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## **TURKEY AFTER THE TRANSITION TO A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM: THE COUPS OF 1960, 1971 AND 1980**

Before 1946 there was just one functioning political party in Turkey – the Republican People's Party (RPP) (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), established by Atatürk. Yet between 1946 and 1952, 28 new political parties were created. Obviously, the most influential of these was the Democrat Party (DP) (Demokrat Parti), established in 1946 and led by Celal Bayar. The DP won the 1950 general election with some 55 % of the vote. This marked a new era in Turkish politics. After the transition to a multi-party system was completed, Turkey experienced periodic breakdowns in the form of direct and indirect military interventions, demonstrating just how problematic regime change in terms of democratization of a political system is. This paper focuses on the period after the transition to a multi-party system and competitive politics in Turkey and, in particular, discusses the coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980 and their implications on the development of democratization processes in the country.

*Keywords:* the Republic of Turkey, democracy, coup d'état, multi-party system, Islam.

In the period between 1950 and 1980 Turkey went through rapid socioeconomic change, with mass migration from rural areas and intensive urbanization, industrialization and development of a service industry, increasing differentiation and fragmentation of society.

The decade between 1950 and 1960 can be defined as a decade of inter-party struggle and polarization of society, with the relationship between government and opposition being the most problematic issue.

On June 30, 1954, the Electoral Law <sup>1</sup> was amended by the Assembly and some restrictions were applied to opposition parties. One of the most important outcomes of the Electoral Law was the ban on opposition parties using state radio. The intersection of the deteriorating economic situation, the government's repressive measures and the opposition's criticism constituted the general framework of political life in Turkey after 1954. A new law passed on June 27, 1956 banned opposition parties from arranging public meetings <sup>2</sup>.

At the beginning of 1957 it was believed that the heavy political climate could only be solved by an early election. A general election was held on October 27, 1957. Even though the DP won a majority of seats in the Assembly, the election results indicated the decreasing power of the Government.

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<sup>1</sup> *Milletvekilleri Seçimi Kanunu* (Kanun № 6428).

<sup>2</sup> *Toplantılar ve Gösteri Yürüyüşleri Kanunu* (Law № 6761).

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Encouraged by an increase in its share of the vote, the RPP started an abrasive opposition campaign. The Government then imposed more restrictive measures on the opposition. In April 1960, the DP's parliamentary majority voted to establish a Parliamentary Investigation Committee consisting entirely of members of the governing party to investigate the subversive activities of the opposition. The committee would be granted the legal authority not only to collect evidence, but also to ban political assemblies and to sentence anyone who objected to the decisions of the committee to up to three years in prison [Eroğul, 1970. P. 175–176]. After the law giving extraordinary powers to the committee went into effect mass demonstrations broke out. This created a danger of escalation of the situation and, in an atmosphere of political turmoil and social tension, the military intervened.

On the morning of May 27, 1960, the Turkish Army overthrew the Menderes Government <sup>3</sup> and replaced it by what became known as the National Unity Committee (NUC) (Milli Birlik Komitesi), which consisted of the 38 officers who had organized the coup [Weiker, 1963. P. 113]. Shortly after the coup, the National Security Council (NSC) (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi) announced that a committee of scholars and experts, chosen by the leaders of the military coup, would begin the process of drafting a new democratic Constitution in consultation with the NSC. In a report prepared by the military leaders, the scholars declared that the DP had lost its political legitimacy by repeatedly engaging in actions violating the Constitution; this fact required the drafting of a new Constitution, which would protect the rule of law and prevent a future breakdown of democracy.

The draft of the new Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly (Kurucu Meclis) on the anniversary of the coup (May 27, 1961) and it was decided that the draft should be voted on in a constitutional referendum on July 9, 1961 [Tanor, 2002. P. 375]. The 1961 referendum was the first referendum in the history of Republic of Turkey and resulted in the ratification of the new Constitution by 61.7 % of registered voters [Aksin, 2007. P. 265]. Besides social rights, the Constitution introduced a wide range of civil liberties and some new institutions were created, among them the Constitutional Court (Anayasa Mahkemesi) and the NSC.

The new Constitution addressed, in particular, abuse of government power, oppression of political dissidents and erosion of the Republic's founding principles. It expanded individual rights and liberties, strengthening, for example, the right to privacy, the right to travel, and freedoms of speech, assembly and association.

Article 2 of the 1961 Constitution defined the Republic of Turkey as a “state governed by rule of law”, while Article 114 stated that “no act or procedure of the administration shall be immune from the review of law enforcing courts”. Another crucial development brought in by the 1961 Constitution was the separation of the Presidency from party politics. According to Article 95, the President would be elected for seven years from among the members of the National Assembly, and his Presidency would be limited to one term. The President had to dissociate himself from his party and his membership of the National Assembly would be terminated [Balkan et al., 1962. P. 215–226]. Moreover, the new Constitution added a second house of Congress, the Senate, as an additional check on the existing Parliament, and required bills to be passed by both the Parliament and the Senate in order to become law (Articles 70, 92).

On October 15, 1961 a general election was held. When, in preparation for the constitutional referendum and general election, the prohibition on political activity was lifted, it must have seemed like opening Pandora's box, with some 20 parties registering their intent to represent the public [Nye, 1974. P. 107]. No party won a clean majority. A coalition government was formed by the RPP and the Justice Party (JP) (Adalet Partisi) with İsmet İnönü as Prime Minister and NUC leader Cemal Gürsel as President. From this point until the elections in 1965 there was a period when the military held sway over the parliament, combined with increasingly fragile coalitions. Four different governments held office during that four-year period.

<sup>3</sup> The commonly accepted fact is that the subsequent trials of party members were not conducted fairly and objectively. The verdicts of the military tribunals were announced on September 15, 1960. Fifteen former DP leaders were sentenced to death, but the NSC commuted the sentences of all but three of the leaders to a term of imprisonment. The remaining three leaders – Prime Minister Menderes, Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, and Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan – were executed by hanging on the Island of Imralı.

In the general election of October 10, 1965, the JP won a complete victory, and then repeated its success in the 1969 election. However, the increased liberalization and political freedoms granted in the 1961 Constitution resulted in a heightened atmosphere of continuous political discussion and debate. This polarization within the country was also evident in the 1969 election results. While the JP retained its leadership in a field of eight political parties, there were many conservative dissenters within the JP. The RPP, which maintained its 27 % of the vote, was also in disarray. This led to a reorganization of the party along more liberal and progressive lines by its new leader Bülent Ecevit, who was elected as the party's General Secretary on 24 October 1966 [Vanderclute, 1984. P. 55]. Ecevit declared that the party's new political orientation would be center-left.

Thus, in the 1970s, the reaction to the rise of liberal leftist elements was also reflected in the Assembly. Parties such as the Reliance (Güven Partisi), Nation (Millet Partisi), and New Turkey (Yeni Türkiye) parties formed a coalition, while their more religious elements combined to form the National Salvation Party (NSP) (Milli Selamet Partisi).

The Government faced difficulties in dealing effectively with the clashes in the streets and on university campuses. The struggle among political parties and inflation led to a situation in which, on March 10, 1971 the Supreme Council of Commanders (Genişletilmiş Komuta Konseyi) concluded that some sort of military intervention was necessary. In order to avoid direct military involvement, a stern memorandum was sent to both the President and Prime Minister. Shortly, after receiving the ultimatum, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel resigned. The armed forces had overturned the government in a bloodless coup by communique. For the next two and a half years after the coup, Turkey was run by a series of "above-party" coalitions.

The political system of government remained very fragile. On October 14, 1973 a general election was held, in which the RPP secured victory with 33.3 % of the votes. A coalition was formed with the NSP, but the Government displayed an inability to enact the required social and economic legislation.

On March 31, 1975, the 39<sup>th</sup> government, known as the first National Front was formed by four parties. The prime minister was Demirel, the leader of the JP. Meanwhile, inflation was rising and left-right clashes resulted in hundreds of deaths. The demonstration on May 1, 1977 was the biggest and most violent in Turkish history, with around 500,000 participants. "Unidentified" persons shot into the crowd, causing 36 deaths [Aydın, Taşkın, 2014. P. 270–281]. The decision was taken to hold an early election.

Nevertheless, the election of June 5, 1977 failed to produce a one-party government, therefore again necessitating the formation of a coalition. Ecevit, as the leader of the winning party, formed a minority government, which received a vote of no confidence by Parliament on the July 3, 1977.

Thus, on July 21, 1977, the second National Front was formed by Demirel, which received a vote of confidence on August 1, 1977 and started its work. It stepped down on 31 December 1977. A new RPP-RRP-DP coalition government was formed by Ecevit in 1978. However, the 22-months period of government under Ecevit was marked by an ever-increasing crisis. On October 6, 1979 Ecevit resigned and the following week, another government, led by Demirel, was formed.

The atmosphere of political chaos contributed to the rise of dissatisfaction among the population, which eventually led to the third coup in less than 25 years. On September 12, 1980, the Turkish Armed Forces, headed by General Kenan Evren, Chief of the General Staff, assumed control over the Turkish Government in a coup d'état. The Parliament and Government were dissolved and the NSC took over the administration of the country. The declared mission of the new Government was to draw up plans for the reestablishment of an elected Government and to continue the bureaucratic functions of the administration in the interim.

On September 20, 1980, eight days after the coup, retired Admiral and former Chief of Naval Forces, Bülent Ulusu, was asked to serve as Prime Minister and to form a government. Less than a week later the Council of Ministers was announced. The "main mission" of the Government's program was to establish measures and amend the law so that the "Turkish republic will not once more

fall into such difficult circumstances". The 1961 Constitution was assessed as far too liberal for Turkey. "The separation of powers introduced by this Constitution degenerated, in effect, into conflict of powers", claimed Ulusu [Vanderclute, 1984. P. 102].

Work on a new Constitution was launched. A draft was presented on July 17, 1982 and a debate began on August 4. On November 7, 1982, the new Constitution was approved by more than 90 % of the popular vote.

The new Constitution granted unprecedented powers to the President and imposed some restrictions on civil rights, freedom of press etc. Article 14, for example, stated that individual freedoms could not be used to challenge the national unity and territorial integrity of the Republic. The essence of the article was repeated again in Article 68 in reference to political parties. Articles 33, 34, 52 and 54 of the new Constitution prohibited voluntary associations and labour unions from pursuing political goals and engaging in political activities, as well as from developing links with political parties, cooperating or coordinating their activities with them, or receiving or giving aid to them [Turan, 2015. P. 117]. Under the 1982 Constitution, the bicameral legislative was reduced to a single house with a term of 5 years. The President, who would still be elected for a 7-year term, was vested with an important power in order to avoid coups in times of crisis: he would now be able to call fresh elections in the absence of a government and if no new government could be formed within 45 days [Vanderclute, 1984. P. 130–133].

The Political Parties Law <sup>4</sup> (issued on 22 April, 1983) and the Electoral Law <sup>5</sup> (issued on 13 June, 1983) contained several provisions aimed at reducing the chance of any recurrence of the chaotic political system that preceded the coup. The parties began the registration process by listing themselves with the Ministry of Interior. Key provisions of the law were designed to prevent the emergence of small, factional or regional based parties by stipulating that parties that failed to gain at least 10 % of the poll nation-wide could not qualify for seats in the new Grand National Assembly.

Consequently, in the general election of November 6, 1983, only three parties were allowed to compete: the Motherland Party (MP) (Anavatan Partisi) led by Turgut Özal, the National Democracy Party (NDP) (Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi) led by Turgut Sunalp, and the Populist Party (PP) (Halkçı Parti) led by Necdet Calp. The results of the election were as follows: the MP received 45 % of the votes cast and 212 seats in the 400-member Grand National Assembly, the PP received 30.4 % of the votes and 117 seats in parliament, while the NDP won 23.2 %, corresponding to 71 seats in Meclis [Vanderclute, 1984. P. 136].

To summarize all of the above, the years from 1946 to 1960 were marked by Turkey's first experiment with a competitive multi-party system. With the change in political rule in 1950, a new era in Turkish politics had begun. The decade from the election on May 14, 1950 to the military intervention on May 27, 1960 was characterized by constantly growing polarization between the Republicans and Democrats, with the growing role of religion in daily life and the ruling party's intolerance towards the opposition. The DP was losing its legitimacy in the eyes of the regime's bureaucratic actors and the military elites. In April 1960, a series of large-scale student demonstrations led to bloody confrontations with the police. The imposition of martial law failed to restore order. Thus, one of the main arguments used by the military to justify the 1960 coup was that the Menderes Government had lost his democratic legitimacy. In other words, the military saw itself as the key institution for moving the nation towards western-style democracy and liberalism. However, the 1960 coup fits squarely within a democratic framework. Maurice Duverger has defined the regime of that time in Turkey as a democracy under tutelage [Duverger, 1970].

Nevertheless, successive new governments were unable to put an end to the leftist-rightist confrontation and polarization within the country. Perhaps the most remarkable step towards further democratization in Turkey during that period was the adoption of the 1961 Constitution with its strong

<sup>4</sup> Siyasi Partiler Kanunu (Kanun № 2820).

<sup>5</sup> Milletvekili Seçimi Kanunu (Kanun № 18076).

emphasis on individual rights and freedoms. However, the ineffectiveness of central government was an important causative factor in precipitating the 1971 coup by memorandum.

Turkish politics in the 1970s was characterized by a lack of decisiveness on the part of the Government, as well as fragmentation and polarization between social groups and on the political scene. Two previous coups have been unsuccessful in restoring a lasting and stable representative democratic system in Turkey. The crisis which led to the 1980 military intervention in Turkey was multi-faceted, including economic breakdown, civil violence and open challenges to secularism. The September 12 coup was launched in order to avert the very real possibility of civil war, and was followed by the adoption of the 1982 Constitution and the 1983 general election.

In other words, the three coups d'état in 1960, 1971 and 1980 jeopardized Turkey's democratic development. However, the period from the 1950s to the 1980s also contributed to the demand for democracy within Turkish society.

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### **ТУРЦИЯ ПОСЛЕ ПЕРЕХОДА К МНОГОПАРТИЙНОЙ СИСТЕМЕ: ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЕ ПЕРЕВОРОТЫ 1960, 1971 и 1980-х гг.**

В статье описывается процесс внутривнутриполитического развития Турции в период после перехода к многопартийной системе. Политическая либерализация в стране была начата в 1946 г.

До этого времени в Турции функционировала лишь одна политическая партия – Народно-республиканская партия Турции (НРП), основанная Ататюрком. С 1946 по 1952 гг. в стране были созданы 28 политических партий, наиболее сильной из которых была Демократическая партия Турции (ДП) под руководством Джелала Байара. Демократическая партия одержала победу на всеобщих выборах 1950 г. Этот факт ознаменовал начало новой эры во внутренней политике Турции. В статье подробно рассматривается период 1950–1980-х гг. и, в частности, государственные перевороты 1960, 1971 и 1980-х гг., приводится анализ их влияния на развитие демократизационных процессов в Турции.

*Ключевые слова:* Турецкая Республика, демократия, государственный переворот, многопартийность, ислам.