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*Danuta Chmielowska**

The Evolution of the Socio-political Situation of the Republic of Türkiye in the 20th Century – Efforts Towards the Europeanisation of the Society and State

Abstract

The events related to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye contributed to a complete departure from the system of constitutional monarchy in favour of a parliamentary democracy. Owing to the decisions on Europeanisation and implemented reforms, i.e., adopting a Civil Code based on the Swiss code, a Criminal Code reflecting the Italian code, a Commercial Code underpinned by the German code (1924), and the transition to the Latin alphabet which replaced Arabic (1928), as well as education reforms (1925), women's suffrage (1934), and the introduction of surnames (1935), etc. the Turkish people became a European society, aware of their rights and obligations. The transition from a single-party regime to a multi-party period (1946) allowed for democracy to be consolidated. Türkiye's participation in strictly European and international political and military organisations was of vital significance and turned the country into an extremely important state. Its failed efforts to join the EEC, and, subsequently, the European Union, resulted in Türkiye abandoning its interest in this form of cooperation (1997).

The socio-political transformations that took place in the 20th century, highlighted in this article, characterise this dynamically changing period. The evolution of the views of Turkish society was clearly marked in the second half of the 20th century, which led to serious changes in the mind-sets of the Turkish people and completely altered the image of the country post-2002, allowing the newly established Justice and Development Party to assume power (2002).

Keywords: Democracy, Kemal Atatürk, Türkiye, Turkey, Ottoman Empire

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Introduction

The Ottoman Empire allied with the Central Powers in the First World War only to emerge defeated (Bayraktar, 2005). As a result of the Armistice of Mudros (1918) (Mondros, 1995), Istanbul and a sizeable part of Anatolia were occupied by the troops of the Triple Entente. Pursuant to the decision of the Versailles Conference, in 1920, in Sèvres near Paris, a peace treaty was signed with the participation of the delegation of the Sultan government under which the Empire was to be partitioned. The treaty provided for the preservation of the former Ottoman possessions in the form of a rump state in northern Anatolia with Istanbul as its capital.

The Turkish people accepted neither the occupation nor the terms of the peace treaty. A Turkish resistance movement and partisan units began to form, which gave rise to the establishment of an army in Anatolia under the leadership of the Ottoman army officer Mustafa Kemal Pasha (1881–1938), and a war for Türkiye's integrity and independence broke out (1919–1922) (Mondros, 1995).

In 1920, in the small town of Angora (now Ankara) in central Anatolia, a people's government was established that led to a successful end of the War of Independence (Wituch, 1983). The Sultanate was abolished in 1922, and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 acknowledged the existence of a sovereign Turkish state, although its territory comprised only Anatolia and eastern Thrace. The European powers dictated their terms to the newly-formed state. Every single resident of the country, including foreigners, were subject to Turkish courts. War reparations claims were relinquished, and Türkiye undertook to protect its citizens regardless of their religion, nationality or language. Greece and Türkiye executed an agreement on compulsory population exchange. The Greeks residing in Anatolia (numbering about 900,000 people) were displaced to Greece, and about 400,000 Turkish Muslims (except those living in Western Thrace) were displaced to Türkiye. The Republic of Türkiye was proclaimed on 29th October 1923, and the formation of an entirely new state within ethnic borders with a new republican system began. The country's reconstruction from the devastation of the war commenced, and public, administration, judiciary, education, and army institutions were formed in place of the former, now obsolete Ottoman establishments. Along with the War of Liberation, three ideologies, promoted by the Ottomans, were irretrievably lost: pan-Turkism, Ottomanism, and pan-Islamism. Following a military victory (resulting in the Armistice of Mudanya being signed in 1922), the movement for

national sovereignty went through a phase of pluralism (until 1925), after which an authoritarian government was introduced and the implementation of reforms began.

Socio-political Reforms Following the Proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye and the Reign of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) (1923–1938)

The following words of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the first president of the young Republic of Türkiye (Jevakhoff, 2004; Volkan, Itzkowitz, 2007; Sonyel, 2003): “Peace in the country, peace in the world”, or, “Yurtta sulh cihanda sulh”, guided the policy of the new state. The focus was on improving the situation of the devastated and neglected Anatolia, and the issue of achieving and catching up with what modern civilisation brought became a priority. Over time, in the 1930s, the Kemalist movement emerged, which gathered together ardent supporters of the nationalist trend propagating the idea of Turkism, aimed at creating a modern European state.

The power formally rested in the hands of the parliament, which elected the government and the president. In the years 1925–1945, there was basically a one-party system in Türkiye. During that time, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), i.e., Kemalists, were in power (Velidedeo lu, 1973; CHP, 2022; Gökberk, 1997). The opposition parties of the time were weak and infrequent.

The so-called republican period in the history of Türkiye can be divided into stages whose timelines are marked by important political events. The first stage covers the years 1923–1938/40, ending with Atatürk’s death in 1938. During this period, as a result of political, social and cultural reforms, there were fundamental changes in the nation’s life (Süslü, 2002).

Secularism has been enshrined in the constitution over a period of time in Turkey gradually. The Constitution of 1924 stated that “the religion of the Turkish Republic is Islam.” In 1928 however, Islam as the state religion was removed from the constitution. Finally in 1937 secularism as a constitutional principle was added to the constitution in 1937. (Küçükcan, 2011). In the new constitution adopted that year, Türkiye was proclaimed an entirely secular state (Öktem, 1972). Religious schools were closed and Sharia courts, or, courts based on Islamic law, were abolished, religious brotherhoods were dissolved, and their property confiscated. In lieu of Koranic law, new codes were introduced; that of the civil which abolished, *inter alia*, polygamy. New criminal and commercial laws based on Western models (namely, Swiss, Italian, and German) were also introduced. Women

were granted passive and active voting rights (1934) (Chmielowska, 2008). The metric system and the Gregorian calendar were officially adopted. There was even a clothing reform. In connection with the abolition of titles and the introduction of surnames in 1934, in place of the previous names and cognomina, the Turks chose their own surnames. Due to its central location, Ankara became the capital and began its transformation into a modern city (Kołodziejczyk, 2003). The government, striving to become independent from foreign capital, pursued a policy of economic statism. State monopolies (on matches, tobacco products, alcohol, and salt) were introduced and mines, railways, ports, power plants, etc., were being developed (Özgür, 1975). However, the country's dependence on foreign powers and capital persisted due to the lack of its own resources for the development of larger industry. The rural areas remained backward and suffered from a lack of investment. The position of Aghas (great landowners) was not affected, and the reforms covered a narrow strata of society. Among the villagers, craftsmen and small merchants, Muslim traditions were still alive and customary law was followed by the majority of the population. The disparity between full political rights granted to women and their actual situation was growing. Türkiye was also affected by the great economic crisis of 1929–1930. In 1935, the first five-year industrialisation plan was announced and the policy of statism enabled the foundations of Turkish industry to be created and foreign trade to be developed. Attempts were made to modernise the country in order to catch up with Western civilisation, but they also strived to create a cultural and artistic environment that would be loyal to Turkish nationalism, without rejecting the idea of Europeanisation. In the first period of the republic, which lasted sixteen years, the government was committed to the development of the country in all areas.

After Atatürk's death in 1938,¹ power was assumed by his former comrade-in-arms İsmet İnönü, who tried to continue the policies of his great predecessor (Inalcik, 2020; 2010).

Hard Times 1945–1950

Türkiye remained neutral for a long time during the Second World War, and declared war on Germany only in February 1945 (Seydi, 2006), but in April 1945, Türkiye attended the San Francisco conference as a founding member of the United Nations and committed itself to implementing democratic principles by signing the UN Charter. At the same time, problems

¹ In 1934, the Grand National Assembly granted him the title of Atatürk (Father of the Turks).

in relations with the Soviet Union arose, as the Turkish government became increasingly more engaged with Western policy, especially with the U.S. The years 1945–1950 were characterised by fundamental transformations of the political system, economic policy, and foreign relations. It was a period of democratic transition. In 1945, there was a split in the ruling Republican People's Party (Velidedeo lu, 1973), which resulted in the foundation of the Democratic Party in 1946 by a group of deputies (Karpas, 1959).² Referring to Atatürk's ideas, they promised material assistance to villagers, advocated for economic liberalism, and demanded that the policy of state capitalism be revised. They also saw the importance of Islam in the social life of the Turks. The party was chaired by former Prime Minister Celal Bayar, a close associate of Atatürk at one time. At the same time, several other parties, both right-wing and left-wing, including those socialist in leaning, were established. However, at the end of that year, the parties were dissolved, their dissolution occurring in the face of charges of spreading communist propaganda, with their leaders being arrested and brought to trial. Subsequently, parties that propagated the observance of the principles of Islam were established, parties which also shared the fate of the left-wing parties.

Democratic Transition: the Democratic Party Government 1950–1960

In 1950, the Democratic Party won the elections thanks to the support of the wealthy bourgeoisie and religious Muslims (Tunaya, 1952). Adnan Menderes became the Prime Minister, Celal Bayar was elected the President, and Ismet İnönü became the opposition leader. In lieu of a single-party system, a multi-party system began to function. The centre-right Democratic Party gained popularity owing to its programme of limiting state interference in economic affairs and attracting maximum private capital (domestic and foreign), as well as changing the attitude towards the Muslim religion. The ideas of democracy were, however, openly violated. Once Menderes assumed power, the practice of the summoning to prayer from mosques in Arabic – the language of the Koran – was restored, which had been prohibited since Atatürk times. The government also allocated significant funds to the building of mosques. Religious education was allowed in secular schools, the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University was established wherein the Koran was taught in Arabic. During this period, there was a liberalisation of the economy and a modest reduction

² In the elections of 1946, the CHP won 391 seats.

in state bureaucracy. The authorities became interested in the situation in the countryside, and electrification and road development began. The initial period of Menderes' government was marked by some economic recovery, triggered by an increase in U.S. aid. Investments, although chaotic, contributed to the reduction of unemployment.

In terms of foreign policy, the government further strengthened its orientation towards the West. In 1952, Türkiye joined NATO (Nitecka-Jagiello, 1981), and in 1955 signed the Baghdad Pact (later renamed CENTO) with Iran, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom to contain Soviet expansion towards the Indian Ocean. Within NATO, the Turkish army was the second (after America's) most powerful armed force (Poznańska, 1970). Menderes, despite his successes in foreign policy and an increase in national income, enjoyed little support among the Kemalist elite. From the mid-1950s, the economic situation deteriorated significantly. Ill-considered investments and government decisions led, *inter alia*, to overproduction and a decline in selling prices, which in turn resulted in a debt surge and budget deficit. The only people who strongly supported the government were rich villagers and landowners. The effects of this chaotic and pro-inflationary economic policy were, however, increasingly alarming. The Turkish currency became one of the most unstable in the world. Chaotic industrialisation failed to prevent further imports of industrial goods and other consumables, resulting in a constantly negative trade balance in the country and exacerbated inflation. The middle classes, which were economically the most disadvantaged, were particularly dissatisfied and began to support the opposition.

There were attempts to save the deteriorating economic situation with the support from the West in the form of loans (the so-called stabilisation loan), which temporarily stopped inflation and stabilised the currency. At the same time, the majority of citizens, even though not to the same extent, enjoyed the improvement of their economic situation under the Democratic Party as compared to the post-World War II years. It was particularly experienced by the villagers, who were almost entirely exempt from paying taxes by Prime Minister Menderes and benefitted from other favours as well. In the cities, capital gains grew faster than wages and salaries, and merchants and industrialists enjoyed their successes. Despite the improved situation in the rural areas, mass migration from the countryside to the cities began in those years. This time, the Anatolian villages were not only abandoned for seasonal work, but the residents moved to cities and towns on a permanent basis. Unfortunately, only a small percentage were able to find employment there. In terms of infrastructure, cities were not prepared for the constant influx of such a large number of new inhabitants. Slums,

the so-called *gecekond* (houses built overnight) began to be erected in the outskirts. At the end of the 1950s, the budget deficit amounted to half a billion Turkish pounds. In 1959, the U.S. declared that Türkiye would not receive new loans, and the majority of Turkish society began to publicly oppose Menderes' government. The ruling elite was accused of generating economic instability, a repressive policy, and blamed for the high costs of living. The Democratic Party's response was the purge of journalists, officials, and scientists. The popularity of İsmet İnönü and his Republican People's Party (Nitecka-Jagiełło, 1981) inevitably grew. Adnan Menderes and the Democratic Party's ten years of ruling failed to bring expected peace and stability. It was, in fact, to the contrary; it tightened the police system even more.³ However, in the opinion of experts, the democratisation of the country during Menderes' 10-year rule certainly outweighed authoritarian tendencies. In fact, the military used the abovementioned argument to intervene in the democratic system. The military aimed at re-establishing its tutelage over the country as they perceived themselves as "the guardian of the state".

The Second Turkish Republic 1960–1980

In May of 1960, the Turkish army executed the first coup. A group of military men overthrew Menderes' government, and sentenced him and his closest associates to death by hanging. This was the beginning of the next stage in Turkish history, which lasted until 1980 and a subsequent military coup (Nitecka-Jagiełło, 1981). As a result of the coup, the National Unity Committee assumed power, headed by General Cemal Gürsel. Among the members of the Committee, Colonel Alpaşlan Türkeş turned out to be extremely influential, representing the most radical wing demanding a comprehensive reform of the political system. In December 1960, the incumbent National Unity Committee was dissolved, which was a sign that the authorities were returning to parliamentary democracy. The ban on political activity was lifted and new political parties were allowed to register and take part in elections. Eleven new parties applied (besides the long-established Republican People's Party and the Republican Villagers Nation Party). One of the crucial new parties was the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi),⁴ whose main objective was the full vindication of dismissed

³ On 31st August 1960, the activities of the Democratic Party were suspended, and on 29th November of that year, it was dissolved.

⁴ The actual electoral base of the Democratic Party were large cities, while the Justice Party was predominantly supported by affluent people from rural areas and smaller provincial towns.

officers and arrested Democrats. It was considered a continuation of the Democratic Party.

To revive the economy, the so-called State Planning Organization was founded in Ankara, which designed a 15-year development plan, spread over three, five-year plans. The military promptly handed over power to civilians and, in 1961, parliamentary elections took place. Following the elections, a coalition government of the Republican People's Party and the Justice Party was created, led by İsmet İnönü with the participation of smaller parties and independent members. İnönü was unable to implement the previously announced reforms. In 1961, however, a draft of a new constitution was passed that was more liberal than its predecessor from 1924 and allowed for a wide spectrum of political activity, both left and right.⁵ The main goal was to prevent a monopolisation of power and so, due to this, a second house was introduced – the Senate (*senato*), and all legislation had to be passed through both houses. The Senate was to be an elected body, with the exception of a group of senators appointed by the president. An independent Constitutional Court was also established. The judiciary, public media and universities were granted complete autonomy and a full range of civil liberties were incorporated.⁶ There are also other comments that the 1961 constitution justified a military coup and the closure of the Democratic Party. The role of the army was established by creating the National Security Council, which was the strongest obstacle for the democratisation of the country until the AK Party re-organised civil/military relations.

The strictly secular, or even anti-Islamic, policy from prior to 1945 was not reinstated, but the constitution prohibited the use of religious slogans for political purposes. It was not possible to change the structure of state-owned industries, state monopolies were not affected, and crafts continued to play an important role. Türkiye's economic development was dependent on the world market. Agriculture was characterised by great disproportions, the most developed agricultural lands were to be found on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, while the most economically primitive region was Eastern Anatolia. Low productivity, insufficiently irrigated lands, deficient fertiliser and equipment supplies, soil erosion, and population growth necessitated food import.

⁵ The first party to enjoy the support of young intellectuals throughout the 1960s was the Workers' Party of Türkiye, founded in February 1961.

⁶ The New Turkey Party, which can be considered a continuation of the Liberty Party, founded by dissidents of the Democratic Party in 1955, received approximately 14% of the votes. 13.4% voted for the conservative Republican Villagers Nation Party. In total, the parties considered the successors of the Democrats remained the greatest political force in the country.

The government undertook the implementation of a project from as early as the 1930s in the form of the development of Southeastern Anatolia (GAP, Güney-Doğu Anadolu Projesi), incorporating the development of an agricultural and industrial base in the region, the construction of 22 dams and 19 hydropower plants on the Euphrates and the Tigris, as well as an increase in industrial production and employment growth. It was, however, unable to resolve any of the pressing challenges and to carry out the necessary reforms. Social tension grew and ideological disputes intensified on an unprecedented scale. Previously-banned trade unions began to be revived. Both the workers and the intelligentsia became radicalised. In the 1960s, mass migrations from villages to cities intensified, and large cities were surrounded by slums.

The social distrust in the new government generated an economic slowdown and paralysed private investment. In 1962, Türkiye's national income amounted to 18 dollars *per capita*, which classified it amongst developing countries. What is more, the extreme Muslim movement was reactivated which was perceived as an attack on the state's secularity.

1965's parliamentary elections were won by the Justice Party, and its chairman, Süleyman Demirel, became the Prime Minister. The President in the years 1966–1973 was Chief of Staff Cevdet Sunay. The main challenge the head of government had to face was to maintain unity within his cabinet and the party since the electorate of the Justice Party were industrialists, merchants, craftsmen, villagers, landlords, religious reactionaries, and liberals – in the ideological dimension, they had very little in common.

The second half of the 1960s was a period of economic recovery in Türkiye. Economic growth surged and real incomes were almost constantly rising. One of Demirel's most significant accomplishments was to convince the army that the country could be ruled by civilians who were the successors to the Democrat Party overthrown by the military just five years earlier (Zürcher, 1993). At the same time, the government was constantly battling left-wing organisations and their representatives, and in 1966/1967 an attempt was made to purge schools and universities in order to remove leftist teachers. Demirel focused on the development of the private and state sectors, and received loans from the OECD – 175 million dollars and 200 million marks from the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. What actually truly helped the Turkish economy, was the former agreement on the mass shipment of Turkish workers to Germany, signed in 1963. The Turkish economic crisis coincided with the economic boom in the Federal Republic which, for an overpopulated Türkiye plagued by unemployment, was an enormous help. Every Turkish

person with a passport, a medical certificate and a contract for employment in any establishment could go to Germany for an indefinite period of time. They earned money themselves and, thanks to foreign remittances, they contributed to the reduction of the country's debt.

In 1964, the foregoing agreement entered into force known as the Ankara Agreement, allowing the free movement and settlement of Turkish people in EEC countries. Not long thereafter, there was an uncontrolled influx of guest workers to Western Europe, the majority of whom were staying illegally, without a work permit. In 1964, there were 10,000 Turkish workers in West Germany, a number which had risen to 133,000 by 1965, and to 600,000 by the end of the 1960s.

In 1969, the Justice Party won the parliamentary elections again and Demirel formed another government. However, the unresolved economic crisis led to violent demonstrations and strikes involving workers and students. They demanded higher wages, jobs for the unemployed, better social welfare, social reforms, the closing of the U.S. bases, and a peace-based foreign policy. The repressions against demonstrators only exacerbated the waves of anti-government demonstrations and terrorist attacks.

Due to a serious internal crisis in 1971, the military forced Süleyman Demirel to resign. Disputes among numerous parties resulted in frequent changes of government. The balance of power was disturbed, and the influence of the private sector over politicians was more profound. Short-term "nonpartisan governments of experts" were established. The country was still in disarray, with leftist terrorism and demonstrations brutally suppressed by the authorities with the support of the police and the military. A state of emergency was introduced in eleven provinces. In 1972, Amnesty International published a report on the torture of political prisoners. In 1973, retired Admiral Fahri Korutürk was elected president, and the Republican People's Party won the election, which formed a coalition government with the National Salvation Party, a conservative party inspired by Islamic values and ethics. This government, among others, granted amnesty to political prisoners.

The Constitutional Court repealed the laws of 1971 prohibiting rallies, mass gatherings, and demonstrations. The ban on opium poppy cultivation, imposed by the U.S. government, was also lifted. A new Law on Land and Agricultural Reform was passed, but nevertheless, the population in cities doubled. Mass layoffs and the return of Turkish workers from abroad contributed to a rise in unemployment. The position of the incumbent Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit was strengthened by the decision to invade Cyprus in 1974 in response to a coup by the Cypriot National

Guard. Following the dissolution of the coalition due to the dispute over the invasion of Cyprus, Ecevit resigned. In 1978, following subsequent two elections and three cabinet changes, Bülent Ecevit formed a coalition government, but despite the successes in the international arena, the internal situation remained complex. Terrorist acts continued, especially in eastern Türkiye, and the opposition insisted on the government implementing a state of emergency. In September 1978, religious conflicts turned into an open war between Sunni and Alevis. In December 1978, another wave of terror began with a series of murders in Kahramanmaraş. Within a week, a hundred people were killed and hundreds more were injured. In order to pacify the situation, the government introduced a state of emergency in thirteen provinces.

The economic situation deteriorated. The country was engulfed in strikes, workplaces were closed, and employment was reduced. A black market emerged, and a grey economy replaced the traditional Turkish private sector. The financial support that was expected from Western countries came with a year's delay and was subject to multiple conditions. The International Monetary Fund granted a loan, and OECD countries granted Türkiye a loan of 1.5 billion dollars, but, despite this, public opinion was that Ecevit did not know how to use the aid. The government began to gradually lose control over the situation in the country. The opposition, especially the one centered around Süleyman Demirel, waged an anti-government campaign. Türkiye was yet again hit by a wave of terror that could not be stopped by the police nor the country's security services. The reason behind this was corruption in their internal structures as well as the fragmentation of left-wing political parties, which obstructed effective surveillance. It was assumed that 70% of the terrorist attacks were organised by left-wing youth groups financed by the USSR, and 30% by far-right groups linked to the Grey Wolves – the youth faction of the nationalist National Movement Party of Türkiye.

The economic situation was also compounded by an energy crisis, caused by a global surge in oil prices in the years 1973–1974. Western Europe was also hit by a recession, which resulted in a decline in the demand for Turkish goods and guest workers. Besides the significant reduction in foreign currency revenue to the Turkish state budget, there was a risk of a large-scale return of Turkish workers from the West. Türkiye was committed to enabling their citizens to work abroad, but the EEC rejected its requests to increase the quota of Turkish workers and to grant them the same rights as those enjoyed by immigrants from other Mediterranean countries. Reluctant to implement actions recommended by World Bank and OECD experts, Türkiye decided to take further loans

and print worthless money, which led to 90% annual inflation. Terror, the rise of Kurdish separatism, and the activities of ultra-right youth groups intensified on an unprecedented scale. This aggravated anarchy was disconcerting for the army.

The army command was afraid that terrorist attacks would disseminate in the east of the country, which could turn into an armed Kurdish uprising, and therefore, at the end of 1978, a project for armed internal intervention was created under the name Operation Bayrak (Flag).

In 1979, hundreds of factories and companies were sold for next to nothing, and their owners with families fled the country. The buyers of these enterprises often became millionaires not long thereafter. The National Security Council extended the state of emergency to six more provinces. In the by-elections to parliament in 1979, the Republicans lost their majority, prompting Süleyman Demirel to form a minority government. Following another wave of terror, which again caused dozens of casualties, Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren handed President Korutürk a letter in which he indicated the army's readiness to intervene should political forces fail to take control of the situation in the country. The threat from right-wing extremist terrorist groups grew, unemployment rose, and inflation skyrocketed which triggered another coup in 1980. The military, yet again, assumed power.

The Third Republic

Following the military coup, the civilian government was abolished, the parliament was dissolved, and parties and trade unions were prohibited from any political activity (Parla, 1993). General Evren officially became the head of state, and the National Security Council became the highest authority in Türkiye, and was comprised of the Chief of Staff and commanders of the land forces, the naval forces, the air force, and the military police. Within three years, the military government brought peace to the country and eradicated terror, except in eastern Anatolia, where Kurdish guerrillas remained active. In a draft of the new constitution in 1982, the powers of the president and the National Security Council were expanded, whereas the freedoms of the press and trade unions as well as civil rights and liberties were limited. In a mandatory referendum, 91.4% of citizens expressed their support for the new constitution. Following the adoption of the constitution and the establishing of Evren's position as president, the next stage in the reconstruction of political life in Türkiye began. In the summer of 1983, a decision was made to transfer power to civilians by holding general elections.

Only three new parties were allowed to take part: the Nationalist Democracy Party, the People's Party, and the Motherland Party (ANAP) with Turgut Özal. The Motherland Party won the elections, taking 45% of the votes. These elections were to answer a fundamental question regarding the kind of economic system the country would choose (Turkuia Basin-Yayin, 1983). Would it be statism, the foundations of which were laid by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1930s and which was supported by the military, the members of the Nationalist Democracy Party, and the Kemalists? Or would there be a neoliberal system, the greatest proponent of which was Turgut Özal – the country's chief economist? After the elections, he became the Prime Minister and, in the 1980s, he played the most significant role in shaping the country's policy. Following a military coup, Özal was invited to form a government of experts as a deputy minister with extraordinary powers in the economy, and then he began the first reforms to liberalise the financial sector, consisting in suppressing inflation through a remuneration freeze and a policy of high interest rates. He was backed by the army, which was ready to suppress any resistance. Özal was a politician, but above all he was an economist who tried to lead Türkiye out of economic depression. He forwent statism combined with the privatisation and decentralisation of the economy, and he also liberalised trade and introduced lower taxes. During his government, the telephone network and roads were developed, and electricity was brought to the provinces which significantly increased the citizens' standards of living. Nevertheless, significant disparities between the regions of the country persisted, especially between the provinces and the Mediterranean and Aegean cities that were experiencing a tourism boom at the time. Unemployment remained high. Turgut Özal's rule generally had a positive effect on the economic situation in Türkiye. The army's level of participation in political life was declining, basically being limited to interventions in the event of any violations of the principles outlined by Atatürk. As a result, democracy developed, compulsory religion classes in schools were restored, the banking system developed and further integration with European structures continued, which culminated in Türkiye's application for accession to the EEC in 1987. Türkiye, in line with its pro-Western foreign and economic policy, tried to apply for full membership in the European Union for years.

In 1991, the government introduced constitutional changes to human rights as well as the political system, including increasing the number of deputies in the National Assembly and lowering the voting age to 18 years of age. At the request of the government, the Assembly allowed for the use of the Kurdish language in private and approved the removal of articles

prohibiting class or religious politics from the Criminal Code. These restrictions, however, were maintained under the constitution.

Terrorist acts committed for political purposes were considered a crime. The new Anti-Terror Law that was introduced at that time nevertheless defined the concept of terrorism very broadly. In the following years, a significant number of lawyers, activists of international organisations, journalists, and writers could successfully be prosecuted and judged on its basis (Gevgilili, 1990; Turkish News Agency 2000).

The parliamentary elections in 1991 were won by Sülejman Demirel's party, the True Path Party, in second place was the Motherland Party, and the Social Democratic People's Party recorded a disappointing outcome. The Welfare Party (Refah) achieved its best result, but it was the result of a tactical alliance with the ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party of Alparslan Türkeş.⁷ Demirel formed a coalition government with the Democrats.

Prior to the elections, both opposition leaders declared that if they won, they would indict President Turgut Özal, but the president remained in office after the election. The relations between the president and the government were, however, strained from the outset, since the parties that supported the government were united in the common goal of disposing of the legacy of the 1980s, which the president epitomised. After June 1996, Türkiye was ruled by a two-party coalition with Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (the Welfare Party) and Tansu Çiller (the True Path Party), who was both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister.

The new, liberal government programme promised constitutional changes, more academic freedom, the freedom of the press, democratisation, and respect for human rights. To begin with, the infamous Eskişehir prison was closed, but the liberalisation reform package was stopped by the right wing of the True Path Party, and the government was forced to put the reforms on hold. The number of fatalities in a series of political murders by the Revolutionary Left urban guerrilla movement reached ten per month after 1989. The victims were usually judges, policemen, and retired government officials involved in intelligence work or the drafting of martial law. The Kurdish uprising (organised by the PKK, recognised as a terrorist organisation in Turkey) in the South-east escalated rapidly as the economy continued to weaken and inflation soared. Moreover, the government was plagued by President Özal's continued interference and filibustering.

⁷ In the years 1983–1993 the Nationalist Movement Party operated under the name 'The Nationalist Task Party'.

The early 1990s were marked by increased activity in new party formation. There was a split in the Nationalist Action Party – a group closely associated with the ideas of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis⁸ formed the Great Unity Party (Chmielowska, 2018).

A split also occurred in the Social Democratic Populist Party when Deniz Baykal, after an unsuccessful overthrowing of the leader Erdal İnönü, recreated the Republican People's Party. Some veterans of Menderes' Democratic Party joined forces and, 32 years after its ban, formed their own party, while Menderes' son, Aydın Menderes, founded his own Great Change Party. The unexpected death of President Turgut Özal in 1993 due to a heart attack turned out to be more of a shock than the division of the political scene. Despite the resentment towards him and the turmoil and conflicts related to his presidential term of office, public opinion felt that a man of great significance to modern Turkish history had passed away. Many considered him the second greatest reformer of the state after Atatürk.

A month after Özal's death, Süleyman Demirel became the ninth president of the Republic of Türkiye. Tansu Çiller, a female professor of economics and the Minister of Economy in Demirel's government, won the election to become the next party leader. Her appointment as Prime Minister provided a modern image for both the party and the country. Together with Yılmaz's takeover of the Motherland Party, it seemed to herald a change in political leadership dominated by figures such as Demirel, Ecevit, Erbakan, and Türkeş. Although Çiller entered a most grand political scene under Demirel's tutelage, her agenda was more aligned with Özal's (she was very pro-American and supported the free market). She wanted to transform Türkiye into a modern state, but her lack of negotiating and mediation skills led to early elections not long after. Also, in the coalition party of Social Democratic People's Party, Erdal İnönü left politics and was replaced by Murat Karayalçın, the former mayor of Ankara, who became Deputy Prime Minister, but not a member of parliament.

The Tansu Çiller government was dominated by three issues: the economy, the Kurdish question and the problem of the observance of human rights related thereto, as well as relations with the European Union. The greatest challenge for the coalition government came from the Welfare Party (Refah), which was revealed during municipal elections in March

⁸ The ideological system developed by the main ideologist of the Intellectual's Hearth (Aydınlar Ocağı) and its chairman, İbrahim Kafeso lu, was called "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis". The basic tenet of this ideological system was that Islam is particularly attractive to Turks because of the number of similarities between their pre-Muslim culture and the Islam civilisation.

1994. The true winner was Erbakan's Welfare Party, whose support almost doubled. They owed their success to great organisation, the mass character of the party, as well as to its message, contained in the slogan: "adil düzen" – "Just Order". It was victorious in fifteen of the largest cities in Türkiye, including Ankara and Istanbul. The generals were wrong, it was not the Welfare Party that Islamised Türkiye, it was Islam that had been present for centuries which led to the creation of such a party.

Erbakan claimed that a return to the roots of Islam would bring prosperity. He was an engineer, educated in Germany, where he had worked in the arms industry. After returning to Türkiye, he became a professor of technical sciences. He did not have a proper religious education, nor was he an expert on Muslim law. In the mid-1990s, the Welfare Party functioned more as a social welfare agency than as a political party. It gained the support of not only small entrepreneurs, but also the urban poor. The party was supported by trade unions, chambers of commerce, women's and youth associations, and was also supported by 50 publishing houses, 45 radio stations, and 19 TV channels. The Welfare Party clearly created the environment for a corporate system within a pluralist democracy.

Secular intelligentsia, who also hailed from big cities, were concerned about the victory of the Welfare Party in metropolitan areas. The activists of the Welfare Party wanted to change the formula of secularism functioning in Türkiye. They demanded a constitutional provision that would guarantee the right of an individual to live in accordance with professed religious principles. Erbakan was a realist, however, and for the first time as the Prime Minister, he supported an association with the European Union. This strategy laid the foundations for the cooperation of moderate Islamists with moderate proponents of a secular state. His party recognised one of the fundamental canons of the secular state – the prohibition of Sharia (Islamic law), stating that pluralism and democracy preclude its enforced imposition. The Welfare Party's mission was to form a government with great diplomatic tact and negotiation skills. Although it rejected Koranic law, its programme contained a classic set of Islamic values: the rejection of socialism and capitalism, the condemnation of dependence on the West, the promotion of social justice, cooperation with other Muslim countries, along with concern about the development of the domestic economy. Charity programmes were extended: schools and hospitals were established and cooperatives were founded.

The centre-left, which was traditionally supported by the Alevi community, was defeated due to internal divisions and personal animosities of the party leaders. However, after the election disaster, the parties reunited in 1995 under the name of the Republican People's Party and Hikmet

Çetin, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, became its leader. The Democratic Left Party remained under Bülent Ecevit's leadership. The elected coalition government was extremely weak, and, at the same time, the European Union clearly made the conclusion of the Customs Union agreement dependent upon Türkiye's implementation of democratisation changes.

In 1955, the National Assembly eventually passed the package of amendments by a mandatory majority of two-thirds of the votes. They provided organisations and trade unions with the right to engage in politics, allowed civil servants to join trade unions, and also allowed parties to form youth and women's sections within party structures. The voting age was lowered from 21 to 18. The changes were, in fact, a compromise and did not affect the people that were in power during the period of military rule. The detested Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Act also remained in force.

In the elections in December 1995, the Welfare Party gained support and became the largest party in the parliament, so much so that no stable government could be formed without the Islamists. In the new coalition government, Erbakan would be Prime Minister for the first two years, only to resign from the post in favour of Çiller. Even pro-Western business circles recognised that a stable government is more important than a secular government. The army, although concerned, showed no willingness to intervene. It came as a surprise to the Western world that a secular state was governed by an Islamist not long after concluding the Customs Union with Western countries, which was supposed to prevent it. However, a wait-and-see attitude was adopted.

In the first months, the new government tried to avoid confrontation and refrained from using Islamic rhetoric. Six months later, the coalition seemed quite strong and stable. It was tolerated more than supported by the business community, although it was still criticised by the military and heavily attacked by the mass media. The support for Erbakan's policy grew nevertheless. Just before 1997, relations between the government and the army began to deteriorate rapidly. National Security Council presented the government with a long list of demands aimed at limiting the influence of Islamists on the economy, education, and the internal state administration. The most spectacular postulate was the introduction of a compulsory eight-year education in primary state schools, with the aim of eradicating religious schools, schools which were immensely popular among the poorest society members since they offered a free-of-charge and relatively-safe education in the eyes of conservative Muslims. Graduates could continue their education up to university level and gain

employment in religious institutions, but in fact they often worked in government bodies, so in the eyes of the military and secular circles they posed a threat to the secular nature of the state.

Six weeks later, army officials presented their demands as an ultimatum and an almost open war broke out between the Welfare Party and the army. Erbakan survived a vote of no confidence, but the army continued to mobilise further groups, such as trade unions and employers' unions, groups in favour of secularism and being against the government. 161 officers were dismissed on suspicion of promoting Islamisation. Under military pressure, Erbakan resigned in 1997. President Demirel, to the discontent of both former coalition partners, entrusted Mesut Yılmaz with the task of forming a government. Under tremendous pressure from the military, he created a coalition comprising the Motherland Party (ANAP), Ecevit's Democratic Left Party and the Democrat Türkiye Party of Hüsamettin Cindoruk, a group of Demirel's allies who left the True Path Party. The army thus succeeded in carrying out the first post-modern coup.

The main task of the new government was to implement reforms demanded by the army. In January 1998, the Constitutional Court banned the Welfare Party and even Erbakan himself from the political scene for five years, which was subsequently changed into a lifetime prohibition on participating in political life. In February, a case was brought against the Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He was accused of inciting religious hatred and sentenced to ten months in prison. A case was also brought against MÜSIAD – the largest Muslim business association. In the meantime, the Islamists reorganised themselves. In 1998, 41 former deputies founded the Virtue Party, and, after having been joined by the majority of colleagues from the Welfare Party, it became the largest parliamentary group. Yılmaz's cabinet navigated between the pressure from the military and attempts to save the economy. In 1997, inflation was the highest since the foundation of the Republic and additionally, in 1998, Türkiye was hit hard by the Russian financial crisis. The government saw a lifeline in urgent privatisation, which eventually gave rise to a corruption scandal involving Prime Minister Yılmaz, who was forced to resign in 1998, and new elections were scheduled. Since it was supposed to be the first election since the 1997 coup, there was fear of an Islamic coup. Geographically, there were clear-cut divisions; the developed west voted for Ecevit's Democratic Left Party, Central Anatolia voted for the nationalist National Movement Party, and the Virtue Party won the backward East. This election result was most likely affected by the sensational detention of the Kurdish leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, which strengthened Ecevit's position. Ecevit's popularity and

generally-recognised integrity, especially when contrasted with the corruption scandals associated with Yılmaz and Çiller, led to the success of the Democratic Left Party. The government formed following the elections was a coalition of the democratic left, nationalists, and ANAP under the leadership of 70-year-old Bülent Ecevit. It may come as a surprise that the far-right and the democratic left established a coalition, but, in reality, the parties shared similar ideological foundations – they were united by nationalism and their belief in a strong state.

The new government was supposed to save the Turkish economy. It undertook to tighten fiscal policy and privatisation in return for loans from the IMF. It was so busy negotiating the terms that when, in the morning of August 1999, a massive earthquake (7.4 on the Richter scale) hit the Gulf of Izmit area east of Istanbul, the government was unable to react quickly or effectively. The destruction was enormous, and, officially, the earthquake claimed 15,000 lives, but the unofficial number was more likely twice as high. In the initial days after the disaster, the state and the government seemed to be in a state of paralysis; no rescue operations were organised during the crucial first twenty-four hours after the quake. The military tackled their own losses, but there was no aid provided to civilians. Dozens of countries, including Greece and Israel, offered help and dispatched specialist teams and medical assistance, but their efforts were met with little cooperation on the Turkish side. Supplies of medications and dressings were seized at the border, and Osman Durmuş, the ultra-nationalist Minister of Health, tried to block foreign aid on the grounds that the Turks did not need foreign blood. The clear disgrace of the government authorities angered the public. The army was also severely criticised, which was unusual for Türkiye. While the government struggled with an economic crisis and the human and material losses in the aftermath of the earthquake, the Kemalists fought for their return to power. The Islamist Virtue Party was accused in court of being a direct continuation of the Welfare Party and, in June 2001, the Constitutional Court ruled on its dissolution. Its supporters split up and formed two parties: the moderate Justice and Development Party of Abdullah Gül and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Islamist Felicity Party. In 2000, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the president of the Constitutional Court, became the tenth president of Türkiye. He enjoyed the prestige, but had no political foundations. He was also critical of the government and wanted to act independently. In 2001, the President confronted the Prime Minister with evidence of corruption in government circles and accused him of covering it up for political reasons. This conflict caused a great economic crisis as investors lost confidence in the stability of the

government that signed the agreement with the IMF. Between 2001 and 2002, the government was fully focused on efforts to keep the economy and the financial crisis under control. This task was significantly facilitated by the influence of Kemal Derviş, the Turkish director of the World Bank. He acted effectively, contributing to the stability of the state, but the ruling coalition's credibility in the eyes of Turkish society was forever lost (Ortaylı, 2007; 2010; 2015; 2018).

Conclusions

Almost 100 years have passed since the events related to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, whereupon the Turkish people became a European society, aware of their rights and obligations. The transition from the single-party regime to the multi-party period (1949) allowed for democracy to be consolidated. Turkey's participation in strictly European and international political and military organisations was of vital significance and turned the country into an extremely important state. Its failed efforts to join the EEC, and, subsequently, the European Union, resulted in Turkey abandoning its interest in this form of cooperation (1997). The socio-political transformations that took place in the 20th century, highlighted in this article, characterise this dynamically changing period. The historical facts presented in the article emphasise the evolution of the views of Turkish society that was clearly marked in the second half of the 20th century, which led to serious changes in the mindsets of the Turkish people and completely altered the image of the country post-2002, allowing the newly established Justice and Development Party (2002) to take the reins of power in the country.

In the end, it was not the economic or financial crisis that brought down Ecevit's government, but the Prime Minister's conduct. It was suggested that he was physically weak and oftentimes emotionally unstable. The parliamentary elections in 2002 brought spectacular results. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party enjoyed a landslide victory and won an absolute majority in the National Assembly. Only Deniz Baykal's Republican People's Party managed to win seats in the Assembly. Ecevit's support, however, plummeted by 95%. The parties in the ruling coalition were blamed for the collapse of the financial system. What is more, the so-called liquid electorate was revealed, and traditional party loyalty seemed to be disappearing. Voters were ready to vote for anyone who brought hope, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan turned out to be that person. Not only was he a charismatic leader with working-class roots, but he was also a popular mayor of a metropolis he ruled over in 1994–1998. Although

in 2002 he was outside the system of power, he gained credibility as an efficient administrator. The Turks voted for him because they believed that he could end yoksulluk – poverty, and yolsuzluk – corruption, and not because they wanted an Islamic state. The defeat of the true Islamists of the Felicity Party (Saadet) in the city of Konya is proof of that. Furthermore, most Turks did not see the contradiction between nationalism and Islam, and they considered Kemal Atatürk to be the greatest figure in the history of mankind and still holds a leading place in hearts and minds, even before Muhammad, perhaps because he made secularism a true religion.

Summarising the extremely-dynamic and politically-difficult 1990s, Türkiye was undoubtedly a unique country on a global scale in terms of politics and religion. Balancing between secularism, democratic political structures, and a strong Islamic influence, Türkiye presented itself as a state with an incomplete, unconsolidated electoral democracy. A characteristic feature of this system was the political importance of the extensive apparatus of coercion (army, secret services), as well as religious associations and bureaucracy operating alongside constitutional bodies. The informal, high position of Islam, fought by the army in the name of the constitutional principle of secularism, was acknowledged. The level of advancement of democratic change in this insufficiently institutionalised, pluralist-civic democracy showed a tendency to resort to force in order to deal with political crises and unresolved ethnic conflicts (such as the overblown Kurdish conflict) and the continued political immobilism. Türkiye was characterised by conflict within the governing elite that destabilised the entire system. Therefore, it is worth emphasising that Türkiye was classified in the same group as the majority of Latin American countries, India, and the larger part of post-communist countries.

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