

# A Contribution of Democracy Research to Turkish History: Evaluation of The National Turkish Party and Its Program

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**Abstract:** The National Turkish Party was founded on December 9th, 1919 in Istanbul. The National Turkish Party was founded prior to the 1919 election. In a sense; it aimed at maintaining policies of the National Constitutional Monarchy Party and the movement of Turkishism in the period of the armistice and of an occupation and cosmopolitan climate. The party participated in the pre-election work and elections and made some name for itself. The party dissented in opinion from other parties at the National Congress. Abdülhak Adnan (Adivar), Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), Mehmet Emin (Erişirgil) and Ahmet Ferit (Tek), party’s nominees, got into parliament in the elections in which the party participated with an independent list. In order to better understand the cosmopolitan pluralistic capital in a political way, we can consider that a newly established party, which formally adopted “Turkish Nationalism”, was able to win a parliamentary seat in armistice Istanbul. The National Turkish Party was not able to open any branch office except in Istanbul. They tried to explain themselves to the masses through the newspaper İfham. The party sent Ahmet Hikmet and Hamdullah Suphi as delegates to the National Congress. They were in conflict with other political organizations because of not taking a harsh attitude towards the Anatolian movement. The Party was strongly criticized especially by the Freedom and Accord Party circles for supporting the movement of the Union for the Defense of Law as well as centralizing the resistance point in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. After the invasion and abolition of the Ottoman Parliament, the party became unable to work in Istanbul. Ahmet Ferit, Dr. Adnan Adivar and Hamdullah Suphi, the founders and directors of the party, moved to Ankara and participated in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Thus, the political life of the National Turkish Party ended.

**Keywords:** The National Turkish Party, Turkish Nationalism, Party Program, Period of Armistice, Ahmet Ferit (Tek).

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# Türk Demokrasi Tarihi Araştırmalarına Bir Katkı: Milli Türk Fırkası ve Parti Programının Değerlendirilmesi

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**Öz:** Milli Türk Fırkası, 9 Aralık 1919 tarihinde, İstanbul’da kuruldu. Bir bakıma Milli Meşrutiyet Fırkası’nın politikalarını ve Türkçülük akımını, mütarekenin işgalci ve kozmopolit iklimi içinde sürdürmek amacıyla olan fırka, 1919 seçiminden önce kurulmuştur. Fırka seçim öncesi çalışmalarına ve seçimlere katılmış, ardından az da olsa söz ettirmiştir. Millî Kongre’de diğer fırkalarla fikir ayrılıkları yaşamıştır. Bağımsız bir listeye girdiği seçimlerde, gösterdiği adaylardan Abdülhak Adnan (Adıvar), Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), Mehmet Emin (Erişirgil) ve Ahmet Ferit (Tek) mebus seçilmiştir. Yeni kurulmuş ve Türk milliyetçiliğini resmî ideoloji olarak benimsemiş bir fırkanın, mütareke İstanbul’unda bir mebus çıkarabilmesi, kozmopolit bir çoğulculuğa sahip olan başkentten siyasi yönden daha sıhhatli anlaşılabilmesi için önemli bir veridir. Milli Türk Fırkası, İstanbul dışında, hiçbir yerde şube açamamıştır. Kendisini, İfham gazetesi vasıtasıyla kitlelere anlatmaya çalışmıştır. Fırka, Millî Kongre’ye, Ahmet Hikmet’i ve Hamdullah Suphi’yi delege olarak göndermiştir. Anadolu hareketine karşı sert bir tutum takınmadığı için diğer siyasi kuruluşlarla çatışma yaşamıştır. Fırka, Mustafa Kemal Paşa’nın önderliğindeki Müdâfaa-i Hukuk hareketini ve direnme merkezinin Anadolu’da kurulmasını desteklediği için özellikle Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası çevrelerince ağır bir şekilde eleştirilmiştir. Meclis-i Mebusan’ın basılmasından ve feshedilmesinden sonra, fırka İstanbul’da çalışamaz duruma gelmiştir. Kurucu ve yöneticilerinden Ahmet Ferit, Dr. Adnan Adıvar ve Hamdullah Suphi Ankara’ya geçerek Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi’ne katılmışlardır. Böylece Milli Türk Fırkası’nın siyasi ömrü sona ermiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Milli Türk Fırkası, Türk Milliyetçiliği, Parti Programı, Mütareke Dönemi, Ahmet Ferit (Tek).

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# تقييم الحزب القومي التركي وبرنامجہ: مساهمة في أبحاث تاريخ الديمقراطية التركية

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## الملخص

تأسس الحزب القومي التركي في إسطنبول في 9 ديسمبر/ كانون الأول 1919. هذا الحزب يهدف إلى مواصلة سياسات الحزب القومي الدستوري والحركة التركية داخل بيئة احتلالية وتركيبة غير متجانسة في عهد الهدنة. تأسس الحزب قبل انتخابات عام 1919. وشارك الحزب في الفعاليات قبل الانتخابات ثم شارك في الانتخابات، وبذلك بدأ بإسماص صوته ولو قليلاً. كان هناك في الحزب القومي اختلافات في الرأي مع الأحزاب الأخرى. وفي الانتخابات التي دخلها بقائمة مستقلة تم انتخاب عبد الحق عدنان (أديوار) وحمد الله صبحي (طانروفر) ومحمد أمين (أريشير غيل) وأحمد فريد (تك) أعضاء في البرلمان. في الحقيقة، إن فوز حزب أنشي حديثاً وبتبني القومية التركية كأيديولوجية رسمية بمقعد برلماني في عهد الهدنة بإسطنبول، يعد بمثابة إحدى البيانات المهمة لفهم سياسي أكثر وضوحاً للعاصمة التي تتمتع بتعددية غير متجانسة. الحزب القومي التركي لم يستطع فتح فرع في أي مكان آخر غير إسطنبول. حاول أن يعرّف بنفسه للناس من خلال صحيفة إفهام. أرسل الحزب أحمد حكمت وحمد الله صبحي إلى المؤتمر الوطني كأعضاء. ونظراً لأنه لم يتخذ موقفاً متشدداً ضد حركة الأناضول، فقد شهد صراعات مع المنظمات السياسية الأخرى. الحزب تعرض لانتقادات شديدة من قبل دوائر حزب الحرية والائتلاف لدعمه حركة الدفاع عن الحقوق بقيادة مصطفى كمال باشا وتأييده إنشاء مركز مقاومة في الأناضول. وبعد مدهامة مجلس المبعوثان وحله، أصبح الحزب في حالة لا تسمح له بالعمل في إسطنبول. وعلى إثر ذلك، توجه بعض مؤسسي وأعضاء الحزب أحمد فريد ود. عدنان أديوار وحمد الله صبحي إلى أنقرة وانضموا إلى مجلس الأمة التركي الكبير. وبذلك انتهت الحياة السياسية للحزب القومي التركي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الحزب القومي التركي، القومية التركية، برنامج الحزب، عهد الهدنة، أحمد فريد (تك)

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## Introduction

The National Turkish Party was one of the organizations established during the armistice period. Despite the fact that it was not a political organization that had a profound effect on Turkish political history, it served as a political structure created by some intellectuals who expressed themselves as Turkist in the period of armistice to express their will within the framework of national feelings. Although the party could not have a big impact in the history of Turkish democracy in terms of influence and efficacy, in the process of the opening of the Grand National Assembly, the National Turkish Party was important in terms of showing that not all of the intellectuals in Istanbul followed a submissive policy and some of them, especially the Turkist intellectuals, were struggling to combat imperialism to the extent of their capabilities.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment, development and political activities of the National Turkish Party are mentioned within the scope of the study. Another issue that is emphasized in connection with the subject is that the political program of the party is presented and the analysis of this program has been carried out in various aspects. Despite the fact that the National Turkish Party was a short-term political structure in the history of Turkish democracy, it managed to attract attention with its party program that was published just before the 1919 elections at the time of its establishment. This was because, as can be understood from the sources of the period, the National Turkish Party was one of the rare political parties that published a party program and tried to announce this program to the public ambitiously during the election studies conducted throughout the country for the last Ottoman Chamber of Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

Consisting of fourteen articles, the program is an extremely valuable source of information in terms of showing the politicians' perspective on the developments in the country in that period. When the issue is approached from this aspect, it is possible to analyze the opinions of the Turkist intellectuals of the period regarding the situation of the Ottoman State during the armistice period by looking at the program in question. Therefore, the mentioned party program also carries an extremely important source of identity that has not been emphasized so far in order to describe the mentality in the history of the armistice period.<sup>3</sup>

In this research on the National Turkish Party and its program, the books and the articles related to the subject were firstly examined and then the newspaper

1 Yenal Ünal, Ahmet Ferit Tek, (İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz Publishing, 2009), 58-59.

2 Tan Baykal et al. "The Reflections of the 1919 Elections in the Turkish Press", *Social Sciences Research Journal* 7, no 2, (June 2018), 222.

3 "The National Turkish Party Declaration", *İfham Newspaper*, Number: 81, October 22, 1919, 1.

İfham<sup>4</sup>, which operated as the media organ of the party, was carefully scanned. It should be stated at this point that the number of relevant sources is very low. The study by Tarık Zafer Tunaya “Political Parties in the Turkey Armistice Era 1918-1922” includes basic information about the party, but detailed comments in this book are not to be seen. The National Turkish Party and Party program, which has been mentioned in general terms in the book named “Ahmet Ferit Tek”, which was prepared by us in 2009, has been handled in more detail in this research. Although not directly related to the subject, a total of four master’s theses were prepared about the publication activities of İfham newspaper<sup>5</sup> and their contents during the armistice period. These theses include Sedat Karakoç’s “The İfham Newspaper and Literary Addition Examination and Selected Texts”, Meral Doğruer’s “The İfham Newspaper, one of the Armistice Periodicals”, Bilgen Yetkin’s “The Voice of the National Turkish Party, The Insight of the İfham Newspaper to the Armistice Period (1919- 1920)”, and Merve Dumlu’s work titled “The İfham Newspaper from the National Constitutional Monarchy Party to the National Turkish Party”. We tried to examine these theses within the scope of our examination. It is believed that this study will make a scientific contribution to the field, since very serious research has not been carried out with the aforementioned party or with the program of this party.<sup>6</sup>

## I. The National Turkish Party

The National Turkish Party was founded on 9 December 1919 in Istanbul. The founders of the party were Ahmet Ferit (Tek), Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul), Ahmet Hikmet (Müftüoğlu), the poet, Zühtü (İnhan), one of the professors of Darülfünun, Ahmet Refik (Altınay), one of the professors of Darülfünun and a historian, Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), Yusuf Akçura, İsmail Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu), Mehmet Emin (Erişirgil), Hüseyin Ragıp, the editorial writer of İfham, and Nebizade Ahmet Hamdi, the editorial writer of “Turkish World”.<sup>7</sup>

4 İfham means a word such as telling, being told, reporting and being reported. See Ferit Devellioglu, *Ottoman-Turkish Encyclopedic Dictionary*, (Ankara: Aydın Bookstore Publishing, 2001), 411.

5 Bilgen Yetkin, “The Voice of the National Turkish Party, The Insight of İfham Newspaper to the Armistice Period (1919-1920)”, *Pursuit of History*, no 7, (April 2012), 10-24.

6 Sedat Karakoç, *İfham Newspaper and Literary Addition Analysis and Selected Texts*, (Master’s Thesis, Hacettepe University, 1995); Meral Doğruer, *İfham Newspaper of the Armistice Period Publications*, (Master’s Thesis, Niğde University, 2010); Bilgen Yetkin, *The Voice of the National Turkish Party, The Insight of İfham Newspaper to the Armistice Period 1919-1920*, (Master’s Thesis, Selçuk University, 2010); Merve Dumlu, *İfham Newspaper From the National Constitutional Monarchy Party to the National Turkish Party*, (Master’s Thesis, Atatürk University, 2019).

7 *İfham Newspaper*, “National”, 1.

In a way, the party, whose aim was to maintain the National Constitutional Monarchy<sup>8</sup> party and the Turkism movement in the invasive and cosmopolitan climate of the armistice<sup>9</sup> and to establish relations with democratic states for Turkey's salvation, was founded<sup>10</sup> before the 1919 election.<sup>11</sup> This party is considered by some newspapers and intellectual environments as “stillborn” and not founded legally. Nevertheless, the party participated in the pre-election work and elections and made some name for itself. The party dissented from other parties at the National Congress. In the 1919 general elections, which it<sup>12</sup> entered with an independent list, Abdulkhak Adnan (Adıvar), one of the candidates it showed, was elected from Istanbul, Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver) was elected from Antalya and Mehmet Emin (Erişirgil) was elected from Niğde. Ahmet Ferit (Tek) was elected from the Istanbul midterm elections on January 15, 1920.<sup>13</sup> In order to better understand the cosmopolitan<sup>14</sup> pluralistic capital in a political way, we can consider that a newly established party, which formally adopted “Turkish nationalism”, was able to win a parliamentary seat in armistice Istanbul.<sup>15</sup>

When the media organs of the period are examined, the National Turkish Party is regarded as one of the most successful parties of these elections, although it was newly established and it was only able to issue four deputies. Considering the votes of the candidates for the Party, it is seen that the people of Istanbul had a sincere favor for the National Turkish Party. While there were plenty of quarrels during the elections, no party other than the National Turkish

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8 National Constitutional Party and for additional information about the program, see Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Second Constitutional Era of Political Parties in Turkey 1908-1918*, (Istanbul: Hürriyet Foundation Publishing, 1988), 351-363; Muhammed Sari, “*First Nationalist Party of the Second Constitutional Monarchy: Constitutional Monarchy Party*”, (Presented in International Congress on Cultural Heritage and Tourism, 2018), 358-368.

9 Resul Yavuz, “The View and the Attitude of Allies High Commissioners Toward Istanbul During the Declaration of National Pact”, *Tarih ve Günce Journal*, 1, no 1, (Summer 2017), 282-285.

10 The 1919 elections were held in accordance with the principles enacted in 1908. The basic principle in the selection is the existence of a two-degree election scheme. According to this principle, the election took place in two stages. In the first stage, all citizens who have the right to vote and be elected have chosen the second voters according to the numbers they have determined in their regions. Second voters also elected deputies. At the end of these elections, which took place over a two-month period at the end of 1919, the last Ottoman Parliament was formed on January 12, 1920. These election results also formed the basis of Turkey's Grand National Assembly. For detailed information, see Tevfik Çavdar, *Turkey's History of Democracy-1839-1950*, (Ankara: İmge Bookstore, 2013), 183-184.

11 Mithat Atabay, *History of Turkish Democracy*, (Edirne: Paradigma Academy Publications, 2015), 63.

12 National Turkish Party.

13 Ahmet Demirel, *Deputies of the First Assembly, Elections in the National Struggle Period*, (Istanbul: İletişim Publishing, 2017), 41-46, 55-58, 60.

14 Resul Yavuz, “The Policies of the Damat Ferit Government After the Occupation of Izmir and the Ongoing Discussions at the Sultanate Council”, *Tarih ve Günce Journal*, 3, no 7, (Summer 2020), 57-94.

15 Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Political Parties in Turkey Armistice Era 1918-1922*, (Istanbul: Hürriyet Foundation Publishing, 1986), 531-532.

Party could put forward a vision of a detailed country concept. Therefore, the National Turkish Party is more successful compared to the Peace and Ottoman Salvation Party and the National Liberal Party, because it had both a high number of votes and an important breakthrough, although it did not have the opportunity to prepare for the elections for a long time like other parties.<sup>16</sup>

The National Turkish Party could not open a branch anywhere outside of Istanbul. It tried to explain itself to the masses through the newspaper *İfham*. The newspaper was published for the first time on September 22, 1912 by Ahmet Ferit (Tek) as the media organ of The National Constitutional Monarchy Party. During this first period, Mustafa Suphi Bey was the chief editor. The newspaper struggled against the Committee of Union and Progress power, and the Freedom and Entente Party. The newspaper was closed in 1913 due to news about the killing of Mahmut Şevket Pasha. The second publication period of the newspaper started on 23 July 1919. The newspaper also operated as the media organ of the National Turkish Party during this publication period. Yusuf Kenan, Hüseyin Ragıp and Hasan Vehbi worked as the editors-in-chief during this period. Most of the editorials were written by Hüseyin Ragıp. In the period when Istanbul was occupied, it became a publication supporting the National Struggle and Mustafa Kemal Pasha. In fact, an important report of Mustafa Kemal Pasha was published in the *İfham* newspaper dated 19 October 1919 and announced to the public. The publishing life of *İfham* ended when Ahmet Ferit moved to Ankara. Although the communist intellectuals of the following years such as Mustafa Suphi, Ethem Nejat and Sadrettin Celal wrote in the first publishing period of the newspaper, *İfham* followed a conscious nationalism policy in both publication periods. As of August 18, 1919, it<sup>17</sup> also gave a literary supplement once a week. Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul), Yusuf Akçura, Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), Adnan (Adivar), Omar Seyfettin, Orhan Seyfi (Orhon), Ruşen Eşref (Ünaydın), Halit Fahri (Ozansoy), Şükûfe Nihal (Başar), Yusuf Ziya (Ortaç), Necip Asım (Yazıksız), İzzet Ulvi, Feyzullah Sacit, Ahmet Refik (Altınay), Ali Ekrem (Bolayır), Müfide Ferit (Tek), Fazıl Ahmet (Aykaç), İbrahim Alâeddin (Gövsa) and Falih Rıfkı (Atay) were among the authors whose articles were published in the newspaper's literary supplement.<sup>18</sup>

The party sent Ahmet Hikmet (Müftüoğlu) and Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver) as delegates to the National Congress. Since the party did not take

16 Baykal et al. "*The Reflections*", 222-223, 228.

17 *İfham* Newspaper.

18 "A Notable Report of Mustafa Kemal Pasha", *İfham Newspaper*, Number: 74, October 19, 1919; Semih Yalçın, *Republic of Turkey Historical Resources*, (Ankara: Siyasal Bookstore, 2004), 169; *Encyclopedia of Turkish Language and Literature*, "İfham", (İstanbul: Dergâh Publishing, 1981), 344-345.



a harsh attitude towards the Anatolian movement,<sup>19</sup> it had conflicts with other political institutions. As a matter of fact, the party received serious criticism from other organizations since it did not comply with the decision to use harsh language against the Anatolian movement. It was especially criticized by the supporters of the Freedom and Entente Party<sup>20</sup> since it supported the election results of 1919. These criticisms were made especially by Mahir Sait. The National Turkish Party supported the Defense Law Movement, which was developing day by day under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the gathering of the resistance center in Anatolia.<sup>21</sup>

After the occupation of Istanbul on 16 March 1920, the raiding of the Ottoman parliament and the dissolution of the parliament on 18 March 1920, the party became unable to work in Istanbul.<sup>22</sup> Ahmet Ferit, Dr. Adnan Adıvar and Hamdullah Suphi, who were the party's founders and managers, moved to Ankara and participated in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Thus, the short political life of the National Turkish Party ended.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. The Declaration of the National Turkish Party

The National Turkish Party was founded by publishing a declaration. The party program was prepared by its founders, especially Ahmet Ferit, Mehmet Emin and Yusuf Akçura, in accordance with the serious needs of the country. As it can be understood from the party program, this political formation aimed to make politics in an anti-imperialist line and emerged in order to realize the ambitions of the national movement in the political field. The party emerged on the political scene, claiming that it would take its power from the soul of the people, become an active political body on the political scene and soon bring the majority of the nation around.<sup>24</sup>

The founders of the National Turkish Party explained the reasons for the establishment of the party in detail in their declaration of establishment, which also included the program. Accordingly, the following evaluations have been made about the reason of the establishment of the party and the basic political arguments that it will rest on the political scene:

19 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *The Great Speech*, (Ankara: Atatürk Research Center Publishing, 2003), 166.

20 Kemal H. Karpat, *History of Turkish Democracy*, (İstanbul: Timaş Publishing, 2015), 48; Fatih Türe, "Freedom and Accord Party", *Political Parties From Union and Progress to Today*, edited by Turgay Uzun, (Ankara: Orion Bookstore, 2010), 78.

21 Tunaya, *Political Parties in Turkey Armistice Era 1918-1922*, 532-533.

22 Murat Hacifettahoğlu, *Political Regime and Constitutional Order of the First Period of Turkish Grand National Assembly*, (Ankara: Adalet Publishing, 2016), 59-60.

23 Tunaya, *Political Parties in Turkey Armistice Era 1918-1922*, 533.

24 *İfham Newspaper*, "National", 1.



“The spiritual cause of the last major problem starting with the First World War is that each nation decides its own future and should be independent. The origin of this idea, which was originally put forward by the leaders of British politics and later accepted by French, American and even German politicians, opposes colonialism, which is now dominated by nations despite their decisions and benefits and accepts popularism, which means that every nation is dominated by all kinds of political and social life. The Wilson Principles expressed these basic ideas in the most understandable way towards the end of the war, and the Ottoman Government made an agreement with its enemies within the framework of this principle. Turkish nationalism, which has been operating in the scientific, literary and social field for years, is obliged to determine and realize its political ambitions in the face of the new situation of the world. Those who have felt this need and have been a supporter and member of the nationalism movement in the cultural field until now, have established the National Turkish Party by gathering together, taking power from the national conscience and accepting the future principles as a guide.”<sup>25</sup>

As can be seen, the National Turkish Party was born with the purpose and determination to fill an important gap in the general situation that emerged after the First World War and in the face of the difficult situation that the Ottoman Empire fell. The party determined the issue of “determining the destiny of each nation with its own will, being free and independent” at the point where the future of the Ottoman State could be placed on a solid ground, which was a widely discussed concept by various groups and which emerged after the First World War.<sup>26</sup>

The party took a completely dissenting attitude towards imperialism, which is a major means of oppression, especially on backward nations. The founders of the party accepted the popularism that they put in the same rank with democracy as the basic principles of the party by stating that all nations in the world should be independent in the political and social field. The Party saw the principles of Woodrow Wilson dated January 8, 1918, consisting of a total of 14 articles and underlining that the nations must determine their destiny themselves in the most meaningful way, as one of the most important political arguments that could sustain the Ottoman State, because the founders were of the opinion that the Ottoman State signed an armistice based on these principles. According to the party, the Turkish national movement, which had been operating in the fields of science, literature and social sciences for years,

<sup>25</sup> *Ifham Newspaper*, “National”, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Zekai Güner, Orhan Kabataş, *National Struggle Statements and Press*, (Ankara: Atatürk Cultural Center Publishing, 1990), 88-91.

was obliged to set and realize some new targets in the face of the new situation that had emerged in the world. The National Turkish Party had emerged in order to determine and implement these goals. The party was founded mainly by supporters and members who served the national cause of culture in the process until then.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. The Evaluation of the National Turkish Party's Program

The program of The National Turkish Party consisted of 14 articles. In the program, evaluations were made on the principles and procedures to be followed in relation to many issues. When looking at the content of the articles in the party program, it was seen that many general titles were brought to the fore. When these general titles were subjected to a certain classification, it was determined that some articles of the program were extremely close in terms of the content. It was observed that the following issues were emphasized in the program: Wilson Principles and self-determination of the destiny of the nations, the situation of non-Muslims in the Ottoman country, Ottoman-Western relations and the concept of civilization, the mode of administration of the Ottoman country, public will and elections, Turkey's economic structure, external debt and Acceptance of the Ottoman Empire to the League of Nations. Under these general headings, the policies to be followed by the party were elaborated.<sup>28</sup>

The first five articles of The National Turkish Party's program had a body that contained various evaluations about the principles of Wilson and self-determination of the destiny of the nations. These articles were related to the subject, where and on what grounds should the future of the Ottoman State, which was defeated in the First World War, be developed. The articles of the program related to these issues were as follows:<sup>29</sup>

“Article 1: The Turkish State's salvation is to compromise with governments that claim to be Democratic on the basis of nationality by refusing imperialist tendencies.

Article 2: It is necessary to protect our unity and integrity based on the meaning of Wilson's principles from nationality. For this reason, the party understands the principle of nationality according to a contemporary perspective and by keeping the Ottoman Empire away from its imperialistic

27 *Işham Newspaper*, “National”, 1.

28 Güner and Kabataş, “National Struggle...”, 88-91; Tunaya, *Political Parties in Turkey Armistice Era 1918-1922*, 534-535.

29 *Işham Newspaper*, “National”, 1.

ideas. It tries for the community living in the parts of the Ottoman State, where Muslims, who are accustomed to Turkish or Turkish language tradition have the majority to determine their own future based on their own will.

Article 3: From the expression “Turkish”, the National Turkish Party refers to the social community of those who have adopted the Turkish language, manners and feelings, regardless of race.

Article 4: One of the main features of the Turkish nation is Islam. The party believes that they defend the law of Muslims residing in Turkey while it defends Turkish unity and law.

Article 5: According to the principle of nationality, nations cannot be divided. The party definitely wants to take all of the lands, which is called “Turkey”, where the Muslim majority, who are Turkish or accept the Turkish civilization, are settled.”

According to the statements contained here, the National Turkish Party is in favor of the harmonization of the Ottoman country on a national basis with the countries that claim to be democrats by avoiding the imperialist states. Ensuring the unity and integrity of the Ottoman country on the basis of Wilson Principles and aiming for the society to draw its own fate in the territory of the country, where the majority of the Muslim elements are Turkish and speak the Turkish language are issues that the party emphasizes with sensitivity by protecting the Empire from imperialism. The party does not mean a race with the term “Turkish,” but it refers to the community of people living together with the Turkish language, manners and feelings. Another issue on which the group is sensitive is the protection and preservation of the law of Islam, because Islam is one of the essential elements of the Turkish nation. Therefore, while defending the law of the Turkish nation, it is necessary to defend the rights of Muslims and Islam in Turkey. Therefore, according to the principle of nationality, nations cannot be divided. Ensuring the integrity and independence of the Ottoman lands, where the majority of Turkish and Muslims are located, is of vital importance for the state. On this basis, the Ottoman Empire should live independently and freely. As can be seen, the first five articles of the program include the actions in order to achieve complete independence within the scope of the Wilson Principles in the Ottoman lands where the Turkish and Muslim population is predominant with the Ottoman territorial integrity. According to the party program, the survival of the Ottoman State depends on the actualization of these determined elements.

One of the issues in the program of the National Turkish Party was about observing the situation of non-Muslim citizens and determining the policies to be followed for them. The following article was included in the party

program on this subject.<sup>30</sup> “Article 6: As the principle of nationality requires recognition of the law of other nations, the party considers that non-Turkish minorities who will remain in the Turkish country have equality in political, civil law with the Turks. The party is committed to supporting and helping the development of non-Muslim elements as a minority, provided that they do not jeopardize the unity and future of the state.” Accordingly, the party accepted that minorities have equal rights with Turks in all matters, as required by the principle of nationality; especially the protection of political and civil law of minorities who remain in Turkey in parallel, the party aimed to support the development of these elements to the maximum extent, provided that non-Muslims did not create a situation that would jeopardize the unity and future of the state. As can be understood from this article, The National Turkish Party regarded non-Turkish minorities and non-Muslims as one of the main elements of the country. It was stated in the party program that the development of these elements would be supported in all respects provided they would not cause any harm to Turkey’s integrity and unity.

The seventh article of the party program deals with Ottoman-Western relations and includes various evaluations about the concept of civilization. The article contains the following phrases:<sup>31</sup>

“Article 7: According to the principle of nationality, nations cannot be forced to come under any different sovereignty except their own domination. Therefore, the party also wants to achieve the political independence of the Turkish State. However, as long as the nation’s desire to determinate itself is reserved, the party accepts that Turkey should benefit from the scientific and administrative developments of the Western civilization in order to accomplish the civil duties it will undertake in accordance with the needs of the age.”

According to the information in this article, in accordance with the principle of self-determination of the fate of the nations, no nation can be forced to enter the administration of another governing other than its own. The Turkish State found it beneficial to use the science and administration method of Western civilization in order to fulfill its civil duties within the framework of the needs of the age, provided that it maintained its authority to determinate itself freely. In other words, the party aimed to utilize Western science and administrative methods, which have made significant progress in many areas in order to fulfill the needs of the age, provided that the independence of the Ottoman State was never compromised in the cosmopolitan climate that emerged at the end of the First World War.

30 “Program of the National Turkish Party”, *Ifham Newspaper*, Number: 130, December 10, 1919, 1.

31 *Ifham Newspaper*, “National”, 1.

The eighth article of the National Turkish Party's program concerns the way of administration of the Ottoman Empire. The following expression is included in the related article:<sup>32</sup> "Article 8: The National Turkish Party is in favor of maintaining the Turkish state's government as a monarchy, a constitutional sultanate, as clearly stated in the Constitution." Accordingly, the party, as clearly stated in the Ottoman Constitution, adopted the administrative way of the Ottoman State, which was a constitutional monarchy, as it was, and stated that it was also in favor of maintaining this administrative method.

The ninth article of the party program is aimed at the best disclosure of popular will and the rapid development of election law. The following article is included in the program regarding the subject in question:<sup>33</sup> "Article 9: The National Turkish Party accepts to take initiatives and take precautions to ensure the full emergence of popular sovereignty and is in favor of accelerating the development of election law." The existence of political parties<sup>34</sup> that appeal to large masses is an essential requirement for a political institution to work properly in a country. Political parties are obliged to ensure that a precise election system is established in their countries and that the public will is particularly well represented in the parliament. The National Turkish Party stated that within the scope of this article, it shall demonstrate will-power both at the point of representation of public will and the development of election law.

The tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth articles of The National Turkish Party have been issued on the economic situation of the Ottoman Empire and the method of foreign debts to be paid. One of the prerequisites for a country to survive in full lies in having an economic independence. With the armistice period, the Ottoman Empire was dragged into a great obscurity in the economic field. In addition to this uncertainty, foreign debts, which had been carried as a burden on the back of the state for decades, remained a serious threat to national economic policies. For this reason, it was no coincidence that the National Turkish Party allocated four articles of its fourteen-point program to foreign debts and economic issues. The issues regarding the external debts and economic issues in the party program were as follows:<sup>35</sup>

"Article 10: The Party accepts state power as an economic factor besides individual labor, taking into account both the development of international socialist ideas and the way the world economy will take in the future, as

32 *Ifham Newspaper*, "Program", 1.

33 *Ifham Newspaper*, "National", 1.

34 About the concept of Political Parties see: Turgay Uzun, "Political Parties and Turkey", *Political Parties from Union and Progress to Today*, edited by Turgay Uzun, (Ankara: Orion Bookstore, 2010), 7.

35 *Ifham Newspaper*, "National", 1. 2.

well as the social status, spirit and need of the Turkish nation in the present situation. For this reason, the party wants the Turkish government to regulate things in the economic life of the individual, to fulfill his instructional duties and wishes to make laws accordingly. For this, it is necessary to give national and urban content to large economic and public work and the institutions that will serve the benefit of the people should be kept in the hands of the state, and social institutions should be created to satisfy all the workers.

Article 11: The party defends that a solution must be sought in order to overcome the current economic crisis on this basis. The party therefore accepts that the state has the duty to show a place to work for citizens who cannot find a livelihood and remain unemployed due to the end of the First World War. The party asks the government to ensure that military and civil servants who will remain unemployed can be placed in regions which require building in agriculture and trade, besides this they can be used to enlighten them through education and agriculture and arts, and that orphans have opportunities to make a living in the future and requests laws and regulations on these issues.

Article 12: As far as Turkey's future point, financial freedom and economic adequacy is a requirement. Therefore, the Turkish National Party wants Turkey to have a completely independent domestic and foreign trade and economic affairs. The party also wants to benefit from the civil law in force on this matter.

Article 13: The National Turkish Party agrees to pay in an honest way, all the debts that will fall on its share to the extent of communities living in Turkey's borders by agreeing with its creditors.”

The National Turkish Party accepts state power as an economic factor in addition to individual efforts. According to the party, the government should organize the economic life of individuals, discipline and enact laws accordingly. It is among the general objectives of the organization to establish large economic enterprises, to hold the state as much as possible by serving the public, and to establish new institutions that will satisfy all employees.<sup>36</sup> The party thought that the state should show a work area to unemployed individuals and the citizens who could not find a means of livelihood with the end of the First World War when the economic depression started in Turkey. It asked the government to place exposed military and civil servants in the necessary places for the purpose of building the country. The party also demanded the government to enact the relevant laws and regulations to take

<sup>36</sup> Atabay, *History of Turkish Democracy*, 63.

necessary measures in order to provide orphans with the means of earning their livelihoods and to support artisans in all respects.<sup>37</sup>

When it comes to economic issues, one of the issues that the party focused on was the full independence of the country in economic and financial fields. A desirable objective to be achieved by the party was that Turkey's domestic and foreign trade and economic affairs should be entirely free and Turkey should benefit from the civil law in force in order to achieve this goal. Another important issue that the party has expressed in the economic sector is the debts of the Ottoman state. The party thought that commitment should be given to those concerned on Turkey's agreeing on the payment of debts to the creditors by considering the number of inhabitants living in Turkey.<sup>38</sup>

The fourteenth article that constitutes the program of the party was related to the subject of the League of Nations. The League of Nations, which was established as an international organization in order to establish permanent peace in the world after the First World War, appeared as a light of hope in the name of humanity in the first years of its establishment, although it could not fulfill the function expected from it in the following years. The National Turkish Party supported the Ottoman State to enter this institution. In the fourteenth article in the program of the party, the following phrase was included:<sup>39</sup> "Article 14: The National Turkish Party shall demand the acceptance of Turkey to the League of Nations as soon as possible provided that Turkey and other countries are equal in terms of law." Accordingly, the party stated that they would demand an attempt to enter the League of Nations

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37 The National Turkish Party believes that small business owners, one of the most tax-paying professional groups, should be supported in all respects. It criticizes both the state institutions and other political parties for not having a serious program for the survival and development of tradesmen. According to the group, the machines and tools used by Turkish tradesmen are very old. It is also an achievement on behalf of the country's economy to deliver the most advanced machines and tools to the tradesmen. Therefore, the tradesmen, one of the pillars of the country's economy, must be supported and developed within the framework of a planned economic policy, which will also support the country's economic strength. For detailed information about the National Turkish Party's view of tradesmen, see: "National Turkish Party and Small Business Owners", *İfham Newspaper*, Number: 90, October 31, 1919, 1.

38 Turkey's economic situation is one of the most important issues for the National Turkish Party, because the founders of the party think that Turkey won't be able to develop and resist imperialism without an independent economy. Party founders think that the national workforce in Turkey should be protected by the state and they also defend the Turkish working class that should not be left to the bondage of imperialism. The fact that the governments that have come to power for years cannot form a national economic policy is a big mistake according to the party. The National Turkish Party has regarded it as a duty to overcome this mistake that has been going on for years. To access more detailed information about the view of the party on the Ottoman economic order, see: "Interview with Zühtü Bey, one of the Economists of the National Turkish Party and one of the Founders of the Party", *İfham Newspaper*, Number: 84, October 25, 1919, 1.

39 *İfham Newspaper*, "Program", 1.



as soon as possible provided that Turkey and other countries would be equal in terms of law. The National Party thought that withdrawal from the weakness experienced in Turkish diplomacy in the past year and a strong representation in international organizations by Turkey was to the benefit of national interests.

The National Turkish Party added a three-paragraph statement to the end of the program, which included a total of fourteen articles. Accordingly, apart from the party program gathered in fourteen articles, the party declared that it would immediately identify the reforms that would arise due to the needs of the state and the nation and add them to the party program. The National Turkish Party thought that the idea of responsibility in individual and political actions should take root in the mentality of the nation, so those who commit political and personal abuse should be punished by law.<sup>40</sup>

The party also stated that they would try to work with individuals, institutions and groups that were the factors in the emergence and development of the Turkish national movement in the realization of these four-point principles. They declared that the reasons that disturbed the Turkish unity and integrity would be determined and eliminated, and that the nation would be united around the authority of the government that came to power in legitimate ways. The establishment and support of the national press during the access to these identified national goals emerged as another goal of the National Turkish Party.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

Turkey has about two hundred years of democratic experience. Compared to other neighboring countries, it has a significant accumulation in a democratic sense. In the process from the Reformation to the present day, many important steps have been taken in the name of democratization in Turkey. Turkish democracy, which is thought to be still far behind the West by some intellectual circles, continues to progress despite some difficulties. It is obvious that democracy has been adversely affected sometimes by the system, sometimes by legislation, and sometimes by anti-democratic interventions in this process. Therefore, while Turkish democracy has developed and has had a certain experience, on the other hand, it has not been able to bring the pace of development to an ideal level. There is a paradox at this point. In order to eliminate the problems experienced in Turkish democracy today, almost every event in the past of this experience should be investigated objectively within

40 *Izham Newspaper*, "National", 2.

41 *Izham Newspaper*, "National", 2.

the framework of scientific methods and the results of the research should be shared with the masses.

In order for Turkish democracy to be brought to the ideal level, political parties and politicians, electoral systems, related legislation, associations and non-governmental organizations, and all kinds of individuals or groups in the society should demonstrate willpower. Only in this way can a development close to the ideal level be achieved in Turkish democracy.

Looking at the past is not a need but a necessity to fully understand the causes of some basic problems in Turkish democracy. Here, there is a need for historians and historic researchers that will analyze the issues in a healthy way, leaving out issues such as emotion and worldview. This research titled “A Contribution of Democracy Research to Turkish History: Evaluation of the National Turkish Party and Its Program” has emerged in order to make a scientific and modest contribution to Turkish democratic history research within the framework of an objective assessment as much as possible.

Within the scope of this study, we tried to evaluate the National Turkish Party in several aspects, which have not been studied so far. The party was founded in Istanbul on 9 December 1919 by a group of Turkish nationalist intellectuals during the armistice period. It is interesting to find Ahmet Ferit Tek, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, Yusuf Akçura and Ahmet Hikmet Müftüoğlu among the founders of the party, both with their intellectual identity and their efforts for the development of Turkish nationalism. This is in terms of showing how wide and colorful the political spectrum was during the armistice in Istanbul.

The party was described as a Turkist intellectual group party by some circles. However, given the rationale, purpose and program of the founding, we concluded that the founders were nationalist individuals who were deeply concerned about the future of their country and wanted to produce thoughts and policies that were established in this direction. This political formation, which was established shortly before the 1919 elections, was able to recruit only four deputies from the elections that it entered with great hopes. Both the election results and the subsequent political and military developments in Istanbul during the armistice period prevented the National Turkish Party from leaving deep marks in Turkish political life. The party conveyed its political activities to the readers through the İfham newspaper. The İfham newspaper, which was first published as the media organ of The National Constitutional Monarchy Party in 1912, published a total of 204 issues between 23 July 1919 and 6 March 1920 in the second publication period. The newspaper served as the resource of conveying the ideas of the National Turkish Party to large masses in this second publication period.

One of the most important features of the National Turkish Party, which could not be organized outside of Istanbul, was that it supported the developing national movement in Anatolia unlike other Istanbul parties. The party did not strictly criticize the Anatolian movement. Instead it gave support to it indirectly. For this reason, it was criticized by Freedom and Accord Party circles. Upon the official occupation of Istanbul on March 16, 1920, party leaders moved to Ankara and the short political life of the party ended.

The National Turkish Party, which was established by Turkish nationalists during the armistice period and formed with the aim of creating policies within the framework of Turkish nationalism, had a party program consisting of fourteen articles. Unlike many parties established during the armistice period, The National Turkish Party's having a party program shows that it wanted to be seriously effective in politics. The party program focused on drawing the future of the nations themselves at the end of the First World War and the Wilson Principles, the Western World Ottoman State, administrative procedures, elections, the economic situation of the country, foreign debts and the entry of the Ottoman State into the League of Nations. When the program of the party is examined meticulously, it can be seen that the founders of the party made an effort to save the Ottoman State, which had a hard time at that time, by using rational methods. A total of fourteen articles of program was like a road map prepared to save the state in the shortest and healthiest way from the oppression of imperialism.

The National Turkish Party was a political party created by a group of Turkish nationalists during the period when the Ottoman State was dragged into a great obscurity after the Moudros Armistice of 30 October 1918. Contrary to what the opponents of its time stated, it was not a "stillborn" party, but it did not achieve much of the goals that it determined during the establishment process. It is possible to see the effects of many political factors on this issue. However, it provides important data for the leading figures of Turkish literature and history in the cosmopolitan climate of the Ottoman capital. This was in terms of taking a serious step forward and establishing a political organization to put their ideas into action on behalf of the country's future during the armistice period. The party program of the National Turkish Party is both a source waiting to be discovered in order to understand the political conditions of that period and a basic source for understanding the thoughts of the leading Turkish nationalists of the armistice period.

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