.) Court packing (3.7.0.11.) High court independence	V-Dem
Performance	Regime Performance, Economic Growth, Social Services	*Performance Index* 1. Regime Score 2. Growth: GDP Per capita, Official Development Assistance (ODA) Per capita, and Human Development Index (HDI).	Polity V, World Bank, UNDP, EIU

Legitimacy Claims	Procedural, Performance, and Ideological Legitimacy Claims	*Legitimacy Claims Index* (3.14.0.5.) Rational-legal legitimation (3.14.0.4.) Performance legitimation (3.14.0.1.) Govt. promotion of ideology	V-Dem

Source: Compiled by the author.

Similarly, the indicators under the performance strategy reveal the extent of economic growth and social development under the electoral authoritarian period in three countries. Data from these indicators are contextualized in each case to qualitatively explain how authoritarian rulers make efforts to improve economic growth and social development and highlight their performances in improving people's living conditions for the quest of legitimacy.

Finally, this thesis uses a 'legitimacy claims index' combining rational-legal (procedural) legitimation, performance legitimation, and government's promotion of ideology indicators from V-Dem. As discussed in Chapter 2, electoral authoritarian regimes not only employ legitimation strategies, but also make legitimacy claims based on their strategies. Therefore, the 'legitimacy claims index' is used to provide evidence for the legitimacy claims based on the three legitimation strategies in the selected electoral authoritarian contexts. Data for the legitimacy claims are contextualized and discussed alongside the rhetoric of the incumbents, which are derived from their speeches and statements, as mentioned above. It is important to note that the selected cases demonstrate a strong relevance of the ideological contents. The thesis contends that the ideological narratives significantly influence the linkage between legitimacy claims of the regimes and legitimacy beliefs of citizens in the construction of regime legitimacy. Therefore, a thorough investigation of the relevant literature and the empirical evidence is conducted to explore how ideological narratives contributing to connect legitimacy claims and legitimacy beliefs to legitimize the authoritarian regimes in place.

It is important to mention that the above indices alone will not be the sole determinants to examine the regime legitimization strategies in the selected electoral authoritarian regimes. By contextualizing these indices in the political developments of the selected cases, this thesis aims to reflect how the authoritarian regimes target and politicize institutional and non-institutional aspects to legitimize their rule. Two points warrant attention here. First, the selected indices are helpful in identifying the trends in the institutional aspects. Second, the autocrats' frequent references to procedural, performance, and ideological legitimacy claims provide evidence for their quest for legitimacy. Qualitatively analyzing these indices and data points in the political context of each case, this thesis highlights the autocrats' legitimation strategies seeking to link their legitimacy claims with legitimacy beliefs of the people.

Using the above indices and key insights from secondary sources, this thesis qualitatively analyzes how electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule. By locating the chosen indices in respective political contexts, relating them with relevant insights from theoretical and empirical literature, and comparatively analyzing them, this thesis develops a generalized knowledge about the authoritarian regime legitimation, which should be appliable to diverse authoritarian contexts beyond the selected authoritarian regimes.

Summary

This chapter provides a detailed account of how legitimation strategies in electoral authoritarian regimes are operationalized. It describes the operationalization by highlighting the rationale for using case study and comparative methods, choosing the selected cases, and describing data sources and measurement indices. The chapter shows that the case study research and the comparative method fit well the research objectives and the theory-testing goals of this thesis. The chapter also highlights that the thesis has followed specific criteria to select three

most different case studies. Additionally, the chapter insisted that the use of method of agreement technique, as part of the comparative method, is effective to explore the relevance of the three-fold regime legitimation framework in the selected electoral authoritarian regimes. The following four empirical chapters are dedicated to exploring the relevance of the theoretical framework. Chapter 4, 5, and 6 provide individual case specific discussion of the authoritarian legitimation strategies in Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey, respectively. Chapter 7 comparatively analyzes their legitimation strategies to develop a generalized understanding for authoritarian legitimation.

CHAPTER IV: REGIME LEGITIMATION IN BANGLADESH

This chapter explores and analyzes the relevance of the three-fold regime legitimation framework in the electoral authoritarian context of Bangladesh. While the chapter concentrates on the post-2009 electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh to understand procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation tools and legitimacy claims, it briefly discusses historical development to understand the transformation of political regimes. Therefore, the chapter is divided into five parts. The first part discusses the transformation of Bangladesh's political regimes in the past decades. The second part describes the nature and characteristics of the current electoral authoritarian regime. The third section elaborately analyzes the relevance of procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation tools. The fourth section provides evidence for the regime's legitimacy claims based on procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation. The final section gives a summary of the findings of this chapter.

Transformation of Political Regimes in Bangladesh

After gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh experienced a one-party civilian authoritarian rule during the 1972-1975 period and the military-led authoritarian rule during the 1975-1990 period. Throughout the 1972-1990 period, democratic practices were severely limited which were reflected in unfree and unfair elections, manipulation of electoral processes, very limited political competitiveness, and using state machineries to suppress opposition voices (Riaz, 2019, p. 22). After democratization began in 1991, political power alternated between two major political parties: Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) until 2006. Throughout this period, Bangladesh demonstrated various hallmarks of electoral democracy such as periodic elections, higher levels of political participation, equal opportunities for all political parties, a vibrant civil society, and sufficient press freedom (Riaz, 2014b, p. 150).

However, holding elections regularly remained the only functional democratic institutional procedure during this period (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 12), while the overall democracy remained fragile as institutions necessary for democratic consolidation were seriously lacking (Riaz, 2014b, p. 150).

However, a major political crisis was mounting in Bangladesh since 2004 centering around the non-partisan caretaker government (CTG)[2], which was incorporated in the constitution in 1996 to hold free and fair elections. The constitutional provisions regarding CTG stipulated that the immediate past Chief Justice (CJ) would be the head of the CTG. In 2004, the BNP-led government increased the retirement age of the Supreme Court (SC) justices, allegedly to ensure one of its preferred former CJ presiding over the CTG during next election (Riaz, 2019, p. 24). This decision was ultimately opposed by BAL who led violent street protests. These protests heightened during the second half of 2006, when BNP's tenure was about to end and a CTG government was to be formed. Since both BNP and BAL failed to reach an agreement on the formation of the CTG government and violent protests continued, the military staged a soft coup on 11 January 2007, ten days ahead of the scheduled election, and installed a military-backed civilian caretaker government. Putting democracy on hold, the military-backed government (2007-2008) severely limited political rights and civil liberties and attempted to bring structural changes by ousting both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina (two former prime ministers) from politics. Faced with several crises and domestic and international pressure, the military-backed government arranged an election in December 2008, which delivered a landslide

[2] A neutral caretaker government (CTG) system was first introduced in 1991. CTG was authorized to hold the executive power during the interim period between the departing and the incoming governments. The central role of the CTG system was to hold free and fair elections during the interim period and ensure the peaceful transfer of power. The CTG system was officially incorporated in the constitution in 1996, but it was removed the BAL-government in 2011 through the fifteenth constitutional amendment.

victory to BAL. The BAL-led government under Sheikh Hasina formed the government in 2009 and began the electoral authoritarian era in Bangladesh.

The discussion above shows that democracy was never consolidated in Bangladesh since the country's birth. Additionally, the confrontational politics between two major political parties led to the emergence of authoritarianism in the country.

Electoral Authoritarian Regime in Bangladesh

With four-fifths supermajority in the parliament (Shehabuddin, 2016, p. 24), Hasina-led government assumed a stronghold in the government and intensified authoritarianism in the country. Though the incumbent began its rule in the backdrop of an already established authoritarian political environment, during her regime (2009-present), electoral authoritarianism has been institutionalized. But when exactly did electoral authoritarianism begin in Bangladesh? Based on the 'electoral authoritarian index' adopted in this thesis, Bangladesh became an electoral authoritarian regime in 2009. According to the 'electoral authoritarian index' (see Table 4.1.), any country which has both FH rating of 3 or higher and Polity scores of 5 or lower is considered an electoral authoritarian regime (Roessler and Howard, 2009, p. 110). As Table 4.1. shows, Bangladesh had an FH rating of 4 and Polity score of 5 in 2009.

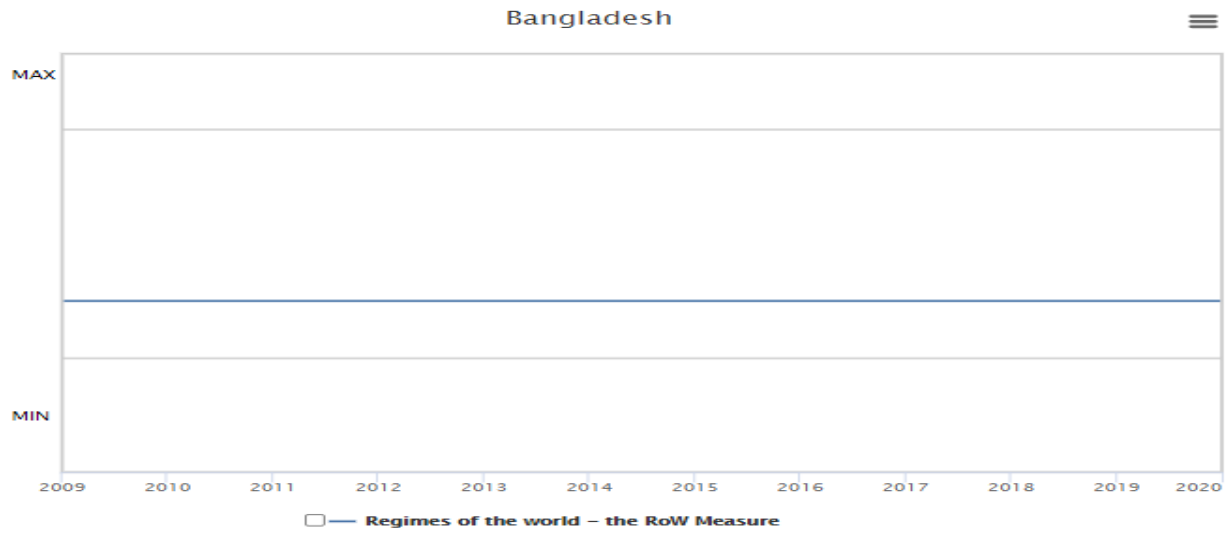
Table 4.1.: Regime Performance and the Quality of Democracy in Bangladesh, 2009-2021

Year	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
FH Rating	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Polity Score	5	5	5	5	4	1	1	1	1	−6	-	-	-

Source: Freedom House (FH) Rating of Bangladesh is compiled from the '*Freedom in the World*' annual reports, available at https://freedomhouse.org/reports/publication-archives. FH rating ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 being most democratic and 7 means least democratic. Polity Score of Bangladesh is compiled from Polity V Dataset, available at https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html. Polity score ranges from −10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic).

Based on the categorization of electoral authoritarian regimes, Bangladesh has been a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime since 2009. Similarly, as per V-Dem's "regimes of the world index" (see Figure 4.1.), Bangladesh became an electoral authoritarian regime in 2009 with the score of 1, which continued until the present time. Following both indices, this thesis identifies the 2009-present period as Bangladesh's electoral authoritarian era.

Figure 4.1. Electoral Authoritarianism in Bangladesh



Source: V-Dem. "Regimes of the World" [How can the political regime be overall classified considering the competitiveness of access to power as well as liberal principles?], (0 = closed autocracy, 1 = electoral autocracy, 2 = electoral democracy, and 3 = liberal democracy].

To understand whether Bangladesh became a competitive or hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime in 2009, one needs to look at the 2008 election results, as per "the electoral authoritarian index" adopted in this thesis. To be a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime, along with the regime's FH rating of 3 or higher and Polity scores of 5 or lower, the ruling party requires to win more than 70 percent of seats in the parliament in the previous election (Roessler and Howard, 2009). As Table 4.2. shows, the ruling BAL won 230 out of 300 seats, which is 76.67 percent of seats, in the December 2008 election. With the required FH rating and Polity

score and more than 70 percent of seats in the parliament, Bangladesh, therefore, became a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime in 2009.

Table 4.2.: Major Parties' Performance in Bangladesh's Parliamentary Elections (2008, 2014, and 2018)

Party Name	2008			2014			2018		
	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Total Votes (%)	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Total Votes (%)	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Total Votes (%)
Bangladesh Awami League (BAL)	230	76.67	48.04	233	77.67	72.14	258	86	76.88
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP	30	10	32.50	-	-	-	6	-	-
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB)	2	0.67	4.70	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jatiya Party (JP)	27	9	7.04	34	11.33	-	22	-	-

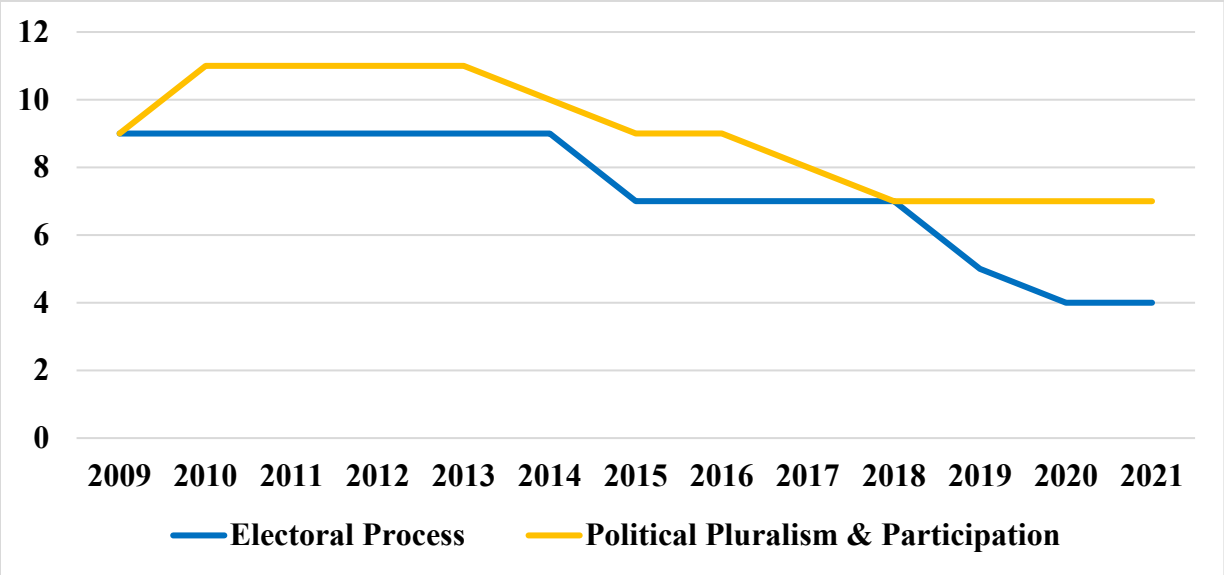
Source: Bangladesh Election Commission, http://www.ecs.gov.bd/category/publications?lang=en; Riaz, 2014b; Riaz, 2019.
Note: The data are compiled from the Statistical Reports of Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Parliamentary Elections of Bangladesh. The national assembly of Bangladesh is comprised of total 350 seats for the elected members to be in office for 5-year term. Of total seats, 300 members are elected based on the First Past-The-Post system, representing single member electoral districts. The elected members then fill the remaining 50 seats, reserved for women, based on proportional representation of the elected parties.

Through severe manipulations in the parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2018, the incumbent regime further secured 77.67 percent and 86 percent of seats in parliament, respectively. Therefore, the hegemonic electoral authoritarianism has further intensified in the country. As per Roessler and Howard (2009) framework, Bangladesh is likely to keep this categorization until the next national election unless any drastic event or change of rules occur.

However, broadly there are two characteristics of electoral authoritarianism – limited political openness and limited electoral competitiveness (Kou and Kao, 2011, pp. 7-8). Figure

4.2. shows that both electoral competitiveness and political pluralism have been drastically declining in Bangladesh under the hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime. Freedom House's (FH) electoral process score for Bangladesh has declined from 9 (out of 12) in 2010 to 4 in 2021. Similarly, the score for political pluralism has fallen from 11 (out of 16) in 2010 to 7 in 2021.

Figure 4.2.: Electoral Competitiveness and Political Pluralism in Bangladesh, 2009-2021



Source: compiled by author from *Freedom in the World* reports (2009-2021) of Freedom House. Electoral process is measured on a scale of 1 to 12 based on whether the elections were free and fair and whether electoral rules were impartially implemented. Political pluralism is measured on a scale of 1 to 16 based on whether diverse political groups had freedom to exercise political rights, realistic opportunity to gain power through elections, and were subject to domination by political forces.

Although elections were held regularly, they were severely manipulated with very limited space for political opposition. Two elections (2014 and 2018) have so far occurred under the incumbent regime in Bangladesh, in which 12 and 39 political parties have participated (Riaz, 2014a; Riaz, 2019), respectively. The level-playing field in both elections was largely limited, as it was dominated by the ruling regime. The incumbent regime either created an environment that

led to the boycott or withdrawal of the opposition parties or allowed weak or pseudo political parties to participate in elections.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this section. First, Bangladesh became a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime in 2009. It has kept this categorization until the present time. Second, while political openness and electoral competitiveness are drastically declining under the electoral authoritarian era, the regime either allowed weak political oppositions or created a political environment that led to boycott or withdrawal from elections by the main opposition party.

Strategies of Legitimation under Electoral Authoritarianism in Bangladesh

This part discusses how the incumbent electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh has applied procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies. The procedural legitimation highlights manipulation of elections, controlling the political opposition, restricting media freedom and expression, and changing the rules of the game. The performance legitimation focuses Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and growth, net official development assistance (ODA), and the Human Development Index (HDI) value to show the performance of the government. The ideological legitimation analyzes how the ideological tools of nationalism and Islam have applied for legitimation.

Procedural Legitimation

Manipulation of Elections

In Bangladesh, severe and systematic manipulation of elections were manufactured using both formal and informal mechanisms. The *formal mechanism* of electoral manipulation includes the removal of the CTG provision from the constitution through the fifteenth constitutional amendment in 2011. The thirteenth amendment required that parliamentary elections be held

under a non-partisan CTG, headed by the immediate past Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appointed by the President to oversee elections (Riaz, 2019). In contrast, the fifteenth amendment, which was passed by the parliament in the absence of the opposition (Majumdar, 2013), formalized that the elections will be held at a time when the incumbent will be in office (Riaz, 2014b). The incumbent provided the rationale for this change referring to the capture of power by unconstitutional bodies such as the military (Riaz, 2014a, p. 122).

Although free and fair elections have always been a challenge for Bangladesh (Rahman, 2006; Maniruzzaman, 2019), elections that occurred under the CTG were relatively free and fair compared to any other elections in Bangladesh (Riaz, 2019). The removal of the CTG system paved the way for not only manipulating elections but also establishing a complete control over the electoral system. Under the new provision, elections will be overseen by the election commission appointed by the incumbent and supervised by a highly politicized administration. The new provision paved the way for the incumbent to establish a complete control over the country's electoral system and facilitated severe manipulation of elections (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 6). The ruling regime further used the incumbency advantage to create an uneven playing field for political opponents in both the 2014 and 2018 elections.

Apart from the *formal mechanisms*, a wide array of *informal mechanisms* was brought into practice by the incumbent that facilitated the manipulation of elections. Such informal mechanisms can broadly be divided into creating a climate of fear and preventing electoral participation. First, the incumbent's decision to remove the CTG provision in 2011 was met with heightened protest, led by the opposition BNP-JIB (Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh) alliance, which the ruling regime controlled with law enforcement crackdowns. The crackdowns resulted in nationwide political violence that led to over 169 deaths and more than 17,000 injuries in 2012

alone (Freedom House, 2013, p. 69). Additionally, the year 2013 witnessed two important events.[3]

A social movement emerged on February 2013 in the capital's Shahabag square, triggered by a verdict of the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT). The ICT was established by the government to bring those under trial who collaborated with the Pakistani military to commit genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1971 independence war (Riaz, 2014b, p. 151). Many members of JIB who colluded with Pakistani military were brought under trial, which resulted in violent protests led by JIB throughout the country. Countering the Shahabag movement, an Orthodox Islamist umbrella organization, Hefazat-e-Islam (HI) (Protector of Islam) led over 500,000 madrassa students and teachers for a 'siege of Dhaka' operation in May 2013. Branding the Shahabag movement activists as atheists and anti-Islamic, the HI demanded the death penalty for some Shahabag movement bloggers who insulted Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, along with the implementation of 13 points demands (Kabir, 2015, p. 70; Human Rights Watch, 2013, p. 21). The law enforcement agencies disrupted the HI campaign through a late-night clean-up operation which caused the death of roughly 50 people (Riaz, 2014a, p. 152).

Both the Shahabag movement and the HI campaign in 2013 served to "exacerbate an increasingly tumultuous political environment" ahead of the January 2014 election (Bleckner, 2014). Over 300 people were killed and another 9400 injured throughout 2013 due to political violence and lethal use of force by law enforcement agencies (Bleckner, 2014; Freedom House, 2015, p. 65). After the election date was declared on 27 November 2013, at least 153 people were killed before the election, while 19 people were killed during the election day

[3] Both the Shahabag movement and the Hefazat campaign are elaborated at the later part of this Chapter. The current section briefly covers these events, as they contributed to escalate fear in the preceding months of the 2014 election.

(Bhattacharjee, 2014). Along with this violent political environment, the increased use of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances created a culture of fear among the people (Human Rights Watch, 2013; Riaz, 2014b, p. 9). The result was the occurrence of the most violent election (in January 2014) in the country's history with the lowest turnout ever.

Violence erupted after BNP called for mass demonstrations on 5 January 2014 and launched general strikes and nationwide blockades. Within the next three months, at least 138 people lost their lives, and economic loss arose to US$ 2.2 billion (Riaz, 2015). The autocratic incumbent responded with arbitrary arrests, increasing numbers of extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances, which continued to grow until the next election of 2018. Prior to a couple of months of the scheduled election in December 2018, the incumbent launched an anti-narcotic drive on May 2018, in which, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and the police were given free reign by the Prime Minister, that resulted in the deaths of 200 people within a few months (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 7). While many listed and notorious drug lords, alleged to have connections with the ruling party, were left untouched, the main targets were petty criminals, people with no connection to drug trafficking, and allegedly opposition activists (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 7).

The increasing numbers of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, the government's adoption of strict measures, and overall political situation permeated a sense of fear and insecurity before the election.

Second, the prevention of electoral participation was ensured through arbitrary arrests of the candidates, rejection of candidacies, threats and intimidation, and ballot stuffing, which were reflected in both the 2014 and 2018 elections. The ruling regime filed charges anonymously against opposition party leaders and candidates, which resulted in arbitrary arrests, detainments,

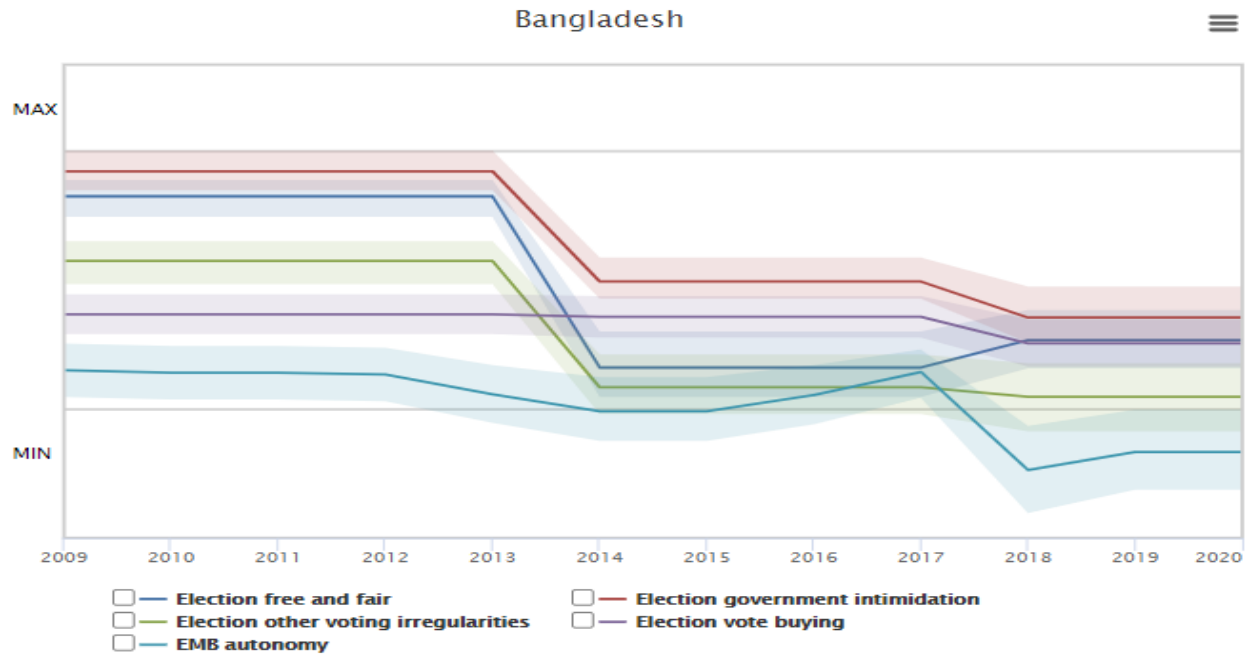
and torture. According to a Dhaka-based civil society organization, SHUJAN, at least 67 percent of the opposition candidates, who submitted nomination to the election commission in 2018, faced criminal charges, as opposed to only 7 percent of the ruling party candidates (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 8). During the last three weeks before the 2018 election, at least 8,200 opposition party candidates were arrested (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 8). Sometimes, the opposition activists were arrested by plainclothes secret police, who later released them a couple of kilometers away (Maniruzzaman, 2019).

Using the excuses of the criminal charges, the election commission disqualified opposition candidates in both elections (Maniruzzaman, 2019). The commission also played a double standard role by disqualifying opposition candidates on unreasonable grounds, while providing nomination to the ruling party candidates despite having the same grounds (Riaz and Parvez, 2021). Additionally, in both elections, the ruling party activists prevented the nomination of the opposition candidates by intimidating the willing opposition candidates. The campaign activists, polling agents, and the opposition party activists were threatened and often forced to return from entering the polling stations in both elections. Furthermore, there had been widespread casting of bogus and phantom votes, which were cast through several ways. Examples include voting on another's behalf, stuffing the ballot boxes with false votes, and allowing the pro-regime polling agents or activists to enter the polling booths to cast false votes (Abedin, 2020; Maniruzzaman, 2019; Riaz and Parvez, 2021). Due to these phantom votes, election results in many constituencies appeared peculiar. For instance, the ruling party candidates won with an unimaginable margin of vote differences (Maniruzzaman, 2019; Blair, 2020, p. 144). Similarly, the total vote casts sometimes ended up higher than the total number of

voters in a constituency (Maniruzzaman, 2019; Blair, 2020, p. 144). All these informal mechanisms were manufactured and applied to steal elections.

Further evidence for the manipulation of elections under Bangladesh's electoral authoritarian regime can be found in V-Dem's 'clean election index' (see Figure 4.3.). As per the V-Dem data, the score for free and fair elections has been negative since 2014, indicating that elections under the ruling regime are fundamentally flawed. Similarly, the autonomy of the election commission in Bangladesh does not exist and it is controlled by the incumbent government, as indicated by the negative score throughout the regime's tenure. Furthermore, the government's intimidation to opposition parties and candidates, vote buying, and other voting irregularities have drastically increased, as indicated by the negative scores.

Figure 4.3.: Clean Election Index for Bangladesh, 2009-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
*Election free and fair [Taking all aspects of the pre-election period, election day, and the post-election process into account, would you consider this election to be free and fair?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).

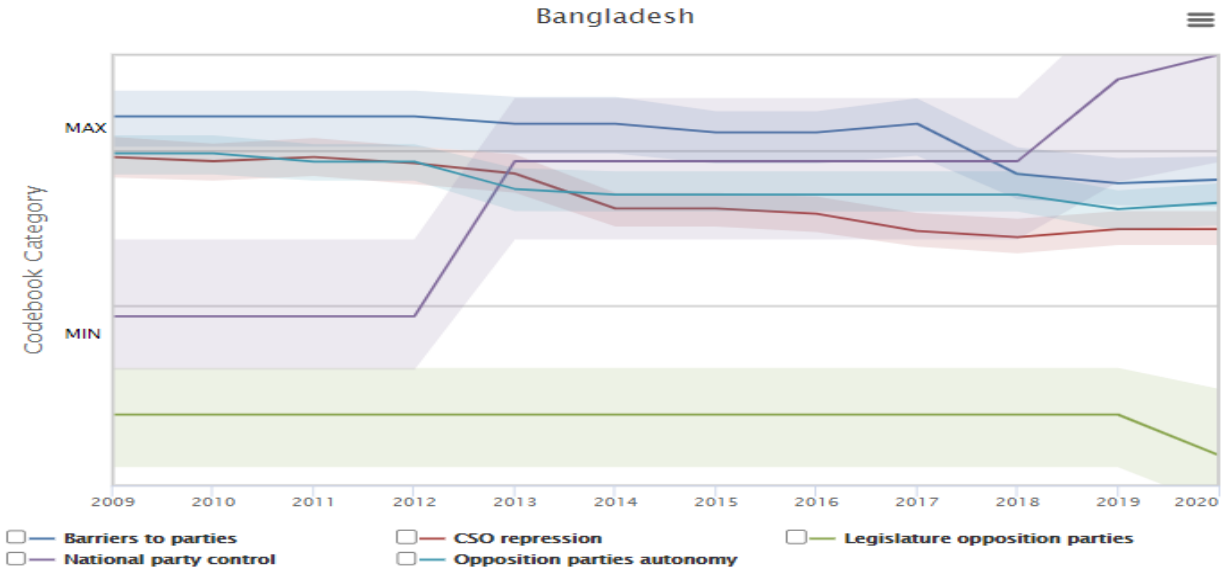
*EMB autonomy [Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have the autonomy from the government to apply electoral laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Election government intimidation [In this national election, were the opposition parties/candidates/campaign workers subject to repression, intimidation, violence, or harassment by the government, the ruling party, or their agents?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
*Election other voting irregularities [In this national election, was there evidence of other (intentional) irregularities by the incumbent and/or opposition parties, and or vote fraud?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
*Election vote buying [In this national election, was there evidence of vote and/or turnout buying?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).

The above discussion clarifies that there has been severe manipulation of elections under the electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh. Such manipulations are broadly done through legal and informal mechanisms which delivered repeated electoral victories to the incumbent.

Controlling Political Opposition

The electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh has attempted to control political opposition through repression and co-optation. The regime's repression is reflective in the V-Dem's "freedom of association index" (see Figure 4.4.).

Figure 4.4.: Freedom of Association Index for Bangladesh, 2009-2020



Source: V-Dem.

Note:
(1) Barriers to parties [How restrictive are the barriers to forming a party?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(2) Legislature opposition parties [Are opposition parties (those not in the ruling party or coalition) able to exercise oversight and investigatory functions against the wishes of the governing party or coalition?] (0 to 2, lower to higher).
(3) Opposition parties' autonomy [Are opposition parties independent and autonomous of the ruling regime?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
(4) CSO repression [Does the government attempt to repress civil society organizations?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) National party control [How unified is party control of the national government?] (0 = unified coalition control, 1 = divided party control, 2 = unified single party control).

As per the index, the government's barriers in forming and running a political party have significantly increased, as indicated by the score falling from 1.62 in 2009 to 0.42 in 2020. Similarly, repression against civil society organizations (CSO) has dramatically increased since 2013, as shown by the negative score. While both scores are negative for both legislature opposition parties and opposition parties' autonomy, the ruling party's control of the national government has drastically increased since 2013, reaching 1.14 in 2020 on a 0 to 2 scale. These data bear testimony to the fact that Bangladesh has become one of the world's worst five countries in terms of freedom of peaceful assembly (ARTICLE 19, 2020, p. 18).

The main government repressors were law enforcement agencies and, in many instances, the ruling party wings. The main targets of the repression were opposition activists (e.g., BNP and JIB activists), civil society members, journalists, and those who share opposing views. The regime's repression resulted in increasing extrajudicial killings, crossfire/gunfights, enforced disappearances, custodial deaths, shot to death, and torture to death (see Table 4.3.).

Table 4.3.: Repressive Responses by the Government of Bangladesh, 2009-2020

Year	*Extrajudicial Killings*	*Crossfire/ Gunfight*	*Enforced Disappearances*	*Death in Jail Custody*	*Shot to Death*	*Torture to Death*
2009	154	129	3	50	4	21
2010	127	101	19	60	2	22
2011	84	65	32	105	1	17
2012	70	53	27	63	8	7
2013	329	65	54	59	245	11
2014	172	119	39	54	38	11
2015	186	148	67	51	22	8
2016	178	151	93	63	13	11
2017	155	139	90	58	1	13
2018	466	458	98	81	2	6
2019	391	376	34	60	8	6
2020	225	196	31	76	8	19
Total	2,537	2,000	587	780	352	152

Source: Odhikar. 2020. *Annual Human Rights Report 2020 Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Odhikar, http://odhikar.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annual-HR-Report-2020_Eng.pdf, pp. 69-74.

According to a Dhaka-based human rights organization, Odhikar, at least 2,537 instances of extrajudicial killings, around 2,000 cases of crossfire deaths, 587 cases of enforced disappearances, and 780 cases of custodial deaths took place in the 2009-2020 period. These numbers continued to grow over the years but increased the most during the election year of 2018. The government's anti-narcotic drive of 2018, which targeted and killed many of political opponents, bore one testimony to the increased killings in 2018 (Blair, 2020, p. 144). Additionally, there have been increasing numbers of abduction, enforced disappearances, and detainments, which were mainly done by the plainclothes policemen under the ruling regime, though the government denies the involvement of law enforcement agencies in these issues (Riaz, 2015). Many political activists, academics, media activists, former diplomats, and others have been disappeared in the past decade (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 7). According to Odhikar (2020), of the 587 people who have been disappeared, at least 81 were found dead, while 149

people are still disappeared (p. 73). The regime's repressive actions also included increasing numbers of false and politically motivated cases against the opposition members and activists. For example, more than 300,000 false cases have been filed against BNP members and supporters in the past decade (Riaz and Parvez, 2021, p. 8; Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 15). Finding no way out, many opposition party members left their own parties and joined the ruling BAL to seek a political fortune (Dhaka Tribune, 2017; Dhaka Tribune, 2018). All these indicate the regime's well-designed game plan to "squeeze the life out of BNP" (Sobhan, 2015). Finally, the regime introduced legal provisions to tighten its grip on the formation of new political parties and threatened to cancel the registration of the main opposition party (The Daily Star, 2020; New Age, 2020).

Apart from repression, the authoritarian regime attempted to control the political opposition, mainly the Islamist forces, through co-optation. With the emergence of HI in 2013, the incumbent regime was terrified by the size and speed of the HI protesters and the network and mobilization capacity of HI, along with its elements of surprise (Lorch, 2018, p. 13). Additionally, HI protests were widely supported and patronized by JIB and BNP, the latter called the mass public to join HI's campaign (Kabir, 2015; Islam, 2016). The ruling regime became afraid of the emergence of a united mobilization front of the opposition, suspecting BNP's collusion to topple the government (Islam, 2016; Lorch, 2018). Therefore, the ruling regime in Bangladesh applied a mixed strategy of appeasement and pressure to co-opt the HI (Lorch, 2018, p. 14). The regime's appeasement became apparent through the government's explicit concessions to HI, both economic and non-economic. Hasina greeted the HI leaders in her residence more than once and began providing huge concessions staring with the HI demands. The HI demands included: enactment of an anti-blasphemy law, cancellation of the country's

women development policy, ban on erecting sculptures in public places, ban on mixing men and women in public, ending shameless behavior and clothing, and affirming absolute trust and faith in Allah in the constitution (Kabir, 2015). Many of the demands were met such as removing a sculpture from the supreme court premise and taking out of the writings of many authors whom the HI thinks as anti-Islamic (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 21; Barry and Manki, 2017). The incumbent reportedly gave over US$5.8 million to various small Islamist parties (Lorch, 2018, p. 16).

Apart from the concessions, the authoritarian government applied pressure on HI-led Islamist forces by filing criminal charges. According to a leader of HI, the ruling regime revived 43 criminal cases filed against HI activists, which were filed during the 2013 campaign, after HI was found to collaborate with BNP and other opposition parties in the anti-government demonstrations surrounding the 2014 election (Lorch, 2018, p. 15). The regime also threatened to take two big madrassas away from the control of HI leaders, unless they leave BNP (Lorch, 2018, p. 16). After HI launched violent protests over India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in March 2021 for the celebration of Bangladesh's 50th anniversary, the incumbent regime revived previously filed charges against HI leaders and activists (whose investigations were unprecedentedly slow in the past years) and filed new charges and arrested dozens of HI activists (Aljazeera, 2021).

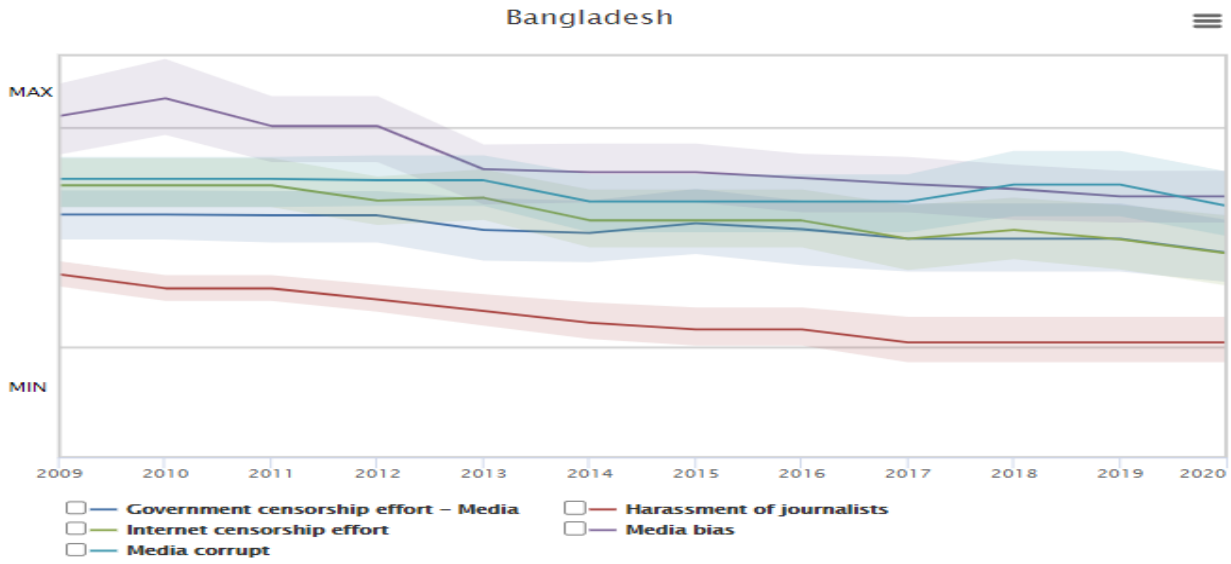
These concessions and pressures clearly indicate the government's intention to co-opt HI, with the aim to prevent the emergence of any united mobilization front of the opposition forces and seek the loyalty of HI. These objectives of the co-optation of HI were reflected in the interviews of many senior BAL leaders, who insisted that the government sought to contain HI for them "not to be violent" and better "handle election politics" (Lorch, 2018, pp. 16-17).

The above discussion finds that the incumbent has controlled political opponents through repression and co-optation. While repressive responses, which were implemented through law enforcement agencies and reviving legal provisions, aimed at the main opponent forces, co-optation was used to control Orthodox Islamist groups.

Manipulation of the Media

The manipulation of the media is evident in the V-Dem's "freedom of expression index" (see Figure 4.5.). As per the index scores, during the 2009-2020 period, the government's direct and routinized censorship, censorship in online environments, and harassments of journalists have significantly increased, as indicated by the scores close to 0 or negative. Similarly, media bias and media corrupt scores have increased, as the scores are close to 0.

Figure 4.5.: Freedom of Expression Index for Bangladesh, 2009-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Government censorship effort – media [Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the print or broadcast media?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(2) Internet censorship effort [Does the government attempt to censor information (text, audio, or visuals) on the internet?], (0 to 3, higher to lower).

(3) Harassment of journalists [Are individual journalists harassed (threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed) by government or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(4) Media bias [Is there media bias against opposition parties or candidates?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) Media corrupt [Do journalists, publishers, or broadcasters accept payments in exchange for altering news coverage?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).

The manipulation has been orchestrated through legal and extralegal means. The government has been using a series of legal instruments, but two important laws warrant attention. In 2013, the ruling regime amended the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, which was enacted by BNP government in 2006. Under Article 57 of the ICT Act, one can be charged for publishing materials which is "false", "prejudicial to the state or person", and/or hurt "religious beliefs" (Riaz, 2020, p. 11). While none of these offences have yet to be defined, the Act allows the regime to file charges and implement a sentence of a maximum of 14 years of imprisonment and a fine of US$12,500 if the government perceives a violation of the Act (Mamun, 2018; Riaz, 2020). The amended Act eliminates the need for arrest warrants and official permission to prosecute, while also restricted the use of bail to release detainees (Human Rights Watch, 2018). The authoritarian regime has largely been using this Act to silence the critics and the criticisms against the government and curtail freedom of speech and expression, leading to the establishment of a complete control over the media environment (Riaz, 2020, p. 11; Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, pp. 18-19).

Similarly, in October 2018, months before the election, the incumbent enacted the Digital Security Act (DSA), which is vaguely defined but carries harsher punitive measures (Bangladesh Gazette, 2018; Amnesty International, 2018). Some examples are as follows. Section 21 of the DSA 2018 authorizes life imprisonment along with a huge fine for engaging in propaganda against the "spirit of the liberation war", "father of the nation", "national anthem", or "national

flag". Section 25 punishes those who publish "false" or "offensive" information, and hence can be used to prohibit legitimate political expression. Additionally, Section 28 punishes any individuals who publish "information that hurt religious values or sentiments". Furthermore, the DSA Act provides "absolute power to the government's digital security agency to arrest anyone without warrant, simply on suspicion that a crime may be committed using digital media" (Amnesty International, 2018). Apart from the DSA Act of 2018, the regime enacted the National Broadcasting Act in 2018, which imposes sentences up to three years of imprisonment for publishing contents against the spirit of liberation war (Choudhury, 2019).

The regime's increasing use of legal instruments has caused a sharp decline in the country's freedom of press and expression. In the World Press Freedom Index, Bangladesh is ranked 151 out of 180 countries in 2020, which is a sharp decline from its rank of 144 in 2013 (RSF, 2020). With the increasing censorship in online environments in the past decade (ARTICLE 19, 2019), Bangladesh has become one of world's worst five countries in terms of freedom of expression with a score of 15 out of 100, as per the Global Expression Report 2019/2020 (ARTICLE 19, 2020, p. 73). Further evidence of these data is reflected in the use of legal instruments to file several charges against senior editors, arrests and detainments of journalists, academics, and even ordinary people for criticizing the prime minister, her father, and the government (Riaz, 2020; Mostofa and Subedi, 2020). According to Amnesty International (2018), at least 1200 cases were filed using these legal instruments between 2013 to 2018. Using only the DSA Act 2018, the regime arrested at least 199 people between 2018 and 2020 (Odhikar, 2020, p. 76).

While these above legal instruments helped the regime to restrict the freedom of expression and media in general, additional legal instruments and changing ownership structure

have specifically facilitated the incumbent to establish control of the media industry. Riaz and Rahman (2021), in their study titled "*Who Owns the Media in Bangladesh*?" analyzed 48 major media outlets in Bangladesh and showed that "most owners of media are directly or indirectly affiliated with political parties" (Riaz and Rahman, 2021, p. 15). The authors found this political affiliation of the media industry in four forms: receiving a license for a media outlet is contingent upon the government's relationship with the entrepreneur; involvement of politicians in media ownership; business groups lobby the ruling party politicians to attain licenses for media outlets; and ownership of the media changes hands to those who are connected to the incumbent party (Riaz and Rahman, 2021, p. 16).

Licensing has become an instrument of power play. The regime enacted the National Broadcast Policy (NBP) in 2014, which has institutionalized the government's authority over licensing. The NBP gives the Ministry of Information full power and authority to decide the television licensing criteria, which eventually ends in legitimizing the government's agenda (Rahman, 2016, p. 334). Thus, media owners lobby and maintain a close relationship with the ruling party politicians for licensing. Additionally, the activities of the media industry are regularly monitored through surveillance under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Act of 2001 (amended in 2010), and the National Mass Media Policy 2017 (Riaz, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2018). The regime's dissatisfaction with the media outlets often causes huge financial losses for the owners as the government can block advertisements, which has happened in the case of the two national dailies, *The Daily Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Star* (Riaz and Rahman, 2021, p. 12; Riaz, 2020, pp. 11-12). The ownership structure and the relevant controlling legal mechanisms provide an explanation for why there have been many instances of

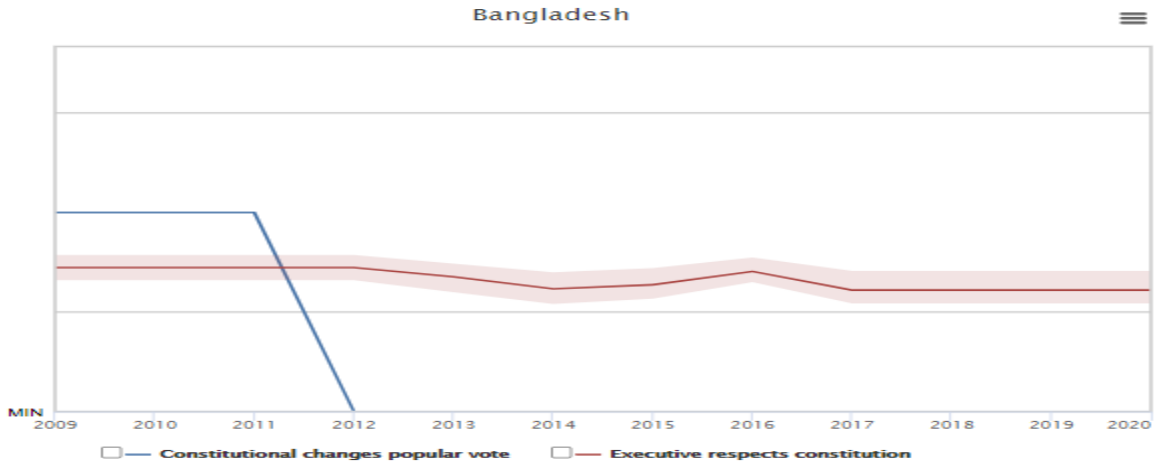
the media often killing the news if it goes against their major advertisers/sponsors and interests of the owners (Rahman, 2016, p. 333).

Two conclusions can be drawn from this section. First, the regime applied legal and extra-legal means to manipulate the media. Second, almost all media outlets are directly or indirectly affiliated with the ruling regime and the government conditions licensing and advertisements to put pressure on the media.

Changing the Rules of the Game

After assuming power with a supermajority in 2009, the ruling regime has been utilizing its legislative power to change the rules of the game, using it as a tool of authoritarian legitimization to consolidate power. As per the V-Dem's "constitutional index" (see Figure 4.6.), members of the executive violated the constitution whenever they wanted, without any legal consequences, as indicated by the score 0 or lower. The regime disregarded the need for popular votes to bring major constitutional changes, as indicated by the score 0 since 2012. The ultimate purpose of changing rules of the game was to concentrate power and establish control of democratic institutions.

Figure 4.6.: The Constitution Index for Bangladesh, 2009-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Constitutional changes popular vote [Is a popular or direct vote required in order for a constitutional change to be legally binding?], (0 to 2, 0 = no, 1 = depends on the content of the change, 2 = yes).
(2) Executive respects constitution [Do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government, and cabinet ministers) respect the constitution?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

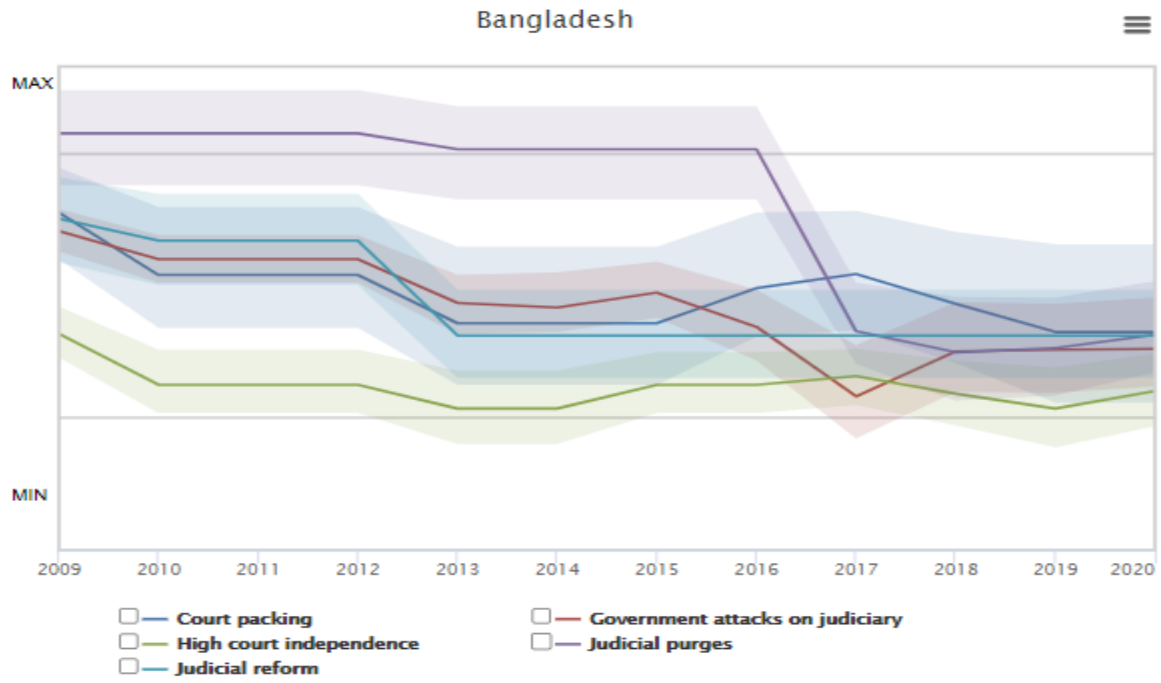
Two major changes in the rules of the game bear testimony to this argument. First, with 270 out of 300 seats in the parliament, along with the use of the legislative power in Article 70 of the constitution that prohibits floor-crossing (Laws of Bangladesh, 2021), the incumbent removed the CTG provision from the constitution in 2011 to establish control over the electoral system. The amendment also added Articles 7A and 7B, the latter prohibits any further amendments of at least 55 clauses including the election system one. Addition of these eternal provisions opened the door for the institutionalization of a manipulative electoral system to secure electoral victories in the future. However, this section particularly focuses on the second major change in the rules of the game.

Second, the regime passed the sixteenth constitutional amendment in 2014. The amendment has authorized the parliament to impeach judges of the Supreme Court for their incapacity or misconduct. According to Article 96 (2), "A judge shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed pursuant to a resolution of parliament supported by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total numbers of members of the parliament on the ground of proved misconduct or incapacity" (Laws of Bangladesh, 2021). Additionally, Article 96 (3) authorizes the parliament to regulate the procedure, investigation, and proof of the misconduct and incapacity of the judges (Laws of Bangladesh, 2021). When the High Court and the Supreme Court annulled the amendment in 2017, the ruling party engaged in extreme vilification of the Chief Justice, who was later forced to resign and remain in exile (Riaz, 2018).

The Chief Justice, in his memoir, *A Broken Dream*, clearly explained how the authoritarian government amended the constitution to establish control over the judicial system (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 18; Riaz, 2020, p. 13).

The sixteenth constitutional amendment, therefore, paved the way to establish an effective control over the judiciary. The judicial system, being subject to authoritarian control, is increasingly deteriorating, as indicated by V-Dem's "judicial index" (see Figure 4.7.).

Figure 4.7.: The Judiciary Index for Bangladesh, 2009-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Court packing [Whether the size of the judiciary is increased, with increasing number of judges for political reasons], (0 to 3, higher to lower).
(2) High court independence [How often the high court reflects government wishes regardless of its sincere view of the legal record?], (0 to 4, 0 = always, 1 = usually, 4 = never etc.).
(3) Government attacks on judiciary [How often the government attacks the judiciary's integrity in public?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(4) Judicial purges [How often are judges removed arbitrarily for political reasons?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).

(5) Judicial reform [Were the judiciary's formal powers altered this year in ways that affects its ability to control the arbitrary use of state authority?], (0 to 2, 0 = reduced, 1 = no change, 2 = enhanced).

As per "the judiciary index", court packing has significantly increased and continued to increase, as indicated by the score below 0. This is indicated by the increase of the size of the high court division in 2015 that paved the way to appoint favorable judges, as reflected by the appointment of eighteen under-qualified and controversial judges in 2018 (Obaidullah, 2019, p. 301; Prothom Alo, 2018). The high court independence has significantly been compromised since 2009 with a continued score below 0, indicating the high court's increasing reflection of the government's wishes irrespective of actual legal provisions. The judicial purges were conducted on a limited scale in 2014, as indicated by the score of 1, but such purges dramatically increased after the sixteenth amendment, as shown by the negative score since 2017. This is evident by the government's removal of 200 district judges allegedly on political reasons (Obaidullah, 2019, p. 301). Several judicial reforms were made since 2012 through changing existing rules that have significantly reduced the judicial powers to control the arbitrary use of the government authority, as revealed by the negative score throughout the period.

Therefore, it appears obvious that the regime has changed the rules of the game along with other legal changes to establish an effective authoritarian control over the country's judicial system.

Performance Legitimation

Electoral authoritarian regimes understand that the socio-economic characteristics of a country influence the electoral process and outcomes (Miller, 2015, p. 27). Thus, after assuming power, the incumbent proposed 'Bangladesh Perspective Plan' incorporating 'Vision 2021' to be a middle-income country and 'Vision 2041' to be a high-income or developed country. The

regime undertook several development activities throughout its tenure to materialize the plan. Simultaneously, a rapid transformation in the improvement of various social and economic indicators took place at the country, despite increasing authoritarian governance, which paved the way for the incumbent authoritarian government to insist on its performance for the country's development. Therefore, the regime has consistently and continuously been utilizing its performance as a tool of legitimation to claim the right to rule.

In the past decade, the structure of Bangladesh's economy has transformed from an agriculture-based to a service-based economy, as indicated by these sectors' shares in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2013, the agriculture sector's share of GDP was 17.5 percent, compared to 28.5 percent for manufacturing and 54 percent for services (Riaz, 2014b, p. 153). This rapid transformation, despite the country's decline in institutional quality and good governance, has been identified by many as an "economic miracle" (Yusuf, 2021), an "economic darling" (Ganguly, 2020), and a "paradox" (Raiz, 2014b; Blair, 2020). This transformation translated into the improvement of various social and economic indicators that can be understood looking at increasing GDP, Official Development Assistance (ODA), and various indicators of Human Development Index (HDI).

As Table 4.4. shows, the GDP per capita has doubled in the past decade (US$ 702 in 2009 to US$1,402 in 2016), despite the political violence during the 2013-2016 period. The amount continued to increase and reached US$ 1,856 in 2019, despite the violent political environment surrounding the 2018 election. Similarly, the net ODA received by Bangladesh has increased more than four times, from US$1.08 billion in 2009 to US$4.48 billion in 2019, despite severely manipulating two national elections that were vehemently rejected by many international organizations, election observers, Western donor countries and agencies, and

international media. Alongside with increasing GDP per capita, the improvement in various social indicators is reflected in the increasing HDI Index value, which is measured on a scale of 0 to 1 (lowest to highest) broadly based on three criteria: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. From 2010 to 2019, the HDI Index value score has increased from 0.56 to 0.63, respectively.

Table 4.4.: Bangladesh's Performance in Economic and Social Indicators, 2009-2019

Year	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
GDP Per Capita (current US$)	702	781	862	883	982	1,119	1,248	1,402	1,564	1,698	1,856
Net ODA Received (US$ billion)	1.08	1.32	1.44	2.15	2.63	2.42	2.59	2.53	3.78	3.04	4.48
HDI Index Value	-	0.56	0.57	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.60	0.61	0.62	0.63	0.63

Source: Compiled by author from The World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator; United Nations Development Program (UNDP), http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BGD; and Knoema, https://knoema.com/atlas/Bangladesh/topics/World-Rankings/World-Rankings/Human-development-index.
Notes:
*GDP Per Capita (Current US$): [the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products].
*Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) Received in Billion (Current US$): [consisting of disbursement of loans and grants by official agencies of the members of Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare].
*Human Development Index (HDI) is used to measure the average achievement in key dimensions of human development. The HDI Index value ranges from 0 to 1 (lowest to highest), which is measured based on a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

Between 2015 to 2019, HDI ranking for Bangladesh has improved from 142 to 133, respectively, out of 189 countries (UNDP, 2015, p. 273; UNDP, 2020, p. 2). Bangladesh is, therefore, registering significant progresses in its economic and social development that puts it well above the countries with comparable per capita income (Blair, 2020, p. 139).

Beyond these indicators, the regime's performance is evident in some other areas. Although the government's expenditure on health (as percentage of GDP) declined from 2.57 percent in 2012 to 2.27 in 2017, it increased to 2.34 percent in 2018 (The World Bank Data, 2021). The regime, however, takes huge credit for the improvement of the population health status by meeting several indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as reducing child and maternal mortality deaths and introducing several policy initiatives such as the National Health Policy 2011 and the Healthcare Financing Strategy 2012 (Naheed and Hort, 2015). Similarly, the percentage of government expenditure on education, in terms of total government expenditure, has significantly declined from 16.8 percent in 2011 to 9.27 percent in 2019 (CEIC, 2021). The regime nevertheless highlights its performance by pointing to the country's increasing literacy rate. The literacy rate (of the percentage of people ages 15 and above) has increased from 58 percent in 2012 to nearly 74 percent in 2019 (BBS, 2019, p. 13; Trading Economics, 2021). The percentage of people living below the national poverty line has dropped from 24.3 percent in 2016 to 20.5 percent in 2019 (ADB, 2021), along with the extreme poverty rate declining from 13 percent (Lomborg, 2016) to 10.5 percent (Ahmed, 2020) during the same period. These percentages, however, have dramatically increased after the global Covid pandemic hit Bangladesh in 2019, as per a study conducted by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) (Dhaka Tribune, 2021).

However, while the actual factors attributed to the economic growth and the improved social development indicators are many, three factors are worth mentioning. First, with around 4 million workers (mostly women), Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industries account for 80 percent of the country's total export earnings (Ganguly, 2020), making Bangladesh the world's second largest apparel exporter. The annual revenue from the RMG industry has

increased from US$19 billion in 2012 to US$34 billion in 2019, indicating a 79 percent rise (Fathi, 2020). The success in this sector is mainly attributed to low wage and availability of workers, and huge inequality in socio-economic structure. Second, around 10 million migrant workers send almost US$15 billion annually (Gangualy, 2020), accounting for 5.5 percent of GDP, making Bangladesh the world's eighth largest remittance recipient country. The remittance inflow has increased from US$ 18 billion in 2019 to US$21.75 billion in 2020, accounting for 6.6 percent of the country's GDP (Hasan, 2021). Third, the innovative interventions and successes of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Grameen Bank [which won the Nobel peace prize] and the BRAC [the world's largest NGO] significantly contributed to the socio-economic development of rural Bangladesh. The Grameen Bank's micro-credit and BRAC's development programs, especially in education and health sectors, made outstanding contributions in poverty reduction by creating employment opportunities, increasing equal access to education, and reducing maternal and infant mortality among others (Riaz, 2014b, pp. 155-156).

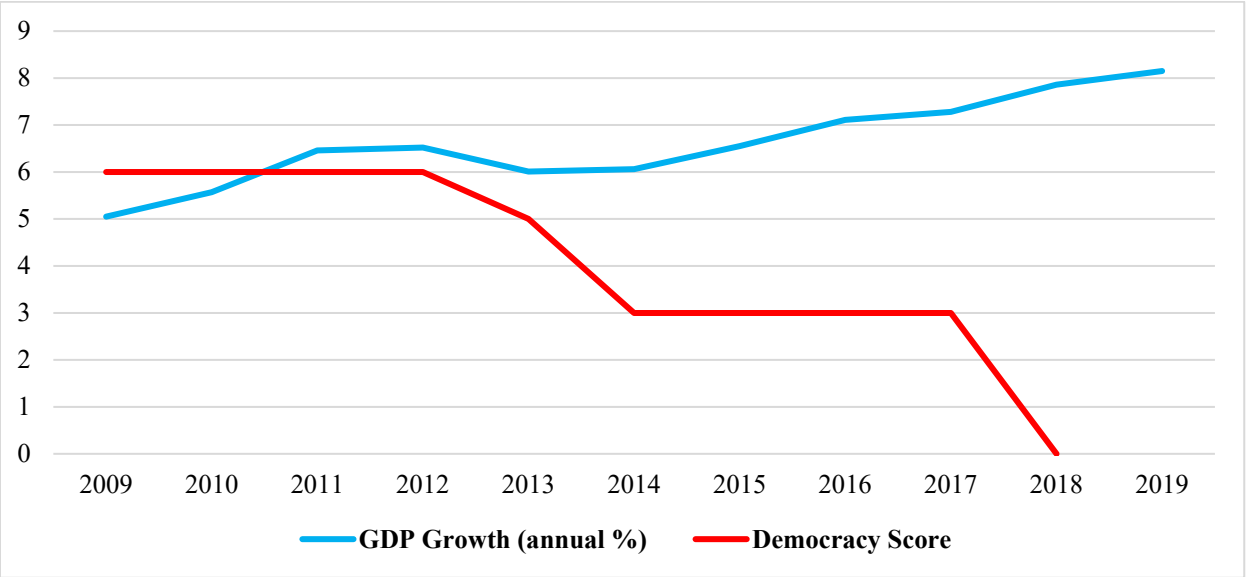
On the other hand, the regime's insistence, and adoption of policies for quick socio-economic growth and transformation have caused to spread endemic corruption and bring the highest ever income inequality in the country. According to the Global Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, Bangladesh ranked 146 out of 180 countries in 2020, rising from 136 position in 2013 (Trading Economics, 2021a), indicating rapid increase of corruption. On a 0 to 100 scale (0 means 'most corrupt' and 100 means 'no corruption or clean'), Bangladesh's score was only 26 in 2020, making it the fourteenth most corrupt country in the world (Foyez, 2020). Similarly, the percentage of income inequality has increased to 16.6 percent in 2019 from 14.8 percent in 2010, according to UNDP's inequality in income dimension

(UNDP, 2021). As per the World Data Atlas, only 3.7 percent share of national income is held by the poorest 10 percent, while 26.80 percent share of income is held by the wealthiest 10 percent people (Knoema, 2021; Knoema, 2021a). Another estimate suggests that the richest five percent of the people in Bangladesh is 121 times richer than the poorest five percent (Mahmood, 2020). Corruption and income inequality, in fact, provide a favorable condition for electoral authoritarian regimes to dominate elections because autocrats can capture a large group of voters through clientelism and state assistance (Miller, 2015, pp. 17-18). Therefore, autocrats utilize such conditions to increase the chances of their electoral success with less political opposition and protest during the elections.

While the ruling elites in Bangladesh either deny the increasing rate of corruption and income inequality or blame the opposition, they successfully utilize the overall improved socio-economic economic growth and development as a tool of performance legitimation. As opposed to the traditional theories which insist on the requirement of democracy for economic growth, Bangladesh's increasing economic growth took place alongside a consistent decline on the country's democracy. As Figure 4.8. shows, the GDP growth and democracy took a divergent turn in Bangladesh since 2013. While Bangladesh's democracy score drastically declined from a 5 in 2013 to 0 in 2018, the GDP growth rate continued to increase from 6.06 percent in 2013 to 8.15 percent in 2019. Since 2015, Bangladesh's annual GDP growth never fell from 6.5 percent, making Bangladesh a lower middle-income country, as per the World Bank, and the fastest growing economy in South Asia, as per the HDI (Blair, 2020, pp. 138-139). The ruling elites and their advocates justified this divergent democracy-economic growth trend by insisting that "development should precede democracy." Many pro-government intellectuals introduced the

notion of "democratic authoritarianism", which was described by Riaz (2020) as to mask heavy handed measures of the government against the opposition and the media (p. 14).

Figure 4.8.: GDP Growth and Democracy in Bangladesh, 2009-2019



Source: compiled by author from The World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator; and the Polity Project, https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html.
Notes:
*GDP Growth (Annual %): [annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency].
*Democracy score is derived from the Polity V dataset. The score ranges from 0 to 10 (lowest to highest).

The advocates of 'democratic authoritarianism' and 'development before democracy' perceived that Bangladesh might have to make some pragmatic compromises with the ideals of democracy for the sake of development (Zaman, 2017). These pro-regime advocates also compared Bangladesh's scenario with Southeast Asian economies (e.g., Malaysia and Singapore), where development was given priority over liberal democracy (Khan, 2016). The elevation of these debates in Bangladesh fed into the regime's authoritarian legitimation. Hashmi (2016) opined that the 'development over democracy' debate was used as "an alibi of

dictatorship, a big leaf of autocrats' unquenchable thrust for glory and power." Similarly, Riaz (2020) insisted that the regime's attempt to create a false dichotomy between democracy and development not only helped sway support of some people, but also served as a source of legitimacy (Riaz, 2020, p. 14).

The above discussion suggests that the incumbent insisted on its performance to improve economic growth and social development, leading it to use the performance as a legitimation tool. While the rapid development initiatives caused increasing income inequality and rising corruption, pro-government advocates introduced 'development before democracy' rhetoric that fed into the regime legitimation purposes.

Ideological Legitimation

Since 2009, the incumbent concentrated on two ideological elements through constitutional and extra-constitutional means for its ideological legitimation: Bengali nationalism and Islamism. The first part of this section presents the relevant constitutional changes, which highlight the regime's emphasis on both nationalism and Islamism. The second part then discusses the relevance of these ideological features and the application in the contemporary context.

In the 2011 constitutional amendment, the regime revived the "high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism" in the Preamble and in Article 8 describing them as the "fundamental principles of the constitution" (UNESCO, 2013), in the same way they were coded in the first constitution of 1972. The amendment added Article 4A to acknowledge the country's liberation war hero Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the "Father of the Nation", the portrait of whom shall be displayed at all government offices at home and abroad, public institutions, and non-governmental educational institutions. Article 6(2) of this constitution identified the people of

Bangladesh as "Bengalees as a nation" and the citizens of Bangladesh as "Bangladeshies".[4] The amendment insisted on "Bengalee nation" and "Bengalee nationalism" in Article 9 when describing "nationalism" as:

> "The unity and solidarity of the Bengalee nation, which deriving its identity for its language and culture, attained sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bengalee nationalism."

Additionally, the fifteenth amendment incorporated [under Article 150(2)] the "historic speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" on 7 March 1971, the "declaration of independence" by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 26 March 1971, and the "proclamation of independence" by the Mujibnagar government on 10 April 1971. Finally, the amendment further added Article 7A (1 and 2) to prohibit abrogation and suspension of "this constitution or any of its articles", insisting that such act shall be "sedition" and shall be sentenced with the "highest punishment".

Furthermore, the fifteenth constitutional amendment retained "[Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)/In the name of the Creator, the Merciful]" at the beginning of the constitution. The new constitution also kept Islam as "the state religion of the Republic" (Article 2A) but added "secularism and freedom of religion" in Article 12 (UNESCO, 2013).

The above changes, additions, and retainment in through the fifteenth constitutional amendment highlight that the incumbent emphasized 'Sheikh Mujibur Rahman', 'Bengali nationalism', 'independence, and 'Islam' in the constitution. Nevertheless, they broadly fall

[4] It is important to note that this thesis has used exact wording of 'Bengalees', 'Bangladeshies', 'Bengalee' etc., as they were coded in the constitution when citing the constitutional provisions. However, the thesis has used regular and standard wording of these words in the rest of the Chapter.

within nationalism and Islamism. The discussion helps to develop a clear understanding of these issues.

Bangladesh's founder president Sheikh Mujib regime elevated 'Bengali nationalism' and later 'Mujibism' (incorporating nationalism, secularism, democracy, and socialism) and used them for ideological legitimation during the 1972-1975 period. It is important to note that 'Bengali nationalism' was based on ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity (Murshid, 2001). The Mujib regime, despite insisting on secularism, moved for Islamization when 'Bengali nationalism' was losing its appeal (Riaz, 2003). However, the changes the fifteenth constitutional amendment above showed the current regime in Bangladesh reincorporated four high ideals of the 1972 constitution. The amendment also placed exclusive emphasis on "Bengalee" identity, "Bengalee nationalism" with language, culture, and the spirit of independence war, "Father of the Nation" as liberation war hero, and Mujib's 7th March speech and declaration and proclamation of independence speeches. All these instances reflect the current regime's quest for an ideological legitimation through 'Bengali nationalism'.

Interestingly, the regime's amendment retained "the citizens of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangladeshies" (Article 6(2)). This retainment has a religious (e.g., Islamic) connotation, hence deserves further discussion. As opposed to Mujib's so-called secularist Bengali nationalism, which made no reference to "Islam" in the first constitution of 1972, Zia regime (1975-1982) promoted 'Bangladeshi nationalism' to reassert the Muslim identity of the Bengalis in Bangladesh. Zia changed the constitution to redefine the citizens of Bangladesh as "Bangladeshis" instead of "Bengalis" (Riaz, 2003; Khondoker, 2016). In contrast to 'Bengali nationalism', Zia's 'Bangladeshi nationalism' centering around Islam received certain popularity due to its exclusive emphasis on Muslim identity. While the incumbent Sheikh Hasina and the

ruling elites leave no chance to vehemently criticize Zia and undo his doings, the regime kept "Bangladeshis" as the identification of the citizens. Similarly, the regime kept "Islam as the state religion", which was added in the constitution during Ershad regime (1982-1990). Both instances indicate the regime's intention to use the cloak of Islam and Muslim identity in Bangladesh, a county where ninety percent of the people are Muslim. By making this constitution unamendable, the regime recognized and re-emphasized both nationalism and Islam to be the marker of the people of Bangladesh.

While official constitutional changes highlighted the regime's intention to utilize nationalism and Islam as tools of ideological legitimation, the Shahabag movement and the HI's counterdemonstration provide evidence for the regime's exclusive use of them. The ruling BAL was losing its popularity and legitimacy since 2011 due to mass corruption, poor performance of the government, and its inability to control political backlash brought by the BNP and the JIB on the issue of CTG (Gommes, 2013). With the rise of the Shahabag movement in 2013, the regime took the opportunity to utilize nationalism as a tool of ideological legitimation to regain its legitimacy for the upcoming election. Following the verdict of life imprisonment of Abdul Quader Molla, who was Assistant Secretary General of JIB, the Shahabag movement emerged demanding the hanging of Molla, other war criminals, and banning of JIB (Khan, 2013a).

While the movement initially emerged spontaneously and gaining popularity, the regime soon co-opted the movement and made "mukhtijuddher chetona" (the spirit of liberation war) as a battle cry (Riaz, 2020, p. 14). On the one hand, pro-secularists and the regime supporters called the movement as "the second liberation war of Bangladesh" (Hossain, 2020, p. 22). On the other hand, Hasina, called the movement as the "perfect leadership to direct Bangladesh in the spirit of the liberation" and promised to do everything to fulfil the demands of the protesters (Roy, 2018,

p. 13). Additionally, the incumbent made the Supreme Court to overturn the verdict of the ICT to confirm the hanging of the war criminal, Molla, as per the demand of the Shahabag protesters (The Independent, 2013). Meanwhile, the ruling regime, using its student's wing, Bangladesh Student League (BCL), politicized the leadership of the movement and co-opted it.

Afterwards, the concept "mukhtijuddher chetona" (the spirit of liberation war), which simply means to uphold the ideals, which underlined the 1971 war, has been used by the supporters of the ruling regime as an indicator of patriotism. While there is no agreed meaning of this term, the regime began to use it as a marker of patriotic identity to delegitimize and marginalize the opposition parties and groups branding them as anti-liberation forces. Criticism of the concept "mukhtijuddher chetona" was highlighted as unpatriotic and treasonous to the state (Riaz, 2020, p. 14). The promotion of this concept implies that, those who believe in nationalism and are true patriots, must support the BAL-led ruling regime and vote for it in the next elections. Additionally, the elevation of the spirit of liberation feeds into the regime's legitimation purpose as it articulates the hegemony of BAL due to its leadership role in the 1971 war. It makes the ruling BAL as the only legitimate party to rule, as opposed to the main opposition party BNP, which had an alliance with the largest Islamist party JIB. Several members of JIB were facing trial due to their role in the 1971 war. Furthermore, JIB's registration cancelled in 2013 for its anti-liberation stance in 1971 and it was barred from participating in elections (The Guardian, 2013).

While the regime's co-optation of the Shahabag movement provided grounds to revive the nationalist sentiment for using nationalism as an ideological legitimation, it also paved the way to uncover an ideological struggle between nationalism and Islamism in Bangladesh. When some pro-secular bloggers and protesters in the Shahabag movement made derogatory comments

about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, the HI led a counterdemonstration branding the Shahabag protesters atheists and anti-Islamic, as mentioned above. While the Shahabag movement was supported and co-opted by the incumbent, the HI movement was supported by BNP, JIB, and other Islamist groups, putting the ruling regime in a conundrum. As BAL always struggled to prove that it was not 'anti-Islamic' (Lorch, 2018, p. 10), its support to the Shahabag movement made it appear 'anti-Islamic' again and facilitated the opposition to re-emphasize such rhetoric. Being afraid to be labelled as anti-Islamic, the regime began reducing its support to the Shahabag movement and played the 'Islamism' card. Hasina declared that the state of Bangladesh would be governed as per "the rules of the Charter of Medina and the Prophet's Sermon on the Last Pilgrimage" (Zaman, 2018, p. 343). In her own words, "there will be no law against Holy Quran and Sunnah here ever" (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 20). The regime immediately arrested the accused bloggers and began co-opting the HI through appeasement, concessions, and pressure (Lorch, 2018, pp. 13-14), as mentioned above.

The regime's co-optation of HI, which believes in bringing the entire society and state under the sharia law, and Hasina's declaration of "no law against Holy Quran and Sunnah" and governing the country as per "the rules of the Charter of Media and the Prophet's Sermon" are clear indications of utilization of Islam as an ideological legitimation tool. The ultimate purpose of these attempts was to prevent a united opposition front under HI and resist the labelling as 'anti-Islamic'. Such a labelling could have cost the ruling BAL in the upcoming election, as it did in the 1991 and 2001 elections (Lorch, 2018, p. 14). Therefore, the regime played soft with HI, met most of HI's 13 demands, and promised to build one model mosque and Islamic cultural center in each district and sub-district with the cost of US$10 million (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 22). In addition, the regime published 540 books through the Islamic foundation,

established 2,500 Mosque-based libraries, and provided 5,000 Islamic books to other libraries to spread Islamic knowledge (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, p. 22). For recognizing the highest Qwami madrassa degree as equivalent to a post-graduate degree, Hasina was even given the title "Mother of Qwami" in a religious gathering of HI (Riaz, 2019a).

Since the controversial election of 2014, which intensified the legitimacy crisis of the ruling regime, the incumbent kept promoting Islam and Islamism to increase its religious legitimacy. Prior to the 2018 election, the regime forged an alliance with fifteen Islamist and like-minded parties, all of which represent Orthodox Islamism in Bangladesh, as per these parties' ideologies, goals, and objectives (Riaz, 2018a). However, most of these parties are not registered and cannot participate in elections. It is important to note that, all Islamist parties together have never won more than 6.7 percent vote in Bangladesh since the post-1991 period (Riaz, 2021; Rana, 2021). Therefore, the regime's alliance formation with these Orthodox Islamist parties goes more than electoral calculations, though it certainly has electoral implications.

Two explanations inform this reasoning which have clear ideological legitimation goals. First, the regime's decision to deregister JIB created an ideological vacuum in Bangladesh's public sphere. The decades-long presence of the JIB in Bangladesh's politics and its consistent insistence of the dialects of Islam in social and political discourses created a demand of Islamic ideological authenticity among the Muslim majority population (Pattanaik, 2009, pp. 280-281). While JIB had long been providing such ideological authenticity, the deregistration of JIB has given rise to an ideological gap. In the context of a rising Islamist public sphere in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2018), the regime sided with Orthodox Islamist parties to fill the gap by promoting Islamism and appearing Islamic. Second, though Islamist parties have low electoral support, they

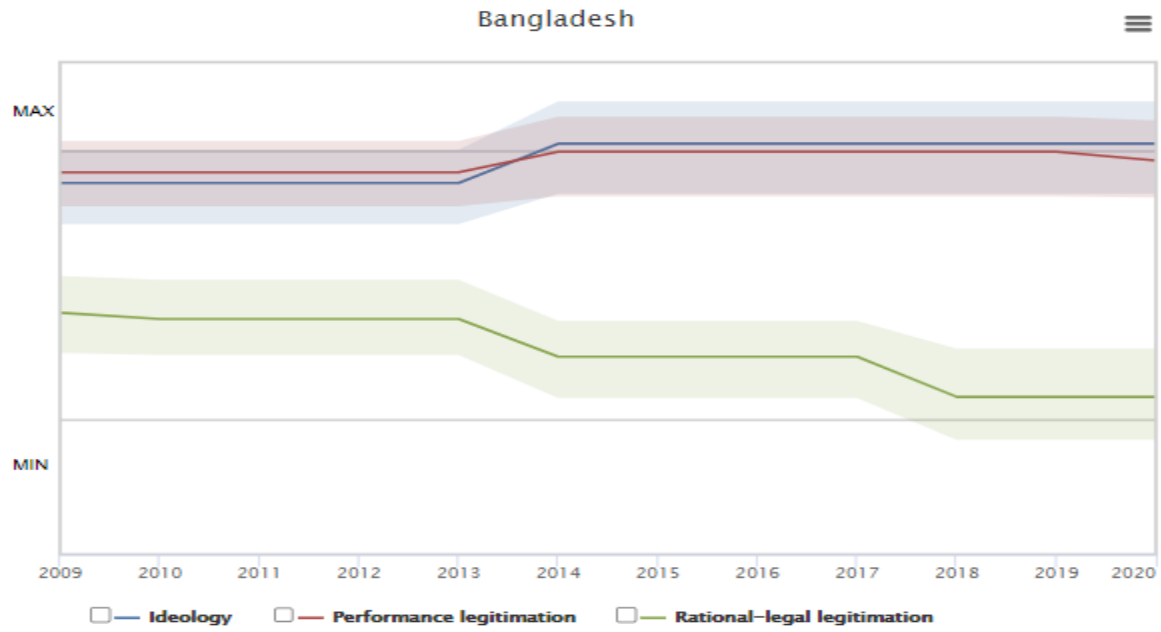
have high influence at the policy level and the grassroot level (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, pp. 19-20). In Bangladesh's locally driven hierarchical power structure, religious leaders are key figures in social, religious, and political mobilizations that led the mainstream parties to accommodate Islamism and Islamist political parties for political mobilizations and electoral advantage (Mostofa and Subedi, 2020, pp. 19-20). The ruling regime did the same by accommodating Islamism and Islamist parties to mobilize support of the masses as well as win religious legitimacy.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion. First, the incumbent regime has used nationalism and Islamism as tools for ideological legitimation. Second, the incumbent used constitutional and extra-constitutional means to apply these tools for legitimation.

The Making of Legitimacy Claims

The legitimacy claims of the incumbent regime based on procedural, performance, and ideological strategies can be derived from three items of V-Dem: rational-legal legitimation, performance legitimation, and ideological legitimation (see Figure 4.9.). According to V-Dem, the rational-legal procedural legitimation item explores the extent to which the ruling regime make claims about upholding legal norms, rules, and regulations including the constitutional procedures such as access to power (e.g., elections), exercise of power (e.g., rule of law), civil and political rights and liberties etc. to legitimize its rule. The rational-legal legitimation, which is measured on a scale of 0 to 4 (lower to higher), is used here to understand whether the authoritarian regime in Bangladesh makes any structurally coordinated procedural legitimacy claims.

Figure 4.9.: Legitimacy Claims in Bangladesh, 2009-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
*Rational-legal legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to legal norms and regulations to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Performance Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to performance (such as providing economic growth, poverty reduction, effective and non-corrupt governance, and providing security) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Ideological Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government promote a specific ideology or societal model (e.g., socialism, nationalism, religious traditionalism etc.) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

As Figure 4.9. shows, the incumbent regime in Bangladesh has avoided making procedural legitimacy claims, as indicated by the score below 0 representing that the regime does 'not at all' make rational-legal legitimation claims. The score for rational-legal legitimation increasingly moved toward the negative direction since 2014. This makes sense in the Bangladesh context, based on the discussion above regarding the manipulation of democratic procedure. The above discussion also highlighted that there has been a consistent decline in the

country's democracy, making it difficult for the incumbent to make procedural legitimacy claims. Hasina's speeches to the nation in the past ten years bear testimony to this (The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), 2021). On the question of the denial of constitutional rights of the people in elections, Hasina blamed the opposition for stealing the constitutional rights of the people (Alam and Schmall, 2018). Hasina also rejected that boycotting election by the opposition undermined her "legitimacy" (Burke, 2014). Additionally, she declared that "destructive acts, killing of the people, damaging lives and properties", "arson and bomb attacks", "heinous terrorist acts" etc. were caused by BNP-JIB alliance (The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), 2021). Regarding the rising authoritarianism in Bangladesh, Hasina's son, and heir apparent, told a foreign press that his mother wore the "authoritarian" label as a "badge of honor" (Ahmed, 2019), indicating the regime's legitimation of authoritarianism. The spread of 'democratic authoritarianism' by pro-regime advocates provides another example in this regard. These instances indicate that rather than making any direct and coordinated rational-legal procedural legitimacy claims, the incumbent regime in Bangladesh makes sweeping comments either to delegitimize the opposition or to defend authoritarianism, which eventually serve the purpose for the regime to appear legitimate.

In contrast to the procedural legitimacy claims, the regime makes performance legitimacy claims, indicated by the score of 1.5 between 2009 to 2013. The regime's performance legitimacy claims have increased since 2014 and reached 1.78 in 2020, based on increasing economic growth and improving social indicators. In her addresses to the nation, Hasina repeatedly mentioned: increasing "development works"; "discipline to all (economic) sectors"; rising "average growth rate" and "per capita income"; increasing "volume of budget"; "reducing poverty rate"; "increasing employment"; increasing "remittance", "reserves of foreign currency",

and “foreign investment”; increasing “electricity” and food sufficiency”; “massive improvement” in infrastructure and communication sector, educational institutions with multimedia classrooms; better medical and health care; “increasing life expectancy”; increased “salary of officers and employees of military and civil”, minimum wage of garment workers, allowances for widows, divorcee, and elderly people etc. (The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), 2021; The Daily Star, 2015; The Daily Sun, 2018). Insisting that Bangladesh is on the “highway of development”, Hasina on her address to the nation in 2018 stated:

> “*Beloved countrymen, you are the owner of all power. So, you have to fix the goal – what do you want? Do you want to see Bangladesh moving forward or the country dragging backward? Just think once what was the status of the country ten years back? Don’t you want your children to become self-reliant with education? Don’t you want the light of electricity reach at each house? Don’t you want each road of every village developed?”* (The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), 2021; The Daily Sun, 2018).

Additionally, pointing to the regime’s development plans to be a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed country by 2041, Hasina often highlight that Bangladesh is a “role model of development” in the global scale with the boon of BAL’s massive development initiatives since it came to power (Alam and Schmall, 2018; The Daily Sun, 2018). The ruling elites often emphasized that that Sheikh Hasina and the BAL have done more than anybody else to develop Bangladesh in the country’s history (Zunaid, 2020, p. 94). These comments and statements of Hasina and the ruling elites indicate that they increasingly highlight their performance seeking to make performance legitimacy claims.

Similarly, the regime had been making some ideological legitimacy claims since 2009. As Figure 4.9. shows, the score for ideological legitimacy claims remained 1.01 in the 2009-

2013 period. These claims increased almost 1.5 times since the Shahabag movement in 2013 that revived the nationalist sentiment. The score for ideological legitimacy became 1.46 in 2014 that continued until 2020 (see Figure 4.9.). The ideological legitimacy claims based on nationalism is evident in any speeches of Hasina on her addresses to the nation. In her speeches, Hasina spends a few minutes at the beginning insisting on nationalistic sentiments. Some of Hasina's most common nationalistic rhetoric are as follows: "Bengali" as the nation's identity, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as "Father of the Nation", "Bangabondhu", "the martyrdom of freedom fighters", "liberation war", "the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" along with his family members by "anti-liberation forces", "Sonar Bangla" (Golden Bengal) as the dream of Mujib, "Joy Bangla", "Joy Bangabandhu" etc. (The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), 2021). All these feed into the regime's ideological legitimacy claims based on Bengali nationalism, as promoted by her father Sheikh Mujib. Highlighting terms such as "muktijuddher chetona" (spirit of liberation war) and "second liberation war" during the Shahabag movement as the marker of patriotism provide further evidence of Hasina's emphasis on ideological legitimation through nationalism.

Along with nationalism, the regime has also made ideological legitimacy claims through appearing Islamic and promoting Islamism. Hasina in all her addresses to the nation insisted on Islamic dialects such as "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim", "inshallah", and "Khoda Hafez" (The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), 2021). On several occasions, Hasina insisted on "Islam is a religion of peace". She regularly highlighted her regime's role in modernizing "madrassa education", "expansion of Islamic education", ongoing establishments of over "560 model mosques and Islamic centers" and increasing numbers of madrassas and facilities for madrassa teachers and employees (The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), 2021). On many occasions, Hasina emphasized that she starts her day with morning prayers and reciting the Holy Quran and

regularly practices Islamic teachings. In November 2018 in a madrassa gathering where Hasina was given the title "Mother of Qwami", Hasina said, "the religion of Bangladesh is Islam" and "anyone who pronounces offensive comments against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad will be prosecuted according to the law" (World Watch Monitor, 2018). Additionally, her declarations that the country will be governed by the "Charter of Medina" and "no rules will be against Islam and Sunnah", as mentioned above, are indications of the regime's intention to capitalize on Islam. All these instances provide evidence that the Hasina regime has sought to appear Islamic and has made ideological legitimacy claims based on Islam.

A series of conclusions can be drawn from this section. First, the incumbent regime in Bangladesh does not make procedural legitimacy claims. Second, the regime has made both performance- and ideology-based legitimacy claims throughout its tenure. Third, the extent of ideological legitimacy claims has significantly increased since the Shahabag movement in 2013. Fourth, the regime has made higher levels of legitimacy claims based on its performance.

Summary

The findings of this chapter can be summarized as follows. First, Bangladesh became a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime in 2009. Since then, the country's electoral competitiveness and political pluralism have significantly declined. The regime feigned to hold multiparty elections by either allowing weak opposition parties or creating a political environment that led to the boycott or withdrawal from elections by the main opposition party. Second, under the procedural legitimation, the incumbent has used formal and informal mechanisms to manipulate elections. To control political opponents, the regime has used repression (through law enforcement agencies and reviving legal provisions) against the main opposition and co-optation against the Orthodox Islamist groups through appeasement and

pressure. The regime has used legal provisions, pro-government ownership structure, and law enforcement agencies to manipulate the media environment. The regime has also changed the changed the rules of the game through the fifteenth and the sixteenth constitutional amendments, which allowed the government to establish a complete control over the electoral and the judicial system. Third, under performance legitimation, the regime has undertaken several development plans, which has increased economic growth and social development, on the one hand, and increased corruption and inequality, on the other. The increasing economic growth and development, however, served the purpose of legitimation. Fourth, under ideological legitimation, the regime used constitutional provisions to emphasize nationalism and Islam and then used them throughout its tenure. The ideological legitimation has significantly increased since the Shahabag movement and the rise of HI in 2013. Fifth, while the regime avoided making procedural legitimacy claims, it has increasingly made performance and ideological legitimacy claims to legitimize its rule. The higher levels of legitimacy claims were made based on performance.

CHAPTER V: REGIME LEGITIMATION IN HUNGARY

This chapter aims to explore and analyze the relevance of the three-fold regime legitimation framework in the electoral authoritarian context of Hungary. After briefly covering the political history of Hungary, the chapter dives into exploring the theoretical relevance in the Orban era (2010-present). The chapter is divided into five parts. The historical transformation of political regimes in Hungary is discussed in the first part, while the description of electoral authoritarianism and its characteristics in Hungary is presented in the second part. The third part analyzes the relevance of procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies and tools in the Orban era. The fourth part presents evidence for the regime's legitimacy claims. In the final section, the Chapter provides a summary of the research findings.

Transformation of Political Regimes in Hungary

Following the full independence from the Austro-Hungarian empire after the World War I (WWI) in 1918, Hungary experienced the rule of diverse political regimes. Immediately after the independence, communist forces took power (Gabriel, 2016, p. 4) and the following decades witnessed a series of violent and bloody events such as the Nazi attack during World War II (WWII) (Lendvai, 2017, p. 112). After decades of communist rule, the process of democratization began in Hungary in 1989 following the end of the Cold War (Lendvai, 2003, p. 627). Along with severe authoritarian governance, the major problems of the communist rule included the elitist, oligarchy-prone, and over-centralized state structure that gave rise to the loss of people's confidence on pro-market reforms (Rupnik and Jeilonka, 2013; Agh, 2015, p. 11).

With the eve of democratization, several changes toward electoral and liberal democracy appeared (Bozoki, 2015, pp. 3-4) such as the 1989 constitution that abolished one-party system declaring Hungary as a Republic, legalized political parties, and promised democratic elections

(Gabriel, 2016, 6). Several left-oriented political parties were established such as FIDESZ (the Alliance of Young Democrats, later known as the Hungarian Civic Union) in 1988 by Victor Orban and MSZP (the Hungarian Socialist Party) in 1989 by the reform-minded communist elites of the old ruling party (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party). In the following decades, Hungary became involved in international community joining NATO in 1999 and EU in 2004 (Gabriel, 2016), supposedly aiming to lock itself in western liberal democracy (Scheiring, 2020, p. 5). These reforms toward democracy led most analysts to identify Hungary as a consolidated democracy (Vachudova, 2010), but democracy was never consolidated in Hungary (Agh, 2015).

During the democratization period (1990-2009), Hungary suffered from a widening gap between formal institutional designs and actual political practices as well as an intensification of oligarchization in all sectors of the state (Rupnik and Jeilonka, 2013). The efforts of successive governments for quick economic recovery and fast integration to the democratic world proved to be counterproductive for Hungary (Wilkin, 2016). Throughout the democratization era, the politics of Hungary was mainly dominated by the left parties, especially the coalition of MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) and the Hungarian Liberal Party that ruled the country for 12 out of 20 years. Though Orban-led FIDESZ government came to power in 1998, but lost in 2002 and 2006 elections, in which the MSZP-led coalition formed the governments and ruled for eight years. Since its failure in the 2002 election, FIDESZ under Orban has fully converted itself to a nationalist, conservative, and right-wing populist political party, as opposed to its initial left-oriented position (Oltay, 2012). This shift significantly contributed to FIDESZ's victory in 2010 that allowed Orban to establish an authoritarian system in Hungary by monopolizing all political power and capturing all state institutions (Agh, 2015).

Therefore, it can be stated that although several reforms toward democracy took place during the democratization period, democracy never consolidated in Hungary.

Electoral Authoritarian Regime in Hungary

Under the Orban regime (2010-present), Hungary has transformed from a democracy to an electoral authoritarian regime. In the elections of 2010, FIDESZ in a coalition with KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party), won 53 percent of the popular vote and bagged 263 out of 386 seats (almost 68 percent) in the unicameral parliament. With more than two-thirds of the seats in parliament, Orban and FIDESZ made major changes in Hungary's constitution to centralize political power and consolidate authoritarianism. But when exactly has Hungary transformed into an electoral authoritarian regime? The "electoral authoritarian index" (see Table 5.1.) indicates that, based on the available data on both Freedom House (FH) rating and Polity score in the 2010-2018 period, Hungary did not turn into an electoral authoritarian regime until 2018, as a FH rating of 3 or below and Polity score of 5 or above maintained.

Table 5.1.: Regime Performance and the Quality of Democracy in Hungary, 2010-2021

Year	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
FH Rating	1	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2.5	2.5	3	3	3
Polity Score	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	-	-	-

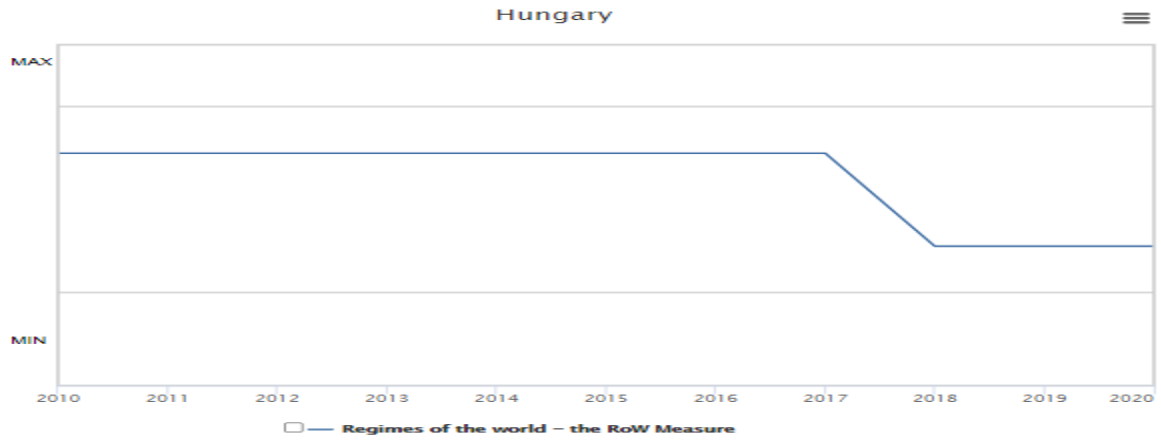
Source: Freedom House (FH) Rating of Hungary is compiled from the '*Freedom in the World*' annual reports, available at https://freedomhouse.org/reports/publication-archives. FH rating ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 being most democratic and 7 means least democratic. Polity Score of Hungary is compiled from Polity V Dataset, available at https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html. Polity score ranges from −10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic).

The regime performance based on Polity data with a score of 10 indicates that there has been overall competitiveness in executive recruitment, no constraints on the chief executive, and

competitiveness in political participation. However, the FH rating for the quality of democracy has declined since 2011 going from a score of 1 to a score of 3 in 2019. It has also retained the score of 3 in the year 2020 and 2021.

While the FH rating of 3 in 2019 meets the electoral authoritarianism criteria, but the Polity score of 5 or below is also required along with the FH rating for full identification as an electoral authoritarian regime. As the Polity data is not available for the 2019-2021 period, I will therefore use the second index: "regimes of the world index" from V-Dem (see Figure 5.1.). As per the "regimes of the world index", Hungary maintained a status of electoral democracy between 2010 and 2017 (with a score of 2), contradicting the Polity score of 10 as strongly democratic.[5] However, the second index also shows that Hungary became an electoral authoritarian regime in 2018 when it scored the country a score 1 (electoral authoritarian).

Figure 5.1.: Electoral Authoritarianism in Hungary



Source: V-Dem. "Regimes of the World" [How can the political regime be overall be classified considering the competitiveness of access to power as well as liberal principles?], (0 = closed autocracy, 1 = electoral autocracy, 2 = electoral democracy, and 3 = liberal democracy).

[5] The reason for the contradiction between Polity and V-Dem in categorizing Hungarian democracy is perhaps the fact that Polity and V-Dem use different indicators in measuring democracy in any state. Polity relies on key qualities of the executive recruitment, constraints on the executive authority, and political competition to measure democracy. In contrast, V-Dem measures democracy based on the extent of election quality, rule of law, access to justice, respect for personal liberty, law enforcement, and constraints on the executive etc. Thus, both indices categorized Hungarian democracy differently.

V-Dem continued to score Hungary as an electoral authoritarian regime through 2020. This identification by V-Dem is consistent with the FH rating of 3 starting in 2019 which suggests that Hungary fully transformed into an electoral authoritarian regime after the 2018 election. To understand whether Hungary became a competitive or a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime after the 2018 election, one needs to look to the election results (see Table 5.2.). Like the 2014 election, the FIDESZ-KDNP alliance secured 133 out of 199 seats (66.83 percent) in the 2018 election. As per Roessler and Howard (2009)'s criteria, the 66.83 percent of parliamentary seats in the 2018 election along with FH rating 3 since 2019 indicates that Hungary became a competitive authoritarian regime after the 2018 election.

Table 5.2.: Major Parties' Performance in Hungary's Parliamentary Elections (2010, 2014, and 2018)

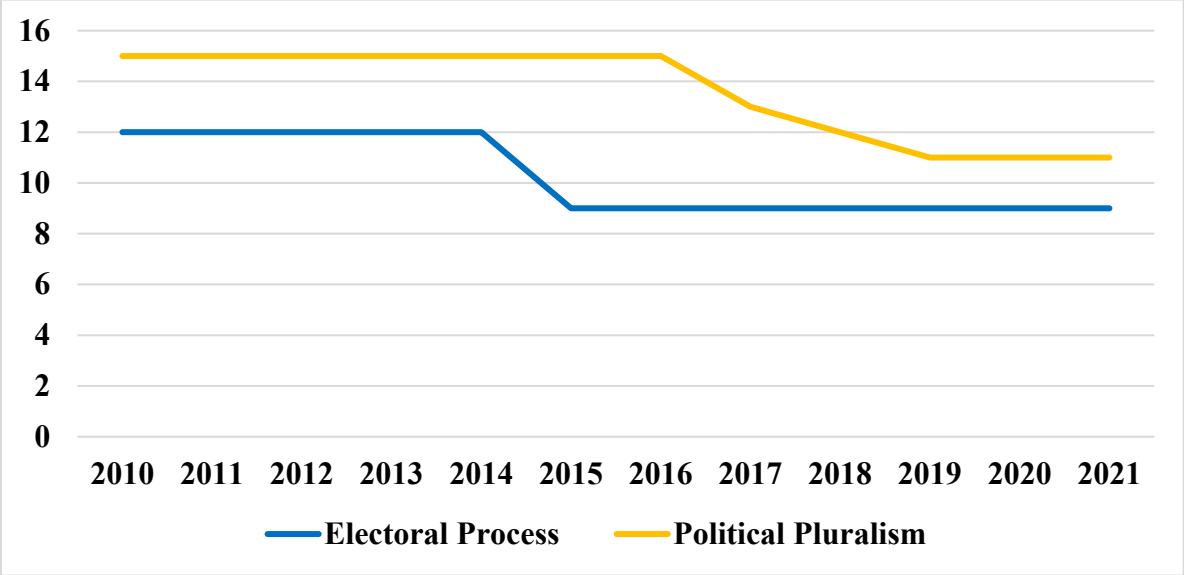
Party Name	2010			2014			2018		
	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Total Votes (%)	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Total Votes (%)	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Total Votes (%)
FIDESZ-KDNP Alliance	263	67.88	53	133	66.83	44.87	133	66.83	49
MSZP/HSP	59	15.28	19	38	19.10	26	20	10.05	-
Jobbik	47	12.18	17	23	11.56	21	26	13.07	-
LMP	16	4.15	7.5	5	2.51	5	8	4.02	-

Source: National Election Office (NEO) of Hungary, https://www.valasztas.hu/web/national-election-office; Mudde, 2014; Scheppele, 2014.
Notes:
*The National Assembly consisted of a total 386 members, who are elected for a four-years term. Till 2010, the national parliamentary elections used to be held in two rounds, but a change of law in 2012 transformed the election to be a single round for the election of 199 members. The elections of 2014 and 2018 were conducted based on this rule.
*FIDESZ-KDNP Alliance [Hungarian Civic Alliance (FIDESZ) + Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP)]; MSZP/HSP (Hungarian Socialist Party); Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary); LMP (Hungary's Green Party/Politics Can Be Different). Many other small political parties participated in these elections but failed to cross over the five percent vote threshold.

*In the 2010 elections, FIDESZ-KDNP Alliance secured 263 out of 386 seats (227 for FIDESZ and 36 for KDNP).
*According to the National Election Office (NEO) of Hungary, voter turnout in the 2010 election was 64.38 percent and 46.66 percent in the first and second round, respectively. The turnout was 61.84 percent in 2014 election and 69.73 percent in 2018 election.
*In the 2014 election, the FIDESZ-KDNP alliance won 44.87 percent of votes, while the left-wing MSZP-led alliance secured 25.57 percent of votes, but the extreme-right wing Jobbik (adopting a racist rhetoric against the Roma minority) managed to win 20.22 percent of votes. After the 2014 election, Jobbik became the second largest party in parliament (TOK, 2018, p. 92).

Although Hungary fully transformed into a competitive authoritarianism after the 2018 election, the country began reflecting electoral authoritarian behavior since the Orban regime came to power in 2010 and more blatantly since the 2014 election. Agh (2015) noted that since 2010, Hungary emerged as "a democratic façade but with a quasi-one-party rule behind that has turned, by the 2014 elections, into an electoral autocracy" (p. 4). Throughout the Orban regime, several scholars have identified Hungary as an electoral autocracy (Agh, 2015), autocracy (Kornai, 2015), a hybrid regime (Bozoki and Hegedus, 2018), and a competitive authoritarian regime (TOK, 2018; Scheiring, 2020, p. 8; The V-Dem Institute, 2020). Further evidence for these identifications can be found in the two characteristics of competitive electoral authoritarianism: electoral competitiveness and political pluralism. The Freedom House (FH)'s measurements of electoral process and political pluralism and participation are used to indicate the declining trends in both characteristics (see Figure 5.2.).

Figure 5.2.: Electoral Competitiveness and Political Pluralism in Hungary, 2010-2021



Source: Compiled by the author from *Freedom in the World* reports (2009-2021) of Freedom House. Electoral process is measured on a scale of 1 to 12 based on whether the elections were free and fair and whether electoral rules were impartially implemented. Political pluralism is measured on a scale of 1 to 16 based on whether diverse political groups had freedom to exercise political rights, realistic opportunity to gain power through elections, and were subject to domination by political forces.

As per the Freedom House (FH) data, under the Orban regime, the electoral process score of Hungary has declined from 12 in 2014 to 9 in the 2015-2021 period which indicates limited electoral competitiveness and election manipulations. Although the parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2018 which were multiparty elections with increased voter turnout, both elections were severely manipulated and unfair, as confirmed by the election observation reports conducted by the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (see OSCE, 2014; OSCE, 2018). Similarly, under the Orban regime, political pluralism and competitiveness has significantly shrunk as indicated by the score falling from 15 in 2016 to 11 in the 2019-2021 period. The repeated electoral victories in 2010, 2014, and 2018 allowed the Orban government to consolidate electoral

authoritarianism in the country and marginalize the political opponents through legal and extra-legal means.

The Orban regime consolidated competitive authoritarianism in Hungary broadly through institutionalizing authoritarianism and using authoritarian populism (Scheiring, 2020, p. 294). To institutionalize authoritarianism, Orban and FIDESZ used their supermajority in the parliament as the main political weapon and utilized legal rules for direct political purposes to make all their authoritarian actions legal (Agh, 2015, p. 17). Beyond legal rules, the ruling regime used 'institutional bricolage' (e.g., a range of things that were available) to occupy all democratic institutions, undermined the systems of checks and balances, and prevented the modes of democratic progress for the institutionalization of authoritarianism (Sargentini, 2018). Scheiring (2020) called these actions of the ruling regime as 'pre-emptive repression' (p. 296). Additionally, the Orban regime utilized authoritarian populism aiming to disaggregate and neutralize the political opponents to manufacture popular consent. The incumbent implemented an authoritarian populism by penetrating a system of discourse and systematically aligning policies and strategies in line with such discourse (Scheiring, 2020, p. 297).

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Hungary became fully transformed into a competitive authoritarian regime in 2019 but it has been reflecting the electoral authoritarian behavior since 2010 and more blatantly after the 2014 electoral victory.

Strategies of Legitimation under Electoral Authoritarianism in Hungary

This part discusses how the competitive electoral authoritarian regime in Hungary has implemented procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies. The procedural legitimation highlights manipulation of elections, controlling of political opponents, manipulation of the media, and changing the rules of the game. The performance legitimation

focuses on GDP per capita, net ODA, HDI Index, and GDP growth versus democracy. The ideological legitimation describes how the incumbent used populism focusing on anti-elitism and anti-immigration. The details are discussed below.

Procedural Legitimation

Manipulation of Elections

The Hungarian parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2018 under the Orban regime were severely manipulated by applying subtle tactics which are often hard to detect from the outside. However, the devil is in the details. With only 44 percent (in 2014) and 49 percent (in 2018) of votes, the ruling Orban regime won 133 out of 199 seats (66.83 percent of parliamentary seats) in both elections and secured a two-thirds majority in parliament. The Orban regime manipulated the country's electoral system by applying a series of novel rules which were strategically designed to ensure a two-thirds majority for the ruling FIDESZ (Scheppele, 2014; Mudde, 2014; Agh, 2015). The manipulation of elections and electoral systems was confirmed by applying both legal and extra-legal means, which are described below.

The constitutional changes and the related cardinal laws following the 2010 elections allowed the ruling regime to pass a series of electoral laws to bring fundamental changes in the country's electoral system that favor the ruling party. Realizing the decline in popularity of Orban and FIDESZ, all these electoral laws were further amended in 2013 before the election year (OSCE, 2014, p. 4). Two such laws are worth mentioning: Act CCIII of 2011 on the Elections of Members of Parliament and Act XXXVI of 2013 on Election Procedure. The effect of these new electoral laws is manifold. First, these new electoral laws for the first time allowed for an election to be held in a single round instead of the usual two rounds (Legislation, 2013;

Venice Commission, 2014). The single-round election system prevented the possibility for political parties to form coalitions after knowing the results of the first round.

Second, the new electoral laws reduced the numbers of members of parliament to 199 instead of 386 [Act CCIII, Section 3] (Venice Commission, 2014). Of 199 parliamentary seats, 106 (instead of 176 based on 1989 constitution) will be elected in single-member constituencies and 93 will be from a regional list with a national threshold of five percent of votes. This change involved a redrawing of boundaries of single-member constituencies in a fashion that gave the ruling party more seats (Pap, 2018, p. 24). For instance, in the new electoral districts, the FIDESZ-led alliance won 96 seats in the 2014 election and 91 seats in the 2018 election out of 106 single-member constituencies (OSCE, 2014; OSCE, 2018). The redrawing of the boundaries of all districts were done using the governing party's two-thirds majority in the parliament without allowing the opposition to have any input (Scheppele, 2014; OSCE, 2014, p. 8). The advantages from this gerrymandering significantly favored FIDESZ by guaranteeing a parliamentary majority even with reduced popular votes (Mudde, 2014).

Third, by amending the Act LV. 1993 on Hungarian Citizenship with Act XLIV of 2010, the ruling regime allowed "non-resident voters" to cast their votes in elections. These are new Hungarian citizens from neighboring countries – people who do not live in Hungary but speak Hungarians, people who are of Hungarian descent but are now foreign citizens, and people who mostly live in the territories that Hungary lost after the WWI. Of the nearly 200,000 registered non-resident voters, almost 95.5 percent voted for the FIDESZ-KDNP alliance (Mudde, 2014). This change has significantly benefitted the ruling regime enabling Orban to secure a supermajority (Scheppele, 2014; Mudde, 2014). FIDESZ won 133 seats, exactly the number

necessary for the two-thirds majority. The votes from the non-resident voters secured the one additional seat that the ruling regime needed to secure the supermajority (Pap, 2018, p. 25).

Fourth, the new electoral laws allowed the winners to utilize the "unused votes" won by the losing candidates to add to the wining parties' total votes when calculating the party-list mandates. The "unused votes" are calculated based on the difference between the number of votes a winner received in a constituency and the number of votes received by the second-place candidate (minus one). The utilization of "unused votes" allowed the ruling party to get six parliamentary seats, without which, the supermajority would not have been possible (Scheppele, 2014).

Five, immediately after the 2010 electoral victory, FIDESZ brought the National Election Commission (NVB) under its control through legal changes. As per the old system, of the commission's ten members, five were filled by party delegates (one from each parliamentary party) and the other five non-delegate members were filled by mutual agreement between the ruling and the opposition parties. The new electoral laws allowed Orban and FIDESZ to prematurely terminate all non-delegate members who were elected to serve through the 2014 election. The positions of the non-delegate members were immediately filled with FIDESZ's own members, giving the ruling party a dominant majority in the commission (Bankuti et al., 2015, p. 39). This led to the decline of the election management body's independence and gave rise to a politicized electoral authority that favored the ruling regime in election monitoring in both the 2014 and 2018 elections. The politicization reflected in the arbitrary dropping of the opposition parties' complaints without considering their substantive merits (OSCE, 2014; OSCE, 2018). Additionally, this change empowered the politicized commission to thwart civil society groups' attempts to use referendums to derail the government's programs, restricting the civil

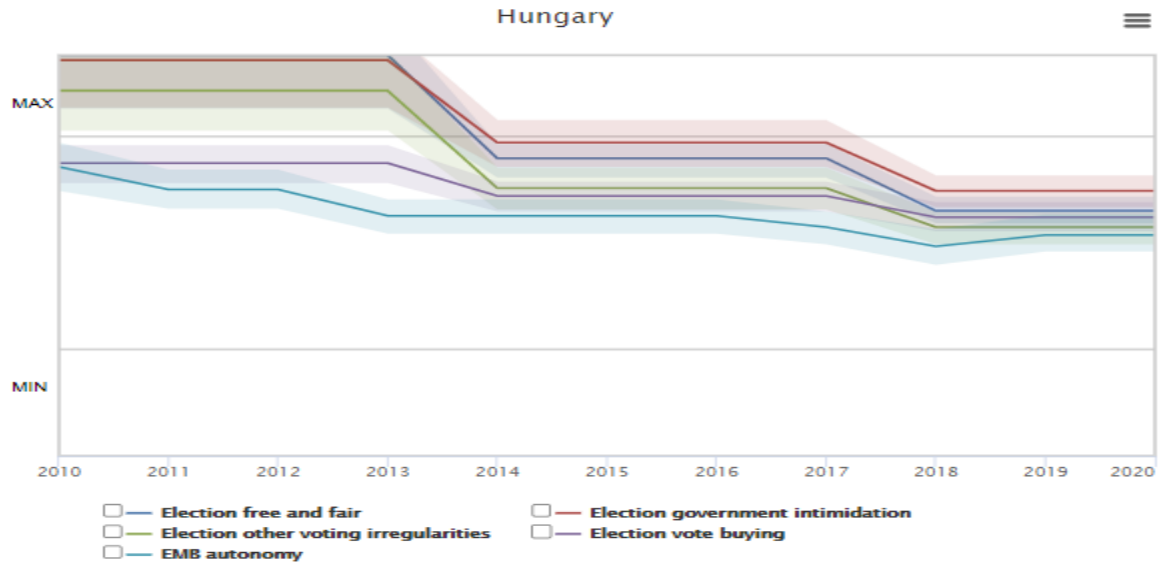
society's voice. All these legal changes single-handedly favored FIDESZ to have political control in all institutions necessary for democratic elections which made it very hard for any other party to come to power (Bankuti et al., 2015, p. 45).

While the legal changes already put the ruling FIDESZ in a privileged position compared to the opposition parties, the ruling regime further unleveled the playing field by restricting the electoral campaigns of the opponents (Mudde, 2014; TOK, 2018, p. 93). The election observation reports for both the 2014 and 2018 elections found that the ruling regime, enjoying an "undue advantage", attempted to prevent the electoral campaigns of its political opponents through various ways such as scandalizing them with bogus corruption charges, creating a biased media environment to highlight the negative image of the opposition, and restricting the campaign financing of the opposition parties (OSCE, 2014; OSCE, 2018). In the 2018 elections, the ruling regime widely spread "intimidating and xenophobic rhetoric" that not only limited a level playing field by creating constraints for the oppositions' campaigns but also hampered the ability of the voters to make informed voting decisions (OSCE, 2018).

Apart from creating an un-level playing field, the ruling regime applied clientelism to win electoral support which is a violation of electoral norms. The FIDESZ-led government, conditioning access to state resources, promised false welfare favors to voters in exchange for electoral support while also threatened to restrict welfare benefits in case of an electoral defeat (Mares and Young, 2019). Additionally, apart from direct vote-buying, the ruling regime utilized private coercion, especially in rural areas, through private moneylenders associated with FIDESZ who threatened to increase the terms of loans in case of an electoral defeat (Mares and Young, 2019).

The above legal and extra-legal mechanisms show that the competitive authoritarian regime in Hungary has significantly manipulated the country's electoral system, holding unfree and unfair elections. Further proof for the manipulated elections and electoral system can be found in the V-Dem's "clean election index" (see Figure 5.3.). As per the index, the free and fair election score of Hungary fell from 2.05 in 2013 to 0.57 in 2014, indicating increasing irregularities that affected the electoral outcome despite some electoral competition. After the manipulated 2018 election, the score fell below 0 which indicates that the elections in Hungary were fundamentally flawed, and the official results had nothing to do with the 'will of the people'. These scores confirm that both elections were neither free and nor fair. Similarly, the declining trend lines in voting irregularities and vote buying since the 2014 election, as indicated by scores close to 0, means that there have been increasing instances of voting irregularities and vote buying in Hungarian elections.

Figure 5.3.: Clean Election Index for Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:

*Election free and fair [Taking all aspects of the pre-election period, election day, and the post-election process into account, would you consider this election to be free and fair?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*EMB autonomy [Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have the autonomy from the government to apply electoral laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Election government intimidation [In this national election, were the opposition parties/candidates/campaign workers subject to repression, intimidation, violence, or harassment by the government, the ruling party, or their agents?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
*Election other voting irregularities [In this national election, was there evidence of other (intentional) irregularities by the incumbent and/or opposition parties, and or vote fraud?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
*Election vote buying [In this national election, was there evidence of vote and/or turnout buying] (0 to 4, higher to lower).

Additionally, the government has been using increased repression and intimidation against the opposition, as indicated by the score 0.38 in 2014 falling from 1.65 in previous years. The score going below 0 in 2018 indicates that the government's intimidation significantly increased during the 2018 election. Finally, the autonomy of the election management body (EMB) is increasingly declining with a score 0. 62 in 2018 falling from 1.72 in 2010. It also reveals that the EMB is controlled by the incumbent government.

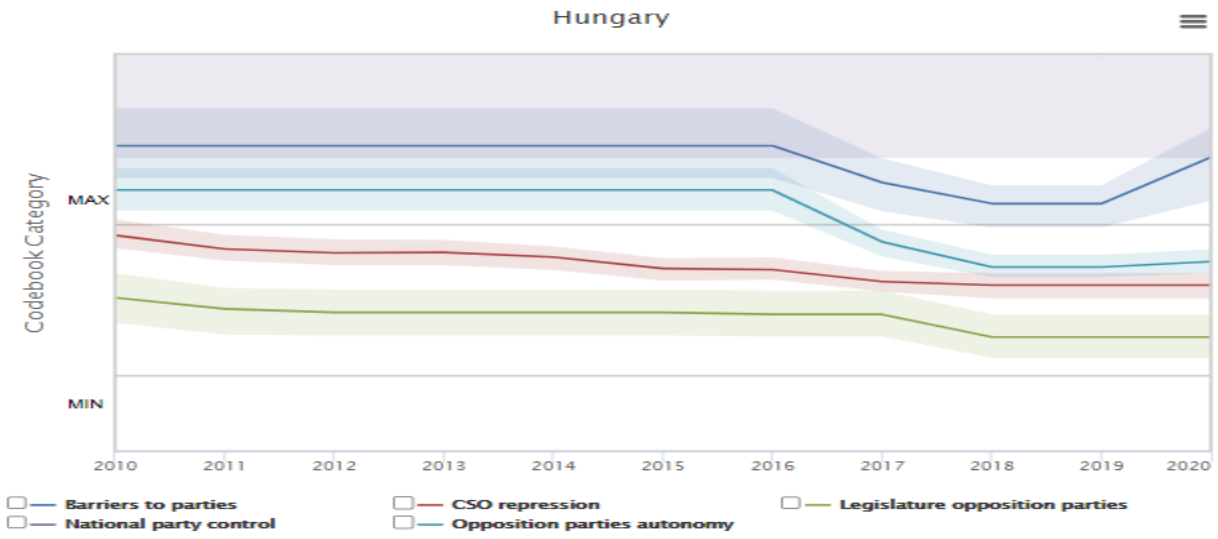
Therefore, the manipulation of elections under the Hungarian competitive electoral authoritarianism is obvious. By rigging rules and using extra-legal means, the ruling FIDESZ, even after receiving fewer votes in the 2014 election compared to the 2010 election (when it won) and the 2006 and 2002 elections (when it lost), secured a supermajority in parliament (Lendvai, 2017, p. 131). Similarly, despite receiving fewer votes in 2018 compared to the 2010 election, the ruling FIDESZ managed to again secure a parliamentary supermajority. The supermajority in both instances was therefore manipulated rather than reflective of the popular will (Scheppele, 2014; Mudde, 2014). These repeated victories not only consolidated competitive

electoral authoritarianism in Hungary but also paved the way for the ruling regime to emphasize its electoral legitimacy claims.

Controlling Political Opposition

The evidence for Orban regime's repressive behavior against its political opposition is found in the V-Dem's "freedom of association index" for Hungary (see Figure 5.4.). As per the index, the ruling regime increased its restrictions on political parties through legal requirements of membership or financial deposits and harassment, as indicated by a score of 2.48 in barriers to parties between 2010 and 2016. These barriers increased significantly during the 2018 election as indicated by the score 1.37. This score indicates that the opposition party leaders regularly faced harassment from the government, and it was virtually impossible for parties, not affiliated with government, to form legally and perform politically.

Figure 5.4.: Freedom of Association Index for Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Barriers to parties [How restrictive are the barriers to forming a party?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).

(2) Legislature opposition parties [Are opposition parties (those not in the ruling party or coalition) able to exercise oversight and investigatory functions against the wishes of the governing party or coalition?] (0 to 2, lower to higher).
(3) Opposition parties' autonomy [Are opposition parties independent and autonomous of the ruling regime?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
(4) CSO repression [Does the government attempt to repress civil society organizations?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) National party control [How unified is party control of the national government?] (0 = unified coalition control, 1 = divided party control, 2 = unified single party control).

Similarly, the opposition parties in the legislature have been unable to exercise their oversight functions, as indicated by the score surrounding 0. This is further confirmed by the declining autonomy of opposition parties, as indicated by the score 0.6 in 2020 falling from 2.18 in 2010. In contrast, the ruling regime has tightened its control over the government as indicated by the score 1.65 between 2010 and 2020 which means that a unified central party or its coalition controls the national government. In addition to the opposition parties, the ruling regime has increased its repression against civil society organizations which is reflected in the score 0.11 in 2020 falling from 1.23 in 2010.

A discussion on Hungarian political context not only presents a clear reflection of the above data but also highlights the incumbent's controlling mechanisms for the political opposition. Following the 2010 electoral victory, the ruling regime introduced several legal changes in the Hungarian political system without involving the opposition parties and civil society organizations, which served as pre-emptive repressive mechanisms for the political opponents (Bozoki, 2015). These constitutional changes and the subsequent cardinal laws pushed Hungarian politics toward a cartel party system in which the opposition parties are co-opted (Susanszky et al., 2020, p. 762). In such a system, cartel parties heavily depend on state subsidies as most of their funding comes from the state budget. Similarly, Hungarian political parties are tied to state finances rather than funding from party members or sponsors. The constitutional

changes allowed the ruling party to centralize power over determining and distributing state budgets and abolished the constitutional court's authority to interfere (Human Rights Watch, 2013a).

Using the advantage from the legal changes, the ruling regime has been conditioning the state budgets to repress the political opponents' functionality by restricting their state subsidies. For instance, between 2014 and 2017, while FIDESZ received approximately HUF460,000 (US$1,520.66) to HUF670,000 (US$2,214.87) per year, the main opposition MSZP received only HUF61,000 (US$201.65) per year (Susanszky et al., 2020, p. 767). The financial constraints of MSZP also led it to sell its building headquarters in Budapest in 2016. It was only during its third consecutive term that the incumbent decided to cut down the state subsidies for political parties to be spent to fight Covid. This sudden cut down of state subsidies disproportionately affected the functionality of the opposition parties (Freedom House, 2021a).

However, whereas the incumbent regime decreased the state subsidies to the main opposition parties, it increased the subsidies for smaller parties. The new electoral legislation introduced by the incumbent encouraged the registration of many small and previously unknown parties, which were called by many observers as 'phantom parties' or 'splinter groups' (Lendvai, 2017, p. 129) or 'camouflage parties' (Freedom House, 2015, p. 297). These parties had neither websites nor a visible campaign presence, but their formation was encouraged by FIDESZ (Freedom House, 2019a). During the 2014 election, six of these parties received public funding between HUF700,000 and HUF2,100,000 each, while they received fewer than ten thousand votes (Freedom House, 2015, p. 297). Twelve such parties, which were found to participate in the 2018 election, were created to take advantage of public funding, fragment the opposition votes, and confuse the voters, according to Transparency International (Freedom House, 2019a).

Additionally, the new single-round electoral system forced the opposition parties to form uneasy alliances prior to elections (Varnagy and Ilonszki, 2017, p. 11). The legal changes for campaign finance insisted that the amount of public finance received by a party is contingent upon the number of candidates a party has in an election. This new legislation encourages the parties to have as many candidates as possible, therefore forcing them to compete among the parties within the alliance, apart from their competition against FIDESZ (Susanszky et al., 2020, p. 766). The point is that the opposition parties, which do not form alliances and play alone (therefore will surely lose), are given more money from public finance, whereas the alliances are given less money. If a party decides to play alone to secure more financial resources, it not only loses an election but also benefits the ruling regime. For instance, LMP's decision to play alone in the 2014 election helped the ruling FIDESZ to win eleven additional seats (Lendvai, 2017, p. 129). These legal constraints therefore significantly repressed and restricted the opposition parties' functionality and political activities.

Apart from state budgets and campaign finance, the incumbent regime passed a law in 2018 that banned the owners of billboards from offering discounts to political parties, indicating the regime's plan to dismantle the political advertising of the opposition parties. In the same year, the State Audit Office (headed by a former FIDESZ member) fined six parties for violating this law of political advertising during the 2018 election (Freedom House, 2019a). Jobbik, which became the second largest parliamentary party after the 2014 election, was significantly affected by this new provision as it had been receiving billboard advertising concessions from some businessmen. The fine of Jobbik was equal to more than two-thirds of its annual state subsidy (Freedom House, 2018, p. 416).

The above pre-emptive repressive mechanisms through legal changes have trapped the opposition parties. Their major dilemma included either participating in the political game, taking seats in the parliament, and accepting state subsidies, or rejecting to play in the rules, devised and dictated by FIDESZ. Playing in the game "unavoidably weakens their credibility and limit their chances to grow and gain supporters" because "they seem co-opted" and "they appear impotent" (Susanszky et al., 2020, p. 766). By playing, they also implicitly legitimize the Orban-led system that they severely criticize (Susanszky et al., 2020, p. 762) and contribute to the continuation of the cartel system. If not playing, they lose state finances affecting their political functionality and highlight their failure to fight the government. Therefore, the incumbent's pre-emptive repression led to a cartel party system that has ultimately co-opted the opposition parties in which they have little chance to win.

Beyond the opposition parties, the incumbent regime repressed civil society organizations and restricted their democratic participation. As several civil society organizations raised their voice and led social movements against the Orban regime's authoritarian rule (Kover, 2015), the government in 2017 passed two laws which significantly affected these organizations' activities. First, the new higher education law of 2017 required that all foreign universities operating in Hungary must conduct their educational activities based on the preferences of the Hungarian government, not on the universities' accreditation boards (Enyedi, 2018). The law immediately took the name 'Lex CEU' (Central European University) because this law affected the U.S.-chartered university CEU the most. The ulterior motive behind this law was to attack the CEU-founder and Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros and all Soros funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Enyedi, 2018). On several occasions, FIDESZ elites

accused CEU as a “fake” university and committed themselves to stop Soros-funded “pseudo-civil society spy groups”.

While CEU was ultimately forced to move to Vienna in 2018 (Freedom House, 2019a), NGOs in Hungary were blamed as serving foreign interests. Therefore, the ruling regime passed a second law in 2017 requiring NGOs which receive more than $26,000 in funding annually from foreign sources to identify themselves as “foreign-supported” organizations and to disclose the identities of the foreign donors or face sanctions (Freedom House, 2018, p. 414). Along with the government’s authority to ban NGOs, the law insisted that NGOs are required to register with the interior ministry and their registration is contingent upon the clearance from security agencies’ vetting based on national security concerns (Downes and Wai, 2018). The law further insisted that any foreign funding, especially for migration-related activities, would be subjected to a 25 percent of tax (Downes and Wai, 2018). This law indicates that the ruling regime has been tightening its control over the civil society’s space by repressing the activities of mainstream NGOs including Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International Hungary (Bayer, 2017). While restricting the mainstream NGOs, the incumbent regime has been promoting the government-funded NGO, Civil Unity Forum (COF), which overwhelmingly circulated positive information about the government during the election campaigns of 2014 and 2018 (OSCE, 2014; OSCE, 2018).

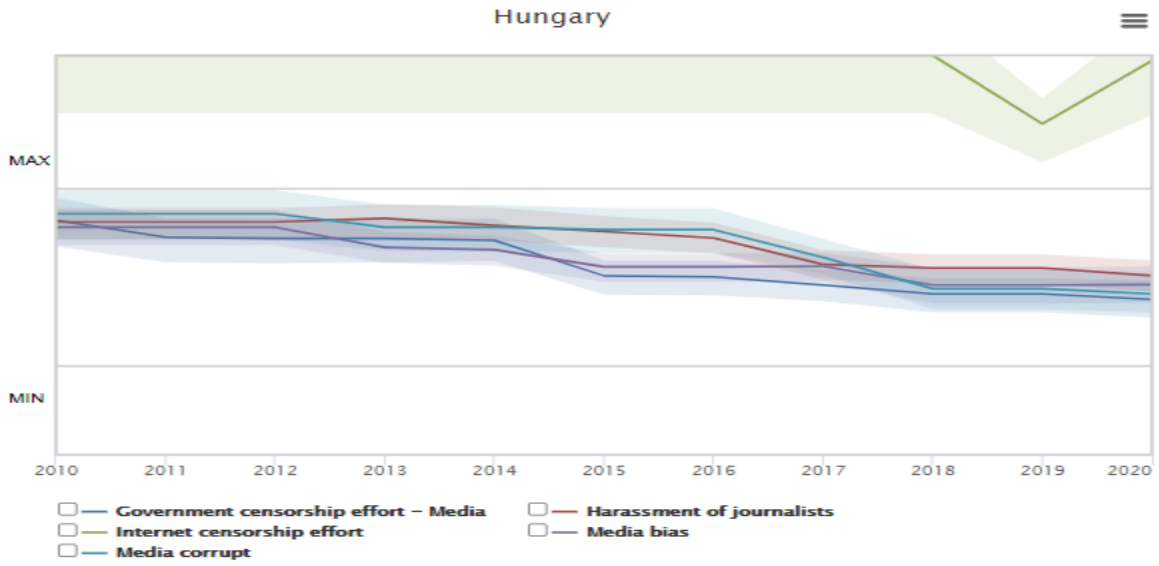
From the above discussion, two conclusions can be drawn. First, that the incumbent in Hungary controls the political opponents broadly through pre-emptive legal repression. The legal changes allowed the ruling regime to institute a cartel party system in which the opposition parties are controlled through conditioning state subsidies, campaign finances, and banning from

receiving concessions on political advertising. Second, the legal changes also authorized the government to control the activities of civil society groups.

Manipulation of the Media

The incumbent Orban regime has severely manipulated the freedom of the media and expression in Hungary. V-Dem's "freedom of expression index" for Hungary provides evidence for the ruling regime's media manipulation (see Figure 5.5.). As per the index, the ruling regime has increased its routinized censorship of the media right after assuming power in 2010. This is evident in the score falling from 1.43 in 2010 to 0.53 in 2015 that continued to deteriorate to 0.11 in 2020. This decline indicates a direct and routinized government's censorship of the media environment.

Figure 5.5.: Freedom of Expression Index for Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Government censorship effort – media [Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the print or broadcast media?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(2) Internet censorship effort [Does the government attempt to censor information (text, audio, or visuals) on the internet?], (0 to 3, higher to lower).

(3) Harassment of journalists [Are individual journalists harassed (threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed) by government or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(4) Media bias [Is there media bias against opposition parties or candidates?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) Media corrupt [Do journalists, publishers, or broadcasters accept payments in exchange for altering news coverage?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).

Similarly, the government's censorship to the online environment continued throughout its tenure and significantly increased after the 2018 election, as indicated by the score 0.89 in 2019 falling from 1.82 in earlier years. Likewise, the government's harassment of journalists has significantly increased in the past decade, as shown by the score 0.62 in 2020 falling from 1.97 in 2010. Additionally, severe bias of some media outlets toward the ruling party has existed throughout the Orban regime which has significantly increased in its third term. This is evident in the score falling from 0.95 in 2010 to go below 0 in the post-2018 period. Furthermore, corruption in media (i.e., journalists or publishers accept payment from the government to alter news or publish pro-government news) has significantly increased in the past decade, as indicated by the score 1.27 in 2010 falling below 0 in 2020.

The above data make better sense when one looks at the political context of Hungary. Since 2010, the ruling regime has passed several legal instruments that have led to the establishment of a one-party control over the media. Three media laws are worth mentioning: Act on the Modification of Certain Acts Regulating the Media and Communications, Act CIV on the Freedom of Press and Fundamental Rules on Media Content, and Act on Media Services and Mass Media (known as Media Act or Multimedia Act). These acts specified new content regulations for all media platforms, outlined the authorities of new media regulatory bodies, and set out sanctions on the breaches of new legislation, indicating the regime's complete control of

the media environment (Brouillette and van Beek, 2012). The following examples bear testimony to this statement.

First, the new laws established a National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) (known as the Media Authority). The NMHH is headed by a Media Council and all four members of the Council have been nominated and elected for a nine-year term by Orban and FIDESZ (Bajomi-Lazar, 2015, p. 60). The Media Council has been authorized to impose provisions on content regulation, charge high fines in case of violation of media laws, control licensing of the media outlets, transfer cases of media outlets to rural areas and enforce many other restrictions (NMHH, 2010). As per Article 13 of the Act CIV, the media outlets must publish "balanced information" (i.e., the information that serves the interests of the public and the Hungarian nation). The infringement of this provision leads to high fines and court cases. While the nature of the infringement and the fines will be determined by the politicized Media Council, no clear definition of "balanced information" has been given which remains open and subject to arbitrary interpretation (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). This vagueness has created widespread fear and confusion among journalists and reporters, as expressed by some critical media during the election campaigns (Scheppele, 2014; OSCE, 2014; OSCE, 2018).

Similarly, the Media Council has been authorized to charge the media outlets with high fines up to HUF200 million in case of violations of the media law (Bajomi-Lazar, 2015, p. 72). In 2012 alone, the Media Council fined sixty-six media outlets with HUF80 million (US$360,000) (Human Rights watch, 2013). According to Bozoki (2015a), the Council has been authorized to fine so high that it can permanently silence a media outlet. While the arbitrariness of the Council in charging pro- and anti-government media outlets has been obvious, the

provisions of fines compelled the media outlets to self-censor their content which are subject to the Council's regulations and interferences.

Additionally, the Council has been authorized to control the licensing of the media outlets and even make the court rule for licensing invalid (NMHH, 2010). The Council's decisions for licensing the private media remained arbitrary and benefitted only pro-government broadcasters (Dragomir, 2017). Within its first two years, the Council has provided eighteen licenses to pro-government radio stations, while refused to renew the license of the long-standing left-liberal radio, Klubradio, which was the last of the opposition voices on the air (Bajomi-Lazar, 2015, p. 72). As the Council is authorized to delay the licensing, Klubradio's licensing was delayed on irrational grounds and was forced into a legal battle for over a year causing huge financial loss due to declining advertising revenues (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). Furthermore, the Council's authority to transfer media cases to rural areas further creates confusion and restricts the media freedom, as most of the media outlets are based in urban areas, hence transferring their cases to rural areas would hamper the reporting and media activities.

Second, the new laws also created a Public Service Foundation to manage the public institutions such as Hungarian Television (MTV), Hungarian Radio (MR), Danube Television (Duna TV), and the Hungarian News Agency (MTI). The Foundation, headed by a chairperson determined by the Media Council, has been authorized to interfere in editorial content of public media platforms and several instances of such interference have been reported, especially on politically sensitive issues. Refusal of such interferences often leads to dismissal of journalists and editors, as it was the case for the state-controlled Hungarian Television (MTVA), in which approximately 1,100 to 1,600 employees were dismissed (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). Through the Foundation, the government has been providing huge funding to the state-led media

outlets, giving financial incentives to their employees based on their pro-government reporting, and attracting pro-FIDESZ journalists in these media outlets with higher salaries (Bajomi-Lazar, 2015, p. 75). Facing pressure and incentives, the public media outlets have been subordinated to the ruling regime and serving FIDESZ's propaganda purposes (Bozoki and Hegedus, 2018).

Beyond the legal mechanisms, the incumbent regime has been conditioning the public advertising funds that only go to the pro-government private media outlets, whereas critical media outlets were disabled financially (Sata and Karolewski, 2020, p. 212). For instance, the left leaning, Klubradio and the national daily, Nepszava, faced a huge decline in government advertising, followed by private advertising (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). The Nepszava was later closed due to financial constraints. The control of advertising funds has been done through a large patronal network, led by FIDESZ loyalist business tycoons. Orban's closest allies have been running almost all media outlets of the country (Sata and Karolewski, 2020, p. 213). According to one estimate, by 2017, a staggering 90 percent of all media in Hungary belonged to either the state or a FIDESZ ally (Dragomir, 2017a). While the owners of these media and business enterprises avoid giving advertising funds outside of their own media outlets, private firms seeking to maintain good relations with the government refrain from advertising with the critical media (Kornai, 2015). Therefore, the survival of critical independent media has been at stake indicating the regime's intention to silence opposition voices.

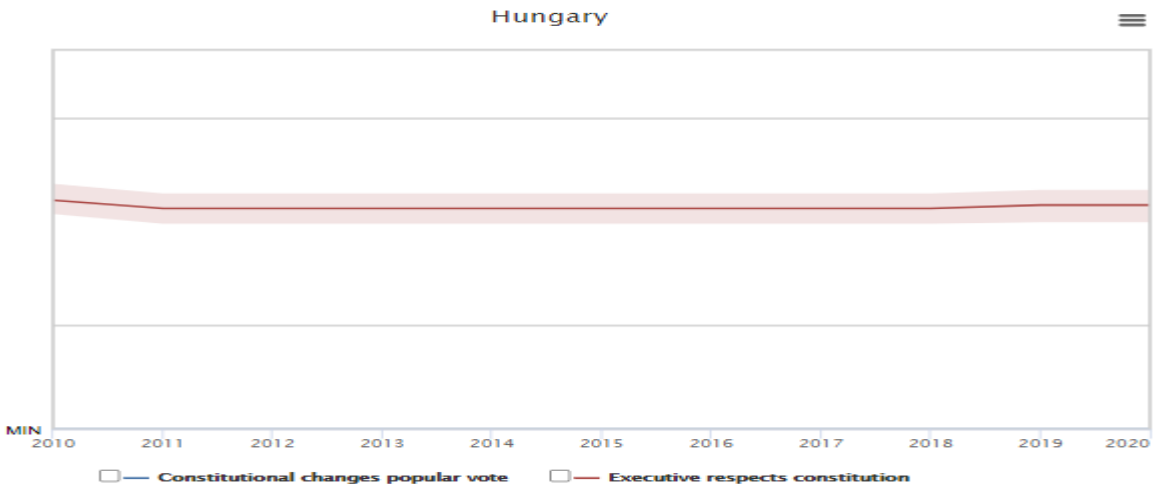
The findings from the above discussion make it clear that the ruling regime in Hungary has used legal mechanisms and created a patronal network to manipulate the media environment which leads to increased decline of the country's media freedom. The declining media environment in Hungary is further evident in the World Press Freedom Index in which

Hungary's position has been drastically deteriorating as indicated by its ranking 56 out of 180 countries in 2013 jumping to 92 in 2021 (RSF, 2021).

Changing the Rules of the Game

The incumbent regime's principal tool to concentrate power and institutionalize authoritarianism has been 'changing the rules of the game'. Between 2010 and 2013, the ruling regime instituted 12 constitutional amendments (Antal, 2019, p. 100) that generated 728 acts which received further 466 amendments (Agh, 2015, p. 17). These amendments make it clear that the regime has heavily relied on changing the rules of the game in the constitution to legalize its authoritarian moves. This is further evident in the V-Dem's "constitution index" for Hungary (see Figure 5.6.).

Figure 5.6.: The Constitution Index for Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Constitutional changes popular vote [Is a popular or direct vote required in order for a constitutional change to be legally binding?], (0 to 2, 0 = no, 1 = depends on the content of the change, 2 = yes).
(2) Executive respects constitution [Do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government, and cabinet ministers) respect the constitution?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

According to the index, between 2010 and 2020, the score remains closed to 0 meaning that the members of the executive do not respect the constitution and violate the constitution or most of its provisions whenever they want without facing any legal consequences. The index also shows that a popular or direct vote for enforcing constitutional changes is not required in Hungary, hence giving a free reign to the ruling regime with its two-thirds majority in parliament.

As mentioned in the above sections, the changes in the rules of the game by the Orban regime have provided the FIDESZ-led government a complete control over democratic institutions, which was nothing more than a constitutional coup (Bozoki, 2015). This section particularly discusses the incumbent's control over the judicial system. In Hungary, the constitutional court has been serving as an important check on the executive since the 1990s (Antal, 2019). During the initial years of the Orban regime, the constitutional court struck down a series of problematic laws and provisions by declaring them unconstitutional (Halmai, 2019a). The regime therefore targeted the constitutional court by passing a series of Acts that were formalized through the fourth amendment in 2013. The new amendment not only approved all legal changes (which were initially objected by the court), but also significantly curbed the power of the constitutional court, limited the independence of the judiciary, and interfered with the administration of courts.

According to Article 24(5) of the new constitution, "The Constitutional Court may review the Fundamental Law or the amendment of the Fundamental Law only in relation to the procedural requirements laid down in the Fundamental Law for its making and promulgation." As opposed to the democratic constitution of 1989, this change restricted the court's power to rule on the substance of the constitution. It can only rule on the procedural legality of

constitutional amendments (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). Similarly, Article 37 of the new constitution limited the jurisdiction of the constitutional court in reviewing laws pertaining to state budgets and narrowed the ability of the court to rule on the compatibility of laws that may affect human rights (Antal, 2019).

The new constitution (Article 25-28 of the Fundamental Law) also led to the subsequent construction of several legal instruments. Among others, two cardinal laws are worth mentioning here: Act CLXI on the Organization and Administration of Courts and Act CLXII on the Legal Status and Remuneration of Judges. Article 25(6) of the Fundamental Law stipulated that the President of National Judicial Office (NJO) of the constitutional court shall be elected by the parliament with two-thirds of votes for nine years (The Act CLXI, Section 66) (The Constitute Project, 2013). It removed the provision of having a special parliamentary committee where each political party had one vote to elect the President of NJO. Under new regulations, since the current regime has two-thirds majority in parliament, it can ensure the appointment of its chosen candidate (Gardos-Orosz, 2018). The Vice President is to be appointed by the President of NJO, hence giving an upper hand to the ruling FIDESZ. The current NJO president is a FIDESZ member and has close affiliation with the ruling regime, hence limiting the independence of the constitutional court (Human Rights Watch, 2013a; Bozoki, 2015, p. 18).

Through these acts, the regime packed the court increasing the number of constitutional court judges from 11 to 15, that allowed the regime to appoint all favorable judges (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). A total 12 out of 15 constitutional court judges were already recruited for a nine-year term by the ruling FIDESZ (TOK, 2018, p. 94), indicating the politicization of the court. The parliament also retains the right to remove the President of NJO and other constitutional court judges, hence the court is subjected to the regime's pressure to uphold the

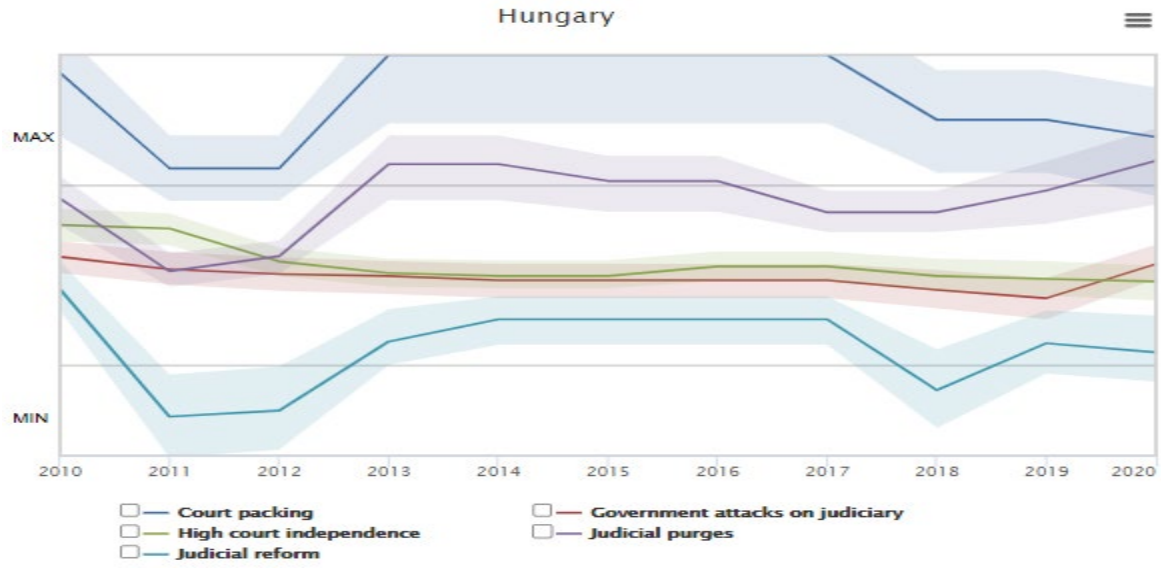
government's agenda. Additionally, the Act CLXI [Section 65-77] gave the president of NJO the power to oversee the administration of courts, appoint senior judges, temporarily transfer judges to other courts without their consent, and transfer cases from one court to another (Venice Commission, 2012; Venice Commission, 2012a). Having political control over the constitutional court, cases can be transferred for political reasons. For instance, the President of NJO has transferred several politically sensitive cases since 2012 from the Metropolitan Court of Budapest to courts in rural areas (Human Rights Watch, 2013a).

Furthermore, the Act CLXII [Section 230] lowered the general retirement age of judges from 70 to 62, forcing nearly 274 judges to retire early, including the presidents of the appeal courts (Halmai, 2017). After facing severe criticism, the regime passed a revision of this Act which insisted that the retirement age would be gradually lowered to 65 (instead of 62) for judges and prosecutors by 31 December 2022. This change did not make any difference because many of the positions, which were vacated by the initial decrease of the retirement age, were immediately filled up by other judges affiliated with the ruling party bench (Human Rights Watch, 2013a).

It is obvious that the new constitution and the subsequent acts have provided enormous power to the ruling regime to control the constitutional court, indicating the decline of the country's judicial system, which is evident in the V-Dem's "judiciary index" (see Figure 5.7.). According to the index, the incumbent has consistently attacked the judiciary (e.g., daily or weekly basis) throughout its tenure, as indicated by the score below 0 during the 2010-2020 period. The court packing (i.e., politically motivated increase of the number of judges) had been massive throughout the regime's tenure, as indicated by the score below 0 during the 2010-2020 period. Similarly, the high court's independence has been declining, as indicated by the score

falling from 1.39 in 2010 to 0.27 in 2019, meaning that the high court almost always adopts the government's position regardless of its sincere view of the law. Additionally, throughout the Orban regime, the government introduced institutional reforms to reduce the judiciary's ability to control the arbitrary power of the state authority, as indicated by the score below 0 during the 2010-2020 period.

Figure 5.7.: The Judiciary Index for Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Court packing [Whether the size of the judiciary is increased, with increasing number of judges for political reasons], (0 to 3, higher to lower).
(2) High court independence [How often the high court reflects government wishes regardless of its sincere view of the legal record?], (0 to 4, 0 = always, 1 = usually, 4 = never etc.).
(3) Government attacks on judiciary [How often the government attacks the judiciary's integrity in public?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(4) Judicial purges [How often are judges removed arbitrarily for political reasons?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) Judicial reform [Were the judiciary's formal powers altered this year in ways that affects its ability to control the arbitrary use of state authority?], (0 to 2, 0 = reduced, 1 = no change, 2 = enhanced).

Likewise, the regime's arbitrary removal of judges for political reasons was enormous in its initial years, as indicated by the score below 0 in the 2010-2012 period ahead of the 2014

election. Though such judicial purges were reduced for a while in the post-2014 period, they increased again after 2016 before the 2018 election.

Thus, it is understandable that the incumbent in Hungary changed the rules of the game to bring the country's judicial system under its control. Consequently, Hungary's judicial system has been increasingly declining.

Performance Legitimation

As Hungary had been facing a major socio-economic crisis and huge economic debts due to the global economic recession of 2008, the Orban regime since 2010 planned to reconfigure the country's social and economic structures (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2020, pp. 563-4). In a speech in 2012, Orban stated that, "instead of the Western type of welfare state that is not competitive, a work-based society was to be established by the cabinet" (Szikra, 2018, p. 5). The Orban regime wanted to transform Hungary from a "welfare" state to a "workfare" state, by rapidly undertaking socio-economic reconfigurations for fast economic growth and social development. The regime's performance in improving economic growth and social indicators is reflective in the following Table. As Table 5.3. indicates, the GDP per capita in Hungary has increased from $13,192 in 2010 to $15,820 in 2020.

Table 5.3.: Hungary's Performance in Economic and Social Indicators, 2010-2019

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
GDP Per Capita (current US$)	13,192	14,216	12,950	13,688	14,267	12,706	13,091	14,606	16,410	16,730	15,820
Net ODA Received (US$ million)	114	140	118	128	144	156	199	149	285	312	411
HDI Index Value	0.831	0.823	0.826	0.835	0.833	0.842	0.844	0.846	0.850	0.854	-

Source: Compiled by author from The World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator; United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for HDI Index Value, http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HUN;
Official Development Assistance (ODA), https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm.
Notes:
*GDP Per Capita (Current US$): [the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products].
*Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) Received in Million (Current US$): [consisting of disbursement of loans and grants by official agencies of the members of Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare].
*Human Development Index (HDI) is used to measure the average achievement in key dimensions of human development. The HDI Index value ranges from 0 to 1 (lowest to highest), which is measured based on a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

Similarly, the net official development assistance (ODA) received has almost quadrupled from $114 million in 2020 to $411 million in 2020. Apart from the economic growth, there has been significant improvement in social indicators, as the HDI Index value scores indicate. The HDI Index value was 0.823 in 2011 and reached 0.854 in 2019. Due to the improvement in the social indicators, Hungary was ranked 40th in 2019, which is a jump from its rank of 43 in 2014.

Several policies contributed to the economic growth during this period. Since 2010, the government began nationalizing private banks while also facilitating the growth of national banks. This strategy helped the regime to increase the share of national capital in the banking sector (Scheiring, 2020, p. 263). The regime also began providing direct financial subsidies to national enterprises to boost the country's economy. These financial subsidies grew 22 times to $300 million between 2011 and 2018 period (Scheiring, 2020, p. 268). In 2013, the regime introduced 'the lending for growth program' (renewed in 2019) that allowed banks to borrow money from the central bank at a 0 percent interest rate to lend money to the domestic business enterprises with a maximum 2.5 percent interest rate. This program contributed almost $6.2 billion into the economy between 2013 and 2017 (Scheiring, 2020, pp. 268-269).

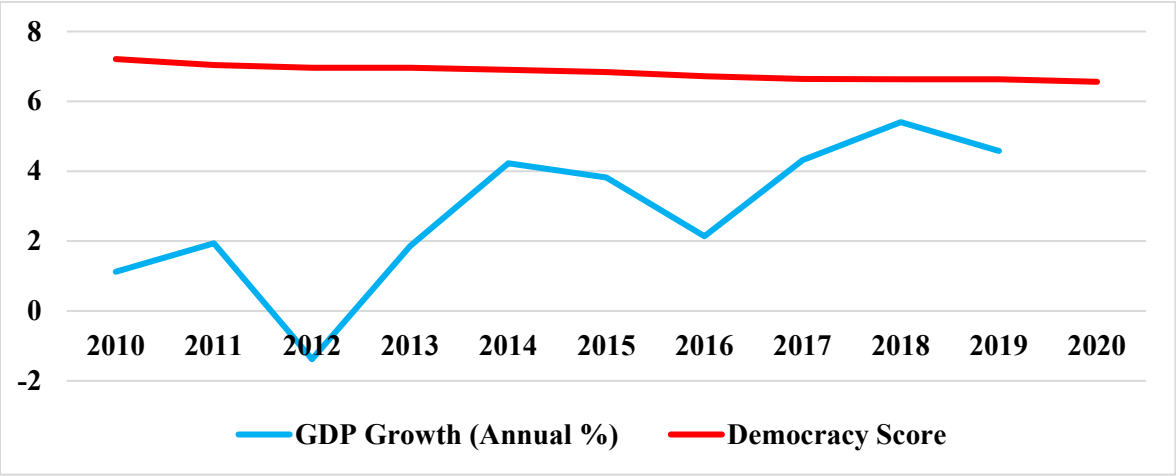
Additionally, the regime increased the government's expenditure on economic functions from 11.6 percent in 2010 to 16.4 percent in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020), reduced personal income tax and corporate tax, and provided massive subsidies to multinational corporations (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2020, p. 564). All these policies among others contributed to the economic growth of the country.

Apart from this economic growth, there has been improvement in several social indicators. According to the Human Development Reports, life expectancy and mean years of schooling have gradually increased, while GNP Per Capita has dramatically increased from $21,497 to 31,329 between 2010 and 2019 (UNDP, 2014; UNDP, 2020a). Additionally, there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of people living in low work intensity and severe material deprivation (Toth, 2019). The percentage share of individuals living below the poverty line has significantly decreased from 23.4 percent in 2010 to 12.3 in 2018 (The World Bank Data, 2021a; Daily News Hungary, 2021). By 2018, Hungary became the second highest

spender on public safety and public order among the EU countries (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2020, p. 566). However, the regime's policies for economic growth and social development have been severely criticized by scholars due to their deep negative implications for Hungary's economy and society. Scholars argued that the Orban regime has been attempting to build a "neoliberal competition state" (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2020), or an "authoritarian accumulative state" (Scheiring, 2020).

Nevertheless, the regime insists on its performance for improving economic growth and social indicators throughout its tenure, though the country's democracy has been continuously declining. Figure 5.8. shows that Hungary's GDP growth (annual %) has no straight line. The country's GDP growth was –1.4 percent in 2012 but increased to 3.8 percent in 2015. It then declined to 2.1 percent in 2016, but increased to 5.4 percent in 2018, and then declined again to 4.5 percent in 2019. Therefore, the economic growth in Hungary has not been stable. In contrast, throughout the Orban regime, Hungary's democracy has been consistently declining as the score fell from 7.21 in 2010 to 6.56 in 2020.

Figure 5.8.: GDP Growth and Democracy in Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: compiled by author from The World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator; and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Notes:
*GDP Growth (Annual %): [annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency].
*Democracy score is derived from EIU Index which measures democracy on a 0 to 10 scale (lowest to highest).

Therefore, although there has been some improvement in Hungary's social and economic conditions, the overall economic growth in the country has not been consistent. On the other hand, the country's democracy has been declining consistently since the beginning of the Orban regime.

Ideological Legitimation

The Orban regime exclusively utilized ideological legitimation which had been in practice in Hungarian politics for decades (Bozoki, 2018). Peter Wilkin, in his *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy: The Road to Serfdom* (2016), noted that the left-wing politicians in Hungary failed to deliver the promised democratic goods and are considered as a bunch of "traitors" by the underclass or unemployed people. They, hence, failed to represent the interests of the ordinary people. Therefore, populist Orban took the opportunity to unite the masses under a populist umbrella that combines ethnic and national identity (Wilkin, 2016) and creates a division between 'us' versus 'them'. On the one hand, Orban promised to restore the "real Hungary" based on "Christian and conservative values" (Wilkin, 2016, p. 54). On the other hand, Orban presented himself as "the man in the street", "a village boy", who grew up "in the countryside", played "football", and went to "law school", while he described the established socialist politicians of the MSZP-led alliance as "the elites" (TOK, 2018, pp. 92-93). Orban often portrayed the socialist elites as "the corrupt elites", and as "outcasts" who "acted against the nation's interests" and colluded with external actors to entangle Hungary in economic disaster

and huge debt crisis (Feledy, 2017). This anti-elitist and "us versus them" rhetoric dominated the Hungarian politics, that sharply risen during the 2014 election.

After the 2014 election, the Orban regime faced an anti-government protest for increasing corruption, rising authoritarianism, and moving away from the EU towards Russia (BBC, 2014). Following the months of protests, increased numbers of refugees were trying to enter in Hungary. In 2015, the government received approximately 177,000 asylum applications (Dunai, 2017), which was unimaginable for Hungary as it never experienced such a refugee flow before. Though majority of the refugees left Hungary quickly, Orban captured the issue of refugees and migrants in its populist rhetoric claiming them as foreign elements and blamed the traditional elites for their pro-immigration approach. He presented refugees as an existential threat to the country's economy, culture, and security (TOK, 2018), constructed a fear among the Hungarians, and did everything in his power to keep this fear alive (Kenes, 2020).

The refugee crisis of 2015 gave Orban the opportunity to arouse a sense of crisis, insecurity, and urgency that required strict measures which helped him consolidate his power. By constructing a sense of insecurity and emergency, Orban described refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants as "poison" and "not needed" (The Guardian, 2016). Such rhetoric dominated the public discussion and was broadcasted in the media in a routinized manner. The incumbent carried out a months-long public campaign against the refugee quota plan introduced by the European Commission that served to spark anti-migrant sentiments by circulating misleading messages associating refugees with terrorism and sexual assault (The Guardian, 2016). The regime's campaign was broadcasted continuously and consistently in the state-owned media channels to arouse public support for Orban's stance. Orban declared that "migration only brings trouble and dangers to the European people therefore it has to be stopped" (TOK, 2018, p. 99).

Following Orban, the ruling party members referred to the refugees as “thieves”, “arsonists”, “criminals”, and “the source of diseases”, indicating the circulation of populist rhetoric.

As part of the anti-immigrant campaign, Orban launched the ‘National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism’ survey to understand the public opinion on the matter. In the survey description and questionnaire, refugees and immigrants were identified as “economic immigrants” and “profiteering immigrants” who “cross the border illegally pretending to be refugees” seeking “social allowances and jobs”, hence are a “threat to Hungarians’ jobs and livelihoods” (Simonovits and Bernat, 2016), indicating a clear anti-immigrant bias. In the survey questions, Hungarians were warned of “shocking acts of ISIS”, “bloodshed in France”, the possibility of Hungary to be the “target of an act of terror” and were urged to support the defense of Hungary “against illegal bordering” (Simonovits and Bernat, 2016; TOK, 2018, p. 99).

According to Hungary’s leading sociologists, the structure and content of the survey and the self-selection method of the questionnaire increased the probability that a large-scale support would go in favor of the regime’s stance (Balogh, 2017). Similarly, a large majority of around one million respondents extended their support to Orban’s biased views that not only strengthened Orban’s populist claim of acting according to the “wishes of the people”, but also served to legitimize his strict anti-migration policies.

Apart from the survey, the ruling regime placed billboards and posters around the country carrying messages such as: “if you come to Hungary, you have to keep our laws” and “if you come to Hungary, don’t take jobs of Hungarians” (Thorpe, 2015). The regime also sent millions of booklets to households posing questions such as: “did you know that the Parisian terror attacks were committed by immigrants?” and “did you know that since the beginning of the immigration crisis, the harassment of women has risen sharply in Europe?” (Balogh, 2017). It is

important to note that Orban's populist approach aimed to construct the consent of the people in favor of his anti-immigration stance by highlighting a cultural clash between Christianity and Islam. As majority of the refugees and migrants were Muslims, Orban insisted on protecting the Christian values against the threat emanating from "Islamization" of Hungary and Europe and the Western ideology of multiculturalism (Kreko et al., 2019).

Orban further presented the migration influx in Hungary as a conspiracy of hostile foreigners and corrupt elites. This was reflected when the EU urged its members to implement the refugee quota plan. Orban declared that "the most bizarre coalition in the world history has arisen, one colluded among human smugglers and human rights activists, and (the other) Europe's top politicians to deliver here millions of migrants. Brussels must be stopped" (Lendvai, 2019). Orban then launched a countrywide "Stop Brussels" campaign highlighting that EU wanted to settle the migrants in Hungary (Kenes, 2020). Orban later added "Stop Soros" in his campaign portraying that Soros masterminded the refugee quota plan (Magyar, 2019; Kenes, 2020). This rhetoric dominated the 2018 election campaign. Two election campaign billboards are worth mentioning which were hung together around the country. While in one billboard with a picture of Orban included "For us, Hungary is the first", another billboard with a picture of four leaders of the four opposition parties and George Soros stated that these five people would "demolish the border fence" (Szabo, 2019; Kenes, 2020). The messages from the billboards were clear that Orban presented himself as the protector and the guarantor of Hungary's unity and security, while highlighted the opposition leaders as the elites who wanted to cause insecurity and instability in Hungary and allow the external forces e.g., Soros and Soros-affiliated organizations to take control of the country's power (Szabo, 2019).

Therefore, on the one hand, the identification of the refugees and immigrants as terrorists and source of all problems allowed Orban to securitize the migration issue, consolidate political power at his hand, and led him to implement extraordinary measures. Such measures included the declaration of a state of emergency, the closure of the Serbian border with fencing, the tightening security control on the border, and the use of violence against refugees (Mackintosh, 2017; TOK, 2018, p. 101). The repeated and wide media coverage on the issue significantly benefitted the regime's position. On the other hand, Orban forwarded his image as "the man in the street" working according to the "wishes of the people" for the betterment of Hungary against the corrupt elites and their conspiracies with foreign powers. Apart from highlighting that the corrupt elites would destroy the borders and adopt an open border approach if come to power, Orban labeled 'the opposition to his government's policies' as 'the opposition to the wishes of the people'. This rhetoric not only put the opposition parties in a critical situation but also helped to silence their voice against the government's stance.

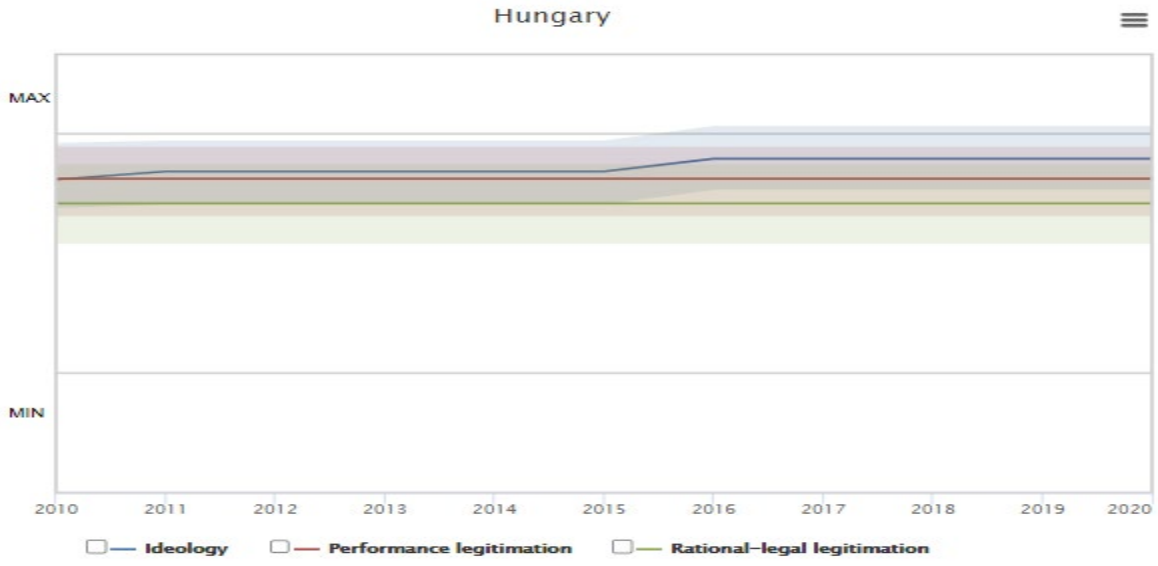
With the crisis of hegemony of the MSZP-led left-wing alliance, the opposition leaders announced their intention to cooperate with the government to prevent EU from settling "illegal immigrants" in Hungary (TOK, 2018, p. 103). Similarly, the far right Jobbik, which could only oppose FIDESZ's politics, but not its ideological direction (Bozoki, 2018), supported Orban's anti-immigration stance (TOK, 2018; Kenes, 2020). Thus, Orban's populist rhetoric for ideological legitimation worked well for the incumbent regime and significantly helped the regime gain electoral support.

This section concludes that the Orban regime used populism for ideological legitimation. The incumbent's populism centered around anti-elitism and refugees and migrants that helped the ruling regime gain electoral support and legitimize its authoritarian moves.

The Making of Legitimacy Claims

Apart from implementing the legitimation tools, the Orban regime made procedural, performance, and ideological legitimacy claims (see Figure 5.9.). V-Dem measures each of these claims on a scale of 0 to 4 (lower to higher). According to V-Dem, the Orban regime throughout its tenure has made very limited rational-legal or procedural legitimacy claims, as shown by the score 0.76. This score is consistent with Orban's speeches and statements. In his speeches to the nation between 2011 and 2018, Orban, though very rarely, mentioned legal rules and procedures during his rule (Prime Minister's Office, 2021; Visegrad Post, 2018). Some of his claims about legal and procedural legitimation includes "democratically elected", "stood up for Hungarian democracy", "free and democratic elections", "law abiding life for people", "modern democracy" etc.

Figure 5.9.: Legitimacy Claims in Hungary, 2010-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
*Rational-legal legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to legal norms and regulations to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

*Performance Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to performance (such as providing economic growth, poverty reduction, effective and non-corrupt governance, and providing security) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Ideological Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government promote a specific ideology or societal model (e.g., socialism, nationalism, religious traditionalism etc.) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

In comparison to the procedural legitimacy claims, the Orban regime throughout its tenure has made slightly more performance legitimacy claims, as indicated by the performance legitimation score 1.11. In many of his speeches to the nation, Orban has made claims about his regime's performance (e.g., "we have achieved great things", "a new Hungarian economy", "safe and dignified life", "brighter future for younger generations", "permanent security for Hungary", "successful and prosperous Hungary" etc.) (Prime Minister's Office, 2021). In a 2014 election rally, Orban insisted that historians would write about his 2010-2013 period as a "miracle" because his government "pulled the country back from the edge of bankruptcy and turned it into a growing economy within just four years" (Orban, 2014). In the speeches, he regularly emphasized that Hungary has been suffering from social and economic problems which were the doings of the previous regimes. Orban's blaming of the previous regimes indicates his anti-elitist populist rhetoric. In many instances, Orban identified the socialist elites (who ruled 8 years before Orban came to power in 2010) as "corrupt elites", "outcasts", and "acted against the nation's interests.

In contrast to procedural and performance legitimation, the Orban regime has slightly shifted its course in making ideological legitimacy claims. Between 2010 and 2015, the ruling regime has made very limited ideological legitimacy claims, as indicated by the score 0.88 during the period. This score has increased to 1.05 in 2016 that continued through 2020. These data are consistent with Orban's speeches and statements. In the initial years, Orban's speeches

regularly emphasized “we Hungarians”, “national traditions”, “the spirit of nation”, “the spirit of Hungary”, “organized based on traditions”, “Christian values” etc. (Prime Minister’s Office, 2021).

Following the refugee crisis since 2015, the Orban regime has been increasingly using the nativist claims centering on the issue of refugees and migrants in its populist rhetoric. Orban’s own words about the refugees and immigrants included “invaded Hungary”, “violated our laws”, “crush the life out of us”, “terrorism and crime”, “expose our womenfolk and daughters to danger”, “leads to disintegration of nations and states”, “don’t respect our culture, laws, or lifestyle”, “want to exchange our life for their own” etc. (Roylance and Csaky, 2018; Visegrad Post, 2018; DW, 2018). These are clear examples of nativist rhetoric against the refugees and the immigrants, which has been used by the ruling regime to make ideological legitimacy claims based on its broader right-wing populism. Orban also tied these anti-immigration claims with his anti-populist rhetoric highlighting that the opposition parties have conspired with external forces who were responsible for the migration influx in Hungary. Orban also emphasized that the opposition leaders would “demolish the border fence” if they come to power.

This section, therefore, concludes that the Orban regime has made procedural, performance, and ideological legitimacy claims. While the regime has made procedural legitimacy claims at a very small extent throughout the regime duration, it has spread performance legitimacy claims at a slightly higher rate than that of procedural. On the other hand, the regime has made very limited ideological legitimacy claims during its initial years, but such claims have slightly increased since the 2015 refugee crisis.

Summary

A series of conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. First, Hungary fully transformed into a competitive electoral authoritarian regime after the 2018 election, though it has been reflecting the characteristics of electoral authoritarianism since 2010 and more blatantly after the 2014 election. Second, under procedural legitimation, the Orban regime has made drastic changes in the country's rules of the game which have significantly affected all democratic institutions and assisted in consolidating political power and institutionalizing authoritarianism. The changed rules of the game have paved the way for manipulating elections, controlling political opponents, and manipulating the media environment. Extra-legal legal mechanisms have further been used by the incumbent party as part of its procedural control. Additionally, the changed rules of the game have provided the government with a complete control of the country's judicial system.

Third, under performance legitimation, the incumbent regime has undertaken several initiatives which brought some level of economic growth and social development in Hungary. However, the country's economic growth has not been stable and consistent as opposed to the consistent decline of democracy. Fourth, the regime has used populism as a tool of ideological legitimation targeting refugees and immigrants since the 2015 refugee crisis. Finally, the regime has made procedural, performance, and ideological claims throughout its tenure. Compared to procedural, the regime has made performance legitimacy claims at a slightly higher rate. While ideological legitimacy claims were very limited during the 2010-2015 period, the regime has significantly increased such claims after 2015 that continued through 2020.

CHAPTER VI: REGIME LEGITIMATION IN TURKEY

This chapter explores and analyzes the relevance of the three-fold regime legitimation framework in the electoral authoritarian context of Turkey. While the chapter concentrates on the past eight years of the Erdogan regime (2013-present), it briefly covers the political history of Turkey to understand contemporary dynamics of Turkish politics. The chapter is divided into five parts. The first part discusses the transformation of political regimes in Turkey, while the second part identifies the electoral authoritarian regime and its characteristics. The third part analyzes the relevance of procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies and tools. The fourth part presents evidence for the regime's making of legitimacy claims, while the final part provides a summary of the findings of this chapter.

Transformation of Political Regimes in Turkey

Following the end of WWI, Turkey was formally established as a Republic in 1923 under the leadership of the founder president Mustafa Kemal who ruled as the president of a one-party authoritarian state until his death in 1938 (Zurcher, 2017, p. 177). After democratization began in 1946, Turkish politics was dominated by the hegemonic Kemalist ideology, which was challenged by the conservative Islamists in the 1970s under the umbrella of the Islamist National Outlook Movement (MGH) (Oran and Akkoyunlu, 2019, pp. 11-18). While the MGH led to the emergence of many new political parties such as the Welfare Party (RP), Turkish politics was under the tutelage of the military, which resulted in several overt and covert military interventions (Howard, 2016). During 1980s and 1990s, several progresses towards democratization took place including the proliferation of civil society organizations and the expansion of media outlets, but democracy was never consolidated in Turkey (Sarfati, 2017, p. 398). Following the 1997 soft military coup that led to the collapse of the RP-led government,

the then mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdogan of RP, organized reformists of MGH and RP and formed the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001.

Through the parliamentary general election of 2002 in which AKP won 363 seats out of 550 (66 percent), Erdogan began his rule in 2003.[6] Erdogan has been ruling the country, first as prime minister (2003-2013) and then as president (2014-present). Under Erdogan, Turkey has transformed from an electoral democracy to an electoral authoritarian regime. Although Turkey reflected several features of electoral democracy between 2003 and 2013 (Yilmaz and Turner, 2019), Erdogan's well-designed plan to move toward authoritarianism followed a piecemeal approach. The Erdogan regime introduced limited reforms toward democracy in the first term (2003-2007), gradually abandoned liberal reforms and showed signs of authoritarianism in the second term (2007-2011), completely ended liberal reforms by 2013 and moved toward authoritarianism at the end of the third term (2011-2014) (Bakiner, 2017). Similarly, Somer (2017) argued that instead of consolidating democracy, Erdogan and AKP focused on centralizing political power and capturing the state throughout the 2007-2013 period, which paved the way to transform the Turkish polity into an electoral authoritarian regime in 2014.

Therefore, since the process of democratization began and the multi-party elections were first held in Turkey in 1946, democracy was never consolidated. Although the initial years of Erdogan reflected some characteristics of electoral democracy, Erdogan followed a piecemeal approach to gradually move toward electoral authoritarianism.

[6] Although the AKP won the 2002 election, Erdogan was unable to become the prime minister in 2002 due to a political ban. In 1996, he was convicted of stirring religious hatred that cost him his job as Istanbul's Mayor in 1998 and barred him from running for parliament. With the constitutional amendment of 2002, Erdogan's disqualification was reverted. He then ran for a special election in the Siirt province in 2003 and won and became the prime minister in 2003. Another leader of the AKP, Abdullah Gul, served as the prime minister during this brief interregnum.

Electoral Authoritarian Regime in Turkey

Through repeated electoral victories and capturing control over the key positions of the state, Erdogan emerged as the sole leader of the ruling party and the government. He then concentrated his efforts on transforming Turkey into an electoral authoritarian regime. Turkey's transition to electoral authoritarianism is reflective in the indices used in this thesis. The "electoral authoritarian index" (see Table 6.1.) shows that, while Turkey maintained a Polity score of 7 in the 2003-2010 period and even improved to a 9 in the 2011-2013 period, the country maintained an FH rating of 3 beginning in 2005. By 2014, Turkey had an FH rating of 3.5 and a Polity score of 3. As per Roessler and Howard (2009), a polity is an electoral authoritarian regime if it acquires an FH rating of 3 or above and a Polity score of 5 or below. Turkey fits this criterion in 2014 and onwards, therefore, the country has been an electoral authoritarian regime since 2014.

Table 6.1.: Regime Performance and the Quality of Democracy in Turkey, 2003-2021

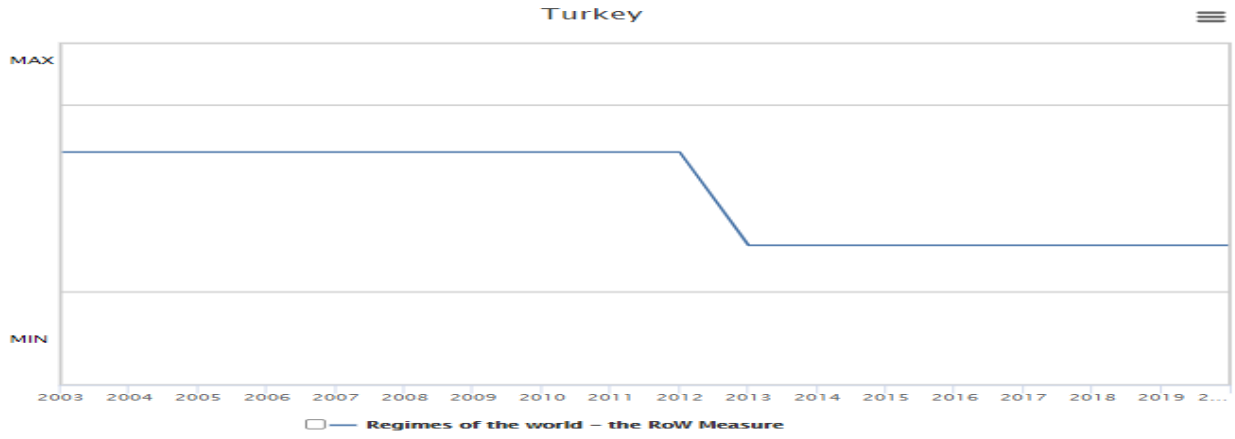
Year	FH Rating	Polity Score
2003	3.5	7
2004	3.5	7
2005	3	7
2006	3	7
2007	3	7
2008	3	7
2009	3	7
2010	3	7
2011	3	9
2012	3	9
2013	3.5	9
2014	3.5	3
2015	3.5	3
2016	3.5	−4
2017	4.5	−4
2018	5.5	−4
2019	5.5	-
2020	5.5	-

2021	5.5	-

Source: Freedom House (FH) Rating of Bangladesh is compiled from the '*Freedom in the World*' annual reports, available at https://freedomhouse.org/reports/publication-archives. FH rating ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 being most democratic and 7 means least democratic. Polity Score of Bangladesh is compiled from Polity V Dataset, available at https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html. Polity score ranges from −10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic).

Similarly, the "regimes of the world index" of V-Dem (see Figure 6.1.) shows that Turkey maintained an electoral democracy status between 2003 and 2012 with the score of 2 during the period. However, in 2013, the country stepped into an electoral authoritarianism, as indicated by the score of 1 and maintained the same status until the present time. Therefore, according to the "regimes of the world index", Turkey has been an electoral authoritarian regime since 2013. Combining the findings from both indices, this thesis identifies Turkey's electoral authoritarian era as the 2014-present period.[7]

Figure 6.1.: Electoral Authoritarianism in Turkey



[7] While the "electoral authoritarian index" shows that Turkey's electoral authoritarian era began in 2014, the "regimes of the world index" finds that the country's authoritarian era started in 2013. Both indices however show that the authoritarian era has been continuing until the present time. Although the first index does not endorse Turkey's beginning of the authoritarian era in 2013, the second index cannot disprove the country's authoritarianism in 2014 and onwards. Therefore, both indices inform that Turkey has been under electoral authoritarianism between 2014 and present. Additionally, this period (2014-present) as electoral authoritarianism has been confirmed by a series of qualitative studies. Thus, this thesis identifies the 2014-present period as the electoral authoritarian era.

Source: V-Dem. “Regimes of the World” [How can the political regime be overall be classified considering the competitiveness of access to power as well as liberal principles?], (0 = closed autocracy, 1 = electoral autocracy, 2 = electoral democracy, and 3 = liberal democracy).

However, whether Turkey became a competitive or hegemonic authoritarian regime in 2014, can be confirmed by the ruling party’s performance in the previous election. As Table 6.2. indicates, the ruling AKP won 327 out of 550 seats (59.45 percent) in the 2011 parliamentary election, which is lower than 70 percent. The FH rating of 3 or above and a Polity score of 5 or below in 2014 along with lower than 70 percent of parliamentary seats in the previous election of 2011 (Roessler and Howard, 2009) indicate that Turkey transformed into a competitive authoritarian regime in 2014.

Table 6.2.: Major Parties’ Performance in Turkey’s Parliamentary General Elections (2011, 2015, and 2018)

Party Name	2011		2015 (November)		2018	
	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)	Seat(s) Won	Total Seats (%)
AKP	327	59.45	317	57.64	-	-
CHP	135	24.55	134	24.36	-	-
MHP	53	9.64	40	7.27	-	-
HDP	-	-	59	10.73	67	11.17
AKP-MHP Alliance	-	-	-	-	344	57.33
CHP-led Alliance	-	-	-	-	189	31.5

Source: Supreme Election Council of Turkey, https://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/milletvekili-genel-secim-arsivi/2644.
Notes:
*In Turkey’s Grand National Assembly, the total number of seats has been 550 which was increased to 600 before 2018 election.
*AKP (Justice and Development Party), CHP (Republic People’s Party), MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), and HDP (People’s Democratic Party).
*AKP won 363 seats out of 550 (66 percent) in 2002 election and 341 out of 550 (62 percent) in 2007 election.
*In June 2015 election, AKP won 258 seats out of 550 (46.91 percent), whereas CHP and MHP bagged 132 and 80 seats, respectively.

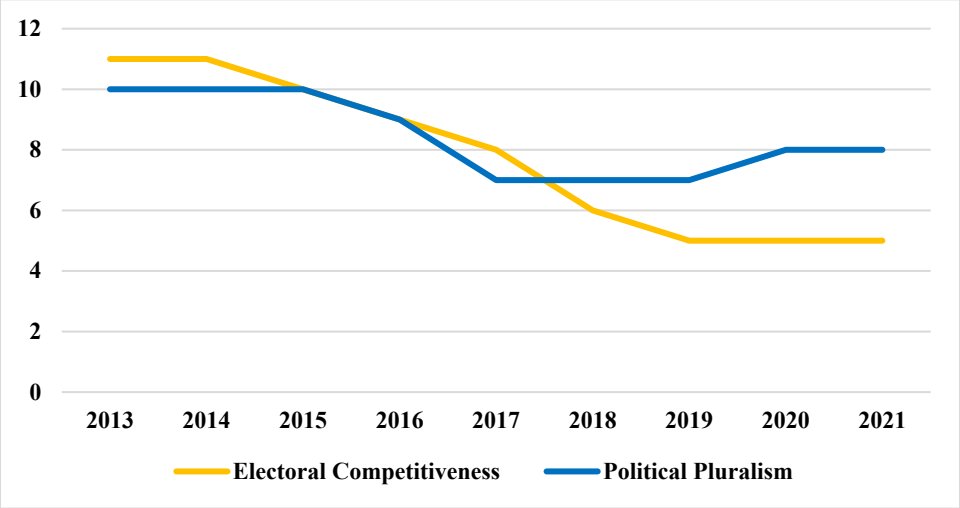
*In the 2018 election, among 344 seats of AKP-MHP-led People's Alliance, AKP single-handedly won 295 seats, while MHP won 49 seats. On the other hand, among 189 seats of CHP-led Nation Alliance, CHP single-handedly won 146 seats.
*In the 2018 election, electoral alliances were allowed for the first time since 1950s, and presidential and parliamentary elections were held simultaneously for the first time in the country's history.
*Apart from these major political parties, many other political parties participated in the parliamentary general elections but failed to win ten percent of popular votes as a parliamentary threshold. However, in the 2018 presidential-parliamentary elections, smaller parties were allowed to bypass the ten percent threshold for the first time.
*Voter turnout was high in all elections.

The country's continuation as a competitive authoritarian regime until the present time is confirmed by the party or the party-led alliance's maintenance of below 70 percent of parliamentary seats in the November 2015 and the 2018 elections. Following Roessler and Howard (2009), Turkey will remain as a competitive authoritarian regime until the next parliamentary election to be held in 2023. The identification of the Turkish polity as a competitive authoritarian regime since 2014 is consistent with a series of qualitative studies. Following the AKP regime's crackdown on the Gezi protesters in Istanbul and other cities in Summer 2013 and the subsequent authoritarian behavior and policies, Turkey has been categorized as a 'new authoritarianism' (Somer, 2016), 'competitive authoritarianism' (Ozbudun, 2015; Esen and Gumuscu, 2016; Sarfati, 2017; Castaldo, 2018), 'electoral authoritarianism' (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018; White and Herzog, 2016; The V-Dem Institute, 2020), and 'dominant or hegemonic party authoritarianism' (Musil, 2015). Others insisted that authoritarianism has been steadily deepening in Turkey (Yilmaz and Turner, 2019) and the country is heading toward full authoritarianism (Caliskan, 2018).

Under the competitive electoral authoritarian regime, both electoral competitiveness and political pluralism have been increasingly declining. As Figure 6.2. shows, the electoral process score of Turkey has drastically fallen from 11 in 2013 to only 5 (out of 12) in 2021, indicating

shrinking electoral competitiveness. This can further be confirmed by the undue advantage of the ruling party and the absence of level playing field in the past elections (OSCE, 2014a; OSCE, 2015a; OSCE, 2017; OSCE, 2018a).

Figure 6.2.: Electoral Competitiveness and Political Pluralism in Turkey, 2013-2021



Source: compiled by author from *Freedom in the World Reports* (2013-2021) of Freedom House. Electoral process is measured on a scale of 1 to 12 based on whether the elections were free and fair and whether electoral rules were impartially implemented. Political pluralism is measured on a scale of 1 to 16 based on whether diverse political groups had freedom to exercise political rights, realistic opportunity to gain power through elections, and were subject to domination by political forces.

Similarly, political pluralism has been declining since the beginning of Erdogan's second term in 2007. It further declined since 2013 falling from 10 to 7 in 2019, although it slightly increased to a score of 8 (out of 16) in 2021. This score still indicates the regime's repressive behavior against political opponents and increasing intolerance against political pluralism. The regime's repression and intolerance has been evident in the government's brutal actions against the Gezi protests' supporters and activists, those associated with the Gulen movement, members of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), members of civil society organizations, and journalists from critical media outlets (Bakiner, 2017).

In summary, this section finds that Turkey fully transformed into a competitive authoritarian regime in 2014. Additionally, while the electoral competitiveness in Turkey has drastically shrunk and continues to decline, the political pluralism has declined significantly.

Strategies of Legitimation under Electoral Authoritarianism in Turkey

This part discusses how the competitive electoral authoritarian regime in Turkey has implemented procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies. The procedural legitimation highlights manipulation of elections, controlling of political opponents, manipulation of media, and changing the rules of the game. The performance legitimation focuses on GDP per capita, net ODA, HDI Index, and GDP growth versus democracy. The ideological legitimation describes how the incumbent uses populism centering on anti-elitism and Islamism. The details are discussed below.

Procedural Legitimation

Manipulation of Elections

Although Turkey had never been a liberal democracy, elections were relatively free and fair since the 1950s with the defeated incumbents leaving office peacefully (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1817). However, under Erdogan's competitive authoritarian era, elections have been neither free nor fair. Instead, they have been severely manipulated to ensure the victory of the incumbent. Bermeo (2016) noted that Turkey under Erdogan is an "illustrative example" in which an elected executive engages in the long-term strategic manipulation of elections (p. 6). While Erdogan repeatedly declared "the ballot box serves as the source of the national will" (Akkoyunlu, 2017, p. 55), he consistently engaged in manipulative tactics to win a majority in the ballot boxes and to enforce his party's will on the nation. Between 2014 and

2018, five elections[8] were held. All elections were manipulated to secure a victory for the incumbent and the ruling party. The manipulation of elections was implemented through legal and extra-legal mechanisms.

Legal Mechanisms

While AKP's popularity has been consistently declining since its second term, as indicated by its election results (see Table 6.2.), corruption allegations against high profile AKP elites (including Erdogan's son and three cabinet ministers in 2013) further cost the ruling party's popularity (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1818). Having the 2014 presidential election ahead, the regime revived the previous legal provisions to allow three million overseas Turkish citizens to vote in elections. Though expatriates were enfranchised through the 1995 Turkish Citizenship Act and again in Article 28 of the 2009 Turkish Citizenship Law (Refworld.org, 2021; Legislationonline.org, 2009), they were never allowed to vote until the country's first direct presidential election in 2014. The regime further penetrated the bureaucracy to access personal information of the expatriates and sent them personalized letters to vote for Erdogan, which is a violation of privacy in both Turkish and European law (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016, p. 1588). About 62.54 percent of the overseas voters voted for Erdogan to be the president in the 2014 election (Anadolu Agency, 2014). Sevi et al. (2019), analyzing the expat votes in all five elections, noted that around three million overseas voters make up about five percent of the Turkish electorate in all five elections between 2014 and 2018, with a steady increase in voter turnout from 19 percent in 2014 to 50 percent in 2018 (p. 218). The authors highlighted that in

[8] The five elections were: presidential election of 2014, two parliamentary elections of 2015 (held in June and November), constitutional referendum of 2017, and presidential-parliamentary election of 2018.

each of the five elections, over 50 percent of the expatriates voted for AKP, hence it benefitted the incumbent regime (Sevi et al., 2019, p. 219).

Additionally, in the 2017 constitutional referendum, in which Erdogan won an executive presidency (with a 51 percent 'yes' against 49 percent 'no' vote margin) and transformed the country into a presidential system with weakened checks and balances, the Supreme Board of Elections (YSK) counted around 1.5 to 2.5 million unstamped votes as valid votes (OSCE, 2017). While the opposition parties claimed that the elections were rigged and demanded the results be annulled (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1818), these claims rejected by YSK. The incumbent regime officially permitted the unstamped votes as part of the electoral reforms under Law7102 that was passed in two months before the 2018 election. The Law7102 authorizes the local Ballot Box Committees (BBCs) – the lowest level of electoral body – to decide whether unstamped ballots should be counted as valid and permits provincial governors to request YSK to move or merge local polling stations for security reasons (Gurini, 2018). The law paved the way for further manipulation of elections in favor of the ruling regime. While civil servants are allowed to be the chairpersons of BBCs (note: there is plenty of pro-government civil servants who were found to campaign for AKP in elections), provincial governors were handpicked by Erdogan and AKP. There were several instances of polling station transfers during the 2018 election (OSCE, 2018a). The opposition party, HDP, claimed that many of the polling stations in the Kurdish-dominated regions were shifted from the villages where HDP had a large voting base to the AKP-dominated villages to secure vote banks (Gurini, 2018).

Extra-Legal Mechanisms

In comparison to the legal mechanisms, the extra-legal means, adopted by the Erdogan regime, turned out to be more significant and effective for manipulating elections. The

incumbent broadly applied two extra-legal means: creating a climate of fear and creating an uneven playing field. First, prior to the June 2015 election, several instances of terror attacks took place that instituted a climate of fear. Examples include bombs detonating at pro-Kurdish HDP's two provincial headquarters in May, and bomb explosions and attacks at HDP's rallies in the closing week of the election campaign. According to the Human Rights Association (IHD) report, during the March-June 2015 period, there were at least 176 attacks on HDP members and activists that killed five people and injured another 522 people (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016, p. 1587). The AKP government reacted slow to these events, hence failed to prevent further attacks, that contributed to escalating fear in the months preceding the election.

While AKP failed to establish a parliamentary majority in the June 2015 election and initially refused to relinquish power (Akkoyunlu and Oktem, 2016), Erdogan was trying to prevent the main opposition CHP from forming a coalition government (Pamuk, 2015). When the talks for a snap election in November 2015 were going on, the Erdogan regime launched a two-front war against the Islamic State (IS) and the Kurdish separatists belonging to (PKK) in the southern border regions (Peker, 2015). Turkey in the past had been unwilling to confront the IS jihadists directly for fear of retaliation (Parkinson et al., 2015). In contrast, the Turkish government had been fighting PKK for decades due to the latter's resort to terrorism. The June-November 2015 period was an opportune time for Erdogan to start a war with the IS jihadists and restart the fight with the PKK terrorists. In this regard, Yilmaz and Bashirov (2018) insist that the AKP's politics of fear along with the fear of PKK's terrorist attacks "led the Turkish voters to believe that the AKP's loss of power was the reason behind the new wave of terror" (p. 1817). Additionally, the bombing in Suruc in July and in Ankara in October, which killed over 130 and injured over 600 people, and the subsequent counterterrorism measures instituted a

fearful environment (OSCE, 2015a). After the attack in Ankara, all election campaigns were immediately suspended.

After the July 2016 failed coup that killed 251 and injured over 2,000 people (OSCE, 2018a), the incumbent declared a state of emergency which lasted for two years. Both the 2017 constitutional referendum and the 2018 presidential-parliamentary elections took place under the state of emergency. Under the emergency decrees, the incumbent enjoyed unimaginable power, which led to the mass arrests and prosecution of over 100,000 people, the dismissal of 150,000 civil servants, the closure of around 150 media outlets, and the arrests of at least 141 journalists (OSCE, 2018a). Amid such an environment of fear, two elections took place. Regarding the 2017 constitutional referendum that changed Turkey's political system from a parliamentary to a strong presidential one, OSCE (2017) reported that the referendum was conducted in an environment of unprecedented fear and restrictions against those who campaigned for a 'no' vote. Similarly, regarding the 2018 election, OSCE (2018a) reported that the ruling regime's pressure and intimidation of the opposition contestants and supporters contributed to an atmosphere of fear (p. 15).

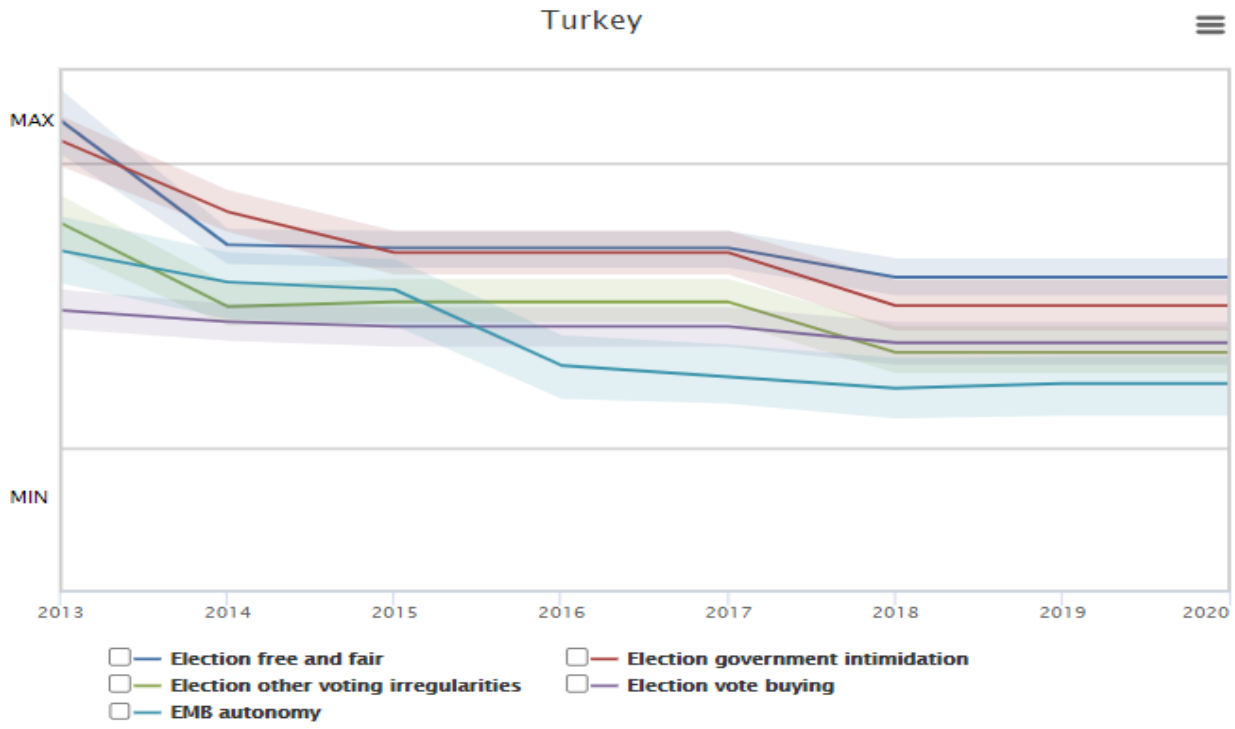
Second, while the deteriorating security environment significantly hampered the election campaigns of the opposition, the ruling regime further utilized several other mechanisms to ensure an unlevel playing field for the opposition parties and candidates. In all elections, the incumbent regime holding enormous power and having control over key positions of the state misused public administrative resources and utilized private networks to enjoy an undue advantage and create an uneven playing field for the opposition. The government forced the opposition parties to reschedule their campaign events if they coincided with the campaigns of the ruling party. The politicized Supreme Electoral Council deregistered many small political

parties following the appeal of the ruling party and rejected numerous formal complaints of the opposition parties without due consideration (OSCE, 2014a; OSCE, 2015; OSCE, 2015a; OSCE, 2017; OSCE, 2018a).

While several bureaucrats and governors campaigned for the ruling party, the incumbent overused the state's funds for campaign finance for travelling around the country, while depriving the opposition parties from the state funds (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016). Beyond the public funds, many pro-regime businessmen and charity organizations (e.g., Deniz Feneri and TURGEV, which received several lucrative deals from the government over the years) provided the incumbent with sizable donations that were used for election campaigns and vote buying (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016; Erkoc and Civan, 2017; Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018). Finally, according to the election observation reports, the incumbent regime used public and pro-government broadcasters to have disproportionate media coverage and enjoyed an undue advantage over the opposition candidates in all elections (OSCE, 2014a; OSCE, 2015; OSCE, 2015a; OSCE, 2017; OSCE, 2018a). For instance, the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) and pro-regime private media outlets such as NTV and ATV provided huge coverage and even actively campaigned for the ruling party, undermining the opposition's access to media (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016; OSCE, 2015a; OSCE, 2018a). Last but not the least, while President Erdogan openly campaigned for the ruling AKP, the election observers failed to differentiate between the state and the party, indicating further an uneven playing field for the opposition.

Therefore, the above legal and extra-legal mechanisms clearly identified that elections under the AKP's competitive electoral authoritarian regime have been severely manipulated and were not at all free and fair. Further evidence of this claim can be derived from the V-Dem's "clean election index" (see Figure 6.3.).

Figure 6.3.: Clean Election Index for Turkey, 2013-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
*Election free and fair [Taking all aspects of the pre-election period, election day, and the post-election process into account, would you consider this election to be free and fair?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*EMB autonomy [Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have the autonomy from the government to apply electoral laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Election government intimidation [In this national election, were the opposition parties/candidates/campaign workers subject to repression, intimidation, violence, or harassment by the government, the ruling party, or their agents?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
*Election other voting irregularities [In this national election, was there evidence of other (intentional) irregularities by the incumbent and/or opposition parties, and or vote fraud?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
*Election vote buying [In this national election, was there evidence of vote and/or turnout buying?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).

As per the index (see 6.3.), the electoral process of Turkey has drastically fallen during the electoral authoritarian regime, as all five indicators of the index have captured negative scores. More specifically, the negative scores of these indicators insist that all elections under the

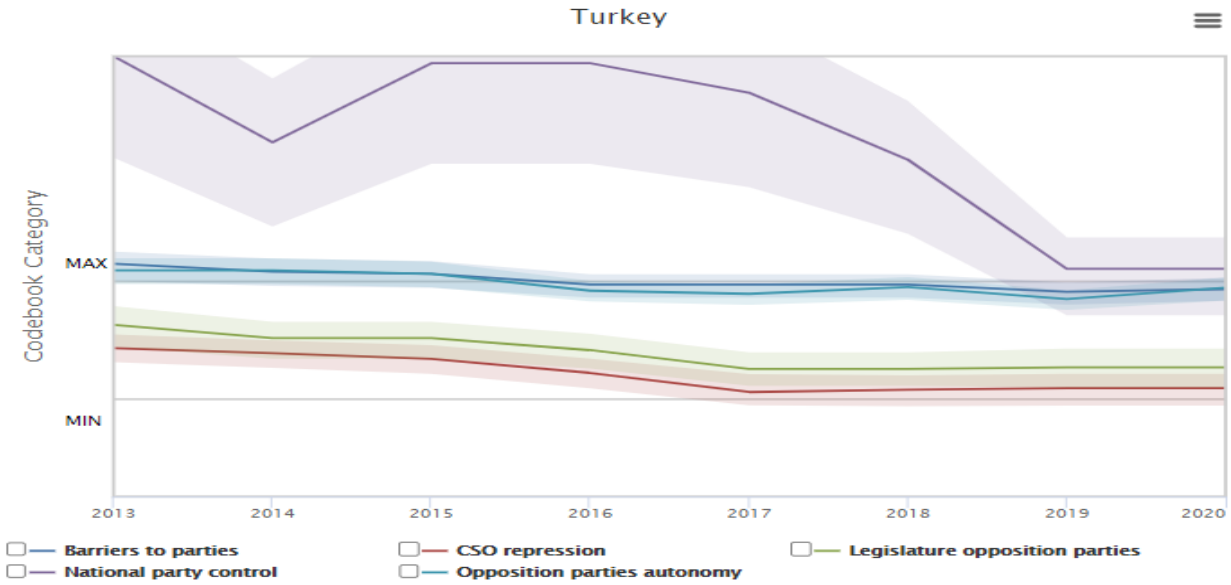
regime were fundamentally flawed and had nothing to do with the will of the people. While the election management body (namely, the Supreme Election Council) has been completely controlled by the incumbent regime, the repression and intimidation by the government or its agents during the election periods were extremely high. Similarly, there has been, at an extreme scale, systematic, widespread, and nationwide vote buying and electoral irregularities throughout the regime's tenure.

In short, this section finds that all elections under Turkey's competitive electoral authoritarian regime are severely manipulated and are not at all free and fair. The manipulation of elections has been implemented by applying legal and extra-legal mechanisms. Legal mechanisms included reviving the previous legal provisions to allow expat voters who mostly voted for Erdogan and the ruling AKP, as well as passing a law to shift polling stations. Informal mechanisms incorporated creating a climate of fear and creating an uneven playing field using public and private resources and media coverage.

Controlling Political Opposition

The competitive electoral authoritarian regime in Turkey has controlled the political opposition and all dissenting voices, restricting the space for political pluralism and participation. This is evident in the V-Dem's "freedom of association index" for Turkey (see Figure 6.4. below). As per the index, the regime has significantly increased the barriers for forming and running a political party, as indicated by the score falling from 1.4 in 2013 to 0.77 in 2020. The autonomy of the opposition parties has declined, while some opposition parties are co-opted by the incumbent, as indicated by the score of 1.23 in 2020. Similarly, the opposition parties cannot exercise their oversight and investigatory functions against the wishes of the government, as shown by the score below 1 throughout the regime's tenure.

Figure 6.4.: Freedom of Association Index for Turkey, 2013-2020



Source: V-Dem.
(1) Barriers to parties [How restrictive are the barriers to forming a party?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(2) Legislature opposition parties [Are opposition parties (those not in the ruling party or coalition) able to exercise oversight and investigatory functions against the wishes of the governing party or coalition?] (0 to 2, lower to higher).
(3) Opposition parties' autonomy [Are opposition parties independent and autonomous of the ruling regime?] (0 to 4, lower to higher).
(4) CSO repression [Does the government attempt to repress civil society organizations?] (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) National party control [How unified is party control of the national government?] (0 = unified coalition control, 1 = divided party control, 2 = unified single party control).

Apart from the opposition parties, the incumbent regime, at an unprecedented scale, actively and violently, has repressed civil society organizations (CSO), as revealed by the score consistently remaining below 0 throughout its tenure (see Figure 6.4.). In contrast, since 2003, AKP unilaterally controlled the executive and the legislative branches of the national government through 2013, as indicated by the score beyond 2 in 2013. Though the score fell below 2 in 2014, as the executive power was divided between the president and the prime minister, AKP soon took control over the national government and maintained until the 2018

election. After the 2018 election, a multi-party coalition (e.g., AKP-MHP alliance) has been controlling the national government, as shown by the score close to 0. The following discussion contextualizes these data to develop a better understanding of how the incumbent regime in Turkey controlled the political opposition.

The regime broadly used repression and co-optation to control its political opposition. The regime's massive repressive actions resulted in arrests, imprisonment, torture, killing, dismissal, closing private enterprises etc. According to the Human Rights Association (IHD), between 2013 and 2019, over 490,000 people were imprisoned, while over 130,000 were prosecuted, over 90,000 were facing civil lawsuits, and over 4,000 were inhumanly tortured and ill-treated in prisons for their political voices and stance (IHD, 2020). A huge number of those were labelled as 'terrorists' and tortured accordingly (p. 11). Due to the regime's massive repressive tools, it has become extremely difficult for conventional political opposition actors to exercise their political rights. The regime's repressive behavior and the crisis of political participation of the traditional political actors became more obvious with the emergence of the Gezi Park protests in 2013. According to Sarfati (2015), the rise of the Gezi Park protests highlighted the existence of a crisis of the conventional channels of political participation, such as formal political parties (p. 28). The protest began as a non-violent form of resistance by a group of environmentalists objecting the government's decision to raze the park and build in it a giant replica of an Ottoman era military barrack with a shopping mall inside. The protesters also maintained a non-political appearance by refusing to be co-opted by conventional political parties such as the prevention of CHP's entrance in the park with party banners. However, the regime's harsh response and crackdown on the protesters left at least eight people dead and

hundreds injured and arrested (Amnesty International, 2013; Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1818). It reflected the regime's intolerance against any sort of resistance and peaceful assembly.

Additionally, in 2014, the Erdogan regime revived the defamation provision, as outlined in Article 299 of Turkey's penal code, which enforces punitive actions against those who insult the president. According to Human Rights Watch (2018a), the incumbent has filed criminal charges against at least seventy-six of CHP and over a dozen of HDP parliament members for insulting the president. Furthermore, the incumbent passed a law in 2016 that stripped away the parliamentary immunities of the members of parliament if they are facing legal investigations. The ruling regime utilized this legal change to marginalize and harass the opposition parliamentarians, along with the public. According to IDH (2020), by 2019, over 36,000 people were brought under trial for insulting the president.

Moreover, the failed coup attempt of 2016 further provided Erdogan with an opportunity not only to consolidate enormous power at hand, but also to shut all kinds of dissent (Esen and Gumuscu, 2017). The incumbent reacted to the coup by imposing a state of emergency that lasted for two years. With the emergency decrees, the incumbent suspended the rule of law and the European Convention of Human Rights. The government also created the legal framework for comprehensive purges for all kinds of dissents, including those with minimal or no connection with the Gulen movement[9] (as Gulenist officers were involved in the coup) (Akkoyunlu and Oktem, 2016; Sarfati, 2017). The emergency decrees led to the deaths and

[9] The Gulen movement is known is Turkey as Hizmet or "the service". The movement is mainly known for its schools which are ubiquitous in Turkey, while also spread in countries like Pakistan and the United States. It was widely believed that the police, the judiciary, and the administration in Turkey were dominated by the Gulen movement supporters. However, the Gulen movement is named after Fethullah Gulen, who is a Muslim religious preacher of Sunni Islam. He was born and raised in Turkey, and currently lives in Pennsylvania. Erdogan and the Gulenists had been in alliance until the AKP's second term (2007-2011). Due to growing diverging perspectives and clashes on several domestic and international issues, the fallout between Erdogan and the Gulenists began since the AKP's third term (2011-2014). For details on the Gulen Movement and the Erdogan-Gulen Fallout, see Cornell (2014) and Mathews (2016).

injuries of hundreds and the arbitrary dismissal, suspension, arrest, and imprisonment of a vast number of public servants including judges, members of the armed forces, police, teachers, doctors, academics, and journalists (Castaldo, 2018, p. 481; Human Rights Watch, 2020). These massive purges paved the way for the incumbent to rig the 2017 constitutional referendum as no members of judiciary or independent media remained to check the implementation of electoral rules and regulations (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018).

The regime's first target of the emergency decrees was the pro-Kurdish HDP. In 2015, one co-chairperson of the HDP had declared, "Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, you will never be able to be the head of the nation as long as the HDP exists and as long as the HDP people are on this soil" (Daily News, 2015). Therefore, within a year of the emergency decrees, over two thousand members and local administrators including both chairpersons, over eighty mayors, and several members of parliament of HDP were arrested and many pro-Kurdish media outlets were closed (Caliskan, 2018, p. 22; Yeginsu and Timur, 2016). By marginalizing the third largest party, HDP, the incumbent sought to capture the nationalist votes in the 2018 election in which AKP and the ultranationalist MHP would participate as an alliance (Tol, 2015). Beside HDP, the regime also repressed the largest and the oldest opposition party CHP and its members through legal charges and harassment. In 2017, a CHP member of parliament was sentenced to twenty-five years of imprisonment for allegedly leaking state secrets to journalists (Freedom House, 2018).

Similarly, a vast number of civil society groups, charity organizations, universities, schools, dormitories, foundations, and unions, associated with the Hizmet movement, were either closed or confiscated by the state while thousands of their members were fired and prosecuted on terrorism charges (Sarfati, 2017, pp. 401-2). According to one estimate, more than US$10

million worth of private companies were seized by the government during the emergency decrees (Castaldo, 2018, p. 481). Additionally, several Kurdish civil society organizations and their members were criminalized. According to Sarfati (2017), "over 1300 academics, who signed a petition calling for cessation of hostilities between the government and the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and condemning the state of misconduct against Kurdish civilians, have been facing ongoing investigations, probations, firings, and even detentions" (p. 401).

Beyond outright repression, the incumbent regime co-opted several members and groups of the political opposition. There were instances of some young popular leaders belonging to the center-right Democrat Party and the MHP who were co-opted by bringing them into AKP and providing powerful positions or persuading them not to contest (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1818). Several NGOs or civil society organizations were co-opted. Many of these organizations became heavily dependent on public funds and developed a rent-seeking relationship with the AKP (Sarfati, 2017, p. 404). On the other hand, the incumbent regime monopolized access to state resources and thereby developed a strong network of neopatrimonialism combining business corporations and charity organizations by providing them lucrative development projects (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016; Yimlaz and Bashirov, 2018). There were instances of the government making pro-regime businesspeople to provide donations to financially weak NGOs to bring them in favor of the AKP. For instance, the Sivil Dayanisma Platformu (Civil Solidarity Platform), a network of several small NGOs, whose costs were covered by the pro-AKP business associations, became eventually co-opted by the AKP, and was found to campaign in elections for the AKP (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016, p. 1590).

Similarly, with the financial benefits and the government's patronization, a series of Islamic educational civil society organizations around the Imam Hatip schools, such as Ensar

Foundation, Association of Imam Hatip Members, and Turkey Imam Hatip Members Foundation were co-opted by the government (Sarfati, 2017, p. 404; Cevik, 2019). It is an open secret that a huge number of Imam-Hatip graduates are within the top positions in the incumbent government, including President Erdogan, who has appointed a wave of more graduates in the high positions of the ministries of education, justice, and interior (Ozgur, 2012, p. 3). Notably, the Erdogan regime expanded the budget of religious education by 68 percent in 2018, and the number of Imam-Hatip schools exceeded 5,000 in the same year (van Bruinessen, 2018; Ahvalnews, 2019). Additionally, at least 142 Islamic civil society organizations formed the National Will Platform and committed to uphold the regime's political ideology (Sarfati, 2017, p. 405) which is another example of the government's co-optation of civil society organizations.

The above discussion highlights that the incumbent regime used massive repressive and largescale co-optation tactics to control its political opponents. The repressive tools were applied through legal instruments or using law enforcement agencies which resulted in mass arrests, dismissals, detainments, killings, torture, and seizure of private enterprises. In contrast, the regime co-opted several opposition political leaders and civil society organizations through delivering funds, offering lucrative posts, and providing patronage.

Manipulation of the Media

Following the Gezi Park protests in 2013, the Erdogan regime became intolerant of democratic criticism. The incumbent began and continued to severely manipulate and restrict freedom of media and expression. The regime's manipulation of the media environment is broadly done through control by ownership, control by advertising and sanctions, and arbitrary control by legal provisions and law enforcement agencies. First, several studies along with the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) confirmed that an overwhelming 90 percent of the mainstream

media in Turkey is under the control of the AKP-led government, more precisely President Erdogan (Coskun, 2020; Yanatma, 2021; RSF, 2021a). Four large pro-regime conglomerates (e.g., Demiroren group, Kalyon Group, Ciner group, and Dogan Group), has been dominating the Turkish media industry, though they mainly operate nonmedia businesses (Yanatma, 2021, pp. 4-5). However, the Dogan Group has recently merged with the Demirorer Group because the Dogan Group was charged for an independent analysis and had to pay US$1 billion in tax fines (Esen and Gumuscu, 2018). The group finally sold all its outlets in 2018 to the pro-government Demiroren conglomerate (The New York Times, 2018).

These conglomerates are involved in sectors such as energy, mining, construction, and tourism, and seek to procure development projects from the government. The government delivers attractive projects to these conglomerates based on a patron-client business relationship in exchange for their loyalty and assurance of pro-government coverage (Tunc, 2015). Noncompliance with the government's demands leads to bankruptcy as it happened in the cases of Dogan group, Koc holdings, and Boydak holdings (Esen and Gumuscu, 2018). Similarly, credits from state banks play a big role in keeping the conglomerates and their media outlets in line while also inducing media ownership changes. For instance, when the center-left Sabah-ATV was sold to the Calik Holdings, in which Erdogan's son-in-law was the CEO, the company immediately received over $750 million credits from two state banks (Freedom House, 2013a). Afterwards, the center-left Sabah-ATV rapidly turned to pro-AKP. These instances of ownership structure indicate that the regime has been applying conglomerate pressure on the media outlets to manipulate the media environment, restricting freedom of expression.

Second, apart from the control of ownership, the incumbent regime has established a government-controlled advertising regime to manipulate the media. Throughout the past decade,

the regime attempted to control the media outlets by conditioning the distribution of official announcements and advertisements by the state-owned enterprises and pro-regime private companies. Due to the AKP's longstanding rule (2002-present), the state has now emerged as the largest advertiser that provides huge financing to the captured media while punishing the critical media (Yanatma, 2021). The survival of several media outlets is dependent on the advertising revenues from the public and the private sources. The public advertising is controlled by the state-run Press Bulletin Authority (BIK) which follows a simple rule: the more pro-government the media outlets are, the more advertisements they receive (Coskun, 2020; Yanatma, 2021). The private advertising is controlled by a group of big companies in which the Turkey Wealth Fund (TWF) is a shareholder (Yanatma, 2021). President Erdogan is the chair of TWF, hence, in one sense, he co-opted the private advertising, and can easily influence the advertising distribution from private companies to punish the critical media.

Additionally, through the 2007 constitutional amendment, the government established control over the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK), responsible for regulating radio and television broadcasts (Coskun, 2013). The RTUK controls the authority to sanction[10] meaning that it can impose broadcast bans or heavy fines to broadcasters for reasons only vaguely defined in law. Between 2011 and 2018, the politicized RTUK imposed more than 16,000 bans on the media and fined over US$45 million (Coskun, 2020, p. 646), significantly restricting journalistic activities. These advertising and sanction regime along with the ownership structure not only prevent citizens from receiving reliable and actual information, but also force the media outlets to publish bias and distorted information. In a recent survey of Center for

[10] The meaning of 'sanction' in this context is the authority to impose a penalty or to inflict punishment in case of any violation of the legislation.

American Progress (CAP) conducted in Turkey, a remarkable 70 percent of respondents opined that the media "presents biased and untrustworthy information", while a majority of the respondents (56 percent) insisted that the press "is not able to speak freely and is more controlled by the government" (O'Donohue et al., 2020).

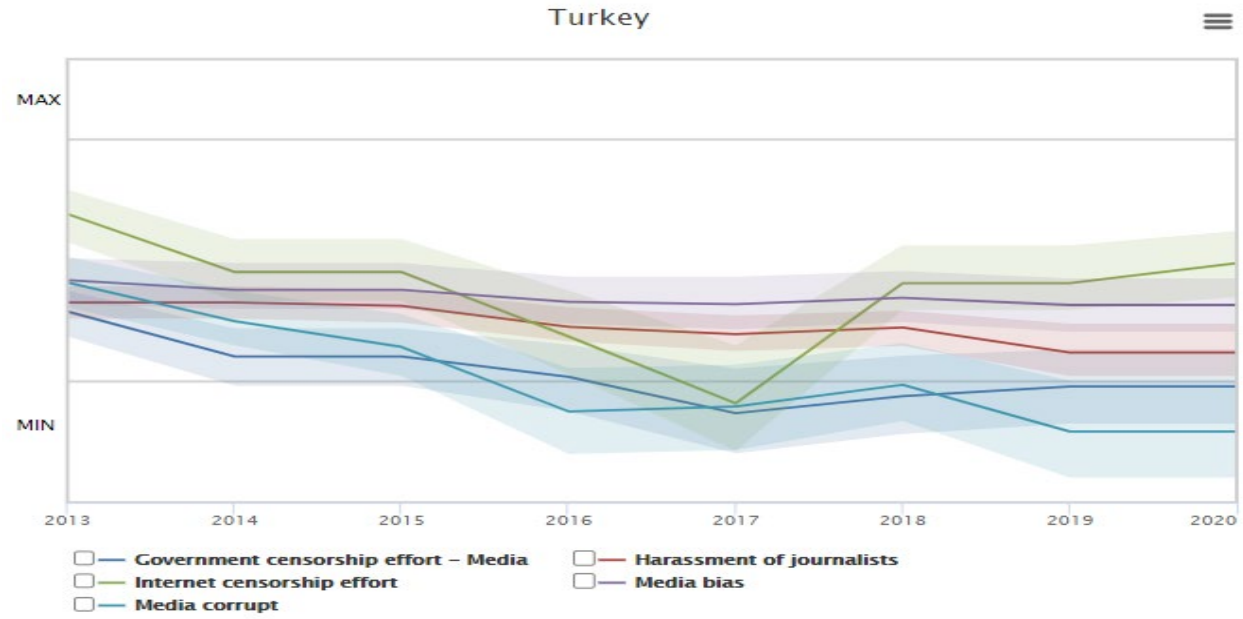
Third, the regime further manipulates the freedom of media and expression by several legal provisions and the arbitrary use of law enforcement agencies. Of the journalists covering the Gezi protests, over four hundred were either fired or forced to resign (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016, p. 1591). After the 2016 failed coup, at least 150 media outlets (mostly left-wing and pro-Kurdish), and most of the media enterprises associated with the Gulen movement were closed, while hundreds of journalists were also arrested during the state of emergency (Castaldo, 2018). The regime mostly used Article 285 and 288 of the Turkish Penal Code stipulating the violation of secrecy of an ongoing trial and Article 301 for publicly degrading the Turkish nation, parliament, government, and judiciary (Venice Commission, 2015) to arrest and imprison journalists, editors, and media activists (Coskun, 2020). Furthermore, the law enforcement agencies used a new anti-terror law to arrests journalists for allegedly disseminating statements and propaganda by terrorist groups (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016, p. 1591). In 2019 alone, around two hundred people including journalists, editors, and reporters were imprisoned (IHD, 2020, p. 18). According to the Reporters Without Borders, Turkey is now "the world's biggest jailer of professional journalists" (RSF, 2021a).

Besides the arrests and imprisonments, there were numerous instances of blocking websites, opening lawsuits against journalists, raiding offices of media outlets, and unprecedented level of censorship in print and electronic media, indicating severe violation of media freedom and restriction in journalistic activities. For instance, between 2013 and 2018, the

circulation of domestic newspapers has fallen almost 44 percent (O'Donohue et al., 2020). No wonder why the World Press Freedom Index ranked Turkey 157 out of 180 countries in 2019, which is a sharp jump from 149 in 2015 (RSF, 2021a). Beyond print and electronic media, the regime used the defamation provision including the insult of the president, as per the Article 299 in Turkey's Penal Code, to restrict freedom of expression especially in the social media platforms. In 2017 alone, over six thousand were prosecuted including over two thousand convicted for insulting the president (Human Rights Watch, 2018a). Many of those were minors between the ages of 12 and 15. In terms of freedom of internet and digital media, Freedom House identified Turkey as one of the lowest of 65 world states (Shahbaz and Funk, 2019, p. 25).

The V-Dem's "freedom of expression index" (see Figure 6.5.) provides further evidence for the regime's repressive behavior to create a manipulated media environment in Turkey. As per the index, the government's censorship effort in media and online environments and harassment of journalists have been at an unprecedented level during the 2013-2020 period, as indicated by the consistent negative scores of the indicators throughout the period. Similarly, at the same period, there has been a drastic rise in media bias and corrupt media in Turkey, as shown by the persistent negative scores. Therefore, the index suggests that the freedom of expression in Turkey has been extremely low under the incumbent regime.

Figure 6.5.: Freedom of Expression Index for Turkey, 2013-2020



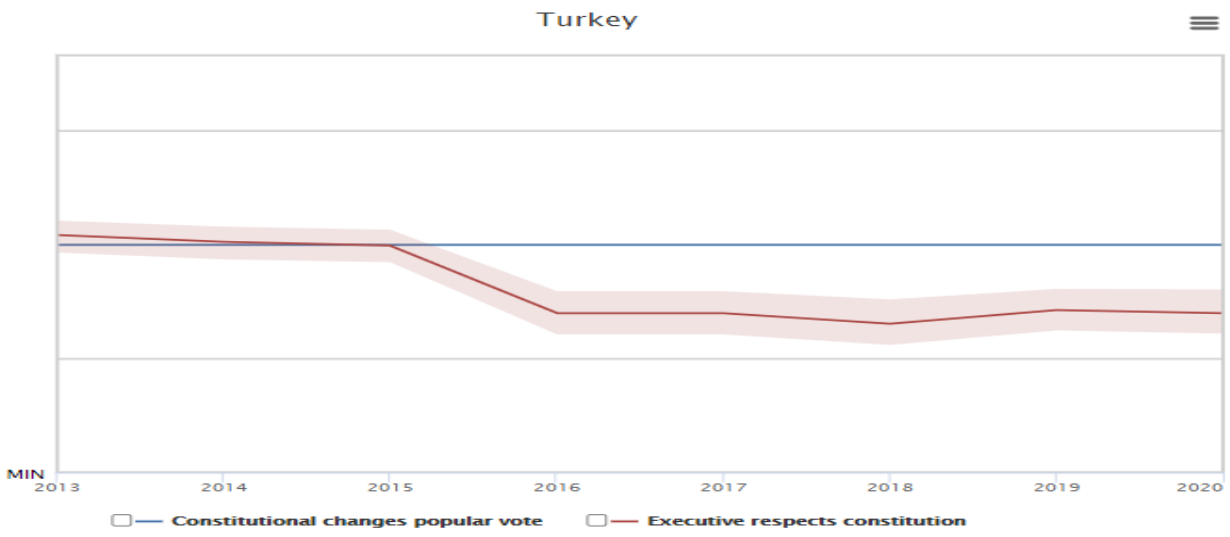
Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Government censorship effort – media [Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the print or broadcast media?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(2) Internet censorship effort [Does the government attempt to censor information (text, audio, or visuals) on the internet?], (0 to 3, higher to lower).
(3) Harassment of journalists [Are individual journalists harassed (threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed) by government or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(4) Media bias [Is there media bias against opposition parties or candidates?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) Media corrupt [Do journalists, publishers, or broadcasters accept payments in exchange for altering news coverage?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).

In short, this section finds that the ruling regime has been manipulating the media environment by ownership control, advertising as well as sanction regime, and use of legal provisions and law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the freedom of media and expression in Turkey have been significantly low throughout the regime's tenure.

Changing the Rules of the Game

One of the major tools of the Erdogan regime to transform Turkey into authoritarianism has been changing the rules of the game. The 1982 constitution of Turkey, which was made during the military rule, was quite undemocratic. Rather than making the constitution democratic, Erdogan drastically changed the constitutional rules through over a dozen amendments for institutionalizing authoritarianism. The V-Dem's "constitutional index" (see Figure 6.6.) bears testimony for this statement. As per the index and the negative scores, the executive in Turkey does not at all respect the constitution and has violated the constitutional rules whenever he wanted without any legal consequences. With the score of 1 in 'constitutional changes popular vote', the index indicates that popular votes in Turkey are required for the enforcement of constitutional changes depending on the nature of the change, which also benefitted the incumbent. The 2017 constitutional referendum is an example in this regard that helped the regime to transform the Turkish polity from a parliamentary system to a strong presidential one.

Figure 6.6.: The Constitution Index for Turkey, 2013-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:

(1) Constitutional changes popular vote [Is a popular or direct vote required in order for a constitutional change to be legally binding?], (0 to 2, 0 = no, 1 = depends on the content of the change, 2 = yes).
(2) Executive respects constitution [Do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government, and cabinet ministers) respect the constitution?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

A discussion of three constitutional amendments (2007, 2010, and 2017) helps understand how changing the rules of the game allowed the authoritarian incumbent to legitimize his presidential authoritarianism. It is important to note that although the amendments of 2007 and 2010 were made prior to the regime's transformation into competitive authoritarianism, they are relevant to understand later developments, hence are discussed here.

The major changes in the 2007 constitutional amendments targeted the presidency. As opposed to the 'seven-year one term limit' of the president in the 1982 constitution, the amendment lowered the term limit to 'five years' but extended the limit to 'two terms' (The Constitute Project, 2011; The Constitute Project, 2019). Additionally, according to the 1982 constitution, the procedures to elect a president included a two-thirds majority in the parliament in the first two rounds and a simple majority in the second two rounds. In contrast, the new amendment fixed a direct election of the president in the first two rounds by popular votes[11] (The Constitute Project, 2011; The Constitute Project, 2019). These changes significantly benefited Erdogan who became president in 2014 through the country's first direct presidential election and is now serving his second term until 2023.

On the other hand, the 2010 constitutional amendment that amended at least 26 articles largely affected the structure of the judiciary and courts extending the parliamentary control over the country's judicial system while reducing checks and balances on the executive (Yegen, 2017,

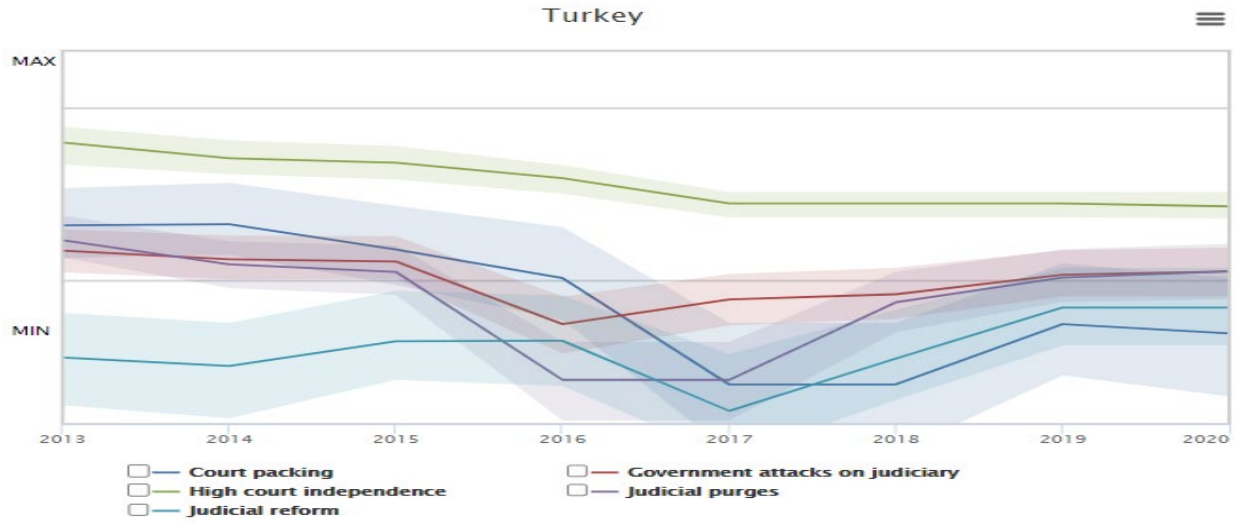
[11] It is important to note that due to the obstruction from the opposition and the judiciary, the AKP was unable to elect a president through parliament. The AKP therefore used its two-third majority in parliament to change the constitution to institute the popular votes to elect the president.

p. 80). Under the amendment, the number of judges in the Constitutional Court was increased from 'eleven' to 'seventeen', of which, fourteen will be appointed by the president and the rest three by the parliament (The Constitute Project, 2011; The Constitute Project, 2019; Cagaptay, 2010). Likewise, the 2010 amendment has increased the number of High Council Judges and Prosecutors from 'twelve' to 'thirty-four', of which, four will be appointed by the president (The Constitute Project, 2011; The Constitute Project, 2019). Besides, twelve other members will be appointed by the Minister of Justice, his undersecretary, the government-controlled Academy of Justice, and the chief administrator of the Council, which gave Erdogan and AKP enormous power and opportunity to fill the Council with a politicized bench and undermine the authority of the Council (Cagaptay, 2010). These changes authorized the incumbent to reorganize the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors to bring them under the government's control (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1816; Yegen, 2017, 80). Additionally, the amendment also reduced the power of the military by restricting its privilege and curtailing the authority of the military courts to interfere in social affairs. The amendment therefore not only expanded the executive's control over the judicial system but also reduced the check on the executive's power from the judiciary and the military.[12]

Further evidence on the government's control over the judiciary can be derived from the V-Dem's "judiciary index" (see Figure 6.7.).

[12] While reducing the role of the military in the 2010 amendment was a democratic move that gave the AKP support of some liberal-democratic groups, the amendment however paved the way for Erdogan to become an authoritarian executive.

Figure 6.7.: The Judiciary Index for Turkey, 2013-2020



Source: V-Dem.
Note:
(1) Court packing [Whether the size of the judiciary is increased, with increasing number of judges for political reasons], (0 to 3, higher to lower).
(2) High court independence [How often the high court reflects government wishes regardless of its sincere view of the legal record?], (0 to 4, 0 = always, 1 = usually, 4 = never etc.).
(3) Government attacks on judiciary [How often the government attacks the judiciary's integrity in public?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(4) Judicial purges [How often are judges removed arbitrarily for political reasons?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).
(5) Judicial reform [Were the judiciary's formal powers altered this year in ways that affects its ability to control the arbitrary use of state authority?], (0 to 2, 0 = reduced, 1 = no change, 2 = enhanced).

The index measures the government's attacks on the judiciary on a scale of 0 to 4, in which 0 means the highest number of attacks, while 4 means the attacks were lowest. As per the index and the negative scores, the government's attacks on the judiciary on a daily or weekly basis have reached an unprecedented level during the 2014-2020 period (see Figure 6.7.). Similarly, the high court has lost its remaining independence since 2016 as shown by the score close to 0. This means that the court has always been making decisions reflecting the government's wishes regardless of what is in the law. Likewise, there had been a massive

politically motivated increase in the number of judges in the judiciary and massive arbitrary purges of judges, along with the alteration of the judiciary's powers to prevent its ability to check the power of the executive. This can be seen in the negative scores in these indicators. The arbitrary purges of around four thousand judges with the emergency decrees and their replacement with pro-regime judges bear testimony to the judicial purges and court packing.

Erdogan and the AKP government made further amendments to the Turkish constitution in 2017. The 2017 amendment included eighteen changes affecting seventy-two articles of the constitution that converted the parliamentary system into a presidential one (Caliskan, 2018, p. 22). The creation of an executive presidency (Article 104) is the most significant change in the history of Turkey since the 1950s. Under the new constitution, the president is both the head of the state and the executive with no separate office for the prime minister. The president is directly elected for five years by a majority vote in popular elections, can serve two terms with a possibility for a third term[13], and has the authority to appoint and dismiss any ministers or deputies without parliamentary oversight with several other additional powers (Esen and Gumuscu, 2017a). The 2017 constitution abolished the post of the Prime Minister, reduced the parliamentary oversight over the executive, including not allowing members of the parliament to question the President (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Additionally, the new constitution allowed the president to retain direct affiliation with his party, set the state budget, and maintain broader authority over high council judges and prosecutors (Bora, 2017). While the constitution does not authorize the parliament to place a no-confidence vote against the president, the president with

[13] Article 116 of the 2017 constitution stipulated that "Where the renewal of the elections (of the President) is decided by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey during the second term of the President of the Republic, he/she may run for the presidency once more" (The Constitute Project, 2019). With the ruling party's majority in the Assembly and the executive's control of the party and parliament, this provision opened the possibility for a third term for the President (Esen and Gumuscu, 2017a).

his control over the parliament can call for an election to dissolve and reinstate the parliament at his will[14] (Bora, 2017). The nature of these changes leaves no doubt that Erdogan has formalized a presidential authoritarian regime that keeps all sources of power in his hands.

In short, this section finds that with no respect for the constitution, Erdogan changed the rules of the game to formalize a presidential authoritarian regime in Turkey. The constitutional amendments of 2007, 2010, and 2017 served the regime's purpose of winning legal legitimacy for establishing Erdogan's authoritarian rule. While the incumbent regime expanded the presidential term limit and set presidential elections to be determined by direct popular votes through the 2007 amendment, it drastically reduced judicial checks and balances on the executive authority through the 2010 amendment making the judiciary subservient to the government. Erdogan used the benefits of the 2007 amendment to be elected as president by direct election in 2014. With no virtual institution left to check the arbitrary authority of the government, the regime used the 2017 constitutional referendum to change the constitution to move toward a presidential authoritarian system.

Performance Legitimation

The performance of Erdogan's competitive authoritarian regime in economic growth and social development provides a complex picture. The government performance in improving social indicators remained consistent within the past decade. Turkey witnessed an HDI index value increase from 0.785 in 2013 to 0.820 in 2020 (UNDP, 2020b) (see Table 6.3.), improving

[14] Article 110 and Article 111 of the previous constitution authorized the Grand National Assembly to place no-confidence votes against the members of the Council of Ministers of the General Secretariat of the President. The 2017 amendment, while creating an executive presidency, repealed both articles thereby the parliament is not authorized to place a no-confidence vote against the president. However, in case of criminal liability of the president, Article 105 of the current constitution authorizes the parliament to initiate a parliamentary investigation through a motion with an "absolute majority" of the total number of members of the Assembly. Only with a three-fifths majority, such an investigation can be opened. With the AKP's majority in the parliament, a no-confidence vote in favor of opening such a parliamentary investigation against the president has therefore become virtually impossible.

the country's rank from 62 to 54 during the same period. The United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2020 Human Development Report categorized Turkey in the "very high human development" category due to its over 40 percent improvement in human development in the past 29 years (UNDP, 2020c). In contrast, the economic growth under the competitive authoritarian regime has witnessed a sharp decline, as the GDP per capita has fallen from US$12,615 in 2013 to US$8,538 in 2020, while the net ODA received improved in the 2013-2016 period but fell from US$3.15 billion in 2017 to US$0.82 in 2019 (see Table 6.3.).

Table 6.3.: Turkey's Performance in Economic and Social Indicators, 2013-2020

Year	***2013***	***2014***	***2015***	***2016***	***2017***	***2018***	***2019***	***2020***
GDP Per Capita (current US$)	12,615	12,158	11,006	10,895	10,590	9,453	9,126	8,538
Net ODA Received (Current US$ Billion)	2.85	3.45	2.14	3.61	3.15	1.19	0.82	-
HDI Index Value	0.785	0.796	0.801	0.808	0.814	0.817	0.820	0.820

Source: Compiled by author from The World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator; United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for HDI Index Value, http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HUN;
Notes:
*GDP Per Capita (Current US$): [the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products].
*Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) Received in Billion (Current US$): [consisting of disbursement of loans and grants by official agencies of the members of Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare].
*Human Development Index (HDI) is used to measure the average achievement in key dimensions of human development. The HDI Index value ranges from 0 to 1 (lowest to highest), which is measured based on a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

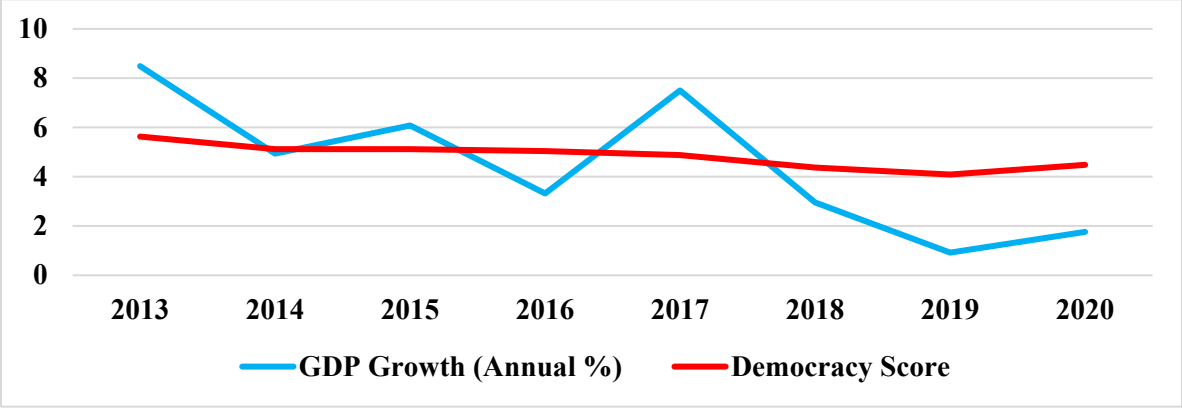
The economic downturn under the competitive authoritarian regime requires some discussion. In the initial years, the Erdogan regime adopted several neo-liberal economic programs which contributed to the country's economic growth, as indicated by the GDP per

capita rose from $3,570 in 2002 to $10,584 in 2011 (Sarfati, 2017, p. 400). As in the Turkish elections, economic voting had remained a predominant factor (Kalaycioglu, 2018), the AKP managed to win elections by securing an increasing number of popular votes in its first and second term (Tansel, 2018). These successes and neo-liberal economic policies served as a "legitimizing device" for the ruling party to infiltrate the state apparatus and establish its control over the political and economic institutions (Gunay and Dzihic, 2016, pp. 6-7). A prominent example was the regime's efforts to reduce the influence of the biggest economic conglomerate, the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD), to favor a pro-regime business group, the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD), where the latter is skeptical about Western economic institutions and policies and rising business elites (Erkoc, 2019). According to Arat and Pamuk (2019), the main reason behind the state's interference in the economy was that the neoliberal policies and institutions adopted to ease economic crises in the past were not consistent with the distribution of power in domestic politics (p. 131). While the neoliberal market-oriented economic policies required the reduction of state interventionism in the economy, the government's continued interventions decided the winners in the market, which seriously affected economic growth and destabilized the Turkish economy (Arat and Pamuk, 2019, p. 131).

Additionally, as the economic landscape is significantly attached to political circumstances, the national, regional, and global political and economic circumstances severely affected the Turkish economy. As the EU comprised approximately 35 percent of total trade and 70 percent of foreign direct investment in Turkey in 2013, the Eurozone's economic crisis along with the sanctions from the US have largely affected the Turkish economy (Kutlay, 2015; Dar, 2021). Apart from hosting the world's largest number of refugees (approximately 3.6 million)

(Dar, 2021), the most important reason behind the economic downturn can be attributed to the regime's turn toward authoritarianism following the 2013 period (see Figure 6.8.). As per Figure 6.8., the country's GDP growth struggled to improve witnessing some fluctuations but eventually fell from over 8 percent growth in 2013 to below 2 percent in 2020. At the same time, there has been a consistent decline in the democracy score falling from around 6 to close to 4 during the same period. Therefore, both economic growth and democracy significantly fell alongside one another, though the former witnessed some improvement after 2016. This can be attributed to the regime's capture of a vast number of Gulenist enterprises worth billions of dollars.

Figure 6.8.: GDP Growth and Democracy in Turkey, 2013-2020



Source: compiled by author from The World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator; and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
Notes:
*GDP Growth (Annual %): [annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency].
*Democracy score is derived from EIU Index which measures democracy on a 0 to 10 scale (lowest to highest).

Let us contextualize the above data to understand how the regime's authoritarian practices affected the country's economic growth. The regime's crackdown on the Gezi Park protesters, its two-front war with the IS extremists and Kurdish nationalists in the southern border regions, the two-year long state of emergency, the crackdown on the Gulenist enterprises,

the growing polarization, the decline in the rule of law, the favoring of public sectors, and the undermining of private sectors have placed severe negative impacts on the Turkish economy. The rising authoritarian practices and the crisis situations led to the deterioration of the institutional environment and growing macroeconomic instability that sharply reduced the private investment from internal and external sources (Arat and Pamuk, 2019, p. 148). Since 2016, Turkey experienced the world's most intense outflow of wealth that amounted to tens of billions of dollars annually (Arat and Pamuk, 2019, p. 149). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Turkish tourism sector has been closed, hence further loss to the economy. By 2020, the Turkish lira lost value against the US dollar by 30 percent, while the increasing inflation rate reached over ten percent (Dar, 2021).

The regime, however, took several initiatives to boost the economy. In line with the initiatives of the past decade, the incumbent focused on the construction sector building large infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, airports, shopping malls, housing, and office building projects (Arat and Pamuk, 2019, p. 150). The regime also changed rules on urban plans to allow higher densities of construction. In 2021, the regime has opened a new economic package focusing on macroeconomic and structural policy changes to boost the country's economy. However, while the country has been severely suffering from an economic downturn, the regime has been using Islamic rhetoric to hide the economic woes. Erdogan in a speech declared, "if they have their dollars, we have our people, our God" and further emphasized that there is "no difference between the attacks on the country's economy and the attacks on our call to prayer and our flag" (Erkoc, 2019).

In summary, the above discussion shows that although there has been some improvement in Turkey's social indicators, the overall economic growth significantly suffered during the

electoral authoritarian regime. The country's move toward authoritarianism represents the biggest reason behind this economic downturn.

Ideological Legitimation

The Erdogan regime heavily used populism as an ideological legitimation tool throughout its competitive electoral authoritarian era. Erdogan's populism largely focused on anti-elitism and Islamism that have been evident in the incumbent's populist rhetoric and policies. First, like all anti-elitist populist, in Erdogan's view, Turkish society is divided between 'the people' and 'the elite', and more specifically, the 'pure people' and 'corrupt elite' (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1821). While Erdogan and the AKP often described 'the people' as faithful Turkish Muslims, they describe 'the elites' as the Kemalist political establishment comprising the CHP, secularist military, bureaucracy, and judiciary (Aslan, 2021: Gunay and Dzihic, 2016).

Erdogan presented himself as a 'man of the people', a 'black Turk', the 'voice of the deprived real people' and 'the champion of their interests' (Yilmaz, 2018). During the Gezi Park protests in 2013, Erdogan declared: "in this country, there are both White Turks and Black Turks, your brother Tayyip is a black Turk" (Ferguson, 2013). While Erdogan emphasized the 'victimhood' of the majority at the hands of the repressive, secular, and Western-oriented elites, he vowed to protect the interests of the masses from the established elites with the 'national will' deriving from the people (Yilmaz, 2018). In a 2015 election rally, Erdogan declared, "My story is the story of this people. Either the people will win and come to power, or the pretentious or oppressive minority – estranged from the reality of Anatolia and looking over it with disdain – will remain in power. The authority to decide on this belongs to the people" (Castaldo, 2018, p. 8). While emphasizing on the 'national will' and representing 'the will of the people', Erdogan

also opposed the horizontal accountability structures of the judiciary and court (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1821).

Erdogan's nationalistic rhetoric and portrayal of his personality further demonstrates his anti-elitist populist approach. Erdogan and the AKP elite's elevation of the rhetoric of the 'New Turkey' aiming to establish Turkey as a great power is a clear example of the regime's 'nationalist' position (Yilmaz et al, 2019). Erdogan portrayed himself as a 'nationalist' and a 'savior' of [Turkey] which embodies a glorious past and a progressive future, while the elites including the Gulenists and the Kurdish nationalists as the 'enemies of the state' (Aslan, 2021; Gunay and Dzihic, 2016). Additionally, on several occasions, Erdogan described his childhood as a 'son of a low-income pious family', attending 'religious schools', 'lad in the neighborhood', 'selling lemonade in the street' etc. (Aslan, 2021). Similarly, having his hair 'cut in the poor neighborhood where he grew up' carried the message that being prime minister or president has not changed him (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1821).

The above anti-elitist rhetoric of Erdogan clearly indicates his insistence of a populist division of the Turkish society in 'us' versus 'them'. Presenting himself as the 'man of the [common] people' and promising to defend their 'interests' against the established elites, Erdogan sought popular legitimacy from the people. His 'us versus them' division helped him delegitimize the Gezi Park protest, describing it as a 'long-arm' of foreign powers. Similarly, Erdogan's repeated identification of the elites filling up the state institutions e.g., judiciary, court, the military etc. helped him to later legitimize his expansion of control over these institutions through constitutional changes and emergency decrees. Describing the Gulenists as traitors and enemies of the nation further strengthened a nationalist and a leadership cult around Erdogan (Aslan, 2021).

Second, another tool of Erdogan's populism is Islam. Throughout the AKP era, Erdogan launched an ambitious project to Islamize Turkish society and the project has intensified under the competitive authoritarian period. With the root of conservative Islam, Erdogan imagines the glory of an Islamic past and longs for the glorification of Turkish-Ottoman history, which was mainly characterized by Sunni-Islamic values. In AKP's view, these Sunni-Islamic values represent the core elements of the Turkish nation (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1821). Therefore, Erdogan and the AKP regime envisions to create a pious Turkish generation that would serve the ideological goals of the Turkish nation (Yilmaz, 2018) under the leadership of the Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs).

To institute Islamism, capture the minds of the youth, and shape their world view, the Erdogan regime brought radical changes to the national education curriculum. The education curriculum has increasingly been devoid of philosophy, secular principles, and Darwinism, while filled with religion, history, Quranic courses that glorify jihad and martyrdom (Yilmaz, 2018; Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1183). Similarly, under the Erdogan regime, the number the Imam-Hatip Schools have significantly increased and the government's budget for these schools have doubled (Yilmaz, 2018), as mentioned in the previous section. These schools believe that "the Imam-Hatip school generation is coming to rescue a youth who has forgotten its history, disrespected its national and human values, drowned in darkness, and has looked to the West for happiness", as mentioned in the Imam-Hatip School Generation inaugural issue notes (Diktas, 1995, p. 18).

Additionally, under the Erdogan regime, the status of the regime-connected religious scholars has risen. These scholars have become key figures in legitimizing the regime's policies through various Islamic fatwas. Some of these pro-regime religious scholars publicly supported

the regime's policies attacking women's rights, abortion, and New Year's celebration; while described the Gulenists and the Kurdish nationalists as 'out of Islam' and 'heretics' (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1823). During the 2017 constitutional referendum, one pro-regime religious preacher insisted that voting 'yes' was a religious obligation, while those who cast 'no' votes are 'heretics' (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1823).

These instances clearly reveal that the Erdogan regime's populist approach surrounding Islam has intensified during the competitive authoritarian regime. On the one hand, Erdogan's anti-elitist rhetoric and acts increased his popularity, especially among the lower classes, hence serving the legitimizing purpose (Yilmaz and Bashirov, 2018, p. 1821). On the other hand, the populist narratives of Islamism targeting the wider Muslim population presented Erdogan as a defender of Islam in Turkey, therefore, again serving as a legitimizing device (Gunay an Dzihic, 2016).

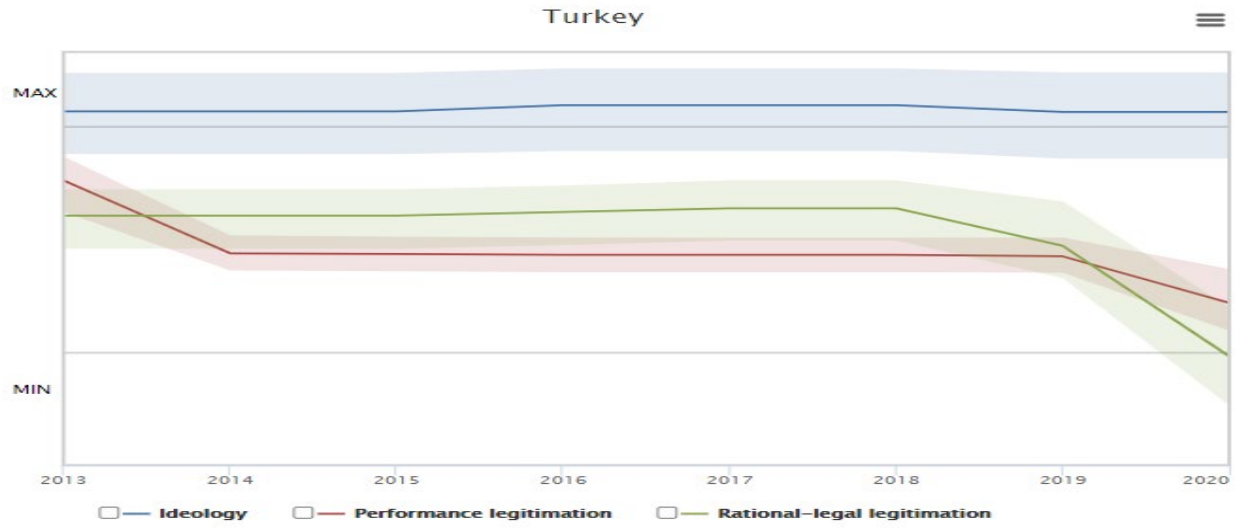
In short, this section finds that the Erdogan regime has heavily relied on populism as an ideological tool of legitimation. The regime's populism largely focused on anti-elitism and Islamism which have been reflected in the incumbent's rhetoric and policies. Finally, while the regime's anti-elitist and Islamist populist approaches had been prevalent in the past decades, such approaches have become intensified during the competitive authoritarian regime.

The Making of Legitimacy Claims

The legitimacy claims of the competitive authoritarian regime in Turkey are evident in the V-Dem's "legitimacy claims" index (see Figure 6.9.). Erdogan's competitive authoritarian regime does not at all make any performance legitimacy claims, as indicated by the score remaining below 0 throughout his tenure. This is consistent with the discussion above, which shows that the economic growth has been suffering under the competitive authoritarian regime.

Therefore, it has become difficult for the incumbent to make performance-based legitimacy claims.[15]

Figure 6.9.: Legitimacy Claims in Turkey, 2013-2020



Source: V-Dem.
*Rational-legal legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to legal norms and regulations to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Performance Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to performance (such as providing economic growth, poverty reduction, effective and non-corrupt governance, and providing security) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).
*Ideological Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government promote a specific ideology or societal model (e.g., socialism, nationalism, religious traditionalism etc.) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

In contrast, the regime's making of procedural legitimacy claims stands between 'not at all' and 'to a small extent", as indicated by the score remaining between 0 and 1 during the 2014-2018 period, but the score fell below 0 after 2018. The speeches of President Erdogan to the opening session of the Grand National Assembly in the 2014-2018 period show that the

[15] It is important to note that the ruling elites and the pro-government advocates regularly emphasize several achievements of the AKP government in the economic sector such as opening bridges, constructing roads, finding gas in the Black Sea, undertaking development projects etc. However, these aspects of economic development have not been emphasized much in Erdogan's speeches to the parliament and the nation.

incumbent, to a small extent, made procedural legitimacy claims. His own words included: “our nation and our democracy”, “directly elected by the public”, “elected with the votes of our nation”, “reflection of the national will on the ballot box”, and “ballot box is where all problems are solved” (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2021).

In 2015, Erdogan declared that we “implemented the constitution word by word and performed huge democratic maturity”; and “the level of democracy we have reached, without doubt, is a source of both pride and hope for our nation and our country” (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2021). As Turkey has transformed into presidential authoritarianism after 2018, the regime’s claims, that it upholds democracy, have become problematic.

As opposed to performance and procedural legitimacy claims, Erdogan has made frequent claims based on ideology, as indicated by the score over 1.5 throughout his tenure. These claims slightly increased during the period of state of emergency. Erdogan’s speeches to the nation often pronounced “honorable nation”, “our nation”, “New Turkey”, “Great Turkey”, “Powerful Turkey”, etc. reflecting his nationalist position (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2021). Erdogan declared: “where is Pennsylvania or the media who supported them?” [pointing at Fetullah Gullen]; “the Turkish people do not need guardians or custodians” [indicating the Gulenists] who “marginalized our people and regarded us as ‘the other’ in society for years”; and the ‘New Turkey’ will not give credit to any “mafia or gang organization” [indicating the Gulenists] (Daily News, 2014). These statements clearly indicate Erdogan’s anti-elitist populist rhetoric. He also martyrized those who died during the failed coup, blaming the Gulenist elites. Additionally, his Islamist populist rhetoric was reflected in several speeches in which he described the ‘pure people’ as ‘faithful Muslims’; the Turkish military forces as ‘the heroes of

Mohammad's army'; and the Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army as 'jihadists who even intimidate and kill death itself" (Hussein, 2019). These statements represent populist Islamist rhetoric.

In short, this section finds that the Erdogan regime has not made any performance-based legitimacy claims during the electoral authoritarian era. While in the initial years of the current era, the regime, in a very limited scale, made procedural legitimacy claims, such claims stopped after the country's move to presidentialism. The regime, however, throughout its tenure has made ideological legitimacy claims.

Summary

The findings of this chapter are five-fold. First, Turkey fully transformed into a competitive electoral authoritarian regime in 2014 after the regime's crackdown on the Gezi Park protests. Second, under procedural legitimation, the Erdogan regime has made drastic changes in the rules of the game which have significantly affected all democratic institutions and facilitated consolidation of political power and institutionalization of authoritarianism. While the regime applied legal and extra-legal means to manipulate elections, it used repression and co-optation to control its political opponents. Additionally, the manipulation of the media is broadly done through control by ownership, control by advertising and sanctions, and arbitrary control by legal provisions and law enforcement agencies. Third, under performance legitimation, the incumbent regime has failed to sustain the country's economic growth, although the indicators of social development have continued to improve. While the economic growth has witnessed some fluctuations, the country's democracy has experienced a consistent decline. Four, the regime has used populism as a tool of ideological legitimation focusing on anti-elitism and Islamism. Finally, the regime has not made any performance-based legitimacy claims. Although it made procedural legitimacy claims in the 2014-2018 period at a very limited scale, the regime avoided

making such claims after the 2018 election. Compared to procedural claims, the regime has made ideology-based legitimacy claims at a slightly higher rate. The regime's ideological legitimacy claims remained consistent throughout the regime's tenure.

CHAPTER VII: COMPARATIVE REGIME LEGITIMATION

This chapter aims to provide a comparative picture of the relevance of the regime legitimation framework in the context of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey to develop a generalized understanding of the regime legitimation strategies in electoral authoritarian regimes. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section gives a comparative view of electoral authoritarianism in three cases. The second section highlights a comparative analysis of procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies for three cases. While the third section comparatively discusses legitimacy claims of the three electoral authoritarian cases, the final part provides a summary of comparative findings.

Electoral Authoritarian Regimes in Comparison

As discussed in the previous chapters, the three selected cases of this thesis are most different cases and share dissimilar historical, geographical, cultural, ideological, and demographic characteristics. Among the three cases, Bangladesh has the largest population, and it is around seventeen times bigger than Hungary and almost two times larger than Turkey in terms of population (see Table 7.1.). In terms of size of the territory (square miles), Turkey is over three times bigger than both Bangladesh and Hungary combined. All three countries have a unicameral parliament, with Turkey converted into presidential system in 2018. While the ruling party in Bangladesh is a center-left party, conservative right-wing parties are ruling Hungary and Turkey. Despite their differences, all three cases have transformed into electoral authoritarian regimes, as discussed in Chapter 4, 5, and 6.

Table 7.1.: Government and Incumbent in Comparative Cases

Country	*Population (million)*	*Form of Government*	*Type of Parliament*	*Head of the Government*	*Ruling Party*	*Holding Power Since*
Bangladesh	163	Parliamentary	Unicameral	Sheikh Hasina	Bangladesh Awami League (BAL)	2009-present
Hungary	9.7	Parliamentary	Unicameral	Viktor Orban	Hungarian Civic Union (FIDESZ)	2010-present
Turkey	82	Parliamentary (1950s-2017)	Unicameral	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development Party (AKP)	2003-2013
		Presidential (2018-present)				2014-present

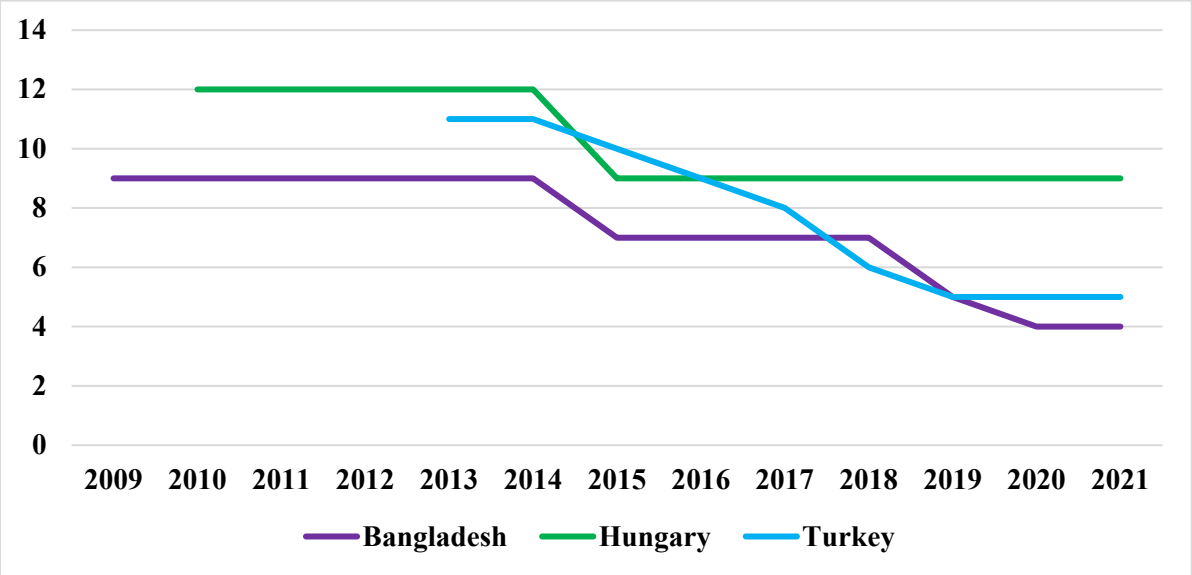
Source: Compiled by the author from World Bank and Eurostat. The size of the population is based on the year 2019.

Based on the indices used in this thesis, Bangladesh fully transformed into a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime in 2009, while Turkey has transformed into a competitive authoritarian regime in 2014. Although Hungary fully converted into a competitive authoritarian regime in 2018, the regime has been reflecting competitive authoritarian characteristics since 2010 and more blatantly since 2014. The incumbents in all three cases have been holding power for over a decade, with Turkey's Erdogan is approaching two-decades rule of in 2023 (see Table 7.1.).

The incumbents in all three cases have largely concentrated political power by applying various means that have widely affected democratic institutions and processes. The performance of these cases in two selected characteristics of electoral authoritarianism – electoral competitiveness and political pluralism – bear testimony of this argument.

As Figure 7.1. indicates, electoral competitiveness in all three cases has significantly declined during the electoral authoritarian era. Drastic decline took place in case of Bangladesh and Turkey with the electoral process score reaching 4 and 5 (out of 12), respectively, in 2021. Compared to Bangladesh and Turkey, the electoral competitiveness in Hungary is in a better condition, though declined from 12 to 9.

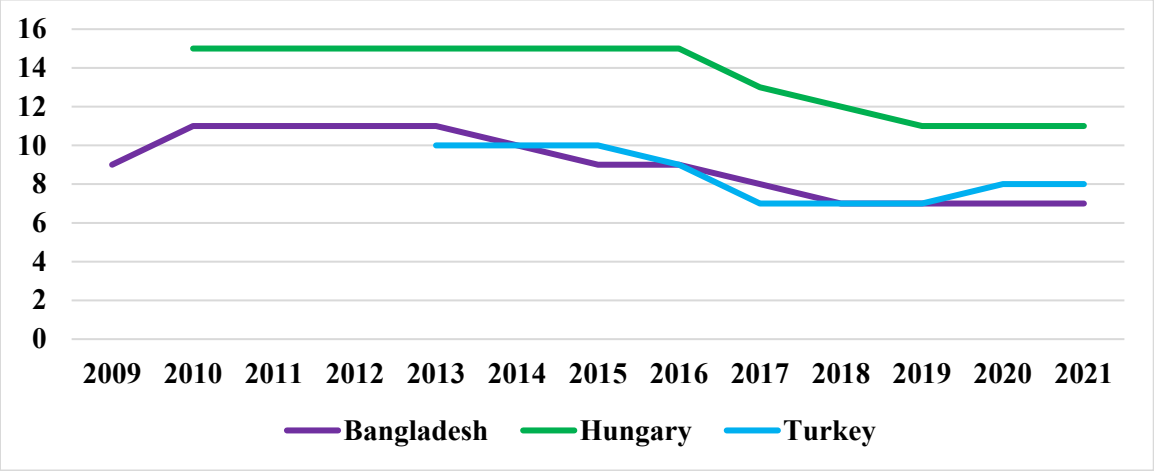
Figure 7.1.: Comparative Electoral Competitiveness



Source: Compiled by the author from *Freedom in the World Reports* (2013-2021) of Freedom House. Electoral process is measured on a scale of 1 to 12 based on whether the elections were free and fair and whether electoral rules were impartially implemented.

Similarly, as Figure 7.2. presents, political pluralism in Bangladesh and Turkey declined to a 7 and 8 (out of 16), respectively, in 2021, while in Hungary, the score declined to 11 in 2021.

Figure 7.2.: Comparative Political Pluralism



Source: Compiled by the author from *Freedom in the World Reports* (2013-2021) of Freedom House. Political pluralism is measured on a scale of 1 to 16 based on whether diverse political groups had freedom to exercise political rights, realistic opportunity to gain power through elections, and were subject to domination by political forces.

While electoral competitiveness and political pluralism have significantly declined, the incumbent governments in all three cases have held regular elections. While elections were multiparty in Hungary and Turkey, in case of Bangladesh, the incumbent created an environment that either led the main opposition party to boycott or withdraw from elections or allowed weak opposition parties which did not have the electoral strength to defeat the ruling party. Through severe manipulation of elections, the incumbents in all three cases secured victory and enjoyed parliamentary majority. In the current electoral authoritarian government of Bangladesh (2018-present), the ruling party-led alliance has over 96 percent of seats, while the percentage is 66.83 in Hungary (2018-present government), and 57.33 in Turkey (2018-present government). Unless any major disaster such as a coup, civil war, or drastic change of rules and implementation occurs, these countries are likely to stay as electoral authoritarian regimes until the next elections (Roessler and Howard, 2009). As highlighted in Chapter 2, electoral authoritarian rulers

manipulate elections to wear a legitimate cloak, the incumbents in all three cases did the same to appear as legitimate rulers.

The above discussion shows that the three selected comparable cases of this thesis have transformed into electoral authoritarianism, with Bangladesh as a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime and Hungary and Turkey as competitive authoritarian regimes. Under the electoral authoritarian era, there has been a significant decline of electoral competitiveness and political pluralism in each country.

Strategies of Legitimation in Comparative Contexts

This section presents a comparative analysis of procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation strategies in Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. Under procedural legitimation, I provide a comparative picture of election manipulation, controlling political opposition, manipulation of the media, and changing the rules of the game to develop a generalized understanding. Similarly, this section highlights a comparative picture of economic growth and social development in each case to understand the regimes' performances. Additionally, comparative ideological legitimation shows the use of various ideological features by the incumbent regimes that aim to legitimize their rule.

Comparative Procedural Legitimation

Manipulation of Elections

In all three countries, elections are manipulated to ensure repeated electoral victory. The manipulation of elections is broadly done by applying legal and extra-legal means, as discussed in Chapter 4, 5, and 6. In Bangladesh, the incumbent removed the non-partisan CTG system from the constitution through the fifteenth amendment and established a complete control of the government over the electoral system that led to severe election manipulation. In Hungary,

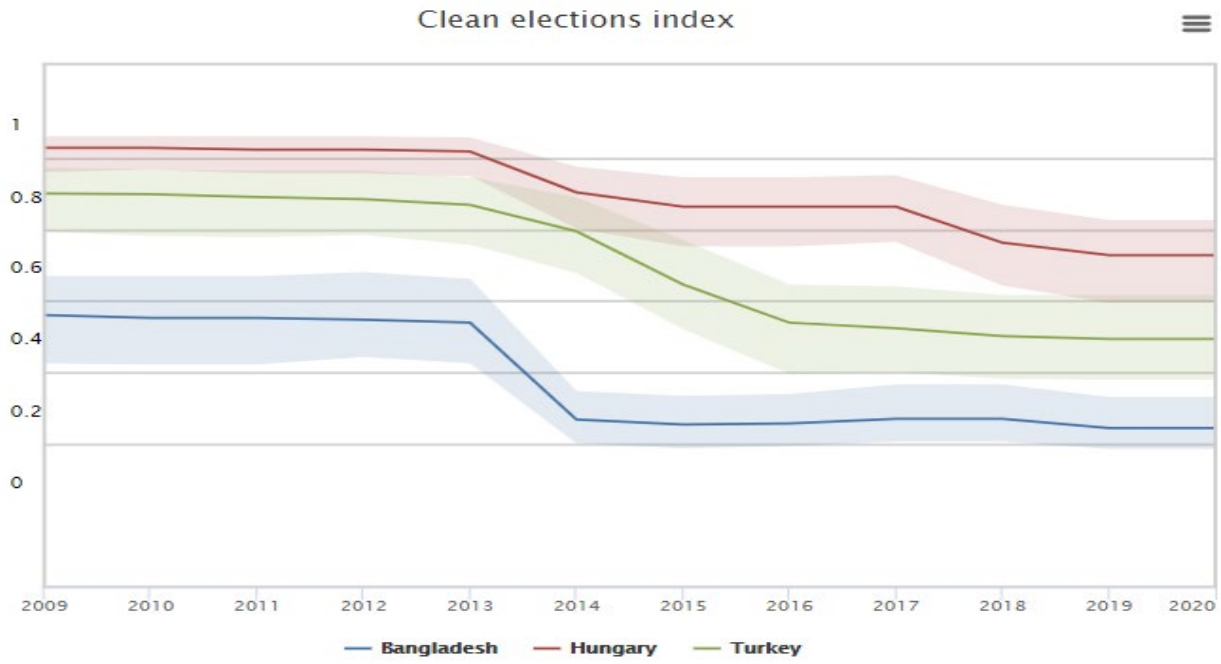
through constitutional amendments and subsequent legal provisions, the ruling regime changed the two-round election system into a single-round system, reduced parliamentary seats from 386 to 199 leading to gerrymandering, allowed non-resident voters to vote for the first time, authorized winning candidates to utilize 'unused votes' in getting parliamentary mandates, and established control over the National Election Commission (NVB). All these legal changes benefitted the ruling party and ensured electoral victory for the incumbent. In Turkey, the incumbent changed constitutional provisions to establish control over the Supreme Board of Elections (YSK), revived previous citizenship law to allow expat voters to vote for the first time, and passed legal provisions to shift local polling stations that led to the election manipulation and electoral victory for the ruling party.

In terms of extra-legal means, the ruling regime in Bangladesh created a climate of fear by cracking down on the opposition using law enforcement agencies. The incumbent also prevented the electoral participation of the opposition through increasing arbitrary arrests of the candidates, rejection of candidacy by the partisan election commission, threat and intimidation, and ballot stuffing. In Hungary, the incumbent created an uneven playing field and restricted the election campaign of the opposition by preventing campaign finance, using biased media to scandalize the opponents, applying a clientelist network for vote buying and pressurizing the voters, and spreading "intimidating and xenophobic rhetoric" to confuse the voters. In the context of Turkey, the ruling regime created a climate of fear by failing to prevent domestic terror attacks against the opposition, engaging in wars on the border, instituting a two-year long state of emergency following a failed coup, and launching mass arrests and dismissals of opponents. The regime further created an uneven playing field by overusing state funds for

election campaigns depriving the opposition and using biased media to scandalize the political opponents.

Due to such severe manipulations through legal and extra-legal mechanisms, elections are neither free nor fair in these countries. The "clean election index" of V-Dem (see Figure 7.3.) provides evidence for unfree and unfair elections in these cases on a scale of 0 to 1 (low to high). The index scores for all three countries are close to 0 by 2020. Among the three countries, overall manipulation and unfairness in elections are extremely high in Bangladesh followed by Turkey and Hungary.

Figure 7.3.: Clean Election Index in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Clean Election Index: To what extent, are elections are free and fair? [0 to 1, low to high]

The comparison of election manipulation in three dissimilar cases indicate that electoral authoritarian regimes apply both legal and informal mechanisms to secure repeated electoral victory. Through legal provisions, these regimes establish control over all electoral bodies, bring

fundamental changes in the legislative and the electoral system, allow non-resident or expat voters to vote in elections, and deprive the opponents from campaign finance. Regarding informal mechanisms, electoral authoritarian regimes create a climate of fear, use law enforcement agencies to suppress the opposition, use biased media to scandalize the opponents, and use clientelist networks for vote buying and intimidation. These regimes overall create an uneven playing field while enjoying an undue advantage over the opponents.

Controlling Political Opposition

The electoral authoritarian regimes in Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey have broadly applied repression and co-optation to control their political opponents. Repression took place into two interconnected but overlapping forms (e.g., pre-emptive [through legal provisions] and preventive repression [through law enforcement agencies]). Hungary is a prime example for pre-emptive repression. In Hungary, the incumbent regime passed a series of pre-emptive legal repressive provisions that allowed the ruling party to severely marginalize its political opponents and weaken their functionalities. These legal provisions were used for controlling the state funds for political parties, distributing big funds to fake or small parties while depriving the main opposition, preventing the advertisement funds of the opponents, scandalizing the civil society organizations, and imposing high taxes on foreign-supported NGOs. Similarly, the incumbent in Turkey used legal provisions such as the defamation law, the parliamentary immunity law, and the state of emergency decrees to silence the dissenting voices and institute punitive actions against the opposition. Likewise, in Bangladesh, the incumbent used legal provisions to restrict the registration of new political parties and threatened to cancel the registration of the main opposition parties.

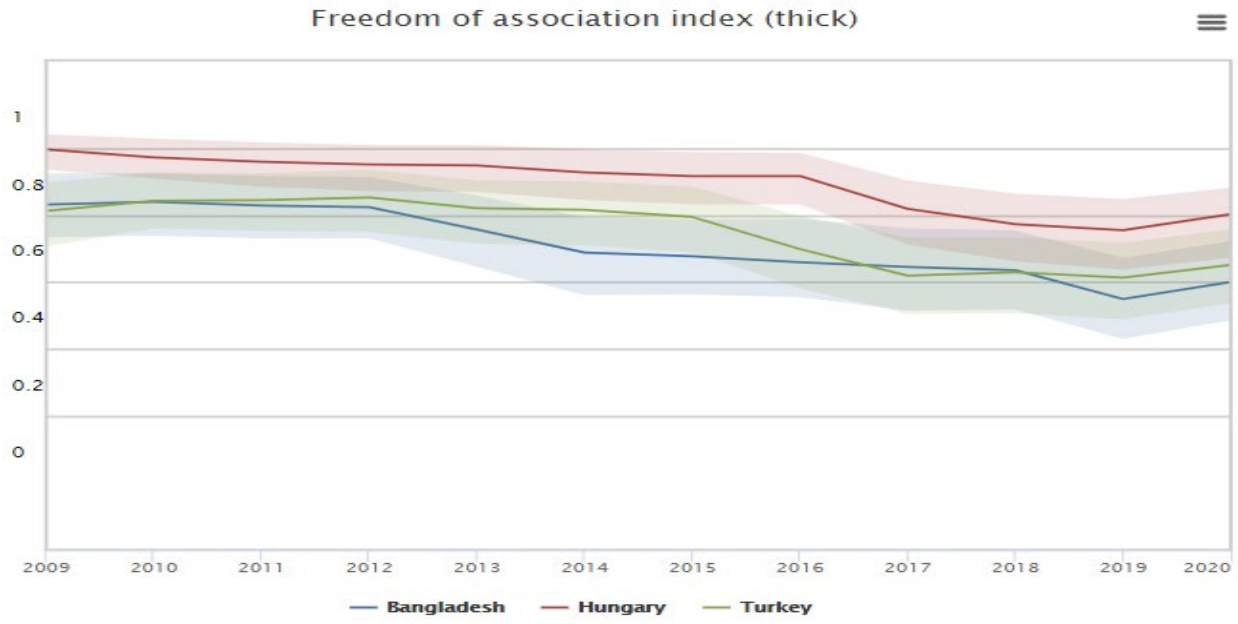
Regarding preventive repression, the ruling regime in Bangladesh extensively used law enforcement agencies to implement repressive actions that resulted in increased enforcement disappearances, extrajudicial killings, arrests, imprisonments, torture, and unprecedented levels of legal harassments of the opponents including civil society organizations. In Turkey, the incumbent drastically used mass arrests, dismissals, suspensions, imprisonments, torture, legal harassments, and closing and confiscating critical civil society organizations, universities, and media outlets. However, the regime's use of preventive repression is less apparent in Hungary. There can be several explanations behind this.

First, pre-emptive repression in Hungary has been so effective to control political opponents that the incumbent regime has not yet felt the need to use preventive repression. Second, the major opposition coalition (e.g., the left-wing MSZP-led alliance) has been suffering from a crisis of hegemony for decades and has failed to mobilize a powerful opposition force to challenge the right-wing FIDESZ-led government. Similarly, the Jobbik, the second largest party in parliament after FIDESZ, is a right-wing party, thus cannot effectively challenge the government, especially in ideological orientation. For instance, the Jobbik supported several authoritarian policies of the FIDESZ-government, for instance on the issue of refugees and migrants, minorities, and LGBTQ community. Additionally, the support base of the Jobbik is relatively very low compared to that of FIDESZ, thus it has not yet appeared as a large threatening force to destabilize the FIDESZ-led government. Third, each authoritarian regime is unique and applies different tools that best serve its political purpose. In Hungary, the incumbent regime perhaps finds that the use of outright preventive repression might be counterproductive to achieve its authoritarian goal.

Beyond repression, these three electoral authoritarian regimes have co-opted the opposition. In Bangladesh, the incumbent co-opted the Orthodox Islamist groups through appeasement and pressure. In Turkey, the ruling regime co-opted several young leaders of the opposition parties through persuasion and providing them with powerful posts in the ruling party. Furthermore, it co-opted many Islamic civil society organizations by delivering huge funds and providing lucrative posts in government, ministry, court, and administration. In Hungary, the ruling regime applied several tactics that created a cartel party system, in which, the opposition parties are co-opted and eventually contribute to the continued existence of such system.

Due to these severe repressive and co-optative means, the democratic right of freedom of association for political parties and civil society organizations in all these countries have been declining (see Figure 7.4.).

Figure 7.4.: Freedom of Association Index in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Freedom of association index: [To what extent, are parties allowed to form and participate in elections and to what extent are civil society organizations able to form and operate freely?], (0 to 1, low to high).

According to V-Dem's "freedom of association index", the scores of "freedom of association" for Bangladesh and Turkey have declined to 0.5 (on a scale of 0 to 1), while the score is 0.7 for Hungary.

Comparing the mechanisms of controlling the opponents in three cases, this section insists that all three electoral authoritarian regimes have applied both repression and co-optation. Using pre-emptive and preventive repression, the electoral authoritarian regimes in Bangladesh and Turkey have suppressed opposition political parties and civil society organizations. Both cases co-opted Islamic groups or civil society organizations, with Turkey the co-optation also covered small civil society groups and young opposition leaders. Finally, Hungary largely used pre-emptive repression mechanisms to repress political opposition and civil society organizations.

Manipulation of the Media

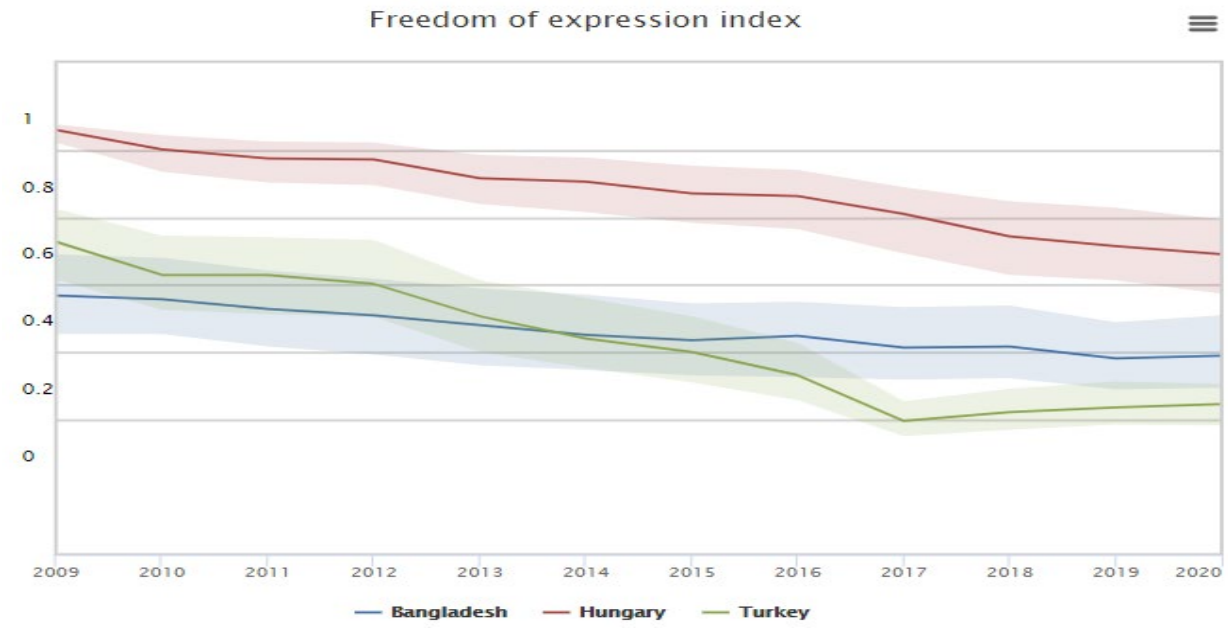
The electoral authoritarian regimes in all three cases largely used legal provisions and law enforcement agencies and applied conglomerate pressure by controlling licensing and advertisements to silence the media. In Bangladesh, the ruling regime used several legal provisions and law enforcement agencies that led to closure of media outlets, arbitrary arrests, imprisonments, torture, and harassments of journalists, editors, and media activists. Similarly, in Hungary, the regime introduced new legal provisions to establish control over the media authority, politicize state-run media, control editorial contents, apply high fines and sanctions for violation of new legal legislation, and transfer media cases to rural areas. In a similar trend, the authoritarian regime in Turkey passed new legislation to take control over the media authority, emergency decrees, and used several other legal provisions and articles of penal code to close

media outlets, apply huge sanctions, buy off critical media, and use law enforcement agencies to silence the media. The arrests, torture, sanctions, and assaults on the media activists are significantly higher in the context of Bangladesh and Turkey, as opposed to Hungary.

Furthermore, almost all major media outlets in Bangladesh are directly and indirectly affiliated with the ruling party. The ruling regime applies pressure on the media outlets through this ownership structure, followed by controlling the licensing of and the advertisements in the media outlets. Similarly, in Hungary, a staggering 90 percent of all media outlets belonged to either the state or a FIDESZ ally. Therefore, the regime applies pressure on the media outlets by controlling licensing and advertisements. The regime further used its clientelist network to ensure that the critical media outlets do not receive advertising funds from private sources. Likewise, an overwhelming 90 percent of the mainstream media in Turkey is under the control of the AKP-led government. These media outlets belonged to four pro-regime business conglomerates and the incumbent uses conglomerate pressure for editorial content control and restricts advertisements from both public and private sources.

Therefore, the authoritarian regimes in all three countries have applied multifaceted pressures on the media to manipulate the media environment and undermine the freedom of expression. This is evident in the V-Dem's "freedom of expression index" (see Figure 7.5.), which indicates that the freedom of expression scores of all three countries have drastically declined under electoral authoritarianism, with Turkey having the least freedom.

Figure 7.5.: Freedom of Expression Index in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Freedom of expression index: [To what extent, does the government respect the freedom of media, the freedom of ordinary people to discuss political matters at home and in the public sphere, as well as the freedom of academic and cultural expression?], (0 to 1, low to high).

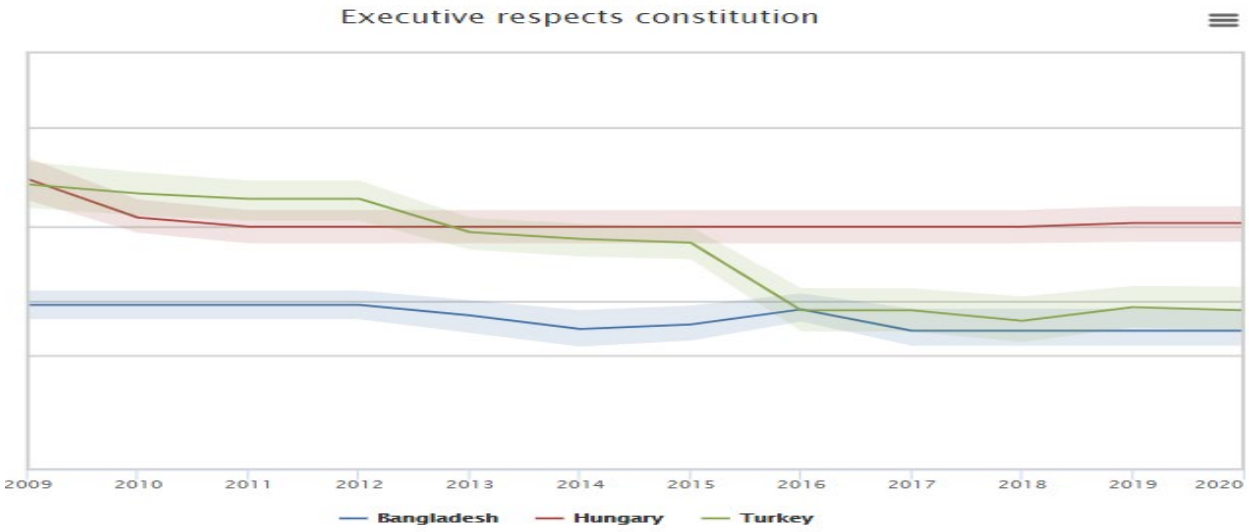
The comparative manipulation of the media in the three cases shows a common trend that the electoral authoritarian regimes capture the media by ownership control, by controlling the licensing and the advertisements from both public and private sources, and by using legal provisions and law enforcement agencies. The severe manipulation causes consistent decline of the respective country's freedom of expression.

Changing the Rules of the Game

The biggest tool of all three electoral authoritarian regimes was 'changing the rules of the game' to establish the government's control over all state institutions. The incumbents had no respect for the constitution, and they changed constitutional provisions whenever they wanted without any legal consequences. The V-Dem measured "executive respects constitution" on a scale of 0 to 4 (low to high) (see Figure 7.6.), which shows that all three countries had either

negative scores or scores close to 0, with Bangladesh scoring the lowest followed by Turkey and Hungary, respectively.

Figure 7.6.: Executive's Respect for the Constitution in Comparison



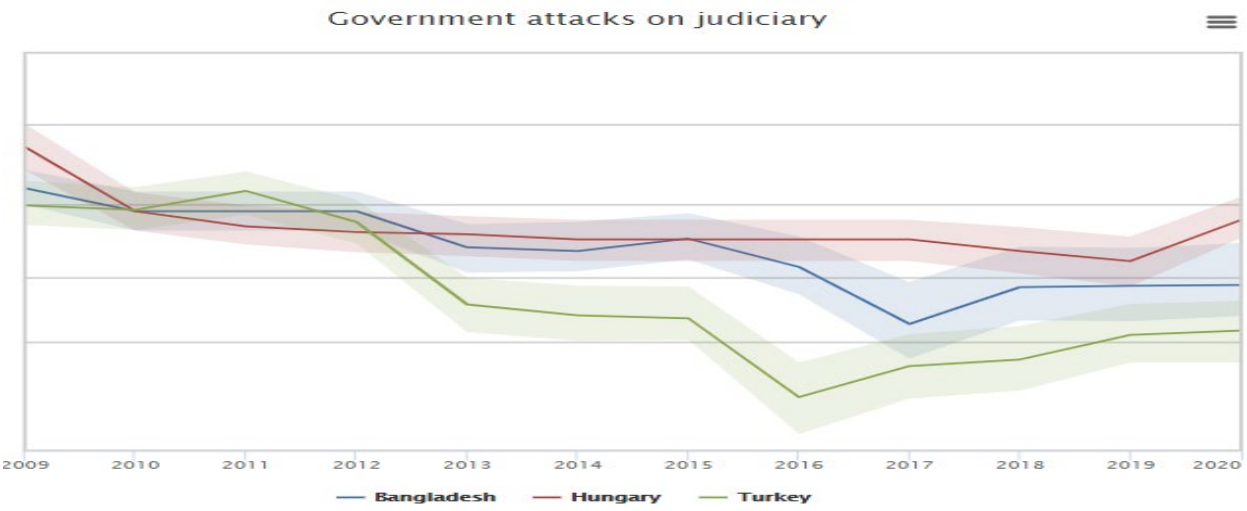
Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Executive respects constitution [Do members of the executive (the head of state, the head of government, and cabinet ministers) respect the constitution?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

While the legal changes mentioned in other sections are part of the overall 'changing the rules of the game' that have been discussed, this section largely focuses on the judiciary. The electoral authoritarian regimes in all three countries have established control over the judicial system. In Bangladesh, the incumbent through constitutional changes authorized the parliament to impeach judges, increased the size of the court, and packed the court by removing critical judges and appointing regime-friendly judges. On a similar trend, the incumbent in Hungary brought rapid changes in the rules of game to establish parliamentary control over the judiciary, curbed the power of the constitutional court, increased the size of the constitutional court judges, lowered the retirement ages, removed at least 272 judges, and packed the court by appointing government-friendly judges. Likewise, the authoritarian regime in Turkey changed the

constitution to make the judiciary subservient to the parliament, increased the size of constitutional court and high court judges, and appointed pro-regime judges. Additionally, the incumbent's constitutional amendments to change the term and election procedure of the presidency and transformation of Turkish polity from a parliamentary to a presidential system is a prominent example of how authoritarian rulers utilize the 'changing rules of the game' tool.

This discussion clearly shows that the three electoral authoritarian regimes targeted the respective judiciary. This is further evident in the V-Dem's item 'government attacks judiciary' which is measured on a scale of 0 to 4 (low to high). This item of V-Dem shows that the government's attacks on the judiciary in all three countries have been unprecedentedly high, with the scores below 0 throughout the authoritarian era (see Figure 7.7.).

Figure 7.7.: Government's Attack on Judiciary in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Government attacks on judiciary [How often the government attacks the judiciary's integrity in public?], (0 to 4, higher to lower).

Therefore, a similar trend in three dissimilar cases shows that the authoritarian incumbents heavily rely on 'changing the rules of the game' to establish the government's

control over all state institutions including the judiciary. The regimes in all three cases have brought rapid changes to make the judicial systems subservient to the parliament and the government.

Comparative Performance Legitimation

The comparative performance legitimation discussion covers a comparison of the picture of economic growth and social development in all three cases during the period of electoral authoritarianism. The electoral authoritarian regime in Bangladesh undertook a series of development projects by declaring the 'Vision 2021' and the 'Vision 2041' to transform the country into a middle-income and a high-income country, respectively. Throughout the authoritarian tenure, there has been a rapid improvement in the country's economic growth and various indicators of social development. The GDP per capita has rapidly increased from US$ 702 in 2009 to US$ 1,856 in 2019, while the GDP growth (annual %) has increased from 5 percent to 8.15 percent during the same period. At the same time, the net ODA received by Bangladesh has increased more than four times, from US$1.08 billion in 2009 to US$4.48 billion in 2019. Likewise, the country's HDI Index value has increased from 0.56 in 2010 to 0.63 in 2019. The improvement in the country's economic growth and social indicators continued despite increasing political violence, decline of institutional quality and good governance, and rising authoritarianism, leading many pro-regime advocates to call it a 'democratic authoritarianism.'

Similarly, the authoritarian regime in Hungary planned to transform the country from a 'welfare' state to a 'workfare' state and undertook various policies and projects for rapid improvement of economy and social indicators. Between 2010 and 2020, the country's GDP per capita has increased from US$13,192 to US$15,820, GDP growth (annual %) has risen from 1.1

percent to 4.6 percent, and ODA has increased almost four times. Additionally, the country's GNP per capita has increased from $21,497 in 2010 to 31,329 in 2019. In the context of social development, the HDI Index value score has risen from 0.823 in 2011 to 0.854 in 2019. While the country witnessed significant improvement in economic growth and social indicators, there has been a consistent decline in the country's democracy.

In contrast to Bangladesh and Hungary, the Turkish case provides a complicated picture. Under the electoral authoritarian regime, Turkey has experienced significant improvement in the country's social indicators with the HDI Index value score rising from 0.785 in 2013 to 0.820 in 2020, leading to the country's rank changing from 62 to 54 at the same period. However, the country's economic growth has drastically suffered at the same time witnessing a declining trend. The country's GDP per capita has fallen from US$12,615 in 2013 to US$8,535 in 2020, while the GDP growth (annual %) has decreased from 8.49 to 1.76 percent during the same period. Similarly, Turkey's ODA has declined from US$2.85 billion in 2013 to US$0.82 billion in 2019. At the same time, the country's democracy has sharply fallen. Scholars insisted on the regime's increasing authoritarianism is the main reason behind the economic downturn.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the above comparative performance legitimation discussion. First, the rising authoritarianism in all three cases appears to not prevent the improvement of social indicators, at least in the short-term. Second, increasing authoritarianism and increasing economic growth coincided in Bangladesh and Hungary during the electoral authoritarian era, but not in Turkey. One reason can be that Turkey's electoral authoritarian era is relatively short-term compared to Bangladesh and Hungary. Additionally, since the country's transformation into competitive authoritarianism in 2014, Turkey has been affected by a series of

political, economic, and security crises in the national context, which were also intensified by the regional and global security environment, as discussed in Chapter 6.

Comparative Ideological Legitimation

A comparative discussion of the ideological legitimation of three countries covers all ideological features used by the incumbents during the electoral authoritarian era. In Bangladesh, the regime has used "nationalism" and "Islamism" as ideological tools for legitimation. The incumbent has formalized several nationalistic features such as "Bengali nationalism", "father of the nation", "proclamation of independence", etc., and made the constitution unamendable, while continuously spreading nationalist rhetoric. The regime's use of nationalistic rhetoric as a tool of legitimation became more obvious during the Shahabag movement in 2013 when the discourse of "mukhtijuddher chetona" (the spirit of liberation war) was chanted and highly elevated. Criticisms to such discourse was equated as unpatriotic or treacherous. Similarly, the regime significantly promoted "Islamism" and used it as a tool of ideological legitimation. Several Islamist rhetoric was spread such as "no law against Holy Quran and Sunnah" and the country's rules would be similar to "the Charter of Medina and the Prophet's Sermon". Additionally, the regime's promotion of Islamism appeared in increased publications of religious books, patronization of madrassa and Islamic education, removing secular poems and short stories from books, and the formation of an alliance with Orthodox Islamist parties who have very little electoral support. The regime's ultimate purpose was to appear Islamic in front of the Muslim voters in a Muslim-dominated country.

In contrast, the Orban regime in Hungary broadly used populism as an ideological tool of legitimation focusing on anti-elitism and anti-immigration. Refugees and migrants were associated with "poison", "thieves", "arsonists", "terrorism", "criminals", and "the source of

diseases". Anti-refugee rhetoric was posted on billboards throughout the country highlighting messages such as "if you come to Hungary, don't take jobs of Hungarians". The regime in general spread a xenophobic and intimating rhetoric threating the Hungarian identity, religion, and culture. The regime widely used this rhetoric during the 2018 election. Additionally, the regime tied the anti-immigration rhetoric with anti-elitist rhetoric. Orban's populist rhetoric constructed a division between "us" versus "them", in which Orban presented himself as "the man in the street" but described the opposition as "the corrupt elites." He identified the corrupt elites as "outcasts" who "acted against the nation's interests" and held them responsible for Hungary's national debt. Additionally, Orban accused the corrupt elites of conspiring with external forces who were responsible for the migration influx in Hungary and claimed that the corrupt elites would let the external forces take control of the country's power and "demolish the border force" if they come to power. These instances are clear indicative of Orban's use of populism for electoral victory and win legitimacy.

On the other hand, the Erdogan regime in Turkey broadly used populism focusing on anti-elitism and Islamism for ideological legitimation. The incumbent's anti-elitist rhetoric included his repeated presentation of himself as a "man of the people", a "black Turk", the "voice of the deprived real people", while criticizing the opposition as "corrupt elites", "enemies of the state", etc. Additionally, the Erdogan regime promoted Islamism by delivering huge funds to religious schools, filling the national education curriculum with religious rhetoric, and providing powerful positions to pro-regime religious scholars who have become key figures in legitimizing the regime's policies.

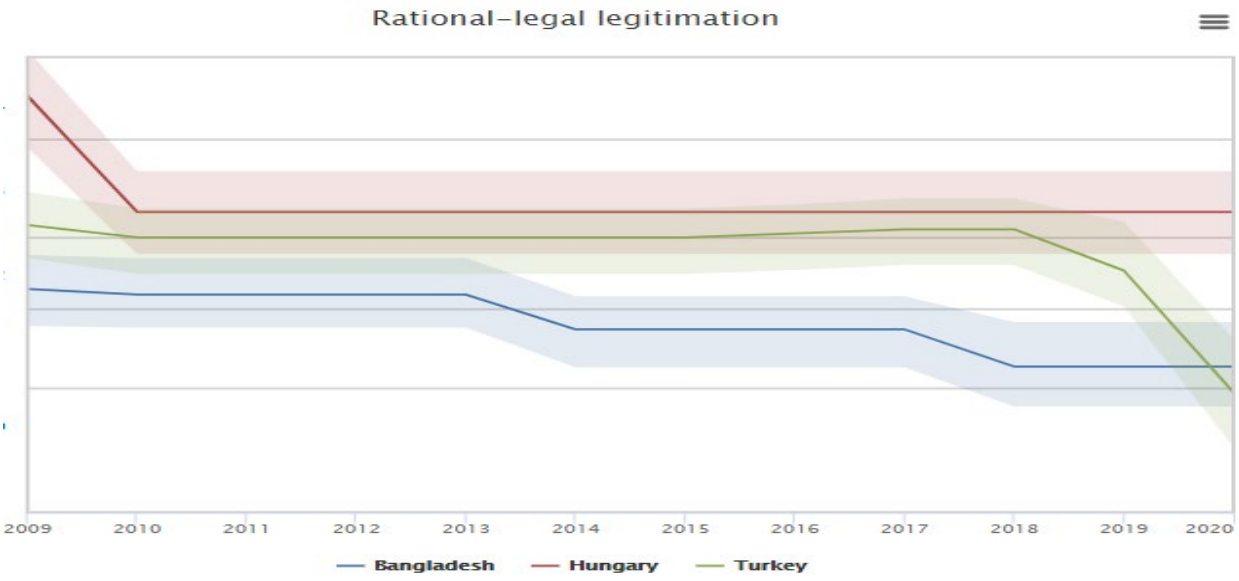
Therefore, the use of ideological narratives in all three cases has been significantly high. Three ideological features were broadly used in these three cases: nationalism, Islamism, and

populism. As ideological features are not bounded and can easily incorporate elements of other ideologies, the same can be found in these cases. For instance, Erdogan's populism covers Islamism and anti-elitism, while Orban's populism focuses on anti-elitism and anti-immigration.

Comparative Legitimacy Claims

The comparative legitimacy claims of these three cases based on procedural, performance, and ideological legitimation can be measured by three indicators of V-Dem: rational-legal, performance, and ideology. As Figure 7.8. shows, Bangladesh has not made any procedural legitimacy claims throughout the electoral authoritarian period, as indicated by the score below 0 (meaning 'not at all').

Figure 7.8.: Procedural Legitimation in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Rational-legal legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to legal norms and regulations to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

On the other hand, Hungary's procedural legitimacy claims remained between 'not at all' and 'to a small extent', with the score 0.76, indicating a very limited number of claims. In

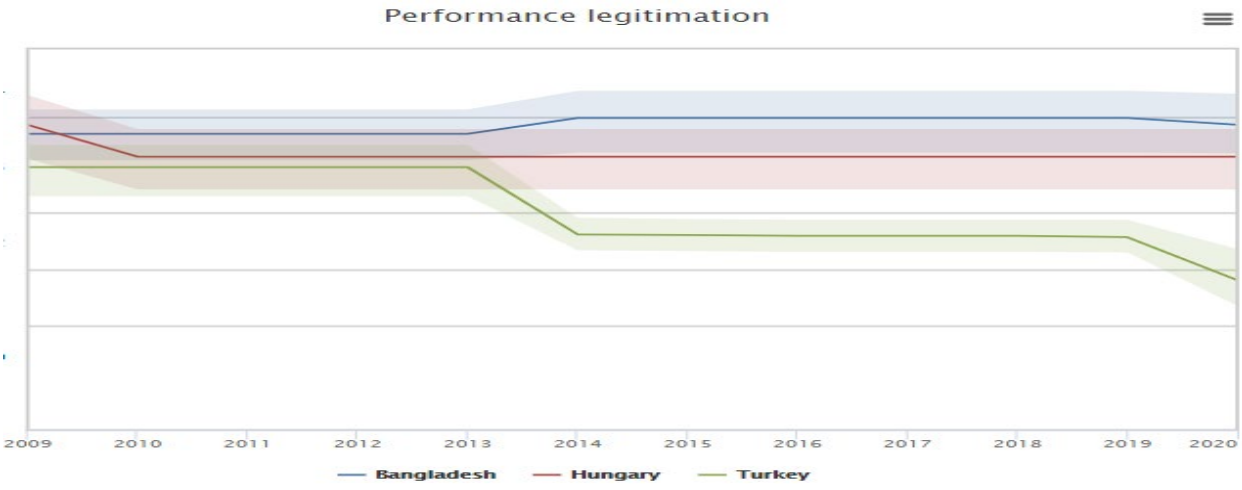
contrast, Erdogan regime's procedural legitimacy claims remained between 'not at all' and 'to a small extent', with the score 0.52 during the 2014-2018 period, indicating a very limited number of claims. However, after the country's transformation into a presidential system, the procedural legitimacy claims captured negative score since 2019, meaning that the electoral authoritarian regime in Turkey has not at all made any procedural legitimacy claims during the 2019-present period. Therefore, none of these electoral authoritarian regimes has exclusively made procedural legitimacy claims, while a very limited number of claims were made by Hungary throughout the period. Though the electoral authoritarian regime in Turkey made a very limited number of procedural claims during its initial years, it avoided making such claims after 2019. Of these three cases, Hungary has made higher procedural legitimacy claims.

There can be several reasons behind these electoral authoritarian regimes' avoidance of making procedural legitimacy claims. First, one of the principal tools of these regimes has been to manipulate the rules of the game in favor of the incumbents. The manipulation of the rules and regulations and democratic procedures paved the way for these regimes to stay in power. Since the extent of manipulation of rules and procedures was extremely high and clearly visible in all three cases, these regimes find themselves in a difficult situation to make outright procedural legitimacy claims. Second, these regimes' reluctance to make procedural legitimacy claims is further evident in their rhetoric that openly undermines democracy and seeks support for their authoritarian practices. For instance, pro-regime advocates in Bangladesh promoted rhetoric such as "democratic authoritarianism" and "development before democracy". Similarly, Orban in Hungary insisted that liberal democracy can no longer be the solution to solve Hungarian problems and highlighted Russia and China as successful states. These instances are clear indicative of these regimes' attempt to openly de-emphasize democracy through rhetoric. These

examples also inform their reason for avoiding outright democratic procedural legitimacy claims. Instead, these regimes attempt to spread an impression for a different version of democracy in the public.

In contrast, in terms of performance legitimation (see Figure 7.9.), the electoral authoritarian regime in Turkey has not made any performance legitimacy claims throughout the period, which is consistent with the country's economic downturn. Bangladesh and Hungary have made performance legitimacy claims with scores over 1.5 and 1.1, respectively, throughout the respective authoritarian period. This is also consistent with the economic growth and social development in these two countries facilitating the regimes to make performance legitimacy claims. Of these three countries, Bangladesh has made higher levels of performance legitimacy claims.

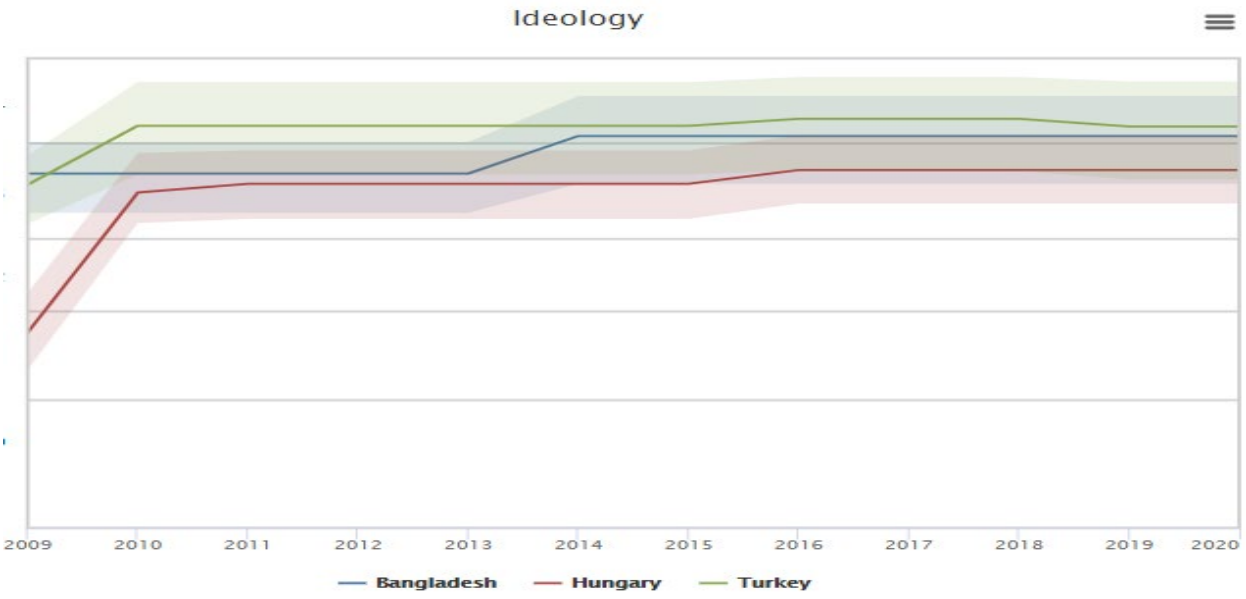
Figure 7.9.: Performance Legitimation in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Performance Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government refer to performance (such as providing economic growth, poverty reduction, effective and non-corrupt governance, and providing security) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

On the other hand, as per ideological legitimacy legitimation (see Figure 7.10), all three regimes have increasingly made ideological legitimacy claims, witnessing an upward trend for Bangladesh and Hungary. Bangladesh's score for ideological claims has increased from 1.01 to 1.46, for Hungary, it increased from 0.79 to 1.05. Compared to these two countries, Turkey has made higher ideological claims, with a score of 1.58 throughout the regime's period.

Figure 7.10.: Ideological Legitimation in Comparison



Source: V-Dem.
Note: *Ideological Legitimation [To what extent, does the current government promote a specific ideology or societal model (e.g., socialism, nationalism, religious traditionalism etc.) to justify the regime in place?], (0 to 4, lower to higher).

Six conclusions can be drawn from this section. First, of the three countries, only Hungary has made all three legitimacy claims. Second, all three countries have made limited legitimacy claims in at least two of the legitimation strategies. Third, none of these countries have exclusively made legitimacy claims for any of the legitimation strategies, as their scores remained below 2 on a 0 to 4 scale. Fourth, each of these countries has made higher levels of claims in at least one legitimation strategy, in comparison with the others. Bangladesh has made

higher claims in performance legitimation, Hungary in procedural legitimation, while Tukey in ideological legitimation. Fifth, all three countries have made ideological legitimacy claims. Sixth, Bangladesh has made no claims in procedural, while there were no performance claims in Turkey.

Summary

The comparative analysis of the regime legitimation strategies of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey demonstrates a strong reflection of the theoretical framework developed in this thesis. A series of conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. First, despite having dissimilar country contexts and characteristics, all three regimes reflected similar regime legitimation behavior. Second, all three regimes have severely manipulated elections applying both legal and extra-legal means. Third, all three regimes have used repression and co-optation to control the opponents. Repression took place in the form of pre-emptive (legal provisions) and preventive (law enforcement agencies) styles. Fourth, over 90 percent to nearly 100 percent of media outlets in all three countries have been owned by either the state, the ruling party, or the pro-regime business groups. The incumbents largely manipulate the media through controlling licensing and advertisements and applying fines and sanctions. Furthermore, the regimes use legal provisions and law enforcement agencies to control the media and restrict the freedom of expression. Fifth, the biggest tool used by all three regimes has been ‘changing the rules of the game’ to establish control over all state institutions, including the judiciary that has been made subservient in all three countries. Sixth, the improvement of economic growth and social development has taken place in Bangladesh and Hungary. Though social indicators have improved in Turkey, economic growth has significantly declined, indicating that economic growth does not improve on an equal footing in all electoral authoritarian regimes. Seventh, ideological legitimation strategy has been

used by all three regimes. Three ideological features have been broadly used: nationalism, populism, and Islamism. Populism in Hungary and Turkey also incorporates elements of nationalism and religion. Finally, not all authoritarian regimes make procedural and performance legitimacy claims, but all make ideological legitimacy claims.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

This thesis examines regime legitimation strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes. It addresses one central question: how do electoral authoritarian regimes legitimize their rule? The thesis argues that neither normative legitimacy nor descriptive legitimacy theories provide sufficient explanations for analyzing regime legitimation strategies in electoral authoritarian regimes. It claims that the 'supply cycle' legitimation perspective provides better analytical tools for regime legitimation. Taking the 'supply cycle' perspective, this thesis argues that institutional strategies are insufficient for analyzing regime legitimation in authoritarian regimes, rather institutional strategies work in combination with non-institutional strategies for legitimation. Therefore, combining institutional and non-institutional strategies, this thesis develops a three-fold regime legitimation strategy framework that includes three broad strategies – procedural, performance, and ideological. The thesis insists that the electoral authoritarian regimes concurrently apply these three regime legitimation strategies to claim legitimacy, with a significant emphasis on ideological strategy. This thesis then applies the three-fold regime legitimation framework in three dissimilar country contexts – Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey to check the theoretical framework's compatibility and develop a generalized understanding of its applicability. The empirical findings from Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey strongly support my three-fold regime legitimation framework. This thesis has several theoretical implications, which are discussed below.

Hegemonic Behavior of Competitive Regime

Theoretical literature divided electoral authoritarianism between competitive and hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes insisting on the level of restrictiveness. Diamond (2002), Schedler (2006), and Levitsky and Way (2002) affirmed that the level of restrictiveness

in competitive authoritarian regimes is relatively lower than that of the hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes. My research finds that competitive authoritarian regimes can reflect hegemonic behavior. Of three cases of my thesis, Hungary and Turkey are competitive authoritarian regimes while Bangladesh has been a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime. The comparative analysis of the three cases shows that the Turkish competitive authoritarian regime can behave even more hegemonic than the hegemonic regime of Bangladesh. As revealed in Chapter 4 and 6, the level of restrictions in electoral competitiveness and political pluralism under Erdogan's competitive regime were higher than those of Bangladesh's hegemonic regime. During the 2017-2019, the restrictions were so high in Turkey that they were greater than the restrictions in Bangladesh. The hegemonic behavior of competitive regimes is also evident in the differences in levels of restrictions between the competitive Hungarian regime and the competitive Turkish regime. As a competitive regime, Hungary had been relatively less restrictive than Turkey, while the latter clearly behaved like the Bangladesh's hegemonic regime as both Turkey and Bangladesh had similar levels of restrictions.

My research shows that the level of restrictions is dependent on the political context, rather than the type of the regime. In Turkey, the domestic political context ranging from the Gezi Park protests in 2013, the regime's war with Kurdish nationalists and IS extremists in 2015, and the failed military coup in 2016 (leading to a state of emergency for two years) paved the way for the ruling incumbent to increase the level of restrictions. Thus, the competitive authoritarian regime can behave like a hegemonic regime depending on the domestic political context.

Performance is Authoritarian Performance

A large volume of the theoretical literature insisted on economic growth and social development as key to performance legitimation. Highlighting the rentier states and countries like China, scholars often asserted that as long as the regimes are able to deliver public goods, the authoritarian regimes are likely to stay in power. This argument is though consistent with Bangladesh and Hungary, but not with Turkey. My research shows that under the authoritarian regime in Turkey, the country's economic growth has significantly suffered and is increasingly declining. At the same time, the country's authoritarianism has increased, and the country was transformed from a parliamentary system to a strong presidential authoritarian one. As opposed to the theoretical literature which insists on economic growth and performance as key to the survival of authoritarian regimes, the electoral authoritarian regime in Turkey has demonstrated that authoritarianism can even be intensified alongside the decline of economic growth.

Therefore, the Turkish electoral authoritarian case highlights an aberration from the existing theoretical arguments, which insisted that the survival of authoritarian regimes is contingent upon the economic performance of those regimes. Based on my research, I argue that the overall authoritarian performance is the key to authoritarian survival rather than economic performance only. By the time the Turkey's economy began to decline, the Erdogan regime had already concentrated enough power that allowed the incumbent to push the country toward a strong presidential authoritarian system. It is important to note that Erdogan assumed power in 2003 and began capturing the state after 2007, as mentioned in Chapter 6, but the regime became competitive authoritarianism in 2014. Therefore, his authoritarian plans and base allowed him to stay in power and intensify as well as institutionalize authoritarianism. Thus, performance is authoritarian performance, which is key to the survival of authoritarian regimes.

Legitimacy in Ideology

Several theoretical studies have asserted that the world is witnessing an 'end of ideology', the electoral authoritarian regime has been facing a fundamental 'crisis of ideology', and ideology is not a legitimation strategy anymore, as discussed in Chapter 2. My research however shows that ideological legitimation is the most common strategy among all three countries. Bangladesh used nationalism and Islamism for ideological legitimation, while Hungary and Turkey both used populism. Orban's populism has been centering around anti-elitism and refugees and migrants, while Erdogan's populism focused on anti-elitism and Islamism. Similarly, in terms of making legitimacy claims, my research finds that although not all authoritarian regimes make procedural or performance legitimacy claims, all three make ideological legitimacy claims. Therefore, the electoral authoritarian regimes seek legitimacy in ideology.

This thesis has identified a gap in the existing literature in the initial chapter that there is no comprehensive framework for analyzing regime legitimation strategies in the comparative contexts. My thesis, therefore, developed a comprehensive theoretical framework by combining three broad strategies and applied them in three diverse contexts. The thesis has found a strong reflection of the three-fold regime legitimation strategy framework to win domestic legitimacy in completely disparate contexts of Bangladesh, Hungary, and Turkey. Due to the limited focus of this thesis, my research has not incorporated autocrats' strategies of legitimation to win international legitimacy, which can be a significant part in the authoritarian legitimation process. Similarly, my research has not covered the perspectives of international community, political opposition, and the public on authoritarian legitimation strategies, which can also be helpful to view the authoritarian legitimation process in a wider horizon. Rather, my thesis has concentrated only on autocrats' strategies, from the ruler's point of view, to win domestic

legitimacy. Future studies can investigate these other dimensions of legitimation, as mentioned above, to develop a broader understanding of the authoritarian legitimation process.

However, the central contribution of this thesis is the development of the three-fold framework and its utility in applicability in comparative contexts. Readers can find this thesis useful in understanding how authoritarian governments try to legitimize and win legitimacy. Similarly, comparativists, academics, and researchers can utilize this three-fold theoretical framework to analyze regime legitimation strategies of various authoritarian contexts. Furthermore, this thesis can also provide significant insights to future researchers aiming to investigate different dimensions of the authoritarian legitimation process.

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