

DEBATE AND THE PUBLIC AGENDA: TURKISH OPPOSITION PARTIES AND THE  
POLICYMAKING PROCESS 1983-2015

by

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POLICYMAKING PROCESS 1983-2015

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## ABSTRACT

### DEBATE AND THE PUBLIC AGENDA: TURKISH OPPOSITION PARTIES AND THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS 1983-2015

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**Keywords:** Turkish Grand National Assembly, opposition parties, political conflict, legislative institutionalization, democracy

In a legislative system such as Turkey's in which the institutional design favors governance over inclusiveness, what role do opposition parties play in the legislative process? Previous studies have investigated elite and mass attitudes towards political opposition, case studies of individual opposition parties and the institutionalization of the party system, but an empirical exploration of the contribution of opposition parties to the Turkish policymaking process is lacking. Applying a framework engineered by political scientist Frank R. Baumgartner, this thesis quantifies and analyzes general debate in the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the magnitude of media coverage of these debates from 1983 to 2015 in order to gain insight into the tools of political conflict used by opposition parties in the Turkish legislative system. This thesis concludes that when the forces of political conflict are played out against the backdrop of a not fully institutionalized legislative system, subject to a lack of linkages between legislators and outside actors, and operating in a less free media climate, Baumgartner's framework reveals an inconsistent picture and the patterns of conflict that are revealed in the Turkish case reflect a larger struggle in finding a balance between stability and democracy.

## ÖZET

### MÜZAKERELER VE HALKIN GÜNDEMİ: TÜRK MUHALEFET PARTİLERİ VE 1983-2015 ARASINDA POLİTİKA GELİŞTİRME SÜREÇLERİ

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, muhalefet partileri, politik çatışmalar, yasama kurumu, demokrasi

Türkiye'nin yapısal tasarımının hükümetin lehine olduđu bir yasama düzeninde, yasa yapım sürecinde muhalefet partileri nasıl bir rol oynamaktadırlar? Önceki çalışmalar her ne kadar seçkinler ve kitle tutumlarının siyasi muhalefetin üzerine etkisini, bireysel muhalefetin durum incelemesini ve siyasi parti sistemlerinin yasalarla güvence altına alınmasını inceledilerse de; muhalefet partilerinin Türkiye'deki politikaya etki süreçlerini inceleyen deneysel bir çalışma daha önce yapılmamıştır. Frank R. Baumgartner'ın geliştirdiđi kuramsal tasarımı kullanan bu tez Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'ndeki genel görüşmeleri ve 1983'ten 2015'e Meclis'te muhalefet partilerinin Türk yasama sisteminde kullandıkları politik çatışmalarının araçlarına bir açılım sağlayarak yaşanan görüşmelerin medyada ne ölçüde yer bulunduđunu ölçmek ve çözümlenmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu tez Baumgartner'ın yaklaşımı istikrarsız ve dolayısıyla çatışma içeren bir siyasal ortamda istikrar ve demokrasi arasında bir denge bulunmaya çalışılırken muhalefetin nasıl çaba gösterdiğini çözümlenmektedir. Tam kurumsallaştırılmamış bir yasama sistemi ortamında politik çatışmaların nasıl şekillendiđini, yasama yapanlar ile dış etkenlerin arasındaki bağlantı eksikliğine nasıl maruz bırakıldığını ve medya özgürlüğünün eksik olduđu bir ortamda bu sürecin etkisinin olup olmadığını araştırmaya yarar. Türkiye'de de benzer bir siyasal çerçeve içinde muhalefetin yasama organını ve genel görüşme olanaklarını kullanarak gündemi genişletmeye olan etkisini araştıran bu çalışma, daha önce dikkat edilmemiş bir muhalefet işlevini böylece gün yüzüne çıkartmaya yardımcı olmaya çalışmıştır.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AK Party	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Motherland Party
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party
CAP	Comparative Agendas Project
CHP	Republican People's Party
DSP	Democratic Left Party
DYP	True Path Party
FP	Virtue Party
MÇP	Nationalist Task Party
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
RP	Welfare Party
TGNA	Turkish Grand National Assembly

## INTRODUCTION

What is the role of opposition parties in political systems designed to privilege governance over inclusiveness? In systems where institutional arrangements do not prioritize the input of opposition parties and yet democratic turnover is possible, the perception can be that the primary function of the opposition is to criticize the government until they succeed in taking power themselves. In systems where policymaking is the prerogative of the government or the legislative majority, the inclusion of opposition parties in the policymaking process is not a priority.

Opposition parties, nonetheless, play a dynamic and important role in the institutionalization of democratic legislative function that goes beyond providing an alternate choice at election time. Even in systems where the political rules leave a restricted space for opposition parties to operate, opposition parties play a vital role in maintaining and consolidating the health of a nation's democracy.

For this reason and others, opposition parties in Turkey have garnered the attention of academics. Explorations of opposition politics in Turkey have been approached from the angle of political culture. Frederick Frey's seminal work on elite political culture and regime stability provides a cornerstone for the academic literature that touches on issues of political opposition.<sup>1</sup> His theories on the group cohesion and intolerance towards outsiders that characterize the Turkish party system are echoed and explored in writings investigating attitudes towards multi-party politics in Turkey. Ersin Kalaycıođlu picked up this line of literature in the 1980s to empirically test its suggestion of intolerance towards multi-party politics and political opposition, finding instead that tolerance among political elites and masses towards opposition and a multi-party system was fairly widespread.<sup>2</sup> Other lines of inquiry have included case studies of particular opposition parties,<sup>3</sup> and significant attention has been given to the nature and institutionalization of the party system itself in Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frey 1965; Frey 1975

<sup>2</sup> Kalaycıođlu 1988

<sup>3</sup> Kiriş 2013

<sup>4</sup> Hale 2002; Frey 1965; Sayarı 2007; Sayarı 2012

What is lacking is a systematic and empirical exploration of the way that opposition parties behave and the legislative function they serve in the Turkish Grand National Assembly during legislative periods. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Turkey's electoral and legislative institutions accord such little apparent space to the contributions of opposition parties, that their influence on the legislative process – much less on the policymaking process – is thought to be an unlikely avenue for fruitful inquiry. However, frameworks for the investigation of opposition parties' contributions to the legislative process despite political institutions designed to prioritize governance over the inclusion of diverse voices in the policymaking process do exist. This thesis will use one such framework envisioned by Frank R. Baumgartner in his book *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking* to investigate the following question: what function do opposition parties in Turkey have in the policymaking process?

Though this is an ambitious question, the modest contribution this thesis hopes to make is to fill in a baseline empirical picture of opposition parties' ability, or lack thereof, to use institutionalized political conflict to influence the national political agenda. It will examine a period from 1983 to 2015 in order to provide a comparative view of opposition parties over time. In doing so, it will investigate whether there is empirical evidence that opposition parties are able to fulfill the basic function of bringing issues to the attention of the public in a way that has the potential to influence policy perceptions and the direction of the political agenda. Furthermore, it will inquire into the methods by which opposition parties engage with the policymaking process and what this indicates about the institutionalization of democratic legislative function in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA).

In the following pages, I will argue that when the forces of political conflict are played out against the backdrop of a not fully institutionalized legislative system, subject to a lack of linkages between legislators and outside actors, and operating in a less free media climate, Baumgartner's framework reveals an inconsistent picture and the patterns of conflict that are revealed in the Turkish case reflect a larger struggle with finding the balance between stability and democracy.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEORY

Political scientists have given us a variety of ways in which to think of and evaluate the contributions of opposition parties to multiparty political systems. The framework set forth by Frank R. Baumgartner in his book *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policy Making* provides a potential means for evaluating the function of Turkish opposition parties that is particularly intriguing.

This work, published in 1989, was Baumgartner's first book and set the stage for his later works exploring the politics of agenda setting. Baumgartner's scholarship, in partnership with others, would later generate an entire avenue of political science inquiry, the Policy Agendas Project and the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP). The later builds upon the United States specific methodology of the former to enable cross-country comparisons of issue attention across policy areas and political systems over time. The work of the Comparative Agendas Project covers seventeen countries, all consolidated democracies. Before expanding his work into this comparative realm, Baumgartner's *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policy Making* focused more narrowly on the specifics of a single country, asking a series of foundational questions that would in many ways inform his later work. Turkey is not a country that is included in the work of the Comparative Agendas Project, and whether or not the CAP framework would be applicable it open for debate. In attempting to glean insights into the workings of Turkish politics by engaging with the literature of agenda setting,<sup>5</sup> Baumgartner's first book provides a valuable starting point.

As the title of the book suggests, his work focuses on the French national context. It evaluates policy making in the French Fifth Republic in the late 1980s. Though his book has several avenues of inquiry into the French policymaking process, this thesis will focus on expanding the framework Baumgartner creates for evaluating political conflict as a tool for debate expansion. This section will proceed with a detailed unpacking of Baumgartner's central claims about the nature of the French Fifth Republic and political contestation

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that there are several prominent lines of scholarly inquiry into the politics of agenda setting. Baumgartner's Comparative Agenda's Project is only one such avenue. For a concise summary of the multiple strains of thought on the study of agenda setting, see Baumgartner, B.D Jones and J. Wilkerson 2011: pp. 950-952.

during the period he conducted his research in order to demonstrate its applicability in the Turkish context. It will then expand upon the implications for general political conflict as well as opposition parties when the Turkish case is viewed through Baumgartner's framework. This section will then set forth a series of claims in the Turkish case that will be empirically tested in subsequent chapters by expanding upon Baumgartner's framework.

### **Conflict and Agenda Setting**

Baumgartner opens his work by asking the question "Why do some issues become important societal debates, dominate the national media, and monopolize the attention of the nation's political leaders, whereas other issues are decided by small groups of experts?"<sup>6</sup> His work is concerned with the mechanisms that shape the political agenda and his central contention is that political conflict is the key explanatory factor behind agenda setting, not policy scope or content. Conflict is the means by which political actors expand debate. His work is built on the understanding that there is a tension between political generalists and political specialists. Generalists wish to portray policy issues in the broadest terms possible by appealing to ideology, values or any other aspects of an issue upon which the general public feels themselves qualified to comment. Specialists, on the other hand, wish to minimize public debate by portraying an issue as technical, noncontroversial and best understood by experts. "Depending on the side that prevails in this rhetorical debate about the proper characterization of the issue, the question will attract the attention either of a large number of policymakers and the mass media or of a small, limited number of specialists."<sup>7</sup>

Baumgartner contends that opposition parties are one of the key actors that have a vested interest in expanding debate, whereas the interests of governments and parties in power are often best served by keeping debate restricted. The introduction of increased scrutiny through debate – particularly debate that raises public awareness and outcry – is contrary to the government's goal of forwarding its agenda with minimal friction. A primary function of opposition parties is to challenge the government, which therefore makes them "natural allies of policy expanders hoping to shift an issue from the specialized

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<sup>6</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 3

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.: p. 3

to the general political arena.”<sup>8</sup> Opposition parties’ interests are best served by expanding political debate and oversight as a means to derail the government’s agenda and provide a platform from which to criticize the government more broadly.

### **Similarities between the French and Turkish Contexts**

Baumgartner makes no explicit claims about the applicability of his claims in other national contexts, though he does suggest that research into the opportunities for expansion and contraction in other political systems would be potentially fruitful.<sup>9</sup> The scalability of his framework and the logic underpinning makes its application in other national contexts both a worthy experiment and justifiable. The Turkish case from 1983 to the present is a particularly apt fit for Baumgartner’s model, as the French political context from which Baumgartner draws his empirical data resembles the Turkish political environment to a degree that makes comparison valid.

The French Fifth Republic, like the Turkish system under the 1982 Constitutional regime, is one in which a strong executive is prioritized and the policymaking role of the legislature is limited.<sup>10</sup> “In France the concern of the framers of the 1958 constitution was more with creating a system that would allow the government to govern despite the deep cleavages in society than with allowing for opportunities for minorities to appeal”<sup>11</sup> It was a system designed to limit opportunities for losers in the policy process to expand debate. Baumgartner describes the French policymaking process as one that is dominated by the executive branch. The parliamentary agenda is set by the government and legislation, Baumgartner says, is generally prepared by the administration and is passed by the Parliament without amendment.<sup>12</sup>

The Turkish governing system designed under the auspices of the military regime governing the country after the 1980 coup was also designed in a way that gives the government the ability to forward its policy agenda with minimal policy input from the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: p. 165

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.: p. 219

<sup>10</sup> Kalaycıoğlu 1990: pp. 188-191; Kalaycıoğlu 1995: pp. 42-43; Kalaycıoğlu 2008: pp. 17-19; Kalaycıoğlu 2010: pp. 122-125

<sup>11</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 220

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.: p. 163

legislature. “The decision as to which bills will be taken up is technically a decision of the legislature, but in fact the government parties, following the instructions of their leaders, determine the agenda.”<sup>13</sup> Over much of the past thirty years, the government, through the power of their party members in the TGNA, have steered the course of the legislative agenda. Writing in 1990, Ersin Kalaycıoğlu characterizes the legislative process as one in which the government plays the most significant role in policy making: “The high approval rates of the government-sponsored bills, and very low levels of deputy input in the legislative process are indicative of the fact that the TGNA after 1983 has veered towards...a ‘subordinate’ type of legislature.”<sup>14</sup>

The government’s dominant role in policymaking can be measured by looking at the origin of bills that are eventually passed into law. In both the French Fifth Republic in Baumgartner’s time and in the Turkish case, though bills submitted by individual deputies are far more common, bills originating from the government are enacted into law with much greater frequency.<sup>15</sup>

An additional similarity between the French and Turkish case is the limited human resources granted to legislators. As in the Turkish case, French legislators have minimal staffs. “Most deputies... indicated relying on a single staff aide for their legislative work and on another for their district casework,” which “make it easier for the government and the parliamentary majority to control debates...”<sup>16</sup> The volume and pace of the legislative process is such that without the aid of a larger staff, legislators’ ability to monitor the progression of government’s policy agenda is necessarily bounded. This is relevant in that it affects deputies’ ability to effectively strategize and engage in timely and well-informed legislative debate. Engaging in expansionary tactics is rendered more difficult by the lack of staff to support deputies and parties efforts. This is particularly true in the Turkish case since constituent services already account for the largest allocation of individual deputies’ time.<sup>17</sup> Expansionary tactics in a context made more difficult by a lack of staff to aid the

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<sup>13</sup> Turan 2003: p. 165

<sup>14</sup> Kalaycıoğlu 1990: p. 211

<sup>15</sup> Turan 2003: p. 165; Baumgartner 1989: p. 164

<sup>16</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 165

<sup>17</sup> Turan 2003: p. 163

process are another example of a check on legislator's ability to challenge the forward push of a government's agenda.

It is not just the legislative system that suggests similarities. Baumgartner characterizes the French system as one in which all of the institutions surrounding the legislature are also focused on governance over inclusion.

“The dominance of the executive branch over the legislature, the centralized administrative structure, the minor role of the courts in most policy questions, the tame press, and the great power of the career civil service all make it easier for the government and for the administration to get things done, but they also allow fewer opportunities for losers in the policy process to appeal to outside allies for help”<sup>18</sup>

Baumgartner seeks and finds expansionary forces even in a political context where the deck is stacked against opposition parties in many ways. Searching for the same expansionary forces in the Turkish case, with its similarly stacked deck, becomes an interesting avenue of inquiry.

### **Applying Baumgartner's Framework**

These similarities give Baumgartner's framework the potential to be highly revealing in the Turkish case, as his framework is one that is intended to explore the function of political parties in a context in which they appear to have little formal or procedural power to affect the outcome of policy. Given these similarly bounded legislative powers in France and Turkey, Baumgartner's framework is a potentially profitable tool of analysis to use in the Turkish context. This framework enables the exploration of political contestation and the role of opposition parties in a system where their power has been intentionally curtailed by the design of the political system.

Baumgartner asserts that, “the reduced role of the Parliament in making substantive and detailed policy decisions creates incentives for the deputies and the senators to contribute to the policy process in other ways. Members of Parliament are natural expanders of policy debates, and the Parliament as a whole plays its greatest role when it

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<sup>18</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 220



serves as an echo chamber for generating controversy.”<sup>19</sup> The Parliament, in serving this expansionary purpose, can bring issues into the public’s view and having done so, gives added momentum for their inclusion in the national agenda. This, Baumgartner says, gives legislators “one of the most important functions in democratic policymaking.”<sup>20</sup>

Looking at the phenomenon of political conflict and expansion in the Turkish case is an interesting test not only of the function of opposition parties, but is also a means by which to evaluate the democratic underpinnings of the policy making process in Turkey. Though the policymaking powers of a legislature may be limited, its engagement in the policymaking process serves the role of democratic oversight of the government, even if its input has minimal ability to drive policy decisions.

Is the Turkish legislature functioning in a manner consistent with this function of democratic oversight? Are the phenomena that Baumgartner observes in the French case similarly observable in Turkey? In order to answer these questions, I will set out to test a set of empirical claims.

First, if Baumgartner’s framework is sound and applicable in the case of Turkey, then we should see that opposition parties are utilizing the expansionary tool of debate to a significantly greater degree than parties in government and that parties in government are attempting to limit debate.

Second, we should expect to see that parties change their behaviors of expansion and contraction when they switch between opposition and government parties. When opposition parties become governing parties, they should switch from expansionary behavior to an impulse to contract debate and vice versa.

Third, if Baumgartner’s framework applies in the Turkish case, we should see a correlation between successful expansion of debate and an increase in public awareness of the subject under debate.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.: p. 165

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: p. 162

## **CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY**

Although this thesis is investigating a similar phenomenon as Baumgartner's above-explicated work and draws heavily on inspiration from his framework, its motivating research question and the length of time under examination are different, which necessarily requires an alteration of methodology. Baumgartner was writing with the purpose of illuminating something larger about the policymaking process and political conflict, namely the expansion and contraction techniques being employed. My purpose is different. It is to take what Baumgartner has concluded about legislators' contribution to democratic policymaking and test those conclusions in the Turkish contexts to see if they hold true. The analysis of these tests will contribute to an understanding of legislative function, particularly the function of opposition parties, and also provide insight into the institutionalization of democratic legislative function in Turkey.

The methodological approach of this thesis maintains the spirit of Baumgartner's empirical tests while necessarily deviating from them in order to look at a longer time frame and work with available data. Expanding on Baumgartner's original framework also allows for the investigation of changes over time and policy areas, which was not possible in Baumgartner's exploration of a single policy area over a one year timeframe.

### **Debate Data Set**

The first variable needed is one that can be quantified as a measure of expansionary tactics. Like Baumgartner, this thesis uses a measure of legislative debate to represent the tactic of expansion. Public debate in the plenary session of a legislature, by nature of the visible arena in which it takes place, relies on broadly framing issues in order to maximize awareness and highlight objections to proposals or policy. Public debate is not primarily a forum for discussing or introducing specific or technical policy changes, particularly in a system where a legislature's ability to amend legislation is highly limited. Debate is a tool of expanders, not contractors. A tool of those who wish to push the consideration of a bill or idea into the realm of generalists as opposed to those who wish to limit consideration of a proposed change to a group of specialists. By quantifying and sampling plenary debate, this allows for a measurement of a clear expansionary tactic.

In the Grand National Assembly, there are three distinct types of debate. The first is debate related to a specific bill that happens at the committee level, debate that happens related to a specific bill at the plenary level, and general debate. General debate is not attached to a particular proposal but rather can be introduced on any topic by any party group of group of twenty or more deputies directly to the plenary session for consideration. It is broadly defined as “the discussion on a certain matter concerning the society and the activities of the state held in the Plenary of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.”<sup>21</sup> Upon its proposal, an incident of general debate – hereafter referred to by its Turkish name, genel görüşme – is placed on the order paper along with a text explaining the justification for introducing the motion for debate. A select number of these tabled motions for debate make it onto the Plenary’s agenda and are then subject to preliminary debate in which the government and political party groups are given twenty minutes to speak on the topic and the deputy who proposed the motion is given ten minutes to speak. After this, a majority vote by show of hands is required to hold a full general debate, which then happens between forty eight hours and seven days later.<sup>22</sup>

For the purposes of my empirical tests, I have chosen to sample genel görüşme. This is an obvious methodological difference from Baumgartner, who used a series of elite interviews to collect legislator’s perceptions of which debates were of importance and then investigated and quantified those debates that were suggested. This was possible because Baumgartner was investigating a recent legislative period of less than two years – a period in which all of his elite interview subjects were involved in the policymaking process. Looking at a longer time frame necessitates finding a way to sample debate across a thirty two year period that has a degree of consistency across that period. Genel görüşme is best suited these criteria for a number of reasons.

First, though records of parliamentary debate are public documents freely available in print and online there are challenges to ensuring the complete thirty two year record is complete. Reports on debate coming out of committee exist, but the format for reporting them changed over time and some records are missing from the electronic record. At any rate, committee debate is of less interest and continuity regardless of whether or not it is

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<sup>21</sup> Rules of Procedure p. 161

<sup>22</sup> TGNA Website

available. Debate of legislation at the plenary level is of such a volume that individual analysis of 30 years of debate is not feasible, and the aggregate reporting on quantity and subject of debates exists in some cases but is again missing at times and changes format over the years.

Genel görüşme, however, receives a special chronological coding in the legislative record. For example, the first genel görüşme introduced in a legislative period is coded 8/1, the next 8/2 and so forth. This system makes it possible to deduce when a record is missing from an aggregate report of debate. It is then possible to search the volumes of debate individually within a specified time frame to find the missing debate. A majority of incidents of genel görüşme from the time period 1983 to the present (2015) can be searched and sorted via the TGNA's online database. However, records are only compiled through the 23<sup>rd</sup> Dönem (2011) with a large gap in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem and several smaller gaps in other Dönems. Since genel görüşme is clearly and consistently coded, it was possible to go back through the records to fill the gaps, and create a record for the 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem by individually searching each volume of the official Journal of Minutes (*tutanak dergisi*).

This process resulted in a data set of 267 incidents of proposed, preliminary and fully debated genel görüşme from the period 1983 to spring 2015, which represents the period running from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> legislative dönem to the end of the 24<sup>th</sup>. Of these 267 incidents of debates, there are 4 missing data points where a gap in the record indicates a debate was proposed but no record of it could be found in the individual volumes of the minutes. Each incident was coded with the following information: legislative dönem in which the debate occurred, general topic area of the debate, specific topic of the debate, proposing deputy, proposing deputy's electoral province, the deputy's party affiliation at the time of the debate's proposal, whether that party was a member of the opposition at the time of the debate's proposal and whether or not the debate was proposed (*önerge*), preliminarily debated (*öngörüşme*) or fully debated (*görüşme*).

A second reason for sampling genel görüşme, beyond the fact that it can be used to construct a reliable data set, is that genel görüşme is a suitable variable to analyze the robustness of Baumgartner's central ideas in the Turkish context. The goal of analyzing a debate variable is to look at parties' expansionary tactics when they are in and out of

power, and genel görüşme is a clear expansionist tactic. A book on the Turkish parliamentary process put out by the TGNA describes genel görüşme: “No voting over the issue under discussion takes place at the end of the general debate. A general debate only provides an opportunity to deputies, government, or party groups to bring particular issues of national interest to the attention of the people and express their opinions.”<sup>23</sup> The Assembly itself describes genel görüşme as a tactic to be used entirely to bring public attention to an issue – the very definition of an expansionary tactic. Furthermore, the overview of genel görüşme in this TGNA information book is under the “Parliamentary Oversight of the Executive” chapter, further highlighting the conception of genel görüşme as a tool that is used primarily by the opposition as a legislative check on the executive and by extension the governing party or parties. Others have posited alternate purposes for genel görüşme: it may also be a tool a deputy uses to influence the way she is perceived within her own party<sup>24</sup> or a chance to enter an opinion into the record<sup>25</sup>, but even these alternate motivations are not mutually exclusive with a desire to broaden general awareness or alter the framing of an issue under debate. Baumgartner’s theories regarding opposition’s role as expanders of debate and governing parties’ preference for contraction can therefore be justifiably tested by an empirical analysis of incidents of genel görüşme.

There are potential objections to the use of genel görüşme. One such objection could be that genel görüşme, since it requires a majority vote to be accepted for debate in the plenary session, cannot be an effective tool of the opposition since the governing party or coalition of parties could block any proposal of debate. This only strengthens genel görüşme as a test of the concepts under investigation, as it is an illustration of the functioning of the legislature subordinate to the governing party – steered by the executive – that is most interesting for us to look at, and is what Baumgartner was looking at. Given that genel görüşme is one of the constitutionally provided procedures given to parties to exercise a legislative check on the power of the executive, it becomes even more important to investigate. Whether or not parties are behaving in the way that would be predicted has implications for the institutionalization and democratic functioning of the legislature.

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<sup>23</sup> Erdem 2012: p. 99

<sup>24</sup> Frey 1965: p. 313-316; Turan 2003: p. 163

<sup>25</sup> This was suggested by deputies in interviews

Another potential objection is that genel görüşme is ostensibly independent of the policymaking process. It is not associated with any particular policy proposal, but rather a general opportunity to discuss an issue that is considered relevant to the time. Since Baumgartner's focus is debate and rhetoric in French policymaking, sampling a type of debate not directly associated with policymaking could be questioned. However, Baumgartner's claims about the policymaking process are built upon a predicted behavior pattern of parties – their ability to affect the policymaking process is a result of their being able effectively expand debate, garner public attention, and then wield that added public attention to force policy concessions. This project looks at only a part of that process – namely, are parties engaging in debate and do those debates enhance public awareness of the issue being debated – essentially the first steps necessary to having any input in the policymaking process through the means Baumgartner describes. Extending the analysis as Baumgartner does to look at how these expansionary tactics are able to influence policy is beyond the scope of the empirical analysis of this thesis, though it would be a natural extension. Analysis of the data does hint at some likely implications for what expansion means for policymaking in the Turkish case, though conclusions in this area are necessarily tenuous. However, even Baumgartner cautions his readers' on the scope of his project, stating that, "It is important not to overstate the policy role of the legislature in the Fifth Republic."<sup>26</sup> That is the point – of his project and of mine – given a context where the legislature is not a driving force in policy formation, what purpose do they serve? In this way, genel görüşme's independence from any specific policy-making mechanism is justifiable.

Furthermore, the use of genel görüşme over a thirty year time period has advantages that Baumgartner's limited time frame did not allow for. Namely, comparison of expansionary tactics over a lengthier time period which allows for the investigation of how expansionary tactics differ in coalition and government party periods, as well as insight into which topics over time are favored by opposition parties and government parties. Baumgartner's investigation was limited only to education policy; sampling genel görüşme opens up an line of questioning that was not possible with Baumgartner's data by allowing us to explore the question of which policy topics are seen by opposition parties as the most

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<sup>26</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 185

easily expanded. Additionally, if the government is proposing debate, which topics do they think are worthy enough to justify bringing added public attention, which topics do they think they can win, or justifies the risk of opening them up for opposition party and public scrutiny.

### **Media Sample Data Set**

As expansion is characterized as a tool by which a political party or actor brings added public attention to a particular issue, a quantifiable measure to act as a proxy for degree of public awareness is needed. Absent the existence of any other data set measuring public awareness of debate in the Assembly over the time period under investigation, media coverage of legislative activities can be used as a proxy indicator for the information that the public has access to and which influences their awareness. Though Baumgartner notes in his own measurement of newspaper coverage as a measure of public awareness, this coverage is not “by itself sufficient to indicate increased public awareness of or interest in the topic,”<sup>27</sup> it is still useful. Measurement in shifts in magnitude of coverage between incidents of debate can serve to indicate which debates received more and less public awareness, as opposed to attempting to quantify a degree of interest for any one case. It is a comparative measure of awareness across multiple incidents of debate as opposed to any sort of absolute measure of awareness in any one particular incident of debate.

Furthermore, the media is a necessary intermediary in communicating legislative activities to the public. Without media, only activist citizens taking the initiative to educate themselves could find out the workings of the TGNA, a task made more possible by the digitalization of the TGNA’s proceedings in the 1990s, but by no means widespread. Measuring media coverage, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that the public is aware. However, a lack of media coverage is a definite indicator that the public is *not* aware. In this way, a quantification of media coverage is intended to demonstrate the possibility or likelihood that the public is more or less aware. If there is no media coverage, there is very little possibility that the public is aware of political actors’ expansionary efforts.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: pp. 175-176

Of the 267 incidents of proposed genel görüşme over the period since 1983, twenty nine of those debates passed beyond preliminary debate and were fully debated in the plenary session. Since some of these twenty nine incidents were on similar topics that were later group and debated together, there are seventeen separate dates upon which a full genel görüşme occurred in the plenary session. I measured corresponding newspaper coverage for all seventeen debates. This created a complete and descriptive data set that could be investigated in its entirety without having to justify sampling a subset of debates. Incidents of fully debated genel görüşme should in theory also be the most impactful and likely to garner media attention.<sup>28</sup>

The question of which newspapers to sample was one that required consideration. There are a prolific number of Turkish dailies catering to different ideological positions and changes in ownership and editorial staff can result in those ideological positions shifting over a time. Sampling any one paper would give an incomplete view of what the broader media picture might look like in regards to portrayal of legislative activities. If a paper has a political leaning that favors a particular party in or out of power, their coverage of the nature and, indeed the existence, of an incident of debate could be skewed. For this reason, throughout the period in question, the coverage of two ideologically disparate newspapers were sampled. Throughout the period, Milliyet newspaper was sampled. I analyzed Tercüman newspaper from 1983 until it went out of print in 1993 and analyzed Zaman daily from 1993 until the present. Though I do not mean to claim that these papers represent the entire political spectrum, I do contend that they represent different portions of the political spectrum and therefore have different biases and ideological skews. In this way, if a paper would have ideological motivations for limiting their coverage of a debate, a second paper with different ideological motivations would be less likely to skew their coverage in an identical way that would obfuscate legislative activities otherwise deemed newsworthy.

Milliyet is digitized from 1950 to the present. A keyword search for “genel görüşme” and “TBMM” were run for each instance of debate over a five day period covering the two days before the debate until two days after the debate. Different keyword

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<sup>28</sup> This method of sampling “high impact” legislative sessions is one that has precedence elsewhere. See Loizides 2009: p. 282



combinations were used, including combinations of “Turk Büyük Milliyet Meclis”, ”Meclis”, “görüşme” and a keyword from the topic of the debate in question. Though some combinations resulted in a broader array of returned results, it did not result in relevant content that was otherwise excluded from a key word search limited to “genel görüşme” and “TBMM,” so I proceeded with the two word keyword search. All relevant results were then checked to ensure that the article’s content covered the debate in question, and those that were not relevant were discarded.

Tercüman is not digitized. I created a keyword search similar to the one I had used to search Milliyet in order to maintain continuity. I did so by using the relevant results I had gathered from Milliyet to reverse-engineer a manual keyword search that would turn up all relevant results. I searched Tercüman headlines and sub-headlines for any one of the words “Meclis,” “TBMM,” “görüşme,” “tartışma,” a debate topic keyword, or any political party name. If the headline contained any of these words I then searched the first one or two paragraphs for a second of any of these words. If none of the words showed up in the first few paragraphs, I moved on. If the opening did contain multiple words, I scanned though the entire article and included it if relevant. Since the pieces of most columnists (*köşe yazarları*) lacked headlines of more than a few words, I scanned the first one to two paragraphs for keywords to decide if the article was worth pursuing in more detail. Additionally, I restricted the date range to a three day range instead of the five day range I had used to search the digitized archives of Milliyet. In my Milliyet search, only one relevant result fell outside of a 3 day date range. Given the labor involved in searching each page of each day’s paper, I therefore justified narrowing my search to include a date range from one day prior to the debate to one day after.

Zaman is digitalized from 1995 to the present day. I used the same procedure as I used for Tercüman to scan the Zaman coverage between 1993 and 1995 and the same procedure as I used for Milliyet from 1995 to the present.

Each result was quantified in number of words. If an article appeared on the front page of the newspaper, I multiplied the word count value by three. If the story was accompanied by a picture (excluding columnist headshots), I multiplied the word count

value by two. The result is numerical score of weighted words of newspaper coverage per debate.

The last quantifiable variable was also the easiest to obtain. This was the length of debate in the TGNA quantified in pages of debate in the Journal of Minutes. This value is given along each summarized entry of each genel görüşme in the Journal of Minutes, and in each online entry.

## **Interviews**

I conducted interviews with seven current and former TGNA deputies in Ankara on March 2-4 and April 2, 2015. Six of the deputies were opposition party members serving in the current 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem. Four were representatives of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), one of whom was a deputy group chairman (grup başkanvekili) in the party leadership of the CHP. Two were representatives of the opposition Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), one of whom was previously a member of the governing Justice and Development Party (AK Party). The other was a designated spokesperson for the MHP. One interview was with a retired Motherland Party (ANAP) deputy who served in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> legislative periods in addition to serving as a deputy in legislatures prior to the period under investigation in this study. During this deputy's time in the TGNA, ANAP switched between opposition party and coalition partner multiple times.

These interviews are not in any way a representative sample of deputies for the period under consideration in this thesis. In particular, there is a heavy bias towards the legislative practices of the most recent legislative periods under the party government of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party). However, the interviews are intended to provide an additional check on my empirical findings and subsequent conclusions. Since these interviews do not constitute sufficient data to be brought in as a separate data set, the deputies' insights and opinions are brought in at relevant points in the analysis section of this paper, both when their views corroborate the data and when their views of legislative functions appear to differ from what the data indicates. At all points I have tried to make it

apparent that these are statements of individual deputies and influenced by their own opinions and objectives, as opposed to definitive statements of facts.

I conducted free form interviews based on a general set of questions. Though each interview progressed along its own course, the basic set of questions can be seen in Appendix A. The interviews varied in length from twenty minutes to fifty minutes. Five were conducted in English, two in Turkish. Since most deputies do not speak sufficient English to give interviews in this language, this also introduces an additional bias. Three of the deputies interviewed completed PhD studies in the United States and one in Austria. Both Turkish interviews were transcribed in Turkish and then translated with the assistance of a certified translator.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DATA ANALYSIS**

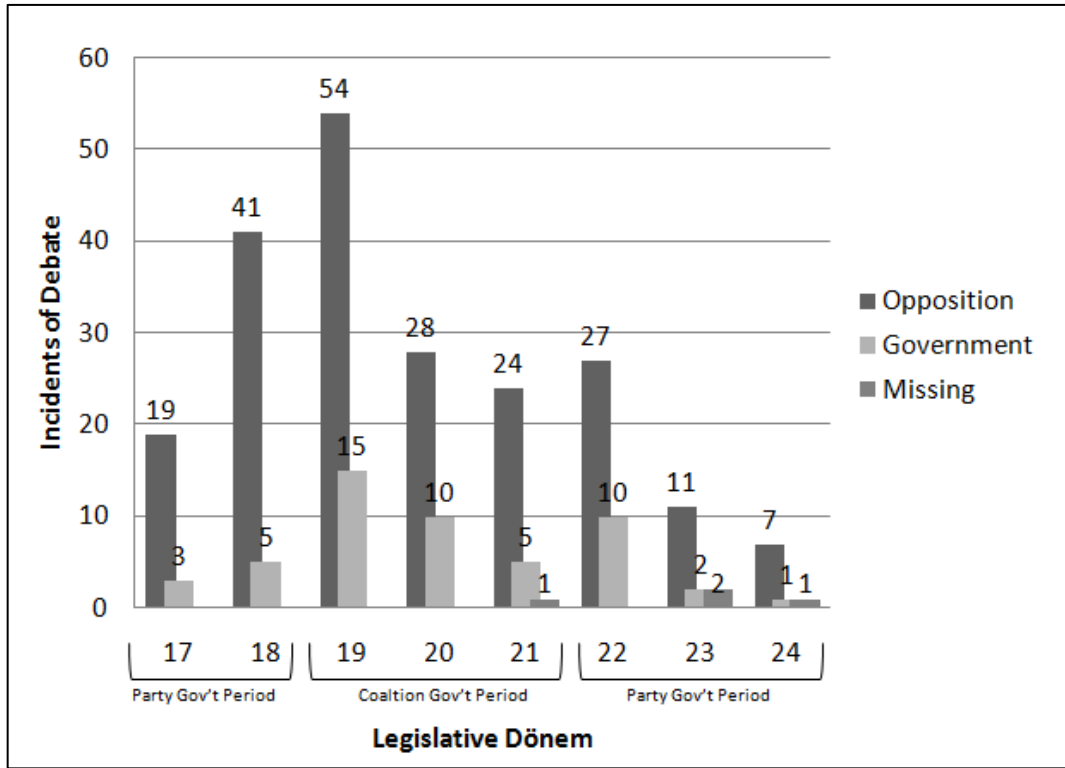
As outlined at the end of chapter one, if Baumgartner's assertions regarding opposition parties' role and interest in expanding public discourse are correct, then there are expectations about how opposition parties will behave in a legislative context. By applying these basic assumptions to the Turkish case, one can test the applicability of Baumgartner's framework for the Turkish case. If Turkey deviates drastically from the expectations of Baumgartner's basic assumptions, then it would not be logically sound to further compare the Turkish case to his framework.

### **Debate Proposed by Opposition Parties versus Governing Parties**

One of the most basic and foundational conclusion of Baumgartner's work is that opposition parties use parliamentary debate as an avenue to introduce conflict into the policymaking process, challenge the government, and gain public awareness of the issue under debate. The government, conversely, has a vested interest in minimizing debate. As a general rule, expanding political debate is dangerous for the government's agenda. The government, particularly a single party government that has sufficient votes to ensure the passage of its legislative proposals, has little to gain from inviting the acrimony of debate. Debate gives opposition parties the opportunity to challenge the government and question the ideas, abilities or intentions of those in power in a public and officially recognized capacity.

To this end, it would be expected that opposition parties in a democratically functioning legislative system would introduce motions for debate at a much higher rate than a governing party. Examining incidents of genel görüşme in the Turkish context, this pattern holds true.

**Figure 3.1:** *Debate proposed by opposition vs. governing party by dönem*



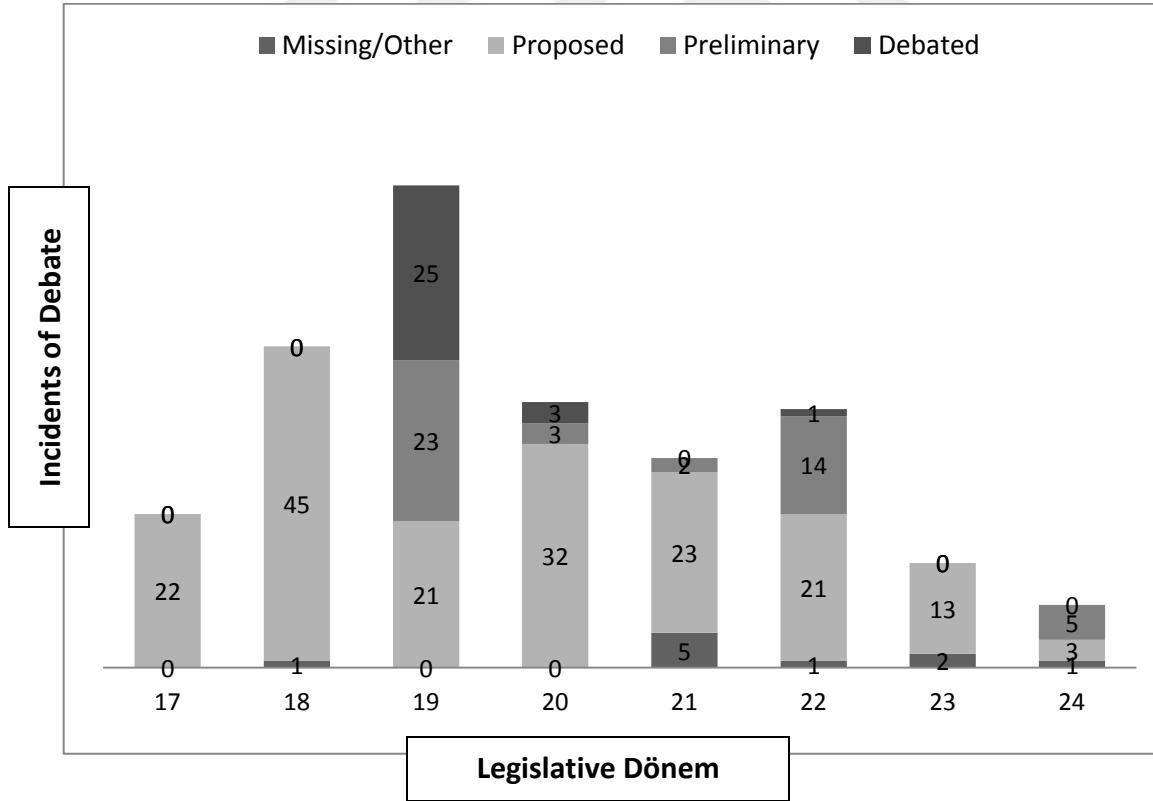
This graph shows that the Turkish legislature is following the expected pattern and that opposition parties are introducing debate at a much higher rate than the government, in every legislative period. In every dönem, regardless of the overall number of times debate is proposed, the ratio of opposition-proposed debate to government-proposed debate is much greater. This implies that Baumgartner's most basic conclusion holds true in the Turkish case. Opposition parties are proposing debate with a view to expand the conversation and challenge the government. Governing parties propose debate at a much lower rate.

### **Proposed, Preliminary and Fully Debated Genel Görüşme**

It would also be expected that opposition proposals for debate would be rarely taken up for full debate by the plenary. The government's interests would be best served by not allowing extensive debate, and their superior numbers should mean that they can successfully block the opposition from debating proposals most or all of the time.

Proposing a debate requires only twenty signatures, which is a feat that can be achieved by any party group. Proposing debate means that the proposing deputies' names and a one to two page summary of the debate proposal are printed in the Order Paper which is published each sitting day of the Assembly. In order for the proposal to make it to the plenary for preliminary debate, the Board of Spokespersons must put it on the plenary agenda. The Board of Spokespersons is chaired by the Speaker or a vice-speaker from the governing party and the chairpersons of the political party groups or their representative. Debate proposals can therefore be obstructed at the level of the Board of Spokespersons so that they never make it onto the plenary agenda or if they do go to preliminary debate, a majority vote is required to pass on to a full debate, which means any proposed debate could be blocked by the majority party.

**Figure 3.2:** Proposed, preliminary and fully debated genel görüşme by dönem



As expected, full debate requires a majority of deputies and therefore can be easily blocked by any governing party. Turkey once again adheres to this pattern.

In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Dönem no proposals made it past the proposal stage. In the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem the majority of proposed debate did not even go to preliminary debate. Only the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem is an outlier, with approximately equal distribution between proposed, preliminary and fully debated genel görüşme. Indeed, a plurality of genel görüşme examples went to full debate in the plenary. The case of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem will be explored in more detail in a later section.

This picture reveals a lack of a consistent pattern across periods. Genel görüşme has changed in terms of legislative importance and function. Under the ANAP party government, genel görüşme was proposed, but did not go even once to preliminary debate. Possible hypotheses as to why this might be the case include that the government was in full control of the operations of the Board of Spokespersons at this period. Though the Board of Spokespersons is defined as a body designed to reach consensus among political parties regarding the participation in legislative activities including setting and changing the Plenary's agenda,<sup>29</sup> in practice the governing party has greater influence through the chairmanship of the Board of Spokesperson and also because a lack of consensus among the members of the Board is resolved by taking the issue to the plenary for a majority vote, where the governing party or majority coalition has sufficient votes to proceed as they wish. The lack of preliminary or full debate could also mean that party leaders were not willing to expend effort to move genel görüşme to preliminary debate based on any number of strategic considerations, including a lack of belief in the value of genel görüşme as a legislative strategy. It may be that the mere proposal of genel görüşme served the purposes of whichever deputy or party group proposed it: proposing genel görüşme causes the debate summary, which is often an outline of the proposing deputies beliefs on the issue, to be included in the Order Papers and become part of the official record. Merely proposing debate is a way to put forward an opinion or raise an objection and have it officially noted.

In legislative periods in which a coalition government is in power, the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem through the 21<sup>st</sup> Dönem, preliminary and full debates began occurring in significant numbers. This is a marked difference from the party government period before in which there were no genel görüşme that proceeded beyond the initial proposal stage. In general,

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<sup>29</sup> TGNA website

the rate of preliminary and full debates during the coalition legislative periods is significantly greater than the rate during party government periods. The increase in preliminary and full genel görüşme indicates that opposition parties had more opportunities and ability to participate in the legislative process in coalition periods than in party government periods.

The proliferation of genel görüşme during the coalition legislative periods suggests that in comparison with the periods before, the governing parties lacked the ability to control the legislative agenda to the degree that ANAP was able to in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Dönem. If the coalition partners had coordinated and been in agreement, they would have possessed sufficient numbers to suppress genel görüşme at the Board of Spokespersons level prior to preliminary debate, or in the plenary to block a preliminary debate from becoming a full debate. The apparent lack of success in suppressing genel görüşme, corroborates other accounts of this period as one in which coalition partners were not in great accord. Ilter Turan observes that the fragmented party system of the time created pressures for political parties to adopt strategies aimed at maintaining their vote share and keeping their deputies from switching parties. “The imperatives of such a situation dictate parliamentary strategies that include somewhat overtly hostile relations with rival parties even when they may be partners in the same coalition. In this way, group cohesion may be maintained while the voters are sent signals to distinguish between what looks like a set of similar parties.”<sup>30</sup> Parties within a coalition had strategic interests that put them in conflict with one another, and in light of this conflict between governing parties, opposition parties had more opportunities to further their own strategic interests.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem, as mentioned above, is an unusual case. The surge in debates that went to both preliminary and full debate suggests lack of control by government over the legislative process. The operation of the Assembly during the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem, which began in 1991, appears to be a break with the way in which the TGNA had operated in the past. Kalaycıoğlu, writing in 1995, observes “[d]efinitely, the influence of the TGNA in policy-making is greater now than it used to be.” He notes that the TGNA, acting on the declared political goals of the governing DYP/SHP coalition is functioning in a way to “slow down

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<sup>30</sup> Turan 2003: p.159



or halt legislation pertaining to political reform,” leading to a mounting of tensions between the TGNA and executive. “Consequently, it looks as if the 1991 Parliament is a more autonomous body, which functions with greater effectiveness than previous Parliaments.... It seems as if the Government wields less control over the TGNA than any previous Government of the 1970s or 1980s.”<sup>31</sup> The surge in debate in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem supports this analysis. Debate, as an expansionary strategy is also a strategy of obstruction. If both the opposition and the governing parties had an interest in slowing down the legislative agenda of the executive, then both would be inclined to use debate as a tactic to do so. In this period in which incidents of debate spike, proposed debate from non-opposition parties is higher than in any other dönem in the thirty two year period under observation.

This obstructionist tendency does appear to decrease over the next legislative periods, suggesting that the government again gains greater control over the activities of the legislature and the loyalty of the governing parties to the government’s agenda. There is a substantial decrease in rate of proposed, preliminary and fully debated genel görüşme between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dönem, and another slight decrease from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>. This suggests an increasing ability on the part of the government to limit debate.

The rate of genel görüşme proposals during the most recent three legislative periods indicates that general debate’s role has changed over the AK Party’s time in power as well. There is a steady decrease in incidents of introducing genel görüşme over the three legislative periods. Furthermore, the tactics of both the governing party and opposition parties appear to change over this time period. Referring back to figure 3.1, the AK Party proposed debate ten times in their first legislative period in power. Indeed, the single incident of full debate that has thus far occurred at any time under the AK Party’s government was proposed by then prime minister and leader of the AK Party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This suggests that in their first term in power, the governing party was not adhering to a pattern that Baumgartner’s framework would predict. The governing party had an interest other than contracting political debate in the interests of moving forward their political agenda with as little public attention during the legislative process as possible.

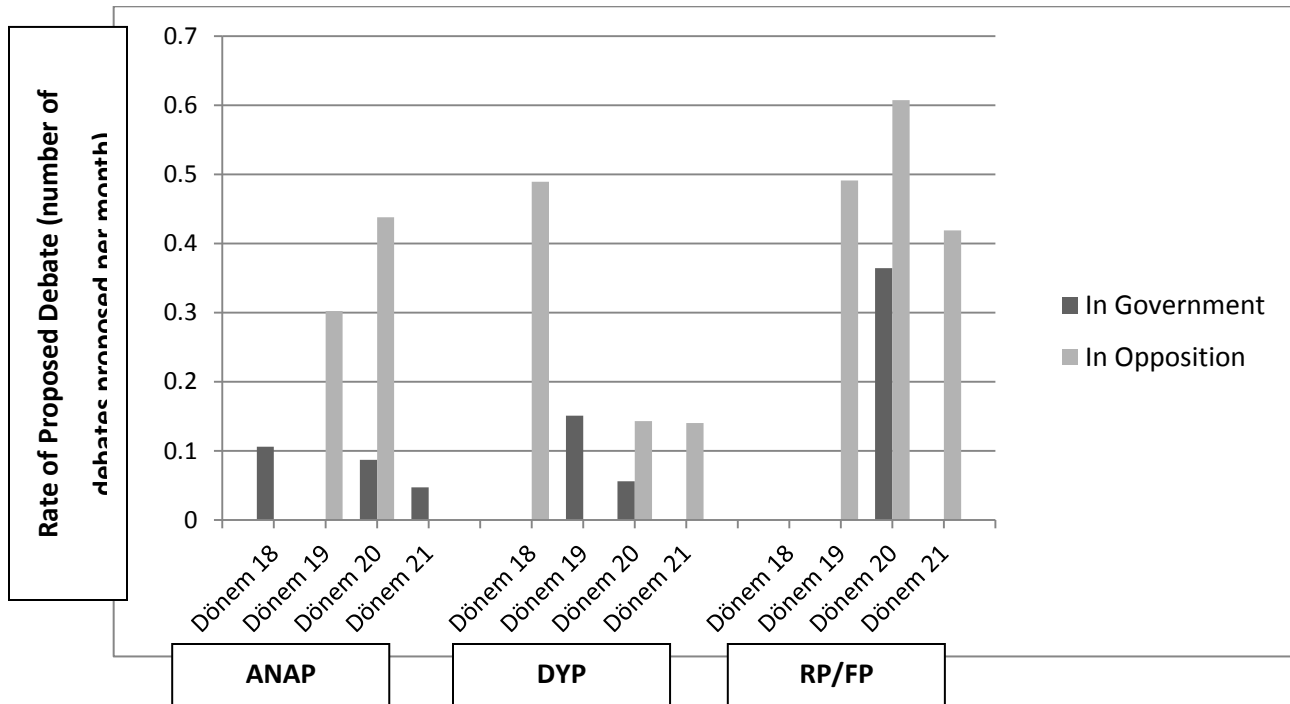
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<sup>31</sup> Kalaycıoğlu 1995: p. 59

### Behavior Changes In and Out of Opposition

Another observable result of Baumgartner’s theory is that parties should change behavior when they change from being a governing party to an opposition party. In order to investigate this phenomenon more closely I analyze the behavior of three parties during a period in which they each switched between government and opposition at least twice. When debate-proposal rates of ANAP, DYP and RP/FP (FP takes up the mantle of the RP after it is banned in 1998) are quantified and divided by each party’s time in and out of opposition, the data reveals that they do behave as Baumgartner’s framework would suggest. Since parties’ times in and out of power varied in length, the ratio of debates proposed to months in office is used to standardize the rate of proposal across parties and periods. This enables the behavior of parties to be compared in terms of magnitude, though in real terms the numbers appear small.

**Figure 3.3:** *Debate proposal rate in government versus opposition*



ANAP's behavior very clearly adheres to the predicted pattern. During the 18<sup>th</sup> Dönem when ANAP was the governing party, ANAP proposed genel görüşme at an average rate of 0.106 debates a month. In the subsequent Dönem when ANAP was in the opposition, that rate of proposal tripled to an average of 0.302 debates per month. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Dönem, ANAP was in power for 23 months and in opposition for 16 months. Their rate of debate proposal in the 20<sup>th</sup> Dönem was 5 times higher when they were in opposition as when they were not. When they were part of the governing coalition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Dönem, their debate proposal rate dropped to the lowest of any time in the period in question to an average of .047 debates proposed per month.

DYP's behavior also adheres to the pattern, if a little less perfectly than ANAP's does. In the 18 Dönem when they are in the opposition, DYP proposes genel görüşme at a rate of 0.489 debates per month – which is nearly five times higher than the rate at which the governing party ANAP was proposing debate during the same time period. When DYP is part of the governing coalition in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem, their rate of debate proposal drops by two thirds. Given the dynamics of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem discussed above, DYP was still introducing genel görüşme at a rate higher than other governing parties during prior and subsequent legislative periods. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Dönem, DYP spent 18 months as part of a governing coalition and 21 months in opposition. Its rate of genel görüşme proposal while it is in opposition during this period is three times higher than when it was a governing party, though in real terms its rate of proposal while in opposition is similar to its rate of proposal while in government in the previous dönem. It maintains the same magnitude of proposal rate in opposition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Dönem as it did in opposition in the 20<sup>th</sup> Dönem.

The RP proposes debate at the highest rate of the three parties across the four legislative periods in question. The RP is not in existence during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dönem. When it becomes a party in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem, as an opposition party it averages a rate of 0.491 genel görüşme proposals per month. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Dönem, the RP is in a governing coalition for eleven months and in opposition for twenty eight months. During this Dönem the RP is banned, and it's behavior in opposition is looked at in combination with the behavior of the FP. The RP/FP proposes debate forty percent less often in opposition than they do as a governing party. Though this ratio is not as stark as for ANAP and DYP, it is more stark

than it appears – in real terms, RP proposed genel görüşme only four times in the eleven months it was part of the governing coalition. Three of those proposals came in the first two weeks of their time in government. It appears that the RP quickly changed their behavior after those initial weeks in power and proposed genel görüşme only one other time in their remaining ten months as part of the governing coalition. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Dönem as an opposition party, the FP continues with their predecessor’s comparatively high rate of genel görüşme proposal while out of power, with an average proposal rate of 0.419 debates per month.

This test clearly confirms the hypothesis that debate is a tool more often used by opposition parties than by governing parties. Parties, even when they are switching between opposition and government multiple times and relatively quickly, adapt their behavior to suit the strategic interest of expanding debate while in the opposition. They propose debate much less frequently while a governing party than they do while in opposition.

### **Topics of Debate**

The data also reveal a number of interesting findings outside of the scope of Baumgartner’s investigation, which was limited to a study of education policy. Analyzing genel görüşme allows for a picture of which topics or policy issues are most frequently the subject of debate.<sup>32</sup> This in turn allows us to explore whether parties deem particular policy areas to be more apt for expansion through debate.

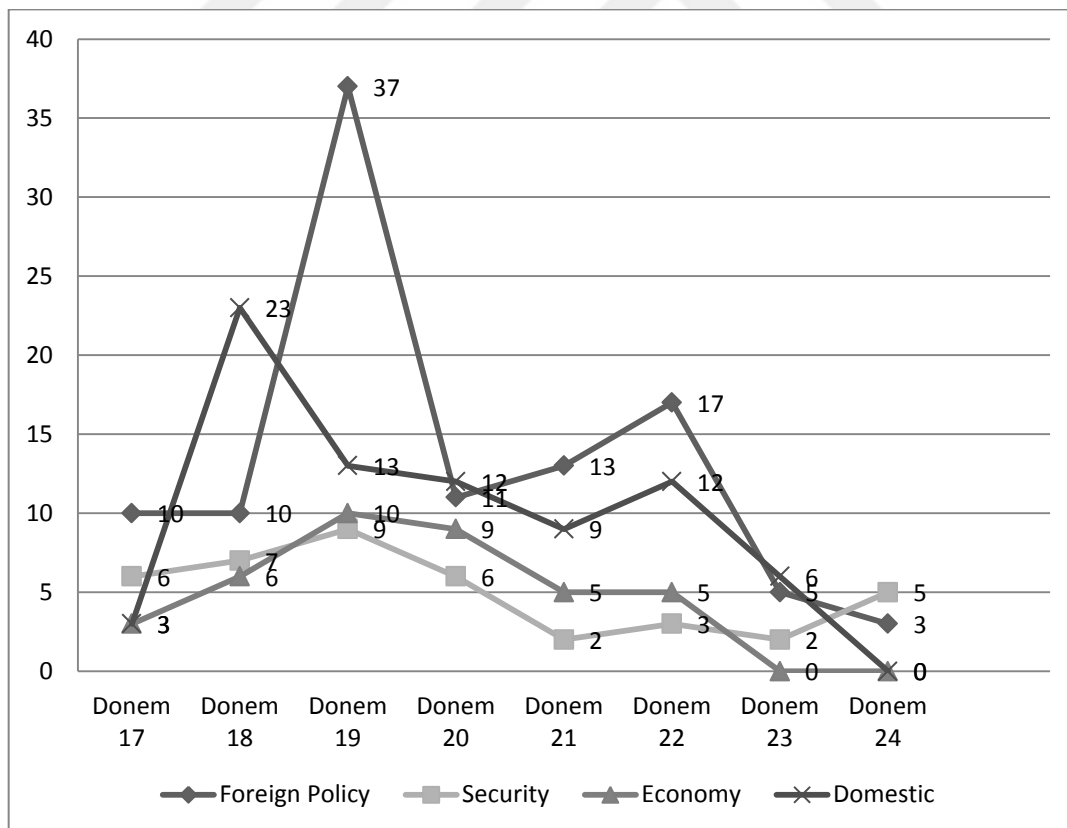
In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> legislative periods, foreign policy issues were the most commonly proposed issues for genel görüşme. The spike in foreign policy related genel görüşme proposals in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem is particularly dramatic. A significant factor in this spike was the propensity for multiple proposals on the same topic to be introduced concurrently, each by a member of a different opposition party. For example, five deputies from four different 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem opposition parties (one each from ANAP, MÇP, DSP and two from RP) proposed a genel görüşme on current events in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This

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<sup>32</sup> I created my own categorizations based on the specific topics of debate. At times, the classification was subject to interpretation, for example a debate on the EU Customs Union could be classified as either an economic or a foreign policy issue. In these cases I chose whichever one category I thought best described the topic. Domestic topics include all non-security and non-economic issues related to domestic policy.

is accounted for as five separate proposals for debate. When one of these topics would make it to the plenary for full debate, the proposals were combined and debated together. This practice is not limited to foreign policy proposals, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem this was the case for genel görüşme proposals relating to Chechnya, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Armenia the Caucasus and accounts in large part for the very visible spike. The most interesting implication of these concurrent proposals is that it indicates a level of coordination or at least mimicry among opposition parties. In some cases different opposition parties put forward a motion for genel görüşme on the same topic published in the same day's Order Papers, on some topics one opposition party will propose debate on a topic and other opposition parties will follow with motions for debate on the same topic at a later date.

**Figure 3.4:** *Topics of debate by dönem*



This practice of concurrent or imitative proposals from multiple opposition parties continues in later legislative periods as well, though to a slightly lesser extent. At times, all parties, including the governing party will put forth a similar topic for debate. For example, the first four proposals at the opening of the 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem were on the same topic, one proposal each from all four party groups, including the governing AK Party. The CHP, MHP and AKP phrasing their proposals as debate concerning an “increase in acts of terror,” and the Kurdish issue-focused BDP phrasing their proposal as a discussion of “the Kurdish issue.” The proposals then were preliminarily debated in a closed legislative session.

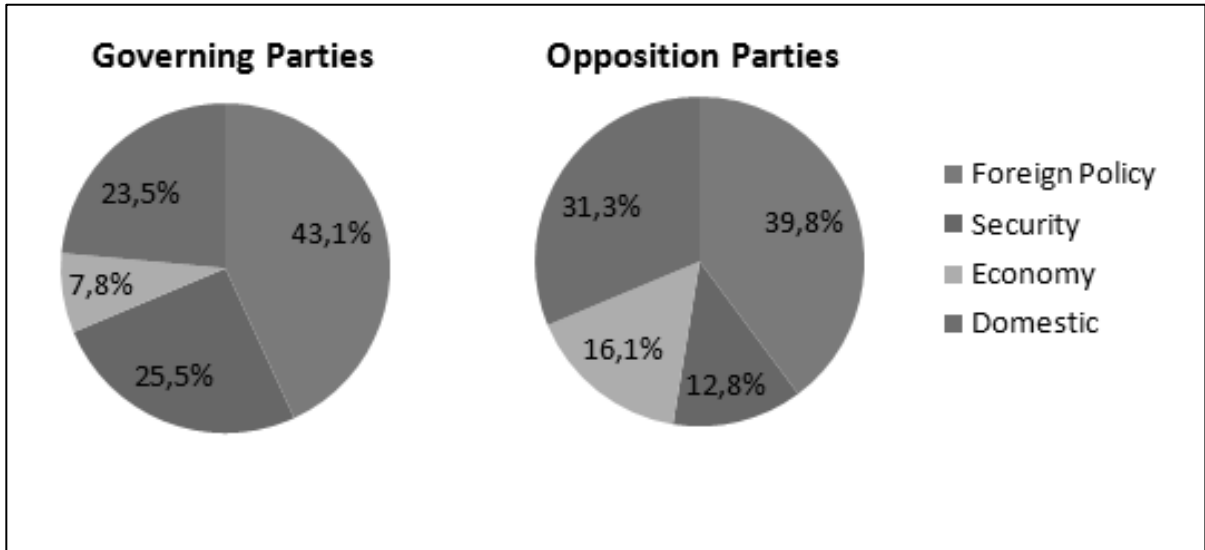
Domestic issues were the most often proposed in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dönem by a significant margin, and narrowly edge out foreign policy proposals in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Dönem.

The 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem is the only legislative period in which a topic other than Foreign Policy or Domestic Issues received the most proposals. In this case security was the most common proposal area. However, this is due to the concurrent proposals to debate increases in terror activities/the Kurdish question mentioned above. These four proposals accounted for the majority of the five total security-related debate topics introduced, and almost half of all debates introduced across all four topic areas in the 24 Dönem.

### **Topics Preferred by Government versus by Opposition**

While an examination of the topics most frequently proposed provides insight into debate expansion more generally, a more interesting question is how does the behavior of opposition parties and governing parties differ when broken out by topic. Looking at the data in this way allows insight into which types of issues the opposition might view as most conducive to expansion, and which issues the governing parties might think are most winnable and worth the risk of attracting attention.

**Figure 3.5:** *Topics preferred by government parties versus opposition parties*



Foreign policy accounts for the largest share of proposed debate for both opposition and governing parties, and to a similar order of magnitude – 43.1 percent of all genel görüşme proposals coming from governing parties and 39.8 percent coming from opposition parties.

The higher rate of genel görüşme proposal in the area of foreign policy suggests that both opposition parties and governing parties view this issue area as one that is winnable in the public sphere. One opposition party deputy who joined the TGNA after decades in the foreign service speculated on the difference between foreign policy debates and debates on other topics:

[F]oreign policy issues have a different status.... [In the past] foreign policy was pursued in a narrow corridor – by the government, Prime Minister – the opposition wasn't terribly interested in foreign policy as a result of either negligence or a broad background consensus on these issues. And a public that wasn't terribly interested, and a media that wasn't terribly interested in foreign policy issues. Now it has changed, foreign policy has become a bread and butter issue, a part of the domestic debate.

This analysis does not entirely concur with the data; opposition parties do appear interested enough in foreign policy for it to compose a plurality of its debate proposals. However, this notion of foreign policy playing a shifting role in how the government seeks to influence public sentiment at home can be one explanation for the reason why a government would wish to bring attention and expand debate on foreign policy issues. If foreign policy is viewed by the public as less relevant to their daily lives and potentially something best left to the government, expanding public debate and awareness of foreign policy issues and thus crafting the way the government's foreign policy actions are perceived domestically, can be in the best interests of the government.

In regards to other issue areas, opposition parties are half as likely as a governing parties to propose debate about a security issue. This means that for governing parties, foreign policy and security together account for nearly seventy percent of all genel görüşme proposed. This suggests governing parties have less interest in contracting debate of foreign policy and security issues. Since foreign policy and security issues are largely interrelated with the actions of other actors, policy on these issues is often reactionary – debate is proposed in response to a specific terror event or conflict in neighboring states for example. In these instances, the government's actions or response are less likely to be part of a coherent policy agenda intended to forward their interests and more about shaping the public's perception of their handling of an unfolding event.

Conversely, economic and domestic issues are the areas in which the government is likely to have an agenda which it is attempting to forward. In which case, keeping debate contracted and trying to forward that agenda while minimizing legislative friction and public awareness prior to passage is more likely to be in the government's best interests. Indeed, the data does provide some support to this theory: opposition parties are twice as likely to propose debate about the economy as a governing party. Proposals on domestic issues account for 31.3 percent of opposition genel görüşme proposals compared to 23.5 percent government parties' proposals.



## Media Sample

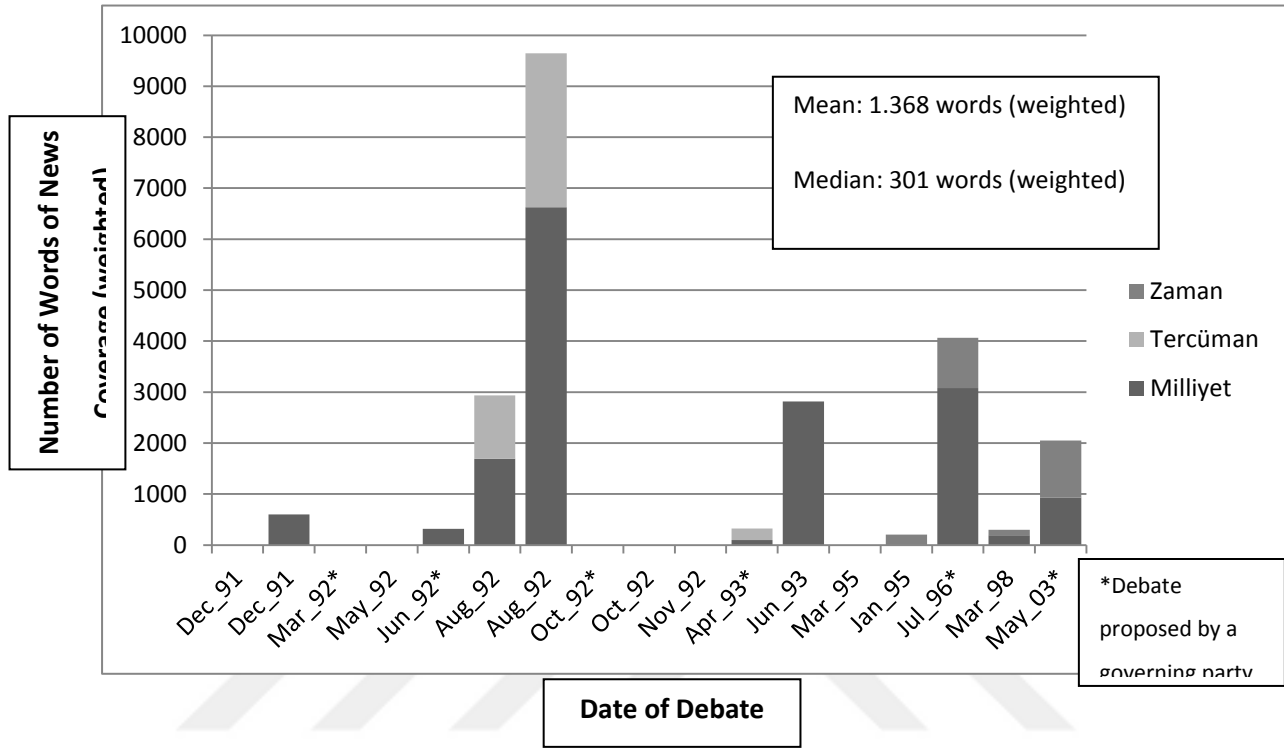
Thus far, unpacking the debate data set has enabled us to test two of the three empirical claims laid out as a test of Baumgartner's framework in the Turkish context. We have shown that yes, we do see that opposition parties are utilizing the expansionary tool of debate to a significantly greater degree than parties and government and also that in periods where the government is unified enough to do so, they are acting to limit debate, as evidenced by small number of debates that pass on to be fully debated in the plenary.

We have also tested the second empirical claim and showed that parties do indeed change their behaviors of expansion and contraction when the switch between the opposition and government parties. When parties are in opposition, they propose debate at a significantly higher rate than when they are a party government or a member of a coalition government.

Beyond testing Baumgartner's framework, we have also been able to empirically examine which topics of debate are most closely associated with opposition and government party strategies of expansion, and how those strategies of expansion differ by topic according to whether the proposing party is in opposition or not.

Analyzing the debate data set on its own has enabled the testing of these first two empirical claims and the additional exploration of topics of debate. In order to test the third claim, that of public awareness as a result of debate, additional data must be brought in. The third and final empirical claim is that if Baumgartner's framework applies in the Turkish case, we should see a correlation between successful expansion of debate and an increase in public awareness of the subject under debate. As outlined in the methodology, media coverage is being measured as a proxy for public awareness. Media coverage in multiple newspapers from 1983 to the present has been quantified for all fully-debated incidents of genel görüşme in that time period.

**Figure 3.6** Magnitude of media coverage of all fully debated genel görüşme 1983 - 2015



Quantifying news coverage in this way makes it apparent that the attention allocated to individual debates is highly varied. Seven out of seventeen debates received zero media coverage in the newspapers sampled. Five debates received a measure of coverage well above the mean of 1,368 words (weighted) of coverage per instance of debate. Five debates received some measure of coverage, but at a rate well below the mean. The variation of coverage suggests that the media’s role in expanding public awareness is not uniform or consistent. The occurrence of debate in and of itself is not enough to garner media attention and by extension public awareness.

Of the five debates that received significant attention, three were proposed by the opposition. Two were proposed by the government: the instance of genel görüşme debated in July of 1996 was proposed by then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. The genel görüşme debated in May of 2003 was proposed by then Prime Minister Erdoğan. Since both of these debates were introduced by the head of the government, it is very clear that

the proposal of these debates was at the initiative of the government, not from any wayward impulse of the governing party in defiance of the executive.

However, there are also instances of proposed debate coming from the governing party that received no media coverage in the newspapers sampled. However, of the four other debates proposed by non-opposition parties that received little or no coverage, none were proposed by the head of the government, rather they were proposed by a member of the governing party.

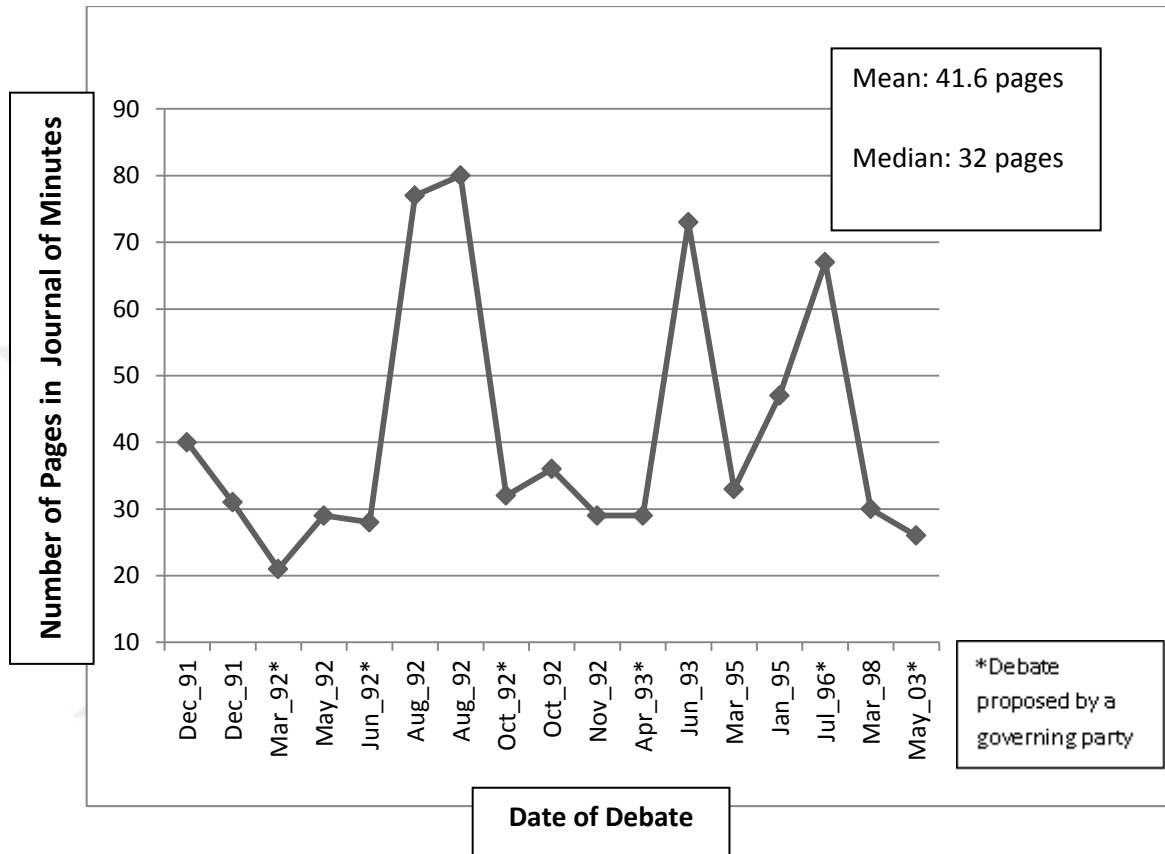
The media coverage in the different newspapers sampled is also comparatively equal. This suggests that judgment of what legislative activity is newsworthy was similar at all three newspapers regardless of their overall editorial directions.

### **Length of Debate**

The time allocated for genel görüşme is prescribed in the rules of procedure, however, debates do still differ in length. Though all incidents of genel görüşme examined in this study were completed in one legislative sitting, the number of pages in the transcript reflecting the extent to which each issue was debated do differ.

The average length of debate is 41.6 pages, the shortest debate was 21 pages long and the longest debate almost four times as long at 80 pages. Four incidents of debate exceed the average significantly. The length of these debates pulls the average length considerably higher than it would otherwise be, meaning that 13 of the debates fall below the average length of debate.

**Figure 3.7** Length of debate for all fully debated genel görüşme 1983 - 2015

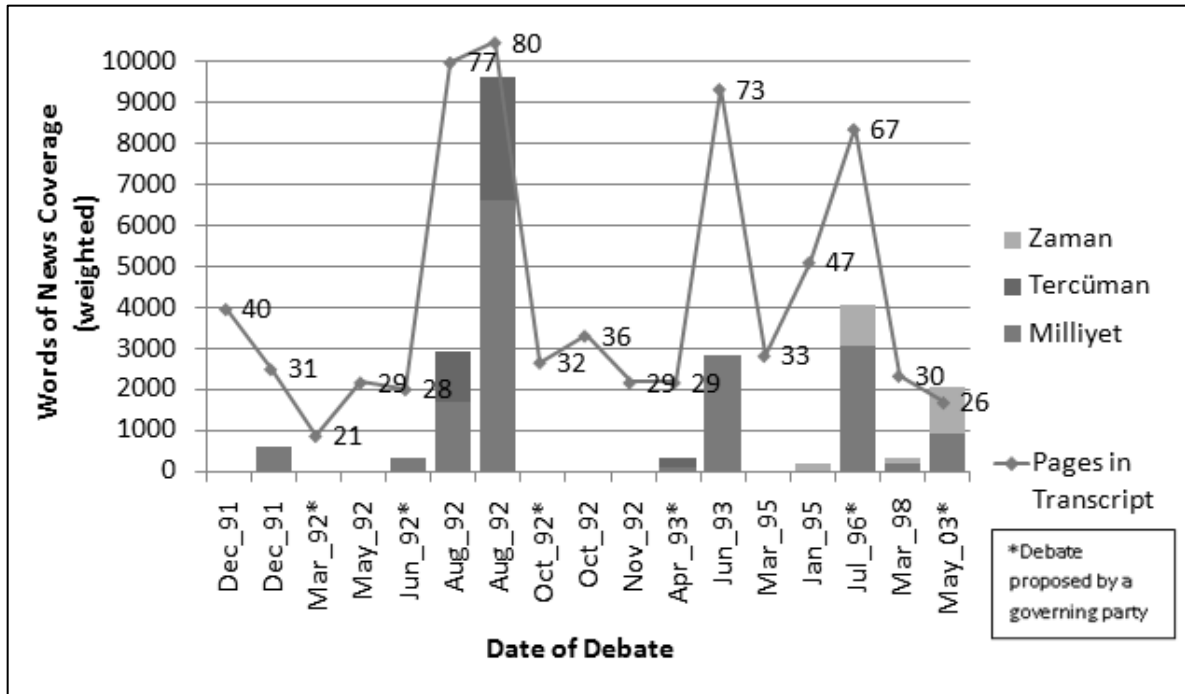


### Length of Debate in Relation to Media Coverage

Overlaying the two figures reveals a strong correlation between length of debate and the amount of newspaper coverage it receives.

The four spikes in debate length correspond with four of the five incidents of genel görüşme that received the largest amount of media coverage. The only exception to this correlation is the genel görüşme which occurred in May of 2003 when despite the length of debate being below average, media coverage still spiked.

**Figure 3.8:** Length of debate in comparison to magnitude of media coverage



Absent alternate explanations, it appears that when the TGNA debates a topic for a longer period of time, newspapers are more inclined to write about it. Granted, the topics that may stretch into longer debates may be more acrimonious and politically visible issues that the media would be more inclined to cover regardless, but since media coverage was measured based on articles that referred to the specific incident of genel görüşme, not just general media coverage of the same topic of the debate, the spikes are in direct coverage of the legislative process and the actions and arguments of deputies, as well as the context of the political environment in which the debate occurs.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION**

This project has investigated one portion of Baumgartner's theory on the expansion and contraction of policy issues in legislative contexts. It explored whether opposition parties are acting in the expansionary way that would be predicted by Baumgartner's framework and, conversely, are parties in government acting to limit expansion.

An examination of the expansionary tactic of general debate in the TGNA over a 32 year period reveals that incidents of genel görüşme increased from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> Dönem, reached their peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> Dönem, declined slightly and then remained at a steady rate across the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> legislative periods. The rate of proposal then tapered off in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem to its lowest levels of any time during the years under investigation.

While these patterns in the data pertaining to genel görüşme have been explored in detail in the previous chapter, the larger implications and meaning of the data will be discussed in this section. First, this section will explore what these patterns indicate overall about opposition parties' ability to expand debate and government's ability to limit debate in the Turkish context as well as what this means for the legislative process in Turkey. Second, it will extend upon these observations to inquire into a related takeaway from Baumgartner's framework. Namely, do parties' expansionary tactics have any influence on policy outcomes?

### **Is expansion successful?**

Are Turkish opposition parties successfully utilizing the expansionary tactics that are one of their natural legislative functions? Is the government acting to limit debate in the way predicted? The data indicates a mixed answer.

In some ways, the analysis of incidents of genel görüşme indicates that opposition parties are behaving in precisely the manner predicted. Opposition parties appear to use the legislative procedures at their disposal in order to act as the "echo chamber for generating controversy" that Baumgartner believes to be a legislature's most important role. The use of legislative process to achieve this goal of obstructing the government's agenda is of

particular importance for our larger question about opposition parties' role in the institutionalization of democratic legislative function; the significance of analyzing incidents of genel görüşme is not only that genel görüşme is an expansionary tactic; it is that genel görüşme is an institutionalized expansionary tactic. Proposal of genel görüşme not only indicates a desire to expand debate, it indicates a willingness to use the rules of the game to do so. In this sense, genel görüşme represents not just an expansionary tactic, it represents a belief in the legislative process and the institutionalization of the TGNA. The legislative tools available to parties have not changed significantly over the thirty plus year period under investigation and yet rates of genel görüşme have. Tracking the rise and fall of genel görüşme has the potential to cast light on the rise and fall of parties' belief in the utility of the legislative process.

In the 1980s, for example, the ANAP government sponsored the large majority of the bills that were eventually adopted by the TGNA, an indication that this government, like governments before and after it, was "not inclined to use the facilities of the TGNA in the law-making process."<sup>33</sup> And yet the continued proposal of genel görüşme on the part of opposition parties, suggests a willingness to work within the system, to exercise the oversight capabilities constitutionally granted to them, despite the seeming weakness of those tools. Indeed, despite not a single proposal of genel görüşme making it past the Board of Spokesperson to be even preliminarily debated by the plenary in the 1983 legislature, opposition parties in the 1987 legislature more than doubled the number of genel görüşme proposals they submitted. Not one of these proposals made it to the plenary either, and yet the rate of proposal increased again in the next legislative period. This participation in the process despite minimally apparent influence, suggests a willingness to work through the procedures granted to the institution of the legislature.

In the coalition years of 1991 to 2002, opposition parties also behave as predicted in regards to proposal of debate. The fragmented nature of the party system during these years created an opening whereby opposition parties were able to push genel görüşme onto the floor of the plenary to be debated, suggesting not only a desire to expand debate but some success in their ability to do so. Furthermore, when opposition parties did succeed in taking

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<sup>33</sup> Kalaycıoğlu 1990: p. 202

advantage of the governing coalition's lack of ability to limit debate, there was a possibility of communicating that expansionary message to the public. The media did not universally cover genel görüşme, but it does appear that for the debates that parties deemed the most important, namely those which they spent the most time debating in the plenary, the media provide an increased level of coverage.

This is not to say that opposition parties were not also attempting to work outside or around the process to counter the parties in power. Indeed, the rate of physical altercations on the floor of the TGNA during this period are one very visible indicator that methods outside of the legislative process were employed with enthusiasm and consistency. However, the continued use of legislative tools such as genel görüşme in addition to all other methods does suggest deputies were also using the system to attempt to expand debate and attract public attention.

On the other hand, parties do exhibit behaviors that are not in line with what Baumgartner would predict in a democratically functioning legislative system. The tapering off of genel görüşme in the past three legislative periods implies a curtailing of institutionalized conflict and expansion in the legislative process. While the return to party government did mean the government was more able to implement a unified strategy to limit debate, the fact that opposition parties have ceased to even propose debate suggests a lack of faith in the legislative procedures given to them. During the party government period of the 1980s, opposition parties were all but unable to get debate on the floor, yet it did not stop them from proposing it. In comparison, opposition parties' behavior in the last two legislative periods suggests a lack of belief in genel görüşme as a useful tool, and by extension suggests a potential lessening of belief in the legislative process.

Interviews with opposition deputies support this theory. In reference to genel görüşme, one main opposition CHP deputy serving in the 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem suggested that genel görüşme is simply not worth the time, going so far as to suggest that legislative procedures across the board have been sidelined and that legislative function has been undermined:

“The disappearance of genel görüşme, and also the disappearance of participatory democracy at the level of the parliament are signs of the diminishing parliamentarism in Turkey. Meaning increasingly the executive



has full control over all aspects of legislation. I would argue that parliament's role as well as individual MPs role – whether in the opposition or the government – are deteriorating over the years”

Another CHP deputy, one of the few deputies who had introduced a motion for genel görüşme in the 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem after working with his party leadership, was disillusioned after the process. “Genel görüşme is not that important. That is another mechanism. That too doesn't work.” Though he did qualify this sentiment later in the interview when asked if he believed genel görüşme had any ability at all to influence the views of the public, saying “Not necessarily on a one on one result of a genel görüşme. But as a combination of statements made to the press, on television, and it piles up.”

A deputy from the MHP pointed to the governing AK Party's ability to limit debate, suggesting that it made parliamentary function and genel görüşme irrelevant:

“The AK Party government, they have a big majority in parliament, it prevents proper parliamentary work in general. Also about [genel görüşme], they reject it, they don't look at if it is necessary or not, or if it is a reasonable offer or not.”

The sentiment that the current distribution of power prevents the legislature from operating as intended was one that appeared in several interviews. Opposition deputies did not just lament their party's lack of ability to influence policy, they lamented that their lack of ability to influence the process was due to a breakdown of the proper functioning of the legislative institution.

Lest it be argued that these opinions merely reflect the fact that genel görüşme has gone out of fashion among legislators and political parties, it should be noted that the deputies' observations on genel görüşme also led them to reflect on the other parliamentary institutions that they thought were malfunctioning in a similar way. More than one deputy remarked that the government, in comparison with previous legislative periods, no longer responds to oral questions from the opposition in a timely or complete manner. Another noted that legislative oversight of the budget has been curtailed. The irrelevancy of the committee process was a theme that emerged in multiple interviews as well. Though only rates of genel görüşme were quantified in this thesis, deputies' attitudes towards other legislative institutional practices indicate their belief in an undermining of legislative

institutions more generally, and by extension, their lack of belief in the utility of engaging in them.

The opinions of these deputies are not included as a definitive comment on the distribution of power in the political system at the time these interviews were conducted, but rather are meant to illuminate opposition deputies' – and by extension opposition parties' – views of the legislative process. The repeated theme of not believing that the legislative process is working is linked to why opposition parties may or may not be attempting to use the institutionalized expansionary tactics granted to them.

The opposition's sense of their lack of legislative options cannot be solely attributed to the difference between the ways opposition parties perceive their options in party government periods versus coalition government periods. The rise AK Party's predominance in the legislative sphere is different than what was observed under the ANAP party government. In the later case, opposition parties continued to propose genel gorusme, to engage in the process regardless of the relationship to policy outcomes. Opposition parties' expansionary tactics in the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem, on the other hand, appear to have diminished at least in part because parties do not believe these efforts achieve anything.

### **Media Climate**

Opposition party deputies' belief in the lack of purpose of genel görüşme in the 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem is not only because they lack the ability to bring genel görüşme to the floor, but also because there is a widespread belief that they are unable to bring their message to the public's attention even should they succeed in using the legislative tools for expansion available to them. Opposition parties do not perceive an even-handed media climate that would enable them to communicate their message beyond the walls of the TGNA.

An admitted shortcoming of the data on media amplification of genel görüşme is that it does not give a complete picture over the entire time period. Because the incidents of genel görüşme that were fully debated occurred primarily during the coalition government legislative periods, very little data specific to media expansion of genel görüşme outside of those years was not included in the media sample of this study. However, other indicators

suggest that the media climate in Turkey at the time of writing this thesis is not fully free.<sup>34</sup> In addition to external measures on the state of media freedom in Turkey, once again opposition deputies' perception of the media climate is telling. Across the board, opposition deputies interviewed for this study expressed a belief that opposition parties are at a disadvantage when it comes to media access. Deputies expressed the belief that the window available to them to get their message out was severely limited on several counts. One CHP deputy described her frustration at lack of media attention to what she viewed as valuable contributions:

“[I]n general stuff that opposition parties, or even speeches or press interviews and so on, you can call the press and have a press conference – these are recorded, but very few channels will show it, or they will not at all show it. So a lot of stuff that the opposition introduces never makes it to newspapers or electronic media. That is exactly why there is this image that my party is doing nothing...it never made it to the press.”

The same CHP deputy who had introduced one of the few instances of genel görüşme in the 24<sup>th</sup> Dönem described opposition parties' access to media thus:

“We get a little space through the parliamentary television. Which, by law, must be broadcast by TRT 3, but only until seven o'clock. When the government doesn't want what the opposition says on an issue, they take it to Friday or the weekend or they call for closed to camera sessions. The voice of the opposition is heard, but only partially. Especially given the state of the media. Which is under the strict, overt – and if necessary covert – control of the government.”

This deputy was not alone in implying that the government's efforts to limit and constrict debate were not, as Baumgartner might suggest, achieved through restricting debate to the realm of specialists, but rather by altering the rules of the game to limit opposition parties' visibility. Objections to the oppositions' share of air time on state run media channels or the government's deliberate scheduling of debate for times when it would not be publically aired were expressed by multiple deputies.

The former ANAP deputy made a direct connection between the media climate today a lack willingness on the part of opposition parties to challenge the status quo.

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<sup>34</sup> World Press Freedom Index

“[Journalists] should be an equal distance from all political parties in theory, but this is not the case. Now, opposition parties have lost their hope and expectations on this front and they do not even complain. They are so hopeless that they do not even put effort into changing this situation.”

A plausible explanation for the decline in opposition party’s expansionary tactics in the most recent two legislative periods is both a declining belief in the utility of engaging in parliamentary procedure as well as a belief that the media climate makes expansion unlikely.

### **Expansion and Policy Outcomes: The Turkish Case**

Thus far, this thesis has focused on the first component of Baumgartner’s theories on expansion. It has asked whether or not expansion is happening. The answer to this question, as explored above, is mixed, with strong indications that expansion is declining in the last two legislative periods. The second question which follows naturally is, when expansionary tactics are being used successfully, do they have any effect on the outcome of the policymaking process?

Baumgartner does not claim that legislative debate is enough to change policy outcomes in a system that is otherwise dominated by the agenda of the government. Rather, he sees debate as a lever by which to instigate or contribute to the magnification of other forces that have a combined ability to influence the government. “Parliamentary debate may not be enough in itself to push an issue onto the national political agenda, but when combined with public demonstrations and other activities outside Parliament it can be very effective.”<sup>35</sup> Legislative debate is effective when it is part of a larger set of coordinated activities. Gaining media attention and elevating an issue in the eyes of the general public is achieved by a combination of tactics employed by both legislative and non-legislative actors.

Baumgartner describes the forces at work behind one debate that successfully altered a policy outcome by contributing to and capitalizing on public sentiment. In this

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<sup>35</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 184

instance, a bill altering medical school training requirements had passed through parliament with the input of only a handful of specialists and very little debate. After passage, there was a large public outcry led by the medical students whom the change affected. “Parliamentary leaders of the opposition were quick to support the striking medical students and used the forum of parliamentary debate as a mechanism for generating publicity for their cause.”<sup>36</sup> The efforts of opposition leaders in combination with the highly visible demands of the students “created a major national issue on a topic that, months before, had been voted through Parliament with the sustained interest of only a handful of legislators”<sup>37</sup> In the end, the legislation was amended. Opposition party leaders’ expansionary tactics mattered, not because they were able to force a change on their own purely through the legislative process, but rather because they created a bridge between popular dissatisfaction and the policymaking process.

Surveying the Turkish case over the past thirty years, what can be inferred about the linkage between legislative and non-legislative actors whose interests and policy preferences align? Do we see the linkage between political parties and other shapers of public sentiment that are an essential component of expanders’ ability to affect policy outcomes?

Prior to 1995, the undermining of these connections between political parties and other societal actors was deliberate. A measure in the 1982 Constitution forbid cooperation between political parties and other stakeholders such as professional organizations, foundations, associations, and cooperative societies.<sup>38</sup> This official ban was lifted by constitutional changes passed in 1995, but in some ways the ban had been a codification of an established pattern; writing in 2000 Özbudun notes that the linkages between political parties and civil society institutions were never strong and were then further weakened by the provisions on the 1982 Constitution. He further suggests a lack robustness in these linkages even after the ban was lifted. The coordination of political goals as a key driver of political parties’ ability to effect change is inhibited in the Turkish case by an extended tradition of low linkage.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.: p. 168

<sup>37</sup> Ibid: p. 171

<sup>38</sup> Özbudun 2000: pp. 58-59

My interviews revealed this lack of linkage and coordinated momentum between legislative and non-legislative actors is perceived by opposition legislators to be a problem. In the words of the current deputies that I interviewed, attempts at expansion are not matched by or coordinated with other societal currents that would aid in propelling an issue onto the national stage.

My first round of interviews was conducted in the midst of a weeks-long debate over a controversial security bill. The exploration of deputies' perceptions of the debate reveal broader attitudes about the likelihood of the expansionary tactics they were using affecting public opinion. In this debate, all three opposition parties were against the bill and all attempted to forestall the bill's passage. These attempts to affect the outcome of the bill took the form of procedural and institutionalized means, as well as non-procedural means including fist fights on the floor of the plenary and "activist-style demonstrations" by deputies in the chamber.<sup>39</sup> Several of the deputies interviewed while this debate was ongoing thought the media coverage of the debate was greater than the coverage received by other debates, and had hopes that it was informing the public and could alter the course of the bill's passage:

I think our resistance in the parliament first of all shows people there is a problem. Second, hopefully we are able to get across some of our main points – about why the bill is such a bad idea for the democratization and EU process and Kurdish peace process, and hopefully a few of the articles have already been dropped, but *maybe* it will help us bring the government back to the negotiation table.

Despite this deputy's cautious optimism, he accompanied this statement with an expression of dissatisfaction that there was not a public outcry to match the efforts of opposition party deputies.

To be frank, it is disappointing to see that there is not much of a public outrage about the bill. I would argue that in any of the EU countries, such a draft bill right from the start would lead to millions of people protesting on the streets – including by members of the ruling party.

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<sup>39</sup> "Turkish parliament passes 10 articles of security bill amid protests from opposition," *Hurriyet Daily News*

He posits that this type of linkage and buy in from other actors is not possible because civil society, businesses and individuals fear punitive measures or loss of privilege if they oppose the government.

Another CHP deputy, when asked if he believed debate in the TGNA had any ability to change the public discussion about the topic being debated responded:

“No, not the direction and the critical end result of that discussion. But if history is important at all, you put yourself on record of saying I warned you, I drew your attention to this critical deficiency. Perhaps this kind of satisfaction.”

This assessment, that opposition parties’ contributions will enable history to vindicate their efforts as opposed to affecting the present reality of policy suggest a grim self-assessment of what they as parties are capable of doing. This same deputy provided an even more candid and cynical take on the role of opposition parties in Turkish democracy, saying “Opposition parties are certainly not irrelevant, in the sense that we give the façade still of a functioning democracy, of different political parties.”

### **Expansion or Instability?**

The intersection of expansion through political conflict and institutionalization of a democratic political system is one that deserves unpacking. Looking at the data from 1983 to the present, periods of heightened expansion and periods of heightened instability appear to be roughly correlated: The 1990’s was a period in which the institutional procedures the TGNA were used with greater frequency to expand political debate. The 1990’s was also a period in which political power was so fragmented and dispersed as to severely undermine effective governing. What is the relationship between expansion and instability? In the Turkish case is expansion a mark of institutionalization and democratic function, or merely mark of instability?

Baumgartner argues that expansion driven by political conflict is an important democratic tool in a restrictive political system, a way for voices that would otherwise be excluded from the policymaking sphere to have a say. But too much conflict equals no

policy, equals an inability govern, equals a failed political system. This is an all too familiar scenario in the Turkish case:

The overall picture of the process of democratization and legislative institutionalization in Turkey seems rather bleak. Every trial since 1946 seems to follow a definite cyclical pattern: a new political regime, or a constitution that emphasizes multi-party parliamentarianism is initiated by the 'state elite.' Conflict among the major contenders for power and political position...gradually intensifies....The mounting tensions pave the way for political protests, demonstrations, strikes and even the use of firearms in the struggle for political power. The TGNA fails to perform as a conflict-resolving arena, and perhaps even helps to exacerbate political tensions."<sup>40</sup>

This is the dark alter-reality of the process of conflict that Baumgartner describes. One in which the political system cannot contain or channel the conflict generated in its institutions and on the streets and the result is a complete breakdown of democracy, certainly not an enhancement of it. Where is the balance between democratic legislative activity that gives a voice to minority opinions even when institutional arrangements are stacked in favor of a strong government and between fragmented, unstable institutions in which effective governing is hobbled?

It is important to recollect the reasons why Baumgartner deems political conflict and expansion essential elements in a functioning democracy. Without conflict, he says, "subgovernments" of policy specialists come to exist and as a result, policy matters are determined primarily by actors who have a vested interest in the programs they are creating. Specialists are often drawn from outside the ranks of political actors, though they can be acting with the explicit approval of political leaders. Specialists can include bureaucrats, interests groups and technical experts. If left unchecked, these small groups of specialists can then dominate the policy process and it becomes easier for them to control what is produced and legislated. However, with the strategy of expansion, when an issue that resonates with the general public is altered, it is possible to wrest some control from these specialized subgroups of vested interests. "Even a minority can protect itself from an encroaching majority, if it is able to use the strategy of expansion to its benefit." When conflict is working successfully, "no single group of actors controls the process, and each

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<sup>40</sup> Kalaycioğlu 1990: p. 184



side engages in a rhetorical battle over the terms of the debate and the proper arena for the controversy.”<sup>41</sup>

Baumgartner, however, readily acknowledges that too much conflict is bad.<sup>42</sup> Generating conflict for the sake of conflict can subsume the entire policy agenda and take up political leaders’ time and attention with issues that may be of less societal importance. Expansion can derail policy proposals that are beneficial and slow down the policymaking process to a degree that makes effective governing impossible.

“The trick,” Baumgartner mentions in his concluding remarks, “is to find a system that allows decisions to be made in a routine and efficient manner on most issues but focuses national attention and public debate on certain others....”<sup>43</sup> The strategies of expansion and contraction, when working as ideally envisioned, should enable policy makers to act in areas of consensus, and broaden participation in areas of conflict.

This balance between consensus driven governance and conflict driven participation is one that has been historically difficult to achieve in the Turkish political system. In the thirty plus years for which data was gathered for this thesis, we have examples of what too much conflict and too little conflict in policymaking look like.

### **The Nature of Conflict in Coalition Times**

The coalition period of 1991 to 2002 provides an opportunity to investigate the implications of a high level of legislative conflict. During this time, we observe the greatest level of successful expansionary techniques as measured by the institutional conflict-generating tool of genel görüşme. However, despite this use of institutional avenues for expansion, this period is not spoken of as a period of robust democratic participation in policy making. Şebnem Gümüşcü goes so far as to describe these years of fragmentation and inefficient policy formation as a “lost decade.”<sup>44</sup> Sabri Sayarı describes this period as one in which party system fragmentation and infighting prevented effective governance:

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<sup>41</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 218

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.: p. 216

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.: p. 219

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.: p. 231

“The dispersion and fragmentation of political power, coupled with volatile parliamentary majorities, proved to be highly detrimental to policy formulation, implementation, and continuity, especially in the period from 1995 to 1999 when Turkey witnessed the rise and fall of six coalition or minority governments in quick succession.”<sup>45</sup>

He goes on to say that this weakness and instability had a significant impact on the functioning of democracy during these years.

In this period, political conflict was not feeding into the political system as a way to amplify unheard voices, rather generating conflict was a means to hobble the government and an excellent means for opposition parties to further their own aims, most notably bringing down current governments and coming into power themselves. When conflict and expansion are used in this way, expansion becomes less about altering policy outcomes and more about winning at all costs.

Expansion through legislative procedure can be an indication of respect for legislative process and institutions, or it can be yet another way to put to use legislative tools and procedures for the purpose of forwarding self-serving goals. Ilter Turan points to the government’s access to public resources as patronage and the opposition’s lack of such resources as a challenge for opposition parties who are working to keep their members from switching sides to gain access to government resources.

“For such reasons, much opposition energy is devoted to finding ways to undermine the existing government: encouraging disharmony within it, standing in the way of its getting anything done by paralyzing the functioning of the parliament...and persistently challenging the legitimacy of the government. In this struggle, parliamentary procedures and instruments are used for purposes other than those for which they were intended.”<sup>46</sup>

Insecure deputies looking to achieve outcomes beneficial to themselves may use institutional tools to achieve their goals – not in a way that advances democratic institutionalization in the TGNA but in a way that hinders it.

This paints a very bleak picture of the legislature in the 1990s. But this study’s earlier findings regarding opposition party’s use of legislative process cannot be summarily

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<sup>45</sup> Sayarı 2007: p. 204

<sup>46</sup> Turan 2003: p. 159

dismissed with the claim that opposition parties were simply using the rules of the game to subvert the game itself. The indicators of institutionalization of conflict that the data on genel görüşme show are matched in the literature by authors pointing to other complimentary indicators of institutionalization and democratic consolidation during this period.

As much as party fragmentation and instability were realities of the political system during the coalition legislative periods, institutionalization and democratic functioning did not grind to a halt. The question motivating Turan's research in the same article quoted above in which he lays bare the self interested practices of deputies, was whether legislative institutionalization can progress in an unstable political systems. Writing in 2003 with the period of fragmentation and coalition governments fresh in mind, Turan ultimately concludes that the TGNA had nonetheless become more institutionalized over time and had been an agent of democratic consolidation: "Governments feel obliged to operate within the prescribed set of laws and procedures in matters involving the legislature."<sup>47</sup> Even in a time of political instability, the institution of the TGNA played a central role, and even in less than optimum circumstances continued to conduct business.

The visible aspects of fragmentation and policy obstruction in the 1990s may create the perception of a "lost decade", but the coalition years were not uniformly dysfunctional. Kalaycıoğlu, writing in 1995 looking back on the 1991 legislature, observed that the TGNA was a more autonomous and effective body than its incarnations that had come before, writing that "[i]t seems as if the Government wields less control over the TGNA than any previous Government of the 1970s and the 1980s."<sup>48</sup> He writes also that despite the seeming intention of the 1982 Constitution, "the TGNA failed to become just a rubber stamp institution."<sup>49</sup> In 1995 there was even sufficient intra-party cooperation to amend some of the more undemocratic measures of the 1982 Constitution. That the years directly following the publication of this article would become more volatile and unstable does not undermine the observation that the TGNA between 1991 and 1995 showed signs of institutionalization and autonomy.

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<sup>47</sup> Turan 2003: p. 173

<sup>48</sup> Kalaycıoğlu 1995: p. 59

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.: p. 43

The patterns of institutionalized conflict and expansion observed in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> legislative periods should not be dismissed as an anomaly due to instability in the political system at this time. As Turan concludes, movement towards greater institutionalization can happen in concurrence with instability in the political system.

### **Conflict in a Predominant Party System**

The indicators that legislators' use of institutional avenues for conflict expansion is tapering off in recent legislative periods provides a converse picture to the one visible in the 1990s. In contrast to the varying degrees of instability of the coalition period of 1991 to 2002, the increasing stability of the party system in the past three legislative periods is striking. The lower levels of electoral volatility, reduction in party switching and high degree of party discipline are markers of the rise of a predominant party system in Turkey.<sup>50</sup>

The opinions of current opposition deputies included earlier in this thesis make their perceptions of the ability of legislators to participate in the policymaking process clear. As noted in previous sections, the data on genel görüşme suggests that not only are opposition parties less able to successfully expand debate, they have also stopped trying to do so as often. The proposal rate of genel görüşme is significantly lower than any period before and has progressively decreased. This is notable not only in comparison with the high levels of institutionalized conflict and debate proposal in the coalition government legislatures, but also in comparison to the party government period of the 1980s. Even though none of the more restrictive and undemocratic measures of the 1982 Constitution had yet been mitigated by constitutional amendment while the ANAP government was in power from 1983 to 1991, opposition parties were still proposing expansion through genel görüşme at a rate that increased rather than decreased over the two legislative periods concerned. The disheartened opposition's frustration with the institutional tools available to them therefore cannot be solely attributed to the opportunities available to opposition parties in party government versus coalition periods. The cowering of opposition parties and curtailing of opportunities for institutionalized conflict must be attributed to factors other than the

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<sup>50</sup> Şebnem Gümüşcü details the rise of the AK Parties to the position of a predominant party and justifies the categorization in her 2013 article.

behavior of opposition during party government versus coalition government times. The political environment under the AK Party government is one in which relatively greater stability has been achieved, but at the seeming cost of furthering the democratic institutionalization of the TGNA. As Baumgartner says “Policymaking by a small group of experts may be more efficient, but few would argue that it is particularly democratic.”<sup>51</sup> The balance between stability and efficiency on one hand, and democracy on the other is a balance that continues to be illusive in the Turkish case.

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<sup>51</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 218

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored whether opposition parties are able to use expansionary techniques to bring issues to the attention of the public in a way that has the potential to influence policy perceptions and the direction of the political agenda. Furthermore, I have shown that the methods that opposition parties use or do not use to create political conflict have implications for the institutionalization of the democratic functioning of the Turkish legislature. The data and discussion in previous chapters enables us to sketch several conclusions about the function of opposition parties in Turkey's policymaking process.

First, the function of opposition parties in the Turkish legislative system is not consistent across time, nor is there a suggestion of a consistent trend or progression over the thirty two years investigated. Opposition parties' willingness and success in using expansionary tactics have differed across government types and legislative periods. At times, the predicted expansionary forces and institutionalized conflict have been visible, and at other times they have not appeared to be operating as would be predicted in a freely functioning legislative system. Since the legislative and electoral institutions of the past three decades have been relatively consistent, this suggests that factors other than the design of institutional arrangements influence the role opposition parties play in the legislature. This further suggests that in times where opposition parties do not appear to be fulfilling the expansionary function that would be predicted of them, this is not merely due to overly restrictive institutional arrangements.

Baumgartner's framework has demonstrated that expansionary techniques can be effectively employed even in some political systems where institutions are arranged to restrict the input of opposition voices. However, Baumgartner's framework does not appear to be capable of fully explaining the Turkish case. This leads to a second finding. Despite Baumgartner's prediction that no institutional barriers are likely to prevent strategic policymakers from effectively utilizing the opportunities for expansion and contraction,<sup>52</sup> my investigation indicates that this does not entirely hold up in the Turkish case.

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<sup>52</sup> Baumgartner 1989: p. 220

The discussion in previous chapters allows a few hypotheses about why this may be the case. First, the use of conflict and expansion is undermined in a political system that is not fully institutionalized. When patterns of legislative behavior are not yet fully known, accepted or valued, political conflict can easily take the form of deputies or parties working outside of the given set of institutions. In a fully institutionalized system where the patterns and procedures of the legislature are fully respected, opposition parties can use conflict in order to work through the system to achieve political and policy goals. When the rules are less accepted, political conflict can be a means to subvert or work around the rules, which can be damaging to policy formation of any kind. We see this behavior in the 1990s when opposition deputies would work to undermine the government by creating discord and paralyzing the functioning of the legislature. This type of conflict can call into question the legitimacy of the system as a whole, which can hinder progress towards institutionalization. We can see the effects of a lack of institutionalization on opposition parties' options in recent legislative periods as well; when the governing party uses its influence to alter opposition parties' access to media or limit coverage of debates, it incentivizes the opposition to use uninstitutionalized means of political conflict to gain attention. Multiple opposition deputies that I interviewed mentioned the understanding that spectacle – media stunts and fist fights – were the best means to get the media's attention. This is a different strategy at work than one in which generalists alter the portrayal of a policy issue in order to push it beyond the control of specialists and into the realm of public understanding.

An additional breakdown in the applicability of Baumgartner's framework in the Turkish case is that the ability to expand issues in a way that influences the political agenda is contingent upon sufficient linkages between legislators and outside actors. These types of linkages have never been strong in the Turkish case. Opposition parties' ability to amplify their voices in a way that might actually have implications for policy is contingent upon finding allies and coordinating efforts to shift the debate surrounding an issue. No matter how persistent or successful opposition parties may be in proposing or debating a policy issue in the legislature, without that debate being connected with or transformed into a larger societal debate that attracts outside actors, the potential for policy impact is minimal.

These linkages are also contingent on the strength of the institutions that operate in tandem with the legislature. The cause of weak linkages cannot be solely laid at the feet of the legislature, but also in the strength of the other institutions that could help to amplify political opposition. In the Turkish case, the strength of other institutions varies across time periods, as is the case with the legislature. At times, the Constitutional Court and the Presidency have been counter-majoritarian forces balancing the weight of a party government with control over the legislature. This was the case in the first term of the AK Party's government when the Constitutional Court overturned a significant number of bills passed by the legislature and the president sent back numerous bills to the TGNA for reconsideration.<sup>53</sup> In this way, when the voices of opposition deputies were frustrated in the legislature, there were other outlets capable of generating political conflict and debate over proposals of the government. In 2007 Abdullah Gül, a founding member of the AK Party ascended to the presidency. Though he renounced his party membership to do so, he did not act as an alternate outlet for opposition to the will of the governing party to the degree his predecessor had.

Additionally, affective linkages that amplify opposition voices require a robust civil society. Building partnerships and mutually reinforcing strategies to strength opposition messages requires that civil society has the capacity and freedom to do so. Turkish civil society is not as potent a force in Turkish society as in the French context that Baumgartner originally explored.

Yet a third addendum to Baumgartner's predicted model is that the media climate must be sufficiently free to facilitate the connection between political actors and the court of public opinion. While Baumgartner might characterize the French press as "tame," an uncritical press is still a different creature than an un-free press. When opposition parties doubt their ability to gain media coverage of their proposals or debates the incentive to propose them decreases. When the institutional tools granted to opposition parties begin to be regarded as irrelevant by those very opposition parties, faith in those tools and the legislative system more broadly may begin to wane.

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<sup>53</sup> Sayarı 2007: p. 203



If opposition parties in the three decades studied in this thesis have not been able to consistently perform the expansionary function predicted of them, what role are opposition parties playing in the Turkish legislative system? In the introduction of this thesis, I noted that even in systems where political rules leave a restricted space for opposition parties to operate, opposition parties play a vital role in maintaining and consolidating the health of a nation's democracy. In a predominant party system such as Turkey's between 2011 and 2015, opposition parties are perhaps especially important barometers of democratic consolidation. When the possibility of political turnover is low, opposition parties' work within the system between elections takes on added importance. Opposition parties are the natural allies of other losers in the policy process, of the non-political actors whose policy preferences do not align with those of the governing party. Opposition parties are an institutionalized counterweight to the majority's will and when incorporated into the system, are a means to counter majoritarian tendencies of those in power. When opposition parties are cut out, the linkages between minority voices that enable them to assemble an effective counter narrative to counter that of the government are undercut as well. In being unable to appeal to outside actors and effectively expand debate surrounding a policy issue, specialists and those with vested interests in policy outcomes reign without challenge.

If opposition parties do not feel that the institutional tools granted to them to fulfill their role are sufficient, then it undermines the legitimacy of the legislative institution. Opposition parties giving up on institutional tools for political conflict are indicative of a predominant party strong-arming them out of the system. Giving up on these institutional tools is deemed by opposition parties to be a reality of the power distribution of the system, but in giving up, they are also giving up on the process. In doing so, they divest their faith in the legislative system and weaken it as an institution.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Interview Questions**

Regarding the ongoing Security Bill debate, what tools are being used to slow down passage of the bill? How was this strategy decided upon? Why are these tools not used at other times?

Do you feel the debate on the Security Bill is helping inform the public? Do you feel the debate is receiving a sufficient amount of media attention?

How are decisions regarding what and if to debate made within the party?

Genel görüşme is a tool that has largely disappeared in recent legislative periods, why do you think this has happened?

Is genel görüşme a tool you or your party would consider using? Why or why not?

How is it decided who in the party will propose genel görüşme?

Do you feel your party is able to gain media attention when you want to draw attention to an issue? How do you go about this?