

Single party era of the 1924 Constitution: democracy, autocracy & beyond

di Nilay Arat

Abstract: *L'era del partito unico nella Costituzione del 1924: democrazia, autocrazia, e oltre* - The 1924 Constitution is the first Constitution of the Republic of Turkey that was adopted under ordinary conditions. It comes after big steps forward as reforms, such as the abolition of the sultanate and caliphate, took place in 1923. And above all the Independence War had been won. Under such an environment, the 1924 Constitution was adopted by the second parliament which was not a constituent assembly. As for the form of government, a parliamentary government system was adopted. Under such a scheme, till 1946 a single party ruled as the government, which leads us to discussions of the issues on democracy of the single-party era of the young Republic.

This study analyses the origins of the single-party regime established at the beginning of the Turkish republican period under the 1924 Constitution and highlights the authoritarian features of this text, such as the majoritarian (not pluralistic) conception of democracy and the lack of solid guarantees for the functioning of the democratic order.

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1. Introduction

The 1924 Constitution, which is significant in terms of reinforcing the regime established in 1920, is the constitution of a period when the efforts to transition to full democracy started, as a matter of fact, it was implemented during both the single-party and multi-party periods¹. The one-party republic was not a feature of the 1924 Constitution. In the period of the 1924 Constitution, the continuation of the political life as one-party or multi-party was related to the developments in the social life and the attitudes of the political leaders. This constitution, which is based on the principles of the republic, nationalism and the unity of powers, had also assumed a secular character in the ongoing years and had brought the revolutionary feature to the fore.² While the 1924 Constitution represented the individualist and libertarian legal and political ideology that had

¹ Ahmet Mumcu, *1924 Anayasası*, in 2(5) *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* (1986), 383-400, 384.

² Mumcu, 389 ff. However, as Mumcu stated, the fact that the Constitution, which adopted the principles of personal freedoms, equality before the law and national sovereignty, did not give women the right to vote and be elected until 1934 - despite the discussions - cast a shadow over its revolutionary character.

developed since the 1789 French Revolution, it was inspired by the basic principles of the previous 1921 Constitution such as “national sovereignty”, “parliamentary supremacy”, “unity of forces” and “single parliament”.

The 1924 Constitution, which was based on parliamentary supremacy, was actually implemented under the rule of political parties led by powerful leaders. In this context, the legislative body’s means of controlling the executive body, which was expressed in the constitution, were not “a right freely and democratically exercised”.³ In fact, the 1924 Constitution, which seemed to have drawn a favourable framework for a pluralistic order, remained a constitution on paper throughout the single-party period, especially since 1927, as it had been claimed that the statutes and programs of the CHP, which revealed the chieftdom system that was not included in the 1924 Constitution, increased the powers of the chiefs and narrowed the powers of the deputies, who were the elements of the parliament, and that the said statutes and programs became the constitutions of the period.⁴

2. Democratisation and 1924 Constitution: The will power behind and the functioning beyond (Majoritarianism)

The 1924 Constitution-making process, which was prepared by the 2nd Grand National Assembly of Turkey that did not constitute a constituent assembly and came to power with the 1923 elections, included non-democratic elements, and the understanding of democracy that it put forward was majoritarian rather than pluralistic.

The 1923 elections that formed the 2nd Assembly, which prepared the 1924 Constitution, emerged as a process far from realizing democracy due to the facts that the election process was not competitive (only one party in the elections) and it was held among the candidates nominated by CHP whose opposition elements had been removed before, held as a two-stage election, and the fact that the electorate consists of only male citizens, contrary to the principle of universal suffrage.⁵ This phenomenon has been described as witnessing the parliamentary elections, where the first serious “exclusion operation” of the ruling wing of the “broad-based political elite coalition” formed at the beginning of the national struggle, and the birth of the People’s Party.⁶

The essence of the 1924 Constitution was political democracy. Although the ideology of populism, which was the reflection of the War of Independence in the form of the preference for national sovereignty with the 1921 Constitution, and the steps towards democratization regarding the right to vote during the times of the 1924 Constitution (abolishing the tax payment requirement in order to become a voter or deputy, and granting

³ Mumcu, 397.

⁴ Ahmet Demirel, *Tek Partinin İktidarı – Türkiye’de Seçimler ve Siyaset (1923-1946)*, İletişim Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2013, 70.

⁵ Serap Yazıcıoğlu, *Yeni Bir Anayasa Hazırlığı ve Türkiye – Seçkincilikten Toplum Sözleşmesine*, 3. *Genişletilmiş Bası*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2016, 16-17.

⁶ Esat Öz, *Otoriterizm ve Siyaset – Türkiye’de Tek Parti Rejimi ve Siyasal Katılma (1923-1945)*, Yetkin Yayınları, Ankara 1996, 47.

women the right to vote and be elected)⁷ gave a suitable floor for the realization of multi-partyism, in practice it was not realized.

The 1924 Constitution does not contain many provisions that guarantee the functioning of the democratic order. In this context, despite the fact that the constitution recognizes freedoms, it is striking that there is no specification on the restriction regimes imposed on the legislator. Article 68 of the Constitution lays down that “the only limitations to liberty – which is one of the natural rights of all – are those imposed in the interest of the rights and liberties of others. Such limitations on personal liberty shall be defined only in strict accordance with the law.” This resulted in encountering major problems in realizing and securing rights and freedoms such as the ruling party putting pressure on the courts and establishing the Assembly Investigation Commission with the power to investigate, sometimes even superior power than courts such as broadcast bans and bans on meetings, and with no review mechanism.⁸

The supremacy of the Constitution was guaranteed under the article 103 that stipulates “None of the provisions of this Constitution may be arbitrarily modified on any pretext; neither may the enforcement of any provision be suspended”, however there is no provision to guarantee such. Besides, there is no judicial body for constitutional review, the only guarantee of freedoms within the scope of the 1924 Constitution was the parliament.⁹ The fact that the judicial review of the by-laws was given to the parliament, not the courts, brought up the debate that the judicial review of the constitutional review could not have been accepted.¹⁰ Under this scheme, the courts did not find themselves equipped with the authority to exercise constitutional review¹¹, besides even the Supreme Court of Appeals (Court de Cassation) has a jurisprudence¹² stating that judges are not authorized to examine the unconstitutionality of a law, and cannot avoid applying it by arguing unconstitutionality. Thus, an organ to supervise the assembly was not foreseen in the system. The way adopted in this framework, in which the constitutionality review by the judiciary was not accepted, was the Assembly’s self-audit, that is, a political inspection by the Assembly’s authorized committees and the general assembly. This fragment is explained by the national sovereignty understanding of those times as it could not have been expected that the assembly, acting on behalf of the nation, be audited by the judiciary as regards for the rules it enacted on behalf of the nation.¹³

⁷ Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 28. Baskı, İstanbul 2017, 315.

⁸ Fevzi Demir, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Anayasaları ve Hükümet Sistemleri*, Prof. Dr. Seyfullah Edis’e Armağan, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Yayını, İzmir, 2000, 63.

⁹ Erdoğan Teziç, *Anayasa Hukuku*, Beta, İstanbul 2009, 102.

¹⁰ Tanör, 320.

¹¹ Tanör, 312. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Siyasal Kurumlar ve Anayasa Hukuku*, İÜHF Yayınları, İstanbul 1980, 152.

¹² See Turan Feyzioğlu, *Kanunların Anayasaya Uygunluğunun Kazai Murakabesi*, Ankara 1951, 251 ff.

¹³ Recai Galip Okandan, *Amme Hukukumuzun Ana Hatları*, Fakülteler Matbaası, 1957, 68.

This scheme toughens the principle of parliamentary supremacy and was interpreted as eternalizing the powers of the holders of political power.¹⁴ Such fragment was used in a positive way with the well-intentioned politicians yet it also led to a parliamentary dictatorship.¹⁵ In this respect, it could be argued that the 1924 Constitution had an understanding of democracy that does not carry sufficient guarantees to draw the limits of the will of the majority, which it recognizes as superior.¹⁶

As a matter of fact, as a result of the adoption of the principle of unity of powers in the republic based on national sovereignty, the representative body was unique and there was no authority superior to it.¹⁷ As stated in article 4 of the 1924 Constitution, if only the Grand National Assembly of Turkey represents the Turkish nation and only the Grand National Assembly of Turkey exercises its sovereign right on behalf of the nation, all functions of the state will be fulfilled by the Parliament on behalf of the nation. With the adoption of the parliamentary government system, gathering the powers of two powers in the TGNA was a constitutional choice. Although it was a constitutional requirement that the right of judiciary will be exercised by independent courts and on behalf of the nation, considering that the right to judge was a part of the sovereignty and the sovereignty belonged to the parliament, it was accepted that the judiciary exercising its power such power was used according to the “law” was decided on behalf of the assembly, not the nation.¹⁸ In addition, the judicial guarantee of the judges was also specified in the constitution, but left to the legislature.

It has been argued that, the absence of clear limits on the parliament's powers in law-making, the lack of a mechanism to protect individual rights and freedoms in the Constitution, the establishment of the legislature from a single assembly, and leaving the power to dissolve the assembly only to the assembly itself, were the consequences of the parliamentary government system which aims to make the assembly the only sovereign and superior organ.¹⁹

Although it was made during the single-party period, it could be asserted that the 1924 Constitution was open to democracy, so much so that the establishment of a political party within the scope of freedom of association was free and accepted as a natural right. However, as was mentioned above, since a framework constituting the limit of the legislature to limit freedoms was not envisaged in the constitution, although forming a party was not prohibited, freedom of association, like other freedoms, cannot be said to be fully constitutionally guaranteed. As a matter of fact, the freedom to form a political party, like all freedoms, was left to the rulings of the majority of the parliament, since no restrictions were placed on the parliament.

¹⁴ Mumcu, 399.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Bihterin Dinçkol, *1924 Anayasası Döneminde Siyasal Muhalefet*, in *Hukuk Araştırmaları Dergisi Mehmet Akif Aydın'a Armağan Sayısı* (2015), 343.

¹⁷ Mumcu, 392.

¹⁸ Mumcu, 393, 395-396.

¹⁹ Demir, 63.

3. Initiatives for Multi-Party System: One Step Forward Two Steps Back

It is accepted that the 1924 Constitution was not the constitution of a single-party system, as a matter of fact, even after the guided elections in 1923, opposition could form in the parliament and the 1924 Constitution was implemented almost without any changes in the multi-party period. In an era that is described as a “guided democracy experiment” by some sources, attempts and practices had been made to transform single-partyism into multi-partyism.

It can be stated that the period between 1923-1931, in which few attempts to multi-partyism took place, was the period of the establishment of the single party ruling.²⁰ Since there did not exist any bar on the establishment of political party under the 1924 Constitution and till 1938 the principle of “freedom” for establishing a political party on grounds of law was valid different parties were established at different times in this period and attempts were made to transition to the multi-party system. The Anatolian and Rumelian Defense of Rights Association, which took part in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as a group, was transformed into a political party in 1922 and formed the People’s Party (Halk Fırkası – then became the Republican People’s Party -CHP)²¹ the so-called “government party”²² that ruled the country for 27 years as a single party, apart from a few attempts to transition to a multi-party system. In this context, the most well-known examples of parties to “interrupt” the single-party regime were the Progressive Republican Party and the Free Republican Party, which was founded on September 29, 1930, but was closed by the decision of the Council of Ministers, and the Republic of Turkey Workers and Farmers Party, which was not allowed to work by the government on the grounds that it had communist tendencies.²³

Although the right to establish a party was legal such freedom was interrupted due to the attitudes and actions of the administrations. As a matter of fact, parties used to be established according to the provisions of the Law of Associations and the Civil Code and by the amendment made in 1923 to the Law of Associations of 1909, the notification system was valid. Accordingly, whoever would want to establish a party had to apply to the administration and obtain a certificate, yet the applications of the associations that were not deemed appropriate were left on hold by the administrations.²⁴ Full freedom of association was accepted with the adoption of the Civil Code in 1926, yet it was not easy to explain to the administrations that this new law abolished the provisions of the Law of Associations.²⁵ Thus, the freedom to establish a party, which is considered within the scope of the freedom of association, could not be realized, as the

²⁰ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Tek-Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması 1923-1931*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 5. Bası, İstanbul 2010, 1.

²¹ Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye’de Tek Parti Yönetimi*, Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1983, 91.

²² Uyar, 76.

²³ Yetkin, 43.

²⁴ Tanör, 319.

²⁵ *ibid.*

legally recognized right was not actually exercised, and this had a negative impact on the transition to the multi-party system. In 1938, the new Law of Associations was accepted and the new law required permission to establish associations. Moreover, the prohibition of associations that act contrary to the six principles of the CHP, which became a constitutional provision with the constitutional amendment, was also put forward as a requirement of the Penal Code and the Law of Associations, among many other issues. In addition, the prohibitive legal framework and practices within the scope of freedom of the press did not facilitate the transition to multi-partyism.

In addition, it should be noted that although freedoms were recognized under the title of “Civil Rights of the Turks” in the constitution, the constitutional guarantee of freedoms was lacking since the limitation of the rights was not specified within the Constitution.²⁶ Since there was no restriction other than Article 86, which regulates martial law, it can be said that freedom of Assembly to “limit the freedoms was unlimited”²⁷. In this environment, the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası -TpCF) was established on November 17, 1924, and then the Free Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası – SCF) was established on August 12, 1930, and attempts were made to transition to a multi-party system. However, until the establishment of the National Development Party (Milli Kalkınma Partisi) on July 18, 1945, the transition to the multi-party in real terms did not take place.

TpCF, which was founded by the dissidents in the CHP who were soldiers and civilians who took part in the War of Independence, did not have a power in the parliament. As an important feature, it should be noted that TpCF was not established to create an opposition. After some events such as the Şeyh Said rebellion, the party, which was thought to be an obstacle to the way of revolution, was closed on June 3, 1925 by the government, which gained the authority to intervene in freedoms with the Law of Takrir-i Sükûn (4 March 1925), which was enacted as part of the harsh measures taken by the İsmet Pasha government. The closure of TpCF was evaluated as an indication that political pluralism would not be allowed in the country.²⁸ In this process, two Independence Tribunals were established, one in Ankara and the other in the rebellion zone (the Eastern Independence Court, which has the authority to implement the death sentences it issued), and the media organs that broadcast dissidents were closed.²⁹ During this period, members of the gang, who were alleged to have attempted to assassinate Mustafa Kemal Pasha, were also tried in Ankara Independence Courts. In addition, “special committees (heyet-i mahsusa)” were established and the military and civilian personnel taken over from the Ottoman period was sorted out.³⁰ Extraordinary conditions peculiar to the

²⁶ Ergun Özbudun, *1924 Anayasası*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2012, 66ff.

²⁷ Mumcu, 397.

²⁸ Tuğrul Korkmaz, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemin Toplum ve Siyaset Anlayışının Dünya Konjonktürü Bağlamında Değerlendirilmesi*, in 43 *Akademik Bakış Dergisi* (2014), <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/382840> (Last Visited 01.06.2023).

²⁹ Demirel, 75-76.

³⁰ Demirel, 80.

period, such as being a state that had just emerged from the war, economic depression, backwardness, low educational and cultural level, and the desired reforms, made this multi-party attempt unsuccessful.³¹ In this process, there was a period without opposition and a “politics of violence” that lasted until the next multi-party trial.³²

A series of social, cultural, economic and political reforms carried out between 1925 and 1930 caused the reaction of the opponents, leading to social opposition and the failure of the liberal economic policies carried out. The SCF was dominated by the idea that the transition to a multi-party political life would eliminate those problems.

SCF was founded by Fethi Bey by the direction of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. The period of SCF was characterised as “guided opposition”³³ and “guided democracy experiment”. However, that period lasted only few months as the SCF was closed by its founder a few months after its establishment on the grounds that it endangered the revolutions. Within this short period prosecutions were initiated against some of the party members and fellow journalists.³⁴ The SCF showed its effect as a promising opposition by enabling large masses of people to unite against the ruling party. Especially, after the participation of people to the SCF from CHP, intense interest of the public and success in the elections, policies that put pressure against the SCF emerged³⁵ and this process resulted in the closure of the party. Due to the possibility of being an option to the ruling party the mayoralties won by the party in the municipal elections were deemed invalid in order to diminish the power of SCF, even after the closure.³⁶ As a matter of fact, “to endanger the power of the revolutionary party meant that the revolutions were endangered.”³⁷

After the closure of the SCF, the statement of Gazi Mustafa Kemal during a country tour was not only announcing the implementation of a one-party system, but also emphasizing the acceptance of the drawbacks of the one-party government and the need to work towards eliminating such cons.³⁸ Gazi Mustafa Kemal stated that “We have to work with more activity every day, as if there are many sects before us, to spread our ideas among the masses of the people and to take our ideas to our villages. At any moment, it is necessary to be in a position to give an account of our action against history, against the world. By being so sensitive and vigilant in our

³¹ Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Partili Dönem ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, 2. Bası, Boyut Matbaacılık, İstanbul 1999, 80.

³² Tanör, 314.

³³ Tanör, 314.

³⁴ Yetkin, 43.

³⁵ Ali Çiftçi, *Tek Parti İktidarı Döneminde Çok Partili Siyasal Hayata Alternatif Katılım Modelleri*, in 9(24) *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Elektronik Dergisi* (2018) <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/gumus/issue/40078/437736> (Last visited 04.06.2023).

³⁶ Yetkin, 44-45. Mahmut Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi II 1931-1938 Tek Partili Cumhuriyet*, İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2009, 6.

³⁷ Uyar, 77.

³⁸ Yetkin, 30.

conceptions and activities, we will eliminate the drawbacks of a dissident sect.”³⁹

Despite these attempts to transition to a multi-party system, after the failure of these attempts, the single-party regime was settled since 1930, when the SCF was abolished, until the transition to the multi-party system.⁴⁰

However, in this context, it should be noted that the CHP had a basis for the presence of intra-party opposition in terms of the period when it faced organized opposition. In this context, it should be stated that the CHP was not a homogeneous party. The CHP was a formation that included different identities in terms of ideology and politics. However, with the settlement of the single party administration in the following years, the freedom of movement seen in the provincial organizations in the first years of the party’s establishment began to disappear, and the written orders sent to the party organizations by the headquarters began to be published in a book.⁴¹

After the process of transition to multi-party life, which did not allow a significant opposition with the understanding of “controlled opposition”, a disorganised opposition was provided by the practices of “independent deputies” in the 1930s, the “independent group” trial, the second voters’ opinion while determining the parliamentary candidacy, and the nomination of candidates more than the quota in the 1943 elections⁴². As a matter of fact, the signals of this were given in the statement sent by Mustafa Kemal Pasha to the second voters on 20.04.1931, when the 3rd Assembly decided to renew the elections before the end of its term, as the opposition shall be made by people elected by the People’s Party in an unorganized way: “As those who know what they are doing and believe in their measures to serve, we find it necessary to target ourselves to criticism. For this reason, I asked ... my party members to make a heavy sacrifice to vote for candidates who are not in favour of our program. Believe that this sacrifice is directed towards an aim as important as the duty of electing a deputy from our party for the administration of the country.”⁴³

4. Authoritarianism on the Axis of State Party or Party State Issue

The post-1930 period marks a period in which single-partyism was institutionalized.⁴⁴ Although the 1924 Constitution contains elements specific to the parliamentary regime, it was based on a parliamentary supremacy that adopts the unity of forces, but this situation had evolved in a different direction in the single-party implementation. As a matter of fact, the political regime operating with strong leaders within the disciplined party that dominates both the parliament and the government had led the government to prevail over the legislation.⁴⁵ According to this view, the

³⁹ Yetkin, s. 29.

⁴⁰ Tanör, 315. Ayşe Güneş Ayata, *CHP (Örgüt ve İdeoloji)*. Gündoğan Yayınları, 1992, 73.

⁴¹ Uyar, 81.

⁴² Çiftçi.

⁴³ Goloğlu, gl10.

⁴⁴ Öz, 47.

⁴⁵ Tanör, 317.

government did not work according to the parliament, but rather parliament was dependent on the government, and the parliament did not have an effective means of control over the government. In addition, since the party that dominates the parliament formed the government, the renewal of elections, a power which was not actually given to the government in the constitution, could be used by easily adopting the election renewal decisions taken in the party groups in the parliamentary general assembly.⁴⁶

Although, according to the 1924 Constitution, the authority of the president in the system was determined symbolically, in political practice, especially Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's influence on the parliament through the party, due to reasons such as his being the leader of the War of Independence, his charisma, military background, being the eternal chairman of the party emerged as a result of being decisive in political life.⁴⁷

After the last attempts to transition to a multi-party system in 1930, the merging of party and state had gradually increased in the first half of the 1930s. Those who work in the executive body were party members and took office in the party, besides civil servants were members of the CHP even though there was a legal ban on party membership, such membership was not considered within the scope of this ban.⁴⁸ While the Minister of Interior was appointed as the secretary general of the party, the governors were appointed as the provincial head of the party, and the general inspectors became the inspectors of the party activities as well as the state affairs in their own regions.⁴⁹ In a speech made by Atatürk dated 18 June 1936 due to his discomfort on this issue after party administrators got involved in state affairs, the reason for such was expressed as follows: "... our decision may cause some other drawbacks. But surely, before that, the biggest, if not the most disastrous, problem in existence; ... is, since it will eliminate the habit of people who are not responsible before the institution to dominate the state affairs, the benefit it will bring will be greater than those inconveniences. ... we are now already in an extraordinary situation due to many necessities, and we are constantly striving to eliminate the malfunctioning, occurred against our will, ... of course, one day we will reach our goal, we will bring the state administration to the most advanced form. Until that day, in which way, how and to what extent we reduce our losses, the more we will earn; our decision is such a precaution."⁵⁰ The desire for party-state immanence was clearly expressed in the Declaration sent by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, who was also the Deputy Chairman of the CHP, to the party organization and the governors on 18 June 1936. He stated that "in order to facilitate the realization of the objectives and to increase ... the development of the party, it was decided to ensure a closer and more practical unity between the party activity and the government administration from now on."⁵¹

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Fahir Giritlioğlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihinde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nin Mevkii*, Ayyıldız Matbaası, Ankara 1965, 115.

⁴⁹ Yetkin, 27-28.

⁵⁰ Uyar, 84.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 78.

With the constitutional amendments under the Law No. 3115 on 18 February 1937, the principles that were accepted in the statute adopted at the 4th Congress of the CHP, consisting of republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism and revolutionism -also known as six arrows- were defined as the second article of the constitution. In this context, discussions were held on whether the CHP is a state party or the regime is a party state.

On the one hand it was argued that the CHP was a state party, as the political power was in the state.⁵² Tanör defined the identity that emerged with the transition to the “National Chief” order as “State symbolizes Nation, Party symbolizes State and the Chief symbolizes and represents all”.⁵³ Another view in the same direction Giritlioğlu argued that the CHP was a party that always kept up with the government’s view and lived with the support of the government, and that although it had an independence in this framework, this formal independence ended with the 1936 decision mentioned above.⁵⁴ In this sense, it was stated that with these developments in 1936, a totalitarian regime was appeared and the only and stable representatives of the political authority were the head of state and the head of government, and this was described as an “oligarchy of forces” by Başgil.⁵⁵

The view asserting that the CHP was a party state Goloğlu refers to the phrase “The Republic of Turkey is a Party State” in the speech made by Party Secretary General Recep Peker at the 1935 CHP Congress, and that only 160 of the 544 delegates in the Congress were from provinces and cities, where the rest of them were deputies. Besides, in the congress the wishes of the people were discussed rather than the issues related to the party, and that the “State Order Program” was prepared instead of the party program, and that resulted the “No-Party Republic” order along with many decisions taken.⁵⁶ According to this view, change in the single-stage election idea adopted by the CHP at the 2nd Party Congress to the two-stage election on the grounds that “the country’s conditions are not yet suitable for single-stage elections” and the fact that amendment made to the party charter on the appointment of the vice chairman (which used to be elected by the party organs are to be elected by the chairman of the party after the amendment) confirmed the thesis of “No-Party Republic”.⁵⁷

Taking into account the world conjuncture of those times where authoritarian and totalitarian regimes was common, an authoritarian government was established in order to adopt the Turkish revolutions to the society and spread them more quickly and easily. In this context, it is argued that the organizational structure of the CHP, despite some differences, is centralized and authoritarian like the Committee of Union and Progress.⁵⁸

⁵² Tanör, 316.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Giritlioğlu, 113.

⁵⁵ Giritlioğlu, 115.

⁵⁶ Goloğlu, 209-210.

⁵⁷ Goloğlu, 201-211.

⁵⁸ Uyar, 77.

5. Concluding Remarks on the Single Party Era: Is There a Really Good in Every Bad?

The 1924 Constitution is the first Constitution of the Republic of Turkey that is adopted under ordinary conditions. It comes after big steps forward as reforms, such as the abolition of the sultanate and caliphate, took place in 1923. And above all the Independence War had been won. Under such an environment the 1924 Constitution was adopted by the second parliament which was not a constituent assembly. As for the form of government parliamentary government system was adopted. Under such a scheme, till 1946 a single party ruled as the government, which leads us to discussions of the issues on democracy of the single-party era of the young Republic. As a matter of fact, the era was considered a “controlled democracy trial”.

Although it could be argued that “Kemalist Turkey” was more democratic than many underdeveloped countries - in the Ottoman period and in similar conditions in the same or later period - examining the will that created the 1924 Constitution, the formation of the 2nd Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and the functioning of the Constitution one comes to the conclusion that the democratic elements were not to be considered as compatible with pluralism, but rather it could be coupled with majoritarianism.

It is accepted that the 1924 Constitution is not the constitution of a single-party system, as a matter of fact, even after the guided elections in 1923, opposition could form in the parliament and the 1924 Constitution was implemented almost without any changes in the multi-party period. In an era that is described as a “guided democracy experiment”, attempts have been made to transform single-partyism into multi-partyism.

In a speech that referred to the closure of the Turkish Hearths as a statement that signals the permanence of the Single-Party period, Gazi Mustafa Kemal emphasized that all forces should be united in order to realize some revolutions: “... it is necessary to gather all the material and moral forces together and direct them in the same direction... All nationalist and republican forces must gather in one place for the country and the revolution to be immune from the dangers that may come from inside and outside. ... Forces of the same kind should unite towards a common goal.”⁵⁹

It was tried to be realized in an “unhindered and trouble-free” way with an “authoritarian” administration to get rid of the problems of underdevelopment with a modernization movement which was a “quick and forced modernization”.⁶⁰

Although a single-party regime was not a feature of the 1924 Constitution, experiences with the first multi-party attempt showed that the ripeness in the political life did not lead to a multi-partyism. Since the closure of TpCF by the government on the grounds that it supported reactionism, a policy aimed at neutralizing the opposition groups has come to the fore. After the Şeyh Said uprising, a part of the opposition was also liquidated with the adoption of the Law of Takrir-i Sükun, and finally, with the planned İzmir assassination attempt against Mustafa Kemal, the opposition related

⁵⁹ Yetkin, 30.

⁶⁰ Uyar, 80.

to TpCF was suppressed. In the new environment that emerged after these developments, it can be said that there is no opposition left, and that all political dominance had passed to the Republican People's Party. This stage had been described as the establishment stage of the single-party period. After the next multi-party period, the SCF period, single-partyism will become established.

CHP single-party rule did not allow free opposition and full pluralism. The result of the CHP's attempt to transition to a guided multi-party system with the CSF, which is a second multi-party process, is that Turkey was not yet ready for a multi-party political life. Because it was the idea that if the opposition parties are allowed, the power of the CHP will be endangered. However, Atatürk also revealed the need for different voices and opinions in the Assembly. For this reason, after 1931, instead of a free democratic competition, intermediary formulas for the control of the power were preferred.

The regime was intolerant to an opposition as for the authoritarianism, but it had perceived itself as an intermediate period in the transition to a democratic society and state order. Although the 1924 Constitution had a democratic spirit, it was tended itself towards the majoritarian and holistic form of democracy rather than the pluralistic and power-dividing option. In that sense, party ideologies became State's principles and party-state cohesion took place. Further, few legal steps taken regarding the restriction of freedoms in order for internal rebellions but this turn out to be the muting of the opposition.

In general terms, it is seen that the one-party government of the CHP had undemocratic rules and practices, but there are also opinions suggesting that it aims at democracy as well as contrary views. In this sense, it is asserted that the CHP was a "guardianship party" and aimed at the preparation of a democratic system.⁶¹ Moreover, the tendency towards authoritarianism aimed at the rapid and permanent establishment of structural reforms. Thus, it makes us to pose the question of is it "less evil" to carry out fundamental reforms in a single-party period without opposition?² as the reforms and procedures carried out within the framework of the law?

"Although Atatürk's Era was a one-party government, it carried out more innovations in terms of democratization than both the multi-party period and many Western countries."⁶² In this respect, this process, which contains phases of authoritarianism, had some differences from the examples in the world conjuncture in the same period. As a matter of fact, it did not have a totalitarian side and did not contain a racism or a "raging" left/right enmity, it tended towards revolutions against reactionism.⁶³

⁶¹ Tunaya, 314.

⁶² Yüksel Kaştan, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek Partili Dönemden Çok Partili Döneme Geçişte CHP'nin Yönetim Anlayışındaki Gelişmeler (1938-1950)*, in 8(1) *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* (2006), 123-140, 124.

⁶³ Sina Akşin, *Atatürk Döneminde Demokrasi*, in 47(1-2) *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi Prof. Dr. Gündüz Ökçün'e Armağan* (1992), 245-252, 249.

Nilay Arat Oder
Kadir Has University
Kadir Has Üniversitesi Cibali, Kadir Has Cd., 34083 Cibali / Fatih/Fatih/İstanbul, Türkiye
nilay.arat@khas.edu.tr

