

# IANUS

Diritto e Finanza



UNIVERSITÀ  
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Rivista di studi giuridici

<https://www.rivistaianus.it>

n. 20 - dicembre 2019

## THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN TURKEY

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*In questo articolo mi soffermerò sugli ostacoli al processo di democratizzazione nella Turchia contemporanea, un processo iniziato con l'istituzione della Repubblica di Turchia, ma mai completato. L'ideologia kemalista è uno di questi ostacoli. Il kemalismo si basa sul secolarismo, sul nazionalismo, sul populismo, sul riformismo, sullo statismo e sul repubblicanesimo, tutti valori presenti nel programma del partito del 1931. Come ideologia, da un lato sostiene valori liberali come la libertà dell'individuo, i diritti umani e il diritto democratico dei cittadini; d'altra parte, insiste ancora sul fatto che la Turchia ha solo un'identità etnica, quella turca. Un altro ostacolo è la debolezza delle organizzazioni non governative, ovvero la debolezza della società civile. In particolare, negli ultimi anni il governo ha limitato l'azione di queste organizzazioni, danneggiando l'ambiente democratico e comportando una concentrazione del potere. Proverò a discutere di come questi due ostacoli mettano in pericolo la democrazia mediante un'analisi del concetto stesso di democrazia.*

*In this paper, I would like to concentrate on the obstacles to the democratization process in contemporary Turkey. Democratization began with the establishment of Republic of Turkey but it has never been properly and in the strict sense completed. My question is what these obstacles are; the Kemalist ideology is one of these obstacles, which is considered a secular, nationalist and modern movement in collaboration with western values, and which takes its name from the founder of the Republic of Turkey: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Kemalism<sup>1</sup> is based on secularism, nationalism, populism (halkçılık), reformism (or revolutionism), Statism/State control (devletçilik/etatism), and republicanism which all featured in the party<sup>2</sup> program of 1931. As an ideology, on the one hand it advocates liberal values such as freedom of the individual, human rights, and the democratic right of citizens; on the other hand, it still insists on the fact that Turkey has just one ethnic identity which is Turkish. This approach leads this ideology to limit itself with a nationalist and secular idea excluding other ethnic groups. Another obstacle is the weakness of non-governmental organizations, that is the weakness of civil society. In particular, the closure of institutions within civil society by the authority of the current government has damaged the environment in which the democracy can be improved and discussed. This situation causes power to be centralized/gathered in one hand, which has created an authoritarian and dangerous system for democracy like a presidential system. I will try to discuss how these two obstacles endanger democracy by means of an analysis of the concept of democracy.*

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<sup>°</sup> Saggio sottoposto a *double-blind peer review*.

<sup>1</sup> “[...] Kemalism-an ideology which grew out of the Turkish war of independence and which was further developed during the Atatürk reform period.” KILI, *Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey*, in *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, vol. 1, no. 3, *Political Ideology: Its Impact on Contemporary Political Transformations*, 1980, 382.

<sup>2</sup> CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi/ The Republican People's Party). Turkey was governed by one party until 1946 when it entered a multi-party era.

**Summary:**

1. Introduction to democracy
2. Democracy in Turkey
3. Weakness of civil society
4. Conclusion

## 1. Introduction to democracy

Cultural and economic developments pave the way for the emergence of modern democracy. In the western societies, democracy is the result of a series of cultural and economic developments which began with the Renaissance. This suggests that in the non-western societies, in order to establish a democratic system, cultural, social, and economic developments are necessary elements. In this regard, the function and the role of the intellectuals are fundamental for the establishment of a democracy as well. Since the existence of democracy, we have been asking what democracy is. Is it an aim *in and for itself* or is it a means or an instrument for governing?<sup>3</sup> Democracy, as an ancient form of government, has also been exposed to attacks and criticized for being the rule of majority. From the *Apology of Socrates*, we know that Plato thinks that democracy punishes Socrates and that such forms of maladministration harm society. Plato's idea about democracy is based on knowledge; he believes that politics is a sort of art or profession which should be done or practiced by specialists.

Aristotle writes that democracy is the governing of people. He defines the forms of government in relation to property. According to him, if sovereignty is in the hands of only a few it becomes oligarchy and if it is in the hand of wealthless, the form of government is democracy. He writes that «oligarchy is when men of property have the government in their hands; democracy, the opposite, when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers».<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the answer to this question Joseph Alois Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* is worth reading and evaluating because Schumpeter considers democracy as a political method. He defines democracy as follows: «Democracy is a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political—legislative and administrative—decisions and hence incapable of being an end in itself, irrespective of what decisions it will produce under given historical conditions. And this must be the starting point of any attempt at defining it». J. A. SCHUMPETER, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London-New York, 2003, 242. Schumpeter criticizes the classical doctrine of democracy based on «the proposition that 'the people' hold a definite and rational opinion about every individual question and that they give effect to this opinion—in a democracy—by choosing "representatives" who will see to it that that opinion is carried out». SCHUMPETER, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, cit., 269. He defines democracy by relating it to capitalist elements. In the same page, he writes that «the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a *competitive* struggle for the *people's vote*» (italics are mine). Here as we can see, the political system is simply seen as a place in which politicians or leaders are *competitively* struggling for votes, which seems to be the basic problem of the democracy which regards democracy just as a method and ignores its content.

<sup>4</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Kitchener, 1999, 61-62.

Aristotle, general interest takes precedence over personal interests; he suggests a mixture of oligarchy and democracy, called polity.

When we come to the modern period, Hegel is one who is against democracy and suggests a constitutional monarchy. As we can see, both ancient and modern philosophers try to avoid democracy, that is the rule of people. Against Hegel, Karl Marx defends democracy as a representative of people's sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> For Hayek<sup>6</sup>, democracy is just an instrument.<sup>7</sup> In short, democracy has taken on different meanings throughout intellectual history.

The Italian philosopher, Norberto Bobbio believes that «democracy is the natural development of liberal state»<sup>8</sup> because it is based on liberal assumptions including the idea of consent, «the role of critical argument and the diversity of opinion for the discovery of truth»<sup>9</sup>, as well as the individual's freedom to choose. Bobbio considers the democratic process and democratic participation of citizens in law making as a barrier against the misuse of power. In *Liberalismo e democrazia*, he writes that the democratic method is necessary to safeguard the individuals' fundamental rights which are the basis of liberal state, but later he adds that safeguarding these rights is necessary for

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and other Marxists such as Antonio Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg criticize the bourgeois democracy. For them democracy and socialism were the same or unitary. For these Marxists under capitalism, democracy and socialism cannot be considered the same. Even though Marx did not make a deep and elaborated analysis of democracy we can still discern what democracy is for Marx. Marx is a defender of political democracy. He defends freedom of expression and thought and he was against authoritarian governments and their restrictions for the sake of democracy.

<sup>6</sup> F. A. HAYEK, in his famous article, *The Principles of a Liberal Social Order*, differentiates liberalism from democracy. According to him, liberalism is about «the extent of governmental power» while democracy is concerned with «who holds this power». Liberalism is defined as being opposed to totalitarianism and democracy as opposed to authoritarianism. According to Hayek, there are two different understanding of liberalism; the first understanding is based on «advocating limitations on the powers of government», while the second focuses on «the ideal of the unlimited powers of the majority». This latter has become democratism and thus according to Hayek, «has become essentially anti-liberal». For Hayek, democracy poses an obstacle to freedom. F. A. HAYEK, *The Principles of a Liberal Social Order*, in *I Politico*, vol. 31, n. 4, 1966, 601.

<sup>7</sup> M. BILGE, *Türkiye'de Demokrasi Kültürü: Siyaset ve Toplum*, in *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, year. 15, no. 3, 2011, 52.

<sup>8</sup> N. BOBBIO, *Liberalismo e democrazia*, in G. M. BRAVO - S. R. GHIHAUDI (eds.), *Il pensiero politico contemporaneo*, vol. I, Milano, 1985, 46.

<sup>9</sup> R. BELLAMY, 'Dethroning Politics': *Liberalism, Constitutionalism and Democracy in the Thought of F. A. Hayek*, in *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 24, n. 4 (Oct., 1994): 419-441, 419.

the proper functioning of the democratic method.<sup>10</sup> It seems that Bobbio reduces democracy into an instrument.

I believe that we can define or separate the idea of those who analyze or interpret democracy into two different groups: those who consider democracy as a “form” of government and as an instrument or protector; and those who consider democracy as an “essence” of a society or people and give importance to its “content.” Therefore, the problem (of democracy) is based on this separation: the form-content, or the form-essence. In *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843) Marx was a fervent critic of this separation of democracy which he expresses through his critiques of Hegel's understanding. The form, which is the deliberative process or a simple process for arriving at decisions completes and fulfills itself with the quality of its content, which is *people*, and with the quality of its *space*, which is *civil society*.

Here, it can be useful to talk about the relationship between freedom and will which are basic concepts of democracy. I believe that freedom does not exist only in pure thought but the concept of freedom itself is associated with practice, and therefore with law, that is, with the practical actions of human beings. Hence, we cannot limit the free will only to the theoretical field and thought. At this point, for Hegel, the most repeated definition of freedom is that freedom is perceived as the ability to do what we want or demand. Those who look at the concept of freedom in this way, in short those who associate it with the ability to do what they want, prove that they do not care about the nature of social life, right, morality, laws, as well as the daily needs. Freedom must be linked to understanding, responsibility and awareness of moral imperatives. For Hegel, freedom is an imperative to be understood. Hegel says that human beings are not free from natural laws, but they can be free through natural laws. This means that the more people understand the laws of nature, the less they are exposed to them and the more they control their freedom. Freedom is possible not outside society but within society and in relation to others. In this regard, democracy guarantees the realization of human freedom in a society. Is democracy a guarantee mechanism? Is it just that the people rule themselves and decide for themselves? On the one hand, it enables the realization of the freedom of the individual, on the other hand, it limits the infinite freedom and arbitrary will of the individual on behalf of the interest of the general. Thus, this prevents the emergence of an authoritarian situation.

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<sup>10</sup> N. BOBBIO, *Liberalismo e democrazia*, cit., 47.

As a modern form of government, democracy, against oligarchy, monarchy and totalitarian forms of governance, is seen as the healthiest form of governance by the developed countries as well as by underdeveloped countries. However, today democracy is in a crisis. At this point the following questions come to mind: What depends on the healthy and correct functioning of democracy? Why are democracies currently in crisis and why are they facilitating the emergence of an authoritarian form of governance? I believe that in order for democracy to function correctly, an economic, cultural and social environment should be provided to enable individuals to make decisions freely. The free choice of individuals depends on their economic independence. This also prevents political parties from approaching the public in a populist guise, thus enabling them to reach the public with reasonable promises. But alongside economic development it is important to create some mechanisms such as a democratic constitution in order to protect democracy and civil rights. The separation of powers as a mechanism of controlling the power of government is another significant and fundamental element to avoid the emergence of authoritarian government. Democracy does not simply mean the participation of people in political elections to decide the delegates who can govern but «on a universal level, the rule of law, the judicial review of government actions and the safeguarding of human rights are determining elements of the definition of democracy. The participation of individuals and groups in government at every stage constitutes a complementary element of democratic governance».<sup>11</sup>

I believe that while democracy reflects the conflict of the universal and individual, it also emerges from this conflict. In its relationship with freedom and will, democracy paradoxically plays a dual role: it is both restrictive and permissive. Democracy is the restriction of freedom through freedom. People make laws and develop an order, but resist to other laws and another order. This order is condemned to fail and collapse in the face of a stronger understanding. Democracy, as we said, is directly related to the development of economic and political institutions.

We do not simply refer to democracy as a political constitution or a structure of a society or a political form of government/State but we consider also the democratic structure of the entire society. Socio-economic modernization leads the individuals in a society to participate in politics. The concept of democracy can be related directly to the concept of “development”

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<sup>11</sup> S. YOKUŞ, *Constitutional Amendments in Turkey 2017 and the Process of Resolution*, in *Democratic Process Institute (DPI)*, <https://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/English-Translation.pdf>. (access: 4-12-2019)

or “progress” in the sphere of economy, politics, and social-cultural structure. The development correlates with political participation. In the sense of industrial and technological development, the abolishment of poverty and inequality can make a contribution to the concept of development and progress but if the individuals do not have direct and determinant influences over executing their social life, this cannot correspond to the “development.”<sup>12</sup> The indispensable element of a concept of development in the sense of the realization of humans’ potentiality is democratization on a political level.<sup>13</sup>

A recent literature claim that Turkey’s form of government is semi-authoritarian<sup>14</sup> and semi-democratic<sup>15</sup>, referring to models which emerged particularly at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent studies focus on the classification of authoritarian regimes. These regimes are “sophisticated” authoritarian types which use democratic forms in order to fulfill their own interest. Regarding the definition of recent democratic and authoritative forms of government, they are variously classified as “competitive authoritarianism,”<sup>16</sup> signifying that regimes can be both “competitive” and “authoritarian”; “illiberal democracy”<sup>17</sup>; “hybrid regimes”<sup>18</sup>; “authoritarian constitutionalism”<sup>19</sup> which represents a normative model between liberal constitution and authoritarianism, and “electoral authoritarianism”<sup>20</sup> etc. Other labels such as “virtual democracy,” “pseudodemocracy,” “soft authoritarianism,” “partly free,” or “democratically disguised dictatorship” try to explain how democracy is losing its proper meaning. These types of democracy or authoritarianism are not new phenomenon, at least in the case

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<sup>12</sup> L. KOKER, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, İstanbul, 2007, 95.

<sup>13</sup> L. KOKER, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, cit., 95-96.

<sup>14</sup> M. OTTAWAY, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, Washington, D.C, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> J. P. BURNS, *Editorial Introduction: Special Issue on the Second Decade of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China: Themes and Overview*, 39, 2017. J. HOXHA, *Network Policy Making Within the Turkish Health Sector: Becoming Collaborative*, Bingley, 2020, 8. M. SOMER, *Understanding Turkey’s democratic breakdown: old vs. new and indigenous vs. global authoritarianism*, in *Journal Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, issue. 4: Exit from Democracy: Illiberal Governance in Turkey and Beyond, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> S. LEVITSKY-L. A. WAY, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, New York, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> F. ZAKARIA, *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, n. 6, 1997, 22-43.

<sup>18</sup> L. J. DIAMOND, *Thinking about Hybrid Regimes*, in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, n. 2, 2002, 21-35.

<sup>19</sup> M. TUSHNET, *Authoritarian Constitutionalism in Cornell Law Review*, vol. 100, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> A. SCHEDLER, *The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism*, in A. SCHEDLER (ed.), *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, Boulder-London, 2006.



of Turkey in which democracy never completes and realizes itself in terms of democratic norms. It always remains “semi”-democratic or “soft” authoritarian. I believe that Turkey can be labeled with these markers, namely “illiberal democracy,” “electoral authoritarianism,” “semi-democracy,” “authoritarian constitutionalism” or “semi-authoritarianism” because when we look through the political systems in Turkey we can observe that governments in general used elements of democracy like elections to maintain their power but came out against intellectual and adopted anti-intellectual attitudes. Here we can consider Juan Linz’s definition of authoritarianism referring to its three characteristics: limited pluralism; depolitization or limited political participation, that is limited political mobilization; and no ideological aim to realize or legitimate the system.<sup>21</sup> The authoritarian system tries to influence people in psychological manner, for instance, through their religious feeling and their feeling towards the nation. To this definition, can be added also an anti-intellectual character.

I think that democracy generally is considered as “formal” or “stylistic” democracy but not as an essence of politics and therefore as an essence of human beings. Human beings are by their nature political. The problem of democracy must be evaluated within this consideration. Democracy means being open to diversity, accepting the existence of different languages, religions, ethnic groups, cultures, and different way of living. The concept of democracy can be analyzed by considering human beings’ *social ontology*. In this regard, democracy is not just a simple method of politics or a form of government but it is a way through which the individual can realize his/her essence-existence in a society. It is not only a sort of a method of establishing a government. The democratization process in Turkey can be analyzed regarding this point of view of democracy, which began at the end of Ottoman empire, that is at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The paper tries to demonstrate the fundamental obstacles that stand in the way of democracy’s “true” realization. I believe that there are many issues posing a challenge before the realization of democracy but here I would like to indicate two basic challenges for fulfilling a “real” and “true” democracy in Turkey. 1) The Kemalist ideology or movement which is especially based on the nationalism, secularism, and statism among its six principles; 2) the weakness of civil society as a fundamental guarantee of democracy.

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<sup>21</sup> J. LINZ, *An Authoritarian Regime: Spain*, in E. ALLARDT - Y. LITTUNEN (eds.), *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems: Contribution to Comparative Political Sociology*, Helsinki, 1964, 297.

## 2. Democracy in Turkey

The question of democracy in Turkey also today needs to be analyzed, particularly through the current political situation under the government of AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/Justice and Development Party). In Turkey, democracy has unfortunately always been in danger due to political and military interventions since its establishment as a nation-State. The fact that a country has a democratic form of government cannot be a sufficient sign of the existence of democracy. The structure of the political parties is also important for the real and true realization of democracy. In this sense, both AKP and CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi/The Republican People's Party) have a non-democratic and hierarchical structure and are supporters of the status quo. I believe that some Kemalist principles create an obstacle for democracy, particularly its nationalist, statist, and secular approach.

CHP, the first party after the foundation of the Republic, is the incarnation of Kemalist ideology and is a "cadre party."<sup>22</sup> Kemalism has six principles: republicanism, populism, reformism, secularism, statism, and nationalism. These principles were first established in the Constitution of 1924<sup>23</sup>: at the beginning, there was republicanism, nationalism and unity of power and other principles were added through constitutional amendments. The 1924 Constitution<sup>24</sup> is generally considered as being based on «the idea of a

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<sup>22</sup> L. KÖKER, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, cit., 13.

<sup>23</sup> Although the six principles of Kemalism were enshrined with the 1937 amendment, the principles such as republicanism, nationalism, and popular sovereignty were first incorporated into the 1924 Constitutional Law. S. KILI, *Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey*, cit., 387. The 1924 constitution was amended in 1928, 1934 and 1937; in 1961, the constitution was replaced by the new constitution.

<sup>24</sup> With the Ottoman Basic Law (Kanun-i Esasi) during the Ottoman period in 1876, the first constitutional system had begun. The 1921 Constitution (Teşkilatı Esasiye) was the first written constitution of the modern Turkish state and predated the proclamation of the Republic (1923). Y. ALTUĞ, *the Development of Constitutional Thought in Turkey*, in A. EVIN (ed.) *Modern Turkey: Continuity and Change*, Wiesbaden, 1984, 131-149. "The sultanate was abolished on October 30, 1922, and the Republic was officially proclaimed about a year later, on October 29, 1923." E. ÖZBUDUN, *The Constitutional System of Turkey: 1876 to the Present*, New York, 2011, 6. Thus the 1921 constitution was amended in 1923 in order to add an article declaring that Turkey is a republic. The following year, the constitution was replaced with a new constitution.

Four constitutions were established in Turkey. Only the 1924 Constitution was amended by the decision of the constituent assembly. The constitution of 1961 and 1982 were put into practice by the coup d'état. The 1924 Constitution was amended three times: in 1928, the article claiming that «the religion of the state is Islam» was amended and in 1934 under the new amendment the right to vote was given to women and they could be elected. In 1937, the six

monolithic and homogenous political unity—the nation—that denied the existence of plurality and internal conflict based on class or ethnic identities». <sup>25</sup> The Turkish constitution defines citizens in terms of a unique political consideration of the individuals that refers to a uniform citizen: Turk, Sunni, laic and loyal to the ideology of the Republic of Turkey (Kemalism), that is Atatürk's or Kemalist principles (“the six arrows”). <sup>26</sup> Therefore, the Turkish constitution eliminates and ignores “others” who remain outside this «acceptable type of citizen». <sup>27</sup> When we consider the Turkish constitutions as a whole, particularly, those of 1924 and 1982<sup>28</sup>, we can say that these constitutions «focus on protecting the state against the individual and its constitutional freedoms rather than protecting the individual against the superior authority of the state». <sup>29</sup>

The fundamental democratic rights are guaranteed by a constitution. The amendment of the current constitution, the 1982 Constitution<sup>30</sup> which

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principles of the Republican People's Party (CHP), especially of secularism, were added to the constitution. In 1946, transition to a multi-party system was realized. Even though the history of the Turkish constitution extended back a long time, crises and coups have played a decisive role in the making or changing of the constitution. «Since the beginning of constitutionalism, Turkey has made five constitutions (those of 1876, 1921, 1924, 1961 and 1982), not counting the radical amendments of 1909, 1971, 1973, 1995, 2001 and 2004 and a much greater number of more minor amendments» and we can also add the amendment of 2017 to these radical changes. Ö. F. GENÇKAYA, *Politics of Constitution Making in Turkey*, in *ECPR Joint Workshops*, 11-16 April 2008 Rennes, WS 20 Politics of Constitution Making: <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/25eb58e6-bdd5-4d5f-b3ce-b573d63d1a59.pdf>. (access: 4-12-2019). For the further reading on the history of Turkish constitutions and amendments, it is worth reading Ergun Özbudun's book, *The Constitutional System of Turkey: 1876 to the Present* and also the short article called “On the Way to a New Constitution in Turkey: Constitutional History, Political Parties and Civil Platforms.”

<sup>25</sup> E. TOMBUŞ, *The People and its Embodiment: Authoritarian Foundation of Constitutions in Turkey*, in F. PETERSEN - Z. YANAŞMAYAN (eds.) *The Failure of Popular Constitution Making in Turkey: Regressing towards Constitutional Autocracy*, New York, 2019 (online), 71.

<sup>26</sup> S. Yokuş's article on the structure of Turkish constitutions in their historical development explains how they contain important restrictions for the democratization process in Turkey. S. YOKUŞ, *Constitutional Amendments in Turkey 2017 and the Process of Resolution*, cit., (access: 4-12-2019).

<sup>27</sup> S. YOKUŞ, *Constitutional Amendments in Turkey 2017 and the Process of Resolution*, cit., (access: 4-12-2019).

<sup>28</sup> For detailed information about the history of constitution-making in Turkey see: E. ÖZBUDUN-Ö. F. GENÇKAYA, *Democratization and the Politics of Constitution-Making in Turkey*, Budapest, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> B. ŞAHİN, *Anayasa Taslağının Başlangıç İlkeleri ve Genel Esaslar*, in *Hukuk Gündemi Dergisi*, 2008-9, 109.

<sup>30</sup> In 2000s, with the solution process (Çözüm süreci) known as the Kurdish-Turkish peace process aiming to resolve the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, and with Turkey's intention to join the

restricted many civilian rights, has always been a topic of debate in Turkish politics. Although it has been amended many times, there are still many discussions about the new amendments but generally these amendments have occurred according to the actual political demands and particularly have been made according to the European Union criteria as an external element rather than as the result of internal factors like the will of people or civilian initiative. The lack of a democratic structure of the constitution is also one of the obstacles to the democratization process.<sup>31</sup> The existence of some principles of Kemalism in the constitution prevents Turkish politics from taking effective action and finding a substantial solution to the deep-seated problems of democracy. Although the question of the constitution and the democratization process are interrelated, here the structure of Kemalism will be analyzed in terms of democratization.

The social and political project of Kemalist ideology as an official ideology of the Republic of Turkey is not only to define a new homeland/nation, a new society, a new identity and a new history for the created nation but this ideology also changes the meaning and status of politics for the people.<sup>32</sup> On the one hand Kemalism considers republic as the best form of government of national sovereignty, on the other hand it fails to suggest policies in order to protect the republican system; these policies were taken to hinder the participation of the people in the decision-making process. This is a contradiction within Kemalism in terms of its approach to the populism and republican system.

What is the nature/essence of Kemalism? In the words of Mesut Yeğen, a sociologist, «a radical secularism against Islam and the tradition remolded within it, an assimilationist nationalism that offers cultural homogeneity against ethnic heterogeneity, though not ethnic, and the idea of a state-bureaucracy that wants to involve everything and leave out/exclude nothing

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EU, the idea of amending the constitution of 1982 became dominant in society. For example, the amendments of 2001 and 2004 aimed at complying with The European Convention on Human Rights and extending the freedom and rights. In this regard, the important and comprehensive constitutional amendments in relation to democratic transformation took place in the period of Turkey's European Union membership process. However, with the amendments of 2017, the 1982 constitution has even become more authoritarian. The increasing power of the political leader over the legislative, executive and judicial structures is an important indicator of this authoritative regulation.

<sup>31</sup> Especially since 2016, the dominance of the authoritarian regime over civil society has also once again revealed the authoritarian character of the constitution.

<sup>32</sup> N. B. ÇELİK, *Kemalizm: Hegemonik Bir Söylem*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGİL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, İstanbul, 2009, 75.

establish the essence of Kemalism in its foundation». <sup>33</sup> Some important thinkers of the period, like Afet Inan, believed that Islam could be «a barrier to Turkishness and caused no advantages to Turks. On the contrary, it caused the fall of Turkish enthusiasm and nationalist feelings in their idea». <sup>34</sup> In addition, her idea was that «Islam is based on Arab nationalism and this is not very appropriate for Turks». <sup>35</sup> The ignorance or the exclusion of Islam from the idea of Kemalist nationalism led to a gap between society and the state and therefore it also created an identity problem because individuals do not identify themselves only by a single identity but are determined by different identities: ethnic, religious, cultural, national, sexual etc. Not by ignoring or excluding cultural differences but rather by consensus can transformations and changes be made possible. This approach is also indicative of a very positivist-west-centered understanding.

Kemalism is defined as Bonapartism <sup>36</sup> by many Turkish and Kurdish intellectuals. Bonapartism, in strict sense, refers to the political ideology of Napoleon Bonaparte who used it to maintain his power. This term was developed by Marx and Engels, especially in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *The Class Struggle in France*. It is used for a political movement that supports an authoritarian centralized state or a sort of

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<sup>33</sup> M. YEĞEN, *Kemalism ve Hegemonya*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGİL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 58. «İslâm ve onunla yoğrulmuş geleneğe karşı radikal bir sekülerizm, etnik heterojenliğe karşı, etnik olmasa da kültürel homojenliği öneren özümsemeci bir milliyetçilik ve her şeyi içine alıp, hiçbir şeyi dışarda bırakmak istemeyen bir devlet-bürokrasi fikri Kemalizmin kuruluştaki esasını oluşturur».

<sup>34</sup> O. ÖRMECI, *Kemalist Nationalism and Turkey's Kurdish Question: Ethnicization of the Civic Identity*, in *Uluslararası Politika Akademisi*, 2014, <http://politikaakademisi.org/2014/04/28/kemalist-nationalism-and-turkeys-kurdish-question-ethnicization-of-the-civic-identity/>(Access: 6-1-2016)

<sup>35</sup> O. ÖRMECI, *Kemalist Nationalism and Turkey's Kurdish Question: Ethnicization of the Civic Identity*, cit.

<sup>36</sup> See particularly F. BASKAYA, *Paradigmanın İflası: Resmi İdeolojinin Eleştirisine Giriş* (The Bankruptcy of the Paradigm: An Introduction to the Critique of the Official Ideology), first published in 1991. In this book, he claims that the Kemalist movement is a Bonapartist and pragmatic movement. In 1993, he was sentenced to 20 months in pris on for opposition to the Anti-Terrorism Act because of the fact that he criticized Kemalism and the early period of Republic of Turkey in his book. See also, F. C. CENGİZ, *The mutation of Islamic politics and the demise of the Kemalist state in Turkey*, 2016. It is a PhD thesis submitted to SOAS, University of London, and one of the chapters is dedicated to Kemalism as Bonapartism: "The Kemalist State as a Capitalist-Bonapartist State." Here, Bonapartism is regarded as analytical tool in order to explain the Kemalist state. See also, G. Şaylan, *Ordu ve Siyaset; Bonapartizmin Siyasal Kültürü* (The Military and Politics; Political Culture of Bonapartism), in *Bahri Savcı'ya Armağan* (A Tribute to Bahri Savcı), Ankara, 1988, 449-459.

dictatorship. This political movement is actualized by a strong charismatic leader, army support, and conservatism. Kemalism itself claims to be an ideology “for the people despite the people.”<sup>37</sup> Democracy for the people despite the people implies power not flowing from bottom to top but from top to bottom. Bonapartism supports a strong and centralized state; the civil and military bureaucrat categories do not allow a class or group to be dominant in the government of the state. In Bonapartism, the proletariat could not have the power but neither could the bourgeoisie because it could not get rich enough: for this reason, the bourgeoisie transfers its political power into bureaucracy. In Bonapartism, the alliance of the military, civil bureaucracy and petty-bourgeois intellectuals, in the name of bourgeoisie but without completely giving up the power to bourgeoisie, holds the power. In this regard, in a letter to Marx, Engels writes of the relationship between Bonapartism and bourgeoisie as follows: «Bonapartism is after all the real religion of the modern bourgeoisie. It is becoming more and more clear to me that the bourgeoisie has not the stuff in it to rule directly itself, and that therefore unless there is an oligarchy, as here in England, capable of taking over, for good pay, the management of state and society in the interests of the bourgeoisie, a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship is the normal form. It upholds the big material interests of the bourgeoisie even against the will of the bourgeoisie, but allows the bourgeoisie no share in the government. The dictatorship in its turn is forced against its will to adopt these material interests of the bourgeoisie as its own».<sup>38</sup>

- *Populism (halkçılık)*

Populism (*halkçılık*) is the main principle of Kemalism, through which it claims to reject the exploitation of the people by a class or a group.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the interest of the whole nation is prioritized over the interest of classes and groups. Populism referred to «the notion of national solidarity»<sup>40</sup> especially during the First World War. In one of his speech of July 12, 1920 in National Assembly, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk talked about populism as follows: «Let us concern ourselves with the question of what principle we shall lay down. I believe the essential reason of our existence now has proven the general tendency of our nation, and it is populism and people's

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<sup>37</sup> L. KÖKER, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, 2007, İstanbul, 175-176.

<sup>38</sup> K. MARX-F. ENGELS, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1975,

[https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1866/letters/66\\_04\\_13.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1866/letters/66_04_13.htm)

<sup>39</sup> Ö. TURAN, *Cahit Tanyol*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGIL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 384.

<sup>40</sup> E. J. ZÜRCHER, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 2004, London, 182.

government. It is the taking over of the government by the people».<sup>41</sup> On 14 August of the same year he stated that «[...] Our point of view, which is populism, means that power, authority, sovereignty, administration should be given directly to the people, and should be kept in the hands of the people».<sup>42</sup> In this speech he also differentiates his understanding of populism from that of Bolshevism. While Bolshevism takes on a class of people who are victims of the nation, Atatürk says that «our nation in its totality is victim and oppressed/suffering».<sup>43</sup> The concepts of people and nation were considered the same. People was put at the center of the politics within a newly-founded nation-state. Populism did not only refer to popular sovereignty but also to «socioeconomic transformation to realize a truly populist system».<sup>44</sup> Populism in this sense is different from its actual meaning. In this period, the idea of populism was based on the economic and cultural development of the people. On 1 December 1921, Atatürk said that «populism is a social principle that seeks to rest the social order on its work and its law».<sup>45</sup> In this speech, he emphasized that populism presents a social system resting on people's work and it refers to «national unity both for national security and development».<sup>46</sup> In the same speech Atatürk differentiates his understating of the form of government from democracy, socialism and other forms of government which can be found in any book. For him, this form of government does not look like any other form. He emphasizes that it is a government that makes the sovereignty and the will of nation possible. Thus, he says that «if it is necessary to express our government from the scientific and social point of view, we say 'the government of people'».<sup>47</sup> Even though his principle of populism by definition similar to democracy, he considers the latter different from populism. I believe that this is due to the need to stay at a certain distance from the political forms that existed at that time.

However, although in the 1920s he claimed that the form of government was different from democracy, in the 1930s he emphasized that the

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<sup>41</sup> ATATURK, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, I, Ankara, 1997, 91. For English translation see, S. KILI, *Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey*, 389 as well as B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London, 256.

<sup>42</sup> ATATURK, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, I, cit., 102. English version from B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, cit., 256.

<sup>43</sup> ATATURK, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, I, cit., 102.

<sup>44</sup> S. KILI, *Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey*, cit., 389.

<sup>45</sup> ATATURK, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, I, cit., 211. English version from B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, cit., 465.

<sup>46</sup> S. KILI, *Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey*, cit., 389.

<sup>47</sup> ATATURK, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, I, cit., 211.

government was democratic and popular. In this regard, on 27 January 1931 in his speech in party congress in Izmir, he said that «even though the program followed by our party is a completely democratic and populist, its economic approach is statist».<sup>48</sup> Kemalist populism did not accept any class differentiation and class conflict. Today, populism, even though not an ideology, has a negative connotation which means using some popular elements like the national sentiment of a people in order to obtain and maintain political power. In short, it speaks to people's interests, prejudices, frustrations and anger.<sup>49</sup>

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk writes that «we call the people of Turkey who established the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish nation» and «the Turkish nation is a State governed by a republic which is the government of people».<sup>50</sup> There were two ways to determine the will of nation during the Turkish war of independence: 1) the “direct democracy” in which people can decide their destiny by their actions; 2) the will of people can be determined by the representatives elected by people, that is by “representative democracy”. Kemalism selected the second way.

- *Statism/Etatism (Devletçilik)*

Another principle of Kemalism is statism which is a condition of populism in the economic sphere. Statism is a guarantee for protecting the interests of the people from the exploitation of private enterprise. In 1931 Atatürk published his manifesto in which he talked about six fundamental principles.<sup>51</sup> He defined statism as follows: «Although considering private work and activity a basic idea, it is one of our main principles to interest the State actively in matters where the general and vital interests of the nation are in question, especially in the economic field, in order to lead the nation and the country to prosperity in as short a time as possible».<sup>52</sup> From his speech we can interpret the state being in the service of the interest of a nation, that is a

<sup>48</sup> ATATURK, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, II, cit., 291.

<sup>49</sup> F. LOĞOĞLU, *Popülizm nedir? İyi midir, Kötü müdür? Bizde nasıldır?*, in *Gazete Duvar*, 2017, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/forum/2017/04/02/populizm-nedir-iyi-midir-kotumudur-bizde-nasildir/>. (access: 4-12-2019).

<sup>50</sup> The quotation from L. KOKER, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, 154.

<sup>51</sup> Devletçilik was placed in the party program for the congress of CHP in 1931. It was the newest and most hotly debated principle. On 20 April 1931, due to the 1931 parliamentary elections, Atatürk gave a declaration to the nation and said that «the main points that we find useful to remind the nation of today are: 'The Republican, Nationalist, Populist, Statist, Secular and Revolutionary features of the Republican People's Party are its unchanging apparent nature'». *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgrafve Beyannameleri IV* (ATTB), Ankara 1991, 606.

<sup>52</sup> *CHP Program*, Ankara, 1935, 9-11. For English version see B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, cit., 286.



people. The purpose of statism is to sustain, strengthen and invigorate the economic, cultural and social life of the nation. In this sense, it seems that the idea of statism defined by Atatürk does not refer to the supremacy of the state over the people. The idea of statism was a result of pragmatic concerns. Examining the words of Atatürk, we find that the interpretation of statism of Kemalism was not ideological: «The system of etatism applied in Turkey [said Mustafa Kemal at the Izmir Fair in August 1935], is not a system copied and translated from the ideas that socialist theoreticians have been putting forward since the 19th century» and he continued to explain the pragmatic considerations behind statism: «Our etatism takes as its basis the private initiative and personal aptitudes of individuals, but at the same time, taking account of all the needs of a great nation and a broad land, and of the fact that so much still remains to be done, it rests on the principle that the state must take charge of the national economy». <sup>53</sup> The Turkish economy, after the war, was very weak, as was the case in other countries, and the aim was to strengthen the economy with state intervention since private enterprise could not be active and capable of development in some fields. In this sense, it can be said that statism was not an alternative to the accumulation of private capital but it can be considered as its complementary element because it allowed the accumulation of private capital.

Kemalism never claims to be a grassroots movement. For Kemalism, the modernization and democratization process is based on the power of the state. According to this ideology, statism is a system which helps the evolution of the nation. Under the tutelage of a statist regime, industry progresses quickly. Statism, according to this ideology, prevents the accumulation of wealth and earnings in the hands of a few individuals and does not allow socialism and communism to appear as happened in Europe. The State does not only have a role in the economy but also promotes social, intellectual, cultural, and artistic life. Kemalism accepted that the political system cannot be democratized without economic development (i.e. industrial development) and cultural development (through education establishing a scientific-rational society). <sup>54</sup>

Kemalism tends to evaluate the state as an independent political and social subject. Its ideal is to create a uniform society because Turkish society has never been a uniform society due to the fact that there are many different ethnic groups that live together. Because of this diversity, Kemalism aims to constitute a uniform and integrated society. Kemalist idea does not reject

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<sup>53</sup> B. LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, cit., 287.

<sup>54</sup> L. KÖKER, *Kemalizm/Atatürkçülük: Modernleşme, Devlet ve Demokrasi* cit., 106.

democracy but it reduces democracy into populism and limits it within the principles of a secularistic/laic republic.<sup>55</sup>

- *Nationalism*

In relation to the idea of populism and nationalism Kemalism denies class conflict because it emphasizes social justice and social solidarity. The slogan of this nationalism is “classless, non-privileged, fused/united/socialized mass.” The nationalism of Kemalism is based on territorial integrity. There are different interpretations of the nationalism of Kemalism; according to one of these interpretations it is based on cultural nationalism more than racial nationalism.<sup>56</sup> This nationalism is infused with a cultural-republican and secular character. According to a Kemalist thinker, Turhan Feyzioglu, in the nationalism of the Kemalist movement, this cultural system attaches great importance to the national unity and integrity of the country and refuses a racial component.<sup>57</sup> For him, it has nothing to do with the idea of a master race.<sup>58</sup>

However, the history of minorities in Turkey presents us with a different interpretation of the nationalism of Kemalism, especially that of the Kurdish minority.<sup>59</sup> First of all, a few words about the foundation of the Turkish state, because it is directly connected with the Kurdish issue<sup>60</sup> and its conception of

<sup>55</sup> T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGIL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, 20.

<sup>56</sup> M. BELGE, *Mustafa Kemal ve Kemalizm*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGIL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 33.

<sup>57</sup> A. YILMAZ, *Kemalist Milliyetçilik*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGIL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 212.

<sup>58</sup> There are many ambiguities in Atatürk's idea of nationalism and questions about whether it was based on racial approach but for a detailed investigation on the racial attitude of Kemal Atatürk towards Kurds see: M. VAN BRUINSEN, *Race, culture, nation and identity politics in Turkey: some comments*, Presented at the Mica Erteğün *Annual Turkish Studies Workshop on Continuity and Change: "Shifting State Ideologies from Late Ottoman to Early Republican Turkey, 1890-1930"* at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, 1997. These ambiguities in the Kemalist conception of nationalism and cultural identity obviously creates problems within Turkish society.

<sup>59</sup> For the deconstruction of Kemalism with regards to the Kurdish question, it is important to refer to İsmail Beşikçi's works, such as *Türk-tarih tezi' ve Kürt sorunu* (Turkish History Thesis and the Sun-Language Theory) and Fikret Başkaya's works such as *Paradigmamızın İflası: Resmi İdeolojinin Eleştirisine Giriş* (The Bankruptcy of the Paradigm: An Introduction to the Critique of the Official Ideology).

<sup>60</sup> The history of the Kurds is a long one. During the period in which Yavuz Selim was sultan of the Ottoman Empire, between 1512 and 1520, the year of his death, the Kurdish people supported the Ottomans against the Safavids, and the latter submitted to their authority. In exchange for support, Selim promised autonomy to the Kurdish region, and so until the nineteenth century governments and emirates survived in the region. It is believed that the Kurdish question arose with the rebellion of Şeyh Said in 1925, after the foundation of the

nationalism. The foundation of Turkey coincided with the modernization that caused the collapse of the Ottoman Empire although the result of war also had huge impact: the ideological and intellectual environment played an important role in preparing the way for its fall. Some Turkish intellectuals such as Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp contributed to the development of Turkish nationalism, which gave rise to the birth of the Kurdish question. Yusuf Akçura in 1904 wrote an article entitled “Three types of policies”, in which he talked about Turkism, pan-Islamism and Ottomanism. According to him, although Ottomanism was a useful idea for recreating the Ottoman nation, its application and implementation would have been very difficult. So, he defended the idea of Turkism and pan-Islamism and therefore he considered Turkism as the best political solution. In short, the subsequent Republic of Turkey was based on these two ideas, namely Turkism and pan-Islamism, which went in the opposite direction to the idea of Ottomanism. Ziya Gökalp was a sociologist and, through his research, he showed the Young Turks<sup>61</sup> the problem of the Kurds and thus encouraged them to activate a policy in this regard.

According to Ziya Gökalp, the Kurdish tribal organization was like a disease that had to be eradicated. In 1913, the Union and Progress Party (İttihat ve Terakki) seized power and therefore began to apply Ziya Gökalp’s policy of “Turkishization”, which included assimilation of the Kurds. Mehmed Talat Pascia<sup>62</sup> described Anatolia as “a black box.” For this reason, he wanted to be

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Turkish Republic (1923). Şeyh Said was an important figure in the history of the Kurdish people, who are for the most part of the Sunni Muslim religion, and was the sheikh. Şeyh Said led a widespread Kurdish rebellion against the central government, the purpose of which was the formation of an independent Kurdish country. At the end of the First World War, in the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920) the allied powers came together to set the peace terms by taking U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s principles (fourteen points) into consideration even if, in the end, they did not respect them. One of these principles aimed at the autonomy of other nations under the Turkish rule. «The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development [...]». In this conference, the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) was prepared which promised an autonomy to Kurds but the treaty was replaced by Treaty of Lausanne (signed on 24 July 1923) which dropped all promises about autonomy; therefore, an independent Kurdistan was never realized.

<sup>61</sup>A group of Turks formed the Union and Progress Party (İttihat ve Terakki) against Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s regime. This movement was made up by medical students until 1906 and later included mainly military officers. The Union and Progress Party appeared in the political arena for the first time in 1895, with a poster titled ‘Motherland at Risk’.

<sup>62</sup>He was one of the leaders of the Young Turks, together with Ahmed Cemal and Ismail Enver.

done some ethnographic research. According to him, Kurdistan was an unknown land.<sup>63</sup>

Through sociological, ethnographic and demographic research and by means of questionnaires that were circulated among the Kurds, the extent and distribution of the Kurdish people was determined and it was possible to implement a strategy of allocation of the Kurds that took into account of both nomadic and sedentary ones. Historically, it is difficult to reject the ethnic feature of Kemalist nationalism, which is based on being Turk.

Levent Köker, a Turkish intellectual, claims that since its foundation in the 1930s, as well as today, Kemalist ideology is obviously a set of considerations that encompass renewal goals for Turkish society and state at economic, cultural and political levels.<sup>64</sup> Kemalism is against Ottomanism while developing the idea of Turkishness (nationalism) through an integrated society (populism) and Sun-Language theory.<sup>65</sup> In his book, "Turks and Kurds" [Türkler ve Kürtler], Cahit Tanyol, a Kemalist thinker, wrote that Atatürk, with his expression, «how happy is he who can say I am a Turk», realized an education policy and program which was based on the repudiation of/ignoring of the Kurds.<sup>66</sup> According to Tanyol, even if this expression does not imply an exclusion, it has imposed the condition of adopting Turkishness and this has been a factor in the separation of the Kurds and the Turks.<sup>67</sup>

The construction of Turkish identity as a supra-identity and the problem of how the ethnic and religious sentiments can subsequently be reflected in this identity, created obstacles for Kemalist nationalism from its foundation.<sup>68</sup> The stabilization of the nation-state was the main task of the Kemalist ideology. For this aim, Kemalists tried to «eliminate their rivals within the military, civil bureaucracy, and the National Assembly (the parliament), and to suppress the religious and Kurdish nationalist revolts against secular Turkish state». <sup>69</sup> With

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<sup>63</sup> Also for the attitude of Atatürk towards Kurdish people during the National Struggle (during the years of Turkish Independence War (1919-1922)) see: A. MANGO, *Atatürk and the Kurds*, in *Middle Eastern Studies, Seventy-Five Years of the Turkish Republic*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1999, 1-25.

<sup>64</sup> L. KÖKER, *Kemalizm/Atatürkçülük: Modernleşme, Devlet ve Demokrasi*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGİL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 111.

<sup>65</sup> This was developed in the 1930s and claimed that all languages are originated from one primal Turkic language.

<sup>66</sup> Ö. TURAN, *Cahit Tanyol*, cit., 387.

<sup>67</sup> Ö. TURAN, *Cahit Tanyol*, cit., 387.

<sup>68</sup> A. YILMAZ, *Kemalist Milliyetçilik*, cit., 234.

<sup>69</sup> H. YILMAZ, *The Kemalist Revolution and the Foundation of the One-Party Regime in Turkey: A Political Analysis*, in S. YAZICI - K. GÖZLER - F. KEYMAN (eds.) *Prof. Dr. Ergun*

the Kurdish rebellion in 1925, especially after the Sheikh Said rebellion, Atatürk's attitude towards Kurdish people took a different direction. For example, «on 8 December 1925, the Ministry of Education announced in a proclamation on 'Currents trying to undermine Turkish unity' that use of the terms Kürt, Laz, Çerkez, Kürdistan, and Lazistan would be banned». <sup>70</sup> In this regard, although Kemalist nationalism did not conform to the racist approach and tried to subsume different ethnic groups under the idea of Turkishness, the Kemalist Turkish state did not respect the article 39 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty. <sup>71</sup>

Many Turkish nationalists condemned those who disclaimed the past but in the same way they deny the recent past. <sup>72</sup> In one of the letter of Erich Auerbach to Walter Benjamin in 1937, he refers to Atatürk's policies and wrote on a «fanatically anti-traditional nationalism which destroyed the historical national character». <sup>73</sup> Auerbach writes as follows:

«But he [Kemal Atatürk] had to force through everything he did in the struggle against the European democracies on the one hand and the old Mohammedan Pan-Islamic sultan's economy on the other; and the result is a fanatically anti-traditional nationalism: rejection of all existing Mohammedan cultural heritage, the establishment of a fantastic relation to a primal Turkish identity, technological modernization in the European sense, in order to

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*Özbudun 'a Armağan*, vol. I, Siyaset Bilimi (Essays in Honer of Ergun Özbudun, vol. 1 Political Science), Ankara, 2008, 535-564.

<sup>70</sup> E. J. ZÜRCHER, *Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics (1908-1938)* in K. KARPAT (eds.), *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000, 176.

<sup>71</sup> Article 39: «Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Moslems. All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law. Differences of religion, creed or confession shall not prejudice any Turkish national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, such as, for instance, admission to public employments, functions and honours, or the exercise of professions and industries. No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings. Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the Courts». In *Treaty of Peace with Turkey signed at Lausanne July 24, 1923 The Convention Respecting the Regime of the Convention Respecting the Regime of the Straits and others Instruments signed at Lausanne*,

[http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/cedir/cedir/Lex-doc/TK\\_trat-los.pdf](http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/cedir/cedir/Lex-doc/TK_trat-los.pdf). (access: 6-12-2019)

<sup>72</sup> O. KOÇAK, *1920'lerden 1970'lere Kültür Politikaları*, in T. BORA - M. GULTEKİNGİL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 391.

<sup>73</sup> N. CURTHOYS - D. GANGULY (eds.), *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, Carlton-Victoria, 2007, 173.

triumph against a hated and yet admired Europe with its own weapons: hence, the preference for European-educated emigrants as teachers, from whom one can learn without the threat of foreign propaganda. Result: nationalism in the extreme accompanied by the simultaneous destruction of the historical national character. This picture, which in other countries like Germany, Italy, and even Russia (?) is not visible for everyone to see, shows itself here in full nakedness.... It is becoming increasingly clear to me that the present international situation is nothing but a ruse of providence, designed to lead us along a bloody and tortuous path to an International of triviality and a culture of Esperanto. I have already suspected this in Germany and Italy in view of the dreadful inauthenticity of the "blood and soil" propaganda, but only here has the evidence of such a trend almost reached the point of certainty». <sup>74</sup>

Auerbach's concern about the politics of that moment echoes the Gramscian critique of the alienation of intellectuals from their own cultural heritage and their national character. The result of this policy is «rejection of all existing Mohammedan cultural heritage, the establishment of a fantastic relation to a primal Turkish identity». Auerbach also refers to this nationalism resulting in the «destruction of the historical national character». In order to create a Turkish nationalism by means of cultural assimilation, this policy led other ethnic groups to lose their identity and cultural character. This policy was not naturally a democratic one.

However, I would like to divide the ideological development of Kemalism into two different periods: 1) during the period of Atatürk; 2) the period after his death<sup>75</sup>. After his death, Kemalism was interpreted in a different manner and utilized in more authoritative way to eliminate social and political conflict with reference to the six principles.

In short, Kemalist principles are contradictory. This is so because the definitions and explanations of the principles are uncertain and ambiguous. Populism can be in conflict with statism. The state is considered superior to the people. While secular understanding should be perceived as the protection of religious difference, it becomes an enemy to religion and an exclusionary factor. Nationalism is based on a single ethnic group. By the same token, it excludes other ethnic and religious groups. Now, let us focus on another obstacle to democracy in Turkey: weakness of civil society.

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<sup>74</sup> K. BARCK - A. REYNOLDS, *Walter Benjamin and Erich Auerbach: Fragments of a Correspondence*, in *Diacritics*, vol. 22, no. 3/4, Commemorating Walter Benjamin, 1992, 81-83.

<sup>75</sup> This period can be also divided into different periods in itself but I cannot elaborate it here because of the limited space.

### 3. Weakness of civil society

The development of democracy depends on the democratic institutions of a society. In this sense, the strength of a democracy is dependent on that of the civil society. If a civil society is vulnerable to the intervention of the state due to the fact that it is not strong enough, the democracy is also in danger, in the sense that it can be transformed into a dictatorial regime. Civil society is a necessary element of democracy. It must be a place where there is not any separation between political and private life or political and private spheres. This separation basically creates alienation of the individual from politics itself. Civil society must produce a sort of control mechanism of the political system in order to prevent the creation of a totalitarian or dictatorial regimes. The important elements of civil society are the civil organizations, institutions, and associations. In Turkey particularly after 1980, civil institutions or non-governmental organizations began to appear and increase in number.<sup>76</sup> Two things are necessary for the true realization of a civil society: 1) the limitation of the State's interference and activities; 2) existence of the rule of law. There is a difference between the ideological character of the state and legal character of the state. The legal character defends the right of the individuals before the constitution and the law, but the ideological character of the state aims to realize its interests alone against the individual's rights and interests.

Mustafa Kemal in one of his speeches outlined his own idea on the link between «elitist past and populist future»:<sup>77</sup> «If we now look at the other details of the organization - we begin our work from the village, from the individual. A structure that in this way rises from below to the top, from the foundation to the roof, will surely be sturdy. Nonetheless, there is a need at the beginning of any undertaking to go not from below upward, but from above downward».<sup>78</sup> From this passage, we can see how the first idea of Kemalist populism appeared. Atatürk refers to popular sovereignty and participation of people in civil affairs. Kemalism, in this sense, emphasizes the participation in particular of science but not of religion. This secular view created, as we said, a divide in society. The perception of religion as an enemy

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<sup>76</sup> Ş. KAYPAK, *Demokrasi Kültüründe Sivil Toplumun Rolü*, in Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, n. CIEP Special Edition, 2016, 648.

<sup>77</sup> N. ABADAN-UNAT, *Patterns of Political Modernization and Turkish Democracy*, in the *Turkish Yearbook*, vol. XIX, 1979, 10. Also, S. KILI, *Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey*, in *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, vol. 1, n. 3, *Political Ideology: Its Impact on Contemporary Political Transformations*, 1980, 385-86.

<sup>78</sup> N. ABADAN-UNAT, *Patterns of Political Modernization and Turkish Democracy*, cit., 10.

to the secular structure and republic, that is to Kemalist state, has meant that the people are not understood holistically. Kemalism failed to understand secularism as means of realizing religious pluralism. Atatürk clearly states that development from the below upward is better than from roof to foundation but at the beginning he believes that it is necessary to progress from above downward until the establishment of democracy. These ambiguous approaches led to different interpretations creating conflict within the Kemalist conception of cultural and national identity. The failure of Kemalism is that it continues to remain an elite regime and ideology which therefore did not allow it to achieve its ultimate aim of being a populist ideology.

The Occidentalism of Kemalism was criticized after the death of Atatürk, particularly between 1960 and 1980, for being “imitation”. Even during the last period of Ottoman empire some criticized the idea of Westernism/Occidentalism as “imitation” of West. However, while Şerif Mardin, a Turkish sociologist, accepted the critique, claiming that western values were implemented in superficial ways, he believes that the reason for this superficial implementation is not “imitation” but the reason must be found in the elements of the structure of Muslim-ottoman-Turkish culture<sup>79</sup> because the Kemalist intellectuals failed to analyze the society at that period and thus did not manage to realize the western values.

One of the failures of Kemalism is based on its relationship with civil society and intellectuals. According to Meust Yeğen, Kemalism of the 1930s was not nourished by civil society and in this sphere, it did not find any response in return. It disregarded the organization of the social consensus in order to constitute/form its domination or hegemony. For him the most important thing is that Kemalism failed to create a general intellectual and moral leadership that could organize a sum of “denominations/invitations” corresponding to a national-popular imagination.<sup>80</sup> Here Yeğen tries to indicate how the Kemalist ideology is alienated from civil society and therefore failed to establish its hegemony. Just as Gramsci tried to demonstrate the relationship between hegemony and intellectuals in his works, especially in the *Prison Notebooks*, here, Yeğen highlights the importance of intellectual leadership, that this not only establish its hegemony but also that it should forge a consensus between the people, politics, and ideology. Civil society is the place where this hegemony can be established. In this regard, civil

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<sup>79</sup> Ş. MARDIN, *Türk Modernleşmesi*, İstanbul, 1991, 21.

<sup>80</sup> M. YEĞEN, *Kemalism ve Hegemonya*, cit., 62.



organizations, societies, associations, and institutions<sup>81</sup> are important to re-establish democracy and create a national-popular front for establishing hegemony, as Gramsci pointed out.

Gramscian criticisms of the Italian intellectuals who were separated and alienated from the people can be applied to the intellectual movements at the beginning of the foundation of Turkey. While Kemalism tried to establish its cultural and intellectual hegemony in that period, it moved away from and became estranged from its own culture and even rejected its history. In the name of modernization or westernization, and in order to establish cultural hegemony, the intellectuals, such as authors and academics, refused their cultural values and history, which led them to cut off relations with the people.

Liberalism is one of the four enemies (along with reactionism, communism, kurdishness/separatism) of the single party and republican regime. People's House was a cultural vehicle to transform the past society into a modern one or more precisely into one conforming to Western standards. According to Nermin Abadan-Unat, «Atatürk never developed an ideology justifying authoritarianism and dictatorship. His main concern revolved around two themes: replacing irrational, traditional, religious thinking with scientific knowledge and logic, and achieving a peaceful competitive system».<sup>82</sup> However, some thinkers claim that Kemalist thought argues for an authoritarian democracy<sup>83</sup> and Kemalism believes in the indivisible union of authority.<sup>84</sup> In trying to create national unity, the idea of nationalism itself led to separatism. Instead of resolving a problem of "separatism", like the Kurdish problem, through civilian consensus and democratic negotiation, it still continues to take up strong nationalist ideas and statist views in undemocratic ways. This creates a great problem for Turkish democratization.

After the recent coup attempt, the Decree Law No. 677, published on 22 November 2016, permanently closed 375 associations and other non-

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<sup>81</sup> Regarding the civil organizations, Mesut Yeğen claims that the People's Houses (Turkish Institution for Public Education) which were opened by Atatürk in 1932 and the Village Institutes which were established by Hasan Ali Yucel in 1940 could be considered institutions allowed the state to monitor and reform society. M. YEĞEN, *Kemalism ve Hegemonya*, cit., 61. These institutions were founded above all for establishing a national identity based on Turkishness.

<sup>82</sup> N. ABADAN-UNAT, *Patterns of Political Modernization and Turkish Democracy*, cit., 12.

<sup>83</sup> A. INSEL, *Giriş* (Introduction), in T. BORA - M. GULTEKINGIL (eds.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Kemalizm*, cit., 23.

<sup>84</sup> A. INSEL, *Giriş* (Introduction), cit., 24.

governmental organizations (NGOs) and their assets were confiscated.<sup>85</sup> Right after that, in the framework of the Decree Law No. 668 of 27 July, many newspapers, TV channels, journals and publishing houses, news agencies were also closed. These attacks on civil organization were aimed at the Islamic organization known as FETÖ but in the end resulted in the closure of Kurdish media in the name of “counter terrorism.” These attacks on civil society obviously damage Turkish democracy.

In the history of Republic of Turkey, military power is always considered as an assurance for the protection of the secular state against radical islamist movements or ideology, and against the attacks more generally. Military intervention damages civil society and the development of democracy, the participation of the people in decision making. In this regard, it seems that the decline and weakness of military power may strengthen or re-enforce democracy and facilitate the democratization process, which paves the way for the intervention and participation of the people and society in politics. In other words, the democracy or democratization will be not a top-down process as Kemalist ideology proposed, but a bottom-up process. Kemalist ideology should accept that, without consideration of other ethnic groups in society such as Kurds, the re-establishment of democracy is not possible. This re-establishment is possible within a consensus in civil society and in collaboration with civilian organizations.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, let us try to evaluate the relationship between civil society, the state, and the intellectual in the period when Kemalist ideology emerged, by comparing it with the AKP period. In contrast to AKP, Kemalist ideology cannot provide integration within civil society. However, I would claim that neither Kemalist ideology nor AKP did manage to set up its hegemony. It seems that the AKP regime constituted its hegemony by strengthening its ties with civil society, while Kemalist ideology aimed to found it on the intellectual and cultural level. But I believe that in terms of the Gramscian sense of hegemony based on the intellectual elements and cultural development of civil society, these two different political approaches failed to achieve their hegemony because, while Kemalist ideology could not integrate with the public, AKP could not create a culture and intellectual environment

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<sup>85</sup> <https://acileyem.org.tr/eylem/yuezlerce-sivil-toplum-oerguetue-daimi-olarak-kapatildi> (access: 24-6-2019)

necessary for the establishment of hegemony. Although we can criticize the use of populism by the AKP regime to build up and keep its power, still we should say that AKP has succeeded in discussing the ethnic, religious, political and cultural issues in the society, regardless of the extent to which it is sincere in this. I believe that these principles of Kemalism, secularism for instance, prevented CHP from discussing the head scarf problem within civil society, because Kemalism saw the problem as a threat to the integrity of the State; by the same token, because of its principles of statism and nationalism, it could not create a consensus on the Kurdish problem within civil society. CHP almost always ignored or overlooked the power of civil society. However, AKP did manage to present these problems to civil society.

Finally, democratization, which has always been problematic in Turkey since its foundation, is interrupted once more by the authoritarian government. CHP, as the party of Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, helped and still tries to help to interrupt this process with its incorrect political attitude. With its current political decisions, it generally services the realization of AKP's own policies; for example, it voted for the invasion of Syria by the Turkish military. Of course, the democratization process in Turkey is not only based on the CHP's political structure and attitude, but this played a significant role.