

Reflections on “Centralization and the Civil Administrative Division” in the Nation-State Building Process during the Early Period of the Republic

Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Ulus Devlet İnşa Sürecinde “Merkeziyetçilik ve Mülki Taksimat” Üzerine Düşünceler

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Abstract

The founders of the Turkish Republic had in mind the idea and aim of building a modern nation-state and society. This idea and aim formed the basis of the approaches and policies adopted in the early period of the Republic. This paper aims to seek an answer to the question of whether there is a close relationship and a multidimensional interaction between nation-state building, centralization and administrative division in the early Republican period. The paper argues that the centralization approach and civil administrative division had multidimensional functions beyond the administrative function “for the construction of the nation-state in the early Republican period”. In this context, parliamentary debates, laws, draft laws and legal texts on the centralization and civil administrative division served as the main sources of reference and were analyzed as part of the study. In this framework, the basic approaches and policies adopted in the nation-state-building process of the early Republican period are presented, followed by an analysis of the role and functions of the laws and draft laws that constitute the basis for the centralization and civil administrative division in the construction of the identity of the “modern nation-state” in the light of parliamentary debates. The paper also draws attention to the conclusion that the founders of the Republic were engaged in a decentralist discourse and centralist action in the aforementioned construction process and that they adopted the centralization and civil administrative division as a constructive approach for the modern nation-state and society.

Keywords

Early Republic, Nation, Nation-State, Centralism, Civil Administrative Division

Öz

Cumhuriyet kurucularının zihin dünyasında modern ulus devleti ve toplumu inşa etme düşüncesi ve amacı vardır. Bundan dolayı erken cumhuriyet döneminde benimsenen yaklaşım ve politikaların temelini bu düşünce ve amaç oluşturmuştur. Bu makale, Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde ulus devlet inşası ile merkeziyetçilik ve mülki taksimat arasında yakın bir ilişki ve çok boyutlu bir etkileşim var mıdır? sorusuna cevap aramayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, merkeziyetçilik yaklaşımı ve mülki taksimatın yönetim işlevinin ötesinde “Erken cumhuriyet dönemi ulus devleti inşa etmeye yönelik” çok boyutlu işlevlere sahip olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu bağlamda merkeziyetçilik ve mülki taksimata ilişkin meclis tartışmaları, yasa ve tasarıları, hukuki metinler ana referans kaynağı olarak seçilmiş ve analiz edilmiştir. Bu çerçevede, Erken Cumhuriyet dönemi ulus devlet inşa sürecinde benimsenen temel yaklaşımlar ve politikalar serimlenecek, sonrasında merkeziyetçiliğe ve mülki düzenlemelere zemin teşkil eden yasa ve tasarılarının “modern ulus devlet” kimliğinin inşa edilmesindeki rol ve işlevleri, meclis tartışmaları eşliğinde analiz edilecektir. Cumhuriyet kurucularının bahsi geçen inşa sürecinde, ademi merkeziyetçi bir söylem ile merkeziyetçi bir eylemsellik içinde olduklarına, merkeziyetçiliği ve mülki taksimatı modern ulus devlet ve toplum için kurucu bir yaklaşım olarak benimsediklerine ilişkin bir çıkarıma dikkat çekilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Erken Cumhuriyet, Ulus, Ulus Devlet, Merkeziyetçilik, Mülki Taksimat

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Introduction

The modern nation-state paradigm emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a necessity for state and social forces. Dynamics such as modernization, capitalism, and revolutions, which were effective in reproducing and shaping the political and social sphere, were the factors that necessitated the nation-state paradigm. This new state identity was embodied in policies that built political and social structures that were standardized, homogenized, and unified around certain values under the influence of the aforementioned dynamics. In this framework, the “people” of the state were conceived as citizens with a homogeneous identity and bound to the state by a sense of belonging. Instead of traditional fragmented identities, the modern state required the existence of homogenized national identities under a supra-identity. This was considered necessary for the state to have a healthy relationship with and influence over the people living within its territory. One of the main goals of the early Republican period was to build a nation-state. In this context, the nation-state sought to unite the people under the umbrella of a national identity, which was “Turkishness”. In this process, the ideology of nationalism was one of the founding elements of a common consciousness, a sense of belonging and a common identity. In this axis, the modern nation-state defined a national identity based on the ideology of nationalism and constructed a concept of citizenship that acts with a sense of belonging and is dependent on the state. This was considered very important for the existence and effectiveness of the nation-state. The founders of the Republic tried to complete the construction of the nation-state through a similar process. Therefore, the ideological basis of the founders of the Republic was generally the philosophy of the Enlightenment, the idea of modernization, and the French Revolution. The nation-state that the founders of the Republic tried to build on this ideological basis was characterized by centralization and a civil administrative division in line with centralization (Önen, Reyhan, 2011: 541-543). Therefore, it seems important to consider the construction of the nation-state in the early Republican period within this framework and to place centralization and the civil administrative division¹ within this framework.

The word “civil administration” is defined as a concept that refers to the entire territory of a country (Güler, 2009: 279). Within this conceptual framework, the territorial organization of the state in the Republic of Turkey has been shaped by two structures: the “provincial administration” and the “local administration”. The provincial administration is the central administration organized at the provincial and district levels (Nadaroğlu, 1998). Local administrations, on the other hand, are those that meet their own local needs on the basis of autonomy (Çukurçayır, 2000). In the regulations on provincial and local administrations, it is assumed that it would be important to seek an answer to the question of whether the main issue is to increase the possibilities of exercising initiative by delegating duties and powers to the provincial and local administrations in accordance with the principle of decentralization and separation of powers as stipulated in the Constitution, or whether the main issue is to transfer the values accepted by the political center to the provincial and local administrations and implement a holistic modernization process in accordance with a nation-state identity.

1 Civil administrative division refers to the division of land in relation to the organization of the State. Civil administration, on the other hand, refers to the central government. In this framework, civil administrative division includes the organization of the central government based on land.

In the early Republican period, the centralist policy formed the basis of the arrangements regarding the administrative structure. In the minds of the founders of the Republic, centralization had a very broad meaning for the construction of the modern nation-state and society. Centralization, as a pillar of the dynamics of building a modern nation-state and society, has an important function in ensuring unity between the center and the provinces/localities. The civil administrative division is important to open a wide space for the functioning of centralism for these purposes. The civil administrative division of the early Republican period has a dual approach. While a decentralized approach characterized the civil administrative division in the period between 1920 and 1923, the civil administrative division in the period after 1924 is based on a comprehensive centralist approach. The Constitution of 1924 provides the legal framework for centralization, but it also indicates the direction of civil administration. It should be noted at this point that the decentralization approach lacks the ability to go beyond rhetoric and produce a concrete reality. Indeed, the civil administrative division in the period between 1920 and 1923 was geared towards strengthening the central government (Keskin, 2007a).

In the early Republican period, the centralist organization of the state played an important role in the construction of the nation's identity, as well as its reproductive function in a wide range of areas, including political, administrative, economic, and socio-cultural. It is necessary to recognize the existence of a reduced geography and a narrowed ethnic and religious pluralism in the process of establishing the nation-state. Therefore, centralization has a constructive function in the building of national identity as well as in the holistic development of modernization within its territorial borders. In the formation stages of modern Turkey, the political center defined Turkishness as a supra-identity within its territorial borders while striving to integrate other ethnic identities into this supra-identity. The common founding elements such as language, history and culture were sought to be integrated with social segments through ideological tools and a centralist approach. Therefore, the founders tried to adopt the transformative and comprehensive policies of the political center in many dimensions through centralization.

This paper focuses on the close relationship between the nation-state-building process in the early Republican period and centralization and the civil administrative division. The centralized administrative structure that both the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey adopted and sought to build has a wide repertoire to address a wide range of issues. This article aims to show that the centralization adopted in the early Republican period had a meaning and function beyond an administrative approach and that the desired and/or actual civil administrative divisions were planned in this context. The paper attempts to make a comparison based on the differences between discourse and action by conducting a content analysis of the opinions expressed during the parliamentary sessions and debates on the draft laws in each period.

One of the main objectives of the newly established Turkish Republic was to build a modern state and society under a national identity. This objective was undoubtedly adopted as a result of a political and social necessity and imperative in terms of the overall conditions of the time. Within the framework of the theoretical approaches, the national identity was intended to be made a common denominator by creating a sense of belonging, consciousness and emotion through the phenomena of history, language,

religion, tradition and culture. The founders of the Republic saw it as a necessity to take the helm in line with the need for this common denominator, in other words, a collective identity. In this context, it seems meaningful to emphasize the assumption that there was a close interaction between the building of the “nation” state in the early Republican period and centralization and the civil administrative division, as claimed in this paper. The arguments that can support this assumption are the intellectual references, the discourses² used, the parliamentary debates, the legal acts, and the administrative tools that were intended to be implemented.

Centralization, which was one of the pillars of the nation-state in the early Republican period, aimed to build a modern state and society through various policies and instruments that would make the provinces/localities dependent on the state. While the state provided public services on a very large scale, the provincial and local administrations tried to perform the services assigned to them by the political center within a national integrity. Moreover, the political center sought to exercise its power and transformative effect on social organization through centralization in various dimensions. The paper aims to answer the question of whether there was a close relationship and a multidimensional interaction between the building of the nation-state in the early Republican period and centralization and the civil administrative division, and to this end, it takes the parliamentary debates, laws and draft laws as a source of reference. The focus of the paper is to analyze the roles and functions of the centralist approach and the civil administrative division in the building of the nation-state in the early Republican period within this scope. This paper is categorized into three sections. The first section examines the “building process of the modern nation-state” in the early Republican period, the second section focuses on the “projections of centralization” and the last section includes “an analysis of centralization and the civil administrative division”.

Building of the “Nation-State” in the Early Republican Period

The nation-state is a modern phenomenon that has the right to exercise legal power over a territory with defined borders and aims to unite the people under its rule by homogenizing them, creating a common culture, symbols and values, and keeping alive and reproducing traditions and myths of origin (Guibernau, 1997: 93). In addition, the nation-state is defined as an institutional form of government that maintains an administrative monopoly over a territory with defined boundaries, establishes its administrative authority by law, and enforces it through direct control of internal and external means of violence (Giddens, 2008: 165). As the state paradigm of modernity, the nation-state, which has taken a strong place on the stage of history, has adopted a homogenizing approach with the enveloping and transformative effect of modernity and has created a nation and citizen identity by integrating different identities into one supra-identity. The nineteenth century was an important period of change in the phenomenon of the state, as in many other phenomenal changes. The clear manifestation of this change in the phenomenon of the state is the identity of the modern nation-state. Therefore, one of the constitutive elements of identity is the state and the other is the nation. Without going into the details of whether the nation is a historical reality or a political necessity, it is necessary to state here that the identity of the nation corresponds to a reality based on the needs of the modern state.

2 Discourse can be defined as a multidimensional plane of practices, meanings and habits that enable the establishment of a certain conception/perception of reality and understanding of society (Çelik, 2003: 33).

A nation is defined as a community with a common ancestry, united geographically by settlements and neighborhoods, culturally by a common language, customs and traditions, and as a form of state organization (Habermas, 2012: 18). According to Smith, a nation is a community of people who collectively share a territory, myths and historical memory, public culture, economy, legal rights and obligations (1991: 14). Scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner, who offered a different and important approach to the phenomenon of nation, defined nation as an imaginary, invented, artificial community (Anderson, 1995; Hobsbawm, 2010; Gellner, 1992) and emphasized that it was shaped and gained dynamism within the idea of nationalism. Therefore, the conditions of modernity provided an important context for the formation of the idea of nationalism and its foundations. Common affiliations had to become a denominator for the creation of a national identity in the modern period.

The basic dynamics of the new state and the Republic were the ideas of building a nation-state, modernization and development (Bozdoğan, 2012: 18). The intellectual climate on which this idea was based was essentially rooted in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the fundamental values of the French Revolution, and the founders, intellectuals, and professionals of the Republic were the constructive actors. They adopted the most comprehensive and radical approach possible to achieve this goal, and the main approach was to act quickly. An important reason why the founding actors of the republic adopted a more radical approach was to achieve these goals quickly and radically (Zürcher, 2004: 152). The philosophy of the Enlightenment, which inspired the founding ideology of the Republic, the ideal of modernization, and its founding elements, generally emphasized man's dominance over nature and adopted a positivist and secularist approach to life. Therefore, for the founding cadres of the Republic, part of the roadmap for building a modern nation-state bore the intellectual traces of this philosophy³. Positivism and secularism were the main concepts used in the reproduction of the political and social sphere (Mardin, 2006: 190-191; Lewis, 2008: 545). It should be noted that positivism and secularism had a guiding and determining effect on the modern nation-state and society, while nationalism functioned as an ideology for the construction of the nation-state.

In this process, it is possible to see the function of nationalist ideology, which is an important element in the construction of national identity in the early Republican period, by homogenizing various identities along with the instruments of the modern state to establish sovereignty. In this context, an attempt was made to establish a national identity through (Kemalist) nationalism, a principle of Kemalism. This approach to nationalism was based on positivism and secularism (Karpas, 1996: 62; Ergüç, 2019: 89). Turkish

3 The early Republican period coincides with a period of intense and profound revolutions. An important goal was to build a modern state and society through rapid radical changes and transformations guided by positivist and secular thought. Accordingly, the abolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the abolition of religious lodges, the abolition of the Department of Sharia and Foundations, the abolition of the religious courts, the adoption of a civil code, and the abolition of the phrase "Islam is the religion of the state" all serve this purpose. In short, the aim was to build a modern state and society through large-scale revolutions and reforms that would enable the intellectual, institutional and social functioning of modernity. Suitable means to accomplish this goal, such as instruments of force and violence or ideological apparatuses were sought and found within the theoretical and practical realm of the modern state, for example, instruments of force and violence or ideological apparatuses. Louis Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* and Michael Mann's *the Sources of Social Power: Volumes I-II-III* provide an invaluable perspective on these issues.

and/or Kemalist nationalism in the early Republican period adopted elements of French/ political nationalism, which was characterized by abstract, moral, and spiritual elements rather than material elements of national identity. In particular, Kemalist nationalism was expressed as a French-style political nationalism because it did not show an expansionist approach abroad and wanted to homogenize and unify ethnic and cultural differences within the country through a supra-identity (Alakel, 2011: 23). However, under the influence of the wind of fascism blowing across Europe, it was also influenced by German and Italian ethnic and cultural nationalism, especially in the 1930s, and adopted a nationalist approach based on the material elements of national identity (Sarı, 2021). As a natural consequence of this approach, the identity of nation and citizen became an identity embodied within this framework.

For the founders of the Republic, one of the main ideas was to reject the multicultural and multiethnic legacy of the Ottoman Empire by melting all the different identities under the Turkish identity into one pot and transforming the Ottoman Muslims into a “civilized”, homogeneous Turkish nation. According to Zafer Toprak (2006: 15), the Turkish Republic is a nation-state that seeks to build a homogeneous structure. In this axis, the main approach to transforming a people with a traditional and religious identity into a modern nation is the construction of a secular state and society (Kaya, 2015: 26). Within this framework, the distant past of Turkishness became the main source of reference for the construction of the national identity, while the close relationship between Turkishness and religion⁴ was intended to be weakened by pointing to an identity other than the Islamic identity. Therefore, the founders aimed to construct the national identity of the early Republic by articulating a distant past beyond the Ottoman Empire and, in a sense, Islamic identity.⁵ While the state intellect of the early Republican period put the construction of the modern nation-state on its agenda as an important goal, the members of society, both the subject and the object of this goal, were to be assembled around “national identity” on the basis of “citizenship”.⁶

In this context, the political center’s “right to have a say” on issues such as the construction of the modern state and nation, civic identity and the ability of this identity to

4 Religion, together with nationalism, provided an important motivation during the War of Independence. In particular, it was used as a means to ensure national unity and to ensure social mobilization for a common goal. Within this framework, the two-fold use of the concept of nation, including both religion and nation, reflects a conscious choice in the context of the period (Çoban, 2021: 89).

5 Constructing a national identity through the “distant past” of Central Asia, presented as a golden age in place of the Ottoman Empire, which has an important and powerful place in social memory, was not an easy goal to achieve (Van Het Hof, 2010: 553).

6 Modern nation-states, by their very nature, produce a civic identity that embraces the official ideology, in other words, the accepted constitutive values, the ideological instruments that enable this civic identity and the constitutive values to establish as much commonality as possible are mobilized accordingly. This meaning attributed to citizenship is an effort to create, in Füsün Üstel’s concise expression, “Desirable Citizens”. The idea of creating a desirable citizen is a product of the efforts of modern nation-states to shape it through their ideological apparatuses. While the concept emphasizes the acceptability of citizenship by the state, it describes a collective personality that knows its duties and responsibilities towards the state and society, acts within the boundaries set, and is “docile, civilized, patriotic, hardworking and obedient”. In this context, there are studies which make it possible to read the effort to create a ‘desirable citizen’ in the Ottoman and early Republican periods through many elements. An important study on this subject is Füsün Üstel’s “In Pursuit of the Desirable Citizen: Citizenship Education from the 2nd Constitutional Monarchy to Today (*Makbul Vatandaş’ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi*). İstanbul: İletişim Publications, 2004.”, which is noteworthy for shedding light on the formative dimensions of the issue through educational tools.

establish a rational relationship with the state, and the ability to respond to and reproduce the revolutions in the people's world of meaning strengthened. According to Tanör (2018: 321), the primary mission of the founders of the republic was to establish the nation and the state. To this end, national independence, national sovereignty, reforms in the fields of language, alphabet, education, and history were concrete instruments of this mission. The "elitist" founding cadre of the republic saw themselves as the guarantors of the regime to be built (Alakel, 2011: 19). Therefore, the pedagogical attitude determined by the founding cadre as the dominant power was an attitude towards the adoption/imposition of the regime by segments of society.

Language and education policies⁷ created a unifying effect as effective tools in the nation-building process (Eren, 2018: 229). The importance of educational tools in the establishment and dissemination of a common language is quite high. Therefore, the function of education in constructing a national identity was used through ideological apparatuses⁸ and institutional tools. In this respect, language and education were considered as important tools. It should be noted that the representatives of German Romanticism pointed out the importance of language in creating a common spirit/identity concerning the issue of national identity. In this regard, language, which Herder and Fichte saw as the soul of the people, the history, and the pillar of a nation's knowledge, fulfills a constitutive function, establishing a link with the linguistic, historical, and cultural foundations of national identity and indicating that the nation is an organic entity (Candan, 2015: 181; Kadioğlu, 2003: 285; Çolak, 2007: 31). While the founding cadre of the republic used language and educational tools for these purposes, they also aimed to increase the level of literacy of the people through education and to ensure the adoption and permanence of the revolutions⁹ (Ahmad, 2008: 101; Zürcher, 2004: 273-277).

Phenomena that changed the demographic structure of the population¹⁰ both quantitatively and qualitatively, such as forced migration and deportation in the late Ottoman period and population exchange and settlement policies in the early Republican

7 The Third Grand Congress of the Republican People's Party emphasized that education was the most important means of raising republican, nationalist, secular, patriotic citizens who know their history (Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Üçüncü Büyük Kongre, 1931: 80-81). Therefore, educational institutions played a significant role in the construction of a national identity as one of the most important ideological tools in the early Republican period.

8 Althusser states that political power possesses and intensively uses repressive and ideological apparatuses in order to maintain its existence. The state maintains its existence on the basis of repressive and ideological apparatuses. The repressive apparatuses of the state are agencies such as the law, the courts, the police and the army, which operate in areas where there is an overt use of force or coercion. The ideological apparatuses of the state, on the other hand, are institutions that perpetuate the affirmation of political power in areas such as the family, education and religion. Within these spheres, individuals are named, given identity and imprisoned in the sphere of state sovereignty (Althusser, 1991).

9 The founders of the Republic did not see themselves as revolutionaries and their changes as revolutions. According to Taha Parla (1993: 155), since this cadre were ideological positivists who avoided the notion of revolution, they adopted the idea of political and social change in harmony and unity. In the literature, the radical reforms in various sections of political, social and individual life are referred to as Reforms, Kemalist Revolution, Atatürk's Revolution and Turkish Revolution (Tanör, 2018: 321).

10 Between 1923, when the Republic was founded, and 1938, more than 400,000 immigrants, exchanged persons and refugees were naturalized by the state (Yılmaz and Konya, 2022: 24) and settled in various regions of Turkey pursuant to the Law on Resettlement. However, population arrangements and settlement policies also became an option in the early Republican period as instruments for building the nation-state (Göker, 2019).

period, also influenced the construction process of the modern nation-state in the early Republican period to some extent and created a broad basis for its homogenizing policies (Tanör, 2002: 360; Çağaptay, 2006: 155).

In the early Republican period, the political center aimed to intervene, change, and transform many areas through a strong centralist approach to build a modern nation-state. This goal was to help the state acquire an identity with modern forms, on the one hand, and to establish a social structure that was modernized and developed and that embraced the values of the Republic, on the other. Therefore, it seems useful to study and evaluate centralism in the early Republican period with its many dimensions.

“Repertoire” of Centralism

The early Republican period was a time when political power sought to exert its influence on all levels of social life and formulate its policies accordingly. In this context, a strong central power and a corresponding model of administrative organization were considered essential for the construction of a modern nation-state and society. Ensuring that cities, which are an important part of the identity of the modern nation-state and society, acquire a modern identity was also incorporated into this framework. Like many postcolonial nation-states in the twentieth century, early Republican Turkey adopted the idea of urbanism and modern architecture as an expression of national independence, pride, and progress (Bozdoğan, 2012: 23). During this period, the political center actively sought to mobilize various policy instruments that would build the modern nation-state formation. In this context, the reorganization of the state on its territory and the reproduction of space are important to achieve goals such as uniting different identities under a supra-identity to build the modern nation-state, modernize society, and ensure the adoption of the fundamental values of the Republic. Therefore, the supporting instrument of this idea of reorganization and production was centralism.

The centralism of the early Republican period should be considered and evaluated from this perspective. In particular, the existence of a close relationship between the reproduction of space and the reproduction of social life (Lefebvre, 1991) is the intersection of this interaction. For the founders of the Republic, the production of a space compatible with the values of the Republic and the modern living climate had more than a symbolic value. An important dimension of the civil administrative division within the framework of the nation-state identity is the integration of the population around a homogeneous supra-identity. Therefore, in the early Republican period, unifying policies were intensively implemented to eliminate the elements that weakened the national identity and to bring the strengthening elements to the fore. In this process, the non-Muslim population was taken out of the equation in the founding policies of the modern nation-state in the early Republican period. Beginning in 1913, the nationalist movements in the Balkans, which were the important ruptures that paved the way for the idea of constructing a national identity, and their aftermath had a corrosive effect on the Ottoman territories. This erosion continued to have an impact during the National Struggle, producing an exclusionary result for non-Muslim identities and an inclusionary result for Turkish and Muslim identities (Ergüç, 2019: 86-87).

In this context, the draft law on the establishment of a ‘liva’ under the name of Giresun¹¹, consisting of the Giresun, Tirebolu and Ordu districts, which was submitted

¹¹ The administrative unit of ‘liva’ was abolished in the Republican period and ‘province’ became the largest

to the Parliament in November 1920 with the signature of Mustafa Kemal, the head of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), was linked to the problem of Pontic Greek separatism in the region (Keskin, 2007a: 246). This territorial arrangement sought to reorganize the territory and reproduce space on the basis of nationalist ideas and an understanding that excluded non-Muslim identities. During the discussion of this draft law, the speeches of Dr. Abidin Bey, member of Parliament for Lazistan, on ethnic and religious identity made this state of affairs visible. Dr. Abidin Bey's opinion that "Ordu cannot be made into a province/vilayet because of the majority of Christian merchants in Ordu and their concentration in commercial life" (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 1, Volume 6, 1336: 142-144) is noteworthy as a discourse that shows the close relationship between civil administrative division and national identity. For the founders of the Republic, as for the Unionist leaders, the phenomena of the national economy and the national bourgeoisie (Toprak: 1995) and the phenomenon of the nation-state (in which Turkishness and Islam were considered constitutive elements of national identity) were mutually influential. Therefore, a modern nation-state could create a national bourgeoisie and economy, and a national economy and bourgeoisie could create a modern nation-state. Until the late 1920s, this approach envisioned the domestic economic power needed to build a modern state and society and the transformative effect of that power¹². The political center sought to construct the state and social order in the early Republican period by reorganizing on land and intervening in space to create similarities rather than differences through centralization.

Although the Constitution of 1921 stated that sovereignty belonged to the people and would be exercised through the Parliament, the existence of the Sultanate and the Caliphate made the nature of the regime unclear. With the abolition of the Sultanate and the subsequent establishment of the Republic, the nature of the regime became clearer. With the Constitution of 1924, the legal framework of the regime was also defined. Thus, constitutionally, the people became the owner of "sovereignty" and the Parliament acquired the right to exercise sovereignty. With this Constitution, the Parliament, which was the sole holder of legislative and executive power, in other words, the political center, became a powerful actor in the policies that established the modern nation-state. As one of the important elements of this power, the concept of centralized administration fulfilled important functions. The 6th Section of the Constitution of 1924 defines the civil administrative division as provinces, districts and townships, stating that townships are composed of townships and villages, and that provinces, cities, townships and villages have sovereign status; however, townships/nahiyas and districts/kazas are not recognized as legal entities. It was stated that provinces would be governed according to the principle of breadth of authority and separation of duties (The Constitution of 1924, Articles 89-91). As in previous Ottoman-Turkish constitutions, it was reiterated that provinces would be governed on the principles of "breadth of authority and separation of duties" (Kili and Gözübüyük, 1985: 128-129).

unit of settlement. The province of Giresun, consisting of the districts of Tirebolu and Görle, and the province of Ordu, consisting of the districts of Fatsa and Ünye, were established with the enactment of the draft law.

12 Enterprises that were under the concession of foreign companies were nationalized in parallel with the national economy, national bourgeoisie and statism policies in the early Republican period (Afet İnan, 1982: 15-16). If one purpose of this nationalization was to open up space for a national economy and bourgeoisie, another was to acquire the means to intervene in various areas of social life through the state's economic instruments.

The political center wanted to build a strong centralized administrative structure, especially through the Constitution of 1924 and the legal arrangements it sought to make regarding the civil administrative division. In this respect, the Constitution of 1924 provided an important framework. The centralist approach embedded in this framework provided the means and conditions for intervening in and transforming the social sphere. There were also dissenting voices in Parliament against the centralist approach of the Constitution of 1924. One of these voices was Halis Turgud, a member of Parliament for Sivas. Halis Turgud objected to the centralist approach of the Constitution of 1924, arguing that the provinces should not be under the tutelage of the central government in order to fulfill their primary duties and local services, that the province councils should be given powers as stipulated in the Constitution, and criticized the centralist approach of the civil administrative division (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 7, 1340: 245). The founders of the Republic believed that the model appropriate to the political and social foundation they wished to build was not decentralization, but centralism¹³. It should be noted that the centralist approach was quite compatible with the basic dynamics of the nation-state within the conjuncture of the period. In this context, the centralist approach adopted in the early Republican period became one of the most important pillars of the modern nation-state construction process. The words of Celal Nuri, a member of Parliament for Gelibolu, during the parliamentary debates on the draft Constitution of 1924, make the purpose of this approach more visible. According to Celal Nuri, the state consisted of a nation. Therefore, centralism was equated with one nation and federation and decentralization were to be rejected. Moreover, the “benevolent state” was reproduced in which the citizens, who were considered to be one and the same and identical with the state, were united in the person of the state (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 8/1, 1340: 915). Within this framework, the views expressed by Ragıp Bey, a member of Parliament for Kütahya, during the parliamentary debates on the Draft Law on Villages in 1924 were also directed towards the local objectives of the political center. According to Ragıp Bey, the principle of breadth of authority was a means for the center to establish control and supervision over local structures (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 6, 1340: 233-234).

The attempt to understand the reforms attempted in the early Republican period as a whole is important in terms of several dimensions. The first dimension is the construction of the modern nation-state, the second is the acceptance of centralism as the basic approach to reform in this construction process, and the third is the shaping of the civil administrative division together with the other two dimensions. Therefore, the political, administrative, and legal arrangements made in the early Republican period should be viewed and interpreted through these three dimensions. In this context, the statements made by Necati Bey, a member of Parliament for Erzurum, during the discussions on the

13 Centralism refers to a top-down organization in state on the basis of the integrity of the administration and the division of tasks with the delegation of authority between levels; decentralization or subsidiarity (closeness to the people in service) refers to a bottom-up organization and the division of tasks between levels based on the separation of duties. There is no delegation of authority in decentralization; the administrative structure that undertakes the task in accordance with the division of tasks uses any kind of authority required by it (Güler, 2001: 9). The centralist understanding of government does not allow for a democratic, autonomous and strong local government. The reason is that the central government wants to maintain its sovereignty over political power sharing and resources. Therefore, it implies a lack of trust in elected local administrators, local policies and local democracy (Yalçındağ, 1992: 4).

draft law on the Administration of Townships and Villages, which was presented to the Parliament in January 1921, represent an understanding that constructs the nation-state. Necati Bey's statement that "the names of many villages are not Turkish and are in foreign languages" and that "the names of these villages should be changed and made Turkish" (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 1, Volume 13, 1337: 69) shows that the importance of language in the construction of a national identity was recognized. Language is important in the process of building a nation-state in terms of creating a common identity (Eren, 2018). Therefore, one of the important goals in the early Republican period was to make Turkish the dominant language as a constitutive element of national identity. However, in a draft law submitted to parliament in December 1923, the issue of "abolishing elected memberships in administrative assemblies" (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 4, 1339: 367) was put on the agenda, and elected memberships in provincial and district administrative assemblies were abolished in 1926 (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 21, 1926). This approach is important for the construction of a nation-state in two ways. First, this draft law aimed to put an end to the membership of non-Muslim elected members in the administrative assemblies, and second, it aimed to build a strong centralist structure at the local level by abolishing the membership of elected representatives of the people. Thus, on the one hand, there was an approach that acted with the reflex of the nation-state, and on the other hand, there was an approach that wanted to bind the localities to itself with a centralist approach.

Sovereignty is undoubtedly one of the founding characteristics of the modern state and the most fundamental element that defines the only power that has a say in social organization (Saygılı, 2010: 78). In particular, a strong centralized structure has a very important function in the establishment of sovereignty. In this regard, the establishment of sovereignty in every part of the country was an important goal for the founders of the Republic, as sovereignty and authority were considered prerequisites for the construction of a modern nation-state and social identity. Within this framework, the political center, instead of directly and explicitly considering banditry as a problem of state sovereignty, considered it as a reason for the long distance between administrative structures and presented it as a justification for the establishment of subsidiary administrations. The justification of the draft law prepared for the establishment of a district named Hekimhan under the Malatya province was emphasized as the prevention of banditry activities. However, the opinions expressed by the members of Parliament in their parliamentary speeches indicate that there was a lack of sovereignty and authority. The remarks of Lütü Bey, member of Parliament for Malatya, on the need for new administrative structures in order to record the population and taxes of the tribes and to ensure security and the remarks of Emin Bey, Member of Parliament for Sivas, on the fact that Hekimhan township had been given to some aghas and that no taxes were being collected and no soldiers recruited from this township and that it could not be administered (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 1, Volume 10, 1337: 406-409) showed that there was a lack of sovereignty and authority. "General Superintendencies"¹⁴ were established in many regions to provide solutions to problems that were considered threats to the construction of the nation-state, such as tribal and minority issues, to establish sovereignty and authority, and to

¹⁴ Although the issue of general superintendency was included in the Constitution of 1921, it was implemented as late as 1927.

promote modernization and development (Yılmaz, 2013; Korhan, 2012). Therefore, one of the important objectives of the early Republican period was to effectively implement the policies of the modern nation-state that penetrated the social sphere by establishing sovereignty and authority. Looking at the civil administrative division in this context puts the issue in a more meaningful framework. It is understandable that the political center wanted to assert its authority in such places through administrative levels and the establishment of a law enforcement force because the purpose behind this was to establish sovereignty and authority. Especially in some regions, the high degree of tribalism and the existence of fragmented local power structures were the reasons that pushed the political center to establish new administrative levels in these regions.

In order to establish a modern nation-state identity and strong centralization, a draft law called “Draft Law on Administrative Organization” was prepared in 1926. The political center prepared this draft law and submitted it to the Parliament with the aim of reducing the number of provinces and building manageable provinces and related administrative structures. This draft law provided for the transformation of the provinces of Beyoğlu, Üsküdar, Çatalca, Gelibolu, Genç, Ergani, Ardahan, Siverek, Kozan, Muş and Dersim into districts (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 25, 1926: Annex No. 199). This draft law dealt with the question of which provinces and districts would be retained, which would be abolished and which would be merged with another province. In addition, it aimed to reorganize the local administration, such as redetermining the district centers, changing those deemed necessary, reorganizing the townships and villages accordingly, and determining the townships that would be eligible to be made into districts. This draft law had political and administrative objectives, as well as the provision of public order and security and the reorganization of economic relations. With the intervention of the political center, the idea was to reconstruct the civil administrative division according to the structure of the modern nation-state and to make the cities manageable. In fact, the draft law emphasized the necessity of forming the civil administrative division on the basis of political, administrative, economic, health and military factors. In particular, issues such as security, tribal structures and banditry were emphasized in the justification for changing the status of Dersim into a district.¹⁵ In addition, the “primitive” state of society was mentioned, and it was stated that it should be annexed to a province in order to introduce it to “civilized” life. In a sense, the state wanted to ensure sovereignty and security as a dimension of modernization by carrying out extensive reconstruction activities in these regions. In the draft law, many reasons were given for the abolition of an administrative structure, such as low revenues, weak administration, small population, small territory, economic and social underdevelopment, or the presence of developed provinces in the immediate vicinity. In addition, approaches such as weakening the economic and commercial power of non-Muslim minorities, bringing the tribes that created security problems under the control of the government, securing their support through compromises with local government forces, and suppressing the separatist movements of ethnic tribes were the main foundations of the civil administrative division.

¹⁵ Laws undoubtedly played a significant role in the elimination of social objections and resistance to the idea and/or method of modernization. In this respect, the Law on Treason, the Law on the Maintenance of Order and the Independence of Courts, which interpreted and ruled based on these laws, aimed to suppress the elements of objection and resistance coming from the social sphere and to include them in the modernization process as the state’s instruments of oppression and coercion.

In a way, it was an attempt to secure sovereignty and authority (Keskin, 2007a: 250-251). In the reorganization of the civil administrative division, security problems in some parts of the country were seen as a factor that weakened the sphere of influence of the political center. This dimension of the problem was also raised during the parliamentary debates on the draft law.

Münür Hüsrev Bey from Erzurum, one of the Parliament members who opposed this draft law, said that the civil administrative division was not based on the right criteria and that the provinces were to be turned into districts based on arbitrary criteria, which implicitly showed that the political center was trying to establish sovereignty through the civil administrative division. However, Cemil Bey, the Minister of Interior, stated that there were two ideas of provincial administration: general administration and local administration. He said that the idea of general administration makes it possible to divide the country into a small number of provinces and a large number of districts and townships and to manage it more easily. Furthermore, the idea of local administration allowed for more provinces, the development of administrative structures under provinces, and the self-government of provinces. He noted that the Republic administration and the Grand National Assembly adopted the second idea and that the government wanted to create provinces where the people could govern themselves (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, Volume 25, 1926: 610-611). These ideas of the Minister of the Interior suggest that while decentralist discourse constructed the domain of social legitimacy, legislative regulations laid the groundwork for the operational domain of centralism and sovereignty-building attitudes. This legislation, the first "Law on Administrative Organization" of the Republican era, was adopted on May 30, 1926, and came into force on June 26, 1926. With this law, 11 provinces were reorganized into districts, 27 districts were reorganized into townships, 60 townships were abolished, 18 districts were reconstituted and 17 districts were annexed to other provinces (Düstur, Session 3, Volume 7: 1394-1398). The province status of Üsküdar, Beyoğlu, Çatalca, Gelibolu, Genç, Ergani, Ardahan, Siverek, Kozan, Muş and Dersim, which were included in this draft law, was changed to district status with this law. In 1927, the civil administrative division included 63 provinces, 343 districts and 681 townships; in 1928, 63 provinces, 328 districts and 699 townships, and districts were made into townships in this process (Önen and Reyhan, 2011: 486).

On April 18, 1929, the government submitted to the Parliament a draft law entitled "Draft Law on the General Administration of Provinces". The preamble of the draft law stated that the Law on the General Administration of Provinces of 1913, which regulated the administration of provinces, was a temporary law and that the powers granted to the governors had been taken away by laws in the course of time and that the law had lost its character. Emphasizing that governors should be representatives of both the government and each ministry, the government requested that the powers of governors be expanded to ensure the functioning of an effective local administration in rural areas. With this draft law, the political center aimed to establish a civil administration structure in the rural areas that could effectively implement the policies of the political center by granting broad powers to the governors. The preamble of the draft law referred to the civil administration structure in the Ottoman period and emphasized that "with the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the extensive decentralization in the rural administration was ended and a strict

centralization procedure was implemented, and with the Reformation, improvements were made in the central and rural organizations” (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 3, Volume 10, 1929: Annex No. 134). An evaluation of these justifications shows that the government believed that decentralization created problems of sovereignty and authority and led to a “disorderly” system. To emphasize, both in the Ottoman and Republican periods, the local/periphery was viewed with suspicion and there was a constant tension (Mardin, 2006). Therefore, the political center wanted to transfer its values to the periphery to bind them.

In the parliamentary debates on the draft law, the principles of “breadth of authority and separation of duties” were used to explain why there should be a strong governor’s office in the provinces. The Minister of Interior, Şükrü Kaya, explained the reasons for granting broad powers to a responsible authority representing the power of the state in the provinces with this draft law. These reasons included ensuring the security and peace of the country and lawfulness among the citizens, and ensuring that the central and local administrative, economic and social activities are carried out according to the general program and instructions of the center and specific objectives. Kaya’s statements suggest that the aim was to effectively implement the policies adopted by the political center at the local level through strong centralization and to create a harmonious coexistence between the center and the local level. The remarks of Mustafa Şeref Bey, a member of Parliament for Burdur, regarding the draft law also show that the state aimed to have a strong presence at the local level. According to Mustafa Şeref Bey, this draft law provided for the principle of the unity of the state, ensured the implementation of state administration in the provinces, and included principles that would guide and direct the governors and officials working in the provinces towards the government’s program (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 3, Volume 10, 1929: 78-80). From the late 1920s, the centralist discourse became more visible. One of the most important reasons for this was undoubtedly the changing situation at home and abroad. The lack of diversity in the Parliament led to the adoption of this draft law without much discussion. The 1929 Law on the Administration of Provinces, the first law on the provinces of the Republic, was adopted after debates in the Parliament and amended the 1913 Provisional Law on the general administration of the provinces. This law represents an understanding that strongly constructs centralization in the rural areas. It did not talk much about decentralization and separation of duties, and emphasized the principle of breadth of authority, thus aiming to establish a strong rural organization on the basis of centralism. Therefore, this law aimed at enabling the center to intervene strongly at the local level.

As a result of the impressions gained by Mustafa Kemal during his travels around the country in 1930, the Ministry of Interior prepared a report on the civil administrative division. This report emphasized the need to restructure the civil administration in a way that would provide solutions to the basic economic, social, cultural and transportation problems of the cities. Until 1930, these problems of the cities had been ignored, but from that time onward, the issue of urban development became particularly important due to the realization that modernization could gain significant momentum from the cities. Therefore, the 1930 report was prepared with the idea that the civil administrative division should be revised within this framework. In particular, it was emphasized that the

duties and powers of local administrations should be increased, that they should be able to exercise their powers and that they should be financially strengthened. In addition, it was envisaged that the powers of the governors should be increased and that they should become the highest administrative authority in the provinces and that the rural areas should become more powerful (Yıldız, 2022: 155). Thus, the provinces were given an important role in modernization and development. Municipality Law No. 1580 of 1930, the first municipal law of the Republican era, should also be considered in this context.

The first municipal law of the Republican period was adopted and came into force on April 3, 1930. This law regulated the municipalities as the most important structure in the provision of local services. Recognizing the importance of cities in modernization and development, this law, in addition to establishing an autonomous local administration, also gave municipalities an important role in implementing the modernization-oriented policies and/or services of the political center. During the parliamentary debates on the law, the Minister of Interior, Şükrü Kaya, emphasized that cities are important structures for modernization and development as they are important for civilization and progress and promote science, art and commerce. However, he emphasized that municipalities in the Republic of Turkey had problems related to zoning and settlement as well as problems arising from the civil and social needs of society. He stated that to solve the problems of cities and municipalities, it was necessary to give them duties, powers, instruments and financial means and to provide them with an organizational structure, and this law gave municipalities the duties and powers they needed (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 3, Volume 17, 1930: 22-23). A reading of Kaya's thinking reveals that the political center established a close link between civilization and the urban, and realized that modernization meant building modern cities and modern municipalities. In particular, Kaya's view that "municipalities are schools of political and social education" shows the mission that the political center assigned to municipalities the role of shaping the identity of citizens. Ahmed Ağaoglu, a member of Parliament for Kars, who spoke in favor of decentralized local administration, pointed out that Kaya's attitude was ambivalent and that he showed two different attitudes as Şükrü Kaya the politician and Şükrü Kaya the citizen. According to Ağaoglu, he spoke as Şükrü Bey the citizen when he said that municipalities could become modern cities with a democratic and liberal identity, while he spoke as Şükrü Bey the Minister of Interior or "with the mentality of a statesman" when he mentioned regulating and controlling all areas of the state and demanded that municipalities should not be left unsupervised (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 3, Volume 17, 1930: 24-25). Ağaoglu's words are important because they show that the political center was conflicted between discourse and action. After all, in the early Republican period, the "discourse" of the political center in all its dimensions reflected a decentralist approach, while its "actions" reflected a centralist perspective. The crucial point here is that the political center was the only power that took the initiative in the construction of a modern state and society and achieved holistic modernization and development through its policies. Therefore, as Şükrü Kaya stated, the wide range of duties and powers granted to the municipalities by the Municipalities Law of 1930 in its various dimensions was to start and spread the modernization of the country from the cities and to undertake the project of a modern state and society. Kaya's words, "Every city belongs to the state and the state will have control over it" (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 3, Volume 17, 1930:

31), summarize the purpose of the law. It should be noted that the direct appointment of the mayor of the Municipality of Ankara by the political center, the merging of the Municipality of Istanbul with the Istanbul Provinces Administration and the appointment of the governor as mayor are concrete examples of centralization. This is an approach that weakens local autonomy and establishes tutelage over the local.

The fact that centralism was perceived by the founders of the Republic as an approach that would build the modern nation-state, lead the society to a modern identity, and make the values, principles, and goals of the “Republic” acceptable and permanent to the social segments caused the local governments to be considered as implementing institutions of the state ideology (Yalçındağ, 1997: 11). Therefore, it did not allow them to have a real local government identity. The political center wanted the local structures to establish a harmonious coexistence with itself through legal regulations that would build a modern nation-state and society. Within this framework, it envisioned that the laws and policies it enacted would be meticulously implemented by municipalities at the local level. By declaring that mayors who did not show sufficient diligence in this regard would be dismissed, the political center demonstrated its patronizing attitude toward the locals.

The centralist approach adopted in the early Republican period and the civil administrative division made within this framework were important for the construction of the nation-state and modernization on the one hand, and for the political center to establish sovereignty and influence at the local level on the other. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze and evaluate the impact of centralization and the civil administrative division on the political and social structure and the relationship between the center and the countryside/local.

An Analysis of Centralism and the Civil Administrative Division

The idea and concept of the modern nation-state were important factors in the restructuring of the civil administration in the early Republican period. A strong and centralized administrative structure was the primary goal to implement the idea of building a modern nation-state and society. Once this goal was achieved, the envisioned republic and its citizens would have the opportunity to establish a meaningful coexistence. For the founders of the Republic, who won the War of Independence and established the Republic, the centralization of the regime in political, administrative and economic terms was considered imperative. It was accepted as a basic approach that overcoming economic and socio-cultural problems and imbalances, spreading the values of the Republic throughout the country, and implementing reforms effectively and permanently could only be achieved through centralization, not through local governments with limited resources and capabilities and localization (Keskin, 2007b: 142).

Centralization played an important role in the construction of the nation-state. Centralization produced important results not only in the political and administrative spheres, but also in the reproduction and expansion of the social and cultural spheres. The desire to reduce the size of provinces and transform them into manageable cities provided the political center with more opportunities to intervene in the construction process of the nation-state and contributed to the homogenization of social organization (Önen and Reyhan, 2011: 541-542). Therefore, the centralist approach matured the conditions

for the creation of the nation-state. The establishment of sovereignty and authority and the spread of reforms and founding values necessary for a modern republic throughout the country were crucial for the adoption of the centralist approach (Yayla, 1982: 135). Looking at the general outlines of the process, many issues affected the direction and content of the nation-state building process, centralization and civil administrative division in the early Republican period. In particular, objectives such as controlling the Armenian and Greek minorities in the southeastern provinces and Trabzon, eliminating the tribal structure in Sivas and Malatya, combating Pontus-Rum separatism in Ordu and Giresun, and suppressing the Sheikh (Şeyh) Sait rebellion in the east were decisive in this approach (Keskin, 2007b: 120).

The policymakers of the early Republican period took into account factors such as geographical area, population, economic relations and security issues in the context of the nation-state when reconstructing the civil administrative division of the country. The idea of reducing the size of the provinces and establishing a manageable structure, especially in regions where the Armenian-Greek minorities were concentrated and tribes were dominant, shaped the administrative arrangements (Keskin, 2007a: 462). One of the important goals of the modern nation-state was to be able to penetrate the entire country and become a sovereign power. This goal was considered important for the effectiveness and sustainability of many state policies. The existence of a strong central administration was one of the main preferences for the policies of the modern nation-state, as it created the basis for the recognition and acceptance of these goals and policies in the periphery/locality. In this context, the founders of the Republic in the 1920s and 1930s emphasized the centralist approach¹⁶ to the establishment of the modern nation-state and society, the formation of manageable modern cities, and the adoption and acceptance of the values of the center by the periphery (Mardin, 2006). While the founders of the Republic responded to the question of "how to save the state" in the period of constitutional monarchy with the National Struggle, the founding actors of the early Republic and the one-party government sought an answer to the question of "how to transform the state into a sovereign and powerful" modern nation-state with the existence of a strong centralized administration.

Centralization, which was the key element of nation-state building in the early Republican period, had the effect of expanding the capacity of the state on the one hand, and paved the way for local structures to become dependent on the center and to be supervised and controlled on the other. However, in the process of building the nation-state and achieving modernization, important tasks were assigned to the localities to ensure unity between the center and the localities. The period between 1920 and 1923 and the period from 1924 onwards witnessed a significant break, if not in discourse, then in action. While a decentralist discourse and an autonomous approach were present in the period between 1920-23, when the first term of Parliament was in power, a centralist

16 For the founders of the republic, a centralist approach was first and foremost considered as a method that could bring about the principles of the republic, modernization and development. Therefore, the aim was to suppress and/or eliminate the opposition against the centralist approach. The important reason behind the dissolution of the Progressive Republican Party (Terakki Perver Cumhuriyet Fırkası) founded in 1924 and which supported the Sheikh Sait uprising in 1925 and the reason for the dissolution of the Free Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası) founded in 1930 was that these parties advocated the liberation of the country from centralism and supported a decentralized approach and found support for this approach (Mardin, 2006: 61).

approach made itself felt on a larger scale with the second term of Parliament. Although the autonomous approach did not go beyond “discourse”, it had an important place in the draft of laws and proposals on the civil administrative division (Kandeg er, 2016). The discourse of popular sovereignty formed the basis of the social legitimacy of policies in the early Republican period while centralization constituted the practical field of policies in a wide range, especially with the 1924 Constitution.

Article 1 of the Constitution of 1921 stated that sovereignty belonged to the people, Article 2 stated that the authority to exercise sovereignty on behalf of the people was vested in the Parliament, and Article 3 stated that there was a parliamentary system of government (Constitution of 1921, Articles 1-3; Kili and G oz ub y k, 1985: 91-93), thus giving the source of sovereignty to the people and the right to exercise it in the Parliament and the government. The Constitution of 1921 reorganized the local administration as a tripartite structure based on the province system, including “province, district and township”, and sought to shape the locality through a new administrative organization. With this Constitution, provinces and townships were given legal personality and province councils were to be elected by the people (Constitution of 1921, Articles 10-21). Therefore, this decentralized approach has a unique place as an approach adopted until the 1920-1923 period. One reason for the adoption of a decentralized approach in the period between 1920 and 1923 was that Muslim identities other than the Turkish identity helped during the National Struggle. The mobilization of different segments of society and different identities during the National Struggle distinguished the 1920-1923 period from later periods. This reality can be seen in the structure of the first Parliament as well as in the Constitution of 1921. The Constitution of 1921 is a text that regulates the relationship between the center and the local within a “decentralized” framework. This constitutional approach, which can provide an important basis for local governance and democracy, such as communal structures, elected bodies and legal entities (Ortaylı, 1985: 207; Tan r, 250-257; Kandeg er, 2021a: 31), is noteworthy in that it reflects an understanding suited to the social diversity and multi-identity structure of the period. Looking at the legislation between 1920 and 1923, the main approach was decentralization. This is particularly evident in the Constitution of 1921, namely the Draft Law on the General Administration of Provinces of 1921 and the Draft Law on the Administration of Townships and Villages.

The Constitution of 1921 and the civil regulations redefined the relationship between the center and the local through “province-based organization,” and the civil organization of the feudal order was replaced by a civil arrangement that included the organization of the new order. With the new civil administrative division, the broad province system was replaced by a narrow province system (Keskin, 2007b: 130-131;  nen and Reyhan, 2011: 455). This arrangement eliminated the large provinces and their associated livas and made the provinces smaller and more manageable. Thus, the large provinces ceased to have a large administrative structure together with the province attached to them. While the Constitution of 1924 continued this civil administrative division, it adopted a strictly centralist approach instead of the decentralist approach of the Constitution of 1921 and abolished the autonomous structure granted to the townships. While the townships, which had been included in the Ottoman administrative structure for the first time with the Province Regulation of 1864, were recognized as a communal administration

with governmental personality until the Constitution of 1924, they were removed as an autonomous structure and their sovereign entity was abolished in the Constitution of 1924. With this Constitution, the founding political authority aimed to establish control and supervision over the local level and to transform it by adopting a centralist approach. Centralization became the basis of the civil administrative division with the Constitution of 1924. By abolishing the *livas* and reducing the size and increasing the number of provinces, the goal was to create manageable cities subordinate to the center. According to Birgül Ayman Güler, the centralization approach adopted with the Constitution of 1924 weakened local sovereign powers and reduced their ability to use public power (Güler, 1998: 155). The Constitution of 1924 sought to ensure the central government's tutelage over the provinces by reducing the number of provinces on the one hand and creating a manageable local/ provincial structure by placing the provincial administration under the supervision and control of the governor's office on the other (Keskin, 2007b: 119-120). Therefore, the creation of a manageable local structure through the provincial administration under a strong centralization was one of the main objectives.

The Law on Provinces enacted in 1929 aimed to create a rural organization centered around a strong governorship structure, and the Law on Municipalities enacted in 1930 aimed to create local structures with broad duties and powers under the supervision of the center. The Law gave broad powers to the governors (Önen and Reyhan, 2011: 540). The Law on Administration of Provinces enacted in 1929 regulated the rural administration, which was a natural extension of the central administration, rather than the provincial administration. The law abolished local powers, *aghas*, and *beys* in the provincial and district councils, ultimately ensuring the control and supervision of the center over the local authorities (Keskin, 2007a: 297). This decision was crucial for establishing the political center's sovereignty over local powers in rural areas. During the early Republican period, local powers were viewed as a threat to the Republic and as "weeds" that needed to be removed. This arrangement thus bolstered the political center's position and established the framework for enacting planned policies.

The political center, through the Municipalities Law of 1930, aimed to have municipalities participate in the modernization process of the country by building modern cities on the one hand, and on the other hand, giving municipalities a mission in the effective use and promotion of the Turkish language in the process of creating a nation-state (Doğanoğlu, 2015). Istanbul Municipality's "Municipal Police Ordinance" issued in 1925 prohibited vendors from selling their wares by shouting in a language other than Turkish (Tümerkan, 1946: 192). Moreover, the attitude of many municipalities that wanted to ban the veil and *burqa* was seen as a result of the tasks assigned to the municipalities in the modernization process (Doğanoğlu, 2015: 128). In this context, municipalities were included in the process of establishing a national language to create a nation-state. Additionally, it was envisioned that local structures would play a significant role in modernization efforts and aid in the process.

Concluding Remarks

During the early Republican period's nation-state construction process, centralism encompassed a broad spectrum of meanings. Its repertoire ranged from establishing

national identity to achieving modernization and development, constructing modern cities to adopting republican values, and producing social mobilization to enhance the state's capacity to intervene politically. Within this framework, the civil administrative division also constituted a broad ground for the regulations provided for important functions. While local arrangements were regarded as a means of establishing the state's sovereignty and authority over social organization, they also offered valuable opportunities for the political center to intervene in rural administration and local governments, as well as for the nation-state's development and the promotion of a uniform national identity. Within this framework, it should be acknowledged that local governments could not attain these fundamental objectives with their own resources.

The founders of the Republic deemed centralism crucial to constructing a rational nation-state. Their objective was to implement reforms and mobilize society effectively based on this ideology. They aimed to improve economic and social development, spread republican values across the country, and implement reforms geared toward reconstruction. Centralization and its administrative instruments were again among the most important elements of these efforts.

In the context of nation-state and centralization, many issues were considered in the construction of the nation-state, including subordinating and controlling tribes and local power centers, eliminating banditry activities, establishing security, preventing and/or weakening minorities from participating in governance, engaging in commercial activities, and becoming an economic power. This is because these issues were designed to address a vacuum of sovereignty and authority. Ensuring sovereignty and authority, key elements of the nation-state was deemed critical during the early Republican period. In this context, the political center assigned significant value to centralization and the civil administrative division as solutions. Although centralization and the civil administrative division were initially viewed as administrative concepts during the early Republican period, in the founding stages of the nation-state and the modernization process, they formed a political line and provided a basis and momentum for policies aimed at uniting ethnic and religious identities under the umbrella of the "Turkish" identity.

The citizens envisioned by the Republic would only come into being once the modern nation-state and society had been successfully established, and the people became the true and exclusive possessors of sovereignty. Consequently, the adoption of a "citizen" identity by the people in the nation-state was considered crucial, with centralization being a means of building this identity. After 1923, a crucial factor in the shift from decentralization to centralization was the political center's aim to undertake a comprehensive construction process as a sovereign power.

The Constitution of 1924 and subsequent regulations on local administration served as the foundation for the widespread support of centralism. The reason for this is that decentralization was seen as a cause of division in the early Republican period, just as it had been in the Constitutional Monarchy period. The founders of the Republic regarded centralization as a prerequisite for both the existence of such a concern and the success of the construction process. However, although there is a debate regarding whether decentralization is a requirement of democracy, democracy was not a priority for the Republic's founders. Therefore, centralization served a wide range of purposes

for the state, including the achievement of various key objectives such as building a nation-state. Building manageable cities by reducing the size of provinces was considered an important goal. Centralization played a crucial role in implementing this idea. The political center aimed to spread modernization throughout the country, beginning in the cities and ensuring standardized implementation. Meanwhile, rural administration and local governments executed and monitored the political center's policies. Therefore, the constitutional principles of "breadth of authority and separation of duties" were interpreted in accordance with the nation-state formation and centralization.

Finally, centralization was seen as crucial in the nation-building process to establish a national identity and achieve holistic modernization. It also facilitated the expansion of state capacity. Centralization, which aimed to guarantee the construction of the nation and the harmonious coexistence of modernization and development, was embodied as a manifestation of agency rather than discourse. During the early Republican period, the political philosophy and discourse expressed populism and decentralization, while the philosophy of administration and the field of action embraced centralism.

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