

# The Effects of Early Republican Period Political System on Democracy in Türkiye in the Context of Elite Power and Political Culture in Contemporary Political Sociology

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of elitist power, which is one of the important issues of political sociology, is based on a dual form of power, in which a minority that considers itself privileged manages, decides and manipulates large masses on the grounds that they are "not mature enough politically". This distinction also emerges in the context of the differentiation of the norms that make up the political culture between the elites and the masses. The elitist tendencies that have left their mark on the political life of Türkiye since the Ottoman modernization experienced its historical peak in the single-party period. According to T. H Marshall's category of citizenship processes, in the early republican period, rights were formed mostly at the economic level, and there was an ongoing historical struggle to reverse the tutelage of the elitist center over political power for the development of civil and political rights that constitute the mature mechanisms of citizenship. Since the 1980s, concepts such as demilitarization, identity, belonging and citizenship rights have historically increased at the global and national level. As a matter of fact, the period between 1980-2000 has created a fertile climate even though it progressed with breaks and returns in terms of civil society and citizenship concepts. However, a process emerged where economic models and economic development did not progress in coordination with this breakthrough, the function of the state to protect social welfare was eroded, and thus democracy was blocked. However, after the 2000s, a political climate was created in which economic stability was established, welfare policies were strengthened, identity policies made a breakthrough besides social rights, and an inclusive citizenship was established in which elitist politics were eliminated and demilitarization increased..

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## INTRODUCTION

Political sociology differs from political science in that it is a discipline that deals with political phenomena in a social context. It combines concepts that both political science and sociology have left out, sheds light on them and fills an important gap. Political sociology has dealt with the issue of power in its social context with its different aspects and examined the relationship between the elitist form of power, which is one of them, and the social base of politics with an increasing interest in some periods and a decreasing interest in others. In fact, this situation has arisen out of necessity: Considering the long journey of the social sciences, it has become inevitable to evaluate the idea of elitism, which has a long history and which was put forward to criticize the rational human phenomenon created by the Enlightenment, with the new tools and perspectives acquired by the discipline.

The idea of elitism is founded on a dualism based on the idea of a supposedly immature population that needs to be mobilized by a group of elites who have amassed

economic, cultural and political privileges. At this point, the questioning of where elites derive the legitimacy of their power has dominated the discussions within the discipline. Indeed, the theory of elitism in political sociology in the twentieth century, based on the theses of Weber and Durkheim, has put forward important theses on the development and implications of elitism from a critical perspective.

In the context of early Republican Türkiye, the idea of elitism determined the founding framework of Turkish modernization and shaped the political power's view of the masses on the axis of a legacy passed on from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. In this respect, the main purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of the elitist approach, which constitutes the main axis of Turkish modernization and the history of democracy, in the light of certain concepts of contemporary political sociology and within its historical context. In addition, this analysis will also examine the damage that elitist political thought has done to the development of democracy in Türkiye.

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From a historical perspective, Ottoman modernization was carried out by a new generation of enlightened and progressive bureaucrats and the military, who had embraced Western ideas that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and who were different from the traditional state-affiliated bureaucracy. This generation, which was in conflict with the traditional elements of the state, imagined itself as the savior and society as an ignorant, uncivilized, passive mass waiting to be saved, and their efforts to “civilize” society by force through a reform program imposed from the top down and its Jacobin tendencies were inherited by Republican Türkiye and shaped the elitist tendencies of the founding cadre.

The Republic’s total modernization project was carried out by a narrow cadre of people who devoted themselves to the secular aims of the state, identified their existence with the state, adopted a monolithic nation model and a monolithic identity imaginary, and tried to shape society from top to bottom, with all its cells, in line with the ideas of this core cadre of state bureaucracy and intellectuals. After 1925, this tendency became even more ascendant and reached its historical peak during the one-party period that lasted until the end of World War II.

Following the transition to the multi-party era in 1950, Türkiye was governed for the first time by a government that derived its legitimacy from the people. The multi-party period was marked by the struggle of the bureaucratically based, coercive, centralized elite power not to hand over the flag to the civilian political power that derived its legitimacy from the people, and the resistance of this civilian power to open space for itself. Both the diversifying social structure and the conjuncture that shifted due to political and economic changes on a global scale did not change the ideology of the founding elites; on the contrary, social dynamism was forcibly pruned and condemned to the narrow ideological framework of the bureaucratic elitist center. In this context, May 27th marked the beginning of a process of coups carried out by bureaucratic elites backed by military elites in order to return society to its center settings every time society “goes off the rails” with its pluralism and demandingness.

With the strengthening of civil society debates in the global conjuncture after the 1960s, new social stratifications, different identities and visibilities gradually rose in Türkiye and sought to represent themselves in the public and political sphere. This diversification in the structure of society seeped through the cracks in the walls of the bureaucratic elitist ideology, shaking its monolithic ideological integrity. Nevertheless, the military, which was the most inflexible and still intensely

preserved its internal integrity, intervened every decade to re-establish the elitist socio-political order of the pre-1950s, preventing the representation of social demands in the political center and keeping democratic demands under restraint.

Türkiye took a different turn in the 1980s, when the concepts of civil society and citizenship came to the fore with the impact of global liberalization. During this period, on the one hand, civil and political rights gained strength at the social level, but on the other hand, individuals’ social rights and social welfare suffered due to the economic instability of the state. Indeed, this situation constituted one of the obstacles to the full development of democracy in Türkiye for a long time. In addition, another phenomenon that hindered the development of civil society in this period was the February 28th coup, which went down in history as an experience different from other coups. In the previous coups, the military, in its capacity as a monolithic military elite, has carried out a total intimidation movement against the society by displaying an image above all social layers. However, the February 28 process targeted the Islamist identity, which had been gaining strength by rallying behind it not only the Anatolian capital and the newly formed devout middle class but also individuals seeking belonging thrown by modernization, and which had confronted the bureaucratic elitist center as a serious political power with the support it received from society. Being entirely a society-based movement, with its localism, orientalism, “backwardness”, “vulgarity”, and anti-elitist stance, this social movement, which struck all centers that had adopted elitism as an ideology right at their core, was intervened by the “vigorous forces” and the “danger” was swiftly attempted to be eliminated.

The 2000s is a period in Türkiye’s democratic adventure that exhibits different dynamics from previous periods. The diversifying social structure has increasingly insisted that the elitist coercive framework be overthrown and that politics be transformed to include society, and a systematic struggle has been carried out to this end. Although every move to expand the dominant political and public framework based on bureaucratic elitist tutelage in favor of freedoms has met with fierce resistance from the elitist center, it has enabled a different political system to come to life in order to build a new system in which politics is socialized and the influence of the state and its bureaucratic elites on politics is regressed. Besides, democratic development, which was set back by the state’s backsliding in creating social welfare due to economic instability, especially after 1990, will only be able to resume its course after the 2000s.

### **Development of the Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of Political Sociology**

The discipline of political sociology has a unique place in contemporary social sciences. This discipline, which is often compared to political science and sociology and even considered synonymous by some, actually examines important political and social phenomena that political science and sociology ignore. As Raymond Aron points out, political science examines political phenomena by detaching them from their social context - largely on the formal level - while sociology focuses primarily on abstractions such as social structure and class, ignoring concrete institutions (Uslu, 2019: 13). In this context, political sociology fills an important gap in terms of contemporary social sciences by focusing on the research area left out of the perspectives of these two disciplines. The fact that political sociology occupies an interdisciplinary position between political science and sociology gives political sociology strength in terms of theoretical and conceptual framework (Uslu, 2019: 15).

From this perspective, the main issue that political sociology examines is politics in its social context. More specifically, it is, in Bottomore's terms, "power in its social context" (Bottomore, 2020: 7). It can be said that while political science examines the institutionalized dimension of power, political sociology deals with the underlying structures of power. In this context, it is generally accepted that traditional political science primarily asks the question of how the state, power and authority function, while political sociology deals with the issue of relationality, that is, from a historical sociological perspective, how politics, culture and society are related and how they affect each other (Alptekin, 2020: 4). In particular, Seymour Martin Lipset's groundbreaking work in the field of political sociology, *Political Man* (1960), which introduced the "social bases of politics" thesis marked the classical period of this discipline. However, since the 1980s, especially as a result of the post-modern and post-structuralist theories that emerged with the increasing dominance of Michel Foucault's concepts and ideas in social sciences, the "social bases of politics" approach began to lose its weight in political sociology (Taylor, 2010: 2). On the other hand, as a result of the impact of post-modern and post-structuralist approaches on political sociology, there are also those who argue that the discipline needs to be better framed and that it is essential to establish a coherent conceptual foundation (Hicks, Janoski and Schwartz, 2005: 12-17). In this respect, the necessity of redefining the concepts of "power in its social context"

and "the social bases of politics" within the theoretical framework of political sociology is increasingly being articulated (Uslu, 2019: 17). In addition, it has also been argued that research areas such as elitism and pluralism, which were dominant in the classical period of political sociology but were pushed to the background in the period when post-structuralism was dominant, should be addressed with a new perspective. As a matter of fact, in the field of political sociology today, the major issues of the discipline such as political elitism, pluralism, political culture and political socialization have begun to be addressed again with a new perspective.

### **The Evolution of Elitism Theory in Contemporary Political Sociology**

In political sociology, classical elitist theory is mostly associated with three thinkers, Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels. These three thinkers - albeit through different conceptual frameworks - constructed their theories in reaction to Enlightenment thought, that is, to the view that human beings would move towards absolute progress under the guidance of rational reason. These elitist theorists, who are considered by some to be within the Weberian tradition, have taken up Weber's arguments on bureaucratic rationalization in modern societies and have addressed the function of elitism in modern societies that are increasingly dominated by rules and formal procedures. In this context, they questioned the foundations of democratic development in increasingly bureaucratic and rationalized societies in Europe and put forward a theory of elitism that also sought to refute the arguments of Marxism (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 2009: 820).

The main theoretical framework of classical elitist thinkers is based on the existence of a dual power structure in societies. On one side of this dual structure is the "elite" as an organized minority that holds political power and controls many resources, while on the other side is the "mass" as an unorganized passive crowd that is considered politically immature (Acar and Uslu, 2019: 27). In terms of both political science and political sociology, the most important issue at this point is the legitimacy of the minority in power. According to Weber, every government needs to create a justification for its legitimacy and to gain the consent of the governed (Weber, 2006: 272). Lipset, on the other hand, defined legitimacy as the ability to create a belief that the existing political system and political institutions are the most appropriate systems and institutions for society (Sokullu, 2013: 103). According to the classical elitist theory, the elite can resort to various means to legitimize its power. It

can resort to certain “myths” such as “the right of the elite to rule”, as well as methods such as “recruitment” or “co-optation” of the rest of society to ensure the maintenance of the elitist power structure (Acar and Uslu, 2019: 27).

Although there are some important differences between them in terms of their arguments on elite power, the main significance of these classic thinkers of political sociology is that they provided a theoretical framework - especially for the analyses of Joseph Schumpeter and C. W. Mills - for the function of power elites in post-World War II liberal democratic societies. Schumpeter and Mills critically analyzed how elite power functions in industrialized democratic regimes in the changing political and economic climate of the post-war period. According to Schumpeter, who argues that there is competition within the elite minority, there is no internal cohesion among the elite. Therefore, one cannot speak of a monolithic elite, there are multiple elite groups and this corresponds to elitist pluralism. Another important point in Schumpeter’s elitist theory is that he conceptualizes democracy as a means rather than an end (Acar and Uslu, 2019: 38). He argues that the characterization of democracy as “the manifestation of the will of the people” is a “myth” and that the outcome of the democratic process is not a government “brought about by the will of the people” but rather a government “accepted by the people”<sup>1</sup>. This, as we will see below, offers insights into why democracy in Türkiye has failed for so long.

Mills, who analyzes elite power within a more intricate theoretical framework than Schumpeter, presents a theory of the development of elite power based on the social structure in America in his famous *The Power Elite*. According to Mills’ analysis, which he calls “the theory of balance”, government in America has lost its characteristic of being an apparatus that balances competing interests in society, and as a result, a system of power elites has emerged in the form of a tripartite structure of political, economic and military institutions (Mills, 1959: 242-250). Mills defines these power elites as those who are in positions to control the basic organizations in society and make decisions that have important consequences, and argues that all decisions that permeate society are made by political, economic and military institutions (Mills, 1959: 268). Consequently, in Mills’ theory, power elites have the power to govern

not because of their skills or psychological qualities, but because of the positions they occupy (Glasberg and Shannon, 2011: 25). Although Mills points out that his analysis is limited to America and that the power structure may be different in other societies (Rush, 1992: 60), as we will see below, Mills’ theory of power elites also functions to explain Türkiye’s elitist experience of power in the early republican period.

### **Power of Elites and Democracy in the Concept of Political Culture**

Another important concept in contemporary political sociology is the concept of political culture, which is also related to the concept of culture in its broadest sense. The concept of culture, which has been studied in depth by various disciplines, especially in the twentieth century, from an anthropological and sociological perspective, refers to the way of life of societies that is transmitted from generation to generation through learning (Nesbitt-Larking, 1992: 81). Therefore, culture can be defined as a set of values agreed upon by the society from which it originates and transmitted between generations through inheritance. Political culture, which can be considered one of the manifestations of culture at the social level, can be defined as the set of dominant behaviors, beliefs and values in society that are essential for the functioning of a political system (Sokullu, 2013: 103). More specifically, political culture is formed through the transmission of norms and values between society and the individual. Each individual in a society has a set of ideals and values about how the political system should function, what he or she expects from the system and the obligations of the system, and this set of values, symbols and beliefs constitutes the political culture of that society (Roskin, 1994: 122). In the end, the values of a society are ultimately decisive for its political system.

If we look at the theoretical background of the concept of political culture in political sociology, we can see that the first formulation of the concept is found in Weber and Durkheim. Unlike Marx, who advocated economic determinism in the formation of social and political structure, Weber and Durkheim argued that political institutions and political actions are shaped under the influence of religious beliefs and cultural values in that society (Ayata and Klujs Gölgeioğlu, 2019: 300). This idea was later further developed by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons, whose theses such as social action have become important in the study of political culture<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See. Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique*, p. 20. In this work, Bachrach critically interprets Schumpeter’s views on democracy and argues that he reduces democracy to a state apparatus with a technical functioning.

<sup>2</sup> According to Parsons’ theory of social action, the ends, means, motivations and limitations of individual actions are largely determined by cultural components and the cultural system. As a matter of fact,

The importance of the concept of political culture in the context of elitism theory emerges in the determination of the relations between elites and the masses. Political culture, which can also be described as ingrained behaviors that emerge in a certain period of time, exhibits a difference between elites and the public (Roskin, 1994: 129). As mentioned above, the political culture of individuals outside the elite consists of values and norms that have been formed over a long period of time. The elite, on the other hand, are endowed with economic, social and cultural capital and belong to a different political culture. As a result, elites, as Benedict Anderson puts it, play a special role in changing political culture in the process of nation and identity building (Anderson, 1983: 123). However, at this point, in the process of elites changing the political culture for nation and identity building, an antagonism between elites and the public may emerge. Indeed, in contemporary political sociology, when talking about the existence of a consensual political culture or a conflictual political culture in a society, what is referred to is whether this antagonism exists in that society or not<sup>3</sup>. As we will discuss below, it can be argued that the influence of elites on Turkish political culture in the early republican period ultimately led to the emergence of a conflicted political culture.

### **The Development of Elitist Thought in Ottoman Modernization**

In order to examine the influence of elites on political culture in Türkiye and the dynamics of the political and cultural context that produces and sustains the elitist approach, it is imperative to examine Ottoman modernization. Constituting a pattern diametrically opposed to the existing structures and traditions of the Ottoman Empire, "modernization" was a painful process imposed from the top down. Of course, at this point, it is necessary to consider the concept of "modernization" from the perspective of political sociology. As pointed out above, according to this perspective, "modernization" is based on a conception of social evolution that emerged especially in the 19th century and is both associated with the idea of

progress and emulates the notion of evolution in the natural sciences (Bottomore, 2020: 73).

When considered in the specific context of the Ottoman Empire, the centralist structure of the state produced a bureaucratic and administrative tradition that was raised to be fully loyal to the state (Özbudun, 1995: 4). As a matter of fact, this traditional tendency also determined the relationship of the bureaucratic elite, which positioned itself as the bearer of modernization, with the public. As Niyazi Berkes points out, there was a disconnect between the Ottoman bureaucracy and the social layers (Pustu, 2007: 200). In the 19th century, as the centralized tradition of the empire lost its former power, the ideology of the bureaucratic and military elite, which was reproduced on the axis of "loyalty to the state", was destroyed, at least for a certain wing.

The army and bureaucracy have undoubtedly always been one of the most important pillars of the Ottoman administrative system. However, unlike the ulema, the army and the bureaucracy underwent a major change depending on the conjuncture in which they found themselves. As a matter of fact, the biggest investment in the Ottoman modernization process was spent on military and administrative reforms. Within this new system, a new generation of bureaucrats, fused with Western ideas, embraced constitutionalist ideas and identified with the enlightenment approach, was formed and the dominance of this new elite over the bureaucracy increased (Lewis, 1993: 456). Foreign-language speaking, secular educated civilian bureaucrats who saw Westernization as the only way to salvation, or as Feroz Ahmad called them, "convinced Westerners" (Ahmad, 1984: 6), began to play an increasing role in the political and cultural life of the capital (Lewis, 1993: 62). The ideological attitude, approach and tendencies of this elite wing, which came into conflict with the more traditionalist elements of the state and gradually gained power, also determined the fabric of Ottoman modernization. As a result, modernization remained the main axis of intellectual efforts towards social change in the late Ottoman Empire and permeated the political sociology of contemporary Türkiye (Bouquet, 2016: 51).

The 19th century can be seen as the history of the struggle between these elitist bureaucrats and the traditional wing of the empire (Özbudun, 1995: 5). The theses of the elitist bureaucrats, first organized under the name of the Neo-Ottomans and later as the Union and Progress or Young Turks, shaped the Turkish modernization approach. This tradition, which supported a Westernist approach and a development

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human action is ultimately a cultural action. In this context, Parsons opposes theories that seek the origin of human action in biological or materialist explanations and traces how the cultural factor is encoded in human actions. For Parsons' theory of social action, see Parsons, Talcott (1967), *The Structure of Social Action*, Free Press, New York.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of this issue and an explanation of how political culture change is shaped by consensus or conflict in Germany, see Dalton, R. J. (1993), *Politics in Germany*, Harper Collins, New York.

in the Western manner, produced a kind of intellectual despotism (Mardin, 1997: 83-84). As Aslan and Alkiş state, the bureaucratic elite in question became one of the important actors of the modernization process in Türkiye's later periods as the "motor force of modernization" in Weberian terms. This pattern, which was also transmitted to the Republican ideology, shaped the elitist tendencies in Turkish political culture. In fact, it can be said that this conception of modernization based on Westernization has become a *doxa* - in the Bourdieuan sense - that "there can be no modernization without Westernization" in Türkiye's political culture (Bouquet, 2016: 52).

### **The Historical Peak of Elitist Thought in Türkiye: The Single Party Regime as a Political Culture Phenomenon**

The cadres who founded the Republic inherited their intellectual infrastructure from the Committee of Union and Progress, and although a rupture between these two movements is defined in the literature as a general tendency, in fact these structures are interconnected in terms of continuity and determination (Özbudun, 1995: 7). The principles shaping the ideology of the Republic are the inherited ideas of a narrow cadre of Ottoman bureaucrats. This narrow cadre, described by Hourani as the "reformist group" (Hourani, 1983: 67) or by Findley as the "modernist faction" (Findley, 1980: 153), was largely "devoted exclusively to the secular interests of the state" (İnalçık, 1964: 55). The continuity between the two periods is so evident that, as Rustow states, 93% of the Ottoman Empire's staff officers and 85% of its civil servants continued to serve in the Turkish Republic (Rustow, 1964: 388). These figures testify to the continuity of bureaucrat-based elites in power. On the other hand, the presence of clergy and local representatives in the first parliament convened in the run-up to the founding of the Republic has gone down in history as an exception. In a short time, this exceptional diversity and pluralistic structure was eliminated and a total modernization project was implemented by a narrow cadre of elites (Kara, 2008: 14). As a matter of fact, in the first parliament, a coalition called the second group, representing a variety of colors and traditions, constituted 21% of the parliament. In the second parliament, the military bureaucratic elite dominated the entire structure and other elements were reduced to less than 1 percent (Frey, 1975: 58). As Frey argues, the legislative Kemalist elite that carried out the major reforms in the 1920s and early 30s was predominantly composed of former civil servants, who also formed the institutional core of modernizing coalitions throughout Turkish history (Frey, 1975: 58).

The main ideology that the founding elite of the Republic sought to establish by shaping society and political culture in Türkiye was the ideal society of Kemalism, the "secularized and Westernized homogeneous nation-state". The insistence on this ideal society prevents an open and public debate on the formation of a social contract (Yavuz, 2005: 70). A specific example in this context can be found in the attitudes of the Kemalist elites in the early Republican period towards the then newly established academic structure. In 1924, after the closure of the madrasas, the government decided to open a Faculty of Theology in Istanbul, which was soon closed down in 1933, revealing the hegemonic view of Kemalist elitist cadres towards the public sphere. The main factor in the almost hasty closure of the Faculty of Theology, where only three of the faculty members were from the ulema and which taught mainly in areas such as the sociology of religion, was that a significant part of the Kemalist elite thought that the academic structure should be completely subordinated to serve the Revolution (Clayer, 2016: 106). According to Clayer, the closure of the faculty in question was the result of a desire to conduct a thorough purge of the fledgling academic structure. Moreover, "it cannot be ruled out that some Kemalists may have wanted to put an end to any kind of higher education related to religion, citing the danger that new religious cadres might be trained who could form alternative cadres" (Clayer, 2016: 107). This specific example also reveals that in the early republican period, the state power set out to establish a symbolic power, as Bourdieu conceptualized it, by engaging in the cultural reproduction of its own ideology on the axis of Westernism.

The core cadre formed by the state bureaucracy and intellectuals also included the military elite and thus gained the monopoly on the use of physical force (Kalaycıoğlu, 2007: 475) and thus the ability to shape society by force in a top-down manner. Looking at this issue from the perspective of political sociology, "even if the masses of people are mobilized in revolutions from above, it is the elites who actually carry out the revolution" (Gürsoy, 2013: 81). Moreover, the most important point here, as pointed out above, is that such revolutions often require a military force behind them. As a matter of fact, when considered from the perspective of comparative politics, the elites that carry out top-down revolutions are often a military elite group that emerged from the old regime, as witnessed in Türkiye in 1923 or Japan in 1868 (Trimberger, 1978).

As a result, the practice of modernization, which was implemented on the axis of a strict secularization principle and a homogeneous nationalism approach, was based on the principle of “the total realization of modernity in such a way that it would be the sole color of all mental and social layers” (Özçelik, 2019: 320). This macro project, which was implemented with a solidarist-corporatist philosophy in which the state, the nation and the party were identified with the slogan of “united mass without privilege or class”, intervened in all social processes, including the smallest areas. From language to identity and history, from the design of the public sphere to dress code, academic and social life, from generation upbringing policies to the cultural traditions and beliefs of the people, not a single area was left untouched by this ideological pattern.

### **The Foundations/Emergence of Social Movements against the Elites and the First Struggles in the Construction of Democracy: Transition to the Multi-Party Era**

Until 1950, Türkiye was unable to obtain a political power that derived its legitimacy from the people. In this process, any focus outside the power clustered around the bureaucratic elite was not tolerated, and if there was such a focus, it was thought to be essential for the continuation of the order and the survival of the state (Kaynar, 2019: 36).

From the perspective of political sociology, it is useful to analyze the early republican period in Türkiye, which lasted until the multi-party era, in terms of the concept of “distribution of power” put forward by elitist theories. In this context, when addressing the nature of the “subject of power”, which is the research object of this concept, it is necessary to consider whether “power is in the hands of a minority” or “power is in the hands of different minorities competing with each other” (Acar and Uslu, 2019: 22). In this respect, it is important whether the minority in power constitutes a unity, whether it has internal cohesion, or whether it exhibits a fragmented character (Therborn, 1976: 224). In this framework, the gradual disintegration among elite groups in the early republican period found its reflection in the social base and it became clear that the one-party regime was no longer a sustainable political regime.

Moreover, in a structure where society was conceived as a homogeneous mass, where civil society was not allowed to develop and groups that derived their power from the market economy were not allowed to separate from the bureaucracy, a bureaucratically based, centralized

power based on coercion could only be sustained for a while. On the other hand, in a social structure where the bourgeoisie became stronger between 1930 and 1950 and modernizing influences began to penetrate the peasant masses and landowners for the first time, it would not be as easy as before to establish the unity of the elite (Frey, 1965: 391). Stratification based on the status order was gradually replaced by stratification based on the balance of economic forces (Kazancıgil, 2007: 186).

At this point, the economic dimension is important from the perspective of political sociology. The democratization that necessarily comes with the transition from a single-party regime to a multi-party period should actually be considered in the context of the modernization theory that has become increasingly dominant in political sociology starting from the 1950s. This theory of modernization, which considers democratization as part of a process of change that is considered natural and whose theoretical framework is laid out in Lipset’s *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, which is now considered a classic in political sociology, assumes that there is a correlation between economic growth and progress in other fields (Gürsoy, 2013: 87). According to Lipset, economic progress leads to political and social development, which in turn leads to democratization<sup>4</sup>. From this perspective, it can be argued that the end of the one-party regime in the early republican period and the beginning of the multi-party era were to a certain extent influenced by changes in the socio-economic structure rather than a change or development in the ideology of the founding political elites. On the other hand, the transition to a multi-party system in Türkiye should also be analyzed in terms of the broader global conjuncture of the period. This examination is also important for understanding the different phases of the long-term transformation of Turkish politics that began after the 1950s.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the regime based on a single political party that emerged with the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye was based on an understanding of political parties inherited from France. The political parties that first emerged in France after the French Revolution were primarily parties of the elite and were organizations composed of individuals belonging to the elite class who had prestige and wealth in their constituencies<sup>5</sup>. In this respect, it is not surprising that the

<sup>4</sup> Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, especially in the second chapter entitled “Economic Development and Democracy”.

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of the historical development of political parties, see Duverger, 1959.

early republican political structure, inspired by the French political system, implemented an elitist understanding of politics. However, in the second half of the 20th century, which corresponded to the transition to a multi-party regime in Türkiye, changes in social and political thought worldwide, particularly in the Western world, had significant effects on the nature of political action. In this period, political action began to change its nature with the emergence of new issues and new movements based on identity politics (Bottomore, 2020: 43). Political action can be defined as the activities of a social group in the struggle for power. In terms of political sociology, these groups are generally classified under two general categories: "social movements" and "organized political formations" (Bottomore, 2020: 51). In general, a social movement is characterized as a collective struggle to bring about change or to resist change in the society in which it exists. The main significance of these movements is that they played a key role in the process of what is called the "self-production" of modern society. Accordingly, societies have come to see themselves as "[...] the result of social action, decision and functioning, domination or conflicts" (İncioğlu, 1977: 1). In this process of society creating itself, social movements have historically been forces that have resisted an established system of political power and tried to steer the development of society in a different direction. However, it is important to note that the long-term success of social movements depends on certain conditions. First of all, such movements need to create a doctrine that will encourage individuals to participate in political activities. This doctrine must have qualities such as explaining the problems in the society in question and developing solutions, and formulating a political understanding that responds to the issues of belonging and identity of different segments of society. From a historical perspective, social movements that have failed to fulfill these requirements have failed to form a political unity<sup>6</sup>.

This points to the importance of the fundamental difference between a social movement and a political party. Social movements create the preconditions for changes in the established political climate by creating a different climate of opinion in the society in which they exist. However, in order for a social movement to directly participate in the struggle for power and to bring about a lasting transformation in society once in power, it needs to form a political organization. Historically, the 1950s have been an important turning point for social movements

in Türkiye. Although the DP government had a relatively short political life due to the military coup, the resistance of popular groups to the elitist political elite by forming the nucleus of a social movement and then manifesting in the political arena became a decisive factor in the political developments that would take place from the 1960s onwards after the multi-party transition period.

As mentioned above, social movements and their ideals gaining a political identity and becoming embodied in a party began to shake the elitist political structure from the 1950s onwards. Moreover, this was achieved despite the resistance of elitist cadres and their moves that amounted to political manipulation. Indeed, according to İnönü and his circle, the transition to a multi-party system was designed to be a controlled and step-by-step process. Thus, the legitimacy of the old system would not be questioned and democracy would be established, at least in appearance. According to İncioğlu, "The multi-party system that İnönü and his circle tried to create was not really a competitive and pluralist party system, but a 'hegemonic party' regime in which opposition parties existed only in appearance." (İncioğlu, 2007: 256). However, the efforts of the bureaucratic elite to expand the system in a controlled manner and to mend fences with various segments of society (Varel, 2019: 209) did not turn out as expected and interest in the Democratic Party turned into mass support. At this point, the social movement as an unorganized force paved the way for a political transformation through its involvement in the formation of a political party.

With the impulse of this transformation, there were significant changes in the nature of political representation and state organization. In the period between 1950-60, the dominant position of bureaucratic elites in parliament, their influence, status and income decreased significantly (Özbudun, 1995: 17). Likewise, the structure of the parliament started to present a more fragmented appearance, the proportion of deputies with public origin decreased, while the proportion of deputies with self-employment or economic occupation origin increased in parallel. Likewise, the degree of regionalism, which had declined significantly during the single-party years, increased again with the transition to a multi-party system (Özbudun, 1995: 8).

In the new period, the share of bureaucrats in national income dropped by nearly half (Şaylan, 1984: 303). Instead of the traditional bureaucracy, the Democrat Party enabled a professional bureaucratic class that performed technical economic services to emerge and gain power and prestige, and as a result, the position

<sup>6</sup> The most specific example of social movements that failed to form a political unity is the student movements of the 1960s; see Bottomore, *Political Sociology*, pp. 63-66.



of the bureaucratic elite, which positioned itself as the owner of the system, was gradually eroded (Şaylan, 1984: 305). Practices such as “placing under ministerial orders”, “referring them to ex officio retirement”, and “closing the way to the Council of State against government actions”, which were implemented during the Democrat Party period, were in fact attempts to break the power of the bureaucratic elite that had been integrated with the power during the single party period (Şaylan, 1984: 305). This struggle culminated in the 1960 coup in which the bureaucratic elite, backed by the military (in fact, there is a symbiotic relationship between these two groups), forcibly removed from power a political party that had gained legitimacy by representing different social layers and identities.

### **Period Between 1960-80: Painful Democratization**

After the 1960 coup, Türkiye entered a new era in terms of the relations between the political elite and the agents who resisted it at the social level. In fact, even when there seemed to be a period of gradual reconciliation, underlying conflict and tension continued. The 1960s and 70s were a period in which capitalism was becoming well established in Türkiye and an economic transformation was taking place, rural-urban migration emerged as an important phenomenon, different identities and layers became more visible in the cities, and different social segments strengthened their search for political representation. Therefore, in such a period when new stratifications, different social groups, identities and their rising demands started to become evident within the country, and as mentioned above, the dynamics of political action on a global scale were transformed, the bureaucratic elites no longer had the objective conditions to establish a solid power as before. Likewise, from the perspective of Lipset’s theory that correlates modernization and democratization on the basis of economic change, the loss of this objective ground of power is understandable. It was necessary to address this multi-layered social structure and economic transformation with a constitution that corresponded, at least in appearance, to the political and economic developments in the world. However, while the 1961 constitution expanded the scope of citizens’ rights and freedoms, which were extremely limited in previous constitutions, it also differed from other constitutions in terms of the construction of tutelage institutions that would ensure control over the political elite and brake and control mechanisms over the will of the people (Aydın and Taşkın, 2014: 89). Through practices such as the establishment of the National Security Council and

the Constitutional Court, the Council of State’s legal control over the legislature and the executive, and the elevation of the Chief of General Staff to a position above the governments, the tutelage system that frames the control of elites over the people was institutionalized.

This was a period in which an adventure of democracy was envisioned under the shadow of institutions that sought to re-establish the elitist socio-political order of the pre-1950 period (Karpas, 2004: 22). Indeed, the two coup attempts in 1962 and 1963 prove how sharply the military’s designing and aligning role in the system continued. Even though it is a different period from the one where the monolithic ideological unity among the bureaucratic elite was broken and even the CHP, which had existed as the party of the bureaucratic elite and the center, shifted to the left of the center, the Justice Party (AP), which is considered the heir of the DP, cannot feel comfortable under these conditions, as it won the absolute majority in the 1965 and 69 elections and came to power. Inevitably, the AP became a party that tried to appease the actors of the May 27 coup and the military front. As a matter of fact, even if the integrity among the bureaucratic elites was disrupted, the ideological unity in the army still persisted. As Özbudun states, “among the sub-groups of the state elites, only the army seems to have been able to maintain its internal integrity throughout this period” (Özbudun, 1995: 26).

The atmosphere of political fragmentation and ideological polarization in Türkiye in the 1960s and 70s began to erode the influence of Kemalism which was the glue that held the bureaucratic elite together. The bureaucratic interpretation of Kemalist thought began to lose political power with the diversification of society, but the bureaucratic elite did not have the means to produce a new or updated paradigm to replace it (Heper, 1985: 115). During this period, for example, the economic power of entrepreneurial groups was on the rise, while bureaucratic elites began to lose their economic advantage. However, the bureaucratic elite, despite its diminishing professional prestige and income, maintains its claim on politics and retains its power in terms of other aspects of social stratification (Heper, 1976: 492).

Beginning in 1973, with the coalition governments, civil servants were replaced by the political power, and with this new trend, the erosion of power of the bureaucracy accelerated further. Therefore, the coups of 1970 and 1980 can be evaluated as an attempt to prune the diversifying social structure and confine it to the socio-political framework of the pre-1950 period by the military, the only bastion that maintained its

ideological integrity. The bureaucratic elites, incapable of renewing and revising their own ideology and attitudes, in order to re-establish their power and regain their lost power, forcibly trapped the political system, which now produces a thousand and one kinds of diversity, and tried to confine it to an extremely narrow, archaic framework.

The period between 1960 and 1980, the main stages of which are described above, presents a specific outlook when analyzed in terms of political sociology concepts. This was a complex period in which social movements as a form of political action gained ground and debates on citizenship and civil society came to the fore in public opinion due to the 1961 constitution.

In a political climate that has long been dominated by military-based political elites, the concept of civil society has inevitably been vague and distorted. Likewise, the notion of the existence of a non-state social sphere that corresponds to the concept of civil society could not be realized during the single party period. At this point, it is useful to look at the historical course of the concept in order to examine why the concept of civil society remained dormant in the early republican period. The concept of civil society was first introduced during the Enlightenment. The meaning of the concept at that time pointed to the ability of society to organize itself and thus referred to the modern state. As a matter of fact, a society that could organize itself and establish a state meant civil society. Subsequently, this concept, which was also attributed importance in Hegel's philosophy in the 19th century, reached its current widely accepted comprehensive form with Gramsci's arguments. According to Gramsci, civil society corresponded to the non-state sphere, where power struggles were taking place (Gülalp, 2018: 134).

However, the real introduction of the concept of civil society into liberal political theory in the West occurred during the Cold War. During this period, the social opposition against the Communist regime in the Eastern European countries living under the authoritarian system of the Soviet Union put the concept of civil society at the center of discussions. In particular, the opposition of various segments of society in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia to the authoritarian regime embodied in the Soviets constituted a specific example of civil society's ability to mobilize as an entity separate from the state (Judt, 2005: 425). Thus, civil society became the dominant medium for opposing authoritarian political regimes and gradually gained weight in the Western democracy-based political thought (Judt, 2005: 436). As a matter of fact, when viewed from this perspective,

it is necessary to see the gradual strengthening of the discussions focusing on civil society and democracy in the 1960s, which started with Türkiye's transition to a multi-party system, in the light of the social and political developments of the world, especially the West, at that time.

### **The 1980s and Beyond: Strengthening Civil Society and the Emergence of New Social Movements**

The 1980 coup marks a break for the bureaucratic elite. Therefore, there is a different picture from the "bureaucratic transcendentalist" (Heper, 1985: 93) view of the single-party period when the entire bureaucracy acted in unity with the military. The military also tried to control the civilian bureaucrats who, in Kenan Evren's words, were "obsessed with reactionary ideas and deviant ideologies" (Heper, 1985: 173). In order to restore the ideological integrity of the single party era, many bureaucrats who did not fit this framework were purged. As Heper puts it, "The aim was to bring the civil bureaucracy, which could no longer be an institution in which the transcendentalist state could be structured, under strict control" (Heper, 1985: 175). The socio-political model, whose ideal form was experienced during the single-party period and in which all the founding codes of Turkish modernization were observed in the purest form, was stretched by external influences and its monolithic integrity was disrupted. Nevertheless, the transcendentalist state approach of the single-party period was attempted to be reconstructed through the military, which remained more ideologically stable.

For a certain period of time, the army took over the government by appearing to be above all these groups, social and political debates, and above all parties. In this process in which political parties were shut down, their properties confiscated, leaders arrested, parliament and the cabinet disbanded, and all mayors and municipal councils were dismissed, the generals, as Zürcher says, saw their task as saving democracy from politicians and cleaning up the political system (Zürcher, 2009: 402). Unlike in previous times, the cooperation of existing political leaders was not seen as a fundamental element in reshaping the political and economic structure of the country. The military targeted all ideologies and political views except its own (Karabelias, 1999: 133). All power was concentrated in the hands of the National Security Council, and any movement deemed to be "anarchy-related" was violently suppressed, in a sense destroying the social base of politics. Thus, for three years, the military was legally the sole ruler of Türkiye (Karabelias, 1999: 133).

The new civilian era that began with the November 6, 1983 general elections constitutes a unique process in which different motifs were incorporated into Turkish political culture. According to Göle, “the 1980 coup, despite the use of 1920s themes, unintentionally played a catalytic role in replacing the Westernist positivist and Jacobin tradition that began with the Tanzimat with a new process” (Göle, 2007: 521). In Özbudun’s words, this was a period in which “the unity of mentality on the part of the bureaucratic elite, the reformist, secular, tutelary worldview of the old bureaucratic center was shattered” (Özbudun, 1995: 31). A context in which different groups such as Islamists/conservatives could be included in the bureaucratic center has emerged (Kalaycıoğlu, 2007: 491). It is observed that ANAP (Anavatan-Motherland Party), which was in power during this period, tried to establish a bureaucracy that was not traditionally attached to the regime and its ideology and thus indirectly reduced the role of bureaucratic elites in the political system (Özbudun, 1995: 30). As a matter of fact, these developments were in line with the liberal economic policies of the period and the principles of downsizing the state and simplifying the bureaucracy. In this respect, a strong public opinion began to form and the “single actor pathology” that characterized the pre-1980 period began to move away (Göle, 2007: 520). The policy-making process carried out by the ruling elites in a top-down and anti-civil society manner shifted from the state and elites to the society (Göle, 2007: 521) and a political climate that focuses on more stakeholders began to emerge.

One of the biggest changes that took place in the 1980s was a kind of dimension jump in Islamist identity with urbanization, developments in the economic and social climate, the strengthening of Anatolian capital, and the increase in the educational opportunities of Islamist groups at universities in big cities. Göle considers this process as the birth of contemporary Islamism in Türkiye (Göle, 2002: 107). This newly formed religious middle class largely supported center-right parties until the 90s (Ete, 2009). However, the fact that political Islam transformed and updated itself with new paradigms that could produce solutions to current problems, and that it put forward a real alternative to power by taking the disadvantaged segments in the cities that were swept away by urbanization, voters from various ideologies who were tired of failed governments and corruption, conservative middle classes and the rising elements of Anatolia, whose moves towards the center were cut off by a stable blockage, hit the bureaucratic-elitist center in the heart, so to speak. The new Islamist political cadres’ one-to-one contacts with the society, unlike the

patronizing and unapproachable state elites, and their emphasis on national values have enabled them to find an increasing response among the society (Kurtbaşı, 2017: 197-198). On the other hand, the bureaucratic-elitist center and the military, which now stands at the heart of the system as its anchor, have no tolerance for the possibility that “their ideology, which they embroider like lace, loses its social relevance” (Arpacı, 2020: 199). In this respect, the February 28th process was an attempt by the elite forces to “get back on track” the political environment that had “gone out of hand” and to raise the flag of their bureaucratic elitist worldview. In this way, the positions lost by the state elites in areas such as the military, education, economy and media were taken back by force. Unlike other coups, the February 28 process targeted a single group. As Arpacı states, “February 28th was the most obvious ontological struggle of the elites of the Republic. Qualitatively, February 28th differs from other coups and memorandums in that for the first time it was directed against a single group, a single ideology and only its institutions, instead of being directed against the whole society, either theoretically or rhetorically” (Arpacı, 2020: 199).

At this point, it is useful to look at the elitist intervention crystallized in the February 28th process in the light of C. W. Mills’ theory in order to better understand certain issues. The concept of “power elite”, which Mills examines in his work *The Power Elite* and which has an important place in contemporary political sociology literature, finds its counterpart in a society like Türkiye, which has experienced some setbacks on the road to democratization<sup>7</sup>. Mills conceptualized the “power elite” as a tripartite system consisting of administrators or bureaucrats, capitalists and the military, united around a particular ideology. Therefore, Mills argued that all decisions affecting society are made by political, economic and military institutions (Acar and Uslu, 2019: 39). Mills’ conceptualization is in line with the political, economic and military structure of early republican Türkiye. When analyzing the development of elitism in the Turkish context, it is necessary to consider the economic manifestation of elitism in addition to the

<sup>7</sup> In his work *The Power Elite*, C. W. Mills analyzed state-society relations and political structure, especially in the American context, and introduced the concept of “power elite” within this cultural and political background. In the introduction to his work, Mills defines the concept of “power elites” in American society as those in positions that “command the basic hierarchies and organizations/initiatives in modern societies”; see Mills, 1959, p. 3. However, the concept of power elites developed by Mills has also been applied theoretically to societies outside the United States by many researchers and thinkers; for a good example, see Skocpol, Theda, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

political and military groups that are usually emphasized. In this respect, one of the components of Mills' tripartite power structure, which he characterizes as capitalists, corresponds to Istanbul capital in the context of early republican Türkiye. Istanbul capital, which received the support of the state under the guidance of the republican elite from the foundation of the republic until the early 1970s and embodied its ideological and class nature through the TUSİAD organization they established, is also a dominant element of this elitist faction (Arpacı, 2020: 195).

In this tripartite structure formed by the ruling elite, while the power of the bureaucracy increased, civil society could not find a place for itself, the power of centralization gradually increased in contradiction to the local administration approach, and the political sphere came under the dominance of the positivist Westernist understanding (Yücekök, 1976: 83). In this context, this tripartite power structure, from the very beginning, envisioned Islam as an opposing ideology and resorted to many means incompatible with democracy, including military coups, to keep it out of power. As a matter of fact, the February 28th process is one of them. The February 28th process, which was carried out with the initiative of the capitalists who embraced a certain ideology, the political class that inherited the elitist legacy of the republic, and ultimately the military as the main actor, was in this sense a confirmation of Mills' assertion that the ruling elite turned democracy into a game. In conclusion, the February 28 process is a very important breaking point in the period between 1980 and 2002, which began with a military coup and ended with the bankruptcy of the political and economic thought that represented the elitist thought of the republic. This incident is a clear demonstration of the instrumental view of elitist groups that reduces democracy to a means of play, as both Mills and Schumpeter point out<sup>8</sup>.

Political formations centered on Islam, which were regarded as enemies by this triumvirate of power elites - and which Arpacı characterizes as 'challenger groups' (Arpacı, 2020: 196) - began to gain the character of a minimum common ground where the reactions of different social segments to this triumvirate of power gathered, especially after 1980. In this sense, it can

be said that, thanks to these political formations, the reactions against the cultural and social revolution of the Republic, which was centered on the West, also acquired the character of an identity politics.

When the period between 1980 and 2000 in Türkiye is viewed from a more general perspective that also takes into account global developments, the panorama of social and political developments takes on a more meaningful framework. Indeed, the civil society debates that started in the 1960s in Turkish political life gained momentum in the 1980s and dominated the entire political climate.

Civil society debates in Türkiye became more holistic in the late 1980s and early 1990s and made its impact felt in all areas from politics to social life and even popular culture (Gürbilek, 2020: 110). On the other hand, when we look at the course of civil society debates in Turkish public opinion, we come across an interesting point. Various arguments have been put forward that civil society in Türkiye is almost non-existent, that it has difficulties in developing, that this situation is inherited from the Ottoman Empire and that it hinders the development of democracy, and these views have been widely accepted in many circles, from Kemalists to leftists. However, this view contains a general misconception. If civil society means organizations that exist outside the state and operate on a voluntary basis, these already existed in the Ottoman Empire in the form of foundations, guilds and religious communities. If civil society means a sphere separate from the state and based on private property and the free market, i.e. a capitalist political economy, it is inherently impossible for such a concept to exist in the Ottoman Empire since the Ottoman Empire did not have a capitalist system (Gülalp, 2018: 145). Therefore, attributing the Ottoman social structure as the culprit for the prolonged inhibition of the development of civil society in Türkiye is a completely wrong reasoning. Leaving such distorted reasoning aside and looking through the lens of political sociology, it is seen that both the internal dynamics of Turkish society and the global conjuncture at the time were behind the strengthening of the concept of civil society in Türkiye since the 1980s.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, globalization provided a favorable environment for the emergence of alternative communities based on different identity claims, thus creating social movements that transcend social stratification and are based on issues of cultural identity. The axis of the concepts of civil society and democracy began to shift towards issues such as the legitimate recognition of these

<sup>8</sup> Like Mills, Schumpeter, especially in chapter 22 of his famous *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, drawing on the behavioralist movement in contemporary political sociology, argues that elitist governments use democracy not as an end within the framework of an ideal, but as a means within the framework of a method to maintain power; see Schumpeter, Joseph (2003), *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Taylor & Francis, Londra, p. 269.

identities and the acceptance of cultural and religious diversity (Harvey, 1989: 286). The 1980s, when civil society debates gained strength at the global level, was a period when social movements gained a solid ground not only to oppose the authoritarianism of the state but also to oppressive modernity (Hobsbawm, 1994: 346). What these movements have in common is their opposition to the unquestionable assertions of modernism based on Enlightenment rationality, such as bureaucratic progressivism. A social movement - such as a religious movement - that challenges the political and cultural system of the modern national state based on a homogeneous ideology of exemplary citizenship can characterize itself as a civil society movement. As a result, in the last period of the 20th century, all movements that argued that the main dilemma in a society was not class conflict - contrary to what Marxist thought argued - and aimed to fight against the oppressive aspects of modernity began to appropriate the concept of civil society (Gülalp, 2018: 137).

In this respect, an examination of Türkiye's context between 1980 and 2000 reveals how the concept of civil society constitutes an important crossroads in political and cultural life. Indeed, as an example of this phenomenon, it is significant that the Refah (Welfare) Party, which was the representative of Islamic social movements at the political level at the time, considered itself a civil society movement. However, such a characterization was considered strange by both secular republicans and leftists, who said that the Islamic movement embodied in the Welfare Party could not be a civilian movement. Nevertheless, given the specific nature of this movement in terms of opposing the uniformizing and homogenizing ideologies and practices of the national state and gathering the power of various religious communities as non-state institutions, it is clear that the social movement embodied in the Refah (Welfare) Party is a civil society movement (Gülalp, 2018: 145).

Of course, at this point, one should not overlook the obvious difference between a social movement and a political party. While a political party directly participates in the struggle for power by forming an organized structure, social movements, which exhibit a more dispersed structure, create the preconditions for policy and regime change by creating a different climate of opinion within society and proposing alternatives. However, there is an important requirement for the success of a social movement. At some stage in its development, a social movement must create more organized political entities that can directly participate

in a power struggle, that can be used to rebuild society once they are in power, or that can change the existing political climate (Bottomore, 2020: 71). When we look at this phenomenon in the light of the historical development of social movements in Türkiye, we see that Islamic social movements began to gain power in the social structure starting in the 1960s. However, after the military coup of 1980, social movements, which remained dormant for a short period of time due to the political and social conjuncture, started to gain power again from the end of the 1980s, and in this process, Islamic social movements became prominent thanks to their successful organizational capabilities. In this sense, the Refah (Welfare) Party is an important turning point in the political and socio-cultural life of Türkiye in terms of bringing the Islamic social movement that gained strength in the 1980s into an organized structure.

The fact that the Islamic-democratic movement in Türkiye gained power at the level of political representation with a social acceleration in the late 20th century also testifies to the deep sense of unrest that society experienced during this period. While elites were questioning where the fault lay, sections of the population were experiencing a loss of direction in the face of growing social unrest, institutional corruption and the erosion of the rule of law (Keyder, 1998: 39). On the other hand, this was a period in which a deep political struggle was becoming increasingly evident. As Keyder points out, especially during the 1990s, the main political struggle in Türkiye was between the authoritarian modernizing state of the past, whose legitimacy was slowly eroding, and political liberalism and the concept of citizenship (Keyder, 1998: 52).

### **The Elimination of the Elitist Political Understanding and the 2000s: The Construction of Democracy in Türkiye on the Axis of Civil Society and Citizenship**

In the 20th century, one of the two main components of the concept of civil society, which is recognized as the source of democracy, has been social movements, as mentioned above. However, given the definition of democracy as the sharing of power through deliberation among the members of a community without disregarding the diversity within that community (Benhabib, 2002: 89), the other element necessary for civil society, and ultimately democracy, to truly take root in a society is the concept of citizenship. As a matter of fact, as will be analyzed below, the reasons for the failure of the development of democracy in Türkiye until the 2000s lie in the destruction of the ground for the construction of the concept of citizenship at the social level.

The concept of citizenship, which played a major role in the evolution of the conception of civil society, was based on the “citizen with rights as an individual” model in the West. As a result of the transformation that took place in Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War, the idea of citizenship began to gain strength in the West starting from the late 1980s (Mann, 1987: 343). According to this view, the state, and politics more generally, is an institution at the service of the individual, not a focus from which the individual directs his or her life as a duty. Participation in politics is recognized as a right, but this right does not imply a duty. This raises the issue of the individual’s “civil”, “political” and “social” rights.

According to T. H. Marshall, the author of the most important studies on civil rights in political sociology, civil rights in the West developed in three phases: first, “civil rights” such as freedom of thought and belief and the right to a fair trial, which are necessary for individual freedom; then “political rights”, which are the right to participate in the exercise of political power; and then “social rights”, which are related to welfare and social well-being (Marshall, 1964: 71). Although it has been argued that Marshall’s framework does not fit many countries and societies around the world<sup>9</sup>, this distinction between civil, political and social rights has continued to exist as a paradigmatic distinction in discussions on citizenship and democracy in political science and sociology literature (Gülalp, 2018: 147). Although these rights take different forms in different social contexts, the following is a general characterization: In the twentieth century, states mostly recognized social rights, but by the end of the century, the criterion of democracy was shaped by the recognition of cultural diversity and identities rather than the provision of welfare rights (Taylor, 1994: 145). Indeed, identity politics started to rise in this period.

From Marshall’s conceptual framework, the welfare state based on the social rights of individuals in the 20th century was widely accepted as a model across the world, but it did not emerge in a liberal democratic form everywhere. Examples include fascist regimes such as Nazism or Communism, or populist regimes in the Third World (Berger, 1994). In societies where welfare-enhancing practices were articulated with authoritarian or totalitarian administrations, the state aimed to create an artificial sense of community. As a matter of fact, in examples of non-liberal political regimes, the masses of the people did not have political and civil rights, even though they had social rights to increase their

welfare (Gülalp, 2018: 150). In this context, it can be said that in the early republican period, the founding elites pursued a developmentalist economic policy within the framework of the Kemalist ideology and as a result, certain steps were taken to increase the level of welfare. However, Kemalism’s elitist dogmatic political and cultural ideology did not allow for the development of civil and political rights at the social level, and thus hindered the establishment of an identity-based political understanding and democracy.

The roots of this situation lie in the French-style conception of citizenship, which was largely appropriated during the early republican period. This conception is based on the suppression of different cultures and identities and the effort to impose a single cultural framework on all segments of society (Vaner, 2005: 155). As a result, it has meant the exclusion from the public sphere of individuals and communities that do not conform to the normative ideal set by elites with political and cultural sovereignty. As a matter of fact, it can be said that the set of rights and duties determining the early republican conception of citizenship, which was guided by the French-style conception of citizenship, was illiberal<sup>10</sup>. The emphasis on the sovereignty of the general will and homogeneity in such an understanding of citizenship paved the way for a political culture that ignored diversity and difference. The Kemalist emphasis on unity and *solidarity* in the sense of homogeneity is actually guided by modernity, which sees uniformization and homogeneity as a normative feature (Groc, 2005: 196). Consequently, it is obvious that such a conception of citizenship constructed by elites cannot establish a democratic regime<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> In the French conception of citizenship, which was shaped under the influence of Rousseau’s views, it was assumed that there was a distinction between the sum of individual wills and the general will and that the state represented the general will, and as a result, the concept of citizenship was determined by duties rather than rights. For the distinction between the individual will and the general will in Rousseau, see Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book 1, Chapter 7. The main dilemma in Rousseau’s argument lies in the conception of the general will, according to which the general will is superior to the individual will in all cases and is the main determining factor. As a matter of fact, according to Rousseau’s theory of society, the freedom of the individual passes through submission to the general will. This understanding of citizenship is still evident in contemporary French society. For example, the ease with which a ban on the turban can be imposed in France and individual freedoms restricted indicates that such an understanding prevails.

<sup>11</sup> One of the implications of such an understanding based on the distinction between the general will and the individual will is that it creates a state/government distinction unique to Türkiye. According to this understanding, the state represents a supra-political structure and occupies an unquestionable position, while politics is always directed towards the government. An example from the recent past is the words of former DTP deputy Aysel Tuğluk in her speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly during the constitutional

<sup>9</sup> See for instance Mann, 1987.

The social dilemmas caused by such a conception, which does not coincide with Türkiye's social reality and political culture, and which systematically discriminates between individuals in terms of religious and cultural aspects, has influenced Türkiye's political and socio-cultural life for most of the 20th century. On the other hand, shortly after the establishment of the republican regime, the world economic conjuncture and the ideological environment of the period had changed in a way that favored anti-liberalism and a state-led economy. In this phase of national developmentalism, conditions on a world scale allowed the state to regulate the economy in a relatively closed manner. Indeed, as in most peripheral economies around the world until the 1980s, Türkiye also experienced development, urbanization and increased prosperity. However, material progress did not lead to the development of individual autonomy or civil rights. In the early republican period, as mentioned above, a citizenship that would be based on a system in which the rights implied by a Marshallian understanding of citizenship would gain strength never developed, and the welfare policies in question could not be complemented by a social reform (Keyder, 1998: 42).

In this sense, both on a global scale and in Türkiye, the 1980s marked a turning point. Along with globalization, the rise of identity politics and civil society debates on a global scale had repercussions in Türkiye, and demands for identity and belonging, voluntary identities such as religion and sect, which had been suppressed by elitist politics for so long, began to be given more importance at the social level, and as a result, such identity demands naturally manifested themselves at the political level. In this sense, the period between 1980 and 2000 was a fertile climate for the concepts of civil society and citizenship. However, it can be said that as a result of globalization, political economy models regulated by the state have been pushed to the background and there has been a decline in the social rights of individuals, that is, in the level of welfare (Akagül, 2005: 443). The state's function of safeguarding social welfare has been eroded and thus the establishment of democracy has been blocked. For, as Marshall argued, in addition to civil and political rights, social welfare rights provided by the state to society are also essential for democracy to have a solid foundation (Burchill, 2000: 286). As a matter of fact, due to the economic crises Türkiye experienced especially in the

1990s, which reached its peak with the 2001 economic crisis, and the difficulties faced by the state in fulfilling its obligations to increase social welfare, social rights could not be articulated with the civil and political gains experienced at the social level in this period, and thus the development of democracy was hindered.

Consequently, although the period between 1980 and 2000 witnessed identity movements at the social level due to the impact of globalization, social rights of segments of the population were weakened due to the instability of the economic environment in Türkiye. Both the strengthening of welfare policies through the establishment of economic stability and thus the development of social rights and the strengthening of the democratic ground through identity politics and the creation of a more inclusive citizenship environment were only possible after the 2000s, after the elitist politics was completely eliminated.

## CONCLUSION

The theoretical and conceptual framework developed by contemporary political sociology as a discipline at the intersection of political science and sociology has provided important intellectual insights into the analysis of the forms of government and administration that emerged in the twentieth century. In this context, elitism theory, one of the main branches of political sociology, has articulated and developed various theories that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, offering analyses of the power of elites that prevailed on a global scale for most of the twentieth century. This analytical framework provided an intellectual ground to shed light on the elitist regime of power that Türkiye experienced in the early Republican period and which dominated Türkiye's political climate for a long time afterwards.

One of the most obvious examples of elitist governments' imagination of transforming society through the creation of political culture is the Western-based modernization and single-party era that Türkiye experienced in the early Republican period. The efforts of the ruling elite, within a tripartite structure consisting of the political, economic and military sectors, to forcibly change the long-established political culture of the people have been the biggest obstacle to the development of a democratic civil society in Türkiye. The democratization process, which was interrupted by successive military coups and the tutelary political understanding that persisted and reproduced itself in the multi-party period, eventually led to a social resistance

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amendment negotiations on the turban issue: "Today, political Islam has finally taken over not only the government but also the state"; see. <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/print/104725-cicek-incileri-radyoaktif-korku-laiklik-noteri-endise-giderme-komisyonu>; (28.06.2021).

and, as a result, prepared the necessary social context for the strengthening of political Islamic formations as a social movement representing the pluralist structure and political culture of society.

On the other hand, the concept of citizenship, which is necessary for democracy to take full root in a society, and the civil, political and social rights that will ensure it, have been disrupted in various ways from the early republican period to the early 2000s in Türkiye, and this tripartite structure that forms the basis of democracy could not be established simultaneously in the said period. The development of social rights that would ensure social welfare on one hand, and the establishment of civil and political rights on the other, thereby representing individuals' issues of identity and belonging in a constructed public sphere and creating an inclusive citizenship environment, has only been possible after the 2000s, following the elimination of elitist politics and its extensions.



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