

**LEGITIMIZATION OF THE SINGLE-PARTY PERIOD OF  
TURKEY: A CRITICAL APPROACH**

by  
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*To my beloved mother,  
for whom I would give everything  
to come down and disagree with me*

Abstract

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Key words: Turkish single-party, “conditions of the era”, Inter-war Europe authoritarianism, modernization theory, Atatürk Revolution

This thesis questions the long embraced assumption in Turkey which is based on the premise that single-party period of Turkey between 1925-1946 was because of the “conditions of the era.” By giving examples from advocates of single party, I am arguing against the exigency of a single-party period and I am offering that it was rather based on preference. By going into the subheadings of single-party advocacy, I am analyzing each of them and trying to show that as a whole the argument that conditions of the era necessitated a single-party regime is not convincing.

## Özet

# TÜRKİYE’DE TEK-PARTİ MEŞRULAŞTIRMASINA ELEŞTİREL BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Bu çalışmada Türkiye’de uzun süredir kabul edilen, 1925-1946 arası Tek-Parti Dönemi’nin koşullar gereği olduğu argümanı sorgulanmaktadır. Tek-parti savunucularının argümanlarından örnekler vererek, Türkiye’de Tek-Parti Yönetimi’nin koşullar gereği değil, kişisel tercih sonucu olduğu savunulmaktadır. Tek-parti meşrulaştırmasının alt başlıklarına tek tek değinilerek, Türkiye’de Tek-Parti Dönemi’nin koşullar gereği olduğu argümanının ikna edici olmadığı öne sürülmektedir.

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## ***Foreword and Acknowledgements***

It all started in 2011 on a winter day when I was looking at the daily newspaper *Sabah*, and saw the title of an article titled as “If the conditions of the era taken into consideration.” I did something unexpected from me and read the article in one sitting (normally I have utmost trouble in reading newspaper articles). When I finished it, I read it again and then I remarked Eureka! There it was! A possible answer to the question I have long been thinking and doubting. A few weeks after that, when during a discussion a friend of mine tried to give me the excuse “conditions of the era,” I counted him all I had learned from that newspaper article of Şükrü Hanioglu.

I was aware with the “conditions of the era” phrase since I was in high school, but I never thought about it thoroughly. While I had my doubts that early republican period necessitated single-party rule, I had never had any idea as to how it could be challenged. If somebody had told me at that time that it would become my master thesis topic, I would probably laugh. In time, I got so obsessed with this phrase that I, with the encouragements of a few friends and a professor of mine, decided to write my MA thesis on this defense of single-party rule, voiced with the phrase “conditions of the era.” Before making the decision of writing the thesis on “conditions of the era” advocacy, I wavered for some 9 months about writing about Kemalism as the religion of Turkey, 1927 elections or 1923 elections.

I can not help but mentioning the names of several people who made valuable contributions to this thesis. I should be grateful to Cemil Koçak, my thesis advisor who recommended me the valuable sources and methods to deal with them. Saygın Salgırlı and Aykut Kansu made important contributions by reading and commenting on the first draft of the article which was turned into this thesis finally. I thank Ahmet Demirel for providing several articles and more important than that, encouraging me to write in times I was most aloof. The grammar and sentence structure would be much worse without my beloved sister Irem and her husband Mark's invaluable help. I got help with translation issues from my friends Sertaç Şen, Nadya Uygun, Funda Alkan, Emre Şahin,



Ozan Arda Aydın and Ekrem Aral Tuna, family friend Gönül Pultar, my brother Onur Derin and scholar Elçin Arabacı. I thank my dear father Ömür Derin and his wife Göksun Üngüt for providing me the suitable environment to type the thesis. I am also grateful to my friend Yasemin Bavbek from Columbia University who helped me both with translation and with one particular source, Akşin Somel from Sabancı University for encouraging me to start writing at a time I had my doubts and was postponing again and again, and Gencer Çakır, my sociologist friend for his contributions about discussions of historical materialism.

Finally, but in terms of importance firstly, I am grateful to Kaya Akyıldız, my professor from Bahçeşehir University Sociology Department. In addition to having contributed to everything I've counted so far, he has been my unofficial academic advisor since the autumn of 2011. Without him, neither this work would have emerged, nor I would be in the academia.

*“The whole notion of historical greatness is in the last resort futile”*

Ian Kershaw

*“All national histories are peculiar, but some appear to be more peculiar than others”*

Geoff Eley & David Blackbourn

*“Leaning on single-party autocracy, when considered with respect to the conditions of the era, can not be accepted as the natural and the inevitable choice in front of Republican founders”*

Şükrü Hanioglu

## ***Introduction***

The aim of this thesis is simple, yet it will challenge a postulation that has been widely clinched to within the Turkish historiography: That the single-party regime of Turkey during the Early Republic period stemmed from a necessity which the conditions forced, and not preference. This claim -in fact the main thesis I hope to question in this work- has several sub-theses and premises, to all of which I will refer throughout my study in detail. I will simply argue that the single-party regime of Turkey between 1925-1946 was *not* because of necessity; it was rather based on personal preference. However, to prevent questioning the founding philosophy of Kemalism, an apologetic item was introduced to the Turkish historiography: Conditions (circumstances) of the era.

Let me now go deeper into the thesis I will present, which is mostly based on challenging the Kemalist assumptions that has been widely popular in Turkey for more than half a century. According to the research I have made, the assumption that the single-party period was a necessity is based on 4 sub-theses, and to put them roughly, these are: a) That the Turkish republic meant transition from *subject* to *citizen* so it needed a transition process; b) that the authoritarian regime of Turkey should be accepted as normal when compared with totalitarian and/or fascist regimes of inter-war Europe; c) that Turkey had its unique conditions which distinguished herself from the rest of the world, so it needed a unique system, such as single-party rule; and d) that in a society where the socio-economic indicators are undeveloped/underdeveloped, democratic regimes can not be established and/or a single-party (tutelage party) will prepare the preconditions of multi-party system (modernization theory).

A glance at any democratic regime will already suggest that, to explain authoritarian rule in a society, these assumptions are not satisfactory-unless we accept the modernization paradigm, to which I will refer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. But there is a reason why I will take these into consideration and deal with them throughout this study. If one is to make research as to how the single-party regime of Turkey is justified, s/he will see that historians mostly clinch to one of these sub-theses. In other words, anyone who wants to read about the period between 1925-1946 in Turkey is most likely to come across with a sentence beginning as “Of course the Early Republic

of Turkey was not a democracy...”,<sup>1</sup> and then going on to state that the conditions of the era were not suitable, and that “conditions not being suitable” is very likely to be based on one of the four items I've presented above.

What I hope to do in this work is to dig into all the apologist statements that justify authoritarian rule of single-party of Turkey and to show, one by one, why they are not cogent. These are assumptions that have been widely held by Kemalist<sup>2</sup> historians for many years. They have been repeated in history books so many times that they have, by now, almost become facts. I will try to show in this work how the phrase “conditions of the era” has become an answer to everything when the Kemalist founding philosophy is questioned, and why it is lacking factual evidence and therefore should be abandoned.

I will discuss the arguments of single-party advocates one by one to see if we can come up with any alternative explanations. While I will present my doubts as to justifying the single-party regime, I am not suggesting that the premises of single-party exponents are totally incongruous. However, looking at the conditions at a time is different than the “conditions of the era” phrase becoming a grand narrative apology, and I regret to observe that the Turkish case is the example of the latter.

I will do an unusual thing for an introduction and count all the names whose theses I will examine and question in this work. The list includes: İlber Ortaylı, Halil İnalçık, Toktamış Ateş, Nevin Yurtsever Ateş, Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Anıl Çeçen, Emre Kongar, Sina Akşin, Nurşen Mazıcı, Ergün Aybars, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Suna Kili, Zafer Toprak, Hakkı Uyar, Bernard Lewis (why I have picked these names and not others; I will explain it in the final chapter). It should not be assumed from this literature review that I deliberately picked historians who defend marginal views. The approach I question and object in this work is more or less the official approach in Turkish historiography. The names I refer are historians with successful academic careers, without whose valuable works, our knowledge of Turkish modernization would be much weaker. Some of the books I refer are the ones that have been used as course book in universities for years. The premises I question are voiced by many historians and are not merely the discourse of the academy. They have long been part of the popular

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1 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 23.

2 “Kemalist” and “Atatürkist” are sometimes used interchangeably, sometimes with different

2 “Kemalist” and “Atatürkist” are sometimes used interchangeably, sometimes with different meanings. In this thesis, I used them interchangeably. For a brief discussion as to the differences between the two, please see Conclusion, p. 79-80.

Kemalist discourse.

My main objective in this thesis is to inquire into the assumptions that assume that the Early Republican Turkey had to have a single-party regime, and that toleration of pluralism would prove worse. In doing so, I will touch upon certain points in each chapter, and here is how this work is structured: Chapter I will focus on the discussion of transition from subject to citizen. Considering the assumption that the people of the Ottoman society were *subjects* and that they became *citizens* with the Turkish Republic, I will probe what this means and try to see if we can come up with any other explanation, such as identifying this transition with the later stages of the Ottoman State instead of the proclamation of Turkish Republic in 1923.

Chapter II will be about inter-war Europe, and it will question a widely held belief. Was the inter-war Europe, as often asserted in the Turkish historiography, dominated by totalitarian or fascist regimes, and if so, can this be used as an excuse for the legitimization or justification of Turkish single party? The unique or unfavorable conditions of Turkey will be questioned, too, and in Chapter III, Turkish single-party period will be evaluated within the modernization paradigm. What the proponents of the modernization paradigm contend and how much it fits the Turkish case will be examined. Whether pluralism or democracy can develop in states like Turkey, and if so, what forestalled it will be my main focus. In doing so, I will touch upon the illustrious tutelage-party theory of late Duverger, and compare the Turkish case with a similar example, German *Sonderweg*.

Did Mustafa Kemal aim democracy in the long run, and if so, what did he do to help develop it? Were the socio-economic conditions of Turkey unfavorable for pluralism? Do the two opposition parties formed in 1924 and 1930 respectively, attest to Mustafa Kemal's intentions for establishing democratic regime in the long run? Questions like these will be addressed in this long chapter.

The treatment of opposition against Mustafa Kemal deserves to be discussed, and chapter IV will be about that. Who were the dissidents of Mustafa Kemal, and with what purpose did they part company with him? Were they reactionaries and Ottomanists, or did they take action with a different kind of agenda? What does Mustafa Kemal's having people that disagree with him in every group he involves tell us? How judicious it is to assume that the law of revolution is above all, and to assess every kind of opposition accordingly? Items that subsume -but are not limited to these- will be covered in the fourth chapter.

Perhaps an important matter within the Early Republican historiography is how things and events are narrated by historians. What happened between 1920-1938, and how is this described? The language of accounts might give clue as to the stance of the figure who writes it, and in this regard, comparisons between Kemalist and non-Kemalist historians -whom I will address as realists- will compose chapter V. By comparing a few accounts -from both sides- I will try to depict how Kemalist accounts are preoccupied with the justification and legitimization of almost every act of Mustafa Kemal's (e.g. purge of the opposition), whereas non-Kemalist accounts are only trying to relate what happened as it happened (in the Ranke style perhaps).

In the conclusion part, I will reiterate what I've discussed in the study and try to reach an alternative hypothesis as to “conditions of the era” discussion that justifies single-party domination. Here is what I suggest: The assertion that single-party rule emerged because of the circumstances is invented later to justify the actions of Mustafa Kemal which mostly aimed at crushing the opposition. I will question the assumptions in each chapter and suggest that, some of them not only lacks factual basis, but even if they are true, there can be no convincing reason to accept and justify single-party policy.

I should make one thing clear before beginning. For the ones who say “yet another account on the Turkish modernization...”, this work will *not* cover the late Ottoman and/or early Turkish Republic periods; neither as a whole, nor in part. The sole purpose of this work is to question and object to the accounts that justify the single-party regime of Turkey. In other words, any account will be referred to as long as it makes claims to legitimize the actions of the period between 1925-1946, as long as it advocates Kemalist single-party rule. Let me give an example: Script revolution of 1928 will not at all be a part of this work, but the so-called anthropological head skull measurements by Afet İnan will be. Here is the reason: 1928 script revolution is not identified within the Kemalist historiography as something the conditions necessitated, but the head skull measurements are.

I might have confused the reader a bit so far so I will finish this introduction chapter with a better explanation. During the single-party regime, some actions of the rulers of Turkey (e.g. head skull measurements or the Dersim massacre) were what we would address today as “unacceptable”. When these actions are questioned, Kemalist historians admit that those things are unacceptable for today, but they insist that considering the conditions of the era, they were normal for that time. I will, on the other

hand, question all the assumptions of Kemalist historians that justify single-party actions and try to show that they are *apocryphal*. I will claim that the explanations invented later to justify the authoritarian regime are no more than mere apology.

## ***I. The Question of Transition from Subject to Citizen***

The first sub-theses of “conditions of the era necessitating single-party regime” I will talk about is about transition from subject to citizen. As I will give its examples below, the argument roughly goes like this: Because sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire was based on heavenly (religious) power and not on the people's power, subjects of the Ottoman Empire should be accepted as slaves. With the declaration of Turkish Republic in 1923, the period of transition from subject to citizen started. Since this transition necessitated a process, single-party rule during that time is natural. I should say now that although the meaning is roughly the same, this claim is not always uttered in this way, as I will show now.

The figure who most insists on this “transition from subject to citizen” is the late Toktamış Ateş. Every time Ateş talks about the meaning of Turkish Republic, he either uses these exact words, or their counterparts. In his article written in 1979, titled as “Kemalizm Dediğimiz,” he uses the words “the sovereignty of the people against monarchic power rooted in God”.<sup>3</sup> Again in his book, *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz*, Ateş uses the words “a republic where there is no Sultan and where the sovereignty is owned by the people.”<sup>4</sup> Ateş likewise identifies the essence of Turkish Revolution as the “transition from subject to citizen”<sup>5</sup> and again talks about how Kemalism is different than the theocratic ideology where the power is in God,”<sup>6</sup> in his book, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*.

The last example I will give is from Ateş's article, “Kemalizm ve Özgünlüğü,” where he directly identifies Turkish Revolution with the phrase “transition from subject to citizen,” again using the words “Turkish Revolution is the transition from a theocratic monarchy to the sovereignty of the people.”<sup>7</sup> What the obvious problem with this ever

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3 Toktamış Ateş, “Kemalizm Dediğimiz.” cited in *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz*, p. 40. Ateş later published the same article in 1998 with the title “Kemalizm'in Özü” (the Essence of Kemalism).

4 Toktamış Ateş, *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz*, p. 180.

5 Toktamış Ateş, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 243.

6 Ibid. p. 44

7 Toktamış Ateş, “Kemalizm ve Özgünlüğü,” cited in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm*, p. 320.



recurring “unique” definition of Ateş is that the later stages of the Ottoman Empire (such as the Reform Edict of 1856 or the II. Constitution of 1908) ended the period of theocratic rule in Ottoman Empire, if any such thing had ever existed.<sup>8</sup> But I will come to its details later.

Apart from Toktamış Ateş; Emre Kongar, Suna Kili, Halil İnalçık, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Anıl Çeçen, Nevin Yurtsever Ateş and Ergün Aybars all talk about this transition from subject to citizen, though using different words.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Kongar states in his book *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*<sup>10</sup> (*Facing with Our Democracy*, UD) that the “Republic regime will produce Turkish citizens from the Ottoman subjects.”<sup>11</sup> While Kongar, in this book, at least 10 times puts the emphasis on transition from religious/agricultural society to a democratic republic, it is at times uttered as “founding a democratic secular social law state in a Moslem society,”<sup>12</sup> and sometimes as “a society where there was no substructure of democracy or consciousness of citizenship.”<sup>13</sup>

Emre Kongar talks about the same “transition from subject to citizen” matter in his earlier works, too. In a book he published in 1983, Kongar talks about “efforts to create a contemporary national state from a six-hundred-year religious/traditional empire structure.”<sup>14</sup> Likewise, in another study published in 1972, Kongar makes the distinction between Ottoman *ümmet* and Turkish *millet* (getting help from Ziya

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8 What the date 1908 corresponds to and how its perpetrators can be conceptualized within the Turkish historiography is quite debatable. While Aykut Kansu strongly argues in his published Ph. D. *Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* that it is a revolution, it should not be referred to as merely the “2<sup>nd</sup> constitution” and that it tried to settle a liberal democratic system (p.3), figures like Emre Kongar (as cited in Kansu's work) or Fevzi Demir identify it as the 2<sup>nd</sup> constitution. Ayşe Hür does not state whether she prefers to refer to it as revolution or coup, but she is not close to identifying it as a revolution for she argues that it was not a people's movement. (p. 105-106). Finally, Erik Jan Zürcher argues that, although the Young Turks were against the autocratic sultan and that they struggled to reopen the parliament, they were not democratic (p. 138).

In this work I will refer to this period as the “2<sup>nd</sup> Constitution”, as the usual way.

9 The reason I wrote Toktamış Ateş to the beginning is that the term “transition from subject to citizen” seems to have been invented by him and then used regularly and recurrently by many Kemalist authors wanting to defend single-party regime.

10 The title of the book can be translated as “Facing with Our Democracy,” but unlike what his title offers, Kongar not only does not face with the Turkish democracy, but advocates single-party regime throughout his work. His book which does not include a references section bears vague concepts such as “religious oligarchy” and a considerable amount of anti-Kurdish and discriminative vocabulary.

11 Emre Kongar, *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, p. 67. For similar statements, see p. 16, 214, 216, 217, 223-224, 226, 259, 292.

12 Ibid p. 114.

13 Ibid p. 199.

14 Emre Kongar, *Devrim Tarihi ve Toplum Bilim Açısından Atatürk* (from now on, *Atatürk*), p. 326. This study of Kongar which is the printed version of his Ph. D. was first published with the title “Atatürk ve Devrim Kuramları” and then again, with the above mentioned title. The chapters talking about the subjective and objective conditions of a revolution in this book deserve attention and therefore, will be touched upon later.

Gökalp's historical stages, too)<sup>15</sup> and goes on to make analysis similar to what I presented above. Kongar claims that Turkish Revolution transferred a feudal empire to a contemporary, capitalist, national state<sup>16</sup> and that with the republic, sovereignty stopped getting its source from religion and tradition and was now based on the people.<sup>17</sup>

Let us keep illustrating the postulation of transition from subject to citizenship. Halil İnalçık claims that the “new state would be founded as the Turkish Republic based on sovereignty of the people,”<sup>18</sup> that the new Turkish nation is a community consisting of equal citizens, and that people are no longer part of *tebaa* (religious community).<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Suna Kili argues in the very beginning of her book *Türk Devrim Tarihi* that the new state has changed its long duree tradition and that instead of sectarian ties, now national ties are holding individuals together.<sup>20</sup> Anıl Çeçen identifies at least four times in his book the Turkish Republic as the transition from Ottoman monarchy based on single-man to modern democratic republic,<sup>21</sup> once using the exact words “*ümme*” (religious community) and “*millet*” (nation).<sup>22</sup> Kışlalı wrote several times in his newspaper column that the goal of republic was to enlighten a people living in the dark ages and that it could be done with the will of the people,<sup>23</sup> which again is close to the above mentioned argument. Nevin Yurdsever Ateş identifies the people of Turkey in 1920's with a sense of servitude (slavery) coming from hundreds of years.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Ergün Aybars takes the same stance as the previous figures, treating the Ottoman Empire as theocratic and Turkish Republic as a nation state, thereby corroborating this claim of transition from subject to citizen.<sup>25</sup>

Before discussing and questioning these arguments, it is worthwhile to repeat the above-mentioned arguments and their meaning. My main question is what the defense of single-party is based on, and the first sub-theses of single-party advocates I am discussing is the postulation that Turkish Republic meant transition from *ümme*

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15 Emre Kongar, *Toplumsal Değişme Kuramları ve Türkiye Gerçeği*, p. 107.

16 Ibid 353.

17 Ibid 361.

18 Halil İnalçık, “Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük,” cited in *Atatürk ve Demokratik Türkiye*, p. 23.

19 Halil İnalçık, “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve Osmanlı,” cited in *Atatürk ve Demokratik Türkiye*, p. 90

20 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. XVII.

21 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 62, 123, 125, 126. I will go on referring to Çeçen's book within this work, especially while discussing the “unique conditions of Turkey.”

22 Ibid, 123.

23 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “Colomb'un yumurtası: Kadınlar,” *Cumhuriyet*, 13 Dec. 1998, cited in *Ben Demokrat Değişim*, p. 219.

24 Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Kuruluşu ve Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (from now on, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*), p. 325. The exact Turkish word is *kulluk anlayışı*. I used “servitude” but “slavery,” too, can be used here.

25 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 12 and 188-189.

(religious community) and *kul* (subject) to *millet* (nation) and *vatandaş* (citizen). This postulation is uttered sometimes with these exact words, as in the case of Toktamış Ateş and Ergün Aybars, sometimes as transition from an agricultural empire to a nation-state, as in the case of Emre Kongar or from the dark ages to modernity, as in the case of Ahmet Taner Kışlalı.

The first thing that should be said about this contention of transition from subject to citizen is that, although it is not very convincing - which I will discuss soon - it doesn't get enough criticism within the Turkish historiography. Maybe with a few exceptions including Şükrü Hanioglu,<sup>26</sup> it is not a topic addressed enough by Turkish historians. It is true that figures like Aykut Kansu, Gökhan Kaya, Fevzi Demir and Cemil Koçak did draw attention to the pluralistic foundations of Ottoman Empire during 1908-1912 and that Füsun Üstel and Kansu directly identify this transition with the period of 1908 (which I will illustrate below) but thinking that this debate has been around for a long time - and kept lively thanks to Toktamış Ateş - it is surprising that the majority of the historians have not yet said a word about this debate.

Let me now begin by stating why this assertion of transition from subject to citizen is lacking factual basis, and go on discussing it. The first thing that should be said is that, if this transition ever took place, it was during the later stages of the Ottoman Empire, (that is to say during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and not during the early years of the Turkish Republic. The assertion that Ottoman people were *kul* (subject) is obviously based on the premise that Ottoman Empire was a theocratic state ruled by a god-like figure, which is the summation of what the above-mentioned figures argue. The argument will probably go like this: Turkish Republic created citizens, because now that the sultanate and the caliphate were abolished and there was a so-called parliament ostensibly taking shape with peoples' votes, these people are no more part of *tebaa* (religious community) but they are *citizens*.

This whole assertion and arguments behind it seem to make sense, only if we assume that Ottoman Empire was a theocratic and stable state. What I mean is that, if we treat the Ottoman Empire as a monolithic system which did not have any dynamics throughout 600 years, and if we treat Turkish Republic as a secular, democratic system where everybody was equal, then the above-mentioned arguments sound plausible. However, anybody who is a little bit familiar with the later stages of the

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26 Şükrü Hanioglu, "Dönemin koşulları göz önüne alınırsa," *Sabah*, 4 Dec. 2011.

Ottoman Empire would know that starting from 1908, Ottoman Empire experienced political pluralism and that the creation of citizenship even goes earlier. Also, anybody who is familiar with the early years of Turkish Republic would know that between 1925-1946, there was single-party rule; so if *citizen* bears the activity of voting or being equal before law, people of the early Turkish Republic can hardly be addressed as citizens.

The sources I will use while discussing whether there was citizenship in the Ottoman Empire belong to Akşin Somel, Aykut Kansu, Ayşe Hür, Cemil Koçak, Şükrü Hanioglu, Gökhan Kaya, Füsün Üstel, Fevzi Demir and Zafer Toprak. My main aim in using these figures is to suggest that the later periods of the Ottoman Empire created its own modernity and that with its free elections, political parties, somewhat free press, non-governmental organizations and identified status in front of law, the people in the period of the Ottoman Empire between 1839-1908 were much closer to *vatandaş* (citizen), than *kul* (subject). I should stress here that from the following explanations, the thesis that there was true democracy in the Ottoman Empire should *not* be inferred. Nor do I have any intentions to magnify or overemphasize 1908, apart from asserting that it was part of a process that saw limited pluralism in modern Turkey.

As we all know, Ottoman Empire entered a period of change and modernization starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>27</sup> While this process had its ups and downs, I think it can easily be said that concepts such as political parties, elections, charities, freedom of press and non-governmental organizations entered the life of Turkish people within this process. I will not claim that starting from 1876, the I. Constitution, Ottoman Empire experienced true democracy, which would be quite misleading. As Kansu rightly argues, perhaps the best we can say for 1876 is that it reformed the absolute monarchy.<sup>28</sup> However, my contention is that starting from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman modernization marked the transition from subject to citizen.

Let me give a few examples from the last phase of Ottoman Empire to make it clear. Freedom of press and the presence of political parties can be good indicators to point out the relatively liberal and pluralist characteristic of a state, if we are to make any kind of claim about transition from subject to citizen. As Toprak indicates, after in

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27 The era that marks the beginning of Ottoman -and therefore Turkish- modernization is quite debatable. It is often referred as the 18<sup>th</sup> century -with Selim III- or 19<sup>th</sup> century, often with Mahmud II. My aim here is not to discuss when it begins, but rather to argue that transition from subject to citizen corresponds to Ottoman modernization, and not to Turkish Republic.

28 Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 1.

1908, the Constitution was proclaimed for the second time, Ottoman press enjoyed some degree of freedom; the ensuing period would see the publishing of various magazines, papers and establishment of communities. Likewise, political parties were formed following 1908. An increase was seen in the numbers of books, papers and magazines which would create a relatively high readers group.<sup>29</sup>

If we go a little earlier and look into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the Ottoman Empire, we will see that the first steps of modernization were taken. Law of penalty was promulgated in 1840 and was again put into effect in 1851.<sup>30</sup> In 1871 and 1878, laws to regulate city municipalities were also put into effect.<sup>31</sup> In 1869, a law to regulate Ottoman citizenship was promulgated, but as Üstel stresses, this only regulates the preconditions to win or lose Ottoman nationality and does not say anything to make one belong to any nation or people.<sup>32</sup> In 1876, the Ottoman basic law, *Kanun-i Esasi*, was put into effect, but as Akşin Somel argues, definition of citizenship can perhaps better be identified with 1856, the Reform Edict.<sup>33</sup>

The period in which the Ottoman citizen was created can be taken as 1908, the II. Constitution, or earlier. Within the date 1908, two things should be addressed: 1908 period as the most lively and politically pluralistic era of Turkish history till then, as Aykut Kansu, Gökhan Kaya and Fevzi Demir argue, and the importance the Ottoman state gives to the creation and raising of *citizen*, as Füsun Üstel argues. Within 1856, the Reform Edict where for the first time the definition of Ottoman citizenship was properly made should be emphasized. While discussing the date 1908, I will do my best in order not to fall into the trap of fetishizing 1908 or any Ottoman period, which I will also discuss below.

As Aykut Kansu, Gökhan Kaya and Fevzi Demir all state, 1908 is the period which for the first time brought political pluralism and liberalism to Turkish political life.<sup>34</sup> With election campaigns and somewhat free and regular elections, it marks the

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29 Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Popülizm*, p. 15-16; Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, p. 124.

30 Füsun Üstel, "II. Meşrutiyet ve Vatandaş'ın "İcad"ı," as in *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde*, p. 25. This is an article published first in İletişim's book *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, with the same title. Üstel took it to her book *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde*, with some additions.

31 Ibid, p. 25.

32 Ibid, p. 26.

33 Akşin Somel, "Osmanlı Reform Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913)," as in *Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, p. 92-96.

34 Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 1, 3 and 368; Gökhan Kaya, *Osmanlı Demokrat Fırkası*, p. 15, 17, 18; Fevzi Demir, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Meclis-i Mebusan Seçimleri* pp. 13-14 and 347.

period of Turkish history which saw political liberalism. Kansu takes his assertion to the level of claiming that “Revolution of 1908 literally brought the end of the empire” and “sought to settle a liberal, democratic regime.”<sup>35</sup> Demir argues that the II. Constitution started the politicization process, thereby opening the period of charities, political parties and pluralism.<sup>36</sup> Kaya likewise asserts that the liberal atmosphere emerging with the II. Constitution and the charities, communities and the political parties created the modern Ottoman political space.

As for the creation of citizen, we can talk about 1856 – as Akşin Somel does – or the II. Constitution (1908), as Füsün Üstel does. As Füsün Üstel argues, *Malumat-ı Medeniyye*, (which can perhaps be translated as “Knowledge of Civilization”) was a course studied in Ottoman schools whose main concern was the creation of Ottoman citizenship. The ministry of education of the cabinet of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Emrullah Efendi, was engaged with the creation of citizen fitting the regime of Meşrutiyet (Constitution) and he wanted the lessons to be based on taming and educating the children. The course *Malumat-ı Medeniyye* had an important role in raising the citizen the new regime desired. Üstel and Kansu also identify the period of II. Constitution as the transition from subject (*tebaa*) to citizen,<sup>37</sup> which I will touch upon below as the main point of my criticism while discussing transition from subject to citizen. Finally, Akşin Somel identifies the emergence of Ottoman citizenship as 1856, with the Reform Edict.<sup>38</sup> As for the distinction between 1856 and 1908, I have my doubts, but perhaps we can identify the start of the process of transition from subject to citizen with 1856, although the people of 1908 had more rights than that of 1856.

Let me now wrap all the arguments I have talked about so far, and talk about what they mean and how, if any of them, lack factual basis. While doing this, I will refer to an article of Cemil Koçak, in relation to the meaning of 1908. As it can be seen, I am talking about two group of historians and while the former identify transition from subject to citizen with 1923, the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, the latter do this with 1908, the II. Constitution, or earlier. Let me now discuss both groups and state my own opinion.

As I've said before, identifying Ottoman Empire as theocratic and thereby saying

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35 Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. XV.

36 Fevzi Demir, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Meclis-i Mebusan Seçimleri*, p. 14.

37 Füsün Üstel, “II. Meşrutiyet ve “Vatandaş”ın İcadı,” p. 319; Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 366.

38 Akşin Somel, “Osmanlı Reform Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913),” as in *Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, p. 92-96.

that the Turkish Republic means transition from subject to citizen lacks factual basis. The six-hundred-year-period of the Ottoman Empire was not shaped by the same characteristics; even the first 300-400 years often referred to as “the classical age” can not be identified with the same characteristics.<sup>39</sup> Ottoman Empire entered a period of modernization<sup>40</sup> in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which culminates with the period of 1908. As all Aykut Kansu, Gökhan Kaya, Füsün Üstel and Fevzi Demir argue, limitedly free and fair elections<sup>41</sup>, constitution, election campaigns and school courses (and course books) where the definition of Ottoman citizen is properly made, corresponds better to the creation of citizenship than 1923, proclamation of the Turkish Republic.

When we bring together all these, the conclusion we can reach is that, while it is debatable when the Ottoman citizen emerged, it doesn't look plausible to argue that Turkish Republic marked the transition from subject to citizen. For this argument to make sense, citizens of the Early Republic should have some rights that the Ottoman citizens lacked. In this regard, perhaps it can be argued that women obtained their rights to vote between 1930-1934, but it should be questioned what it means to vote when there is only one party.

It should also be kept in mind that, when the exponents of single-party assert that Turkish Republic meant transition from subject to citizen, they do not show cogent grounding for their claim. However, the ones who identify this transition with some time between 1839-1912, show certain concepts, laws or rights for their argument. It is not very surprising that while Toktamış Ateş only argues that Turkish Republic means transition from subject to citizen, Akşin Somel discusses the Reform Edict of 1856 and Şükrü Hanioglu cites elections, polyphonic media or political movements. This is what I conclude: What is done in Kemalist historiography<sup>42</sup> is - in the words of Mete Tunçay<sup>43</sup>

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39 Fevzi Demir, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Meclis-i Mebusan Seçimleri*, p. 19

40 While there is more or less an agreement within the Turkish historiography that the Ottoman Empire started to Westernize and modernize in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Şükrü Hanioglu offers a different approach. In *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Hanioglu challenges this paradigm of Westernization and offers a wider perspective characterized by an Ottoman response to modernity and attempts of Ottoman Empire to gain the control of center.

41 The 1908 elections were not free and fair in the sense we know today. For instance, women could not vote. Nor males who did not pay any tax, too. For the characteristics of the 1908 elections, see Fevzi Demir, *Ibid*, pp. 49-57.

42 The term “Kemalist historiography” is not yet a term in Turkish, but “Kemalist” is. I described the way history is presented from a Kemalist point of view as “Kemalist historiography.” I hope to coin this term with my future academic works.

I should also add that, I categorize the historians who champion Ataturk's rule and argue that the single-party period was a necessity, as “single-party advocates/proponents/exponents.”

43 Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması*, (from now on, *TC'de Tek-Parti*) p. 1

and Cemil Koçak<sup>44</sup> - producing theories without basing them on facts. We can perhaps come up with several other theories to suggest that Turkish Republic meant transition from subject to citizen, but unless they are corroborated with factual evidence, theories by themselves are not very convincing.

One thing I feel the need to emphasize is the trap of fetishizing the period of 1908 and I have something to say about this. In an article, Cemil Koçak states that lack of democracy today makes the historians look for its foundations in yesterday, and that Aykut Kansu's identifying the period of 1908 with liberal democracy is a product of this problem. Koçak argues that since the people we often identify with liberal democratic ideas did not have the chance of coming to power and that we do this identification based on their statements, we can not certainly know whether they would remain democratic if they came to power.<sup>45</sup>

I might agree with Cemil Koçak in this matter to some extent. In fact, if we can make a claim like this to point out the dangers of fetishizing political figures and parties, the study this danger best corresponds to will be Gökhan Kaya's published Ph. D., *Osmanlı Demokrat Fırkası*. Although Kaya himself states that this party never had the chance of coming to power and that they joined the Hürriyet ve İtilaf (HİF) Party later, he nevertheless identifies the party with the most positive, liberal democratic ideas, based on their statements and the documents they left behind. Koçak's article which criticizes seeking democrats in the near history would well suit this study, for we do not know what would have come out of this party if it had ever obtained the chance of coming to power.

Still, all the examples I've discussed above pertaining to 1908 or earlier should be enough for me in arguing against the Kemalist theses that the Turkish Republic means transition from subject to citizen. Whether 1908 was a revolution and whether it started capitalist accumulation in Turkey, as Kansu claims<sup>46</sup> is outside my interest for the time being. As both Ayşe Hür<sup>47</sup> and Emre Kongar<sup>48</sup> objects, 1908 might not be a people's movement and that the motive for it might not be the rights of citizens and individual liberty; it can be argued that "Revolution of 1908" was a fray among the ruler elites. Likewise, whether the Ottoman Democratic Party was really liberal democratic

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44 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 652.

45 Cemil Koçak, "Tarih Çalışmalarında Yeni Bir Eğilim: Siyasi Tarihimizde Demokrat Aramak" as in *Geçmişiniz İtinayla Temizlenir*, p. 539-544.

46 Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 376.

47 Ayşe Hür, "1908 Devrim mi Darbe mi," as in *Öteki Tarih I*, p. 106.

48 Emre Kongar, cited in Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 29.



and whether they would remain democratic if they had ever come to power does not quite interest me. To argue against the Kemalist assumption that Turkish Republic created citizen from subject, a more or less politically plural 1908 atmosphere and some proof that Turkish citizen was defined properly in Ottoman course books, is I think enough, and as a single-party proponent like Zafer Toprak points out, the parliament of 1908 would be “counted as an important step towards pluralist, parliamentary life.”<sup>49</sup> When we admit that Turkey entered a modernization period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that she had already witnessed a political pluralism in 1920's,<sup>50</sup> putting forward and defending the above mentioned Kemalist theses become utterly difficult.

I should add a few words about the Kemalist argument that Turkish Republic created citizen from subject, and I will come back to this point in the very end of this work as well. With their vast knowledge of the Ottoman society structure, figures like Emre Kongar or Toktamış Ateş themselves probably do know that if this transition ever existed, it was during the late Ottoman period. But their over attachment to Kemalism which at times manifests itself in the shape of a cult of leadership<sup>51</sup> - argued by Kansu as “the psychology of worshipping a hero” bringing with itself “the assertion that the existence of Turkey today depends on the Father”<sup>52</sup> might be preventing them from conceding this. What they do is to come up with hypothesis without taking into consideration the facts, an approach criticized by Mete Tunçay and Cemil Koçak.<sup>53</sup> After all, they are trying to justify an authoritarian -if not totalitarian- period, and they need to find excuses. The reason why Toktamış Ateş, in almost all his works, talks about this so-called transition from subject to citizen is that he needs to make an apology for the single-party authoritarianism, which he champions. And he never explains how this transition ever took place in 1923, which he can not.

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49 Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Popülizm*, p. 16.

50 Cemil Koçak, *Belgelerle İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (from now on, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*), p. 641 and 645.

51 Toktamış Ateş, as in *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz*, p. 2 and 112. Here, Ateş talks about how we are beholden to Atatürk, one time giving Halide Edip as example.

52 Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 15.

53 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 652; Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması* (from now on, *TC'nde Tek Parti*), p. 1.

## ***II. Interwar Europe Authoritarianism***

I started my work with a basic question: What is the defense of single-party based on, and why should it be abandoned? The first sub-thesis of defense of single-party I indicated was the question of transition from subject to citizen, and my second sub-title is interwar Europe authoritarianism. As I will demonstrate its examples below, the assumption that interwar European states were characterised by totalitarian and/or fascist regimes makes one of the backgrounds of the claims that justify single-party regime of Turkey.

Roughly speaking, the argument goes as follows: Interwar Europe saw the rising of many authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, mainly the Nazi Germany of Hitler and the fascist Italy of Mussolini. Apart from these obvious examples; Spain of Franco, Greece of Metaxas, Salazar of Portugal and Pilsudski of Poland can be counted among many dictatorships. At a time like this, Turkey had a relatively softer regime, with a limited amount of liberty. When we evaluate Atatürk's single-party regime with respect to the values of her time, single-party rule is (should be) acceptable.

I should say now that there are two obvious problems with the above-mentioned argument, and I will utter them when I am done with citing examples. This claim that interwar Europe witnessed the rising of totalitarian regimes so the single-party regime of Turkey should be accepted natural has various examples in the Kemalist literature. The era is often referred to as the “Europe of 1920's and 1930's” and the arguments can show variety. Let me explain by citing the examples.

The names I will refer to are İlber Ortaylı, Toktamış Ateş, Hakkı Uyar, Sina Akşin, Nurşen Mazıcı, Ergün Aybars and Zafer Toprak. Ortaylı asserts there was no democracy in the European continent, particularly in the essential names of today's European Union. Democracy was “degenerated and dysfunctional” in France; it is out of question in Poland and Hungary; it is causing street fights in Austria and it is “obvious where it is going in Germany” (meaning the rise of Hitler's Nazi party, U. D.). In addition, England was outside of the continent, as it is today, and so was

Scandinavia.<sup>54</sup>

According to Toktamış Ateş, it is wrong to evaluate the world of 1920's and 1930's with the values of 2000's. "Interwar period was a time all around the world, especially in Europe where totalitarian winds blew. With respect to both human rights and liberties, the Turkey of those times was one of the leading states of Europe." Ateş goes on to give the examples of Belgium and France as countries whose women obtained their rights after Turkey, and finally mentions some 200 professors who fled Nazi Germany to come to Turkey, as "something to think about."<sup>55</sup>

Sina Akşin is another figure who approaches to the matter from the same angle as Toktamış Ateş, citing the same example. "Atatürk regime," Akşin claims, "was above the level of European democracy." Akşin, like Ateş, gives the example of (this time 142) university professors who accepted to come to Turkey to live and work for a long time, and says that "there is no reason to think that these people were desperate or stupid enough to move from a dictatorship to another one,"<sup>56</sup> implying that the Turkey of that time was not a dictatorship. Akşin makes his same argument in another work, too. Saying that in post World War I Europe authoritarian and totalitarian regimes were extremely normal, and that the single-party rule in Turkey was more democratic than many other European countries, Akşin gives the examples of Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Soviet Union. He states that maybe Atatürk's single-party regime could be titled as dictatorship, but since it was not totalitarian and did not bear rampant anti-Semitism, it was lesser of the two evil.<sup>57</sup>

The last three examples I will talk about in this interwar Europe authoritarianism are Nurşen Mazıcı, Ergün Aybars and Zafer Toprak. Mazıcı gives the examples of French and Switzerland as the only republic regimes in Europe in the end of World War I. Stressing that the republic regimes later turned into totalitarian and militarist ones, Mazıcı says that "Turkey at least was successful in protecting a softer republic."<sup>58</sup> Toprak likewise identifies the period between 1914-1945 as the "dark ages of Europe" (perhaps giving reference to Mazower's book titled as *The Dark Continent*) and claims that trying to understand the single-party of Atatürk is impossible when we ignore this.

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54 İlber Ortaylı, *Yakın Tarihin Gerçekleri*, p. 100.

55 Toktamış Ateş, "Kemalizm ve Özgünlüğü," as in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm*, p. 322.

56 Sina Akşin, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 225.

57 Sina Akşin, "Atatürk Döneminde Demokrasi," cited in Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (from now on, *Tek-Parti Dönemi*), p. 92-93.

58 Nurşen Mazıcı, *Tek-Parti Dönemi*, p. 10.

Toprak also talks about head skull measurements conducted during the 1930's in Turkey-in fact this is the main purpose of him to write the book and I will come back to that part, in the end of this chapter. Finally, Ergün Aybars, too, like Toprak, identifies the period between 1918-1940 as the “age of totalitarian states” and stresses that “Turkish Republic will make its preference in such an atmosphere.”<sup>59</sup>

As I've said in the previous paragraphs, the arguments show resemblance. The view of all the above-mentioned historians is that interwar Europe was characterized by authoritarian/ totalitarian regimes and at a time like this, Turkey had a softer regime. The countries that are most cited are Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. To make their arguments more valid, Toktamış Ateş and Sina Akşin give the examples of some 150-200 university lecturers who preferred to come to Turkey after they fled the Nazi Germany.

The first and foremost thing that should be uttered about interwar Europe authoritarianism is that, the Europe of 1920's was *not* characterized by authoritarian or totalitarian/fascist regimes. As we know very well, the rise of totalitarian Europe corresponds to the 1930's, and not 1920's. Since it is impossible for erudite historians like İlber Ortaylı not to know this, what I will suggest is that the desire to defend single-party regime of Turkey prompts historians like Ortaylı to distort history.

There are more than enough sources to have a general look into the regimes of interwar Europe. The names I will refer to are Mark Mazower, Eric Hobsbawm, Norman Davies, J. M. Roberts, Michael Mann and Cemil Koçak. Mazower states that when World War I was over, democracy was in its apogee.<sup>60</sup> While Mazower states that the number of republics in Europe at the beginning of World War I was 3, and in the end 13;<sup>61</sup> Davies states that in the beginning (of World War I) there were 19 monarchies and 3 republics, in the end 14 monarchies and 16 republics.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Hobsbawm puts forward that in 1920, there were “35 or maybe more” constitutional elected governments all around the globe.<sup>63</sup> According to Şükrü Hanioglu, 28 out of 32 regimes in 1923<sup>64</sup> and according to Michael Mann, “all but one of its twenty-eight states...in late

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59 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 185.

60 Mark Mazower, *Karanlık Kıta: Avrupa'nın 20. Yüzyılı*, p. XII. Mazower also states that 20 years later, democracy was facing death, which I will talk about soon.

61 *Ibid*, p. 2.

62 Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, p. 943.

63 Eric Hobsbawm, *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl: Aşırılikler Çağı* (from now on *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl*), p. 147.

64 Şükrü Hanioglu, “Dönemin koşulları göz önüne alınırsa” *Sabah* 4 Dec 2011.

1920” (the deviant one being the Soviet Union)<sup>65</sup> in Europe are parliamentary democracies. Finally, Cemil Koçak states that in 1920, there were only two countries in Europe without democracy, and in 1940, there were only two with democracy.<sup>66</sup>

The above-mentioned information makes it clear that in 1920's, Europe was not characterized by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes (the numbers may, and do, differ from source to source; what is clear I think is that post World War I period witnessed the rise of democracies, *not* totalitarian regimes). However, we should also make clear that this democratic triumph of Europe was very short lived; that is to say when we come to the mid 1930's, democracies had been vanquished by fascist or totalitarian regimes. At this point, again I see it useful to refer to the above-mentioned names. Mazower states that in 1918, democracy was triumphant but adds that 20 years later, it had almost disappeared.<sup>67</sup> He adds that in the end of 1930's, full support for democracy was in decline all around Europe.<sup>68</sup> Hobsbawm and Davies have similar evaluations for the future of democracy in Europe. Hobsbawm states that 35 or more regimes in 1920 were elected governments, but he adds that when we come to 1938 -only one year before World War II- the number was at most 17.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, Davies concludes that “democratic revolution soon proved illusory.”<sup>70</sup>

The above-mentioned information speaks for itself and hardly needs further clarification. The early years of interwar Europe did not witness the rise of totalitarian regimes, as suggested by almost all Kemalist names I uttered above. On the contrary, what we saw in 1919 in Paris Conference was, the triumph of democracy. To quote from Mazower, it was “a generation of democracy ranging from the Baltic to the Balkans, passing through Germany and Poland.”<sup>71</sup> It is true that Europe “saw liberal democracies falling prey to dictatorships,”<sup>72</sup> but this was in the 1930's, when Turkey had already transferred to the single-party regime, which is the core of my first criticism to the interwar Europe authoritarianism argument.

The second point I want to make is that, even if in 1920's, Europe had seen the rise of totalitarian regimes, this can not be used as an excuse for transferring to single-party regime; it can only serve as part of apologist historiography. Justifying Turkey's

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65 Michael Mann, *Fascists*, p. 37.

66 Cemil Koçak, “Türkiye Avrupa'daki 4'üncü tek-parti diktatorluguydu,” *Star*, 2 March 2013.

67 Mark Mazower, *Karanlık Kıta: Avrupa'nın Yirminci Yüzyılı*, p. 4.

68 *Ibid*, p. 25.

69 Eric Hobsbawm, *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl*, p. 148.

70 Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* p. 943.

71 Mark Mazower, *Karanlık Kıta: Avrupa'nın Yirminci Yüzyılı*, p. 2.

72 Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, p. 943.

single-party regime based on the totalitarian regimes of interwar Europe would mean to forget that the regimes Turkey claims to have been influenced by, are considered infamous and loathsome. What the proponents of single-party refuse to see is that bad examples can not be accepted as precedent.

I want to make this point more clear, for whenever the authoritarian regime of Turkey is discussed, the final word is that the Europe of 1920's and 30's were mired in totalitarianism, so it was normal for Turkey to take these states as example. This is equal to an Italian historian's arguing that Mussolini's regime should be accepted, considering that it was influenced by Hitler! This is also equal to a German historian claiming that Germany's totalitarian tendencies should not be questioned, for they were influenced by the winds blowing from Italy. In addition, this issue of authoritarianism is not a result of the circumstances; it looks more like a preference. Therefore, saying that the conditions of the time were not suitable, like İlber Ortaylı does, is utterly problematic.

The postulation that interwar Europe saw the rising of totalitarian regimes also brings with itself the premise that Turkey transferred to the single-party regime after other European states, which is based on false information. Hitler comes to power in Germany in 1933, 8 years after Turkey transferred to single-party regime. Likewise, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway and Czechoslovakia all fall prey to authoritarianism after Turkey.<sup>73</sup> As Cemil Koçak puts forward, Turkey is the fourth country to turn into the single-party regime, after Russia (1917), Hungary (1920) and Italy (1922) respectively.<sup>74</sup> If there is any mentioning of influence, it is not that Turkey was influenced by the authoritarian regimes, but perhaps it should be vice versa.

It is almost always uttered that Turkey was influenced by the totalitarian interwar regimes, and the two examples always uttered are Italy and Germany. Hitler's statement which we can only read in Falih Rıfki Atay's book *Çankaya* -and only in the original one since it was censored in the later editions- speaks for itself: Atatürk's first pupil is Mussolini, I am the second one.<sup>75</sup>

Here, I am pleading the readers not to make comparisons with Hitler's III. Reich and the

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73 Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy*, p. 21.

74 Cemil Koçak counts these 3 countries in historical order and states that, Turkey became the 4<sup>th</sup> single party-state, after Russia, Italy and Hungary respectively. But since he states that Hungary was turned into single-party in 1920 and Italy in 1922, the order should be Russia, Hungary and Italy, respectively.

75 Falih Rıfki Atay, *Çankaya*, p. 205.

Kemalist Republic, which would be preposterous, but rather to ponder: If Hitler himself is claiming that Atatürk's first student is Mussolini, and himself the second, than Turkey could not have been influenced by Germany or Italy. Also, knowing that Italy banned all opposition and cemented the single-party rule in 1926, Germany in 1933 and Turkey in 1925, I think it seems obvious who was influenced by whom.

The question of some 142 or 200 university lecturers coming to Turkey to flee Nazi Germany will not help us in justifying Turkey's single-party regime or claiming that it “was above the level of European democracy,” as Sina Akşin does.<sup>76</sup> Since at that time, some European countries -mainly Germany- had eradicated democracy at a level never witnessed before, Turkey's “protecting a softer regime,” as Nurşen Mazıcı argues,<sup>77</sup> can not be an excuse for legitimization. Why the university lecturers left Nazi Germany to come to Turkey seems obvious: To save their lives! Therefore, Akşin's suggesting that these people can not be stupid enough to move from a dictatorship to another one<sup>78</sup> seems utterly problematic. If one is moving from a dictatorship that aims to burn him after choking with gas to another one that does nothing to destroy him but that does not give him much right, I think one would immediately accept it! Not establishing death camps or destroying all the opposition with utmost violence can not be an excuse for justifying single-party rule. Nevertheless, I should reiterate that saying that Turkey's single-party regime can not be justified based on Nazi Germany should on no account lead to making comparisons between III. Reich and Kemalist Turkey.<sup>79</sup>

At this point, I would like to move the argument to a different level, with reference to a study by Zafer Toprak. In his book, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, Toprak talks about the physical anthropology studies conducted during the interwar period in detail, and claims a few times that Turkey was affected by this atmosphere. Toprak also gives the example of head skull measurements meticulously conducted by Afet İnan and titles them as the “biggest anthropological survey.”<sup>80</sup> I would like to touch upon this claim of Toprak closely, for I believe it constitutes a

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76 Sina Akşin, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 225.

77 Nurşen Mazıcı, *Tek-Parti Dönemi*, p. 10.

78 Sina Akşin, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 225.

79 While it is not plausible to draw parallels between the Nazi Germany and Kemalist Turkey; Soviet Russia and Fascist Italy might offer better examples for comparison, and Stefan Plaggenborg titles his most recent study as *Ordnung und Gewalt: Kemalismus-Sozialismus-Faschismus*. In addition, Stefan Ihrig, who argues that the Nazis were influenced by Atatürk, titles his work as *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination*.

80 Zafer Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (from now on *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*), p. 99.

quintessential example of apologist historiography.

Zafer Toprak states in his work that “the interwar period is maybe the darkest decades of all history,”<sup>81</sup> a statement with which most people would pretty much agree. The problem is that, he goes on to say that “the Republican Turkey is emerging in such an atmosphere,”<sup>82</sup> starting to make grounds for his apologetic arguments. After that, he is counting the various so-called anthropological studies conducted during the interwar period -needless to say all of which were racist- and argues that Turkey was influenced by the spirit of the time.

An interesting point made by Toprak is that the anthropological studies conducted during Turkey's single-party regime was done to prove to the world that Turkish people were not part of the yellow race. Toprak's argument goes as follows: European nations identified Turkey as the yellow race,<sup>83</sup> which was a racist attitude. We however, proved them wrong by demonstrating that we are not from the yellow race (which Toprak somehow does not identify as racism). European peoples thought Turkish people were dolichocephalic, but we, thanks to our anthropological studies, proved that we too, like the Europeans, were brachycephalic.

This is another case where the Kemalist historiography is trying to legitimize its wrongdoing by exemplifying another wrongdoing. Mind you, Zafer Toprak knows that what Europeans did was racism, and therefore he says that “the antidote of anthropological mistakes, was again anthropology.”<sup>84</sup> This is equal to saying the antidote of racism was again racism, or as perfectly stated by Şükrü Hanioglu, “our racism was good.”<sup>85</sup>

Zafer Toprak constructs all his book on the premise that if some so-called anthropological studies identify Turkey from the yellow race, then another study claiming that Turkey does not belong to the yellow race should be acceptable. Unfortunately, these actions are equally racist. A bad example can not be justified by pointing out a worse example. No matter how much Toprak does his best to prove that the question of racism is not ethnic, and that it bears an anthropological quality by saying that “an inclusive, not exclusive question of racism is dominating all the single-

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81 Ibid, p. 13.

82 Ibid. p. 13

83 Ibid, p. 72.

84 Ibid, p.13.

85 Şükrü Hanioglu, “En asil duygunun tarihçiliğinden apolojetik tarihyazımına,” *Sabah*, 1 July 2012.



party period”,<sup>86</sup> it is to no avail, and it does not change the fact that single-party regime of Turkey saw racist actions.

At this point, it might be judicious to take into account that Atatürk declared in 1930 that the landscape of Turkey was like that of a dictatorship, and it was obvious that he was not pleased with this. This is suggestive because if in 1930, European nations one by one had fallen prey to totalitarianism, Atatürk would probably not say that “the landscape of today is more or less a dictatorship and that I do not want to leave an institution of despotism after I die.”<sup>87</sup> It is lack of democracy in Turkey that makes Europeans disrespect and denigrate Turkey,<sup>88</sup> and it is the same lack of democracy which prompts Atatürk to take a step to establish a new political party, albeit a controlled one. Both Europeans and Turkish people at that time are perfectly aware that the political fashion in Europe in 1930 is *not* authoritarianism.

I should repeat once more what I've been discussing in this chapter. The argument that Turkey's leaning on single-party regime can be justified considering the authoritarian or totalitarian characteristics of interwar Europe is not cogent for two reasons. The first is that unlike conventional assumptions, Europe of 1920's was not dominated by authoritarian regimes; most of those regimes rose in 1930's. Although this is as plain as day, it is suggestive that almost all Kemalist theses use this excuse for single-party justification. Accordingly, Turkey which was turned into a single-party regime in 1925 can not have been influenced by totalitarian states. The second is that, even if this had happened like this -meaning if in 1920's authoritarian regimes had risen in Europe- this should not justify Turkey's single-party regime, because the examples all the world remembers with hate and disgust should not be cited as examples that influenced Turkey. The first point is historically, the second one is morally problematic.

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86 Zafer Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, p. 15.

87 Mete Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek-Parti*, p. 254.

88 Here, I will give two important examples: An often narrated anecdote within the foundation of Free Republican Party is that when Kazım Paşa, head of Turkish parliament tries to elucidate in Vienna to a European journalist that Turkey has only one party and that it is normal because of Turkey's unique conditions, the journalist mocks him the next day in his column and finds it stupid that a Turkish is trying to teach parliament lesson in the middle of Europe to the Europeans. (Cited in Mete Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek-Parti*, p. 248; Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih III*, pp. 47-48).

Another name that is often referred to is Joseph McGrew, American ambassador in Turkey in 1930. McGrew writes that Atatürk gradually reached the conclusion that single-party system, when compared with Europe, is a token of abasement. McGrew also mentions the European journalists who had recently talked about “Turkish dictatorship as formally Western but de facto Eastern,” and states that Atatürk did not like this at all (Cited in Mete Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek-Parti*, pp. 247-248; Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih III*, p. 47).

### ***III. Modernization Theory and Unique/Unfavorable Conditions of Turkey***

This will be the longest, and arguably the most important chapter of this thesis for I will address an important part of the assertions put forward to justify single-party regime of Turkey. While the material in the first two chapters are easy to categorize, I can not say the same thing for this one. The reason is that the issues raised in this chapter are often intertwined and used interchangeably. Let me elucidate this point. The remaining premises to justify single-party period are as follows: a) Turkey had her unique conditions which entailed a single-party regime; b) In a country where the socio-economic conditions are not favorable, there can not be democracy (pluralism); c) Republican People Party (CHP)<sup>89</sup> established by Atatürk is kind of a tutelage party which prepared the preconditions of a democratic regime; and d) Democracy was the aim to reach in the long run.

I will deal with all the premises above in this chapter jointly, and not one by one, because they tend to intertwine with each other. Let me give a couple of examples and then go on with the summary of the premises. There will be some cases where Turkey's unique conditions will be voiced along with her low socio-economic level, so it will be easier to deal with them. Also, since teleologic historiography is related with Turkey's "unique" conditions, tutelage party debate and German Sonderweg, it would not be the best idea to treat each of them separately, under different titles in different chapters.

Before beginning this chapter, I would once more like to summarize my aim in this work and what I have done so far. I am trying to disprove the premise that the early years of Turkish Republic entailed a single-party system. In doing so, I am referring to

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89 The full name of the party is Republican People Party, and is usually abbreviated as RPP in the English literature about Turkish history. The reason for my predilection of "CHP" in this thesis is that this is a study about Turkish history, and will mostly be read by the Turkish audience. Likewise, Progressive Republican Party will be addressed as TPCF, and Free Republican Party as SCF, with their Turkish abbreviations.

the assertions of historians within the Kemalist historiography and so far, I have dealt with two of them: That Turkish Republic meant transition from subject to citizen, and that since inter-war European states had authoritarian/totalitarian regimes, it was natural for Turkey to follow suit. The third premise I will question -and hopefully confute- is that Turkey's unique conditions entailed a single-party regime and/or put obstacle for the creation of a true democracy. While talking about Turkey's "unique conditions," I will incorporate the modernization theory, debate about tutelage party, teleologic discussions, and to compare Turkey with Germany, I will raise an important debate from Western historiography: Sonderweg (that like Turkey, Germany had her unique conditions which produced authoritarianism).

### **Modernist and Kemalist Paradigms: Unique Conditions and Sonderweg**

I will start with the modernization theory and preconditions of democracy, and in doing so, the name I will resort to will be Levent Köker, though he merely refers to this paradigm without supporting it. The modernization theory envisages two kinds of societies (traditional and modern), and to be able to observe how the single-party period is justified by historians, it is imperative to understand their premises, which assert that Turkish Republic meant transition from a traditional society (meaning Ottoman Empire) to a modern one, so it was imperative to go through a transition stage.

The modernization theory, put forward by the Western social scientists for the non-Western societies roughly goes as follows: i) There is a distinction between traditional and modern societies. ii) Democracies can only exist in the modern ones, and for democracy, certain level of economic and cultural conditions are necessary. iii) The modern society is characterized by capitalism and industry. iv) Evolution from the traditional to the modern society takes stages, and a transition stage might be necessary which may be characterized by coercion v) Every society will pass from the same stages, despite their certain idiosyncrasies. vi) Modernization is an irreversible process and a society to reach a certain level in terms of urbanization, industrialization and literacy will not experience previous stages again.<sup>90</sup>

It might be like spoiling the end of a movie, but I should say now that historians I have referred to so far who justify single-party period of Turkey will exploit this paradigm to the full extent, duly identifying Ottoman society as a traditional one, the democratic Turkey Atatürk desired to create a modern one, Atatürk revolutions about attire, time and measure units, script revolution etc. as agents of modernization and the

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90 Levent Köker, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, p. 35 and 52.

single-party period as the transition stage. No doubt the debate of subject to citizen I've discussed in the first chapter will fit into this theory, too. What an invaluable paradigm for exponents of single-party!

From the modernization theory, let me skip to Turkey's so-called unique/unfavorable conditions and then discuss how they relate. The figures I will resort to while discussing Turkey's "uniqueness" and low socio-economic conditions will be Anıl Çeçen, İlber Ortaylı, Ergün Aybars, Bernard Lewis, Halil İnalcık, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Toktamış Ateş, and Emre Kongar, respectively. I should first summarize the assertions of these distinguished names: Because Turkey had its unique conditions such as low socio-economic level and an empire background, there was no way for her to experience democracy. The facts that she came out of a war conducted under tough conditions and lack of an industrial (and/or bourgeoisie) revolution also played a key role in necessitating the rule of the single-party regime.

The figure that talks about Turkey's uniqueness -almost with an obsessed manner- is Anıl Çeçen. In his work, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, Çeçen mentions these very words "our (or Turkey's ) unique conditions" at least 10 times!<sup>91</sup> It is bizarre and quite objectionable that Çeçen actually never elucidates the meaning behind this "unique conditions of Turkey." Quoting passages from Atatürk's certain speeches where he uses the phrase "we resemble us," Çeçen again and again claims that Turkey had unique conditions. For instance Çeçen argues that the unique state of Kemalizm becomes prominent when it is combined with the unique conditions of the political setting.<sup>92</sup> Again, Çeçen asserts that Kemalizm can be evaluated based on Turkey's unique and other nations' non-unique conditions.<sup>93</sup> Çeçen also claims while discussing Kemalist principles in general that, they were formulated based on Turkey's unique conditions while also exploiting -but not totally copying- other ideologies. While Çeçen emphasizes these uniqueness of Turkey at least 10 times, he doesn't make any attempt to substantiate his premise.

İlber Ortaylı is another historian who talks about Turkey's unique conditions. In his book *Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yüzyılı* -in the format of questions by İsmail Küçükkaya and answers- Ortaylı brings the word to Turkey's uniqueness twice, though not directly using these exact words in both of them. While Ortaylı claims that the secular model

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91 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 21, 72, 76, 102, 114, 118, 121, 127, 128 and 184.

92 Ibid, pp. 72.

93 Ibid, pp. 118.

can not function in Turkey as it does in the West, he asserts that “we have to operate our unique (peculiar) model,” giving the example of Jewish state Israel.<sup>94</sup> (When asked by Küçükaya what that model is, Ortaylı fails to cite a cogent reason. Making a rather ambiguous statement about Moslem communities in Colonial countries, he argues that “it is not valid and that another model can not be established.”)

5 other names I will refer to pertaining to the uniqueness of Turkey are Ergün Aybars, Bernard Lewis, Halil İnalçık, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı and Toktamış Ateş. In a chapter from the book of Bedri Baykam, *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, Aybars mentions how in a previous conference he “talked about Turkey's unique conditions,” directly using these words. Talking about how Western states transferred to democracy, Aybars demonstrates the long process of democratization of the West. In doing this, he gives Western-world events such as the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution and French and American revolutions as examples. Citing Germany, Italy and Japan -the defeated nations of World War II who later transferred to democracy by means of international factors- Aybars tries to justify lack of democracy in single-party Turkey.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, Bernard Lewis -giving interview to Özer Ozankaya as part of his book *Dünya Düşünürleri Gözüyle Atatürk ve Cumhuriyeti*, talks about how hard it is to establish a democratic regime after a national war, emphasizing the fact that Ottoman State had been in struggle from 1908 onwards, though intermittently. Exemplifying Sweden, which did not go through the same afflictions that Turkey did, Lewis identifies Turkey's democracy experience as “radiant.”<sup>96</sup>

The identifications and assertions of Halil İnalçık, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı and Toktamış Ateş are not very different from that of the previous ones. Citing from the sociologist Eisenstadt, İnalçık states that the instability of Turkey's democracy can not be explained with military coups, development or unhealthy urbanization; rather, we can analyze it by the Kemalist regime springing from Turkey's unique conditions.<sup>97</sup> Kışlalı on the other hand, states in his newspaper article -like Kongar- that the 6 arrows of CHP were products of Turkey's conditions and that Kemalizm was the amalgamation of liberalism and socialism, in a country underdeveloped.<sup>98</sup> Finally, Toktamış Ateş - though not exactly using the same words as the ones above- argues that the amount of

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94 İlber Ortaylı, *Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yüzyılı*, pp. 144.

95 Ergün Aybars, as in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 59.

96 Bernard Lewis, as in *Dünya Düşünürleri Gözüyle Atatürk ve Cumhuriyeti*, Özer Ozankaya, pp. 6-7.

97 Halil İnalçık, “Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük,” *Doğu-Batı*, 29, as in *Osmanlı ve Modern Türkiye*, p. 197.

98 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “CHP'nin İdeolojisi ve Kemalizm,” *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Aug 1992, cited in *Atatürk'e Saldırmanın Dayanılmaz Hafifliği* p. 26.

blood split in the Turkish revolution is inconsiderably low, asserting that it is the result of the unique laws of a revolution process.<sup>99</sup>

The last figure I will refer to is Emre Kongar (and I saved him for the end on purpose to deal with him in detail) who in his book *Atatürk* directly uses the chapter subheading “Turkey's Unique Conditions.” Analyzing it from a more or less class-based perspective, Kongar asserts that since the Western theories are not satisfactory in understanding Turkey, we should take into consideration Turkey's unique conditions, without completely rejecting Western theories. Kongar's analysis goes as follows: Since Turkey's Selcuki-Ottoman past is different from her Western counterparts, and since unlike the Western countries, Turkey did not go through an industrial revolution, the theories that comply to Western countries are not enough to understand Turkey. Exploiting the analyses of figures like Donald Blaisdell, Orhan Kurmuş and Rother Rathmann, Kongar concludes that after Ottoman State became a semi-colonial country, adapting the Western methods became impossible. So today's Turkey -whose past was never experienced by societies of the West- has planes, but it is nevertheless backwards in technology<sup>100</sup> (I will come back to this work and some categorizations of Kongar again in the end of this chapter).

Kongar makes a similar analysis in his work *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, too, where he claims that the 6 arrows of CHP was designed based on the unique conditions of that day's Turkey, and that if one is to question the practices of the single-party, s/he should not ignore that those principles and practices took place in a society that neither underwent industrial revolution, nor consummated her democratic transition,<sup>101</sup> which brings us to a similar example of historiography, *Sonderweg*.

Before going to the next phase, which will be about the so-called peculiar characteristic of German history, I shall summarize the above-mentioned points: Turkey could not develop a democratic regime like that of the west because of her unique (peculiar) conditions. Either because of the Ottoman past filled with afflictions or because of lack of bourgeoisie (or industry) revolution, Turkish state could not have followed the path of Western civilizations. Since Turkey does not resemble any other country, their conventional methods such as parliamentary democracies, elections etc. would not be favorable for her. Because of her peculiar conditions, Turkey had to go in

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99 Toktamış Ateş, as in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 31.

100 Emre Kongar, *Atatürk* p. 340.

101 Emre Kongar, *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, p. 216.

her own way. Turkey's unique conditions entailed the single-party rule.

From the uniqueness of Turkey, let me now come to the uniqueness of a Western society, Germany. Since *Sonderweg*, meaning special/unique path in German, (*Sonder* meaning special/unique/peculiar and *weg* meaning path/way/track) bears conspicuous resemblance to the “unique” conditions of Turkey, I believe it deserves some attention. *Sonderweg* is the title given to a standard historiography in Germany, claiming German superiority, or inferiority -depending on the time it is written- compared to other industrialized states, such as England and France. The works I will refer to for this *Sonderweg* debate will be *Peculiarities of German History* (including 2 long articles by Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn) and the review of that work by Zafer and Deniz Yenel.

The *Sonderweg* thesis -summarized in Yenel & Yenel, though they are not supporting it- can be summarized as follows: i) Liberal democratic values are mostly the corollary of successful bourgeois revolutions. ii) A bourgeois revolution is one that will cause economic, social and cultural changes and which is fought by the bourgeoisie class against an aristocracy. iii) Successful bourgeoisie revolutions of this type did emerge in England and France. iv) Every society, at a certain stage of their development, will go through this kind of revolution. v) Unlike England and France, Germany did not go through a successful bourgeoisie revolution; and vi) The authoritarian regimes of Germany -not exclusively the Nazi Germany of Hitler- are results of this unsuccessful bourgeois revolution, and of Germany's aberration (unique conditions).<sup>102</sup>

I should say a couple of things about the above-mentioned *Sonderweg* argument. Until in 1989 -when Eley and Blackbourn published their separate essays questioning the validity and reliability of Germany's unsuccessful bourgeois revolution creating authoritarian rule- *Sonderweg* thesis was widely popular in the academic field. Perhaps its being held by both Marxist and liberal schools of thought might give a clue as to its efficiency.<sup>103</sup> The interesting thing is that this *Sonderweg* thesis can be used both in the positive and negative context. Blackbourn and Eley observe that both in 1914 -in the eve of World War I- and during the Weimar years, *Sonderweg* was a positive notion whereas especially after 1945 -Germany's terrible defeat and destruction- historians' assessment of *Sonderweg* became negative. From this, I understand that the validity of

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102 Yenel & Yenel, “Alman Tarihinin Özgünlükleri Üzerine,” as in *Toplum ve Bilim*, 54-55, p. 106.  
103 David Blackbourn & Geoff Eley, *Peculiarities of German History*, p. 47.

Sonderweg is measured by the ability of Wehrmacht in battles of Verdun, El Alamein or Stalingrad.

Let me now come to the discussion as to the uniqueness of Turkey and Germany, within the arguments of modernization theory. First of all, as Blackbourn and Eley emphasize, identifying a certain kind of development as aberration is highly problematic. This goes for both Turkish, and German cases. As Eley and Blackbourn state, “in order to have an aberration, it is clearly necessary to have a norm.”<sup>104</sup> What is the common norm in German and Turkish cases: Modernization to be realized by an industrial and/or bourgeoisie revolution. Historians -Ralf Darendorf and Barington Moore in the case of Germany, and Emre Kongar in the case of Turkey- argue that these two states experienced an authoritarian regime because of lack of bourgeois revolution. While in the case of Turkey, the authoritarian single-party period is a justification for modernization, in the German case, it is an explanation for lack of proper modernization. The common denominator is that both cases are identified as being peculiar (unique) compared with their counterparts.

Another problem arises within the discussion of Turkish and German democracy. The modernization theory envisages that a successful bourgeois revolution will inevitably lead to liberal democratic values (Moore further argues that there can be *no* democracy without bourgeois revolution) but it is doubtful whether this is true. In fact Blackbourn and Eley who give England, France and even the USA as examples where this process did not necessarily operate like this,<sup>105</sup> offer to “question the causal chain bourgeoisie-liberalism-parliamentation-democracy, as if these went naturally and somehow logically hand in hand.”<sup>106</sup>

Leaving the Sonderweg discussions for the moment -to come back later- let me now go on with the Turkish case. The problem with the Turkish case is that, both the pluralist periods between 1908-1912 and from 1919 onwards until the onset of the single-party regime, invite certain explanations as to the presence or lack of bourgeois/industrial revolution and/or socio-economic values. It is argued by all the following names -Anıl Çeçen, İlber Ortaylı, Emre Kongar, Ergün Aybars, Bernard Lewis, Halil İnalçık, Toktamış Ateş and Ahmet Taner Kışlalı- that low socio-economic conditions forestalled democracy. But if this were true, those two pluralist periods I've

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104 Ibid, p. 10

105 Ibid, p. 15.

106 Ibid, p. 16.



mentioned above could not have been experienced. If socio-economic conditions are a criteria for having democratic regime, the conditions in any year of the single-party regime were surely more favorable than either that of 1908 and of 1919. If anything, the conditions in 1908 were probably the worst of all, for the Ottoman Sate -although itself was not in war- was fighting against rebellions all around the empire!<sup>107</sup> The question of unfavorable conditions applies to 1908 more than any year of single-party regime, and I am afraid, is enough for the collapse of “unique conditions” paradigm.

Back to the modernization paradigm... As I've said, this set of arguments were put forward by the Westerns for the non-Western world. So it is obvious that their way of looking at the matter is Eurocentric. Just as the modernizationists stipulate that every traditional society will follow Western societies in their development to become modern ones, the Kemalists stipulate that Turkey go through Atatürk revolutions to attain values of democracy, equality, freedom etc. The common mistake here is that while the modernization paradigm assumes that traditional societies are stable (and not dynamic), the Kemalist paradigm assumes a stable, monolithic Ottoman past. As Gusfield objects, developing societies are not stable; they are constantly subject to change, and it would be wrong to assume that every traditional society has forever existed in its current stage.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, the Kemalists are basing their assumptions on the false premise that the Ottoman state was theocratic, and since it remained like that for 600 years, there was no way for it to produce democratic values (whether Islam or any kind of religion can go hand in hand with democracy is another debate and I will not go into that here).

This discussion brings us back to the transition from subject to citizen debate, described by the 8 figures I counted in the first chapter. When we accept Ottoman society as a theocratic state lacking pluralism, it might be argued that Turkish Republic did create subject from citizen. Transition from subject to citizen and from traditional to modern society go hand in hand, and is a good example of Kemalist paradigm combined with the modernization paradigm.

I talked about Emre Kongar's work *Atatürk* earlier and stated that I would come back to it. In two chapters of his book, Kongar discusses the objective and subjective conditions of a revolution. While discussing the objective conditions, Kongar is looking at the revolution structures all around the world and tries to come up with common

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107 Fevzi Demir, *II. Meşrutiyet Seçimleri* pp. 45-46. Demir points out that on 5<sup>th</sup> October, Bulgaria declares her independence and that the next day, Austria-Hungary Empire invades Bosnia-Herzegovina. Again on 6<sup>th</sup> October, Crete Rums declare that the island is now part of Greece.

108 Joseph R. Gusfield, cited in Levent Köker, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, p. 58.

elements, such as economic, social and political conditions. As to the subjective (peculiar) conditions of the Turkish revolution, Kongar discusses leadership (Atatürk), organizations (parliament, political parties etc.) and ideology (6 arrows).

What Kongar fails to see is that, majority of the elements he counts as objective conditions of revolution are actually the conditions of Turkey's single-party period. Kongar argues that if one or more of the following happens, a revolution might occur in a given society: a) If it is indefinite how the political power is to change; b) If the political power is not open to all groups and classes of society; c) If the rulers' ties with the classes, groups and people they represent are cut; d) If the political system doesn't give legitimate opposition to the dissidents; and e) If the people hold the belief that the current political order can not satisfy the needs of the society in the long run.<sup>109</sup> As it is as plain as day, all these apply to the conditions of the single-party period of Turkey, rather than the last stages of the Ottoman Empire.

Emre Kongar goes on to apply all these conditions to the transition from the Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic. While doing is, he bases all his analysis on the highly controversial premises that Ottoman Empire was economically and politically in chaos, that there was no way for pluralism -hence change of power- and that administrators had lost all their legitimacy for representation.<sup>110</sup> This will take us back to the discussion of whether there was pluralism and any hope for change of power in the last stage of the Ottoman Empire, and the answer will be positive. For instance, it is very interesting that Kongar claims that Ottoman parliament was effectively useless, and that Atatürk rendered it efficient,<sup>111</sup> but historical sources suggest just the opposite! It can surely be argued that the parliament opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1920, was more efficient than any parliament of the Ottoman Empire, but I doubt whether this efficiency can be attributed to Mustafa Kemal. Also, knowing that Atatürk did away with the parliament once the National Struggle was over, suggesting that he rendered the parliament efficient would be highly problematic.

The whole content of my thesis -questioning the long embraced assertion that “conditions of the era” necessitated single-party regime- takes its roots from the false notion that economically, socially and politically, Ottoman State had collapsed and that

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109 Emre Kongar, *Atatürk*, pp. 101-102.

110 Ibid, p. 111-121.

111 Ibid, p. 114.

a new regime was required.<sup>112</sup> It is obvious that Kongar -with his academic background- fully exploits this paradigm. For instance, identifying Ottoman society as an anomaly -a term coined by the sociologist Durkheim- Kongar argues that the last stage of the Ottoman State was nothing but chaos, citing the example that the most European and the most religious lifestyle could be observed in the same neighborhood; when in fact this should be interpreted as a token of a social and cultural diversity.

Another problem with Emre Kongar's analysis is that, the conditions he claims to be enough to trigger a revolution can not be applied to the Turkish case, because Turkish Revolution is a definite example of a top-down revolution. Political system's not being open to all groups, its being indefinite how the power is to change, or lack of toleration for opposition can only ignite bottom-up revolutions, not top-down; and Turkish case definitely corresponds to the latter one. It is not that Ottoman masses revolted because of the above-mentioned conditions and overthrew the sultan (as perhaps in the case of The French Revolution where angry masses stormed the Bastille on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1789) but Atatürk -with the help of his charisma and the support of the army- overthrew the Ottoman government and declared himself as single-man (perhaps like Caesar did 2000 years ago by passing the river Rubicon).<sup>113</sup>

Emre Kongar also talks about the modernization theory and he not only himself applies the paradigm to Turkey, but also gives examples from social scientists who do that. While doing this, Kongar doesn't use the modernization paradigm fully, indicating its weaknesses and possible inefficiency in understanding the Turkish revolution (for it was put forward by Westerners). For instance, he resorts to Lerner who claims that every society goes through a modernization process that starts with urbanization which engenders an increase in literacy. Increase in literacy will then lead to propagation of communication devices, which will eventually increase political participation. Lerner

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112 It would not be wrong to say that, majority of Turkish historiography is dominated with accounts that present Ottoman Empire -in the words of Şükrü Hanioglu- with a “teleological...retrospective approach...” in which “it is...assumed that the emergence of Republic of Turkey in Anatolia and of the neighboring nation-states in the surrounding territories of the disintegrated Ottoman polity was the inevitable and predictable result of the decline of a sprawling multi-national empire.” (Hanioglu, p. 1)  
For a meticulous study offering an opposite approach, please see Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*.

113 Some people might find it anachronistic to compare Atatürk and Caesar; after all they are almost 2000 years apart from each other. Yet I think their actions, the impetus behind those actions, and even results bear conspicuous similarity. It should also be kept in mind that when Mussolini marched on Rome, he did his best in order to be regarded as “a second...Caesar who had wished to enter the city on horseback surrounded by supporters.” Christopher Kelly, *Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 123. For how Kelly compares Caesar and Mussolini, and how he draws parallels between the Roman Empire and fascist Italy, see *Ibid*, pp. 122-126.

concludes by pointing out what happened in Turkey after 1940 as an evidence (proof) to his theory. Kongar uses a similar example by referring to Huntington, too, who argues that political modernization means propagation of political participation, rationalization of authority and the differentiation of structures.

Here, too, Emre Kongar fails to match the social theories with what actually happened in Turkey during the single-party period. While it does sound romantic that Atatürk revolution increased political participation, and sprawling of communication devices, the reality was much more different. It is obvious that political participation of the people was zero during the single-party regime, for there was only *one* party, and people could not attain communication devices at all, for all media was under strict censor. Kongar is probably referring to the fact that in 1950, with the DP's coming to power, political participation increased, but it would be quite fallacious to attribute this to the success of Atatürk revolution. As I will discuss soon, it is not that Atatürk regime aims transferring to democracy in the end -as unanimously proposed by the Kemalist literature- but rather it *knows* that it will be overthrown in the first free election.

Kongar also gives the example of script revolution as a factor to increase literacy; but if anything, script revolution pulled the level of literacy in society to %0 at once. Level of literacy skyrocketed perhaps due to campaigns all around the country, but it can easily be argued that it would happen anyway, without the script revolution. Also, it is obvious that the number of journals and newspapers published after 1908 - when the censor was disposed off- is much more than that of any year of single-party regime, not to mention the diversity.

The last example Kongar uses -to relate modernization theories to Atatürk revolution- is from Frey, who is famous in Turkish historiography for his conceptualization of tutelage party for CHP, and I will discuss it now.

### **Tutelage party, democracy in the long run and teleologic historiography**

Was the single-party rule founded as a temporary solution, aiming multi-party democracy in the long run; or was the big picture a bit different than that? This is a question asked and answered many times, and in the mainstream Turkish historiography, there is a definite agreement that Kemalist Republic aimed a multi-party democracy (Kışlalı even argues that there were palpable examples that Atatürk wanted and applied participatory democracy). As I will give several examples below, the general agreement that Kemalism aimed for a multi-party democracy is based on the following premises: Atatürk was a democratic leader, who wanted Turkey to be a multi-

party democracy. The fact that opposition parties were founded and that there was a certain degree of discussion room in his own party attest to this. It is true that opposition parties did not survive for long, but it was because of their -and the reactionary masses'- own mistakes. Attempts for multi-party regime failed during Atatürk's lifetime, because the conditions were not ripe yet. In this context, CHP was a tutelage party whose aim was to prepare the preconditions of multi-party democracy (such as enfranchising women). There had to be a single-party rule for 25 years, because the society was not ready for democracy. When the time came, CHP transferred to the multi-party system without any problems (smooth transition).

The amount of literature shows that there is a definite agreement about the above-mentioned premise. All the figures I've counted in the previous chapters -Ergun Özbudun, Maurice Duverger and Tarık Zafer Tunaya added- confirm and advocate the set of arguments that Atatürk embarked his project with the final aim of establishing a multi-party regime, but the conditions were not ripe, so a single-party regime was applied till the right time came. That Ergun Özbudun's -a scholar whom I can not categorize as Kemalist- supporting the theory that Atatürk wanted a democracy and worked for it should be notified.

Ergün Aybars, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Emre Kongar, Suna Kili, Ergun Özbudun, Nurşen Mazıcı, İlber Ortaylı and Anıl Çeçen all agree that the aim of Kemalist Revolution (and/or Atatürk) is democracy.<sup>114</sup> Kongar and Özbudun stress this even more by pointing out that there is absolutely no doubt that the aim of Kemalizm is a democratic regime (Kongar adds an interesting point here by saying that “the principles of Republic aimed at full, impeccable democracy, no matter what was done in this direction”). Toktamış Ateş and Halil İnalçık do not talk about democracy directly, but instead touch upon the will of the people, the former stating that Atatürk respects the will of the people,<sup>115</sup> whereas the latter talks about the principle of rendering national will sovereign.<sup>116</sup>

Assertions that Atatürk was a democratic leader and/or aimed it in the long run

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114 Emre Kongar, *Demokrasi ve Laiklik*, p. 119; *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek* p. 47, 199, 223-24, 260; Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “Atatürk diktatör müydü?,” *Cumhuriyet*, 19 May 1993, as in *Atatürk'e Saldırmanın Dayanılmaz Hafifliği*. p. 47; Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 139; Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 253; İlber Ortaylı, *Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yüzyılı*, p. 116; Ergun Özbudun, “Atatürk ve Demokrasi,” as in *Atatürkçü Düşünce El Kitabı*, p. 117; Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 187; Nurşen Mazıcı, *Tek Parti Dönemi*, p. 10.

115 Toktamış Ateş, cited in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 30.

116 Halil İnalçık, “Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük,” *Doğu Batı*, 29, as in *Osmanlı ve Modern Türkiye*. p. 206.

are not confined to the above-mentioned ones. It is often the case that people desire to put forward palpable evidence for their claims. In this regard, Suna Kili presents people opposing to Atatürk during the national struggle as proof for his being democratic from the beginning.<sup>117</sup> Aybars presents the concepts of freedom, parliamentary democracy and pluralism as information found in the *Medeni Bilgiler* book written by Atatürk himself.<sup>118</sup> Aybars also claims that the goal is democracy and that the Republic prepared it.<sup>119</sup> In addition, Ortaylı states that if there is still an ideal in Turkey for multi-party democracy, it is because Atatürk, in his youth, saw Europe like that.<sup>120</sup>

While talking about democracy, we should think what is meant by populism (*halkçılık*), a principle of Atatürk, and how it is interpreted in the mainstream literature, too. Özbudun and Kışlalı talk about populism, and put it forward as possible proof for Atatürk's being democratic.<sup>121</sup> Kışlalı further argues that, Atatürk thought of modernization and democracy together,<sup>122</sup> and that he was a populist.<sup>123</sup> In addition, Turan claims that along with the republic, all democracy is in process, and that Atatürk neither operates populism, not republicanism, but only democracy.<sup>124</sup>

A very important concept that should be discussed here is the concept of tutelage party, and as I've tried to summarize above, the assertion puts forward that CHP was a tutelage party which prepared the prerequisites of democracy. The figures I will refer in this regard are the late Maurice Duverger -who coined the term *dominant party*- and Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Ergun Özbudun and Anıl Çeçen, who followed his conceptualization and contributed to the tutelage party literature accordingly.

Duverger who classifies single-party systems puts Turkey's CHP under the category of dominant party (the other ones include communist, fascist and totalitarian parties). A dominant party, Duverger argues, can be observed in underdeveloped societies, where the prerequisites of democracy are not yet ripe. The mission of the dominant party is to prepare the society for democracy, to modernize it. So CHP,

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117 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 189.

118 Ergün Aybars, as in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 52.

119 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 187.

120 İlber Ortaylı, *Yakın Tarihin Gerçekleri*, p. 101-102.

121 Ergun Özbudun, "Atatürk ve Demokrasi," as in *Atatürkçü Düşünce El Kitabı*, p. 116; Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, "Yollar da karıştı bölücüler de," *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Aug. 1998, as in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 115.

122 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, "Akılsız dostlar mı yoksa akıllı düşmanlar mı?," *Cumhuriyet*, 3 July 1998, as in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 112-113.

123 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, "Yollar da karıştı bölücüler de," *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Aug 1998, as in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 115.

124 Şerafettin Turan, as in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 273.

according to Duverger, is a dominant party whose primary characteristic is its being democratic. The party does not think of itself as an eternal single-party, and will lose its ideological base when the society is ready for a multi-party regime. Because it is the harbinger of a multi-party system, it will bring its own end. CHP, according to Duverger, never actually liked this political monopoly of itself, and always regretted this.<sup>125</sup>

I should add here that Duverger did not always have this idea about CHP, Turkey's single-party, and changed his view as time went by. As Tunaya informs us, Duverger's first judgement in 1951 is that Kemalist regime is neither fascist, nor democratic. Also, this democracy failed to be social. In 1955, he argues that Kemalist regime should be examined under the category of so-called fascist regimes, though it is slightly different from paternalist dictatorships; and the Turkish single-party regime is a republican dictatorship. In 1961, Duverger softens his judgement and reaches the conclusion I've presented earlier, which is the ever since accepted and related judgement of his: Turkey should be evaluated within the category of underdeveloped nations, and that CHP was a tutelage party that in reality aimed true democracy. The party's inner structure always remained democratic, generating its own dissidents. Also, unlike the fascist and totalitarian single-parties, CHP promoted democracy.<sup>126</sup> Tunaya, who will later coin the term *vesayet partisi* (tutelage party), recommends this taxonomy best, along with Anıl Çeçen and Ergun Özbudun.

The first and foremost thing that should be uttered about this tutelage party and democracy in the long run claim is that -though it is highly celebrated- it completely lacks factual basis. It is true that in social sciences, there should be certain theories, and that merely telling what happened might not be the best idea. However, what we are seeing here (as Cemil Koçak<sup>127</sup> and Mete Tunçay<sup>128</sup> state) is producing theories without basing them on facts. We can come up with millions of theories that will categorize Turkey's CHP as a party who wishes to prepare the bridge to democracy, but unfortunately, the reality does not correspond to that. For one thing, the party's program in 1931 clearly states CHP as the “single-party of Turkey”, meaning that its founders do not think of it as a temporary solution.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, perhaps the only two things that

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125 Maurice Duverger, *Siyasi Partiler*, p. 359-64.

126 Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Siyasi Müesseseler ve Anayasa Hukuku*, p. 552-53.

127 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 652.

128 Mete Tunçay, TC'nde *Tek-Parti*, p. 1

129 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 176.

can be pointed out as proofs of constructing the bridge to democracy are woman enfranchisement, and the independent candidates elected in 1931/34 elections, but there are problems with accepting these developments as stages for democracy.

It is always claimed in Turkish historiography that Atatürk granted women the right to vote, which shows that he values democracy. Yet I have a different point of view. Perhaps it should first be questioned -as Sevan Nişanyan does-<sup>130</sup> what kind of a significance women enfranchisement might have, in a regime where there is only one party, and no free elections. This is something almost never questioned, and there is an unwavering belief in Turkish historiography that Atatürk's giving women the right to vote is a step towards democracy. It can also be argued that in granting this privilege to women, Atatürk -and CHP cadre- actually acted slowly and aloof, and that women obtained their rights in the wake of a long struggle, before France (1944), Japan (1945) and Switzerland (1971), but after 33 countries (15 of them being non-European countries).<sup>131</sup> It can be questioned for instance, that while women founded around 100 organizations and published many newspapers between 1870 and 1923,<sup>132</sup> early Republican elites ignored the position of women for a long time. Perhaps the best we can say about women's acquiring of enfranchisement, as Zürcher states, is to address it “as an important step in the emancipation of Turkish women.”<sup>133</sup> It should not be ignored here that, that emancipation started during the Ottoman Empire and the level it reached during the single-party period was not very bright.

It is also assumed that, CHP's leaving some space for independent candidates in 1931 elections is a sign of democracy, but there are two problems here. The first is that, the party itself decides on who will be independent candidates. Ahmet Demirel relates that for the 1931 elections, although around 15-20 people applied everyday for candidacy, it was written in CHP records that none of the 1400 people who had applied until then would be considered for candidacy.<sup>134</sup> Cemil Koçak also argues, perhaps with a similar concern, that it is dubious how much “independent” the independent

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130 Sevan Nişanyan, *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, p. 70.

131 Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih III*, p. 214-215. The countries where women get their right of vote before Turkey are as follows: New Zealand, Australia, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Russia, the Netherlands, England, Germany, Austria, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Albania, Czech Republic, the USA, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Sweden, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Ecuador, Romania, Republic of South Africa, Spain, Chile, Portugal, Uruguay, Thailand and Brazil.

132 Ibid, p. 208; Fatmagül Berktaş, “Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Feminizm,” as in *Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, p. 35; Nicole A. N. M. Van Os, “Osmanlı Müslümanlarında Feminizm,” as in *Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, pp. 336-37 and 344-345.

133 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 177.

134 Ahmet Demirel, *Tek-Partinin İktidarı*, p. 115.



candidates elected for the 1935 elections were.<sup>135</sup> The second, and perhaps a more crucial thing, is that the term democracy invokes in mind rule of the people, which means that when there is only one party, it does not matter much when 30 or so independent congressmen enter the parliament. It is argued by Duverger, Kışlalı and Tunaya that there is room in CHP for pluralism, but the facts do not lead us to their conclusion. This is another example of what I mean by producing theories without basing them on facts.

I will deal with the opposition parties in the next chapter, but I should utter a few words now, for their existence is related to the tutelage party arguments. There is a definite agreement that Turkish single-party CHP aimed at pluralism, and that opposition parties are a sign of this. I do not quite grasp how this argument is made, for if CHP had aimed at pluralism in the long run -as argued by the above-mentioned figures- the opposition parties should not (and would not) have been closed down. It is known that TPCF, the first opposition party, lasted for 4 months and SCF for only 3 months. It is also known that both parties were banned from competing in free elections (SCF actually did compete in the 1930 municipality elections but since substantial corruption was observed, those elections can not be titled as “free”). If the argument is that CHP is trying to prepare the society for democracy -the most basic and primary condition of *democracy* being *voting*- shouldn't it have led the “ignorant” masses to vote, at least for one election? Rather than preparing the prerequisites of full-fledge democracy, what CHP did seems to be closer to “systematically obliterating all ideologic and institutional conditions of democracy.”<sup>136</sup>

I said above that I would come back to the Sonderweg example, and I think it is worth considering Sonderweg and tutelage party examples within the framework of teleologic history. It is argued in the German mainstream historiography that every society will modernize and follow the path of Western states -preferably England and France- by going through successful bourgeois revolutions, which as a corollary, will produce liberal democratic values. Similarly, it is argued in the mainstream Turkish historiography that, CHP was a tutelage party whose aim in the long run was to establish full-fledge democracy. These are almost quintessential examples of teleologic history, meaning that a desired goal is identified to be reached in the long run, and that every step taken will be construed accordingly, within that flow. Just as Germany's

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135 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 646.

136 Sevan Nişanyan, *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, p. 59.

unsuccessful bourgeois revolution in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is shown as a reason for lack of democracy, Turkey's single-party regime is used to justify that lack of democracy.

Within this context, there is again a definite consensus that Democratic Party (DP) founded in 1946 is the final step of single-party regime, attesting full-fledge democracy. However, as Cemil Koçak points out, there is hardly ever evidence in 1945 that the second party is to be founded (meaning, there is doubt whether this smooth transition has been planned for long). Nor the process of allowing for the second party seems irreversible.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, as Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn argue, it is not the best idea to “present German history since the middle of the last century as if the known outcome in 1933 was inscribed in every event...which leads to a teleologic blandness.”<sup>138</sup> Besides, as I've argued above, this teleologic German Sonderweg argument collapses when both a positive and a negative version exist, fallaciously determining the result based on Germany's success on the fronts. As Köker rightly observes, concepts such as tutelage party are coined *ex post facto*, after everything is over and done with.<sup>139</sup>

I've stated above that Duverger changed his views about the single-party position of CHP in time. It might be helpful to combine this with the modernization theory, to get the big picture. As I've described above, the modernization theory identifies two kinds of societies (traditional and modern), and that non-Western societies will follow Western ones in this process. This theory also envisages a transition period, the characteristics of which might be coercion and oppression.

It can be assumed that Duverger places Turkish single-party CHP within the modernization theory, identifying Ottoman society as a traditional and the Turkey Atatürk wanted to create a modern one, and the single-party period as the authoritarian transition stage. It is obvious that if the modernization theory is taken at its face value, it perfectly fits the Kemalist paradigm that CHP was an ephemeral single-party during a period of modernization. It is also not surprising that Duverger reached this conclusion in 1961, when the modernization theory -in terms of acceptance in academia- saw its peak. As Aykut Kansu rightly argues, the most efficient way for the revival of Kemalist ideology in the academic circle, was the Modernization Paradigm and its interpretation

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137 Cemil Koçak, *İkinci Parti*, p. 16.

138 Geoff Eley & David Blackbourn, *Peculiarities of German History*, p. 33.

139 Levent Köker, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, p. 230.

peculiar to Turkey.<sup>140</sup>

It should be questioned that the first two conceptualizations of Duverger as to Turkish single-party did not include anything like this, and they were perhaps closer to reality (I am not trying to identify Atatürk's CHP as fascist or totalitarian here; I am rather suggesting that it is closer to them than a democratic one). Here, I find it impossible to agree with Tunaya, who adopts Duverger's last conceptualization of CHP in 1961 as a tutelage party aiming democracy. It is not surprising that other than Tunaya, almost no historian is aware that Duverger changed his judgement about Turkey's single-party regime. The figures who want to see CHP as a transient party embrace Duverger's theory fully, without ever mentioning how his views on Turkish single-party period changed in time.

One thing Duverger argues is that unlike fascist and totalitarian regimes which advocate authoritarianism, there is advocacy of democracy in the Kemalist single-party. Although historians desiring to justify single-party regime (including advocating that Atatürk was democratic) cling to this assertion frequently, it seems to lack factual basis. Until the year 1930 when the Free Republican Party was established and dissolved, a basic research about the single-party of Turkey will show us that after 1923, Atatürk doesn't make considerable reference to democracy.<sup>141</sup> When Duverger claims that there was daily advocacy of democracy in Kemalist Turkey, he is either not taking this from any sources, or a second alternative is that -as Cemil Koçak suggests- he might have heard it from Turkish people who were in Europe at that time.<sup>142</sup> I will discuss SCF in the next chapter, within the opposition parties but for the time being, let me say this much: If Duverger's source for this premise is what he heard from the Turkish people, than the official ideology's using Duverger for the same claim presents us a circular argument. Turkish historians' claim that CHP advocated democracy based on Duverger's writing which are based on Turkish people is not very different than -mind the example- trying to prove the existence of God by pointing out the holy book, which is the word of God.

At this stage, I find it useful to go back to the assertion that Atatürk wanted democracy in the long run, and approach it from a different point of view. Two things are obvious: 1) Neither Atatürk as person, nor CHP as party aimed democracy. 2) It is

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140 Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, p. 9.

141 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 642.

142 Ibid, p. 638.

dogma in mainstream Turkish historiography that Atatürk wanted democracy either in the long, or in the short run. I find it very important to ponder about this matter.

Democracy is a concept mostly perceived positively. Except in fascist/totalitarian societies where democracy is often degraded, it is a concept to which mostly positive meaning is attributed. It is often the case in history that people accuse their rulers for being undemocratic. It is often the case that societies' transferring to democracy is related as a positive thing. This also goes for Turkish historiography, too, where the so-called smooth transition in 1950 is not only celebrated, but identified as a success of Atatürk. The bottom line is that democracy is mostly identified with positive values, and even if it is not applied in the current time, it is a desired goal in the long run.

When the situation is like this, it is not at all surprising to identify either Atatürk or the single-party CHP as democratic, even though they are the antithesis of it. Atatürk is a leader that is idolized, even sometimes deified. He is not democratic, nor there can hardly be pointed out any practice during the single-party regime to serve for democracy in the long run. If anything, dissolution of TPCF in 1925; execution and suppression of unorganized opposition in 1926, after the foiled İzmir assassination; the change in CHP's program in 1927 that authorizes Atatürk as the sole decision maker in member election; suppression of the Turkish Hearth movement in 1931; the purge in the former Istanbul University in 1933; and the dissolution of Turkish Women's Union in 1935 all attest, without any doubt, that the regime does not have much toleration for different voices.<sup>143</sup> Still, since democracy invokes positive values and there is a political leader who is almost worshipped, there is the need to match the two. That is why, Emre Kongar has a subheading in his book *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, titled as “Ataturkism is surely democratic.”<sup>144</sup> Kongar himself probably knows that assertions to identify Ataturkism as democratic will lack factual basis. Yet, he still does his best to match the two.

Here, it might be interesting and useful to briefly touch upon Kongar's conceptualization of “democratic nationalism.” In at least two of his works, Kongar uses this term -although in one of them with the words “progressive nationalism”- and in both, he is talking about Atatürk nationalism. He is also making reference to Atatürk's famous motto “How happy is one who says I am a Turk.” The distinction he

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143 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 180-181.

144 Emre Kongar, *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, p. 223.

makes is that the nationalism of inter-war Europe -he directly addresses Nazi Germany- is aggressive and destructive; but that the nationalism of Atatürk is compromising and integrative.<sup>145</sup> I see it appropriate to identify this as euphemistic. One who scours all the nationalist literature -be it Hobsbawm, Anderson, Özkırımlı, Gellner etc.- can not find a coining of “democratic nationalism” (there is “national democratic revolution,” but not “democratic nationalism”). It seems impossible to identify a nationalism as “democratic;” it is against the very nature of democracy to go hand in hand with nationalism, which is by definition an exclusionist ideology. But again, it is important to understand why Kongar is using this conceptualization. It is probably because nationalism is an Atatürk principle, and that Turkish single-party regime adopted nationalism both as ideology and in practice. It is therefore necessary to affix some kind of a positive meaning to that concept of nationalism. When Atatürk nationalism is identified as “democratic,” or “progressive” perhaps the discriminatory aspect of nationalism and its destructive practices -for instance Dersim massacre- are attempted to be minimized. It is similar with identifying Atatürk regime (or directly himself) as democratic. In both, there is an unflattering situation, and since the person who is responsible for it is worshipped, there is a need for euphemism.

All the scholars I've named above should pretty much be aware that Kemalist regime can not be identified democratic. But at the same time, they do know that Kemalist regime will always be criticized for being anti-democratic. So what they are doing, is to take a preemptive measure. By identifying Atatürk and his regime as democracy, or asserting that even if it was not democratic, that it desired to reach democracy in the long run, they are taking precautions against possible harsh criticism that would definitely be brought against the single-party regime. It should be noted that, we hardly ever see any denouncing of democracy in the Kemalist literature, perhaps because it will directly encounter with an accusation of fascism. Instead, what we see is that democracy is duly praised, and it is identified as an aim to reach in the end.

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145 Emre Kongar, *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, p. 150-51; *Atatürk*, p. 317.

*“Opposition in our country...definitely corrupts to treachery and infidelity...Sometimes treachery and infidelity themselves, are the raison d'etre of opposition” Yunus Nadi*

#### **IV. Opposition against Atatürk and its portrayal**

Democracy is a term whose roots go back to the Ancient Greece and it basically means rule of the people. How this is realized in practice is through voting (ballot box). It is obvious from this definition that there can be absolutely no democracy without opposition. There is also a fair agreement within the exponents of the single-party rule which corresponds to this proposal. Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Emre Kongar and Nurşen Mazıcı all accept that there can not be a democracy without opposition.<sup>146</sup> However, there is also a more or less agreement that opposition against Atatürk before and during the single-party regime had a backward, reactionary, religious, Ottomanist, counter revolutionary etc. character, and that the opposition had to be quashed. This chapter will deal with the characteristics of opposition against Ataturk and the way it is portrayed within the Turkish historiography.

Figures who justify the single-party regime do this based on at least one of the following premises: 1) The members of both *Progressive Republican Party* (TPCF) and *Free Republican Party* (SCF) were reactionaries, Ottomanist, and they were against the revolutions which were necessary for the development and modernization of Turkey; 2) The socio-economic conditions of the country when the opposition parties were established were so bad, that in such an atmosphere, democracy could not (and would not) survive (an argument thoroughly examined in the previous chapter); 3) Atatürk did

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146 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “Tek Parti ve Demokrasi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Apr 1998, cited in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 103; Emre Kongar, *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, p. 19 and 46; Nurşen Mazıcı, *Belgelerle Atatürk Döneminde Muhalefet*, p. 1.

not want to dissolve the opposition parties, but they had to be closed down. 4) When both attempts for transferring to multi-party regime failed, it was understood that the society had not yet internalized the revolutions; so time was not right.

There is abundant material in the Kemalist historiography to correspond to the above mentioned story. While Aybars<sup>147</sup> and Kili<sup>148</sup> insinuate that TPCF was characterized by reactionism, İlber Ortaylı<sup>149</sup> and Kışlalı<sup>150</sup> assert the same thing both for TPCF and SCF. Kışlalı also implies that these opposition parties would not have been dissolved had they not been reactionaries, stating that the reason why they were dissolved was not because they wanted more democracy, but because they turned into a counter revolutionary focal.

Thanks to Cemil Koçak's meticulous study, *Belgelerle İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, there is more than necessary amount of knowledge as to what has been written so far about SCF. The official point of view, which made itself into school textbook as early as 1931 -only one year after the party was established and dissolved- states that SCF was closed down -in fact dissolved itself- because of reactionaries that dominated the party.<sup>151</sup> This official ideology was voiced myriad times starting from 1931, eventually becoming the heart of the mainstream view about SCF.<sup>152</sup> Koçak states that Duverger also adopts the view that SCF was closed down because of the reactionaries that permeated the party.<sup>153</sup>

It can be understood from these that there is a relatively general agreement that both opposition parties TPCF and SCF were closed because of their own faults. Before discussing this further, I would like to focus on a different point of view about TPCF, voiced by even figures who justify the single-party rule. Nevin Yurdsever Ateş who wrote her Ph.D. on TPCF states that, the party was “unlike some people assert, neither a religious party, nor reactionary or conservative.”<sup>154</sup> This view of Ateş is based on the program of the party itself<sup>155</sup>, and is corroborated by Mete Tunçay<sup>156</sup> and Feroz

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147 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 57.

148 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 210.

149 İlber Ortaylı, *Yakın Tarihin Gerçekleri*, p. 98.

150 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “Tek Parti ve Demokrasi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Apr 1998, as in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 104.

151 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 52 and 646.

152 Ibid, 21-167. Here, Koçak presents a chronologic summary of how SCF is evaluated, by both orthodox historians and dissident voices.

153 Ibid, p. 646.

154 Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 323.

155 Ibid, p. 190-191.

156 Mete Tunçay, *TC'de Tek-Parti*, p. 108.

Ahmad<sup>157</sup> both of whose overall proclivities can be construed as advocacy of the single-party regime. What I mean here is that, TPCF is not identified with derogatory adjectives even by some figures who justify the single-party rule based on the “conditions.” Finally, Erik Jan Zürcher, too, states that, it was evident that TPCF

...was a party in the Western European liberal mould. It stood for secular and nationalist policies...it clearly opposed...radical, centralist and authoritarian tendencies. Instead it advocated decentralization, separation of powers and evolutionary rather than revolutionary change. It also had a more liberal economic policy.<sup>158</sup>

I will come back to why in the mainstream historiography of Turkey the TPCF is condemned as backward, reactionary etc. (when there is enough reason to think differently) but for the time being, let me go on stating that when the party was established, it was welcomed with great enthusiasm, especially by the Istanbul press. While Zürcher states that “the mood in many parts of the country...certainly...in Istanbul...favoured an opposition party”<sup>159</sup> Tunçay states that most of the Istanbul press supported the opposition against the government<sup>160</sup>, and that it found wide acclaim in the press.<sup>161</sup>

Before moving to the discussion phase, I will touch upon the opposition in the first parliament, founded on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1920, because we need to do this in order to assess the opposition against Atatürk. The most rigorous study as to the opposition in the first parliament has so far been conducted by Ahmet Demirel. In his work, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, while summarizing the course of work about the first parliament, Demirel states with disapproval that until that time (1993) most of the studies about the first parliament were dominated by cliches which identified the 2<sup>nd</sup> group as backwards, reactionary, Ottomanist, sultanist etc.<sup>162</sup> A meticulous study by Demirel, however, reveals that the group was predominantly against personal tyranny, tried to render the power of law efficient<sup>163</sup> and that in certain occasions, did its best in taking action with

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157 Feroz Ahmad, *Modern Türkiye'nin Oluşumu*, p. 72.

158 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 168.

159 Ibid, p. 169.

160 Mete Tunçay, *TC'de Tek-Parti*, p. 109.

161 Ibid, p. 112.

162 Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*. For this mainstream cliché definitions of 2<sup>nd</sup> group, see p. 15-16 and 31-35. For the reasons of this attitude against the second group according to Demirel, see pp. 18-20.

163 Ibid, p. 45.



the first group founded by Atatürk.<sup>164</sup>

It is true that not all the figures who legitimize single-party rule based on the apologist canard “conditions of the era” adopt this above-mentioned definitions about opposition parties. For instance, while Halil İnalçık identifies the structure of the first parliament as democratic, adding that it declared its legitimacy with the motto “Hakimiyet-i Milliye” (sovereignty of the people), he does not use the cliché “backward,” “Ottomanist,” “reactionary” identification for the opposition (2<sup>nd</sup> group).<sup>165</sup> Likewise, Suna Kili rightly identifies the characteristic of the 2<sup>nd</sup> group in the 1<sup>st</sup> parliament, by stating that it bears people from all walks of life.<sup>166</sup> However, as I am trying to point out, there is still a general proclivity to condemn the opposition against Mustafa Kemal, and this mostly goes for the opposition parties TPCF and SCF. Ahmet Demirel's -and to a certain extent Nevin Yurdsever Ateş's- studies should be important examples to reveal the inclination to denigrate the opposition against Atatürk without even looking at the primary sources. In fact, one reason Demirel states for defining the second group as reactionary is because of the “problem of method in academic circles, which is accepting repeated clichés without feeling the need to confirm them from first hand sources.”<sup>167</sup>

The definition of dissidents against Atatürk in the Turkish mainstream historiography should be questioned thoroughly, and when it is done, an important aspect of the legitimization of the single-party rule will be refuted. The bottom line is that, people who opposed to Atatürk either before or during the single-party regime is automatically stigmatized as reactionary, sultanist, counter-revolutionary etc. But it should be kept in mind that, rather than analyzing the opposition and reaching a conclusion which has definitely negative connotations, what is done is to try to come up with apologies to justify single-party regime, and this is actually what I have been discussing throughout this work. It should be kept in mind that SCF, the “reactionary” opposition party founded in 1930 was derivative of CHP; and TPCF, another “reactionary” opposition party founded in 1925 consisted of Mustafa Kemal's friends and commanders of the National Struggle!

Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, who -unlike the mainstream Kemalist figures- rightly

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164 Ibid, p. 612.

165 Halil İnalçık, “Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük,” *Doğu-Batı*, 29, as in *Osmanlı ve Modern Türkiye*, p. 169.

166 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 82.

167 Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, p. 20.

identifies the ideology of TPCF as liberal, is still inclined to justify and legitimize single-party rule by relating how bad the conditions are. The following evaluation of Ateş are definitely worth examining:

When we look at the political atmosphere and the socio-economic conditions on which it was founded, we see that the year 1924 was really a hard year... Proclamation of the Republic, dissolution of the Caliphate, reactions caused by revolutions not adopted by the public...the bad situation of the country's economy...increased the discontent day by day... The year 1924 was really a regime year.<sup>168</sup>

After making this explanation, towards the end of her work, Ateş asks “What would happen if in 1924, democratic elections were allowed? Could the society (meaning Ottoman society, UD), whose literacy level was less than 15% and who have for years been subjugated, rationally determine their own future?”<sup>169</sup> Ateş does not directly answer to this question as “No,” and instead says that we can not know. But as I will fully discuss in the final chapter, there can be hardly any reason not to answer this question as “Yes.” If the people of the II. Constitution (1908) and the National Struggle (1920) could do this, why wouldn't the people of 1924 do?

An issue worth discussing is whether the opposition parties TPCF and SCF can be addressed as “attempts for multi-party.” There is a definite agreement in the Kemalist historiography about this matter. Suna Kili,<sup>170</sup> Ergün Aybars,<sup>171</sup> and İlber Ortaylı<sup>172</sup> all prefer to address the foundation and dissolution processes of both TPCF and SCF as “attempts for trying to transfer to multi-party.” Ortaylı even argues that Atatürk wanted democracy, and gives these “attempt”s as example. Yet, there seems to be a serious problem as to how these can be addressed as “multi-party attempt”s, let alone Atatürk's endeavor for multi-party regime. The main problem is that, these parties are presented in the Kemalist historiography as if they were desired to be allowed to take place in the parliament and compete in elections, but the big picture is quite different. Immediately, I can hear opposition raised, especially about SCF, but I intend to approach the matter from a different point.

The first problem with identifying TPCF as attempt for multi-party is that, the

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168 Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 318.

169 Ibid, p. 323.

170 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 229 and 232.

171 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 58, 62 and 190.

172 İlber Ortaylı, *Yakın Tarihin Gerçekleri*, p. 98.

dissolution of TPCF *itself* effectively meant the end of multi-party regime. In this respect, a party that only survived for 5 months can hardly be addressed as “attempt for democracy.” Also, the formation of this party was not elicited by CHP elites, but the discontent members themselves decided to part company with CHP and founded their own party.

Another problem is that, since the story for justifying the single-party regime puts forward the assertion that Atatürk wanted democracy in the long run but that it could not happen till the society absorbed the revolution<sup>173</sup>, a party that is founded in 1924 -only 1 year after the proclamation of Turkish Republic- can not be titled as “attempt for democracy,” for the revolution “has got promises to keep, and so many miles to go before it sleeps.” Let me elucidate this point. The argument as to the “attempt”’s for multi-party regime goes as follows: Turkish Republic has to be a single-party regime because of the extra-ordinary conditions. When the time is right, there surely will be new parties. But until the revolution is realized, there can be no way for opposition.<sup>174</sup> If this story is correct, and accordingly there will be opposition parties when the time comes, that time can not be in 1924, when the revolution is in its very, very early stage. This is another example to show what is done within the Kemalist historiography: Instead of reaching conclusions based on facts, coming up with theoretical explanations to justify the end result, which can hardly ever go beyond apology.

While the above-mentioned explanation discredits the story behind identifying TPCF as attempt for democracy, some might assume that it should directly correspond to the SCF story. After all SCF was founded in 1930, after a substantial part of the revolution was achieved, and that Atatürk had the party founded in the wake of that famous story where he utters the words: “Today our landscape is more or less that of a dictatorship...I do not want to leave behind a despotic institution.”<sup>175</sup> If SCF had been a real opposition party that consisted of members that were not content in CHP, and had SCF not been dissolved within 3 months, this story would make sense. When a leader states his democratic intention, it is expected from him to allow for free elections. Only allowing for the establishment of a second party can hardly attest to a democratic intention, and what was done in the SCF story was, as Cemil Koçak argues, only to

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173 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 58.

174 Ergun Özbudun, “Atatürk ve Demokrasi,” as in *Atatürkçü Düşünce El Kitabı*, p. 120

175 Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih III*, p. 46

allow a second party to be formed, and not for allowing any other democratic rights, such as a third party or freedom of press.<sup>176</sup>

Unfortunately, it does not seem very plausible to take SCF as an opposition party, mainly because of two reasons. The first is that SCF was not properly allowed to compete in the upcoming local elections, and the second is that people were almost forced to become members of SCF, to the point of regretting and wanting to go back to their party CHP.<sup>177</sup> With the information we have and more or less knowing what happened in reality, SCF can perhaps best be identified -as Süreyya İlmen and Ahmet Ağaoğlu relates- as an agent for intimidating İsmet Paşa<sup>178</sup> -who had been the Prime Minister for 5 years- or as a mere ground for discussing, and criticizing politics lightly. An opposition party can be counted as an opposition party as long as it is free from the tyrannical practices of the power and has equal chance with the party in power. Since it is known that in the local elections right after SCF was established, huge corruption was observed,<sup>179</sup> it is obvious that the party will not be allowed to compete for power, meaning it is not planned as a political party. In this respect, Cemil Koçak's assertion that SCF was not actually planned as a political party seems to make more sense than the official story which portrays SCF as “an attempt for democracy.” SCF would perhaps be the opposition among the republican elites of CHP. To quote from Cemil Koçak, while establishing SCF, “Atatürk put forward his predilection for a political opposition in the level of elites, rather than a social opposition.”<sup>180</sup>

While identifying SCF as backward, reactionary, anti-revolutionist etc., it might be useful to keep in mind that, not only all the members of SCF did come out of CHP itself, but that they were handpicked by Atatürk. SCF is a party whose members were chosen by Atatürk himself, including his sister Makbule. What I am trying to say is that, if SCF is stormed by reactionaries or Sharia enthusiasts (as asserted by Ortaylı, İnalçık, Kili and Kışlalı),<sup>181</sup> this also means that CHP bears in itself the same group of people.

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176 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 689

177 Sevan Nişanyan, *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, p. 32

178 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 65 and 72; Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 178.

179 Ibid, p. 669. This is a story related by Hasan Rıza Soyak and referred very often while discussing the SCF. What I find interesting is that, Atatürk avers that the winner is not their party, but the party of administration, which suggests that he is aware of the corruption during the elections.

180 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 618.

181 İlber Ortaylı, *Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yüzyılı*, 161; Halil İnalçık, “Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük,” *Doğu-Batı* 29, cited in *Osmanlı ve Modern Türkiye*, p. 190; Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 231; Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “Tek Parti ve Demokrasi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Apr 1998, cited in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 104.

Perhaps the bottom line we can say here is that, all organized or individual opposition against Mustafa Kemal is stigmatized as reactionary, religionist etc., not because they fit this description, but because there is not much toleration for opposition; neither by Mustafa Kemal himself nor his followers who try their best to justify single-party authoritarianism.

A note should be made as to whether SCF abolished itself, or was abolished. The mainstream account assumes that SCF dissolved itself, and in fact uses this to justify the single-party rule. While Suna Kili, Ergün Aybars and Toktamış Ateş directly state that SCF dissolved itself,<sup>182</sup> Ortaylı claims that certain groups within CHP made SCF dissolve<sup>183</sup>, and Hakkı Uyar prefers to state that on performing an unexpected political success, SCF had to retreat from political life in short time.<sup>184</sup> Cemil Koçak also quotes the dialogue between a vexed İnönü and Atatürk where he asks why Atatürk is closing the party and Atatürk replies that he is not doing anything; they (SCF members) are dissolving it themselves.<sup>185</sup>

It is understood from these that there is a general tendency in the Kemalist literature to hold SCF accountable for its dissolution, and Atatürk verbally endorses this. The problem here is that, while it is absolutely right that on paper, SCF closed itself (with the action of Fethi Okyar, the founder of the party, writing a petition to declare the dissolution of the party), we must take into consideration the process that lead to its dissolution. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the party performed an unexpected success and soon became a political alternative instead of CHP.<sup>186</sup> But it is only after things started to get out of control and that Mustafa Kemal declared openly that he is the leader and the founder of CHP, that Fethi Bey understood he had to defeat Mustafa Kemal to make the party survive.<sup>187</sup> So it is not that SCF dissolved itself voluntarily, but that on understanding that his party would not be allowed to compete in the political arena with CHP, Fethi Bey saw no other choice but to close it. Fethi Bey's decision should be interpreted as an action to save himself from being targeted as traitor, rather than reactionaries storming the party.

It might be useful to look into how the opposition against Atatürk is evaluated

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182 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 232; Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 62; Toktamış Ateş, “Kemalizm'in Özü” as in *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz*, p. 53.

183 İlber Ortaylı, *Yakın Tarihin Gerçekleri*, p. 147.

184 Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi*, p. 78.

185 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 90.

186 Cemil Koçak, “Siyasal Tarih (1923-1950),” as in *Türkiye Tarihi* 4, pp. 148-149.

187 Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih III*, pp. 50 and 53.

by Atatürk himself. In this regard, what should be said is that while the definition for TPCF in the Kemalist historiography directly corresponds to Atatürk's own evaluation about TPCF, we can not say the same the same thing for the opposition in the first parliament. To put it more pointedly; whereas contemporary evaluation of the first parliament more or less confirms Atatürk's evaluation about the second group, assessments prior to Ahmet Demirel's, do not. While Atatürk states for the second group that there was not much difference in terms of ideology, and that the problem was mostly personal,<sup>188</sup> the studies like that of Enver Behnan Şapolyo's -the coiner of what became cliché criticism about the first group- present the commonly held assessment which defined the first group as “reactionaries/Ottomanists” etc.<sup>189</sup> Yet, the commonly held definition about the first opposition party TPCF directly takes its source from *Nutuk* (The Speech), where the pejorative adjectives Atatürk uses for the dissidents include “villains,” “pitiful” “slothful,” “craven” etc.<sup>190</sup>

A point that deserves attention is the persistent attitude by single-party advocates to describe any kind of opposition against Atatürk with derogatory adjectives such as “backwards,” “reactionary,” “anti-revolutionist” etc. There is a general tendency to disparage both SCF and TPCF, and in some cases, the second group in the first parliament, too, receives its share from this condemnation. This attitude is corroborated by the foreign press, and its earlier indications can be observed in 1926, right after the purge of the remaining opposition based on the alleged İzmir conspiracy. An Italian newspaper in 1924 presents the news of the emergence of TPCF, stating that “just as it is natural for Europeans to have an opposition party, a party in Turkey consisting of around 20 people is the evocation of treachery.”<sup>191</sup> Judging a later article of Yunus Nadi -a staunch Kemalist figure establishing *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on the behest of Atatürk to champion the Kemalist tenets- this pessimistic observation of the Italian newspaper can be viewed as a prophecy. Nadi avers in 1926, in his article titled as “Opposition in Turkey” that, opposition in Turkey means betrayal (treachery).<sup>192</sup> The groups Nadi talks about in this article are the second group in the first parliament, the TPCF and the pro-İttihat figures, meaning all the opposition that stood against Atatürk until that time (SCF would be established later). Nadi not only clearly states that

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188 Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet*, p. 17.

189 Ibid, pp. 15-16.

190 Sevan Nişanyan, *Yanlış Cumhuriyet* pp. 65-66.

191 Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 319.

192 Cited in Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet*, p. 605.

opposition in Turkey is always meant treachery, but he claims that sometimes, treachery is the *raison d'etre* of that opposition. Knowing that Atatürk himself uses derogatory epithets in his *Nutuk* for TPCF members, it might be instructive to note that this proclivity to condemn the dissidents has been ubiquitous in Turkey -even today- as also noted by Sevan Nişanyan.<sup>193</sup>

Holding that TPCF is a counter-revolutionary party is another prevalent opinion among the proponents of single-party regime, and it deserves attention, too. Kışlalı, Kili, Aybars and Çeçen all identify either SCF or both TPCF and SCF as counter/anti revolutionist,<sup>194</sup> and based upon this assumption, they justify the closure of these parties. While it might at first seem plausible to identify these dissidents as anti-revolutionist -after all they *openly* oppose Mustafa Kemal- a closer look will discredit this story as well. A little reflection shows that the opponents of Mustafa Kemal were not against the revolutions; on the contrary, they were against the idea of revolutions becoming the tool of one man. We can reach this conclusion both from their party program, and from their actions. Zürcher states that the party's program emphasizes that the party is against radical reforms unless they are authorized by the people.<sup>195</sup> He also emphasizes that despite what people think, there is no indication that TPCF desired to undo what had been done till then.<sup>196</sup> Articles 49, 50, and 51 of the party's program for instance, make it clear that the party advocates national education,<sup>197</sup> hence their support of Tevhid-i Tedrisat (Law on Unification of Education) 8 months ago. It is also well known that, before the establishment of TPCF, sultanate was abolished in 1922 unanimously<sup>198</sup> -meaning later members of TPCF voted *for* the abolishment- and that right after the establishment of TPCF, when the government proposed by İsmet Paşa in 1924 got vote of confidence, fresh TPCF members voted in favour.<sup>199</sup> While giving vote of confidence to the new government, Ali Fuat Paşa's requesting that CHP elites not

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193 Sevan Nişanyan, *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, p. 67.

At the time I am typing this thesis, this attitude is still dominant in Turkey. Most of the opposition against President Erdoğan and his former party AKP is condemned with accusations of treachery, or with being representatives of what the pro-government calls as “parallel state.” In the near future, I hope to publish studies that deal with the never-ending justification of authoritarianism of Turkey.

194 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, “Tek Parti ve Demokrasi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Apr 1998, as in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 104; Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 231; Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 57 and 62; Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 182.

195 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 141.

196 *Ibid*, p. 152.

197 *Ibid*, p. 145.

198 Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 46.

199 Ahmet Demirel, *Tek Partinin İktidarı*, p. 73.

enact any precautions that are not rooted in general (natural) law<sup>200</sup> shows deep foresight.

As I've already pointed out in the previous chapter, and will again address in the rest of this work, it is often assumed in the Kemalist historiography that Mustafa Kemal wanted democracy (and that opposition parties attest to his intentions) but the country was not ready both because the revolution had not yet been internalized and because socio-economic conditions were not ripe. This assertion and the tutelage single-party theory are mutually supportive and has been repeated multiple times in the Kemalist literature.<sup>201</sup> However, the entrenched tutelage single-party theory is not at all convincing, and that there can hardly be found any evidence to suggest that Mustafa Kemal desired genuine democracy. It is often the case to quote speeches of Mustafa Kemal to prove his democratic intentions,<sup>202</sup> but as Sevan Nişanyan rightly argues, not intentions, but actions must be taken into consideration<sup>203</sup> and the actions of Atatürk - either as to TPCF or SCF- can hardly be taken as democratic.

Before going to the next phase -relating the course between 1919 and 1930 from exponents of single-party- I would like to summarize what I've been discussing in this chapter. One of the things done to justify the single-party regime of Turkey is to denigrate the opposition both before and after the proclamation of Turkish Republic. According to this story, Atatürk and Turkish Republic aimed a multi-party democracy, but it was because of the faults of the parties themselves that they were suppressed. Again according to this story, Atatürk's allowing for opposition attests to his democratic intentions, and his aim for creating a multi-party republic.

Unfortunately, this whole story seems incongruous because of several reasons: It is very dubious that SCF can be accepted as a political party. It is also not sensible to identify the dissidents as “reactionaries” or “Ottomanists” because not only their own documents do not confirm this story, but this assertion is not based on any substantial material. The assertion that Turkish Republic was planned as a democracy and that TPCF and SCF constitute its attempts at a multi-party system is not cogent, too. One of them (SCF) is a loyal opposition, and not an organized attempt by the opponents themselves, and that the other (TPCF) should better be accepted as the *de facto* end of

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200 Mahmut Goloğlu, *Devrimler ve Tepkileri*, p. 93

201 The following can be typical examples of this assertion: Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and Ahmet Mumcu (cited in Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 98 and 111); Ergun Özbudun, “Atatürk ve Demokrasi,” as in *Atatürkçü Düşünce El Kitabı*, p. 120-122.

202 Ergun Özbudun, “Atatürk ve Demokrasi,” as in *Atatürkçü Düşünce El Kitabı*, p. 121.

203 Sevan Nişanyan, *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, p. 59.



organized opposition rather than an “attempt for democracy.” The bottom line is that, all these assertions -that the opposition were reactionaries, that opposition parties were attempt for democracy, that the time was not favorable because revolution had not yet reached the masses etc.- were invented later to justify and legitimize the single-party domination, and are by no means convincing.

*“From A to Z, everything we have is broken” Refik Saydam*

## **V. What Happened During the Early Republican Period, and How it is Narrated: Kemalist/apologist Accounts vs. Realists**

The primary objective of this work is to indicate how single-party rule of Turkey is justified by stating that what happened was due to “conditions of the era.” Whereas all the chapters hitherto have focused on the theocratical explanations used in justifying the single party regime -transition from subject to citizenship (chapter I); inter-war authoritarianism effecting Turkey (chapter II); Turkey's unique conditions or modernization process (Chapter III); and reactionary opposition (Chapter IV)- this chapter will bear a different stance. While taking into consideration everything I've counted so far, I will directly portray how the revolutions and reforms in the early republican period are depicted. In doing so, I will resort to both Kemalist and non-Kemalist accounts to unfurl the obvious distinction which gave rise to this thesis in the first place.

Let me elucidate what I mean above: History can be told from several different points of view, and as John Arnold rightly argues, “historians inevitably decide which things can or should be said.”<sup>204</sup> As I've beheld while scouring the Kemalist accounts, when it comes to relating the single-party period (and the process leading up to it) there is one thing conspicuous: To identify the Ottoman Empire and its whole cultural and social structure as antiquated, hence paving the way for the exigency of revolutions. I've basically dealt with this item separately above (in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapters), but what I will do in this chapter is a bit different: I will give examples (direct statements) from accounts that are advocating single-party rule to demonstrate that in these accounts, there is an overall inclination to find plausible causes for most actions of Atatürk, both before and after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic.

As I will give several examples below, there is a general tendency in the

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204 John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 8.

Kemalist historiography to not only relate what happened, but also either trying to come up with possible explanations (if the case involves some kind of purge or violent action against the dissidents), or relating what happened with a predicative statement (if the case is a reform that is reckoned positive, such as reforming the university). I will give examples below from Kemalist figures such as Ergün Aybars, Suna Kili, Şerafettin Turan and Anıl Çeçen, and then from figures such as Cemil Koçak, Ahmet Demirel and Mete Tunçay, whom I like to address as *realists*. This chapter can be thought of a very basic discourse analysis. My main aim is to show that phrases such as “necessary, exigency, imperative, inevitable, prerequisite” are overwhelmingly used by Kemalist figures to justify Atatürk revolutions, whose main aim was to get rid of “backwards, reactionary, outdated” Ottoman institutions.

While discussing how the languages of Kemalist and non-Kemalist accounts vary, I will focus on 3 points: The necessity/exigency of the revolutions, the antiquity/outdatedness of the Ottoman culture and the claim that to achieve assets like democracy or modernization, there is the need for nation state and/or revolutions. This categorization I've just made might seem elusive at first, but I hope to make it clear in the following paragraphs.

Atatürk revolutions are mostly emblazoned and also deemed necessary by exponents of single-party regime, and I will now cite examples from 3 names, Anıl Çeçen, Sina Akşin and Şerafettin Turan, the last one being a name I have not mentioned earlier in this work. According to Çeçen, “to create a modern country in Turkey, a revolution in the field of law seemed compulsory<sup>205</sup>” and “because multi structure came to an end, it was necessary to do away with different education systems.”<sup>206</sup> Likewise, according to Şerafettin Turan, it was necessary to ban augury (fortune telling) sorcery, and exorcism which were things Islam did not affirm but reviled.<sup>207</sup>

From the necessity of the revolutions, let us now come to the backwards, reactionary, outdated structure of the Ottoman Empire. There is again a general proclivity presented by the advocates of single-party that -be it about law, education, economy, politics etc.- the institutions of the Ottoman Empire and/or the items used in the everyday life of the Ottoman society are outdated, and therefore had to be reformed. Suna Kili claims that “tarboosh...is the ridiculed and dilapidated image of an outdated

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205 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 103

206 Ibid, p. 105.

207 Şerafettin Turan, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Volume, p. 179.

lifestyle”<sup>208</sup> and that the *tekkes* (Islamic monastery) and *zawiyas* had become houses for bigotry that have nothing to do with religion and in which all kinds of factiousness, engrossing and sordidness were carried out.<sup>209</sup> As for the *Darü'l-fünun* (former Istanbul University founded in 1900 by Abdulhamid II); Anıl Çeçen<sup>210</sup> and Sina Akşin<sup>211</sup> both identify it as an outdated institution, and the former argues that to reform it, a revolutionary enterprise was necessary. In addition, Suna Kili identifies the ezan being recited in Arabic in Bursa in 1933 as a “reactionary” action.<sup>212</sup> Finally, Ergün Aybars identifies the social and economic situation of Turkey in 1923, when the Republic was proclaimed as “with one word, horrible.”<sup>213</sup>

It is often the case that when discussing the Atatürk revolutions, we hear phrases such as “without X, you can not have Y,” and I should note here that this approach is still prevalent in Turkey, whether the subject is Atatürk revolutions or not. I will now cite examples from the aforementioned historians, to demonstrate how Atatürk revolutions as a whole or in part, are deemed necessary to achieve certain assets. Anıl Çeçen argues that to establish a modern nation state, it was necessary that sultanate be proscribed.<sup>214</sup> He goes to argue that for the republic to progress, caliphate had to be abolished,<sup>215</sup> and that to become a nation state, a certain enculturation was necessary.<sup>216</sup> Suna Kili argues that revolutions are the imperative for development, change and modernization,<sup>217</sup> and that for modernization, nation state is a prerequisite.<sup>218</sup> Finally, according to Ergün Aybars, who claims that to realize democracy, there should be national unity, economic base, inner peace and cultural accumulation,<sup>219</sup> political multi-party life should not be expected to be realized within the revolution process.<sup>220</sup>

I should reiterate my main aim in this chapter, and make clear why I've quoted the above mentioned statements. Within the advocates of single-party regime, there is a general proclivity to praise Atatürk revolutions. However, merely citing the revolutions

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208 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 213.

209 Ibid, p. 216.

210 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 105.

211 Sina Akşin, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, p. 210.

212 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 232. Ezan, originally Arabic and has been Arabic for more than 1300 years, was turned into Turkish on the behest of Atatürk in 1933. For a very short account of Turkish ezan, see Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih III*, p. 74-83.

213 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 56.

214 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 88.

215 Ibid, p. 93.

216 Ibid, p. 108.

217 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 237-38.

218 Ibid, p. XV.

219 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 54.

220 Ibid, p. 58.

are often not enough, and this brings itself the persistence to create a necessity for the revolutions, and to denigrate the previous structure, the Ottoman Empire. As I will show the contrast now, in the non-Kemalist accounts -which again I should say that I will address as realists- this desire to find ground for the revolutions can not be observed.

An important step within the process Mustafa Kemal builds his personal dominance is in 1922, when the parliament proposes a law draft which apparently aimed at deactivating Mustafa Kemal by proposing that people who did not abide for five years in a precinct within Turkey or who were born outside of Turkey would not become congressmen. While the intention to get rid of Mustafa Kemal seems salient here, a closer look at how this is narrated might give us clue as to difference of style by Kemalist and non-Kemalist figures. Ahmet Demirel narrates what happened, citing the parliament records,<sup>221</sup> and Cemil Koçak summarizes the deliberations.<sup>222</sup> Bu when it again, comes to Suna Kili, she addresses this as a “document of malice, a bitter memory,” also pointing out that the speech Mustafa Kemal gives in return for this law draft should be “unforgettable,” identifying his speech as “describing what treachery act could be taken given all his national objectives and triumphs.”<sup>223</sup> It is true that Koçak, too, identifies this as “an open thrust against the subject of Mustafa Kemal,”<sup>224</sup> which it is.<sup>225</sup> But identifying this law draft with the words “malice” and/or “treachery” is suggestive; it makes it clear that anything Mustafa Kemal does will be defended, and the opposite will be condemned. Within relating this law draft, Kili is not finished with her panegyric of Mustafa Kemal and condemnation of his dissidents. She goes on:

This draft has revealed another fact. There are people in the parliament who has worked with Mustafa Kemal since the first day...but who are malicious enough to do every evil...It will be thought that in every new election these are expelled, but this won't prevent same kind of people from coming into the parliament with the new election. From the first days onwards the existence and behaviour of these people could not be prevented. This is in one way inevitable. As long as revolutionist, faithful people will be vigilant, consistent and determined.<sup>226</sup>

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221 Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, p. 516-525.

222 Cemil Koçak, as in *Türkiye Tarihi: Çağdaş Türkiye Volume IV*, p. 130.

223 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 200.

224 Cemil Koçak, as in *Türkiye Tarihi: Çağdaş Türkiye Volume IV*, p. 130.

225 I should add here that Ahmet Demirel seems to be failing in capturing that this law draft is directly targeting Mustafa Kemal, for Demirel, after citing parliament records, corroborates figures like Hüseyin Avni Ulaş and Süleyman Necati Güneri who deny that the draft aims for Mustafa Kemal. Demirel concludes that the proposal did not aim the nationality law of Mustafa Kemal, nor there were any attempts to warrant such an enterprise. Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet*, p. 520.

226 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 201.

This whole excerpt speaks for itself, and in one way makes the linchpin of this chapter. Mustafa Kemal is a revolutionary figure and what he does is unassailable. His actions will incontestably produce good results so they should not be opposed. Any kind of opposition in this regard, means treachery, contains evil. Opposition against Mustafa Kemal can not be accepted. This is more or less the stance of Kemalist historiography, and Suna Kili, in the above-quoted excerpt, presents a par excellence example of it. Mind you, by stating that in every new election, malicious people are coming back, Kili also paves the way for justifying single-party rule, and for condemning and purging any further opposition. Kili does not think that it is the right of people to oppose to Mustafa Kemal; on the contrary, by identifying the action of Mustafa Kemal as sacred, she is claiming again and again that the dissenters have bad intentions.

I would like to go on portraying how the revolutions are presented by realist historians. In the chapter “Political History (1923-1950)” from *Turkish History* series, Cemil Koçak summarizes -under the sub-heading of Kemalist Revolutions- all the revolutions of Atatürk within 3 pages.<sup>227</sup> While his style is succinct, Koçak does not make any attempt to justify the revolutions, nor to disparage them. He one by one describes all the reforms or revolutions, and if they have any significant results (such as people executed in the end as in the hat reform) he relates these. The same thing goes for Ahmet Demirel, too, who in his book *Tek Partinin İktidarı* recounts the whole process between 1923-1946. Again like Koçak, his style is as close as one can be in relating what happened as it happened.<sup>228</sup>

The same thing goes for Mete Tunçay, Erik Jan Zürcher and Ayşe Hür, too. The common denominator that brings all these names together is that, unlike Kemalist accounts busy with stating the necessity of the revolutions and celebrating them - meanwhile denigrating their Ottoman counterparts- these names not only basically relate what happened, but emphasize that all the revolutions and the revolutionary tribunals this or that way served for the suppression of the opposition in the society.<sup>229</sup> For instance, it might be instructive to compare Suna Kili who feels the need to tell that tarboosh was a “ridiculed” item used in an “outdated” society and Zürcher, Tunçay and

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227 Cemil Koçak, as in *Türkiye Tarihi: Çağdaş Türkiye Volume IV*, pp. 152-154.

228 Ahmet Demirel, *Tek Partinin İktidarı*, pp. 59-81, 102-111, 155-166, 209-219, 260-271 and 302-312.

229 Mete Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek-Parti*, pp. 156-64; Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, pp. 172-175; Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih II*, pp. 360-368;

Hür who feel the need to state that around 600 people were executed because of objecting to the hat law, which Kili does not even mention.<sup>230</sup>

I should add here that figures like Suna Kili do not just put forward their own opinion while arguing that tarboosh is a token of backwardness. It is known from Atatürk's numerous speeches and telegraphs that he identifies the general garment of Ottoman society as backwardness and covets for the garment of the West. But again, this Orientalist and Euro-centric attitude of Atatürk is not peculiar to him, and there is a reason why he came out to develop such a weltanschauung.

In 1908, Mustafa Kemal is on his way to Tripoli and on the way, the ferry stops in Sicily. When he is in a carriage, a group of Sicilians throw lemon skins to this “alien with tarboosh.” Later while relating this event, Mustafa Kemal says that he was pissed off not because of the impertinence of the Sicilian boys, but because of “being captive to such an alienated headgear.” In 1912, Mustafa Kemal is in France, during the time of Picardie military manoeuvres. While discussing with European specialists, Mustafa Kemal takes an opposite stance, making the audience sneer at him. When it is understood the next day during the manoeuvres that Mustafa Kemal was right, a foreign colonel says: It was obvious from the previous night that you were right but so long as you wear this flaky headgear, nobody will respect what is in it.<sup>231</sup> I should add here that in Exupery's most celebrated novel, *The Little Prince*, a parallel incident is related - where an astronomer from Turkey discovers a new planet in 1909 but is discounted because of his outfit- and the Orientalist attitude is tacitly criticized by Exupery.<sup>232</sup> The common denominator that brings together all these is that it is true that at least some Europeans find Ottoman (and perhaps Eastern) outfit ridiculous and this stance of theirs even affects their thought on what is inside the outfit. But there is a serious problem here that needs to be addressed.

As I've stated in chapter II where I am discussing interwar European authoritarianism, the racist and Orientalist attitudes of Europeans can not and should not

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230 How many people were executed because of hat reform is a controversial issue, and I will not go into its details here. But to portray the size of distinction, I should say that while Mete Tunçay and Zürcher -who cites Tunçay- give the number 660, Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Hür give much smaller numbers, around 70. I should also state that Ergün Aybars seriously claims “nobody was executed because of not wearing hat,” probably by using the deceptive explanation that people who were executed were executed not because of “hat law,” but because of “provoking masses by using religion,” or “treason.” This is another example to portray the Kemalists' approach to the revolutions and executions.

231 Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih II*, pp. 360-361.

232 Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince*, p. 17

constitute grounds for Orientalist revolutions and reforms of Turkey. Arguing against Zafer Toprak, I have discussed earlier that the main reason for head skull measurements were the Europeans' identifying Turkey as yellow race. The same thing applies for this tarboosh example, too. It is obvious that a group of Sicilian boys or European specialists' mocking Atatürk's outfit is a racist and Euro-centric action, and this racist actions should not be avenged by forcing hat reform on the masses. If it is the Western civilization of which you want to be a part, the main action to take should be the establishment of political parties or free press; not forcing people a new garment which is alien to them. A wrong reaction by racist or Orientalist figures is avenged years later by equally Euro-centric and Orientalist actions! It is no surprise that the hostile tone Atatürk has against the Ottoman garment is dubbed in the Kemalist figures such as Suna Kili. According to Kili, "people are not civilized by their beliefs and thoughts...their appearance and outfit are related with being civilized,"<sup>233</sup> because according to Atatürk, "It was mandatory to get rid of tarboosh because it sat on our heads as token of nescience and bigotry, and hate for every kind of development."<sup>234</sup>

I've discussed throughout this chapter that within the Kemalist literature, there is an overabundance of finding reasons for Atatürk revolutions and identifying his actions as necessary. While this attitude is obviously subjective, and is very prone to exploitation, whether there is some truth in them should be questioned as well. For instance, one can easily argue that changing Ottoman style of measure units with their Western counterparts, did help in the Westernization of Turkey, and if the aim is to Westernize the country, perhaps their benefits can be stressed, though not addressing them as imperative. However, there are some cases where even the subjective premise (reasons) for Atatürk revolutions lack logic, and I want to finish this chapter by addressing a few of them.

In her book, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, Suna Kili seems to be successful in coming up with the desired reasoning for almost all the revolutions of Atatürk. Under the subheading of "A New Alphabet," Kili argues in the opening sentence that one of the most important things for a society is language unity, that each individual speak the same language and that it is understood by everyone.<sup>235</sup> However, for a number of societies, the case is different. For instance, it might be educative to compare which one

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233 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 213.

234 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Speech*, cited in Ayşe Hür, *Öteki Tarih II*, p. 360.

235 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 222.



is more modern and civilized: Turkey, where Turkish is forced on the minorities as the official language, or Switzerland, where at least two languages (German and France) are spoken. This perhaps would go for the abolishment of sultanate, too. Anıl Çeçen argues that to be a nation-state, sultanate had to be abolished.<sup>236</sup> In this regard, comparing Turkey and several European states where still monarchy -though symbolically- is applied can be instructive: Spain, Wales, England and Holland, jut to mention a few.

*“O, wind, if winter comes, can spring be far behind?” P. B. Shelley*

## ***VI. Conclusion: Towards leaving apologetic historiography behind...***

Imagine you are invited to a TV program as an expert historian to discuss the single-party period of Turkey with other historians who more or less have Kemalist outlooks. It is very likely that, whatever kind of criticism you bring to the period between 1925-1946, your collocutor will answer with only one phrase: Conditions of the period. It is very likely that, when you are referring to the single-party period and bringing stricture to any of its practices -be it lack of democracy, Independence Tribunals, executions, dissolution of opposition parties etc- your opponent will tell you that the single-party period should be evaluated by taking the conditions of the period into consideration. The one and only purpose of this thesis is to question and challenge this ever-present postulation, and to prove that single-party period and its practices can not be justified or defended with this fallacious premise. My giving the example of a TV program here might sound weird, but this is not something hypothetical; I've witnessed this situation numerous times in Turkey. In this final chapter, I will go over all the assumptions of single party exponents, and also by taking this discussion to different levels, will hopefully show why they lack substantial evidence.

The whole idea behind the argument that the single-party period was due to conditions is mainly based on several fallacious premises: That there was nothing left out of the Ottoman Empire (evocation of the “subject to citizen” assumption of chapter I) and that Atatürk had to modernize a backward and collapsed nation, meanwhile aiming democracy in the long run (discussed in chapter III). Added to these main premises is that Turkey had her unique conditions which made it impossible to have a

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236 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 88.

democratic regime (again, chapter III) and that since inter-war European states had succumbed to authoritarianism and failed to embrace democracy, Atatürk's less authoritarian single-party regime should be perceived as normal (discussed in chapter II). In addition, because opposition -whether organized or individual- was subsumed without any substantial legal reason, the ones who hold on to the “conditions of the era” argument must denigrate any kind of opposition against Atatürk (discussed in chapter IV). I will go over all of these one by one, and try to place them within the big picture.

I discussed in chapter I that there is this assumption that Turkish Republic meant from transition from subject to citizen and tried to show why it lacks factual evidence. I argued that -although limited- there was a certain degree of pluralism (although not real democracy in the sense we know today) in the Ottoman Empire, and so the proclamation of Turkish Republic can not mean transition from subject to citizen. Now I would like to draw attention to a different point of the situation to prove why this claim of transition from subject to citizen is totally incongruous. I argued that there was a limited pluralism starting from 1908, but for a second, let us assume that this is not true. Let us presume for a second that all the 600 years of the Ottoman Empire was dominated by the Sultan and agree with the Kemalist mainstream premise that the people of the Empire were really subjects, and were not at all close to being a citizen. This, still would not justify the single-party rule, because -taking into consideration that after WWI, there was an upsurge of parliamentary democracies- a nation established after World War One would be expected to have pluralism. Besides, the 1920 elections and the parliament opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1920, would make it clear that when Turkish Republic was proclaimed, the very society which declared that republic had experienced pluralism between 1920-1923. Let us now elucidate this point.

Emre Kongar argues in his book *Atatürk* that the parliament which was inefficient during the last stage of the Ottoman Empire was rendered efficient by Atatürk.<sup>237</sup> The parliament he refers to is surely the one opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1920. I should remind that this date is also celebrated in Turkey every year, with the motto of Atatürk, “sovereignty belongs to the nation.” If Atatürk, as Kongar argues, rendered that parliament efficient -and as both Kemalist and non-Kemalists agree, it is a parliament that bears congressmen from all walks of life- it should be accepted that from then on, that very parliament can speak on behalf of the nation, hence introducing pluralism,

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237 Emre Kongar, *Atatürk*, p. 114.

even if it had not been present at all during the last stage of the Ottoman Empire. The bottom line here is that, it is a great dilemma to celebrate 23<sup>rd</sup> April, the date the parliament was opened as manifestation of sovereignty of the people, and also to argue that Turkish Republic meant transition from subject to citizen.

I should reiterate my concern I argued in chapter I as to fetishizing Ottoman pluralism once more. Arguing that there was limited pluralism from 1908 onwards does not necessarily mean that there was democracy in the Ottoman Empire in the sense we know today. I am only arguing against the postulation that Turkish Republic created citizen from subject, and that needed a transition process. What I am saying is that a) there was limited pluralism in the Ottoman Empire and a lively cultural and social life starting from 1908, and b) Even if it hadn't existed, we could not argue that there was a necessity for single-party period, for a nation established after WWI would be expected to have pluralism. Arguing that there was limited pluralism in the Ottoman Empire should also not lead us to ignore that, following the first elections in 1908, that pluralism was placed by a virtual single-party period when the CUP became authoritarian. As Zürcher argues, Turkish state's being turned into a single-party regime in 1925 is close to CUP's declaring its virtual single-party hegemony.<sup>238</sup> In this respect, we can easily say that the pluralism in 1908 was short-lived, as was the limited pluralism before 1925. Still, this should not make one defend single-party rule with the motto of “conditions of the era.” Looking at Turkey today (in 2014) and when we compare it with periods of 1908-1912 or 1950-1957 perhaps we can assume that democracy or pluralism has always been temporary in Turkey, and rather than being an end in itself, it has always been means to reach the end. Perhaps we can say that absolute power absolutely corrupts, or that popular support from bottom to top might yield in authoritarianism, as argued by Hanioglu.<sup>239</sup>

The argument that Turkey's single-party period should be considered normal when compared with fascist and totalitarian inter-war regimes is not cogent in two ways, as I fully discussed in chapter II. The first problem is that, while it is true that inter-war Europe period saw the rise of totalitarian regimes, it should not be forgotten that it first saw the rise of *democracies*, and that Turkish Republic -as a *new* nation-state- was turned into a single-party state in 1925, when the majority of European nations were enjoying pluralism, and had not yet experienced authoritarian/totalitarian

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238 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 172.

239 Şükrü Hanioglu, “Yukarıdan aşağıya siyaset ve reform tuzağı,” *Sabah*, 25 May 2014.

leaders. The second problem is that, even if we accept for a moment that inter-war Europe was characterized by totalitarianism, Turkish single-party state still can not be accepted normal, because odious examples such as Hitler Germany, Mussolini Italy or Franco Spain can not be cited as examples to be influenced by. When historians state that the Turkey of inter-war Europe was influenced by totalitarian regimes, as Zafer Toprak does,<sup>240</sup> or that Turkey would make its preference at a time most European states were opting for totalitarianism, as Ergün Aybars does,<sup>241</sup> they seem to forget that the regimes which they claim Turkey was influenced by, are regimes today remembered with disgust and hate. The bottom line here is that, if today a German is not trying to justify the Nazi period by citing Italian fascism as an example to be influenced by, a Turkish should not do it, too.

I have discussed above whether Turkey's being influenced by fascist and totalitarian regimes of Europe can be accepted as an excuse for the single-party regime. I think a note is necessary here, on discussing whether Turkey of Atatürk was fascist or not. Whether Turkish single-party was fascist or not is controversial. My aim in this thesis is only to argue whether the conditions necessitated single-party domination, and whether it was fascist or not is not directly related to my topic. Yet, I will point out a few points of view, and basically present my own opinion. I don't think Turkish single-party could be identified as fascist, mainly because it lacks popular support, which is indispensable for fascism (which comes from the Italian word *fasces* meaning a bundle of axes, symbolizing unitary and solidarity). It should not be forgotten that, in his fifteen-year-presidency as the head of a single-party state, Atatürk was never welcomed as Mussolini did after his famous march on Rome. In addition, we can hardly have a photo of Atatürk resembling that of Hitler speaking in Nuremberg to the numbed masses. Apart from that, Turkish single-party is absent of irredentism and expansionism, entities that are mostly found in fascist regimes.

People who often identify Turkish single-party as fascist might be doing it based on *Cumhuriyet* journal's infamous title "Greetings from Kemalist Turkey to the Fascist Italy" and on the statements of certain congressmen such as Recep Peker that promote Italian fascism (which he did), but these alone, are not enough to pin the fascist minimum label on Kemalist Turkey. Zürcher, too, argues that while there are obvious similarities between fascist regimes and Turkey (extreme nationalism, legitimizing

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240 Zafer Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, p. 13.

241 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 185.

historical mythology and authoritarian character of the regime), differences are greater than similarities (lack of irredentism and lack of popular support in Turkey and semblance of a democratic system). Tanıl Bora, too, argues that Turkish single-party was authoritarian in fact at times totalitarian, but it lacked the proper substructure to sustain fascism.<sup>242</sup> Finally, Stanley Payne, who is known for his studies about fascism, does not include Turkey in his article “Fascism: A Working Definition,” where he draws a chart that contain 15 countries.<sup>243</sup>

Turkey's unique and/or unfavorable conditions, when combined with the modernization paradigm, seem suitable to justify the single-party regime, but there are again, several problems here (as I discussed in chapter III). The postulation that Turkey had her unique conditions so traditional solutions such as parliament, democracy, elections etc. would not be suitable for her is not at all convincing, for it is too vague and susceptible for exploitation. Any given country at any given time can have unique conditions. In fact, this claim of exceptionalism is so elusive, that any government eager to suppress any kind of opposition can exploit this to apply her own agenda. It is strange that Anıl Çeçen uses this “unique conditions” claim in his book promiscuously (at least 13 times!),<sup>244</sup> but never making an attempt to explain it. What is meant by unique conditions is vague, and if it is for instance, being a peninsula or housing minorities, there are enough countries in Europe to fit this description. If Turkey can cite for her unique conditions, being surrounded by sea from 3 sides; the Italians, the French or the Spanish can do that, too. If Turkey can cite having minorities for unique conditions, more than a quarter of the countries in Europe can do the same thing.

This unique conditions argument is sometimes intertwined with Turkey's unfavorable conditions (as I fully discussed in chapter III), and when the modernization paradigm is applied, it seems that Turkey's single-party period can be justified. Here, we can incorporate the debate of transition from subject to citizen (the material of chapter I) too, because Turkey's conditions in 1923, when Republic is proclaimed, in the words of Ergün Aybars is “horrible.”<sup>245</sup> So the argument can go as follows: Single party period can be justified because when the Turkish Republic was proclaimed, people of Turkey were not subjects but citizens, and that since the conditions of the country were terrible,

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242 Tanıl Bora, "Türkiye'de Faşist İdeoloji," cited in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, 9: *Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, p. 349-369.

243 Stanley Payne, “Fascism: A Working Definition,” cited in *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*, p. 108.

244 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*.

245 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 56.

it had to go through a modernization process.

Why all the arguments in the previous paragraph are not convincing is simple: A state founded after World War One would be expected to experience pluralism, and not governed by single-party. When you admit that a society founded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is expected to experience pluralism, all the arguments of single-party advocates I've discussed in the 70 pages so far become hard to accept. Neither transition from subject to citizen, nor inter-war Europe authoritarianism, nor Turkey's unique and/or unfavorable conditions nor opposition against Atatürk's reactionary character... None of these can be justified, when one admits that Turkey was established in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at a time not authoritarianism but pluralism was the coin of the realm. Let me elucidate this point, because if one is only reading this final chapter, what I'm saying might seem weird.

I've been discussing in this thesis whether Turkey's single-party period can be justified by asserting that conditions of the era entailed so. In order to this, I've summarized in the first 4 chapters all the arguments of single-party proponents and tried to show why I don't find them convincing. I've said that subject to citizen claim is incongruous because late Ottoman State enjoyed a limited kind of pluralism and the period following Tanzimat was a lively one where the definition of citizenship made its way into textbooks; I've asserted that inter-war Europe authoritarianism is incongruous because 1920's saw rise of pluralism, and not authoritarianism; I've argued that Turkey's unique/unfavorable conditions and the modernization paradigm can not justify Turkish single party state because it is an Orientalist and Euro-centric point of view (and I gave the example of German Sonderweg); and finally I've objected to the argument that opposition against Atatürk bore reactionary characteristics and I gave the example of both TPCF and SCF, both of which were established by Atatürk's fellow soldiers and/or close friends. I will now take this thing to a whole different level and argue why as a whole, this “conditions of the period” argument does not seem cogent.

My intention for embarking on this project in the first place was, to argue that unlike the putative assertion, single-party period of Turkey can not be legitimized with the reason that conditions of the period necessitated what was done. I have analyzed in the first 4 chapters certain postulations and offered alternative explanations to refute them, but what I am saying now is that, the postulation that Turkey went through the single-party period because conditions necessitated it is fallacious, *regardless of its subheadings*. Let me state this without prevaricating: The postulation that single-party

rule was due to conditions is invented in order to prevent the questioning of the founding philosophy of the state and thereby, question what Atatürk, Turkey's national hero did. It is not that the two decks of historians I've challenged in this work look at the real conditions and defend single-party period accordingly; but it is rather that they try to present the conditions in such a way that they will justify the single-party rule. It is not that Toktamış Ateş is deducing that single-party period can be justified because Ottoman people were subjects, and with republic, they became citizens.<sup>246</sup> But it is rather Ateş has already decided to justify and legitimize single-party rule, so he tries to come up with plausible reasons, and the one reason he can find is that Ottoman society was a theocratic one and its citizens were subjects, and that Turkish republic realized this transition from subject to citizen.

Ahmet Taner Kışlalı has once averred that, asking why Atatürk did not establish 1990's style British democracy in 1923, in a medieval society is just like asking why Mehmed the Conqueror did not establish a telephone network while sieging Constantinople.<sup>247</sup> I will spend some time analyzing this statement, because it subsumes majority of the premises I've discussed and challenged in this thesis. Kışlalı is obviously stating that establishing a telephone network in 1453 -almost four centuries before it was actually invented- is similar to allowing a nation established in 1923 to have pluralism. While this premise is utterly weak, I need to go even deeper to discuss why it is so. First of all, telephone is an object that has to be invented, which is even a further step than *discovery*. Democracy, on the other hand is in its most basic sense, changing of ruling power freely, without any pressure, and this is not an invention. Since human beings *discovered* during the times of the Ancient Greece that rulers of societies can be elected, different societies in different parts of the world have applied different levels of democracy. To apply a limited kind of democracy in a society, no scientific invention whatsoever is necessary. This also brings us back to the question of modernization theory, which envisages, as I discussed in chapter III, that eastern societies should follow western societies, and that in this transition period from traditionalism to modernization, a period of coercion can be observed. This also incorporates all the “a must” premises by single party advocates; that for the development of Turkish Republic, the abolition of the Caliphate was a must, as argued by Anıl Çeçen,<sup>248</sup> or that

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246 Toktamış Ateş, “Kemalizm'in Özü,” as in *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz* p. 61-62.

247 Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, as in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 162.

248 Anıl Çeçen, *100 Soruda Kemalizm*, p. 93.

revolutions are a must for modernization, as argued by Suna Kili.<sup>249</sup>

The assertion of Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, that establishing telephone network during the siege of Constantinople is similar to establishing democracy in the 1920's is important because it portrays another problem which should be addressed. Establishing democracy means tolerating pluralism, and to do that all Atatürk had to do was to allow for free elections. When Kışlalı presents the matter with the words “saying that Atatürk did not establish democracy,” it might be perceived as if Atatürk had to embark on any special project to attain the level of democracy. But in fact, the problem is utterly simple: The elections that were done between 1908-1920, though intermittently, would continue, that's it. The comparison Kışlalı does is with Mehmed the Conqueror's establishing telephone network, which was something that had to be *invented* first. But *democracy*, or pluralism as I would like to put it, had already been there since 1908, at times present, at times subdued. The bottom line is that, Kışlalı not only fails to see that Atatürk did not have to do anything to provide pluralism; but he ignores the fact that Atatürk's action destroyed that mechanism of pluralism.

I've argued above that, regardless of its subheading, “conditions of the era” argument is incongruous, because a state founded in 1920's is expected to be ruled with pluralism. Here, I want to draw attention to a very interesting point: The ones who are actually aware of this more than anybody else, are single-party proponents. They are aware of it, because in almost all the accounts I've fathomed and challenged in this thesis, there is this constant attempt to explain and substantiate lack of democracy during single-party period. There is a reason why Ergün Aybars insists that “Turkish Revolution can not be understood without taking into consideration the conditions Turkey had when the republic was established”<sup>250</sup> and that “for a democracy, there has to be certain conditions.”<sup>251</sup> Aybars is talking about lack of democracy in the early republic period of Turkey, because its absence is unflattering. Aybars is trying to explain and justify lack of democracy in the period between 1925-1946, because it is the opposite of what is expected. Lack of something -unless the argument is theological- is only explained when its absence creates problems. Let us scour all the Ottoman History literature, and I bet we can hardly find a source that will try to explain lack of democracy in the reign of Suleiman the Lawmaker or Murad IV. It is because at that

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249 Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, p. 237-38.

250 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 12.

251 *Ibid*, p. 54.



time, probably not many people expected pluralism in the Ottoman Empire. But since the late Ottoman Empire and also the time between 1920-1925 witnessed different degrees of pluralism, that very pluralism is expected after the proclamation of the Republic, too. And since single-party proponents know this, they take great pains in explaining why Turkey of Atatürk lacked democracy. It should be no surprise for us that from Toktamış Ateş to Ergün Aybars, from Suna Kili to Nurşen Mazıcı, majority of the single party advocates start their accounts by saying that we can not understand the single-party period without taking the conditions of the period into consideration.

There is this phrase in Turkey that goes as, “If it hadn't been for Atatürk...”<sup>252</sup> I can guess that, if this thesis gets published, some historians will accuse me of being ungrateful and I will be targeted with sentences starting with “If it hadn't been for Atatürk” and probably going on as “you wouldn't be able to write this thesis.” Zürcher, too, makes an assumption that “it is doubtful whether Turkey would have survived as an independent state without his unique combination of tactical mastery, ruthlessness, realism and sense of purpose.”<sup>253</sup> There can be a great deal of truth in this statement of Zürcher. For one thing, it could be argued that Turkey could not have repossessed Anatolia without Atatürk's leadership in the National Struggle. It can also be argued that if free elections had been allowed, there would be a two party state, paving the way for a possible civil war. But these can hardly go beyond being hypothesis. Perhaps it can also be thought that with free elections and a two party state, Turkey would sustain a mature democracy, but again this, can not go beyond being a hypothesis. Atatürk can be “absolutely the right man on the right spot during the greatest crisis of his country,”<sup>254</sup> to quote from Zürcher. Nevertheless, this should not allow us to assume that his turning Turkey into a single-party regime was the right thing to do when the conditions are taken into consideration.

Earlier in this thesis, I gave the examples of historians who did not think democracy can grow in Eastern societies like Turkey, and I stated that combined with

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252 The origin of this phrase is controversial, but the earliest examples should be with Falih Rıfki Atay, and also, the lines of the poet Neyzen Tevfik who writes that without Atatürk, we wouldn't know our fathers, a rather problematic allusion to the National Struggle. Regardless of its origin, this phrase has become quite popular recently, to the point of making its way into newspaper covers. On 10<sup>th</sup> of November, when Atatürk is commemorated on his death day, an industry company printed on some back cover of some of the newspapers the phrase: Without you, we wouldn't be. This soon created its antithetical counterpart, too, and a rather Islamic paper printed on its back cover: Without you, we would still be.

253 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 184.

254 Ibid, p. 185.

the modernization paradigm which makes a clear distinction between traditional and modern societies, this argument might be used to justify single-party period. If we identify Ottoman Empire as a traditional and monolithic society with no dynamics, and the Turkey after Atatürk Revolution as a modern society, then the modernization paradigm fits Turkey. Add to this the Turkish single-party period as the inevitable coercive period envisaged by the modernization process to turn the traditional society into a modern one, and you have your legitimized Kemalist single-party, as would be lauded by historians like Toktamış Ateş or Suna Kili. But as I discussed, the modernization paradigm was developed by the Western societies for the Eastern societies and it fails to capture the essence of development. For one thing with its woman organizations, somewhat free elections, free press and lively political and social atmosphere, the Ottoman Society in 1900's can not be treated the same as the Ottoman Society in 1700's. But here, I would like to take this argument to a different level.

Bernard Lewis is one of the historians to embrace modernization paradigm and giving the example of Sweden -a Western society that did not go through the same afflictions as Turkey did- Lewis identifies the democratization process of Turkey as “radiant.”<sup>255</sup> Here, the question of Orientalism and Euro-centricism are included in the big picture. Lewis argues in his illustrious book *What Went Wrong* that societies, in times of trouble, give two kinds of reaction: “What went wrong?” and “Who did this to us?” Using historical evidence, Lewis argues that, while Western societies are likely to ask the first question, Eastern societies are more prone to the second one (still, Lewis admits that Ottomans did ask “what went wrong” and searched for the causes of their decline). The content of Lewis's ground breaking study might not be directly relevant to my subject, but its Orientalist attitude is surely useful in this context. Hypothetically speaking, looking at 15 Eastern societies and trying to understand whether democracy or authoritarianism was embraced there, is different than claiming that if democracy had not been embraced, it was because of the conditions of the era. We can look at all the Middle Eastern societies, and deduce that none of them was ever successful in sustaining a democratic regime. But this, will not allow us to look at one particular Middle Eastern and/or Moslem society at a certain time and contend that democracy did not grow there because the conditions were not ripe. In identifying the general pattern of reactions of societies in times of trouble, Lewis might be every right that Eastern

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255 Bernard Lewis, as in *Dünya Düşünürleri Gözüyle Atatürk ve Cumhuriyeti*, p. 6-7.

societies act differently than the Western ones. But again, this will not allow us to argue that, if in Turkey -as a Middle Eastern and Moslem society- democracy did not flourish in 1920's and 30's, this was due to the conditions of the era.

In this thesis, I've analyzed and argued against approximately 20 historians, whom I jointly refer to as single-party exponents. I should say something as to how I made this choice (how I decided whom to include in the thesis) and I feel the need to single-out one of them and thereby, take this debate to a further level. While making the decision whom to include, I basically tried to select eminent and illustrious names. My objecting to all these distinguished names jointly should not and will not decrease their academic value. On the contrary, it is with the help of these acclaimed historians that we budding historians learn about Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic (it should not be forgotten that without Halil İnalcık -who is a single-party exponent- Ottoman Empire studies would be very different, and perhaps difficult). With no exception, all the names I've referred and objected to in my thesis have the academic title of *professor*. Most of them -if not all- have taught Turkish History in universities in Turkey or abroad, and all of them have published academic work, most of which have already seen 10<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> editions. The works of the ones such as Toktamış Ateş and Suna Kili were used in universities as text books. The two criteria I looked for while picking these names were: Being advocates of single-party, and being part of the academic circle. I deliberately did not include names such as İsmail Cem, because I directly looked for advocacy of single-party. I tried to avoid economic or class-based analysis as much as possible, for while surely being valuable, they did not seem to be directly related to the topic I am to canvass. That is also why, among the people who objected to the justification of single-party, I did *not* refer to Fikret Başkaya, whose analysis was more or less a class-based and economic one.

I've stated above that among the exponents of single party regime, I will single out one of them, and that is Nevin Yurdsever Ateş. My reason for treating her differently is because, among the single-party exponents, Ateş is the one who gets closest to proving that justification wrong, but fails to do it because of her bias. As I discussed in chapter IV, Ateş's published Ph. D. is about Progressive Republican Party (TPCF) and unlike majority of the Kemalist accounts, her treatment of the topic doesn't culminate with the assertion that TPCF was dominated by reactionaries. In fact, her specifically stating that TPCF members were *not* reactionaries, is suggestive. The study she meticulously carried out seems to be precluding her from reaching the biased

conclusion most of her single-party advocate colleagues reach, which is something to be admired. But still, she asks the question that if in 1925, proper elections were allowed, could the masses who had been subjects for hundreds of years determine their destiny logically.<sup>256</sup> I should say that, Ateş does not answer this question directly negatively, but prevaricates by stating that we can not know that.

It is true that history can not be written with “what if”s, but what would happen if free elections had been allowed is different than asking what would happen if in 1943, Soviet army had been vanquished in Stalingrad by the Nazi's. The latter can not be answered because myriads of parameters will be included in the picture, but we can perhaps deliberate on the former. Perhaps we can at least say that people would vote and that there would be two parties in the parliament (Cemil Koçak argues that if in 1930, there hadn't been fraudulent elections, CHP, the party in power, would probably lose it's position as power).<sup>257</sup> What I'm trying to say here is that, having already decided to legitimize and justify single-party rule, Ateş falls into the trap of “conditions of the era,” even though in her work, she has identified the characteristics of TPCF, the first opposition party truly.

A very similar example goes on around the debate of the members of the first parliament, too, opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1920. Ahmet Demirel who conducted the most rigorous academic study about the first parliament resentfully states in the very beginning of his work, that the magisterial treatment in the Turkish historiography condemns the opposition in the first parliament as backwardness, reactionary, pro-sultanate etc.<sup>258</sup> Demirel goes on to analyze accounts one by one, presenting their outlooks. Then he gives a very interesting example where the historian İhsan Güneş, who rightly identifies the actions and the characteristics of the second group, but still ends up in falling to the cliché of “reactionary second group, progressive first group.”<sup>259</sup> This is an interesting example which tells us that the magisterial treatment of the second group within the Turkish historiography which basically deems the first group of Mustafa Kemal as “progressive” and second group as “reactionary” is so influential, that it can even effect a historian who in fact rightly identified the characteristics of the group.<sup>260</sup> Nevin Yurdsever Ateş's treatment of the TPCF is different than her fellow

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256 Nevin Yurdsever Ateş, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 325

257 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 86.

258 Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet*, p. 15.

259 Ibid, p. 32.

260 Ibid, p. 33.

historians, but reaching more or less the same result is similar to the problem Demirel points out. In both situations, the end result is determined prior to the studies, and even if the studies might yield results opposite to historians' previous conclusions, their bias impedes them from reaching the true conclusions.

An interesting point as to the characteristic and results of the single-party period comes from Mahmut Goloğlu. In his four-tome-series, *History of Turkish Republic*, Goloğlu relates what happened during the single-party period (and briefly between 1946-1950), both by citing parliament records and interpreting them. In *Tek Partili Cumhuriyet*, he touches upon the resentment of the congressmen some of whom are exasperated because of lack of audit and opposition. Goloğlu here, puts some of the blame on the congressmen, and also on the people of Turkey who allowed this process (meaning, the unbridled single-party regime). Goloğlu's tone reminds me of the parable of the frogs who desired a king. He discusses the inclination towards dictatorship and argues that, if at those times, there was really a disposition towards dictatorship, this could not have been realized with the desire and effort of one single person (meaning, Atatürk). He goes on that “the causes of every event that gives direction to the society, should again be looked for in that very society.”<sup>261</sup> I agree with Goloğlu here to a certain extent. It can perhaps be argued that, if Atatürk is successful in establishing his single-party domination, it is because he gets help from people in doing so. It should not be forgotten that Law of Maintenance and Order was voted in the parliament and the majority voted in favour. This also means that he is successful in making people believe his dreams, and follow them. Still, this is a matter of conditions *allowing* for single-party domination rather than *necessitating* it. What happened in Turkey during the single-party period may be argued within the Marxist debates of historical materialism (or determinism?), (and perhaps with the famous statement of Marx from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that “Men make their own history, but they...do it under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past”) but this, will again not allow us to accept that Turkey had to go through a single-party period because conditions necessitated so.

It is often the case that “conditions of the era” argument is uttered with comparisons with “today.” What was done during the single-party regime included dissolution of opposition parties and execution of proactive or potential dissenters.

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261 Mahmut Goloğlu, *Tek Partili Cumhuriyet*, p. 212-13.

Probably because these are unflattering actions, historians who advocate and legitimize single-party rule feel the need to stress that if these happened today, they wouldn't approve of them. Toktamış Ateş states in 1990's (in the book *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, a study compiled by Bedri Baykam in 1994), that today -meaning 1990's- he wouldn't approve of people from Welfare Party to be send to scaffolds. But Ateş also states that, at that time -meaning the time of Atatürk when opposition was suppressed by means of scaffolds- “it had to be like that.”<sup>262</sup> Ahmet Taner Kışlalı gives a similar example, too, when he states that it should be taught to children that “Kemalizm is not wardership of what was done within the circumstances of 1920's.”<sup>263</sup> Ateş's statement is clear enough, and it needs no further clarification. Kışlalı's statement might sound a bit elusive, but I think we can easily assume that he means that in 1920's people were executed (and there was nothing wrong with that) but today, the same practices should not be applied.

The common denominator that brings together these two statements -and the likes of these can be easily found in the Kemalist literature- is that what was done can not be accepted today, but at that time, it was the right thing to do. This statement, in itself is problematic, because neither Kışlalı not Ateş offers any plausible and concrete reasoning as to why what was done at that time was true. The general assumption that what was done in the single-party period was due to conditions -the very statement which gave impetus to this thesis in the first place- is voiced myriads of time, but never with a convincing reasoning. Ateş, while summarizing the process all the opposition was suppressed in 1925, asserts that, “for the Turkish Republic not to be suffocated at birth, there was no other alternative.” This is the magisterial outlook by single-party exponents to the revolution and its pressures, but again, no cogent explanation is given anywhere.

I have argued throughout this work that the postulation that Turkish single-party was due to the conditions of the era is based on several premises. While discussing these premises, I have almost always used sources outside of the official arguments of the regime. That is to say, I have hardly ever discussed whether any of these arguments were voiced by the spokesman of the Kemalist regime, before or during the single-party regime. I will now make this more clear, and demonstrate that while some of the

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262 Toktamış Ateş, as in *Mustafa Kemaller Görev Başına*, p. 31.

263 Kışlalı, “Akılsız dostlar mı yoksa akıllı düşmanlar mı?” *Cumhuriyet*, 3 July 1998, cited in *Ben Demokrat Değilim*, p. 112.

arguments were voiced during the single-party period, the main assumption -that single-party rule was ephemeral and was due to conditions- was not voiced until 1945, the last year of the single-party period.

The main idea that single-party was necessary due to the conditions, was uttered for the first time within the concept of “memorandum of the four,” a bill proposed in 1946 to the parliament and offering to make the single-party regime softer (hence paving the way for the multi-party in the future). In this memorandum of the four, offered by the future founders of Democratic Party Adnan Menderes (the future prime minister), Refik Koraltan (the future parliament chair), Fuad Köprülü (founder of “scientific history” in Turkey in the words of Halil Berktaş) and Celal Bayar (3<sup>rd</sup> president of Turkey) it is insinuated that the single-party period emerged as an exigency. Institutions from the Middle Ages and the unfavorable conditions of the country lead the party in power (meaning, CHP) to take precautions that would limit freedoms. Since there was no need for these precautions any more, and in a time when all around the world freedom and democracy won triumph, it was time to do away with the single-party rule.<sup>264</sup>

Whether Menderes, Koraltan, Köprülü and Bayar were intimate in stating that single-party period was due to conditions, or whether they were trying to panegyricize it in order not to get negative reaction is controversial. But for a thesis like this, it is important to point out that, the argument that single-party domination was due to the conditions was voiced for the first time in 1946, not by staunch Kemalists or single-party advocates like Recep Peker, but by future Democratic Party founders. It should be noted that, this “memorandum of the four” directly incorporates 2 of the 4 premises I have discussed in this thesis: Transition from subject to citizen and Turkey's unfavorable conditions.

Whether European authoritarianism influenced Turkey and whether Turkey was a single-party state because most European states were so, could not have been discussed during the single-party years, at least not before the end of 1930's. As I have cited examples from Norman Davies, Mark Mazower and Michael Mann, not 1920's, but 1930's were the time authoritarian regimes rose in Europe. Perhaps the dilemma here would be that, although single-party proponents argue that “at that time” (meaning the time Turkey was a single-party state) European nations were falling prey to

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264 Cemil Koçak, *İkinci Parti*, pp. 314-315.

totalitarianism one by one, Atatürk resentfully stated in 1930 that the landscape of Turkey is more or less a dictatorship and that he doesn't want to leave an institution of tyranny.<sup>265</sup>

That the revolutions were necessary to modernize the country and bring it to the level of civilized nations was voiced as early as 1924, and by Atatürk himself. In the Kemalist literature, this is uttered as either transition from subject to citizen (the material of chapter I) or as part of the modernization theory and Turkey's unfavorable conditions (chapter III). Ergün Aybars relates that when the opposition states that democracy can not be with one party and that Mustafa Kemal should remain impartial as the president, Mustafa Kemal replies this by stating that the deed is not done with the proclamation of the republic and that to join the civilized realm of the world, there should be no opposition for some more time.<sup>266</sup> It is obvious that here, Aybars is defending Atatürk against the opposition, and goes on to say that, “His (Atatürk's, UD) being impartial means the end of the revolutions.”

This is the typical outlook developed by single-party exponents, and as I have discussed before, it is also manifested in the form of transition from subject to citizen. Again as Goloğlu relates, when in 1924, Atatürk declares that he will go on being the party leader despite also being the president, there is negative reaction to this from the press. Later, Atatürk is known to have stated that Turkey is in the beginning of a path, but has not yet advanced enough. Aybars's statement that Atatürk's being impartial would mean the end of revolution can be evaluated accordingly. Atatürk himself declared and sustained his single-party domination with the pretext that Turkey has yet “promises to keep and miles to go before she sleeps.” Atatürk's followers, on the other hand, claim the same thing to defend his single-party rule. In fact, one of the first and classic advocates of the necessity of the revolutions (hence the necessity of single-party regime) is Afet İnan. İnan, the adopted daughter of Atatürk, and the illustrious historian of the single-party regime, says that “we owe our place and development within the World Civilization to the Republic.” İnan confirms the necessity of the Atatürk revolutions with the following statement, and it can easily be seen in Turkey that these statements have become the repeated clichés of the Kemalist regime's advocates: The goal of revolutionary Atatürk within the issues of the nation is a Turkish nation

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265 Mete Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek-Parti*, p. 254.

266 Ergün Aybars, *Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Laik Demokrasi*, p. 56. It is not specified by Aybars in which year this discussion took place, but since it is in the chapter Aybars is relating how the first opposition party was formed, it should be 1924.



constantly developing within the World Civilization.<sup>267</sup>

That the opposition against Atatürk was reactionary is a common belief within the single-party advocates, although there are exceptions such as Nevin Yurdever Ateş. Majority of the single-party advocates agree that opposition organized against Atatürk had reactionary character -paving the way for their suppression soon- and this was voiced either by Atatürk himself or by the press that promotes his views as early as 1924. As I discussed in chapter IV, Yunus Nadi wrote in 1926 that opposition in Turkey would always mean treason.<sup>268</sup> It is also known that Atatürk himself did not welcome the organization of the opposition, and when the TPCF was founded, he said that he couldn't see anything essential in their program<sup>269</sup> (since at that time, CHP itself did not have any program, Atatürk's sneering at TPCF's detailed program is suggestive. It seems that, rather than differing with TPCF founders on political terms, Atatürk is driven by envy and intolerance). Falih Rıfki Atay, too, who can be identified as the ideologue of the Kemalist regime, was against opposition. Atay argued in 1930 that it was not the right time for an opposition party (meaning SCF), and he was also against İsmet Paşa's transferring to the multi-party regime.<sup>270</sup> No matter what the reason was, opposition has always meant treason in Turkey (including today) perhaps starting from the late Ottoman period.

Throughout in this work, I've used the words “Kemalist” and “Atatürkist”. While differences can be made between these two, I should say here that I've used them interchangeably. Historians who argue that there was a necessity for the single-party and that Atatürk had to modernize the newly established Turkish state; I regarded them as Kemalist/Ataturkist. When I talk about Kemalist historiography, I mean the history writing that sees Turkish history from the vantage point of Atatürk. That is to say, the historians whom I treat as Kemalist are the ones who argue that there was a necessity for the single-party state and that reforms had to be made to turn a traditional society into a modern one. It is an interesting thing that in Turkey, Kemalist and Atatürkist can be used both differently or interchangeably. It is sometimes the case that people might claim that they are not Kemalists but Atatürkists. I think if we are to make a distinction

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267 Afet İnan, *Atatürk Hakkında Hatıralar ve Belgeler*, p. xviii-xx.

268 Cited in Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet*, p. 605.

269 Mete Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek-Parti*, p. 108.

270 Cemil Koçak, “Falih Rıfki Atay Otoriterliğin gereğini bize hep hatırlatmıştı”, *Star*, 13 Dec.

2014. It can be seen from the statements of both Afet İnan and Falih Rıfki Atay that, some of the arguments I have discussed in this thesis, including the necessity of the single-party regime, are the arguments of the Kemalist regime itself, and have been repeated in all these years).

between these two, we should be cautious. One school of thought might suggest that Kemalizm is more strict compared to Atatürkism, and that Kemalizm, unlike Atatürkism, is a doctrine.<sup>271</sup> Another idea is that they are the same thing and that they mean “the guidance of rationalism and science”.<sup>272</sup> Finally, a third point of view is that, because the leaders of 12 September coup (1980) claimed that they took action with the motto of Atatürkism, people who detested their practices refused to be titled as Atatürkist. As Emre Kongar states, this went to the point of Yunus Nadi, a strict Atatürkist, to write a book with the title “I am not an Atatürkist.”<sup>273</sup> We should not forget the fact that, ideologies mostly end with the suffix “ism,” and that unlike Atatürkism (which is in Turkish, pronounced as “Atatürkçülük,” without any “ism”) Kemalizm is an ideology, a doctrine. We should also keep in mind that, Kemalizm is older than Atatürkism, for the journal, “La Turquie Kemaliste” was being published as early as 1934. For a thesis whose primary purpose is only to question and challenge the single-party period, this much should be enough. I feel the need to reiterate that in this work, I used Kemalizm and Atatürkism interchangeably.

The language used by single-party exponents should give us clues as to how they try to legitimize this process of suppression of opposition, and more than that, how the whole single-party period is justified. Destruction of opposition is presented with the words “attempt for multi-party democracy,” as if it was a magnanimous action embarked by Atatürk himself. Toktamış Ateş states that “there were two attempts for multi-party,”<sup>274</sup> without being aware of the fact that, while these are *not* multi-party attempts, their “failing” (as mostly addressed by single-party exponents), means the de facto end of opposition itself. What I am trying to say is that, while the suppression of the opposition parties effectively destroyed opposition, this is presented in the Kemalist historiography as the “failures of attempts for democracy.” Accordingly, the establishment of Democrat Party in 1950 is presented as a desired goal of the revolution (claim of smooth transition), as if there had been any attempt to reach that goal during the single-party period.

As I've discussed in chapter III -and pointed out by Cemil Koçak-<sup>275</sup> neither was it obvious (even in 1946) that the single-party would transform itself into a multi-party

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271 Emre Aköz, “Kemalizm ile Atatürkçülük arasındaki fark” *Sabah*, 25 Nov 2009.

272 Emre Kongar, “Altı Ok ve Sosyal Demokrasi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Sep 2014.

273 Emre Kongar, “Kemalizm ve Sosyal Demokrasi.”

274 Toktamış Ateş, “Altı Ok'un düşündükleri,” as in *Biz Devrimi Çok Seviyoruz*, p. 239.

275 Cemil Koçak, *İkinci Parti*, pp. 16 and 25.

regime, nor there was any considerable attempt for planting the seeds of a democracy during the single-party period (unlike what the single-party advocates claim). It is a great dilemma to offer that single-party period was ephemeral (and to claim that it was established to pave the way for multi-party) and to know that in 1931, the article which states Turkey as a single-party state was added to the party's program. As I've discussed above, it is not that single-party advocates are looking at the conditions and are reaching results accordingly; but it is the opposite. Cemil Koçak states this better by saying that unlike what the Kemalist postulation offers, Turkish single-party never had any intention to transform itself into multi-party before 1945, and that after World War II, it had to explain its past. The tutelage party theory which envisages that CHP wanted democracy in the long run is, as Koçak rightly diagnoses, is a product of this attempt to explain the past.<sup>276</sup> The end result is to justify single-party period, so there arises a need to claim that single-party rule aimed true democracy. This matches with the assertion of Emre Kongar, too, who avers that there can be no doubt that Atatürk's aim was democracy.<sup>277</sup> Since democracy is a positive concept and defense of permanent single-party rule is out of question, it is argued by figures like Kongar that democracy was the true aim Atatürk wanted to reach.

While arguing that single-party was not the only option, I should be cautious about something. It can be argued that what Ataturk did was a revolution, and that “it takes some blood to cement the revolution.” I can not argue against this statement, nor do I claim that it can be justified or refuted, at least historically. The only way we can discuss this can be from an ethical perspective, but neither am I qualified for that, nor this is the place for it. Still, when we say that there can be no revolution without bloodshed, we are moving with the premise that revolutions themselves are necessary. I am not supporting the Marxist argument that revolution is progress, so here I will assert that Ataturk revolution was not a must; it was not the only choice.

I will finish this “conditions of the era” discussion with a parallel example from economy. I am strongly against the postulation which offers that conditions of the era entailed a single-party rule, as I've discussed in this thesis. However, a similar argument can be made about Turkish economy, and I wouldn't reject it. It can be argued, as both Cemil Koçak<sup>278</sup> and Haldun Derin does, that Turkish industrialist lacked the necessary

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276 Cemil Koçak, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 651.

277 Emre Kongar, *Demokrasimizle Yüzleşmek*, p. 223.

278 Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye Tarihi 4: Çağdaş Türkiye*, p. 151.

capital in the early Republican years, so what came to be known as *statism* was developed to help making investments. While it can not be argued that people were not ready for democracy and that the ruling party CHP paved the way for democracy, it can perhaps be argued that the private sector did not have the sufficient needs for industrialization, hence the need for state's intervention in economy. As Derin points out, it can be asserted that “Turkish statism was limited with interventions to realize the outcome which otherwise wouldn't be at the desired level,”<sup>279</sup> and again as Derin argues, this interventionist policy might have arisen “from a historical necessity”<sup>280</sup> and “might be pertinent and just.”<sup>281</sup> However, economic policy which is more or less limited to the economic field, should not be regarded the same as political tutelage, which can limit every kind of freedom, including people's attire.

The early years of Turkish Republic and its aftermath saw accounts that not only justify single-party rule, but adore Kemalism and present single-party period as kind of a golden age. It should not be forgotten that in 1950's, the shadows on the scarps of mountains that allegedly looked like the silhouette of Atatürk were interpreted as miracles!<sup>282</sup> We can fortunately say that that attitude has pretty much faded. If approximately 20 historians I've analyzed for this thesis start their accounts with the apologetic statement that “when we evaluate Atatürk period, we have to take the conditions into consideration,” this means that they are aware that that period had certain problems and can not be treated as a golden age. This is a development in terms of Turkish historiography because it is important to move from the level of “Atatürk revolution is an immeasurable asset”<sup>283</sup> to “Atatürk period should be evaluated taking the conditions into consideration.” This is, as Şükrü Hanioglu argues, transition from “historiography of the most noble feeling to apologetic historiography.”<sup>284</sup>

What I am suggesting in this thesis, is to leave the apologetic historiography aside, and face with the argument which advocates that conditions of the period entailed what was done during the single-party period. I've tried to demonstrate again and again

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279 Haldun Derin, *Türkiye'de Devletçilik*, p. 3. Haldun Derin (1912-2004) who was my grandfather worked under Atatürk, İnönü and Bayar, and as a staunch Atatürkist, would probably not agree with his grandson's thesis, let alone being proud.

280 Ibid, p. 192.

281 Ibid, p. 192.

282 It all starts when a shepherd in 1954 sees on the mountain the portrait of Atatürk and tells it to the local authorities. For a brief summary of this “event” and its repercussions, see Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 1-2.

283 Suat Sinanoğlu, cited in *Yanlış Cumhuriyet* by Sevan Nişanyan, p. 63.

284 Şükrü Hanioglu, “En asil duygunun tarihçiliğinden apolojetik tarihyazımına,” *Sabah*, 1 July 2012

for 80 pages that what is offered as conditions of the era is not at all, persuasive. It is rather the cult of leadership, and perhaps Turkey's underdevelopment, which makes historians flatter single-party period. Stating that we should not measure Atatürk's time with the current time -no matter what that current time is- is not cogent at all. None of the single party advocates offers to measure it with the period of 1908-1912, a period whose every aspect was more plural and democratic than the single-party period of 1920's and 1930's.

While concluding, there is one last thing that I must emphasize, for we have to understand against what kind of a problem we are faced with. Both the conceptualization of single-party period as golden age and as part of apologetic historiography, is part of official historiography. At primary and secondary school, students are exposed to a golden age narrative with portraits of Atatürk at the cover of every textbook and above the blackboard in each class. When they come to university, the golden age narrative leaves its place to apologetic accounts, and at times it is taught in the Atatürk Principle courses that what was done in early republican years was due to conditions. When the education system is left aside, most of Turkish Revolution books bare the apologist stance which I've taken pains to refute throughout all this work. Accounts by Ahmet Demirel, Şükrü Hanioglu, Cemil Koçak or Ayşe Hür that do not defend the “conditions of the era” argument have relatively recently made their way into historiography. It can perhaps be argued that the magisterial history books of the previous generations were dominated by names such as Halil İnalcık, Suna Kili, or Toktamış Ateş, whose overall stance is apologist single-party advocacy with the pretext of “conditions of the era.”

What I am trying to say is that, the apologist outlook dominant in Turkish historiography is as strong as its golden age counterpart has once been. Perhaps that's why, people who are to speak about single-party period -even if they have not read anything about this period- are very prone to defend it with the motto of “conditions of the era.” An ordinary person I can come across in the street or in social media is likely to say that what was done during single-party era was due to conditions. In this regard, Ergun Özbudun's -whom I can not classify as a staunch Kemalist- falling to this “conditions of the era” trap is suggestive. Even people who would not defend single-party rule categorically (or who would not embrace the Le Bonian attitude that ignorant masses should not vote) might suggest that when Atatürk turned Turkey into a single-party state, it was because of the conditions of the era, and that his aim was democracy.

Any would-be historian who intends to embark on a project of challenging the “conditions of the era” argument must accept that s/he is faced with a very successful and long-lived tradition. Single-party period was advocated in Turkey for years, first as the manifestation of a golden age narrative, and now as part of apologist historiography. Although ultimately incongruous, one must accept that the assertions single-party exponents defend are strong and, that to prove otherwise, one must go over all the assertions one by one, and find plausible and cogent counter-arguments. Dersim massacre is not something advocated as strongly as single-party rule itself, because it is very easy to condemn an action that killed thousands of people and which is tried to be justified by saying “those people were savages.” But when it comes to the establishment of single-party, the arguments are much stronger, and unfortunately, one must go quite deep to argue that Ottoman state was not theocratic or to refute the statement that 1920's of Europe was characterized by authoritarian/totalitarian regimes. When one accepts that Ottoman Empire was ruled by a god-like figure and that Atatürk introduced national sovereignty to an outdated society which had to go through a modernization process, single-party period almost justifies itself. That's why it has been the dominant treatment not only in the academia, but perhaps in everyday life, too.

For a long time, Turkish historiography treated single-party period of Turkey as a golden age, and only recently this golden age narrative turned into an apologist style. I've written this thesis to state that it is time we left this apologist historiography as well. And I believe we can. If apologist historiography was successful in replacing golden age narrative, realist historiography can take its place, too.

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