

PRESIDENTS, THE STATE AND “DEMOCRACY” IN TURKEY  
THE IDEAS AND PRAXIS OF SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL

A Ph. D. Dissertation

by

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Ankara  
February 2010



To my mother and father

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University

by

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in

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE and PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

February 2010

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science and Public Administration.

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## ABSTRACT

### PRESIDENTS, THE STATE AND “DEMOCRACY” IN TURKEY THE IDEAS AND PRAXIS OF SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL

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This study aims to analyze the “statist” role that a president in the Turkish parliamentary system may play in maintaining a viable democracy, drawing on Giovanni Sartori’s bidimensional democracy theory and Alan Siaroff’s classification based on assessments of the nature of presidents. This study firstly discusses how under certain circumstances presidents come to have more powers in Turkey. It is argued that with the 1982 Constitution the president may assume a “corrective” role, despite lacking the legitimacy of popular elections, through benefiting from the vagueness of Article 104 of the Constitution. Unlike counterparts in some other parliamentary systems, the president in Turkey is not a symbolic and passive political actor but enjoys extensive powers. Focusing on the presidential term of Süleyman Demirel, this study secondly discusses how the president’s interpretations of his power and the way he puts this into practice may have had an impact on the maintenance of a viable democracy. The study suggests that Demirel developed a political line that prioritizes the effective functioning of the state, which he sees as indispensable for democracy. This explains the incentive behind Demirel’s active role as the president in protecting the political fabric of the state, which for him is directly linked with preserving the democratic nature of the regime. Despite coming from the circles of political elites, Demirel was able to set up a dialogue with the state elites when he was president, and thus

was moderately successful in achieving a balance in the chronically troubled relationship between the state elites and the political elites.

Keywords: President, state, democracy, Turkey, Demirel, state elites, political elites

## ÖZET

### TÜRKİYE’DE CUMHURBAŞKANLARI, DEVLET VE “DEMOKRASİ” SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL’İN DÜŞÜNCELERİ VE İCRAATI

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Bu çalışma, Giovanni Sartori’nin iki boyutlu demokrasi teorisinden ve Alan Siaroff’un cumhurbaşkanlarının yetkilerini temel alan sınıflandırmasından yararlanarak Türk parlamenter sisteminde cumhurbaşkanının işler bir demokrasi kurma sürecinde oynayabileceği “devleti merkeze alan rol”ünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma ilkin Türkiye’de cumhurbaşkanlarının belirli koşullarda nasıl daha fazla yetkiye sahip duruma geldiğini tartışmaktadır. 1982 Anayasası ile cumhurbaşkanının, halk tarafından seçilmediği ve dolayısıyla seçilme kaynaklı bir meşruiyetten yoksun olduğu halde, Anayasanın 104. maddesinin müphem çerçevesinden istifade ederek “düzeltici” bir rol üstlenebileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Başka bazı parlamenter sistemlerdeki mevkidaşlarından farklı olarak Türkiye’de cumhurbaşkanı, sembolik ve pasif bir siyasi aktör olmanın aksine geniş yetkilere sahiptir. Süleyman Demirel’in cumhurbaşkanlığı dönemine odaklanan bu çalışma ikinci olarak cumhurbaşkanının yetkilerini yorumlayışının ve bunu pratiğe aktarışının işler bir demokrasiyi kurma sürecine nasıl bir etki yapabileceğini tartışmaktadır. Çalışma, Demirel’in demokrasinin vazgeçilmezi olarak gördüğü işleyen devlet kavramına öncelik veren bir siyasi üslup geliştirdiğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu durum, Demirel’in cumhurbaşkanı olarak devletin siyasi dokusunu koruma hususunda –ki Demirel’de rejimin demokratik yapısını muhafaza etmekle doğrudan ilişkilidir- oynadığı aktif rolün arkasında



yatan sebebi açıklamaktadır. Siyasi seçkinlerin arasından geliyor olmasına karşın Demirel cumhurbaşkanlığı süresince devlet seçkinleriyle diyalog kurabilmiş ve bu sayede her zaman problemlili bir çizgide seyreden devlet seçkinleri-siyasi seçkinler ilişkisine denge getirmeyi kısmen başarabilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Cumhurbaşkanı, devlet, demokrasi, Türkiye, Demirel, devlet seçkinleri, siyasi seçkinler

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

President in Turkish political system is one of the significant actors even though there is a general tendency to regard the office as a politically neutral arbiter. The emphasis on impartiality of the president however has undergone a considerable change in the recent years especially since 2002. Holding extensive powers that are delegated by the 1982 Constitution, the president in Turkey has become an active major figure rather than a symbolic one as it is normally expected in parliamentary systems. The office has become a focal point in a period when the clash between the state elites and the political elites was intensified. A debate on who should not be president during the 2007 presidential elections is quite interesting to observe that clash. Hence, the motive behind writing this essay is the necessity to reassess the status and role of the president particularly with regard to his/her position in the clash between the state elites and the political elites. Indeed this has important implications for the maintenance of a viable democracy,



The presidency in Turkey is mostly analyzed as part of the studies evaluating the parliamentary system in Turkey or its possible shift to presidential or semi-presidential systems and its impacts. Majority of studies focus on the status of the president within this context from the perspective of constitutional law. Ergun Özbudun<sup>1</sup>, Serap Yazıcı<sup>2</sup>, Şule Özsoy<sup>3</sup> and Kemal Gözler<sup>4</sup> are among the scholars analyzing the presidency from this perspective. There are also studies examining the history of presidential elections and the tensions mounted during the election periods.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the impacts of the change in the constitutional status of the president on the political sphere attracted academic interest for research. Within a similar context, another important group of studies concentrating on specific presidential terms has provided useful insights about the political significance of the presidency vis-à-vis certain Turkish presidents. The works of Metin Heper<sup>6</sup>, Clement H. Dodd<sup>7</sup>, and Metin Heper and Menderes Çınar<sup>8</sup> are among those that have posited the necessity of examining the political importance of the presidency in Turkey. All of these aforementioned studies have been inspiration for the present essay and provided a background for it. Relying on these studies, this essay

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<sup>1</sup> Ergun Özbudun, 'The Status of the President of the Republic under the Turkish Constitution of 1982: Presidentialism or Parliamentarism?', in *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Serap Yazıcı, *Başkanlık ve Yarı-Başkanlık Sistemleri: Türkiye için Bir Değerlendirme* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Şule Özsoy, *Başkanlı Parlamenter Sistem: Cumhurbaşkanının Halk Tarafından Seçildiği Parlamenter Hükümet Modeli ve Türkiye için Tavsiye Edilebilirliği* (Istanbul: On İki Levha Yayıncılık, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Kemal Gözler, *Cumhurbaşkanı Hükümet Çatışması* (Bursa: Ekin Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Hikmet Özdemir, *Devlet Krizi: TC Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimleri* (Istanbul: AFA Yayınları, 1989); Hikmet Özdemir, *Atatürk'ten Günümüze Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimleri* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Metin Heper, "The Executive in the Third Turkish Republic, 1982-1989," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 3, 3 (July 1990): pp. 299-319; Metin Heper, 'Turgut Özal's Presidency: Crisis and the Glimmerings of Consensus', in *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds. (Oxford: Boulder, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Clement H. Dodd, 'Kenan Evren as President: From Conflict to Compromise', in *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds. (Oxford: Boulder, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Metin Heper and Menderes Çınar, 'Parliamentary Government with a Strong President: The Post-1989 Turkish Experience', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 111 (Fall 1996).

aims to cover a relatively neglected topic in the literature which is examining the role of president with more than usual powers in the development and maintenance of a consolidated democracy in Turkey.

### **1.1. Aims and Methodology**

This essay concentrates on two questions: (a) How does the president come to have more powers in Turkey under certain circumstances? (b) How does the president's reading of his constitutional powers influence the actual situation and, in turn, the overall process with regard to the maintenance of a viable democracy? In order to answer these two questions the essay is divided into two parts, namely "Mapping the Turkish Parliamentary System and the President in the Discussion on Classifying Democratic Regime Types" and "President Demirel, the State and Democracy." As mentioned the essay focuses on a specific period (1993-2000) that Demirel assumed the post of presidency. Without disregarding the effects of the context, first the way Demirel conceptualizes state in his political discourse is examined and then its reflections on his presidential style particularly with regard to democracy is analyzed. For the purpose of framing Demirel's conceptualizations of state and state-democracy interactions, it is necessary to use predominantly the primary sources. Here the aim is not to make a pro-Demirel reading. This essay is not interested in how Demirel is perceived. Rather the endeavor is to frame his views on state. To achieve this aim, two interviews were conducted with Demirel. Additionally Çankaya yearbooks which include detailed information on his daily schedule during his presidential term, presidential

speeches, press releases and statements, interviews, and the biographies based on the interviews conducted with Demirel are used. While analysing these, this essay does not intend to make judgmental comments on Demirel's state understanding either being as true or false. What is important for the purpose of the essay is to concentrate on analyzing the reflections of Demirel's state conceptualization on his practices as president and in a wider picture their positive or negative impacts over building up a viable democracy in Turkey.

Although the essay focuses on Demirel's presidency as the case, to better frame the concept of state in Demirel's understanding, it is essential to look at the origins of the concept of state and its development in Demirel's thinking starting from his early years in politics. Thus, pre-presidential term of Demirel is also examined in two separate chapters, one is designed to provide background information on his political origins and the other to examine his ideas and praxis as a political party leader. In this framework, important political events and Demirel's relations with other major political actors are mentioned referring to secondary sources such as the memoirs of Demirel's contemporaries, not only his colleagues and close associates but also his political opponents and rivals as well.<sup>9</sup> Besides prominent studies analyzing the era of AP under Demirel are of benefit to the purpose of the essay.<sup>10</sup> Keeping in mind that autobiographies, hagiographies and memoirs may have the shortcoming of telling the story from a one sided and

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<sup>9</sup> İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, *Anılarım* (Istanbul: Yılmaz Yayınları, 1990); Deniz Bölükbaşı, *Türk Siyasetinde Anadolu Fırtınası Osman Bölükbaşı* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık AŞ., 2005); Sadettin Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Akasya Kitap, 2007); Kâmrân İnan, *Senatör*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2007); Sedat Akay, *12 Eylül Darbe Yıllarında Bir Kurucu Üyenin Anılarından Bir Partinin Kuruluşu: DYP ve Kurucular Albümü* (Ankara: Prestij Matbaacılık, 2008); Ferruh Bozbeyli, Interview by İhsan Dağı and Fatih Uğur, *Yalnız Demokrat: Ferruh Bozbeyli Kitabı* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Ümit Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri: Bir İnkilemin Anatomisi*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002); Tanel Demirel, *Adalet Partisi İdeoloji ve Politika* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

subjective perspective, the statements and anecdotes narrated in different sources are cross-checked to lean more on the shared memories.

## **1.2. Why Demirel's Presidential Term?**

It was in the 1990s that Turkey has begun to experience the outcomes of the great transformations triggered in the second half of the 1980s. Additionally the struggle to be a more democratic country gained momentum in the 1990s. So did the resistance to change and reforms related with democratization by the defenders of the status quo. Thus it is apt to study the role of the president in such a strained atmosphere of change and persistence of defending the status quo. In this context, Demirel's presidential term has been a controversial period and focus of analysis. Some argue that in such a turning point for the country Demirel as a president allied himself with the state elites and behaved in a way quite contrary to his previous political line. For some others, on the other hand, Demirel behaved in a responsible manner about state matters and fulfilled what his post requires. It is a shared assumption of both sides that Demirel's presidential term marked a significant shift in his political line. Elaborating on Demirel's state and democracy understanding this essay aims to examine the position of president Demirel with regard to the ongoing clash between the state elites and the political elites and hence to reveal his impact (either positive or negative) on building up a viable democracy. Thus firstly the framework of Demirel's state understanding and its link with democracy is drawn and secondly how this framework was put into practice during Demirel's presidential term is analyzed. However, it should be

noted that it is beyond the scope of this essay to make judgmental remarks on to what extent Demirel is a genuine democrat or not.

### **1.3. Theoretical Underpinnings**

The main focus of this essay is to answer two key questions mentioned above. Regarding the first one, which makes us to examine the factors empowering the president in a parliamentary system, Alan Siaroff's classification is chosen as a framework. The reason to choose his classification is not that it offers a complete and perfect model. In actual fact, it leaves significant gaps that could be filled with the findings of this essay. Siaroff's study is not the first of its kind that seeks alternative to the classification of regime types into parliamentarism, semi-presidentialism, and presidentialism. There are other studies that contribute to the literature on the insufficiency of Duverger's semi-presidentialism as a third separate category. Some of them are of the opinion that this triple classification should be preserved, but the conceptual framework of semi-presidentialism or its defining characteristics should be redefined and reframed.<sup>11</sup> The argument here is that semi-presidentialism is case-specific as it is formulated by Duverger based on French experience. Thus, semipresidentialism in Duverger's definition cannot cover the other countries as a separate category. Some others favor developing in-

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<sup>11</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Horst Bahro, Bernhard H. Bayerlein and Ernst Veser, "Duverger's Concept: Semi-presidential Government Revisited," *European Journal of Political Research* 34, 2 (1998): pp. 201-224; Robert Elgie, "The Politics of Semi-Presidentialism" in *Semi-presidentialism in Europe*, ed. Robert Elgie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): pp. 1-21; Nur Uluşahin, *Saf Hükümet Sistemleri Karşısında İki Başlı Yürütme Yapılanması* (Ankara: Yetkin Yayınları, 2007); Robert Elgie, "Duverger, Semi-Presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype," *West European Politics* 32, 2 (March 2009): pp. 248-267.

between categories to capture the variation within semi-presidential systems.<sup>12</sup> Siaroff is among the latter group. As his analysis is based on president it overlaps with the focus of this essay. Siaroff argues that semi-presidentialism is not sufficient to fully embrace the variety of subtypes and instead of it he formulates dispositional categories (parliamentary systems with presidential dominance, parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective, parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents). His classification offers a useful tool for this study. However, it is not fully adequate to explain the Turkish case. This essay will identify and address the gaps in Siaroff's analysis concerning Turkey.

To answer the second question that this essay concentrates on, Giovanni Sartori's analysis on how a democracy would be viable will be used. It will offer us a means to identify the role of president that s/he may play in achieving a compromise between the state elites and political elites. Sartori argues that for democracy to flourish there should be a balance between different groups' interests and the long-term interests of the community.<sup>13</sup> This is pertinent to the interactions between the state elites and the political elites in the Turkish context since there has been an ongoing clash between the two over how general interest is perceived by them and how they think it is perceived by the other elite group. This clash in Turkey has relevance not only in the sense that it has important

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Robert Elgie, "A Fresh Look at Semi-presidentialism. Varieties on a Theme," *Journal of Democracy* 16, 3 (2005): pp. 98-112.

<sup>13</sup> See Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited. Part 2: The Classical Issues* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1987). Sartori uses the concepts of "group interests" and "long-term interests" within the context of political domain. However, it is claimed that in the Turkish case these concepts are generally used at the expense of civilian politics. In fact, those who claim that have a point. Concepts such as the "supreme interests of the country" and "national interests" are used from time to time to justify the military interventions and to establish a tutelary regime.

implications regarding the flourishing of democracy, but also for shaping the nature of the role a president may perform.

In this essay the “statist” role is proposed as a particular role that might be assumed by a president depending on the conditions of the context. It refers to giving a high priority to the matters of state. In this vein emphasizing political stability and the smooth functioning of state with a strong commitment to the constitutional order is closely related to the “statist” role. Considering it within the framework of the 1982 Constitution, this role is about being an overseer who should pay attention to safeguarding the state. That said the “statist” role has also a constructive dimension. This dimension is given an important place within the scope of this study aiming to examine the stance of the president in the clash between the state elites and the political elites. The president could act as a mediating force to reduce the conflict between the two which might clear the way towards a viable democracy. At this point it should be highlighted that to play a statist role the president should engage with the positions of neither the state elites nor the political elites. This is essential for the president to be able to mediate between the two in order to contribute to the establishment of a viable democracy.

To critically scrutinize the “statist” role of presidents in the Turkish parliamentary system vis-à-vis the consolidation of democracy, Sartorian distinction between vertical and horizontal democracy makes sense in analyzing Demirel as president. The horizontal dimension in his argument is directly linked to public opinion and electoral democracy. The key concept for horizontal implementation and diffusion of democracy is *political participation*. The vertical dimension is linked to the

issues of public interest, governing and being ruled and the key concept is *political responsibility*. Sartori underlines the significance of state in preserving and promoting the general interest in his conceptualization of vertical structuring of democracy as a system of government.

To present an articulate conceptualization of state in Demirel's thinking, all the statements of Demirel have been classified according to the categorization of the advocates of "bringing the state back in."<sup>14</sup> Drawing on their classification, Demirel's views on state, democracy and the relationship between the two are handled under four main categories in Chapter V: law and order, modernization and development, socio-economic issues, and international relations. These are useful to identify the functions of the state according to Demirel. The difficulty encountered in delineating the gist of Demirel's viewpoints on state from huge number of materials has been overcome by the help of "bringing the state back in" theorists' classifications.

#### **1.4. Organization of the Study**

Part I of the present essay looks at the Turkish parliamentary system and the President in relation to classifying democratic regime types. In doing so, the first section of Chapter II critically examines the classification of political regimes with

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<sup>14</sup> Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol are the scholars who criticize the mainstream comparative studies as being society-centered and instead offer a state-centered approach. The name of their influential study is *Bringing the State Back in*. That is why here they are referred to as the advocates of bringing the state back in. See Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In*, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).



references to the works of the leading scholars in the field. It looks at the debate in the literature on traditional dichotomous classification – presidential and parliamentary systems – and triple classification – presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary systems – and the challenges to the both as they are claimed insufficient to cover varied practices. The key point this study aims to address in this section is how the status and role of president as well as measuring presidential powers are mentioned in these classifications. Siaroff's analysis is worth being elaborated in detail since his twofold study – presenting dispositional categories of political regimes and formulating subtypes within these categories through an assessment of presidential power– establishes a useful means to examine the Turkish system focusing on presidential powers.

The subsequent section of Chapter II evaluates the status and role of presidents in the Turkish political system. To understand the significance of presidency in the Republic, it is crucial to discuss the issue within a historical continuum. Hence the first subsection traces back the tradition of parliamentarism to the early Republican days. In a similar vein, the origins of the concept of national sovereignty are examined to better evaluate the way the office of president has been (re)shaped over decades. For that purpose, the assembly debates on constitutional proposals on the status and powers of president are analyzed, and the changes made in the status and powers of the president with the adoption of different constitutions are explored. The second subsection looks at the institutionalization process of the presidency from the establishment era to the more mature decades of the regime by focusing on varied practices on the one hand, and on the other, the role given to the office by the state elites. Since it is the clash between the state elites and political

elites that has had impact on electing the would-be president in Turkey, the relationship between these two groups is assessed with respect to the concept of a viable democracy drawn by Sartori's arguments on the horizontal and vertical dimensions of democracy.

Following the general overview on the political regime classifications and the office of president in Turkey, Part II analyzes Süleyman Demirel's presidential term concentrating basically on his views on state and democracy, and his praxis in line with these views. In Chapter III his background and the evolution of his political career, personal characteristics, and views on the concept of politics are summarized. The context in which Demirel's ideas on state and democracy was originated is also examined in this chapter. Chapter IV, having two sections, gives information on Demirel's active political life. These sections are not written just to give mere details about political history. Actually they serve to assess the continuities within Demirel's discourse on state. The first section evaluates Demirel's years as the leader of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* –AP) and has three subsections. The first one looks at the state-society relations and the conceptualizations of “national will” and democracy in the AP era. Demirel's relations with the military and the then presidents (Cemal Gürsel, Cevdet Sunay, and Fahri Korutürk) are the subject matter of the two consecutive subsections. The second section, dealing with Demirel as the leader of the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* –DYP), is structured like the preceding section to look at same parameters –namely, views on state and democracy, relations with the military, and relations with the then presidents (Kenan Evren and Turgut Özal). Portraying Demirel's presidential term without these detailed analyses of his early years

would not offer a complete picture because how he conceptualizes state and democracy and perceives the role of president with regard to these two concepts are rooted in those years.

The fifth and sixth chapters deal with the fulcrum point of the essay: the presidential term of Demirel. The analysis is centered around the concepts of state and democracy, each of which is taken up in two separate chapters. Chapter V aims to reveal Demirel's conception of the state as president by examining his views on the evolution, features, and functions of the state. In order to have a better grasp of the functions of the state according to Demirel, the analysis is made under four main categories which cover the issues Demirel defines as "great matters of state:" law and order, modernization and development, socio-economic issues, and international relations, drawing on the classification of "bringing the state back in" theorists. The chapter also demonstrates how Demirel conceives of the president as head of state. Chapter VI dwells upon the subject of Demirel and democracy. To demonstrate how Demirel conceptualizes democracy and put this conceptualization into practice during his presidential term, Demirel's relationship with the political parties, his views on the secularism-Islam debate and civil-military relations are examined. Since the concept of democracy is closely intertwined with the concept of state in Demirel's political vocabulary, some statements of Demirel on state which are previously given in the preceding chapter are intentionally repeated in the chapter on democracy. These repetitions serve the purpose to highlight that the concept of democracy is inseparably linked to the concept of state in the political line of Demirel. This gives us insights into the "statist" role he assumed as president during the difficult times for the democracy in Turkey.

The Conclusion presents the general findings of the essay and its contributions to the existing literature on the office of president in parliamentary systems. The issue is often examined through the change in the constitutional status of the president, and the “statist” role of the president is mostly disregarded. This essay aims to reveal and highlight that latter role a president may play. The conclusion offers a response to the question of how the way Demirel acted as president has had important political implications on the fortunes of democracy in Turkey. Finally, some suggestions are offered for further research.

## PART I

### MAPPING THE TURKISH PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AND THE PRESIDENT IN THE DISCUSSION ON CLASSIFYING DEMOCRATIC REGIME TYPES

## CHAPTER II

### PRESIDENTS IN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM AND THE TURKISH CASE

#### **2.1. President, Presidential Power and Classifying Regime Types**

The political systems of the existing democracies share the same foundations, such as the separation of powers and representation through parliament. However, the constitutional mechanisms and institutional arrangements achieve the above objectives in different ways that in turn bring varied practices in the world of democracies. In one spectrum, there exists the presidential system, “the system of mutual independence,” and on the other, the parliamentary system, “the system of mutual dependence,” as Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach point out.<sup>15</sup> The purest forms can be observed in Britain, representing a paradigmatic parliamentary system, and in the USA a paradigmatic presidential one.

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<sup>15</sup> Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, “Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism,” *World Politics* 46, 1 (October 1993), p. 3.

The basic difference between the two regime types is derived from the relationship between the legislative and executive powers. Parliamentarism is predicated upon the dependence of executive and legislative powers, whereas the presidential system is based on the strict separation of the two. In presidential systems, the legislative power and the executive power are independent of each other.<sup>16</sup> That feature of the presidential system paves the way for the “issue of dual legitimacy.” The president is the chief executive and is elected by popular vote. The terms of office for the president and the assembly are fixed. Moreover, the president and the assembly, both having their own source of political legitimacy, have separate electoral mandates. Presidential elections and legislative elections are the two sources of political legitimacy.

In parliamentary regimes, on the other hand, the relationship between the executive and legislative entails mutual dependence. The ongoing confidence of the assembly is vital for the government. With the threat of the motion of no-confidence, the legislature might exert pressure over the executive. Coming to office is only half of the task of securing power; for the other half, that is, remaining in office, the governing party, if it lacks an overall majority, needs the support of other parties in the parliament. On the other hand, the executive (normally in conjunction with the head of state) is given powers to dissolve parliament and call elections. The mechanisms such as confidence procedures and the power to call new elections are designed to resolve political tensions that might lead to impasses.<sup>17</sup> In parliamentary regimes, maintenance of stability and elimination of deadlocks between the government and the parliament are

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<sup>16</sup> Stepan and Skach, “Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation,” pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

significant issues. That is why the system is designed in such a way that the price of any stalemate will be paid either by the members of the parliament or the government. The capacity of the president to dissolve parliament creates an incentive for all political parties with a parliamentary presence to cooperate and reach a consensus that in turn creates a functioning system even with fragmented party structures. By making individual parliamentarians align themselves with their parties, parliamentarism endorses party cohesion and discipline as well. Consequently, fusion of powers in parliamentarism generates governments capable of governing and thus a highly centralized decision-making process.<sup>18</sup>

In pure parliamentary systems, the tendency is to give the head of state, who is elected by the parliament, mostly ceremonial roles. However, in practice, the constitutions of parliamentary regimes sometimes clothe the head of state with more than symbolic powers, as seen in the Turkish case which is the focus of this study. Juan J. Linz correctly argues that in such systems presidents “can play the role of adviser or arbiter by bringing party leaders together and facilitating the flow of information among them.”<sup>19</sup> That is why even in parliamentary systems presidents have a more than purely titular position. Otherwise, politicians would not try to elect their candidate to the office as is commonly observed. As Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart point out, politicians care who holds the office since the extensive authority granted to the office of presidency might lead

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<sup>18</sup> Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, “Democratic Institutions and Regime Survival: Parliamentary and Presidential Democracies Reconsidered,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002), p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> Juan J. Linz, “Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference?,” in *The Crisis of Presidential Democracy: The Latin American Evidence*, eds. Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 46-47.



to potential brakes to the parliamentary majority.<sup>20</sup> The controversy in 2007 on who would be the next president in Turkey illustrates that the presidency is given great significance in the Turkish political system as well. For example, Deniz Baykal, the leader of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP), considered the office of president as the “safety valve of the regime.”<sup>21</sup>

In the long-established dichotomous classification of regime types, there is a consensus in the literature on the defining characteristics of presidential systems. However, there is no common agreement as to what are the defining features of parliamentary systems.<sup>22</sup> In fact definitions have varied from one researcher to another. As Robert Elgie asserts the process of regime classification is both messy and subjective.<sup>23</sup> Thus the need to go beyond the traditional dichotomy opened the way to the formulation of a triple distinction by introducing a separate model to cover the regimes neither fit into presidential nor parliamentary regimes. Maurice Duverger's seminal work on semi-presidentialism is an example of that effort. Semi-presidentialism continues to be a widely debated concept. This shows how dominant its impact is on the studies of regime classifications.

Duverger introduced semi-presidentialism in 1970 by focusing on the system of the French Fifth Republic. For Duverger, there are three characteristics necessary to consider a political regime as semi-presidential: a president who is elected by

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<sup>20</sup> Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, “Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal,” *Comparative Politics* 29, 4 (July 1997), p. 452.

<sup>21</sup> *Zaman* (Istanbul daily), 25 February 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Siaroff, “Comparative Presidencies,” p. 289.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Elgie, “The Classification of Democratic Regime Types: Conceptual Ambiguity and Contestable Assumptions,” *European Journal of Political Research* 33 (1998), p. 223.

universal suffrage; a president who possesses “quite considerable powers;” and a president having opposite him a prime minister who possesses executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them.<sup>24</sup> The constitutional powers of the president, the founding context of the regime, and the relationship of the president with the parliamentary majority are the variables Duverger used to explain presidential influence. By focusing on the extent of presidential power, Duverger has listed the systems that fit his definition of semi-presidentialism.

As mentioned, Duverger started from the system in France while formulating his concept of semi-presidentialism. It is characterized by a “twin-headed executive” or “executive dyarchy,” in which both president and prime minister are important figures in their own right. The executive fulfills its responsibilities by the “common action of the head of state and head of government”.<sup>25</sup> Elgie explains that the president can exercise power with the help of the prime minister, which for him is the nature of the French semi-presidential system.<sup>26</sup> The 1962 amendments to the Constitution of the Fifth French Republic introduced direct election of the president by universal suffrage. Previously, the president was elected by an electoral college. Since then, popular legitimacy has become more important. The presidential candidates make election promises concerning bread and butter issues. Chances of reelection also affect the performance of the

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<sup>24</sup> Maurice Duverger, “A New Political System Model: Semi-presidential Government,” *European Journal of Political Research* 8 (1980), p. 166.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted from Francis de Baecque in Robert Elgie, France in *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, Robert Elgie, ed. (Oxford University Press: 1999), p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> Elgie, France in *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, p. 67.

president. Therefore presidents tend to have a close interest in policy matters on the economy, social policy and cultural issues.

The French Constitution grants extensive powers to the president. S/he is expected to ensure the proper functioning of the political institutions and the continuity of the state. The president is also the guarantor of national independence, territorial integrity of the country and observance of the Constitution and international treaties (Article 5). This has blurred the president's place in the political system and, as Elgie highlights, almost any intervention of the president can be legitimized based on this Article.<sup>27</sup> S/he can dissolve the National Assembly after consulting with the prime minister and president of the Assemblies (Article 12), chairs the Council of Ministers (Article 9) and has extensive appointment powers (Article 13). Concerning the issues of "high" politics, the president is a powerful actor. S/he is made active in foreign affairs. As France's most prominent spokesperson in the international arena, the president negotiates and ratifies treaties (Article 52) and leads the French delegation at summit meetings. The president, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (Article 15), has control over defense policy issues as well. S/he presides over the Higher National Defense Councils and committees.

In parliamentary process though, the president takes no part. It is the prime minister who directs the conduct of governmental affairs and is the more powerful political actor with regard to domestic policy making and day-to-day conduct of governmental affairs.

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<sup>27</sup> Elgie, France in *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, p. 76.

Certain powers are shared between president and prime minister: the prime minister should countersign all presidential decisions while the president should sign all decrees enacted by the council of ministers. Although, as mentioned above, the president is the commander-in-chief, responsibility for issues of national defense is shouldered by the prime minister. Hence, as Elgie suggests, apparently the tasks of guiding and coordinating the matters on governing the country was assigned to the prime minister, whereas the tasks of overseeing and protecting the long-term interests of the regime were given to the president.<sup>28</sup> These characteristics of the regime in France have led to Duverger's formulation of the system of semi-presidentialism as a third category in classifying regime types.

Duverger's criteria have been revisited by some scholars.<sup>29</sup> A group of them criticized the usage of concepts like semi-presidentialism or a parliamentary-presidential mixed system as a separate model located in the middle of presidential and parliamentary systems on the two poles. Referring to how Steffani define them as "intellectual slips" or "mistakes", Siaroff argues that, from the point of president's domination in a double executive, there are only two options: the president either dominates or not.<sup>30</sup> Hence rather than grounding the classification on the non-existent third option, an alternative subtype (presidential

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<sup>28</sup> Elgie, France in *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> For a useful summary of the reception of semi-presidentialism by the academic community and the discussions held by the French, Italian, and Anglo-American scholars, see Bahro et al., Duverger's Concept," pp. 203-207.

<sup>30</sup> Siaroff, "Comparative Presidencies," p. 307.

parliamentarism or parliamentary systems with presidential dominance) is offered.<sup>31</sup>

Another criticism on Duverger's semi-presidentialism is the vagueness and weakness of the concept. Elgie claims that it has a problematic definition.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly Bahro *et al.* emphasize the need to interpret and clarify the concept.<sup>33</sup>

There are also discussions on the three defining features of semi-presidentialism as Duverger listed. What constitutes "quite considerable powers" is claimed to be vague and open to subjective judgments. That creates fuzziness in listing the systems of which countries as semi-presidential according to whose definition and interpretation of the "quite" in the concept of "quite considerable powers."<sup>34</sup>

Sartori deems necessary to formulate the defining characteristics in a more clear and detailed way. He patterned on the feature of popularly elected president but with the addition of being elected for a fixed term of office. Instead of suggesting constestable measure of presidential powers Sartori puts forward a "dual authority structure" which enables "shifting power prevalences" and balances within the executive. This structure is based on the existence of, on one hand, a parliament-independent but government-dependent president and, on the other, a president-independent but parliament-dependent (through confidence mechanisms) government.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Siaroff, "Comparative Presidencies," p. 307.

<sup>32</sup> Elgie, "Duverger, "Semi-presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype," p. 250.

<sup>33</sup> Bahro et al, p. 218.

<sup>34</sup> Bahro et al., "Duverger's Concept," p. 214; Elgie, "Duverger, Semi-Presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype," p. 250.

<sup>35</sup> Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering*, p. 132.

Another important challenge to semi-presidentialism is the claim that a great variation is seen within this category, thus subtypes should be formulated to make the model more functional. Elgie highlights the “inherent heterogeneity” of semi-presidentialism<sup>36</sup> and suggests three types of semi-presidentialism: “parliamentary-like, dual presidential/prime ministerial, and presidential-like semi-presidentialism.”<sup>37</sup> Shugart and Carey’s classifications as “premier-presidential” and “president-parliamentary”<sup>38</sup> in addition to pure types of parliamentarism and presidentialism can also be listed as examples of this endeavor to distinguish the variation within semi-presidentialism. Nur Uluşahin agrees on the insufficiency of semi-presidentialism to be able to cover all the regimes that fits into neither presidential nor parliamentary systems. But she criticizes the above classifications for trying to overcome the problem of variation through using the concepts of dichotomous classification.<sup>39</sup> Dealing with Duverger’s concept of semi-presidentialism, Uluşahin argues that it has significant deficiencies in terms of definition and scope; it fails to cover the variety of patterns in the levels of *de jure* (according to the legal-constitutional arrangements) and *de facto* (according to the actual practices).<sup>40</sup> She means by *de jure* level the way the president assume office and presidential powers; by *de facto* level, the distance between the constitutional powers and the displayed presidential profile. Hence Uluşahin, instead of departing from actual political

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<sup>36</sup> Elgie, “Duverger, Semi-presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype,” p. 252.

<sup>37</sup> See Elgie, “A Fresh Look at Semi-presidentialism,” pp. 98-112.

<sup>38</sup> See Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*; Matthew S. Shugart, “Of Presidents and Parliaments,” *East European Constitutional Review* 30 (1993), pp. 30-31. The head of state holds more powers (appointment and dismissal) over the cabinet in president-parliamentary systems compared to the head of state in premier-presidential regimes. The other distinctive feature is the separation of the assembly and the cabinet survival which is present in the latter while absent in the former.

<sup>39</sup> Uluşahin, *İki Başlı Yürütme Yapılanması*, p. 60.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

regimes, presents an abstract model named as *iki başlı yürütme yapılanması* (twin-headed executive structuring) by reformulating the conceptual framework of semi-presidentialism which she considers inherently insufficient in suggesting a coherent typology.<sup>41</sup>

Alan Siaroff also claims that the widely used triple distinction is indeed inadequate to cover all governmental systems in the world.<sup>42</sup> He pointed out that there are several “dispositional categories” of political regimes among semi-presidential systems. That means Siaroff agrees with the opinion that “semi-presidential regimes exhibits varying forms of political practice”<sup>43</sup>. However, rather than assessing systems in terms of the accountability of prime ministers and governments, Siaroff puts the president at the center of his argument. For that purpose, he rejects semi-presidentialism as a separate third category; instead, by observing that seemingly similar political systems listed under the title of semi-presidential systems might operate in various ways, he comes up with new labels. In addition to one of the major categories, presidential systems, Siaroff puts forward “parliamentary systems with presidential dominance,” “parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective,” and “parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents/monarchs” as new formulations.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Uluşahin, *İki Başlı Yürütme Yapılanması*, p. 49. One of the strengths of Uluşahin’s model is that it does not eliminate presidential powers from the defining criteria. Instead it makes an addition to clarify the ambiguous usage of president’s “considerable powers” which is prone to subjective judgments. Hence “a president who possesses considerable powers to the extent that he competes in the executive with the government” becomes a defining feature of her twin-headed executive structuring model. This is important to underline the conflict-driven nature of these systems. Uluşahin not only presents a conceptual model but also elaborates on how it would operate successfully.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Siaroff, “Comparative Presidencies: The Inadequacy of the Presidential, Semi-Presidential and Parliamentary Distinction,” *European Journal of Political Research* 42 (2003), p. 288.

<sup>43</sup> Elgie, *Semi-presidentialism in Europe*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Siaroff, “Comparative Presidencies,” pp. 294-295.

To understand Siaroff's new labels, it is worth examining the way he compares political regimes. Initially, based on the dispositional attributes, he defines eight distinct categories. There are three basic questions that help Siaroff in forming the categories at this stage: Is the head of state also the head of government? Is the head of state popularly elected? Is the head of government accountable to the legislature? The answer given to the first question creates two main units. In the unified executive, head of state and head of government are fused in one person. However, in the dual executive they are strictly separated. Depending on the answers of the second and third questions, the two units are each divided into four to form eight categories. The first four categories are found under the title of unified executive. In Category 1 and Category 2 the president is popularly elected, whereas in Category 3 and Category 4 s/he is selected by the legislature. Within these two groups, the difference is the issue of the head of government's accountability to the legislature. In Categories 1 and 3, the head of government is accountable, while in the other two, Categories 2 and 4, s/he is not. Under the title of dual executive, the last four of the categories are listed. Category 5 and Category 6 have popularly elected presidents, though in the former the head of government is accountable, whereas in the latter s/he is not. The two last categories, 7 and 8, have presidents selected by the legislature, and only in the former is the head of government accountable to the parliament.

To compare political regimes, Siaroff, secondly, pays attention to measuring presidential power and focuses on this perspective. In contrast to any sort of scaling measurement, he limits his analysis to nine dichotomously measured key powers related to the presidential office: popular election, concurrent elections of



the president and the members of the parliament for synchronized terms, the president's discretionary appointment powers, chairing cabinet meetings and engaging in the agenda setting, veto power, having long-term emergency and/or decree powers, playing central role in foreign policy, playing a similar role in government formation, and having the capacity to dissolve the legislature at will. The president's central role in foreign policy includes presiding over a security or defense council, having a say in choosing the foreign and defense ministers, attending international summits and representing the country there, and actively taking part in foreign policy making on certain key issues. The central role of the president in government formation is about the ability to select the prime minister or remove him/her from office. Each of these key powers is counted as 1 in the countries where they exist. In Siaroff's measuring scale, countries having a score of 1 or 2 are termed "parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents;" countries having a score between 3 to 6 are termed "parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective;" and countries scoring more than 6 are termed "parliamentary systems with presidential dominance."

Siaroff's distinction based on these variables indicates that the diversification is seen more in parliamentary systems than it is in presidential ones. Therefore, semi-presidentialism as a third category is far from reflecting the diversity coming out from practices in different political systems.

Siaroff's effort to present an alternative classification of regime types is neither novel nor original. Yet it evidently shows that semi-presidentialism is not a clear regime type. Furthermore the scope of the study is broad enough to include all

electoral democracies in the world (of 2003) which provides a seemingly comprehensive picture enabling comparison. That said Siaroff's classification has also some weaknesses. He states that he has concurred with Elgie in eliminating any measure of presidential power from the definition of semi-presidentialism. The reason is that the subjective judgments on what makes one a "relatively strong president" brings varied list of semi-presidential countries.<sup>45</sup> Hence, as Siaroff explains, while formulating his categories presidential powers are not at issue but they are central in terms of subtypes. As an initial impression, this weakens Siaroff's claim that his study is different from the others focusing on the prime minister and government as it looks through the prism of president. This creates fuzziness. However Siaroff in the subsequent parts of his study clarified this point by stating that what is central in his classification is the question of "who controls the prime minister and cabinet."<sup>46</sup> Hence his emphasis on the nature of the domination of president demonstrates that this is a classification centred on president.

The second weakness in Siaroff's analysis can be seen in the method he used for measuring presidential power. It is the checklist method in which presidential power is measured on a scale from 0 to 1. As Lee Kendall Metcalf argues, although this method provides a "more comprehensive listing of possible presidential powers" it also has a disadvantage. Giving all the powers of president equal importance in such a detailed list would obscure the main issue about

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<sup>45</sup> Siaroff, "Comparative Presidencies," p. 292.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

revealing to what extent president is strong in a political regime.<sup>47</sup> Being aware of this disadvantage, Siaroff limits his list to nine powers. However, limiting the list of the powers to measure but continuing to use a dichotomous scale did not help to capture the real situation considering the relative powers of the presidents in different countries. For instance one of the variables in Siaroff's analysis is the discretionary appointment powers. He explains this power as "appointment by the president of some key individuals" and mentioned some posts.<sup>48</sup> Thus two countries having presidents with differing levels of appointment powers receive the same score of 1. Indeed number of posts that a president has the power to appoint as well as the importance of these posts for the political regime may make great difference. This vagueness is also repeated for the veto power. Scaling from 0 to 1 is not sufficient to distinguish the presidents having a veto power which can be overridden by varied majority in different countries. This shortcoming in a way weakens the claim of Siaroff that his scores are based on actual political practice in addition to the constitutional arrangements on the powers of the president.<sup>49</sup> In fact Siaroff criticized Shugart and Carey on the grounds that they focus solely on legal constitutional arrangements and this could result in a mismeasurement of presidential power.<sup>50</sup> Having mentioned the actual political practice, one can expect a well equipped measure for establishing subtypes. Yet Siaroff's analysis falls short of these expectations. Siaroff is far from clarifying how political practices are incorporated into his classification.<sup>51</sup> That said, Siaroff's eclectic

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<sup>47</sup> Lee Kendall Metcalf, "Measuring Presidential Power," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, 5 (June 2000), p. 664.

<sup>48</sup> Siaroff, "Comparative Presidencies," p. 304.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> At this point the conceptual model that Uluşahin presents is a step ahead of Siaroff's classification. Uluşahin's model, by enabling *de facto* level, is able to incorporate the differences

study is significant in the sense that it is formulated after the strengths and weaknesses of the previous studies are taken into account. There is a mutual benefit in using Siaroff's classification in analyzing the Turkish case. It provides a framework to elaborate on the alternating characteristics of Turkish parliamentary system. At the same time the findings of the essay offer contribution to the gaps left in Siaroff's study regarding Turkey.

Siaroff puts Turkey under the grouping that fits into the Category 7 by examining the country in three periods—Turkey between 1961 and 1971, Turkey between 1973 and 1980, and Turkey after 1983. In the first two periods, Turkey scores 2 according to Siaroff's scale based on nine key powers of the president. The Turkish president chaired cabinet meetings and had veto powers which made Siaroff put the Turkish political system under the grouping of "parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents." Turkey in the post-1983 period scores 3 (discretionary appointment powers, chairing of cabinet meetings, right of veto) out of the nine dichotomous presidential powers.<sup>52</sup> This created a shift in the grouping that Turkey belonged to, from the "parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents" to the "parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective." According to Siaroff, Turkey in the post-1983 is an exception to the pattern he proposes.<sup>53</sup> Turkey has a system with a president assuming a corrective role without being popularly elected. However, this pattern suggests that there is a direct correlation between maintaining a corrective role and the legitimacy of popular elections. Thus, Turkey appears as the only country which has a similar

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among the countries and even among the terms of different presidents in the same country. See Uluşahin, *İki Başlı Yürütme Yapılanması*, pp. 37-42.

<sup>52</sup> Siaroff, "Comparative Presidencies," p. 302.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

score with the other cases fit into this pattern but does not have a weaker presidency.

For Siaroff, in general terms “a presidential corrective role cannot be maintained without the legitimacy of popular elections for the president.”<sup>54</sup> However, Siaroff has not explained how in the case of Turkey in the post-1983 period presidents could play a corrective role lacking the popular legitimacy gained through popular elections. Thus, with regard to this study of the Turkish presidency, Siaroff’s distinction will be of use to a certain extent. The gaps he left concerning the exceptionalism of the Turkish case in his analysis, however, will be filled by looking at the above variables that differ from one presidential term to the other, either because of constitutional changes in presidential status or because of the different interpretations and practices of presidents. This is the basic task that the author undertakes to perform in this two-part essay.

## **2.2. President in the Turkish Parliamentary System**

### **2.2.1. Historical Development of the Office of President**

The Turkish Republic, since its inception, has a tendency to consider the parliamentary system as the most appropriate system for the country, despite vacillating between different models of government in its early days. Historically speaking, it is possible to argue that there is a tradition of parliamentarism which can be traced back to the pre-Republican period. The promulgation of the

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<sup>54</sup> Siaroff, “Comparative Presidencies”, p. 308.

Constitution of 1876 (*Kanun-i Esasi*)<sup>55</sup> in the Ottoman period introduced the parliament to the Ottoman state system but did not pave the way to a system of a Western-style parliamentary government; the Sultan continued to exercise his sovereign rights.<sup>56</sup> He was practically omnipotent, having extensive powers over the system that made the status of the Ottoman parliament distinct from that of parliaments in parliamentary systems.

It is the Second Constitutional period (1908-1918) that the Sultan's constitutional status and power was, for the first time, shaped by the requirements of a system of constitutional monarchy.<sup>57</sup> The executive and legislative powers were separated from the Sultan's sovereignty and granted to different bodies. The Council of Ministers was made responsible to the parliament, which had now been given additional powers while the monarch enjoyed only limited powers.<sup>58</sup> In the opening address, Ahmet Rıza Bey, the Speaker of the General Assembly said that “working for the establishment of national sovereignty was one of the duties of the members of the parliament.”<sup>59</sup> In the official reply of the Assembly to the Sultan's inaugural address, “national assembly” as a concept was used and the

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<sup>55</sup> For the unabridged version of the 1876 Constitution see Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri, Senedi İttifaktan Günümüze* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1985) and for more information about the articles of the Constitution of 1876, see Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri* (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 1992); Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 174-178.

<sup>56</sup> Article 7 of the 1876 Constitution described the sovereign rights of the Sultan. Some of those prerogatives were the following: appointing or dismissing ministers, coining money, concluding treaties with foreign countries, declaring war and making peace, commanding the armed forces and the navy, directing military movements, promulgating all secular laws, supervising the enforcement of the *Shari'a* (Islamic law), respiting or commuting sentences pronounced by the criminal courts, convoking (akt) and proroguing (tatil) the General Assembly and, if deemed necessary, dissolving (fesh) it providing that new elections are held. The Sultan possessed an absolute power of veto concerning any act of parliament.

<sup>57</sup> Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*, p. 145.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>59</sup> Recai Galip Okandan, *Amme Hukukumuzun Ana Hatları* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi, 1968), p. 264.

parliament was defined as the “symbol of national sovereignty” (*hakimiyet-i milliyenin timsali*).<sup>60</sup> As can be seen, for the first time, the sovereignty of the Sultan was curtailed at the expense of the sovereign power of parliament, and the concept of “national sovereignty” (*hakimiyet-i milliye*) began to be used in the second constitutional period.<sup>61</sup>

In the transition period from the days of the constitutional monarchy to the opening of the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi* -BMM) in 1920, it was the said national sovereignty principle that formed the basis of the newly established republican state. In spite of the intermittent ruptures of parliamentary periods, the desire to have a functioning parliament continued to be salient in the Republican period, too.

However, due to the extraordinary circumstances of the time, in the early 1920s, the assembly government model was adopted. The basic feature of this governmental system was the fusion of powers in the Assembly. The Assembly had complete say over the state matters and it had power over the Council of Ministers. According to the 1921 Constitution (*Teşkilat-ı Esasiye*)<sup>62</sup>, the BMM was so powerful that its government carried the title of the Grand National Assembly government (*Büyük Millet Meclisi Hükümeti*). The head of the BMM was elected in the plenary session of the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi Heyet-i Umumiyesi*), and with this title, in the name of the BMM, he

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<sup>60</sup> Cited in Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*, p. 148.

<sup>61</sup> Some other innovations of the period were as follows: for the first time a government program was prepared and submitted to the knowledge of public, a vote of confidence was put before the parliament, and a government was defeated by a vote of no confidence.

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed analysis of the 1921 Constitution see Ergun Özbudun, *1921 Anayasası* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1992).

possessed the right to approve and sign the decisions of the Council of Ministers (*İcra Vekilleri Heyeti*). Each of the ministers was elected individually by the assembly, which was entitled to make changes in the Council of Ministers at any time, whereas the Council lacked any power such as dissolving the parliament. Even though the Council elected its chairman, the head of the BMM was at the same time the natural head of the Council as well. It is necessary to note that up until 1923, there existed no office with the title of president.

During the first legislative session of the Assembly (1920-1923), there were no political parties; rather, there were two groups agreeing on the same objective of saving the country from foreign invasion but diverging on the issue of which policies should be pursued afterwards. The First Group composed of Mustafa Kemal<sup>63</sup> and his pro-change supporters, who were in favor of establishing a republican regime, was roundly criticized by the Second Group members, who favored the preservation of the office of Sultan. Until the Independence War had come to an end, Mustafa Kemal preferred to postpone his change-oriented future plans. The First Assembly, before taking a recess, decided to call for new elections in April 1923.

It was the Second Assembly that proclaimed a republic and put revolutionary policies into practice. With the amendments to *Teşkilat-ı Esasiye* in 1923, the regime started to be called a republic and the office of president was established. Mustafa Kemal was elected the first President of the Republic. The amended Article 10 stipulated that the president was to be elected by the General

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<sup>63</sup> His surname of Atatürk was conferred on him by the Assembly in 1934.



Committee among the members of the Assembly for one legislative term. Reelection was made possible. The term of the president lasted until the next president was elected. With the law, *Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanununun Bazı Maddelerinin Tavzihen Değiştirilmesine Dair Kanun*, Article 12 of the Constitution also changed. The president was given the right to choose the prime minister (*başvekil*) among the Assembly members. The ministers were no longer elected individually by the Assembly. Rather, the prime minister elected them and the cabinet was submitted to the approval of the Assembly by the president. It is apparent that some degree of separation of powers started to be observed, and the model of government formation came closer to the model seen in parliamentary systems. Parallel to that, the president was not given any powers allowing him to act independently of both the Assembly and the government.

During the course of debates in the Assembly on the Constitutional Commission's draft of the Constitution of 1924, the anti-Sultanate and pro-Republican sentiments were strongly felt while the articles stipulating the status and powers of the president were being discussed. The power of dissolution at that time had been given to the Assembly itself. The proposal, on the other hand, conferred this power of dissolution upon the president; in addition, he would act as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and promulgate laws made by the Assembly. Some deputies expressed their worries by saying that delegating such powers to an office other than the Assembly might endanger the principle of the unconditional sovereignty of the nation. For them, the concentration of powers in the Assembly should have been preserved, as it was the best expression of

national sovereignty.<sup>64</sup> The ostensible discomfort of those deputies was due to the possibility of making the office of presidency too strong, which recalled the Sultanic regime of Ottoman days. Suna Kili mentioned “the extreme sensitivity of the Assembly toward a strong executive” deriving from “Turkey’s historical experiences with absolute rulers.”<sup>65</sup> Although several deputies felt the necessity to underline that their criticisms of the powers given to the executive by the Commission’s draft had nothing to do with the personality of Mustafa Kemal, they nevertheless opposed him and his plans for the revolutionary new regime in-the-making. What was commonly desired was the embodiment of the national will through the national representatives in the parliament. Presidency, for many in the assembly, should be an office of arbiter and be kept out of daily politics.<sup>66</sup> They emphasized that the head of the Republic should be the spokesperson of the whole nation, not of the party in power.<sup>67</sup>

The ongoing discussions concluded with the enactment of the new constitution in April 1924. The Constitution of 1924 is said to have established a mixed system in between an assembly government model and a parliamentary regime.<sup>68</sup> The sole supremacy in representing the Turkish nation still rested with the BMM (Article 4). The Commission’s proposal which would open the way to the dissolution of the parliament by a presidential decree after consultation with the council of ministers was rejected after a heated debate. Instead, the following

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<sup>64</sup> For the full text of the speeches of deputies on this discussion, see the transliterated version of the official records of the GNA, Zekai Sezgin and A. Şeref Gözübüyük (trans.), *1924 Anayasası Hakkındaki Meclis Görüşmeleri* (Ankara: Balkanoğlu Matbaacılık, 1957), pp. 8-9, 37-40, 56-60, 64-66, 84-87, 104, 186, 194-201.

<sup>65</sup> Suna Kili, *Turkish Constitutional Developments and Assembly Debates on the Constitutions of 1924 and 1961* (Istanbul: Robert College Research Center, 1971), p. 62.

<sup>66</sup> Özdemir, *Devlet Krizi*, pp. 20-25.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Ergun Özbudun, *Türk Anayasa Hukuku*, 6th edition (Ankara: Yetkin Yayınları, 2000), p. 31.

statement was accepted as Article 25: “When the Assembly by absolute majority votes to dissolve before the expiration of its term, the session of the new Assembly must begin the first of November following.”<sup>69</sup> The office of president was confirmed in the Constitution. Similarly to the 1923 amendment, the president was given the right to choose the prime minister from among the members of the Assembly (Article 7). The prime minister chose the ministers likewise from among the members of the Assembly and submitted the names to the president’s approval. As mentioned, in the 1921 Constitution, the ministers were chosen directly by the Assembly. However, with the 1924 Constitution, presidential approval became mandatory before the list of council of ministers was presented to the Assembly (Article 44).

On the matter of granting more powers to the president, the outcome was discouraging for those favoring a stronger presidency. The president was accepted as the head of state but lacked any substantial independent powers. Article 32 stated that the president presides over the assembly on ceremonial occasions and, in case of necessity, over the council of ministers. More importantly, it was made certain that the president, during his term of office, may not participate in parliamentary debates and discussions nor cast his vote. The proposal of the Commission that the president would be elected by the Assembly for a term of seven years was amended. The principle previously formulated with the 1923 amendments which asserted that the president must be chosen from among the members of the Assembly for a four-year term that synchronized with the term of the Assembly (Article 31) was preserved. A simple majority was considered

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<sup>69</sup> For the English translation of the 1924 Constitution see Edward Mead Earle, “The New Constitution of Turkey,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 40, issue 1 (March 1925), pp. 89-100.

sufficient to become elected. As mentioned, the proposal on the power of president to promulgate laws was one of the three issues which had provoked lengthy discussions in the Assembly. As a result of these debates, it was decided to amend the proposal so that the president could exercise his veto power over all matters except financial and constitutional legislation within ten days, but the Assembly could override president's veto by a simple majority (Article 35). All presidential decrees should be signed by the prime minister and the ministers within whose jurisdiction the measure lies (Article 39), which means the main executive organ according to the Constitution was to be the Council of Ministers. The counter-signature principle, as Serap Yazıcı has noted, made the system closer to parliamentarism.<sup>70</sup> The third longest discussion on the proposed article about the president's power as the Commander-in-Chief resulted in amending the article so as to state that the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces was vested in the BMM and assumed by the President of the Republic. In peace time, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) was to command all armed forces, while in time of war, the command would be entrusted to a person appointed by the president upon the proposal of the Council of Ministers and approval of the BMM (Article 40).

As we have seen, the impartiality of the presidency has been highlighted since the inception of the Republican regime. However, the charisma of Atatürk transformed the conception of presidency in the sense that the presidency became the influential office in the political system. Atatürk's wartime record and popularity, along with his revolutionary steps in the years of establishment and

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<sup>70</sup> Yazıcı, *Başkanlık ve Yarı-Başkanlık Sistemleri*, p. 118.

reconstruction, created an unrivaled power. In fact, he was seen as the father of the nation. Needless to say, he left a personal imprint on the office of presidency as its first incumbent. Even though President Atatürk, in his later years in the office, preferred to confine himself largely to his specific reform projects rather than be involved in day-to-day running of the country, the capacity of the president to maintain an influence over the system was institutionalized in his era. The question of who would be the next president became one of the most contentious issues from then on. Nonetheless, due to Atatürk's personal characteristics, more than the office itself, the president became a major political actor.

The major role of the presidency, as Clement Dodd points out, was “to lead the Atatürkian Revolution,” under the leadership of Atatürk heading the Party, “which has not been an unimportant precedent.”<sup>71</sup> As the founding father of the new State and also the CHP, Atatürk was perceived as the “one man”. It was a one-party regime, and as the party of the State, the CHP was identified with the aims of the Republic. Hence it was not perceived by the people as incompatible to be the head of state and the head of the party simultaneously. Indeed, Article 36 stipulated that the president, each year in November, addresses the Assembly on the activities of the government of the previous year and on the policies to be pursued over a year. Both Atatürk and İnönü, in the president's constitutional capacity, continued to give information about the government's policies and future plans for the following legislative term in the opening addresses they delivered in parliament

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<sup>71</sup> Dodd, “Kenan Evren as President,” p. 173.

on the first day of every legislative year.<sup>72</sup> Irrespective of the necessities of the day, it can be argued that, from then on, the omnipotence of the presidency as the head of state has become visible in the characteristics of the regime in the difficult times of political crisis and social unrest, as will be elaborated below.

After Atatürk's death, the controversy about the possible presidential candidates has revolved around the issue of finding the best person competent enough to succeed Atatürk. Seeking for a competent successor, later, brought a new dimension to the perception of presidency that is about being the guarantor of the Republican regime and the guardian of Atatürkist principles – republicanism (*cumhuriyetçilik*), secularism (*laiklik*), nationalism (*milliyetçilik*), populism (*halkçılık*), statism (*devletçilik*), and revolutionism (*inkılâpçılık*).

In spite of the palpable tension between Atatürk and İnönü in Atatürk's last years which ended in Atatürk asking İnönü to step down from prime ministry, no other candidate could be seen as appropriate to shoulder such a heavy responsibility. Attempts by his political adversaries to obstruct his ascendancy to the presidency proved futile, and just one day after Atatürk's death on November 10, 1938, İnönü was elected the second President of the Republic. The fusion of party leadership and presidency continued in İnönü's term as well. İnönü was given the title of “national leader” (“*milli şef*”) by the CHP. The “eternal chairman of the party” (“*ebedi şef*”) unquestionably continued to be Atatürk, while İnönü was made the “permanent chairman.” Erik J. Zürcher argues that “İnönü was in complete control

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<sup>72</sup> For the full text of those opening addresses, see Kazım Öztürk, *Cumhurbaşkanları'nın Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'ni Açış Nutukları* (Istanbul: Baha, 1969).

and his prime ministers executed the policies determined by the President.”<sup>73</sup> Hence, it is apparent that the political power base of the president was broadened during the terms of the first two presidents.

However, it is also necessary to note that İnönü himself proposed to renounce the title of permanent party chairman to show his commitment and sincerity in the transition to democracy, and instead suggested to the party delegates in the Second Extraordinary Congress of the CHP that the party chairman be elected for a fixed term of four years. İnönü was well aware of the fact that he was fiercely criticized by the members of the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti* –DP) for holding the titles of President and Party Chairman at the same time. The leader of the DP, Celal Bayar, was highly critical of that arrangement, claiming that it benefited the party in power [CHP] through wielding the state power and controlling the administration apparatus.<sup>74</sup> For him, it meant that there was a “crisis of head of state” (*devlet reisliği buhranı*).<sup>75</sup> İnönü responded to those criticisms by defining it as a “constitutional issue” and expressed his opinions as follows:

Our Constitution concentrated state power in the Assembly. No power was vested in the hands of President, the Head of State (*devlet başı*), to be used by him when deemed necessary to serve best interests and maintain a balance while ruling the country. The President was thought to be the leader of the majority party. Hence, he is also thought to exercise moral influence (*manevi nüfuz*) and to maintain and preserve balance and harmony. In my opinion, there is no obstacle to the President’s being Party Chairman at the same time. The President’s being politically irresponsible does not mean that

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<sup>73</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History, 3rd edition* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1997), p. 193.

<sup>74</sup> Özel Şahingiray, ed., *Celal Bayar’ın Seçim Kampanyalarındaki Söylev ve Demeçleri, 1946-1950-1954* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999), p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

he will be indifferent to his duties regarding parliamentary work. If the President wants to abuse his politically irresponsible status then the Parliament will always be ready to act to call him to account. In a nutshell, according to our Constitution, the Head of State needs to rely on a majority in the Parliament to perform a duty.<sup>76</sup>

It is clear that, for İnönü, a president could join the election campaigns of his party without infringing the constitution. There was no provision at that time that forbade the president from being affiliated to a political party while he was in office. The Constitution only prohibited the president from taking part in parliamentary discussions (Article 32). According to İnönü, as the Head of State, he was in charge of maintaining and preserving peace and security, carrying out political activities within the framework of the relevant legislation, and providing an atmosphere in which citizens who have dissenting opinions treat each other with courtesy.<sup>77</sup>

İnönü's determined efforts to make the regime more democratic resulted in the transition to multi-party politics in 1945 with the establishment of opposition parties, the National Development Party (*Milli Kalkınma Partisi* –MKP) and later the DP, among others. The DP succeeded in gaining some seats in the parliament in the July 1946 Elections. Its popularity among the people showed a tremendous increase. The DP's criticisms of the CHP's policies mounted and, within a short period, relations between the two parties became extremely tense, so much so that the timely intervention of President İnönü saved the young multi-party regime. İnönü had meetings with the leaders of both parties separately to develop trust

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<sup>76</sup> İlhan Turan, ed., *İsmet İnönü: Konuşma, Demeç, Makale, Mesaj ve Söyleşiler, 1944-1950* (Ankara: TBMM Kültür, Sanat ve Yayın Kurulu Yayınları, 2003), pp. 142-143.

<sup>77</sup> Turan, *İsmet İnönü*, p. 36, 312.



between them. İnönü's famous "Twelfth of July Declaration" (*12 Temmuz Beyannamesi*) emphasized the necessity of dealing with both parties impartially and evenhandedly. The declaration was significant in the sense that the President, by making such a statement to the press, displayed his endeavor to play the role of an arbiter to prevent people from being entrapped in the "politics of violence."<sup>78</sup>

Despite his efforts, President İnönü could not avoid bitter criticism from the DP members. The Administrative Council of the DP took a decision forbidding the party members to contact him. The DP deputies protested in parliament and did not even stand up when president İnönü came in to address deputies.

Before Bayar was elected President in 1950 after the DP's success at the polls that same year, he emphasized the principle of president's political irresponsibility. He suggested that the head of state, when deemed necessary, become a "balancing factor" (*muavazene unsuru*) within the limits of legal framework. He underlined that heads of state, by becoming immersed in low politics, would be subject to gossip.<sup>79</sup> While in the office, President Bayar highlighted his awareness of the constitutionally defined limits of his functions as head of state. He continued by stressing the regulatory (*nazım*) role of the head of state. For Bayar, he represented the state and hence performed his duty impartially above the governing bodies.<sup>80</sup> However, during his presidential term, Bayar criss-crossed the country during the election period and addressed people as İnönü once did. He did not even hesitate to solicit votes for his former party. Like İnönü, Bayar did not

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<sup>78</sup> Turan, *İsmet İnönü*, p. 362.

<sup>79</sup> Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Seçim Kampanyalarındaki Söylev ve Demeçleri*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>80</sup> From Bayar's Bursa speech delivered on 20 April 1954 in *Ibid.*, p. 97.

think that it would harm his impartiality because, he said, the timing of his political speeches was limited to a particular period, i.e. the parliamentary election period, which was the time for giving an account of the DP's policies to nation.<sup>81</sup> Neither İnönü nor Bayar considered speaking in election campaigns incompatible with their office on the grounds that in accordance with constitutional provisions the head of state should in the first instance be an elected deputy.

Bayar's term was terminated by the 1960 military take-over. It was with the Constitution of 1961 that for the first time the principles of classical parliamentarism were fully adopted. The president was still to be elected by the Assembly, now in a joint session with the newly established Senate, from among their own members. The president-elect should be at least forty years old and a university graduate. In reviewing the position of the president, the framers of the 1961 Constitution had in mind the need to ensure that the president was politically impartial. After the election, the president was expected to disassociate himself from any political party he had been affiliated with. In order to ensure the election of a politically impartial president, a two-thirds majority was specified for the first two ballots, after which a majority vote was sufficient. In contrast to the previous Constitution, the term of office was extended to seven years. Hence, presidential elections would not be synchronized with parliamentary elections; this was expected to result in the election of a politically neutral president. Furthermore, the president was made ineligible for re-election. The two-thirds majority that was necessary to become elected president gave rise to harsh struggles between the major parties and, worse than that, to the embroiling the military in this struggle.

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<sup>81</sup> Şahingiray, *Celal Bayar'ın Seçim Kampanyalarındaki Söylev ve Demeçleri*, p. 97.

As Dodd argues, after the 1960 coup, the impartiality of the presidency began to take on a new meaning. It often came to be seen as guaranteed only by the election of presidents of military provenance.<sup>82</sup> Parallel to that, Özbudun considers the election of the coup leader as president after the restoration of the civilian rule as an exit guarantee.<sup>83</sup> In that way, the military leaders had an opportunity to preserve their positions and the principles of the coup. For the politicians, it also served some other important purposes. As Özdemir suggests, it functioned as a lightning conductor to eliminate the potential ups and downs that could occur while the military was returning to barracks.<sup>84</sup> For the presidential office, the struggle between the civilian and military groups in 1961, excluding the next (1965) election, was repeated in the other elections. During the 1970s, after the experience of a military intervention in 1971, the political parties were agreed on removing the influence of military on politics through the election of former military officers to the presidency. However, they could not reach a consensus on a particular name when the office of the presidency fell vacant in 1980 and, as a result, a political impasse could not be avoided. In 1980, the military again intervened.

As mentioned in the previous section, for the periods between 1961 and 1971 and between 1973 and 1980 Siaroff put Turkey under “parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents.” However, if the practices are also taken into consideration, following his own distinction, it can be argued that the system in Turkey came closer to a “parliamentary system with a presidential corrective.” The head of state

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<sup>82</sup> Dodd, “Kenan Evren as President,” p. 176.

<sup>83</sup> Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 54.

<sup>84</sup> Özdemir, *Devlet Krizi*, p. 45.

and the head of government were separate from each other. The former was elected by parliament and the latter was accountable to the legislature. Although the president had no considerable powers, as it was stipulated in the 1961 Constitution, some “corrective powers” such as presiding over the meetings of the Council of Ministers (Article 97), and promulgating the laws enacted by the TBMM and returning any laws he disapproves of to the Assembly for reconsideration (Article 93), looking at the actual practices, somehow created a corrective president. However, should the TBMM re-enact the law so returned, the President was obliged to promulgate said law.<sup>85</sup>

The Constitution of 1982, following the 1980 military intervention, created a strong presidency. For two years, up until the Constitution was adopted, the leader of the coup, General Kenan Evren using the title of “head of state” had ruled the country. That can be interpreted as an indication of the desire of the guardians of the regime to create a president having extensive powers and exerting greater influence over the regime matters without being “politically” active.<sup>86</sup> The military came to have a loss of trust in politics; not only politicians but also bureaucratic bodies were perceived to have been contaminated with radical ideologies. Consequently they felt the necessity to create an office that would safeguard the regime. This office could only be the presidency, which in the eyes of the military was the embodiment of the continuity of the secular state.

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<sup>85</sup> Sadık Balkan, Ahmet E. Uysal and Kemal H. Karpat (trans.), *Constitution of the Turkish Republic* (Ankara, 1961), p. 25.

<sup>86</sup> Here political refers to what the coup leaders perceived as day-to-day politics.

Dodd observes that the role of guardian of the state and the constitution was taken seriously by President Evren, but due to his lacking a political base he did not successfully develop independent powers that would make it easier for him to achieve this objective.<sup>87</sup> Despite Evren's showing his opposition to the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* -ANAP) overtly at first, a good deal of harmony prevailed between President Evren and Prime Minister Özal except during those times Evren was considered to be intruding into matters of government.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the ANAP government under Özal was at odds with Evren because of his remarks on a number of shortcomings of the government in economic matters. Evren never refrained from commenting on the foreign policy that the government pursued and even sometimes led to dramatic shifts on some critical issues, such as Turkey's European Community (EC) membership and the Cyprus issue. He blamed Europe for having an anti-Turkey approach and rejecting Turkey's quest for EC membership on the grounds that Turkey was a Muslim country. Evren threatened to leave NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) on the grounds that the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) had received a great amount of help and support from some European countries. For Evren, such a move would have been definitely in line with his mission to defend the principles guiding the 1980 military intervention. In this way, Evren extended his powers by exerting an influence over the foreign policy issues, and, through his particular interpretation of his constitutional duties and powers as president, tried to assume a corrective role.

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<sup>87</sup> Dodd, "Kenan Evren as President," p. 185.

<sup>88</sup> Heper argues that after 1982 the executive was divided into two as statist executive and political executive. For him, the relationship between President Evren and Prime Minister Özal was developed based on that division and gradually a shift of power was seen from the statist executive to the political executive as a result of Özal's efforts. For more on the evolution of this relationship, see Metin Heper, "The Executive in the Third Turkish Republic, 1982-1989," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 3, 3 (July 1990): pp. 299-319.

The 1982 Constitution, like its predecessor, sought to ensure the political impartiality of the president. The president was kept politically irresponsible but on the other hand, as Özbudun asserts, the Constitution has transformed the presidency from a largely symbolic and ceremonial office into an active and powerful one, with important political and appointment functions.<sup>89</sup> The principle of being elected by the TBMM for a term of seven years is adopted with a difference. The president-elect does not need to be a member of the Assembly anymore. Turkish citizens who fulfill the requirements (being over 40 years of age and having received university-level education) and are eligible to be elected deputies can be candidates. However, a person outside the Assembly should be nominated by a group of deputies not less than one-fifth of the full membership. The president cannot be elected for a second term. The president-elect must sever all his party allegiances, and if he has ties with any political party he should resign. Moreover, his status as a member of the TBMM will cease after being elected. The procedure for the selection of the president is similar to that in the 1961 Constitution in that it requires a two-thirds majority; however, if the Assembly fails to elect a president in the fourth ballot, it is automatically dissolved, a precaution against a possible deadlock as was experienced in the 1980 presidential elections.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Özbudun, "The Status of the President of the Republic under the Turkish Constitution of 1982," p. 37.

<sup>90</sup> A referendum was held on October 21, 2007 on a constitutional amendment concerning changes in the election of president. As a result, the changes were approved and adopted. In accordance with the changes made, a) in Article 101, the president shall be elected by popular vote, the term of office is five years and reelection at most two times is possible b) in Article 102, in the elections the candidate who gets the simple majority will be elected president. If simple majority could not be reached in the first ballot then the first two candidates who received the most number of votes will have the right to join the second ballot. The one gaining the most votes shall become president.

In the 1982 Constitution, as the first paragraph of Article 104 stipulates, the president is obliged to ensure the implementation of the constitution and regular and harmonious functioning of state organs. As the head of state, the president is expected not only to be impartial but also to supervise in an impartial manner the working of the constitution in the light of the requirements of democracy and, more importantly, in accordance with the Atatürkist principles, especially secularism. The presidency under the 1982 Constitution became an office of safeguarding and protecting the state more than acting as an impartial arbiter which means, as Heper and Çınar argue, the Turkish president has appeared as a “statist president, though with limited executive powers.”<sup>91</sup> Similar to Elgie’s assessment on Article 5 of the Constitution of the Fifth French Republic, Article 104 of the 1982 Constitution is said to create a perception of a president who is above politics but who may at the same time make some kinds of intervention in the functioning of the state mechanism.<sup>92</sup>

The Constitution of 1982 gives considerable powers to the president, leading to controversies over the system of government so created. Özbudun refers to the new system of government by borrowing a French term, “parliamentarisme atténué,” meaning a modified or weakened form of parliamentarism.<sup>93</sup> By endowing the president with discretionary appointment powers, the 1982 Constitution has considerably strengthened the presidency in Turkish political system.<sup>94</sup> The president’s veto power over the legislation has increased; a draft

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<sup>91</sup> Heper and Çınar, “Parliamentary Government with a Strong President,” pp. 490-91.

<sup>92</sup> Elgie, France in *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, p. 76.

<sup>93</sup> Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics*, p. 60.

<sup>94</sup> These powers include nominating the prime minister, approving the appointment of the Chief of the General Staff, appointing members and chairman of the State Supervisory Council, members

law related to a constitutional amendment (which requires the support of two-thirds of the total number of members of the Assembly) may be referred back to the Assembly by the president for further consideration. If the Assembly adopts the referred law as it stands by a two-thirds majority, the president may submit the law to a referendum.<sup>95</sup> As Dodd underlines, in this way, the president gains “a degree of access to the expression of the popular will.”<sup>96</sup>

Apart from these considerable appointment powers, the 1982 Constitution contains some articles that are open to interpretation. Hence, the presidents coming to the office after 1989 have had the opportunity to extend their influence over governmental issues. For instance, from the very beginning of his term, Özal was criticized for not being impartial and meddling in the party affairs, which was seen as inappropriate for the president. He did not hesitate to publicly criticize the government if he was not consulted before making critical decisions. On foreign policy issues, he did not refrain from playing an active role on critical problems, a striking example being his initiative during the Gulf Crisis in 1990. Özal justified his interventionist acts by saying that as President and the head of the National Security Council he was responsible for defending the interests of the state, which shows his reading of the Constitution. Therefore, it can be argued that the 1982 Constitution, by opening the channels to varied interpretations and consequently

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of the Higher Education Council, rectors of universities, members of the Constitutional Court, one-fourth of the members of the Council of State, the Chief Public Prosecutor and the Deputy Chief Public Prosecutor of the High Court of Appeals, members of the Military High Court of Appeals, members of the Supreme Military Administrative Court, and the members of the Supreme Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors.

<sup>95</sup> The other exceptional condition related to the amendment of the constitution stipulated in Article 175 is as follows: A law, which is adopted by a three-fifths or less than two-thirds majority of the total number of votes of the Assembly and which is not referred back by the president for further consideration, shall be published in the Official Gazette in order to be submitted to a referendum.

<sup>96</sup> Dodd, “Kenan Evren as President,” p. 178.



to practices, has made possible the vacillation of the system from “parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective” to “parliamentary systems with presidential dominance.” As mentioned, in Siaroff’s country based analysis Turkey in the post-1983 period is categorized as a “parliamentary system with a presidential corrective” with the score of 3 - discretionary appointment powers, chairing of cabinet meetings, right of veto. This score is based on constitutional features. Although Siaroff claims that his measuring scores are based not only on constitutional arrangements but also the actual political practice, his country based analysis lacks the latter part. For instance on the Turkish case, above mentioned practices show that the presidents may extend their influence on the system through different interpretations of the constitutional powers. In addition to the three measures of Siaroff mentioned above, the presidents could play role in government formation, agenda setting and/or foreign policy making. Hence it can be argued that the system in Turkey gets closer even to “the parliamentary systems with presidential dominance” without having a popularly elected president.

In fact, as mentioned, the basic responsibility of the president in accordance with Article 104 of the 1982 Constitution is ensuring the regular and harmonious functioning of the state organs. How Demirel played a key role based on that principle during the February 28 crisis will be extensively analyzed in Chapter VI. There it will be argued that he took the initiative and tried to defuse the crisis while observing the limits of the constitutional regime. In contrast to that, Demirel’s successor Ahmet Necdet Sezer remained indifferent to that particular constitutional responsibility and instead behaved in such a way that it became a

contributing factor to disharmony. Sezer gave more importance to the duties of safeguarding national unity, the indivisible integrity of the country, and secularism. During his presidential term, Sezer failed to take into account the need for negotiation and compromise and openly clashed with the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* –AKP) government, especially concerning the latter's policies that he considered as promoting political Islam. The secularist state elites, who surmised that the Republican regime was being undermined deliberately and mischievously by the AKP, relied heavily on Sezer. Consequently, the significance that the state elites attach to the office of presidency has increased.

### **2.2.2. The Presidency in the Clash between the State Elites and Political Elites**

In its struggle to establish a viable democracy, Turkey has encountered some difficulties. One such difficulty, which has been directly reflected in debates over the presidential succession, relates to the problems in bringing about a harmonious relationship between the state elites and the political elites. Following the argument of Sartori, one may argue that a viable democracy can be maintained through striking a balance between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of democracy. He emphasized the necessity of achieving a balance between different

groups' specific interests and the long-term interests of the community for democracy to flourish.<sup>97</sup>

In order to better grasp the distinction between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of democracy, firstly and foremost, Sartori's understanding of politics should be explicated. Sartori associates the term "politics" with both the horizontal discourse and the vertical idea.<sup>98</sup> The former was originally related to the community. Notions like public good, commonwealth, and general interest were born within the horizontal discourse. However, in the course of time those concepts have become attached to the vertical dimension; that is, as Sartori argues, they were related to the "hierarchical structuring of collectivities - subordination, superordination, and coordination."<sup>99</sup> The vertical leg of politics has become the sphere of the state; thus the good of the community started to be prioritized at the expense of particular interests. With the coming of the twentieth century, the horizontal dimension has re-entered the literature. While the vertical dimension of democracy denoted political *responsibility*, the horizontal dimension referred to as political *participation*.<sup>100</sup>

In the light of this distinction, the quintessential point in Sartori's argument on the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of democracy becomes clearer. Sartori argues that "the uniqueness of democracy resides precisely in establishing or

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<sup>97</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited. Part 2: The Classical Issues* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1987).

<sup>98</sup> Giovanni Sartori, "What Is Politics?" *Political Theory*, 1, 1 (February 1973), p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited. Part 1: The Contemporary Debate* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1987), p. 131.

<sup>100</sup> Sartori, "What Is Politics?" p. 131.

reestablishing horizontal dimension of politics.”<sup>101</sup> Public opinion and participation are the issues related to the implementation and diffusion of democracy horizontally. So, as Sartori states, electoral democracy emerges as the typical form of this horizontal dimension. In that way, the foundations of democracy is defined. However Sartori claims that this gives us an incomplete picture: “a polity monitored by the will of the majority” is not sufficient to build democracy and address its perfectibility.<sup>102</sup> That is why Sartori brings into the picture the vertical structuring of democracy which is linked to the issues of public interest, governing, and being ruled. Sartori defines the vertical layout as “democracy as a system of government.”<sup>103</sup>

In Turkey, the state elites have primarily perceived themselves as responsible for the guardianship of the long-term interests of the community. Political elites, on the other hand, have mostly regarded themselves as the representatives of the will of nation. From the perception of the state elites, political elites have only taken care of the interests of their constituencies, and this is considered inappropriate. Whereas from the perception of the political elites, the state elites do not respect the nation’s will. What the state elites have attributed importance to is the vertical dimension of democracy. For instance, while the political elites wish to see elections as one of the instruments for conveying the wishes and preferences of the people to politicians, state elites have perceived elections as a means to serve for the highest interests of the public and society, which, for them, is the most important component of democracy. In Turkey, the different emphases placed on

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<sup>101</sup> Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited. Part I*, p. 131.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

the concept of democracy by the two groups have given rise to a tension between them, which in turn has frequently made the maintenance of democracy problematic.<sup>104</sup>

Here it is worth examining further the conception of the “general interest” in the discourse of the state elites so as to illustrate the divergence between them and the political elites. The “general interest” in the discourse of the state elites in Turkey has been conceived as the maintenance of national unity, territorial integrity, and living in harmony in a secular, modern nation-state. The well being of society in terms of its above meaning has been an overriding concern for them. The state elites have perceived politicians as greedy and insatiable and accused them of deviating from the principle of the common interest of the community. The political elites have been blamed for their supposed inability to eliminate political tension and social unrest, and also for not acting with regard to the enlightened public opinion in the country. It has been concluded that the main conviction on the part of the political parties was that they were overriding the nation’s will, no matter whether they were either in power or in opposition, they were trapped into giving more importance to personal or partial interests than to their real duty – that is, promoting the general interest.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Walkington, UK: The Eothen Press, 1985).

<sup>105</sup> As a typical example, see Muhsin Batur, *Anılar ve Görüşler: Üç Dönemin Perde Arkası* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1985), p. 166. General Muhsin Batur was the Commander of the Turkish Air Force between 1969 and 1973. He was one of the four generals who signed the notorious 12 March Memorandum in 1971. Batur was an advocate of a program of socio-economic reforms and of a National Security Council having greater powers. After he had retired, he was nominated senator by President Sunay. He was forwarded as the presidential candidate by the CHP in 1980.

The state elites have regarded themselves as “above” politics - above classes, above partisan interests and the like. In their eyes, the policy preferences of representatives of the political class (as well as that of the civil society) are suspect because they represent only part of the nation, and not the interests of the nation as a whole. Moreover, in their view, short-term, rather than long-term, interests have motivated the political elites. The republican model, as E. Fuat Keyman asserts, was built on three fundamental philosophical and normative principles: the state as a sovereign object; an “organic society” vision that opens the way to the understanding of politics which functions to make state elites define the public interest and to impose it over the private/sectional interests; and an understanding of the “republican citizen” that is defined as having duties and responsibilities rather than rights.<sup>106</sup>

As Kemal H. Karpat has also noted, understanding of the role of the military in the Turkish political system, and for the present purpose the state elites in general, is essential for the understanding of the development of Turkish-style democracy.<sup>107</sup> The state elites in Turkey have a rational understanding of democracy, which Heper defines as “an activity among the knowledgeable and patriotic persons who [try] to find the best policy and thus [promote] the general interest.”<sup>108</sup> In the state elites’ model of democracy, there is always a degree of suspicion towards elected politicians because the elites worry that the politicians will display indifference toward the general interest of the country. That is why,

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<sup>106</sup> E. Fuat Keyman, “Kamusal Alan ve ‘Cumhuriyetçi Liberalizm’: Türkiye’de Demokrasi Sorunu,” *Doğu Batı*, no. 5 (1998), p. 68.

<sup>107</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, “Turkish Democracy at Impasse: Ideology, Party Politics and the Third Military Intervention,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (1981), p. 9.

<sup>108</sup> Metin Heper, “The Military-Civilian Relations in Post-1997 Turkey” in *Globalization of Civil-Military Relations: Democratization, Reform, and Security*, eds. George Cristian Maior and Larry Watts (Bucharest: Enciclopedica Publishing House, 2002).

from time to time, the military in Turkey justified its intervention in matters that properly belonged to the political domain on the grounds that it is the military's duty to save the country from the civilian politicians who were considered ineptitude and distrustful by the military.

In the shift from Ottoman monarchy to the Republican regime, the state elites, especially the military, played a key role. The military has been the most modern and cohesive force, both as developer and as implementer of the reforms starting from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, and especially in the building of the new nation-state. The identification of the military with the state was reinforced during the War of Independence. Atatürk, a successful leader coming from the military ranks, became the symbol of the new state. In the establishment period what was prominent was the development and modernization of Turkey. According to Atatürk, a one-party system could create a developed and modern Turkey.<sup>109</sup> As a consequence of the necessities of the day, democracy was postponed until the Republican regime has been consolidated. As Dankwart Rustow emphasizes, the military and civilian spheres have never been separated strictly from each other under the Republic.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, it is also to be expected that the military, when it thinks that a critical issue is a matter of the state, forms alliances with the other state elites.

The state elites, in particular the military, regarded the new State and the modernization project as Atatürk's legacy. What was important for the founders

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<sup>109</sup> A. Fuad Başgil, *27 Mayıs İhtilali ve Sebepleri* (Istanbul: Yağmur Yayınevi, 1966), p. 34.

<sup>110</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic," *World Politics*, 11, 4 (July 1959), p. 549.

of the new regime has continued to be vital for the military. To a great extent, the latter considers itself an emanation from the former. As Karpat argues, “the military has been intimately associated with the state since its inception.”<sup>111</sup> Up until 1989, with the exception of the period between 1950 and 1960, the head of the state had always been a military man.

In Turkey, the ongoing clash between the state elites and the political elites has relevance not only in the sense that it has important implications regarding the flourishing of democracy, but it has also shaped the presidency as an office. The oath sworn by the president under the 1982 Constitution in a sense stipulates that the president is among the state elites who are obliged to protect the regime when it is necessary. This article of Constitution is as follows:

In my capacity as President of the Republic I swear upon my honour and integrity before the Turkish Grand National Assembly and before history to safeguard the existence and independence of the state, the indivisible integrity of the Country and the Nation and the absolute sovereignty of the Nation, to abide by the Constitution, the rule of law, democracy, the principles of the secular Republic, not to deviate from the ideal according to which everyone is entitled to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms under conditions of national peace and prosperity and in a spirit of national solidarity and justice, and do my utmost to preserve and exalt the glory and honour of the Republic of Turkey and perform without bias the functions that I have assumed.  
(Article 103)

As seen the first task of the president mentioned in the oath is “to safeguard the existence and independence of the state.” This is relevant to what this essay suggests as the statist role of the president.

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<sup>111</sup> Karpat, “Turkish Democracy at Impasse,” p. 9.



## PART II

### PRESIDENT DEMIREL, THE STATE AND DEMOCRACY

## CHAPTER III

### THE POLITICAL PROFILE OF DEMİREL

#### **3.1. Background and the Evolution of Demirel's Political Career**

Süleyman Demirel was born in 1924 in Islamköy, a remote village of Isparta. After completing his elementary school education in this village, upon the suggestions of his teachers, Demirel's father brought him to Isparta, the only city having a secondary school nearby. It is important to underline that, despite being poor and needy, his father did his best to make Demirel continue his education. He even rented a house in Isparta for his son to stay in with his grandmother. In return for these efforts, Demirel rewarded his father by being a hardworking student in his new school. However, the expenses increased day by day as young Demirel continued his education in Muğla, a city further away from his family. To lessen the expenditures, Demirel entered an exam (*Devlet Parasız Yatılı Sınavı*) which provided financial support for needy students if they scored high. Demirel was successful in the exam and got the opportunity to continue his education in Muğla free of charge. Meeting with a new competitive environment, resulting

from the migration of masses of Turks from Western Thrace in those years, made Demirel more ambitious.<sup>112</sup> After graduating from middle school, he came to Afyon to attend high school and stayed there until he graduated. His days in Afyon made Demirel think more about his future plans. What he desired most was to have either legal training or an education in engineering. His years of hard work bore fruit when he succeeded in the entrance exam of the Engineering Academy (*Yüksek Mühendis Mektebi*) which provided education in the fields of engineering and architecture and was incorporated into Istanbul Technical University (İTÜ) in 1944.

In 1949, Demirel graduated from the Civil Engineering Department of İTÜ. After working temporarily in Istanbul Water Works Agency (*İstanbul Sular İdaresi*), he began working as a civil servant in Turkey's Electrical Works and Research Administration (*Elektrik İşleri Etüd İdaresi -EİEİ*), in return for his debt to the state, which had financed his secondary education. Having witnessed drought and villagers' communal prayers for rain in his childhood, Demirel has remained attentive to the problems of water and irrigation throughout his professional life. He stated that experiencing the villagers' suffering from drought and scarcity in 1934 inspired his struggle on the way to civilization.<sup>113</sup>

As part of a training program in irrigation, electrical technologies, and dam construction, Demirel was sent to the United States in 1949 to undertake studies in the Bureau of Reclamation in Denver and stayed there until 1950. He was the first engineer that the Turkish state sent abroad ever. The Bureau carried out major

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<sup>112</sup> Hulusi Turgut, *Demirel'in Dünyası* (Istanbul: ABC Ajansı Yayınları, 1992), p. 69.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Turgut, *Demirel'in Dünyası*, p. 56.

projects in the western states of the US including huge dams, irrigation systems, and generating stations. Demirel later said that when he first saw the Boulder Dam built across the Colorado River, he sat on a rock and admired the view for three days.<sup>114</sup> What he observed there impressed Demirel very much and inspired the ambition to implement what he learned there on his return to Turkey. Thus he concretized the “Western civilization” - the concept that he had first heard from his teacher in Isparta when he was a small child - as being technologically advanced.<sup>115</sup>

Demirel’s days in America made him think that what led the USA become a powerful and wealthy country was activist individuals. As one of the closer persons to Demirel, journalist Yavuz Donat claims that his impressions about America later created Demirel’s philosophy of governing that can be summarized in a nutshell as “the participation of people in governing.”<sup>116</sup> This concerns the horizontal dimension of politics. For Demirel, another point is that the individual who governs should be aware of his responsibility about fulfilling his duty, which concerns the vertical dimension. It is important to note here that since those years, these two concepts, participation and responsibility, have formed and shaped Demirel’s political mindset.

When Demirel returned to his country, Turkey had already gone through significant changes. The DP had come to power with many promises about

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<sup>114</sup> Hulusi Turgut, ed., *Görüntüler: Süleyman Demirel 50. Yıl, Cilt I* (Ankara: ABC Yayınları, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Turgut, *Demirel’in Dünyası*, p. 109.

<sup>116</sup> Yavuz Donat, *Cumhuriyet’in Kara Kutusu Süleyman Demirel Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Merkez Kitapçılık, 2005), p. 13.

preparing and implementing development projects and starting new investment projects. Following his return to the EİEİ, he was first appointed to supervise the ground survey of Seyhan Dam in Adana, and after a year was called up to Ankara again. Until 1953, Demirel worked as a project engineer. In 1954, he was appointed as the Head of Dam Administration. He became involved in dam construction projects so much that later he was given the nickname “king of the dams” (*barajlar kralı*) by his supporters. It was used as a propaganda tool to gain much support for Demirel as the young leader of the AP. Within a year, he was appointed as the Director General of the State Hydraulic Works Department (*Devlet Su İşleri -DSİ*). Demirel mentions that in the course of that duty he learned much about the geography, natural resources and also the people of Turkey.<sup>117</sup> It was said that Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was aware of the capacities of Demirel who was seen as a brilliant technocrat of the DP period, and drew the attention of his close associates to “Demirel’s brilliant future.”<sup>118</sup>

When the military intervened in 1960 and removed the DP government from power, Demirel was in Spain attending a meeting as the Director General of the DSİ. After he came back, he also suffered from the pressure put on the DP bureaucrats. From time to time, investigations were opened about Demirel, and he was subjected to groundless accusations about irregularities in some dam bids of the DSİ. Although his military service had been deferred by the Ministry of National Defense during the DP era, Demirel was tried by the military court with the accusation of being an army deserter. It was decided to conscript him as a

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<sup>117</sup> Turgut, *Görüntüler*, p. 225.

<sup>118</sup> Cited in Füzünan Tekil, *Türk Demokrasisi İçinde Süleyman Demirel* (İstanbul: Göktürk Yayınları, 1976).

reserve officer. It is narrated by Alpaslan Türkeş (one of the army officers who planned the 1960 military coup and then became the undersecretary of the prime ministry under military rule) that with the efforts of common acquaintances, he helped Demirel to perform his military service in the newly established State Planning Agency (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı –DPT*).<sup>119</sup> After he was discharged from the military in 1962, Demirel did not return to civil bureaucracy. In 1962-1964, Demirel worked as a free-lance engineer and a consultant. He also gave courses on engineering in the Middle East Technical University during this period.

In 1962, Demirel joined the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi –AP*) which had been founded by a retired general Ragıp Gümüşpala on February 11, 1961. In summarizing his story of entering politics, he said that it was not an intentional act. Indeed, he drifted into politics.<sup>120</sup> The beginning of Demirel’s political career was his being elected to the party’s General Executive Board (*Genel İdare Kurulu*) in 1962. Although Demirel did not take part in setting up the AP, he was elected as a result of an intensive campaign to support him. As Bozbeyli narrated Demirel was promoted as being an old Democrat -denoting his attachment to the DP- and one of the princes of Menderes.<sup>121</sup> Such efforts to promote Demirel’s image as a young and promising politician who was coming from the DP tradition were so successful that this positive image paved the way for his future leadership of the AP.

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<sup>119</sup> Quoted in İrfan Ülkü and Ali Hasanov, *Süleyman Demirel* (Istanbul: 1999), p. 72.

<sup>120</sup> Turgut, *Demirel’in Dünyası*, p. 21.

<sup>121</sup> Ferruh Bozbeyli, Interview by. İhsan Dağı and Fatih Uğur, *Yalnız Demokrat: Ferruh Bozbeyli Kitabı* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), p. 192.

Nevertheless Demirel's first post in the party ranks did not last long. After Bayar was released from Kayseri prison many demonstrations supporting him were staged in the places on Bayar's way to Istanbul. Pro-May 27 groups protested against the favorable atmosphere that the supporters of the ousted DP tried to create. Consequently the tension was mounted throughout the country. The AP headquarters was stoned by a crowd on October 2, 1962. At the time Demirel was inside the building with some other party administrators. It is told that Demirel was negatively affected by the attack and he decided to cut his ties with the party. Both Bozbeyli<sup>122</sup> and Bilgiç<sup>123</sup> mentioned Demirel's comment that "democracy will not be established in Turkey no earlier than in fifty-year-time." Demirel's behavior may be interpreted as an indication of keeping himself away from conflicts in times of trouble. The expression "*şapkayı alıp gitmek*" – although this refers to its literal meaning to take his hat and leave the party, it denotes escaping when faced with the difficult situations - associated with him started to be used after this event.

Upon the death of Gümüşpala on November 28, 1964, Demirel's name was put forward as one of the candidates for chairmanship. Some leading members of the AP visited Demirel to persuade him to be the vice chairman of the AP when the party was in the process of electing its chairman. Demirel was offered that after coming to power to overcome the difficulty of carrying out the government affairs along with party affairs he and Bilgiç could work together, each was solely responsible with the affairs respectively. However Demirel rejected this offer on the grounds that such a practice would turn the government into a puppet of the

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<sup>122</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 189.

<sup>123</sup> Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 116.

party by referring to the Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki*) example.<sup>124</sup> When Demirel rejected the vice chairmanship, Bilgiç was assigned with this task. It was with that development that Demirel and Bilgiç appeared as the prospective candidates for the leadership contest. Tekin Arıburun, ex-air force commander who was removed from his post in the army by the May 27 coup, also became a candidate. The race however was mostly taken place between Demirel and Bilgiç. Winning by a landslide, Demirel was elected party chairman at the Second AP Grand Congress.<sup>125</sup> Between February and October 1965, Demirel served as deputy prime minister in the coalition government (AP, YTP, CKMP, MP) led by Suat Hayri Ürgüplü, a senator for Kayseri who was assigned to form the government by the president after the CHP government had been brought down with the rejection of its budget.

The 1965 general election was the first election in which Demirel, as the leader of the AP, competed. At the time, he had been the party leader for a year and the deputy prime minister. His first speech during the election campaign, delivered in Şanlıurfa on October 10, 1965, is important to show Demirel's political strategy in reaching the masses:

For ages, you and your children have always lacked water. Therefore, I consider your [water] problem as the biggest political issue, as the biggest problem on the way to modernity. I am a child of a region obliged to pray for rain. I know very well how ruinous droughts could be for your household. I could not stay indifferent to your plight. I am the child of your grief. Saving you from your woes is what I reckon as a matter of dignity and honor.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>125</sup> Demirel received 1072, Bilgiç 562, Arıburun 39 votes. Even though Ali Fuat Başgil was not a candidate, four votes were given to him. There were 12 blank votes.

<sup>126</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyet'in Kara Kutusu*, p. 8.



During those years of economic recession and hard times, Demirel gave priority in his political agenda to problems related to the lack of advancement in technical matters and technology. The election manifesto of the AP prioritized the infrastructural projects on irrigation, electricity production, road building, and communication. The 1965 general election was an unprecedented victory for the AP, who garnered 53 percent of the votes and made the then 41-year-old Demirel the youngest prime minister ever in Turkey.

In the following general elections that took place on October 10, 1969, Demirel's AP was the sole victor once again with 46.5 percent of the votes. Nevertheless the decline in the votes raised the voice of the opposition within the party. Furthermore, Demirel's disbandment of the local organizations that did not comply with his directives deepened the intra-party conflict. At that time the CHP requested a parliamentary investigation concerning Prime Minister Demirel. In the course of the debates, allegations of corruption against Demirel were made by the CHP deputies. In reaction to this, while these allegations were being discussed, some AP deputies proposed to limit the time allotted for deputies to express their views to the parliament. Two AP deputies voted against this proposal along the same line with the CHP which resulted in their expulsion from the AP. On October 17, 1970, seventy-two AP senators and deputies issued a declaration that criticized the party administration and asked for the reversal of the decision on expulsion.<sup>127</sup> However, this last-ditch effort bore no fruits. Then forty-one out of seventy-two voted against the budget submitted by the AP government. As a

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<sup>127</sup> This effort is named as the "Movement of Seventy-Twos" (*Yetmişikiler Hareketi*) and can be considered a signal of the split from the AP to establish a new party. For the full text of the declaration, see Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, pp. 207-213.

result the budget proposal was rejected and the government resigned. The rejectionists thought that Demirel sought for one man domination in the party and for that purpose he did not refrain from turning the party into a place to advance short-term interests and personal gains.<sup>128</sup> Subsequently, the cases of those forty-one people were referred to the disciplinary committee and twenty-six of them were expelled from the party. According to Bozbeyli, punishing some of them was a purposeful act. The aim was to divide that opposing group but it failed.<sup>129</sup> The remaining fifteen resigned from the party and together with the expelled parliamentarians formed the Democratic Party (*Demokratik Parti* –DeP) on December 18, 1970.<sup>130</sup> Bilgiç argued that the motivation behind the expulsions was to eliminate the nationalist-conservative members in order to please the leftist circles.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, Bozbeyli told that he had neither information nor impression on such motivation that would change the conservative identity of the party. For him, this could be interpreted as an effort to get rid of the members that Demirel could not control in the party.<sup>132</sup>

In 1971, the Demirel government had to resign upon the military memorandum of March 12, 1971. The 1970s never recaptured the heyday of the 1960s for the AP. Under the leadership of the AP, two Nationalist Front Governments (*Milliyetçi*

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<sup>128</sup> Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 216.

<sup>129</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 322.

<sup>130</sup> The DeP was initially successful in reaching the people coming from the DP tradition who were not satisfied by the policies of the AP under Demirel. For instance Bayar actively supported the DeP when the party was established. He was furious with the AP as he thought that Demirel and his friends were aborted the attempts on the issue of amnesty to the members of the defunct DP. After this issue was resolved, the Democrats supporting the DeP backpedaled and joined the AP to be elected deputies after their political ban were lifted. This triggered the dissolution of the DeP.

<sup>131</sup> Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p.230.

<sup>132</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 349.

*Cephe Hükümetleri* -MCH)<sup>133</sup> were formed first between March 1975 and June 1977 and the second between July 1977 and January 1978. The first MCH was formed by the AP, the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP), the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* –MSP) and the Republican Reliance Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi* –CGP). All but the CGP came together for the second MCH. In 1979, Demirel formed a minority government which a year later was terminated by a military coup. All political parties were closed and their leaders and higher cadres were banned from involvement in active politics for ten years.

In 1987, with the result of a national referendum, the ban was lifted. For Demirel, it meant returning to active politics. That same year, he was elected chairman of the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* –DYP) at the party's extraordinary congress. He was reelected to the Parliament as deputy from Isparta in the general elections of 1991. Following the elections, Demirel formed a coalition government with the Social Democratic People's Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti* –SHP). In 1993, after the unexpected death of the eighth President, Turgut Özal, Demirel was elected president on May 16.

Demirel's role in Turkish politics did not end after he completed his presidential term. Rather he continues to participate by expressing his views on contentious political issues. He did not directly engage in the matters of any political party until May 2009, when he supported one of his political colleagues in the latter's bid for the chairmanship of the new Democrat Party. His name had always been

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<sup>133</sup> The Nationalist Front Governments were broad-based coalition governments aiming to embrace nationalist and conservative elements.

pronounced in the process of new party formations.<sup>134</sup> It always became an object of interest what Demirel thought on a hotly debated issue. For instance, he actively took part in the heated debate on the 2007 presidential elections by supporting the campaign to reach a social compromise on a presidential candidate. Some of his remarks such as “Those who wear headscarves should go to Saudi Arabia,” and “This parliament [in 2007] does not have the ability to represent [the people’s will]” have stirred up his old constituency and led to interpretations that he had changed drastically.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, in the eyes of many, Demirel has become a respected authority on state matters due to his considerable experience as an above-party figure. Some people expressed their opinions that he could be offered the status of ombudsman when a discussion was opened up on establishing the office of ombudsman in Turkey. He was labeled as a “wise man” (*akıl adam*) who has earned a reputation with the experiences he gained in Çankaya [the Presidential office]. Furthermore, he is said to successfully assess the conditions of the country, having a good grasp of the institutions that are vital for safeguarding the constitutional regime.<sup>136</sup>

Each and every phase of Demirel’s political life will be examined in detail in the following chapters. After all, the story of his political career overlaps with the political history of Turkey since the 1960s. Thus some give him nickname “the black box of the Republic” (*Cumhuriyet’in karakutusu*).<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Yavuz Donat, “Demirel ve İstanbul Yaklaşımları”, *Sabah*, 2 April 2007.

<sup>135</sup> *Yeni Şafak*, 2 April 2007.

<sup>136</sup> M. Ali Kışlalı, “Demirel Olacağı Biliyor,” *Radikal*, 15 February 2008.

<sup>137</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyet’in Kara Kutusu*, p. 5.

### 3.2. Personal Characteristics

As mentioned in the previous section, Demirel has always been ambitious. Even though he was not brought up in an advantageous environment, he worked hard and pushed his limits to be better off. Demirel has never lost his trust in equality of opportunity. He has always believed that as long as he continues to work hard he will accomplish what he dreamt for. Demirel's leaving his village in order to continue his education when he was a small child is an illustration of his motivation. Once, when he came back to his hometown in one of the summer holidays, he said to his father that "in the regime that Atatürk established, everybody can be a deputy in the parliament."<sup>138</sup> It shows, in the mind of young Demirel, how the Republican regime began to be equated with the vertical mobility it offers the relatively disadvantaged portions of the society.

Demirel's upbringing in an environment respecting and praising education has also had positive impact on his personal development. After the Latin alphabet was adopted (1928), the villagers, rather than resisting the changes, tried to adapt themselves to the new script by actively participating in the educational mobilization of the Republic. The people of İslamköy came together and built a primary school with their own means.<sup>139</sup>

Demirel's parents also had an impact over the development of his personality. Like the other people in his village, his father praised education. As noted above, he was a person who, despite opposition from his mother and wife, sent his son to

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<sup>138</sup> Turgut, *Demirel'in Dünyası*, p. 34.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the city to continue his secondary school education there. Even though the family was living in poverty, he did not hesitate even for a moment to spend what he possessed on young Demirel's educational expenses. Demirel portrayed his father as a self-educated man who was so courageous and energetic that he opened new horizons in the minds of his children.<sup>140</sup> Demirel's father was cautious in his business affairs and calculated every eventuality he might face. Such attitudes on the part of his father were claimed to be adopted by Demirel in the latter's politics.<sup>141</sup>

Demirel's mother was an example of a tireless Anatolian woman. Demirel said that she always completed what she started.<sup>142</sup> Demirel's mother influenced him with her personality too. She was a devout Muslim (*mütedeyyin*) who resigned herself to God's hands (*mütevekkil*). Demirel's approach to religion was shaped mostly by his mother. He learnt the Qur'an by heart. Coming from a devout family and being brought up in a religiously oriented environment had a certain impact on the formation of his political style. Having a background in religion also had an effect, towards the end of his İTÜ years, on his re-discovering of some concepts with which he had previously been familiar. Although İTÜ was established by taking the French and German universities as models, and hence followed a curriculum which was prepared under the influence of a European positivist way of thinking,<sup>143</sup> as narrated by Demirel, starting from 1948, a wind of change started to be felt. He said that some students who had previously been

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<sup>140</sup> Demirel has one elder sister, Afife, and two younger brothers Şevket and Hacı Ali. Şevket also graduated from İTÜ. Turgut, *Demirel'in Dünyası*, p. 41.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>143</sup> Ercüment Kuran, *Türk Çağdaşlaşması: Çileli Bir Yolda İlerleyiş* (Ankara: Akçağ, 1997), p. 261.

the regular participants of the entertainments and parties, in due course, began a quest for a new identity and focused more on the issues of Islam, tradition, national and moral values, and history.<sup>144</sup> It is known that, in those years, M. Zahid Kotku, the religious leader of the İskenderpaşa Seminary, which was a branch of an influential Sufi order, *Naqshbandiyya*, influenced some engineering students with his ideas about promoting industrialization, science and technology in addition to caring deeply about preserving national and moral values. It can be argued that Demirel's familiarity with religious terminology that he had gained in his childhood facilitated his communication with the Islamic groups and masses.

Demirel enjoyed huge popularity with the right-wing voters by being perceived as a politician who preserved national and religious elements of his Anatolian origins. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, an influential ideologue and activist who was highly esteemed in rightist circles, also remarked on Demirel's "indigenous" character by referring to him as "the son of Anatolia."<sup>145</sup> Despite the fact that Kısakürek was highly critical of several of Demirel's policies and practices, he praised Demirel's freedom from patronizing attitudes towards the common people. Moreover, Kısakürek added that among the prime ministers whom he had been in touch with Demirel was unique in the sense that he possessed such personal qualities as listening attentively and being open to any criticisms, no matter how sharp.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Hasan Bülent Kahraman, *Türk Sağı ve AKP* (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2007), p. 29.

<sup>145</sup> Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Rapor 9* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 1980), p. 60.

<sup>146</sup> Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Rapor 4* (Istanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 1978), p. 25.

Another characteristic of Demirel is industry. As already noted, throughout his school days, he was among the brilliant students in his classes. According to his primary school teacher, Demirel had strong will-power and always accomplished what he decided on.<sup>147</sup> One of his close friends in Afyon High School portrayed Demirel as a student who was calm, careful, prudent, hard working, and successful.<sup>148</sup>

Demirel's hard working nature is coupled with his calmness. People who know him have commonly noted that side of his personality. One of his close colleagues, İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, described Demirel as a man who keeps his silence when angry, who does not make decisions immediately on impulse but rather calculates all possible outcomes like a chess player. Demirel never leaves anything to chance; he is cautious and organized.<sup>149</sup> As Çağlayangil noted, during hard times he wanted to find the best solution by taking into account each and every possible path he might follow. He assessed well the timing of when to retreat or resist.<sup>150</sup> İsmet İnönü, an important statesman and a political rival of Demirel especially during the 1960s, said that Demirel was a different person in the sense that he managed anger and was aware of what he was talking about.<sup>151</sup>

Demirel values reason and calculation. Clearly, this is linked with İTÜ's positivist education, or, to put it better, with the discipline of engineering in general. He is

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<sup>147</sup> Fuat Süreyya Oral, *Süleyman Demirel'in Kişiliği* (Ankara: Cihan Matbaası, 1975), p. 91.

<sup>148</sup> Oral, *Süleyman Demirel'in Kişiliği*, p. 37

<sup>149</sup> Tanju Cılızoğlu, *Çağlayangil'in Anıları Çağlayangil'le Anılar* (İstanbul: Buke Yayıncılık, 2000), p. 122.

<sup>150</sup> Çağlayangil, *Anılarım*, p. 107.

<sup>151</sup> Mehmet Ali Birand, Can Dündar and Bülent Çaplı, *12 Mart İhtilalin Pençesinde Demokrasi* (Ankara: İmge Yayınevi, 1994), p. 124; Metin Heper, *İsmet İnönü: The Making of a Turkish Statesman* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 73.



gifted in the realistic assessment of political opportunities and constraints, which in turn strengthen his hand in politics. As Arat observes, “[h]e was not a romantic who was led by impulsive and emotional reaction to critical political events.”<sup>152</sup> He has an ability to adapt his past experiences and political skills to the changing political context. For Çağlayangil, there has never been a statesman who regenerates himself as quickly as Demirel. He is said to show a remarkable example of personal development and an outstanding performance in influencing events.<sup>153</sup> On the other hand there are some people who interpret the same attitudes of Demirel in a negative way. For instance, according to the observation of Bozbeyli, Demirel knows better to use a proper language rather than to speak truly.<sup>154</sup> This made him skillful in adopting himself to changing conditions. Demirel is also criticized for the methods he employed while dealing with the intra-party opposition. It is argued that instead of taking a hardline stance against the opponents he made his close associates criticize them aggressively.<sup>155</sup> He was even alleged to have his own team of attrition.<sup>156</sup> It is claimed that in some instances Demirel applied a tactic of making the opponents ineffective through appointing them to important posts and in doing so aimed at giving the impression that he would not let personal hostilities interfere in party affairs.<sup>157</sup>

In the initial stage of his AP leadership Demirel gave great importance to teamwork and praised collective reasoning. However some of his former party colleagues said that Demirel established his own team comprising those who were

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<sup>152</sup> Yeşim Arat, “Süleyman Demirel: National Will and Beyond” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, eds. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı (Boulder: Lexington Boks, 2002), p. 91.

<sup>153</sup> Cılızoğlu, *Çağlayangil'in Anıları Çağlayangil'le Anılar*, p. 128.

<sup>154</sup> Bozbeyli, p. 281.

<sup>155</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 216; İnan, *Senatör*, p. 81.

<sup>156</sup> Kamran İnan, *Senatör*, p. 82.

<sup>157</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 216.

faithful to him (*yeminliler*).<sup>158</sup> Furthermore he was accused of seeing himself as the owner of the party. It was claimed that challenging the leader might be costly and the expulsions from the party in the late 1960s were linked with this.<sup>159</sup> However when there were important and difficult decision-making processes, as argued, Demirel refrained from taking any initiatives not to assume the responsibility and chose not to take a stance.<sup>160</sup>

### 3.3. Demirel's Views on the Concept of Politics

Demirel had a long tenure. Despite being ousted from office by the military twice and banned from active politics for seven years, he managed to form seven governments and served for ten years as prime minister and seven years as president, and this made him one of the most important political figures of Turkey.

Demirel states that he engaged in politics “to complete what had been left incomplete.” What Demirel called as an “uncompleted action” is, in his words, “the struggle for being civilized [read, development] (*medeniyetçilik mücadelesi*) that the DP government had triggered but was interrupted by the 1960 military coup.”<sup>161</sup> He proudly emphasized that he took part in this fight against poverty

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<sup>158</sup> This group claimed to be established to provide a shield to protect the leader against every kind of attack and included 119 deputies. For more see Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 145. Bozbeyli said that he never met someone who admitted belonging to the mentioned group but argued that - if such a group exists - a link might be built between the formation of that group and Demirel's awareness of the opposing group within the party led by Bilgiç. See Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p.207

<sup>159</sup> İnan, *Senatör*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>160</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 275; İnan, *Senatör*, p. 45.

<sup>161</sup> Turgut, *Demirel'in Dünyası*, p. 167.

and ignorance as a technocrat. In that way, Demirel successfully gave the message that the AP inherited the developmentalist line of the DP. He explains his story of drifting into politics as an outcome of his feeling of responsibility to the society in which he was grown up. He had in mind, as he explained, to make Turkey a developed, modern, and prosperous country.<sup>162</sup>

As the long-time leader of a mainstream political movement in Turkey which is conservative but more importantly developmentalist, it can be argued that Demirel is equating politics with serving one's people. That is why, in his political line, social and economic development has had an important place. After all, while in power, Demirel immediately launched the giant projects of the Turkish Republic such as the Keban Dam and Hydroelectric Power Plant, the Bosphorus Bridge, the Urfa Tunnel, the İzmit Yarımca Petrochemical Complex, and the first TV broadcasting, all of which mark significant milestones in the history of development in Turkey. For him, the issues connected with being more "civilized" are at the same time the major issues of politics.<sup>163</sup> He argued that, starting from the early Republic onward, politics had been shaped by the fight against poverty, despair and ignorance. To support his opinion, Demirel referred to Atatürk's saying: "The country, in any case, will be modern, civilized, and affluent."<sup>164</sup> In this way, Demirel related politics to the concepts of welfare, development and civilization.

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<sup>162</sup> Muharrem Özgüven, *A Life Devoted to the Grand Turkey Ideal* (Ankara: EKA, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>163</sup> Turgut, *Görüntüler I*, p. 89.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

According to Demirel, the state should make its existence apparent to the people through its services; the people should not fear the state; they should think that the state has a compassionate attitude towards them. One can also argue that Demirel considers politics as a means to erase in the minds of the people the negative image of the state. Indeed, he argued that he entered into politics to make peace between the state, religion and the people.<sup>165</sup> Consequently, Demirel endeavored to spread modernization to the masses and make them favorably inclined towards becoming modern. He expressed the rationale behind praising becoming civilized in his conception of politics by reminiscing about his childhood memories.

The state always took but gave nothing. The state was distant. There was no policy of retirement or unemployment insurance. The village was unsociably living in the world of its own. People sent soldiers, paid taxes. There wasn't even a single road in use. For the taxes that could not be paid, one had to work for the state as a laborer, for instance on road construction.<sup>166</sup>

It is understood that, in Demirel's conception, politics is closely related to reconciliation. Parallel to that, politics is also about maintaining stability (*istikrarlaştırma*). He states that politics should prioritize a bright future which would be the end result of efforts to adopt the changes that take place in the era one lives, not the trials and tribulations that the latter changes may also lead to. He added that what is important is that the expectations of the society should be met.<sup>167</sup> In Demirel's discourse, politics should not focus on bringing contentious issues up for discussion. According to Demirel, concentrating on solutions and

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<sup>165</sup> Quoted in Kahraman, *Türk Sağı ve AKP*, p. 63.

<sup>166</sup> Turgut, *Demirel'in Dünyası*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>167</sup> From the speech Demirel addressed in the 35th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Constitutional Court, 25 April 1997 in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1999), p. 32.

searching for the better to make the state and regime function well should always at the top of the political agenda.<sup>168</sup>

For Demirel, politics is on the one hand, a scientific act that is centred around the human being and on the other, it is an artistic act.<sup>169</sup> Politics is derived from science since science is grounded upon norms, upon reason and “Cartesian” thinking, but at the same time it is an art since art carries the sign of its creator. A politician, like an artist, leaves his mark upon the solutions of crucial issues. There are many ways to solve an issue, and it will not always be possible to find the best formula. However, what a politician can do is to do his best in finding the most appropriate way to deal with complicated issues. According to Demirel, a politician might choose one of the alternative policies based on reason. Nevertheless, the result carries the sign of his unique style, which makes politics an art.<sup>170</sup>

Demirel perceived politics and political struggles “sacred” in that they will bring the development of the country and also involve a competition to serve one’s own nation. The highest aim of politics, according to Demirel, is to enable people to control their own future and have the right to make final decisions about themselves on the path to being contemporary, rich, and strong.<sup>171</sup> Demirel claimed that politics should not be confined to a certain class of people; the

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<sup>168</sup> From the keynote speech Demirel delivered in the Conference on the Problems of French State Administration and the Solutions Offered, 4 April 1996 in T.C Başbakanlık, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 5.

<sup>169</sup> The interview of the author with Demirel, 21 December 2005.

<sup>170</sup> The Interview, 21 December 2005.

<sup>171</sup> Özgüven, *A Life Devoted to the Grand Turkey Ideal*, p. 34.

participation of the whole nation is necessary.<sup>172</sup> This is in parallel with the horizontal dimension of democracy. Politics, for Demirel, is a human-centered phenomenon, which means that anything related to human beings is political. In his words, “the basis of politics is the love for humanity.”<sup>173</sup> Hence, he emphasizes that politics should not be regarded merely as party politics.<sup>174</sup>

In Demirel’s view, politics functions as a bridge between the state and nation. He thus highlights the prominence of politicians.<sup>175</sup> They are, as Demirel thinks, the voice of the people.<sup>176</sup> Therefore, it is crucial for politicians to be in dialogue with the people. In that way, according to Demirel, politicians could continue to act both as a teacher and a learner.<sup>177</sup>

Demirel’s political principles comprised the following: being patient, never losing confidence and courage, and not giving up easily. These principles can be deduced from the response of Demirel to his wife who was wondering what might happen from then on while they were detained in a military base in Hamzakoy. Demirel said, “That is what we have to experience. We should be calm and patient. I will return [to active politics] when the time comes.”<sup>178</sup> Demirel believes that “if one enters politics, he should be well-prepared for anything that might

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<sup>172</sup> Özgüven, *A Life Devoted to the Grand Turkey Ideal*, p. 67.

<sup>173</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *AP Genel Başkanlığına Adaylığımı Neden Koyuyorum?* (Ankara: Resimli Posta Matbaası, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>174</sup> The Interview, 3 January 2006.

<sup>175</sup> Abdullah Uraz, ed. *Devletimize, Demokrasimize ve Kendimize Güven* (Ankara: Desen, 1995), p. 53.

<sup>176</sup> Abdullah Uraz, *Baba: Demirel’in Büyük Türkiye Kavgası, Demokrasi ve Kalkınma* (Ankara: EKA, 1993), p. 237.

<sup>177</sup> The Interview, 3 January 2006.

<sup>178</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyet’in Kara Kutusu*, p. 28.

happen.”<sup>179</sup> Therefore in line with this motto of him, he never lost hope and enthusiasm even after he was banned from politics. On the other hand, Demirel argues that politics is not the art of heroism. It requires a secure environment.<sup>180</sup> He thinks that in politics when necessary one should act in a courageous manner. However, one should not unnecessarily employ force; rather, one should be able to grapple with problems in an elegant manner.<sup>181</sup>

For Demirel, those involved in politics should have the ability to forgive others and forget previous disputes and troubles. He emphasizes being constructive and conciliatory in political life, since the opposite may prove to be incapacitating and immobilizing for a politician. Demirel also gives importance to the necessity of being cautious in politics and says that “If you don’t know how to put the car in reverse, you can’t park. Politics is pretty much alike. Stepping on the gas pedal continuously is not rational. You should also know how to put on the brakes. One day, you may get to a situation requiring retreat. If you don’t manage to do that then you will stumble [and lose everything].”<sup>182</sup>

In Demirel’s political vocabulary, politics is the “art of opportunities” and is about acting rationally.<sup>183</sup> Thus, there is no benefit in discarding some alternatives just because of painful memories from the past. His political style is best reflected in the three pieces of golden advice he gave to a journalist: “Never forget the past.

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<sup>179</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyet’in Kara Kutusu*, p. 39.

<sup>180</sup> The Interview, 3 January 2006.

<sup>181</sup> Uraz, *Demirel’in Büyük Türkiye Kavgası*, p. 273.

<sup>182</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyet’in Kara Kutusu*, p. 59.

<sup>183</sup> Uraz, *Demirel’in Büyük Türkiye Kavgası*, p. 19.

Draw lessons from the past. But do not be stuck in the past.”<sup>184</sup> Demirel’s said attitude has been interpreted by some as a Machiavellian approach to politics. One of Demirel’s former political colleagues argued that Demirel was driven by a lust for power hence labeled him “as a chemist of politics (*siyaset kimyageri*) who sees every kind of power legitimate.”<sup>185</sup>

#### **3.4. An Overview of the Context Shaping Demirel’s Views on State and Democracy**

In the Turkish political tradition, the state has always been the most potent and autonomous phenomenon. Even though the Ottoman system was based on a hereditary sultanic regime, *Devlet-i Âliyye* (Sublime State) as an eminent entity became in the process more than the dynasty itself. Insuring the viability of state was the first priority, which in the last decades of the empire was embodied in the question of how the state could be salvaged. With the advent of the Republic, the discourse on the state as being sacred and omnipotent has lingered in the mainstream political traditions of the Republican days.<sup>186</sup>

The issue of the continuity of the state that the Republican cadre has always been sensitive about is also shared by the political philosophy of the center-right. The latter is said to target those who make the people disenchanted with their state by pursuing elitist policies in its name. The founding leader of the DP, Celal Bayar,

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<sup>184</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyet’in Kara Kutusu*, p. 28.

<sup>185</sup> İnan, *Senatör*, p. 67, 134.

<sup>186</sup> Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey*, Chapter Two.



asserted that, without harming the characteristics of the “guardian state” (*hami devlet*), people should be encouraged to participate in politics, and this can be realized with a fair electoral system. He added that our traditional understanding of the state could only be kept alive in the hands of “effective governments” (“*kuvvetli hükûmetler*”) that had a great majority (*kuvvetli ekseriyet*) in the assembly.<sup>187</sup>

It can be deduced that the leaders of the DP had a problem neither with the strong, father-like state nor with its mechanisms, but with the very people who were acting as state elites. Bayar stated that they, like İnönü, thought to establish democracy on the basis of our thousand-year state tradition.<sup>188</sup> The fundamental discord between the approaches of the DP and the CHP, for Bayar, was in the conception of state administration: the DP espoused the idea that democracy in Turkey would be realized through acting upon the principle that “sovereignty is vested fully and unconditionally in the nation and the nation itself shall exercise its sovereignty,” whereas the CHP, according to Bayar, embraced the idea that democracy would function upon the principle of a “soft sovereignty of the people” based on new authorized organs which take part in exercising sovereignty in the name of the nation.<sup>189</sup> Hence, the DP wanted to make a shift in the locus of stateness from the CHP, which claims to have a vanguard mission, to the parliament, regarded as the true representative of national will.

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<sup>187</sup> Celal Bayar, *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes* (Istanbul: Tercüman, 1986), p. 42.

<sup>188</sup> Bayar, *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes*, p. 10.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

As the leader of the AP, Demirel voiced a similar view and criticized the state administration of the CHP in one of his pre-election speeches as follows:

All of the republican reforms realized were set to be successful by the help of state pressure and command of law. The support of people, mostly, was not in demand. The democratic methods, two of which are persuading and informing, were hardly applied. Hence, people has come to have become a complaint not of the reforms but of the suppression made in the name of reforms.<sup>190</sup>

As Tanel Demirel points out, the significant feature of the AP was its being an opponent of the bureaucratic-statist alliance that was believed to include the CHP, the higher echelons of the military, university faculty members, the higher cadres of the civil bureaucracy, and the media.<sup>191</sup> For Demirel, the coming to power of the DP in 1950 was a move of grabbing the state from the hands of the state elites, whereas the toppling of the DP by a military coup in 1960 was a move to take the state back from the hands of people.<sup>192</sup> Demirel did not consider the state as an oppressive apparatus transforming the society and causing social change. During the election campaign, Demirel, referring to the practices of the CHP, told the electorate that the AP will change the image of “the state cracking the whip.” Hence, it is clear that early in his career, Demirel, like the politicians having DP origins, paid special attention to the significance of the state, which, according to him, had to embrace all of the people. Since they viewed state and nation as integral parts, any ideology opposing this integrity was fiercely rejected by the AP.<sup>193</sup> Demirel asserted that the state’s main task is to serve the nation as a whole for the maintenance of public peace and welfare.

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<sup>190</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *Seçim Konuşmaları 2* (Ankara: Doğu Matbaası, 1966).

<sup>191</sup> Demirel, *Adalet Partisi*, p. 79.

<sup>192</sup> Ahmet Altan, *Darbelerin Ekonomisi* (İstanbul: Afa, 1990), p. 69.

<sup>193</sup> *AP Programı Prensip Maddeleri* (İstanbul: Türkiye Basımevi, 1961), p. 3.

The political atmosphere in which the AP was established had impacts on the developing a double-strategy<sup>194</sup> for the party to survive. The founders of the party realized the difficulty to survive in a political domain under the military supervision if they gave the impression that the party was the true heir of the DP. They were also aware that they should be responsive to the demands and sensitivities of the political base of the overthrown DP to have broad popular support. Bozbeyli defined the situation of the party as “being caught in the middle;” the AP struggled, on one hand, for not being perceived as a menace by the military rule, and on the other, for convincing the people that it would correct the injustices done to Democrats.<sup>195</sup> As demonstrated, the AP was stuck in finding a balance between these two strategies. This was also reflected in the party’s internal affairs. The AP, in its establishment period, encompassed mainly two groups of people who had different perspectives on choosing one of the two strategies.<sup>196</sup> For a while this double discourse worked out to hold these divergent groups together but gradually it turned into a source of clash within the party. However, the AP’s double discourse especially on the civil-military relations continued to be used.

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<sup>194</sup> For an in-depth analysis on the AP’s double-discourse, see Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*.

<sup>195</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 137.

<sup>196</sup> The Moderates (*Mutediller/İlimliler*) believed that the party should avoid using an accusatory tone and should delay dealing with the issues which could be interpreted by the military regime as opposition to May 27. On the other hand the Hardliners (*Müfritler/Hışımlılar*) insisted on appealing to the political base of the DP by fighting against the injustices of the military regime.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEMİREL AS A POLITICAL PARTY LEADER

#### **4.1. The Justice Party Era**

##### **4.1.1. State-Society Relations, “National Will,” and Democracy**

The followers of the political line of the defunct DP gathered around the newly established parties, one of which was the AP. Taking the party’s emotional anchorage to the DP’s ideology into account, the AP chose *adalet* as its name to imply that it was a movement to bring justice to the banned DP cadres. However, due to the constraints of the post-coup atmosphere, the AP chose not to be overtly critical on the “injustices” of the military take-over. As mentioned a double strategy was employed by the party. Using democracy as a term was convenient for the purpose of this double strategy.

In general, democracy was equated with the manifestation of the “national will” that could be realized by increasing the political participation of the masses through elections. According to Demirel, democracy could not be defined as a

system other than nation's self-rule.<sup>197</sup> Indeed, this way of thinking is very dominant in the center-right. Parliament is perceived as a sacred place where the will of the nation becomes manifest. Sharing this argument on the sanctity of the parliament, the party's mission hence is summarized as making the nation's will supreme, which, as noted, is believed to be realized through fair elections.

The relationship between state and democracy was obviously emphasized in the discourse of the AP. For Demirel, the maintenance of an effective state is dependent on a democratic regime. In the 1973 Election Pamphlet, the "great Turkey" ideal was defined as the wish to make the Turkish nation and state more powerful and honorable. On the other hand, the military's involvement in politics is depicted as a problem for democracy.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, Demirel pointed out that military interventions weaken the state, since they indicate the defeat of the state at the hands of the "street."<sup>199</sup>

In 1970s, Demirel began to use the term *hürriyetçi demokrasi* (democracy with special emphasis on rights and liberties). The rationale behind using the word democracy with the addition of an adjective might be that of defining how the AP took the term "democracy." *Hürriyetçi demokrasi* commends a regime in which people are not silenced and the latter are well aware of the fact that the real owners of democratic regime are no other bodies but themselves.<sup>200</sup> He underlined the importance of freedom of speech for a democratic regime to flourish and

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<sup>197</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *Büyük Türkiye* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1977), p. 42.

<sup>198</sup> Adalet Partisi, *Adalet Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi, 1973* (Ankara, 1973), p. 4.

<sup>199</sup> Nazlı Ilıcak, *27 Mayıs Yargılanıyor Cilt I* (Istanbul: Kervan, 1975), p. 75.

<sup>200</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *Vatan İçin Elele (AP Genel Başkanı Süleyman Demirel'in 16 Haziran 1978 Tarihinde Adana Mitinginde Yaptığı Konuşma)* (Ankara: AP Genel Merkezi Basın Bürosu, 1978), pp. 7-8.

stated that in a country where anything could not be discussed freely no one can claim that freedom is enjoyed.<sup>201</sup>

Demirel's loyalty to constitutional principles is evident even in the days when he was fiercely critical of the Constitution in general. For instance, in 1968 when student movements (and hence tension) were on the rise, a delegate of the AP took the floor in the AP Congress and accused the AP government of condoning the street demonstrations. Demirel as a response read an article from the Constitution emphasizing the horizontal dimension of democracy: "Everybody has the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations." Then, addressing this delegate, he said that enforcing people's rights to demonstrate is a good thing. He made an analogy by saying that "Roads will not be worn away by walking provided that aggression, violence and guns would not come into the picture."<sup>202</sup>

Demirel placed emphasis on the responsibility of institutions, too. He asserted that none of the institutions of Turkish Republic, including the constitutional institutions, could escape from assuming responsibilities. Adding that reform in democracies is a continuous process, he linked responsibility with reform and argued that

A democratic regime would lose its power in case of its objection to reform. If we rejected reform, then autonomous institutions, which are established upon the norms brought by parliaments having the will of nation, would transcend the state. In that case the sovereignty of state would be damaged.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Quoted in Turgut, *Görüntüler I*, p. 51.

<sup>202</sup> Donat, *Cumhuriyetin Kara Kutusu*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>203</sup> Quoted in Turgut, *Görüntüler I*, pp. 54-55.

This shows that Demirel gave great importance to the vertical dimension too. At that point, he associated responsibility with the trust of the people by claiming that in the case of a dysfunctional political responsibility mechanism, citizens lose their reliance on the state and government. What is important is to preserve the trust of the people.<sup>204</sup>

As Demirel suggested, it is a prerequisite of a functioning and open regime that all institutions fulfill their duties. Government is an important institution in a democratic regime but not the sole one. Free elections, free parliament, free judiciary, free press, free labor unions, and autonomous universities comprise the institutions of a democratic regime according to Demirel.<sup>205</sup> He was aiming at having a state that embraces the nation with all of its institutions.<sup>206</sup> Thus, state and nation came together in this way in his discourse.

Although praise of religion and moral values is common in center-right circles, the necessity of secularism as a principle is also emphasized. For them, secularism, on the one hand, means limiting the role of religion as an independent political authority. On the other, it is also interpreted as the absence of state control over religion, denoting the horizontal dimension of democracy. It is underlined that secularism does not give any rights to the state such as forbidding religious practices and morality or showing hostility toward religious people.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., pp. 397-398.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p. 430.

<sup>207</sup> Ali Fuat Başgil, *Din ve Laiklik* (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2003), pp. 186-87.

In line with these arguments, Demirel stated that the AP adopted a policy of neither controlling nor exploiting religion.<sup>208</sup> For Demirel, secularism could be equated neither with the animosity to religion nor with atheism. Contrary to some opposing views, Demirel insisted that secularism and Islam are compatible. Adopting new techniques and borrowing material products from the West would not lead to incompatibility with Islam since, as he argued, Islam has rational foundations that facilitate the process of modernization.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, he claimed that what democracy envisages for humanity is basically similar to the fundamental principles of Islam, its orders, and its guided path.<sup>210</sup> In the program of the AP, it was pointed out that in a secular state the citizens are not coerced into cutting their ties with their faiths but rather are left free to live as they believe.<sup>211</sup> Demirel did not see any discrepancy between the party's views on secularism and the party's practices regarding the state's role in setting up religious schools and in supporting religious education. Indeed, that is the point where Demirel tried to strike a balance between the vertical and the horizontal dimensions.

Demirel's success in fostering close relationships with specific religious orders and communities was a widely known fact. Nonetheless, even this intimacy did not cast suspicion on Demirel's loyalty to the secular regime. For instance, Kenan Evren, the secularist leader of the 1980 military intervention, stated that Demirel would never indulge the people who wish to establish a regime based on *Shari'a*.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Demirel, *Büyük Türkiye*, p. 106.

<sup>209</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *İslam, Demokrasi ve Laiklik* (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1991), p. 341.

<sup>210</sup> "İslam, Demokrasi ve Asr-ı Saadet: Süleyman Demirel ile Mülakat," *Köprü* (October 1985).

<sup>211</sup> Adalet Partisi, *Adalet Partisi Program ve Tüzük* (Ankara: Doğu Matbaası, 1974).

<sup>212</sup> Kenan Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 2* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994), p. 300.



#### 4.1.2. Relations with the Military

Demirel became the leader of the AP at a time when civil-military relations were going through a difficult phase. The civil-military relations have evolved in a confrontational style in Turkish political development. As mentioned, the military has always been an important institution in Turkish history. Being the most educated and disciplined body, it has always been an ardent supporter of modernization embodied in the development of a new identity that is national, secular, Western, and culturally homogeneous. After the mission of “saving the country” had successfully been completed, the route of the National Struggle in the early 1920s turned towards setting up a completely different regime than the Ottoman one. Since then, the military has undertaken another responsibility, that of being the guardian of the basic tenets of the newly established Republican regime.<sup>213</sup> As Karpat argues, the military has been intimately associated with the Republican state since its inception.<sup>214</sup> Hence, maintaining the civilian supremacy over the military became a difficult task in Turkey which from time to time has led to political crises and breakdowns.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> The duty of the Armed Forces is defined by Article 35 of the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Code as follows: to safeguard and protect the Turkish homeland and the Republic of Turkey.

<sup>214</sup> Kemal Karpat, “Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey Before and After 1980,” in *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, eds. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988).

<sup>215</sup> For detailed analyses about the civil-military relations in Turkey, see Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds., *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988); William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994); Metin Heper and Aylin Güney, “The Military and Democracy in the Third Turkish Republic,” *Armed Forces and Society* 22, 4 (1996); Ümit Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, “The Anatomy of Turkish Military’s Political Autonomy,” *Comparative Politics* 31 (1997); Metin Heper and Aylin Güney, “Military and the Consolidation of Democracy: The Turkish Case,” *Armed Forces and Society* 26, 4 (2000); Gerassimos Karabelias, “The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey,” in *Seventy-Five Years of the Turkish Republic*, ed. Sylvia Kedourie (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Nilüfer Narlı, “Civil-Military relations in Turkey,” *Turkish Studies* 1, 1 (Spring 2000); Ümit Cizre-

The first military coup, plotted by a group of middle-ranking officers, took place on May 27, 1960 and removed the ruling party, the DP, from power. It was declared by the junta that the unconstitutional acts of the former government of the DP provoked the army to intervene. The first announcement of the junta clarified the rationale of the coup as “extricating the parties from the irreconcilable situation into which they have fallen” and “having just and free elections to be held as soon as possible under the supervision and arbitration of an above-party and impartial administration, and for handing over the administration to which ever party wins the elections.”<sup>216</sup>

As far as the head of the junta, General Cemal Gürsel, was concerned, the politicians who were “enchanted with the passion of politics” were responsible for the social and political unrest.<sup>217</sup> As indicated by Türkeş, the colonel who read the communiqué from the radio, the officers making up the junta thought that for the sake of electoral gains, the political parties made many concessions that became the biggest obstacle to solving the urgent problems that the country faced at the time.<sup>218</sup> However, the junta’s close collaboration with the main opposition party, the CHP, clearly showed that the target of the intervention was the DP government, not the political parties in general.

The military ruling council, the National Unity Committee (*Milli Birlik Komitesi* - MBK), consisting initially of thirty eight and then of twenty three members,

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Sakallıoğlu, “The Military and Politics: A Turkish Dilemma,” in *Armed Forces in the Middle East: Politics and Strategy*, eds. Barry Rubin and Thomas A. Keaney (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in Walter F. Weiker, *The Turkish Revolution 1960-1961: Aspects of Military Politics* (Washington D. C.: Brookings Institution, 1963), pp. 20-21.

<sup>217</sup> *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul daily), 28 May 1960.

<sup>218</sup> Muammer Taylak, *27 Mayıs ve Türkeş* (Istanbul: Hamle, 1994), p. 5.

governed the country until it was considered safe to restore civilian rule. Despite the fact that establishing an enduring military rule was not the intention of the MBK members, they wished to safeguard the regime and the outcomes of the coup in return for relinquishing government control. As one of the exit guarantees, a new Constitution was prepared and promulgated with a considerable involvement of the military regime. The bicameral Constituent Assembly (*Kurucu Meclis*) which was established in December 1960 dealt with this issue. One of the chambers included the MBK members. In the civilian chamber, there were representatives of only two parties, the CHP and the Republican Peasants Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi – CKMP*), and of some institutions such as the judiciary, universities, bar associations, trade unions, and the press, in addition to the appointees of the head of state and the MBK. Hence, under the shadow of the military, the 1961 Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly and then ratified by 61.7 percent of the popular vote.<sup>219</sup> With the 1961 Constitution, the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu -MGK*) was established. The Council set the precedent of the military influencing government policy on external and internal security matters, and hence laid a legal ground for the military's assuming a formal role in the political decision-making process henceforth.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> As Özbudun observes, the circumstances of the constitution's creation were beyond the requirements of a democratic constitution-making. For more on his assessments, see Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>220</sup> In accordance with Article 111 of the 1961 Constitution, the MGK shall communicate the requisite fundamental recommendations to the Council of Ministers with the purpose of assisting in the making of decisions related to national security and coordination. Over the years more powers were given to the Council. Under the 1982 Constitution, the MGK was made responsible for submitting its views on formulation and implementation of the national security policy of the state to the Council of Ministers. It was also authorized to determine the measures deemed necessary for preserving the constitutional order, maintaining the national unity and integrity, orienting the Turkish nation around the national ideals and values in accordance with the Atatürkist principles and reforms. In order to eliminate the threats against these principles of the state, both internal and external, the Council shall determine basic strategies, principles, opinions

Although propaganda against the Constitution was forbidden before it was put to a referendum, the hardliners within the AP pushed Gümüşpala to start a negative campaign against it. The hardliners were fiercely criticized by the moderate group of the AP who thought that careful steps should be taken in this process not to alienate the military. The opposing voices within the AP caused displeasure among the members of the MBK. Gürsel heavily and publicly criticized the party's "sinister activities" ("*meş'um faaliyetler*") and forced the AP to reorganize the party's cadres by purging the members affiliated with the DP.<sup>221</sup>

As another exit guarantee, the MBK proposed Gürsel's presidency to the civilians. This move, too, caused disagreement within the AP. Some members wanted to propose Gümüşpala as presidential candidate. However, he did not welcome this idea. Some others put forward another name, A. Fuat Başgil, professor of Constitutional Law at Istanbul University, as a candidate for presidency. He was backed by the CKMP and the AP. However the latter party declared that if it was forced to do so, it would support Gürsel. The MBK and the armed forces were against Başgil's candidacy. Indeed they accepted no other names but Gürsel as a candidate. A group of generals and colonels gathered in the War College and signed a protocol proposing an intervention before the newly elected assembly

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on planning and implementation of necessary precautions. With the 2001 constitutional amendments and 2003 amendments to the relevant law, the advisory character of the Council is highlighted. According to Article 118, the MGK shall submit its views to the Council of Ministers on the issues pertaining to the formulation, establishment and implementation of the national security policy and ensuring the necessary coordination. The advisory decisions and views of the Council concerning the necessary measures that should be taken to preserve the existence and independence of the state, the integrity and indivisibility of the country and the peace and the security of society are evaluated by the Council of Ministers. As stipulated by Law no. 2945, coordinating and following up the implementation of these advisory decisions should be approved by the Council of Ministers as well. The MGK has now been rendered an advisory council with no executive powers.

<sup>221</sup> From Gürsel's letter to Gümüşpala published in Cumhuriyet on July 14, 1961. Quoted in Bölükbaşı, *Türk Siyasetinde Anadolu Fırtınası Osman Bölükbaşı*, pp. 291-293.

convened. Bařgil withdrew his candidacy after he was invited to the prime ministry to be informed about “the tragic events that might likely occur” if he insisted on his own candidacy.<sup>222</sup> The party leaders were called to the prime ministry on October 24, where they were informed about the demands of the military. The leaders of four political parties -İnönü (CHP), Gümüşpala (AP), Bölükbaşı (CKMP), and Alican (YTP)- signed a protocol agreeing that they would not introduce any other candidate but do their best in their groups to vote for Gürsel.<sup>223</sup> Those efforts made Gürsel elected president by the parliament on October 26, 1961.

As another requirement of the protocol signed by the leaders, the CHP and AP was coerced into setting up a coalition government (20 November 1961-25 June 1962) after the elections had been held. This was another issue that had created rift within the AP members. The hardliners strongly opposed to be a part of the coalition government imposed by the military regime. However, once again, the party headed in the direction that the moderates demanded. Despite the objection of the party group, the coalition was formed with the decision of the party’s General Executive Board.<sup>224</sup>

Although everything was rearranged under the supervision of the military, the unrest within the armed forces could not be quelled easily. Some officers who attempted to stage a coup on February 22, 1962 were deterred by the then prime minister İnönü. The officers were told that they would not be tried if the coup was

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<sup>222</sup> Ali Fuat Bařgil, *Ali Fuat Bařgil’in Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1990), pp. 100-101.

<sup>223</sup> For the details of this protocol, see Bölükbaşı, *Türk Siyasetinde Anadolu Fırtınası*, p. 311.

<sup>224</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 136.

aborted. As a coalition partner, Gümüşpala told İnönü that his party could support this proposal in the parliament. While saying this he had in mind that together with this proposal the issue of granting political amnesty to the leaders and the rank-and-file members of the DP could also be solved. However İnönü replied that those two could not be solved together since they agitated one another and hence the right time did not come yet.<sup>225</sup> This again stirred things up in the AP. The hardliners wanted to keep the amnesty issue central in the agenda of the party. The military reacted fiercely to such kind of comments and President Gürsel warned the leaders. In fact, Gürsel was uneasy about some AP members' actions and remarks that he perceived as vengeful and provocative concerning the May 27 regime. There was an increase in the number of military officers who began to think that another military coup was inevitable. The tense atmosphere brought the termination of the CHP-AP coalition government only six months after it was formed. Nonetheless, uncontrolled elements in the AP continued to upset the military during the second coalition government (CHP- YTP-CKMP) period (25 June 1962-25 December 1963). However the ups and downs in the statements of the party waned gradually. As Bölükbaşı argued, considerable change occurred in the discourse of the AP for the sake of formulating a monolithic discourse after the headquarters of the party in Ankara was attacked in 1962. Accordingly, the party turned into an advocate of the declaration of May 27 as a national festival.<sup>226</sup>

In general terms, the AP under Gümüşpala tried not to disturb the military. When the party established its organizations, some retired generals loyal to May 27 were

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<sup>225</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>226</sup> Bölükbaşı, *Türk Siyasetinde Anadolu Fırtınası*, p.348.

recruited with the opinion that they would function as “lightning conductor.” While announcing the establishment of the AP, Gümüşpala underlined that they would not tolerate any moves that could overshadow the May 27 Movement. Moreover he added that their comments on the policies of the party in power would be made by expressing their opinions not by criticizing.<sup>227</sup> However, as the follow up events explained above demonstrated, this cautious style, though from time to time, did not succeed to keep the party safe from the pressures of the military. That said, in anyway the use of double discourse got a foothold in the party’s political tradition.<sup>228</sup>

Demirel, after he was elected the Chairman of the AP, continued to benefit from this double discourse to soften the image of the AP in the eyes of the military. To do so, he preferred a constructive approach in his speeches rather than harsh criticism of the military coup. It is narrated that just after the AP won the 1965 general election Demirel visited the MBK members and stated the aim of the party as “leaving behind the previous feuds and focusing on the services.”<sup>229</sup> He delayed the issue of political amnesty so as not to anger the post-coup military administration, but at the same time tried to find a compromise so as not to draw a reaction from his fellow party members. Demirel tried to send a message to his electorate that he is protecting the former members of the DP by emphasizing the necessity to heal the wounds of the past. To show that he did not pose a threat to the military administration, Demirel highlighted that this should be done without animosity and not as an act of revenge. This is actually the core of what he calls

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<sup>227</sup> Quoted in Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 57, 65.

<sup>228</sup> Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*, p. 2003.

<sup>229</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 220.

the effort to reconcile the nation with the military. However the issue of political amnesty was brought to the agenda again in 1969. This time the CHP gave the green light to the AP that it would support a proposal to return the political rights to the DP members. Although the two sides finally reached a compromise, the military took steps to block this initiative. As Bozbeyli reported the then CGS Tağmaç forwarded the reactions of the generals to the then president Sunay who immediately called the then speaker of the parliament Bozbeyli to convey these reactions.<sup>230</sup> Even under such a tense atmosphere the proposal was adopted by the National Assembly and referred to the Senate. Subsequently a controversy broke out on the issue of time assigned to the Senate to vote on the draft. The pressure exerted by the military for making the proposal void continued to mount. The parliament took vacation after the proposal of the AP was accepted in the parliament. In that way the constitutional provision stipulating that when the parliament is on vacation the time assigned to the senate for voting on a draft shall not be counted was operated. In doing so, the draft stayed in the Senate without being finalized. As Bozbeyli reported some rumors were circulating about Demirel that he had not been willing to resolve the issue of political amnesty.<sup>231</sup> The claim was that some deputies feared that they might lose the elections if the defunct DP members returned to politics. Despite accepting that these fears were valid for some AP deputies, Bozbeyli did not believe that Demirel had such concerns but might have taken the reactions of the military seriously and considered delaying the issue to the post-election period as a rational move.<sup>232</sup> Bozbeyli's observation that the delay in returning the political rights of the DP

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>231</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 279.

<sup>232</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 280.



members brought relaxation is acceptable.<sup>233</sup> On the other hand as mentioned this had become a starting point for the split of the AP.

Starting from the end of the 1960s, the AP under the chairmanship of Demirel became unsuccessful in coping with the mounting political tension. The unsolved economic problems along with the increase in violence between extremist groups led to a debate on the legitimacy of the ruling AP. Some radicals in the military began to be highly critical of the policies of Prime Minister Demirel. They wanted radical social reforms to be carried out, and for that purpose those radicals, a small minority of military officers, were in favor of establishing a long-term military regime. For instance, one of the generals said to his colleagues in a meeting that he had no trust in the AP government since it lacked qualified administrators. Moreover, he emphasized that he could not approve a person as prime minister who had previously worked for an American company.<sup>234</sup> This is an indication that Demirel started to be seen as undesirable. The radical officers mostly criticized Demirel for “pleasing one specific class (*zümre*)” at the expense of the national interest and of giving more importance to personal or group gains rather than promoting the general interest.<sup>235</sup>

However, the radicals were not the only ones being frustrated by the policies of the AP. Even moderate generals were uncomfortable with the worsening political situation. Furthermore, they were afraid that the radicals within the military would attempt to launch a coup. Hence, as a last minute move, on March 12, 1971 the

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>234</sup> Batur, *Anılar ve Görüşler*, p. 151.

<sup>235</sup> Batur, *Anılar ve Görüşler*, pp. 150-51, 166.

top military commanders presented a letter of memorandum declaring the following:

1. The Parliament and the Government, through their sustained policies, views and actions, have driven our country into anarchy, fratricidal strife, and social and economic unrest. They have caused the public to lose all hope of rising to the level of contemporary civilization which was set for us by Atatürk as a goal, and have failed to realize the reforms stipulated by the Constitution. The future of the Turkish Republic is therefore seriously threatened.

2. The assessment by the Parliament, in a spirit above partisan considerations, of the solutions needed to eliminate the concern and disillusionment of the Turkish Armed Forces, which have sprung from the bosom of the Turkish nation, over this grave situation; and the formation, within the context of democratic principles, of a strong and credible government, which will neutralize the current anarchical situation and which, inspired by Atatürk's views, will implement the reformist laws envisaged by the Constitution, are considered essential.

3. Unless this is done quickly, the Turkish Armed Forces are determined to take over the administration of the State in accordance with the powers vested in them by the laws to protect and preserve the Turkish Republic.  
Please be informed.<sup>236</sup>

After discussing the situation with his party notables, Demirel resigned. Some people criticized him, saying that he should have not yielded so quickly.<sup>237</sup> However, Demirel reminded these critics of the threat that if the government did not resign then the parliament would be dissolved due to a possible military seizure of power.<sup>238</sup> Demirel's fundamental motive at that time was to keep the parliament functioning. Ostensibly, the AP was not ruling the country any more, but it still kept its parliamentary majority. Demirel used that trump card in the presidential elections. The AP with the support of the CHP managed to resist the

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<sup>236</sup> Quoted in Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment 1950-1975* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), pp. 288-89.

<sup>237</sup> Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 233.

<sup>238</sup> Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Demokrasi Dönemecinde Üç Adam* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1999), p. 32.

election of General Faruk Gürler, the military's preferred candidate, to the office of presidency.

Not long after the 1971 military memorandum, the political turmoil resumed. Nihat Erim, an independent deputy, assumed the duty of forming the government. The first Erim government (26 March 1971-11 December 1971), which was an above-party government, ended with the resignation of Erim after eleven ministers had resigned. The second Erim government (11 December 1971-22 May 1972) was formed after he was appointed again by President Sunay. The second above-party government was terminated with Erim's resignation due to his health problems. Afterwards, President Sunay asked Suat Hayri Ürgüplü to form a government. However, Ürgüplü's cabinet list was vetoed by Sunay on the grounds that it was not in line with the Memorandum of March 12. The following government was formed by a member of the Republican Senate, Ferit Melen. It was a coalition government (22 May 1972-15 April 1973) consisting of the AP, CHP, and CGP. Melen resigned after Korutürk was elected president. Korutürk gave the duty of forming a government to Naim Talu, who had been nominated by the President to the Republican Senate. The Talu government (15 April 1973-26 January 1974) was, like its predecessor, a coalition government formed by the AP and CGP. The parliamentary elections were held in October 1973. Neither the CHP nor the AP could form a government. Talu was reappointed. His efforts to bring together the CHP, AP, and CGP were fruitless. As a consequence of the opposition coming from the ranks of the AP, Talu resigned.

Following the interim governments, the era of coalition governments, which brought instability, started. First, the CHP-MSP coalition government (26 January

1974-17 November 1974) under the premiership of Bülent Ecevit was formed. The disagreement between the two coalition partners brought the end of the government. President Korutürk appointed Sadi Irmak, a Senate member, to form the government. His minority government (17 November 1974-31 March 1975), which was formed by four deputies from the CGP and the remaining ministers from outsiders, could not obtain vote of confidence; hence Irmak resigned. Under the leadership of Demirel, the succeeding coalition government was formed on March 31, 1975 among the AP-MSP-MHP-CGP, and this lasted until the 1977 parliamentary elections.

Demirel, as the leader of the coalition government and prime minister, removed the Commander of the Land Forces, General Namık Kemal Ersun from his post on June 1, 1977. That was three months earlier than the time Ersun's tour of duty was to be completed. Hence this decision suggested varied interpretations. For Evren, it was a vengeful act on the part of Demirel.<sup>239</sup> Within the year of 1977, Demirel had made a visit to the eastern provinces. In Elazığ, he was presented with a military shield by the Commandant of the Third Army, General Ali Fethi Esener. It is narrated by Evren that General Ersun had asked for information on that incident adding that he had not given his permission to what General Esener had done.<sup>240</sup>

After the 1977 elections, on June 21, Ecevit established a majority government. It could not endure more than a month; with a vote of no-confidence, it fell. Demirel was again asked to form a government. The AP, MSP, and MHP came together

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<sup>239</sup> Kenan Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994), p. 12.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

and formed the second nationalist front government (21 July 1977-5 January 1978). Demirel, shortly after becoming prime minister, submitted a decree on the appointment of General Esener as the Commander of the Land Forces. However, President Korutürk did not sign the decree on account of the fact that this appointment was not in tune with the hierarchical order of the army. It was the Commandant of the First Army who was supposed to be the Commander of the Land Forces. Demirel tried to oblige Korutürk to sign the decree, saying that he would resign unless Korutürk approved it. Nonetheless, Korutürk did not change his decision. Demirel's attempt was considered to be interfering in the military's internal affairs and caused mixed reactions. On the other hand, Evren claimed that the then CGS General Semih Sancar must have been in concert with Demirel.<sup>241</sup> He noted that the appointment of the Commander of the Land Forces required preparation of three-name list by the CGS, nomination by the Council of Ministers and the approval by the president. These examples show that Demirel established a somewhat complex relationship with the military that changed from time to time.

The CHP tabled a motion of censure which brought the end of the government on December 31, 1977. The party claimed that the coalition government could maintain security neither internally nor externally, had shattered national unity with its polarizing discourse, accelerated poverty and violated the constitution. The government fell as a result of the vote of no-confidence.

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

Ecevit was assigned the duty of forming the new government. Change of governments was so fast that the social and economic problems went from bad to worse. The economic situation of the country began to deteriorate day by day with a rocketing inflation rate. Violent clashes along ideological and sectarian lines escalated into armed conflict between opposing camps. Following the notorious Kahramanmaraş incidents that took place in December 1978, in thirteen provinces martial law was declared. In the General Staff Headquarters, a new Command to ensure coordination in the state of emergency called *Sıkıyönetim Eşgüdüm Komutanlığı* was set up. The opposition leaders Demirel and Türkeş objected to this Command on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. However, it is important to note here that this Command continued to function during the minority government (12 November 1979-12 September 1980), which was formed by Demirel with the external support of the MSP and MHP following the resignation of Ecevit after the CHP was defeated in by-elections held on October 14, 1979. (The AP took the majority of the votes in all of the five cities –Konya, Manisa, Edirne, Muğla, Aydın).

During the term of the Ecevit government, Demirel began to implicitly criticize the military, while he was seemingly scathing about the CHP. He claimed that the CHP government was trying to make use of the military's influence to conceal its failures. It is interesting that at that point Demirel made a reference to the once stated formula that the the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri* -TSK) plus the CHP is equal to government and argued that his opponents were trying to resurrect it. This statement of Demirel angered Evren and other commanders in

the sense that it implied that there was a connection between the military and the CHP.<sup>242</sup>

Despite the martial law, the armed struggle between the rightists and leftists intensified. The military urged the leaders of the AP and the CHP to form a coalition government as a solution for the crisis,<sup>243</sup> but these were futile efforts since Demirel regarded it as “against the nature of things”<sup>244</sup> and a “tactic [of CHP] for concealing [its] maladministration”<sup>245</sup> and hence vehemently rejected it. Indeed, the two parties could not even agree on a candidate for the office of presidency, which was vacant for six months. The military became so frustrated with the social disorder and the political deadlock that the then CGS General Kenan Evren presented a memorandum-like letter to President Korutürk on December 27, 1979. Evren noted that the decision to submit such a letter to the president was taken in a meeting which was held on December 21 with the participation of force commanders, army commanders, and commanders of the war colleges. It was agreed that a letter would be presented to the president, as he was the chairman of the MGK, but addressed not only to the government but also to all the constitutional institutions that were responsible for defusing the crisis.<sup>246</sup>

President Korutürk thought that it would be better to hand in the letter after New Year’s Eve. On January 2, 1980, both Demirel and Ecevit were called to Çankaya and notified of the letter. Ecevit stated that it was the government that was the

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<sup>242</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>243</sup> Quoted in Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Müdahalenin Ayak Sesleri: 1978-1979*, vol. 8 (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986), pp. 270-71; Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, p.36.

<sup>244</sup> Cited in Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>245</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, p. 49.

<sup>246</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, p. 104.

addressee of the letter. Demirel was well aware of the fact that the public in Turkey has always been sensitive about such letters presented by the generals, which might well precede a military take-over. Therefore, he immediately wanted to meet with Evren. Demirel tried to curb the mounting tension by underlining that the letter's addressee was not solely the government, referring to what Evren said to him in their meeting that took place on January 7.<sup>247</sup> Evren confirmed that the letter was written to all political parties and constitutional bodies. Furthermore, Evren underlined that it was a coincidence that the letter was presented in the term of the AP government.<sup>248</sup>

Demirel, personally, was not convinced by Evren's response but, to prevent agitation, preferred to give people the message that there was no clash between him and the military. However, at the same time, he tried to eliminate any planned actions of the generals. In the third meeting of the state of emergency coordination, Demirel argued that

The assault –referring to the armed clashes between the ideologically polarized groups– was directed against the state. Nevertheless, the state should overcome it on legitimate grounds, through legitimate ways, with legitimate power. The reason behind my drawing the framework described above is that I have great respect for the rule of law. It is the vigilance of the citizens that is stated in the constitution as the guarantee for safeguarding the regime.<sup>249</sup>

This shows that Demirel underlined the fact that any external intervention in politics will be illegitimate. In that way, he linked state and politics within the legitimate framework drawn by the rule of law. Demirel's suspicion turned out to

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<sup>247</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *Anı Değil İtiraf* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1990), p. 47.

<sup>248</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, p. 195.

<sup>249</sup> Quoted in Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, p. 138.



be correct and on September 12, 1980 the military toppled down the government and dissolved the parliament.

Demirel kept his silence about the pre-coup period until the former junta leader Kenan Evren published his memoirs. The basic point Evren made in his book is that the criticisms centered on the intention of the leaders of the intervention are not valid. He states that the allegation that they did not make an all-out effort to stop the violent clashes is not true. As a counter-move against Evren, Demirel opened a Pandora's Box by writing a book and responding to Evren's claims. He raised the question that if there was no preparation for a coup to take over political power, then how could the armed forces explain their failure to stop the bloodshed despite the state of emergency, when it immediately stopped following the coup. For Demirel, Evren's book was an attempt to counter the allegations by distorting the reality.

While writing against Evren's claims, Demirel is said to be cautious in maintaining his respect to the TSK as an institution. He tried to handle the issue by differentiating the top five generals who prepared the coup from the whole institution. This is important in order to understand the place of the TSK in Demirel's political discourse. In that way, throughout his term of office in Çankaya, it was not a difficult task for Demirel to establish cordial relations with the military; that in turn made him a respected leader in the eyes of the officers, strengthening Demirel's hands as a president in the hard times of civil-military relations.

According to Demirel, the 1980 military intervention did not occur due to the shortcomings of the politicians. Demirel, in his book, portrayed a different picture of the pre-coup Turkey. He claimed that it is a distortion to place the blame for the factors making the state dysfunctional and the state of emergency unsuccessful only on the government. Since in the areas where a state of emergency was declared the military had a certain degree of autonomy regarding which measures to adopt, the government should not be depicted as solely responsible for the anarchy. Demirel explicitly accused Evren and the other four top-ranking generals of willingly adopting a hands-off policy to worsen the situation so that a coup would become legitimate and necessary.<sup>250</sup> Demirel also pointed out that, at those times, he believed that the soldiers did not shirk their duties but rather were not allowed to fulfill their duties by the architects of the coup.<sup>251</sup> For Demirel, the costs of the 1980 military take-over were numerous. It damaged the state and the regime, and discredited the belief in democracy. With the coup, the regional differences became crystallized and the state lost its character of being a social state.<sup>252</sup>

As noted, even though Demirel was ousted from power directly by military interventions twice, he never openly criticized the army as an institution. Rather, he preferred to comment on the activities of some generals who, according to Demirel, were trying to hinder the functioning of democratic politics. From time to time, Demirel's attitude towards the Armed Forces has been criticized by his former comrades as an indication of concessionism or opportunism. Hasan Celal Güzel, who worked as the private secretary of Prime Minister Demirel before

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<sup>250</sup> Demirel, *Anı Değil İtiraf*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>252</sup> Demirel, *Anı Değil İtiraf*, p. 110.

September 12, 1980, argued that Demirel has never taken the absolute civilianization of the regime to heart. Güzel accused him of not behaving as a genuine democrat who gives importance to the values of people.<sup>253</sup> He criticized Demirel for not calling the military junta of May 27 to account despite having parliamentary majority to do so and not resisting the military's influence over the civilian domain which caused him to experience the following military interventions of March 12 and September 12.<sup>254</sup> Similarly İnan held him responsible for inviting the coup by prioritizing short-term interests. For him Demirel and his circle made great mistakes: Many concessions for the sake of remaining in power were made and nepotism in government increased.<sup>255</sup> Besides as İnan argued the inability to activate the internal party mechanisms and to function the parliament effectively paved the way to the September 12 intervention.<sup>256</sup> Over time through expulsions and forced resignations Demirel turned the party into a monolithic body at the expense of the hardliners in the party. The lack of internal democracy accompanied the polarizing and uncompromising political atmosphere of the period in addition to the clientelistic relations. The adoption of a cautious and timid political line by the AP under the pressure of the possibility to be closed down weakened the fight against the tutelary regime.

As mentioned Cizre has arrived at the conclusion that Demirel had a double-discourse on civil-military relations.<sup>257</sup> Parallel to what Güzel argued, Cizre stated

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<sup>253</sup> Hasan Celal Güzel, "Beyefendi'nin Halleri," *Radikal*, 4 May 2006.

<sup>254</sup> Hasan Celal Güzel, "Ben Darbelerin Çocuğuyum," *Radikal* (Istanbul daily), 26 February 2006.

<sup>255</sup> İnan, *Senatör*, p. 66, 147, 191.

<sup>256</sup> İnan, *Senatör*, p. 175.

<sup>257</sup> Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*, p. 28.

that Demirel followed the strategy of bringing about a rapprochement with the military while keeping it neutral towards the AP. As a consequence, the role of the military in the political system was not challenged but preserved as it was, as long as the anti-AP tendencies did not come to the fore.<sup>258</sup> That said, Demirel did not invent this double-discourse. It was part of the AP's identity. The AP was set up in a post-coup period when the ex-prime minister and two ministers were executed, the juntas within the army were active and as a result the oppressive atmosphere surrounded the political life. Thus, it is not surprising that, since its establishment the AP had always been fearful of military intervention and cautious about how its activities would be perceived by the military. Demirel inherited and continued to employ this double discourse with its contradictions and problems.<sup>259</sup> It would not be erroneous to argue that Demirel followed such a pragmatic strategy in such a critical period of civil-military relations in order to open new spaces for his party in a shrinking political arena.

Demirel always stated that civilian supremacy in political matters was a requirement of a democratic regime. Furthermore, he frequently underlined that the government must have the last word in appointing Commanders of the Forces and the CGS, extending their terms or retiring them. Demirel used his discretion during his premiership when he deemed it necessary. In 1969, the then CGS General Cemal Tural wanted his term to be extended. Demirel, however, did not favor it. Demirel's advantage was that General Tural had had poor relations with

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>259</sup> Cizre-Sakallioğlu argues that "the DP-AP tradition was rooted in a contradiction: it articulated the popular resentment against the state into a basically state oriented discourse." See Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu, "Liberalism, Democracy and the Turkish Centre-Right: The Identity Crisis of the True Path Party," in *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, Sylvia Kedourie, ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), p. 146.

the other commanders. Thus Demirel was able to have Tural removed from the office of the commander-in-chief before his term ended and to have General Memduh Tağmaç appointed upon the proposal of the council of ministers and the acceptance of the president.

Demirel tried to regulate his relations with the TSK via Ahmet Topaloğlu, the National Defense Minister in his cabinet. Topaloğlu had previously been the Director General of Public Security. Topaloğlu applied police intelligence methods in his relations with the TSK. However, the methods of Topaloğlu contributed little to Demirel's objective to restructure the command echelon of the TSK. If Demirel gave the top-ranking army officers confidence in himself, he would understand that Tural had had loose relations with the other commanders rather than relying solely on the intelligence of Topaloğlu. Indeed, it was the cadre Topaloğlu considered "safe" that had issued the March 12 memorandum.<sup>260</sup>

In 1977, the government under the leadership of Demirel again used its discretionary power and appointed Ali Fethi Esener to the Command of the Land Forces from the three-name list prepared by the then CGS General Semih Sancar<sup>261</sup>. However to confirm this appointment, the approval of the president was required. As noted above, the then president Fahri Korutürk did not sign this appointment. The government did not retreat. This situation continued up until August 31, when all three generals were retired due to their having completed their terms of office as generals. The crisis ended with the appointment of the Commander of the Aegean Army, General Kenan Evren, to the post in question

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<sup>260</sup> M. Ali Kışlalı, 'Demirel ve TSK', *Radikal*, 17 September 2005.

<sup>261</sup> The other two names were General Adnan Ersöz and General Şükrü Olcay.

by President Korutürk upon the nomination by the Council of Ministers which Demirel chaired. On the other hand, in March 1980, the terms of office of the Commander of the Land Forces, General Nurettin Ersin and the Commander of the Air Force, General Tahsin Şahinkaya were extended in accordance with the government's proposal and the president's approval. What is interesting is that all these generals later participated in the junta that toppled down the government in 1980.

#### **4.1.3. Relations with the Presidents in the 1960s and 1970s**

As indicated, between 1965 and 1980, Demirel was asked five times to form a government as the leader of the AP. So it is clear that he worked with all three presidents of the era, Cemal Gürsel, Cevdet Sunay, and Fahri Korutürk. These experiences influenced how Demirel perceived the way the state organs function, and thus contributed to his later conceptualization of presidential office.

##### **4.1.3.1. Demirel and President Cemal Gürsel**

General Cemal Gürsel was a respected soldier who had taken part in many fronts during the First World War (1914-1918) and the War of Independence (1919-1922). He was appointed as the Commander of the Land Forces in 1958. Gürsel wrote a letter to the then Minister of National Defense Ethem Menderes in which he criticized the existing political situation of the country. Because of this letter, Gürsel was given a temporary leave on the condition that two months later he

would be retired. In reaction to that, Gürsel resigned from the military on May 3, 1960 and moved to İzmir. Not long after his resignation, he was invited to lead the military coup of 1960 by a group of middle-ranking officers. The plans had been prepared and a network had already been set up. As noted the coup brought a complete rupture with the existing institutional structure, including the Constitution.

After the coup, Gürsel announced that he undertook the duties of the head of state and government, the Commander-in-Chief of the TSK and the Minister of National Defense. The softening of the discourse of the AP continued after Demirel was elected chairman of the party. Demirel had the intention to make a break with the past referring to the incidents of the coup years. It would not be wrong to claim that this mild and conciliatory tone of Demirel left positive imprints on the Demirel-Gürsel relationship.

There were some claims that Gürsel and MBK were very much involved in the election of the chairman of the AP following the death of Gümüşpala. Bilgiç quoted from Cihat Baban, a member of the Constituent Assembly and the minister of tourism in Gürsel cabinet formed after 1960 coup, that Gürsel was favorable to Demirel's chairmanship and tried to influence the outcome of the AP's congress to make him elected. It was argued that in the eyes of Gürsel, Demirel was a young and enlightened person who would not become an instrument of the Democrats and indulge towards religious bigotry.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Cited in Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 141.

President Gürsel, from time to time, invited the chairmen of the political parties to Çankaya. In those meetings, which were publicly known as *huzur toplantıları*, vitally important issues that led to controversies or conflict were discussed. Demirel, as the newly elected chairman of the AP, attended the last meeting of the series in Çankaya in June 1964. In the meeting, Demirel listed his party's grievances concerning the policies of the CHP government. The then Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, after listening to the complaints of the opposition, invited the party leaders to the parliament to discuss these matters. He said that Çankaya was not the right address to discuss political issues. This was the last remark of the meeting and Gürsel closed it by saying that these meetings would not be held any more. After the meeting, Demirel told his party associates that İnönü's statement became a real lesson for him.<sup>263</sup> It can be argued that Demirel was so much affected by what İnönü had said that later, in his presidential term, he gave full weight to the necessity of an impartial president regarding party politics.

In general terms, President Gürsel and Prime Minister Demirel had cordial relations. Some argue that Gürsel had a good opinion of Demirel due to his personal success story. It is also claimed that Gürsel overlooked some of the statements of Demirel covertly criticizing the things done to the DP cadre by the military junta.<sup>264</sup> Both mentioned that they had trust in the people and had a common enemy, i.e. communism. After the 1965 general elections, President Gürsel nominated Demirel to form the government. Prime Minister Demirel and President Gürsel developed a working relationship for a year. No dissonance was

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<sup>263</sup> Quoted in Arcayürek, *Demokrasi Dönemecinde Üç Adam*, p. 16.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.



observed in the relationship between Gürsel and Demirel. Gürsel's presidency was terminated upon the decision of the parliament on March 28, 1966.<sup>265</sup>

#### **4.1.3.2. Demirel and President Cevdet Sunay**

Before the decision on the termination of Gürsel's presidency was taken by the parliament, civilian and military circles had already started to discuss the possible candidates for presidency. The most pronounced name was Cevdet Sunay who was the CGS at the time. He was a veteran soldier who had served in various fronts in the First World War and later in the War of Independence. For a certain period, he was imprisoned by the British forces in Egypt. In 1960, he was appointed as the Commander of the Land Forces and subsequently as the CGS. Even though he turned 65, which is the age of compulsory retirement, his term was extended for one year by the decision of the Council of Ministers in 1965.

There emerged a consensus on Sunay's candidacy among the political parties which had divergent opinions and objectives. For the AP a president with a military background was preferable to a president coming from the ranks of the CHP. Hence no opposition against Sunay's candidacy was expressed in the AP.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, a positive climate of opinion on the candidacy of Sunay had already been formed in public. Sunay had been at the head of the group called the Turkish

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<sup>265</sup> Due to a quickly progressed illness, Gürsel came to a point that he could not continue to fulfill his duties as a president. After receiving a medical report of a committee of thirty seven doctors that indicated Gürsel's impossibility of continuing his term of office, his term was ended by the parliament.

<sup>266</sup> Bozbeyli, *Yalnız Demokrat*, p. 231; Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 170.

Armed Forces Union (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetler Birliği*),<sup>267</sup> as such, he collaborated with the government in thwarting Talat Aydemir's coup attempts.<sup>268</sup> It is highly probable that this helped Sunay to build a positive image in the eyes of the civilians.

The AP had a sufficient majority in the parliament to elect its candidate as president. However, Demirel thought that the legacy of the May 27 was enduring. The fear of a military coup had not yet been completely set aside. Hence, according to Demirel, a president with a military origin would help to get through difficult times. In other words, Demirel considered President Sunay to be a "safety valve" for the regime. Demirel pointed out that he wanted Sunay's presidency to cope with the coup attempts.<sup>269</sup> Demirel influenced his party members, who wished to choose a civilian for the office of presidency, to support Sunay. Demirel stated that they chose Sunay as president to prevent the rift between the politicians and the military. He added that his and the AP's main rationale during the 1966

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<sup>267</sup> The Union was founded during the coup administration to highlight that May 27 was not a coup aiming at overthrowing the DP government but a revolution, and the gains of this revolution should be preserved. After the 1961 parliamentary election, there emerged a crack within the army. The group of Ankara was of the opinion that before it was too late the military should seize power; whereas, the group of Istanbul believed that they should wait and see. A protocol was signed among the members of the union to guarantee that the intervention could only be made through the chain of command. It was claimed that Sunay did not sign the protocol and inform İnönü about the coup attempt. After that, appointments and detentions started within the army to eliminate the Ankara group. For more, see Osman Deniz, *Parola: Harbiyeli Aldanmaz* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002); Fethi Gürcan, *Ben İhtilalciyim*, Ömer Gürcan, ed. (Istanbul: Süvari Yayıncılık, 2005).

<sup>268</sup> Colonel Aydemir, Colonel Dündar Seyhan and Major Fethi Gürcan alarmed their subordinate units on February 22, 1962 as a response to the elimination of May 27 supporters within the army. Aydemir demanded the dissolution of the parliament and called for new elections. These demands were refused and the operation was stopped the next morning. Aydemir and 20 officers were put on trial and forced to retire. Aydemir attempted another coup on May 21, 1963. The units loyal to the government suppressed the insurgent forces as a result of the clashes between the two. Consequently, Aydemir and 150 other participants of the attempted coup were tried. Aydemir and Gürcan were executed on July 5, 1964.

<sup>269</sup> Ülkü and Hasanov, *Süleyman Demirel*, p. 105.

presidential elections were to make the nation and the military embrace each other.<sup>270</sup>

According to the 1961 Constitution, the presidential candidate should be a member of parliament. The obstacle for Sunay's presidency arising out of this provision of the Constitution was overcome by making Sunay a member of parliament. For this purpose a presidential quota senatorship was opened up with the resignation of a senator. The other candidate running for the election was the retired colonel Türkeş, who was then the leader of the CKMP. However, against Sunay, Türkeş had no chance and Sunay was elected the fifth President of the Republic with a vote of 431 out of 636.

Until the 1971 military memorandum, Prime Minister Demirel thought that the AP did a good job to support Sunay as a candidate for presidency, since Sunay assisted in the consolidation of civil authority.<sup>271</sup> It is argued that once Sunay came to power, Demirel was able to breathe easily in due to Sunay's commitment to the Constitution and the democratic regime while there were calls not to open the parliament dominated by the AP.<sup>272</sup> Demirel stated that Sunay as the CGS played a significant role in pulling out the armed forces from politics after 1960. Demirel underlined that taking part actively in choosing Sunay as president is one of his political services to the country. He believed that in that way, he could prevent damage to "the nation's army" as an institution.<sup>273</sup> Demirel rejected the accusations that he was responsible for opening the road to Çankaya to the CGSs

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<sup>270</sup> Yavuz Donat, "Çankaya'nın Romani," *Sabah*, 19 January 2000.

<sup>271</sup> Fikret Bila, "Sunay'ı Cuntalara Karşı Getirdim," *Milliyet*, 21 July 1989.

<sup>272</sup> Özdemir, *Atatürk'ten Günümüze Cumhurbaşkanları Seçimleri*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>273</sup> Donat, "Çankaya'nın Romani".

in the succeeding presidential elections.<sup>274</sup> He asserted that if it were Sunay who came first and expressed his willingness to become president and he had no chance but to accept Sunay's offer, only then it would have been opening the office of presidency to the CGSs as an established practice.<sup>275</sup>

As reported, Sunay, during the five-year period of AP rule, made Demirel believe that he would never get involved in clandestine activities for a military take-over.<sup>276</sup> In 1969, Demirel received some information that the CGS General Cemal Tural was in preparation for a coup and wanted to see President Sunay urgently. At first, Sunay rejected Demirel's idea of appointing Tural to another post. However, due to Demirel's insistence on this matter, Sunay agreed to Tural's appointment as a member of the Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askerî Şura*).<sup>277</sup> Thus, Demirel succeeded in avoiding a possible military attempt with the help of the president, thus increasing his trust in Sunay. That is why Demirel was shocked when he was informed by the Undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organization about Sunay's call for Demirel's resignation on March 12, 1971. An hour before the military memorandum was issued by the top-ranking military officers, Demirel and Sunay had talked on the phone. Sunay told Demirel that he

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<sup>274</sup> The CKMP opposed the candidacy of Sunay on the grounds that this kind of candidate selection method would create a tradition of the CGS-origin presidents, which would be irreconcilable with the fundamental principles of a democratic regime. A similar opinion was also put forward by the MP Deputies. Osman Bölükbaşı, the leader of the MP, criticized the method of Sunay's selection to the candidacy as well. He was worried about the harm it would cause to the future of Turkish democracy.

<sup>275</sup> Bila, "Sunay'ı Cuntalara Karşı Getirdim".

<sup>276</sup> Quoted in Arcayürek, *Demokrasi Dönemecinde Üç Adam*, p. 18.

<sup>277</sup> The Supreme Military Council deals with the issues related to military bureaucracy. The Council succeeds the *Şura-yı Askerî* which was established in 1925 and restructured in 1972. The Council meets twice a year. It consists of 17 members, i.e. the prime minister, the defense minister, the chief of general staff, force commanders and army commanders. The Council's duties are submitting opinions on the plans and objectives of the armed forces; assessing the drafts of laws, bylaws and regulations related to the armed forces and discussing the issues affecting its personnel such as promotions, retirements and expulsions. Its decisions require ratification by the president and cannot be appealed against.

was cut out of the loop on this issue. Thereafter, Demirel summoned his cabinet and, after discussing the issue in detail with his colleagues, he submitted his resignation to Sunay.<sup>278</sup>

For Demirel, Sunay as a president had the means to prevent the military intervention from taking place in 1971 but did nothing to operate all the constitutional mechanisms beforehand, such as including the issue in the agenda of the MGK. Whether Demirel's critique of Sunay's behavior during the 1971 crisis has contributed to his conceptualization of presidency and his later practices in his presidential term will be taken up in the following chapters.

#### **4.1.3.3. Demirel and President Fahri Korutürk**

Fahri Korutürk was elected president on April 6, 1973 as an outcome of the confrontation between the civilians and the military concerning whose candidate will be elected president. Following in the footsteps of Sunay, the then CGS General Gürler stood as a presidential candidate. As mentioned in the previous part, the civilian authority was in the grip of a crisis, due to the fact that the generals exerted pressure over the civilians on the issue of who would be elected as next president. As a first move, the idea to extend the term of Sunay was put forward. A constitutional amendment to extend the term of president for a two-year period did not gain the necessary two-thirds majority in the assembly and hence was not accepted. Then Demirel and Ecevit agreed on another name, Muhittin

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<sup>278</sup> Arcayürek, *Demokrasi Dönemecinde Üç Adam*, pp. 20-21.

Taylan, the then president of Constitutional Court, as a presidential candidate. This effort again failed after Sunay did not appoint Taylan as a quota senator which was required to be eligible for being a presidential candidate.

Afterwards Korutürk appeared as the compromise candidate of the AP, CHP, and CGP. As elaborated in the previous section of this essay, the problematic issue for the civilians was not the military background of the presidential candidate, but intervention of the military in the election by dictating its choice of candidate. During the voting sessions in the parliament, the full complement of generals turned out to influence the outcome of the elections. Nonetheless, the conflict ended up in favor of neither party, rather as “a victory for moderation and compromise in politics”<sup>279</sup> and Korutürk was elected president.

Korutürk was a retired admiral and former Commander of the Naval Forces. He had formerly served as the naval attaché to Italy, Germany, and Sweden in turn. In the meetings of the Montreux Convention in 1936, Korutürk had taken part as a military expert in the Turkish committee. Two months after the 1960 military coup, he retired. Afterwards, Korutürk was assigned as an ambassador to the Turkish embassy in Moscow in 1960 and in Madrid in 1964. He resigned from the embassy in Madrid in 1965, and, following his return to Turkey, he was nominated by the then President Sunay to the Senate in 1968, which later paved him the way to the office of presidency. Both the military and the civilians compromised on Korutürk’s candidacy, since he neither had affiliation with any

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<sup>279</sup> Roger P. Nye, “Civil-Military Confrontation in Turkey: The 1973 Presidential Election,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8, 2 (April 1977), p. 227.

political party nor with radicals in the military. His diplomatic experiences were perceived as assets that made him suitable for the office of presidency.

In the presidential term of Korutürk, Demirel was not so strongly supported by the people as he had been in the second half of the 1960s. As explained in detail, starting from 1974, coalition governments had started to rule the country. Those were difficult times for Turkey. Deep polarization in Turkish society along with a severe economic crisis influenced public expectations that the leading political parties should find a way to overcome the difficulties the country faced. President Korutürk, at every turn, tried to establish a dialogue mechanism between the AP and CHP, emphasizing that the cooperation of political parties and its leaders was necessary for maintaining peace and safeguarding the regime.<sup>280</sup> To that end, he called Demirel and Ecevit to Çankaya separately and had talks with them. Korutürk felt it necessary as president that he should act as an intermediary between Demirel and Ecevit. However, Korutürk's individual meetings with the leading political figures were aborted. According to Demirel, the place for establishing a dialogue was nowhere else but the parliament, which had shown how important a functioning parliament was in Demirel's political discourse.

The most important event that occurred between Demirel and Korutürk was the notorious "warning letter" to politicians by the then CGS, General Kenan Evren. Evren submitted this letter directly to President Korutürk on December 27, 1979. Then Korutürk decided to meet with Demirel and Ecevit in Çankaya to inform them about the letter. Demirel threatened to resign while Ecevit stated that his

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<sup>280</sup> Quoted in Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 1*, p. 54.

party was not ready to form the government again. President Korutürk, considering such remarks, felt uneasy about the threat of a governmental crisis. Hence, he increased his efforts to provide cooperation between the AP and the CHP.

Demirel thought that Korutürk's failure to inform him about the letter, even though he was prime minister, was not acceptable. What disturbed Demirel in that letter event was being bypassed as prime minister. He thought that such complaints should be brought to the agenda of the meetings of the MGK or the Martial Law Command<sup>281</sup>. The same approach was adopted in the practices of Demirel as president which will be examined in the fifth and sixth chapters.

Even though Demirel emphasized the oddness of the situation, he also insisted that he had no doubts about Korutürk's honesty. Demirel claimed that after being elected president, Korutürk had told Demirel that he would never collaborate with the interventionists. Therefore, he said he had not presumed that Korutürk took part in the plans to topple the government if necessary.<sup>282</sup>

After examining the relations of Demirel as a head of government and a political leader with the then presidents having a military background, it may be suggested that in general terms Demirel succeeded in establishing working relationships

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<sup>281</sup> Following the notorious Kahramanmaraş Incidents, martial law was imposed to restore law and order in 13 cities (Adana, Ankara, Bingöl, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kars, Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Sivas, Şanlıurfa) on December 26, 1978. As a consequence of the increase in violent clashes, six more cities (Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Hakkâri, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli) were added to list of cities that were under martial law on April 26, 1979. By September 12, 1980, the number of cities which were under martial law was added up to 19.

<sup>282</sup> Demirel, *Anı Değil İtiraf*, p. 45.



with the presidents in question. It might be striking at first sight that as the leader of the AP, which claimed that it was the heir of the DP, an overthrown party towards which the military regime had had deep suspicion, Demirel did not face animosity from the coup leaders. This could be explained by Demirel's cautious stance towards the military. He continued to employ the double-discourse on civil-military relations which had positive impacts on establishing working relations with the presidents of the 1960s and 1970s while producing negative outcomes for Turkish democracy.

Demirel and Gürsel's shared anti-communist feelings had strengthened their relationship, as did Demirel's cautious refusal to meet the expectations of his party members and constituencies about granting political amnesty to the DP members. This is still one of the policies that Demirel's old colleagues criticize the most, considering such acts as examples of his "opportunism." Demirel was also seen as responsible for making Çankaya the last stop for the CGSs or retired generals. His efforts to convince his circle to support Sunay's presidential candidacy were interpreted as giving concessions for the sake of political gains. Against such accusations, Demirel defended himself by saying that the process of May 27 had lingered on, and hence a president with a military background could thwart any possible coup attempts. Despite the fact that he was right to a certain extent that Sunay had become influential in aborting some coup attempts, intervention of the army in political matters could not be eliminated for long, as was seen in the March 12 Memorandum. It is demonstrated that it is misleading to think that condoning such kind of reserved domains would serve the consolidation of civil authority. It is true that after Sunay's term had ended, the then CGS

General Gürler was prevented from becoming the next president by a parliamentary majority. Nevertheless the compromise candidate was a retired admiral. This shows that Demirel prioritized finding the best person for the office of president who would become a safety valve for any coup attempts, despite the fact that he defended civilian supremacy in political matters as an important principle in his discourse. Keeping the parliament open and functioning was so significant for Demirel that he did not pay enough attention to the implications of sharing the executive power with the military-backed presidents. In that way, Demirel could continue his pragmatic style of politics and manage to survive in a shrinking political arena, but at the expense of the civilianization of the regime.

#### **4.2. The True Path Party Era**

The 1980 military intervention opened a new page in the political life of Demirel. In September 1981, the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi - MGKo*)<sup>283</sup> announced that all of the political parties were outlawed on the grounds that they were the main actors of the political deadlock. One year later, all the leaders of the already outlawed political parties were declared to be banned from active politics for a ten-year period. In spite of the various impediments, Demirel under the wing of his close associates sought ways and means of remaining in the limelight. In 1983, the Great Turkey Party (*Büyük Türkiye Partisi –BTP*) was

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<sup>283</sup> This council should not be confused with the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu -MGK*). The former was established after the 1980 military intervention to assume the powers of the parliament whereas the latter was set up in 1961. The Council (*Konseyi*) was composed of the Head of State and Chief of General Staff General Kenan Evren, Commander of the Land Forces General Nurettin Ersin, Commander of the Air Forces General Tahsin Şenkaya, Commander of the Naval Forces Admiral Nejat Tümer, and Commander of Gendarmerie General Sedat Celasun.

established, but it met with a rebuff from the members of the MGKo because of the registration *en masse* of veteran deputies and ministers having an AP origin on the BTP list. The party was closed on May 31, 1983 by the MGKo. The Council sent 16 political figures, one of whom was Demirel, to *Zincirbozan*, a town in Çanakkale, where they were kept under custody for four months (June 2-October 30, 1983).

The establishment of the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi –DYP*)<sup>284</sup> corresponded to the days in *Zincirbozan*. It is reported that the way to *Zincirbozan* inspired Demirel to call the party the “True Path”.<sup>285</sup> Although the procedures to set up the party were fulfilled without delay, it was still one of the vetoed parties that lost the chance to join the 1983 elections. In fact, as Evren later pointed out, the reason of the veto was seemingly the objectionable names in the list of founders, but in reality what they wanted to eliminate was the likely fragmentation that would end up with coalition governments.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, the military also saw a need for new faces in politics so that Turkey would have a brand new political life free from the old feuds.

It was with the 1984 local elections that the DYP eventually entered into the political arena. However, in the same year the party faced trial at the Constitutional Court on the grounds that the DYP affirmed itself as the continuation of the AP and the BTP and had made statements and carried out

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<sup>284</sup> For more on the DYP’s program and its organizational characteristics see Feride Acar, “The True Path Party, 1983-1989” in *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, eds. Metin Heper and Jacob M. Landau (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1991): pp. 188-201.

<sup>285</sup> Bilgiç, *Hatıralarım*, p. 311.

<sup>286</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 2*, p. 78.

activities against the decisions of the MGKo. The accusation was rejected unanimously by the Court.<sup>287</sup> From that point onwards, the party associates began to work more vigorously. In 1985, a very close friend of the still banned Demirel, Hüsametdin Cindoruk, was elected to the party chairmanship. Even though Demirel was forced to stay behind the scenes, he did not abstain from politics. In that period, what Demirel primarily focused on was to re-gather the base of the AP under the roof of its successor DYP.

Starting from 1986, the DYP began to gain momentum in the political arena. In the by-elections held in September 1986, the DYP succeeded in winning four of the eleven vacant deputy positions. In addition, some deputies from the other political parties joined the DYP. In that way, the party reached the number necessary to form a group in the parliament. It was also the time that Demirel became publicly much more visible. By addressing the people in different parts of the country, he tried to show that he did not mind the ban on him any more. From then on, Demirel and his party pushed strongly for the necessity of lifting the ban on pre-1980 period political figures. Demirel's main argument in his campaign, as he underlined, was that it was not a mere political struggle but a struggle to have a state based on the rule of law.<sup>288</sup>

The then Prime Minister Turgut Özal decided to bring the issue to the people. A referendum was held on September 6, 1987. As a result, Demirel and the other

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<sup>287</sup> For the full texts of the indictment of the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Appeals against the DYP, the response of the party to the indictment, and the verdict of the Constitutional Court, see Akay, *DYP ve Kurucular Albümü*, pp. 186-213.

<sup>288</sup> Quoted in Tanju Cılızoğlu, *Zincirbozan'dan Bugüne Demokrasi Mücadelesinde Demirel* (Istanbul: Matay, 1988), p. 68.

banned political leaders were given freedom to actively participate in politics. According to Demirel, the result strengthened his claim that he was supported by the people, which for him was the real victory of democracy. After the ban was lifted, Demirel was elected party chairman in the party congress held on September 24, 1987. Within a four-year period, Demirel made the DYP the victorious party of the 1991 general elections, though the party's votes were not sufficient to form a government alone. Demirel formed a coalition government with the SHP on November 20. The important thing was that, after eleven years of a patient suspense, Demirel was again on the stage as prime minister.

#### **4.2.1. Views on State and Democracy**

As taken up in the previous chapter, starting from his political career under the banner of the AP, Demirel has continued considering state and democracy as closely related concepts. He has very much valued this relationship. Demirel's political struggle could be better understood by looking at to what extent he followed his path by embracing these two interrelated notions in the DYP period.

The importance of state as a concept continued to be salient in Demirel's discourse after being politically suspended by the military regime. He never criticized any state institution overtly; Demirel preferred putting the blame on persons instead of institutions, considering the former responsible for democratic breakdowns.

The continuity of the philosophy and terminology of the AP in the party program of the DYP and in the statements of Demirel as the party leader was quite visible. He highlighted four major concepts to explain the party philosophy of the DYP. These were *hürriyetçi demokrasi* (democracy based on freedom), national will, rule of law, and national development.<sup>289</sup> It is quite obvious that Demirel's first objective in that period was to regain the support of the political base of the defunct AP; therefore, he frequently referred to the popular terminology of the AP in power. The major obstacle in front of the DYP to fall heir to its predecessor's popularity was considered to be ANAP, under the leadership of Özal. Hence, at that period Demirel reserved his most aggressive criticism for the policies of ANAP, the number one political adversary of the DYP.

Demirel labeled ANAP as the manifestation of a search for a guided rule (*güdümlü iktidar*). In his view, the party governed the country ineptly, and that in turn impeded the functioning of democracy. For instance, just before the November 29, 1987 parliamentary elections, as a last minute move, the election law was amended by the Özal government. The amendments included an increase in the number of deputies in the parliament from 400 to 450 and a change in the constituencies. These changes provided ANAP with more seats despite their receiving fewer votes. ANAP won 64.89 percent of the seats in the parliament with 36.31 percent of the vote cast in the elections. This was harshly criticized by the opposition parties. Demirel in particular found such amendments and their

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<sup>289</sup> Quoted in Cılızoğlu, *Zincirbozan'dan Bugüne Demokrasi Mücadelesinde Demirel*, p. 196.

impact on the election results unfair and argued that the national will was no longer represented in the parliament.<sup>290</sup>

#### **4.2.2. Relations with the Military**

The 1982 Constitution adopted the principle of the 1961 Constitution that sovereignty, vested fully and unconditionally in the nation, shall be exercised through the authorized organs as prescribed by the principles laid down in the constitution (Article 6). Justifying their actions with this article, the military regime could enjoy tutelary powers and reserved domains even long after the civilian regime was restored. The coup leaders' distrust of politicians had influenced the wording of the constitution. In the eyes of the military, the people were never considered responsible for the tragic events. The politicians had exploited "the glorious feelings of the people." Based on that, the authorized organs have been incorporated into the constitution by the MGKo regime to save the country from the "greedy" politicians.<sup>291</sup>

Leaning on the DP tradition, the DYP leaders objected to bringing the sovereignty of the nation under the tutelage of other organs. For them, the supremacy of the national will was indisputable. It could not be subordinated to any state organ, including the military. Anti-militarism has formed the backbone of the DYP. However, as Cizre has argued, the anti-militarist discourse of the DYP has never

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<sup>290</sup> For more on these developments, see Heper, "Turgut Özal's Presidency," pp. 190-191.

<sup>291</sup> Kenan Evren, *Unutulmuş Gerçekler* (Ankara: Tisamat, 1995), p. 210.

exercised sufficient influence over its former political base to regain their support.<sup>292</sup>

Demirel's ideas on civilianization of the politics, to some extent, are unsophisticated. It refers to the elimination of military's direct interference in politics through influencing elections and exerting pressure on the work of the parliament in which the will of the nation is manifested. The military, on the other hand, left its mark on the civilian domain in many other ways. For instance, the change made in the composition of the MGK was one of the reserved domains of the military. The number of the military officers in the council exceeded the number of the civilian members. In addition to that, the recommendations of the Council's decision gained priority. Demirel governments have always considered the MGK meetings as significant platforms to take decisions and formulate solutions on hot political issues. This means, as Cizre underlines, that Demirel, long before the 1982 Constitution, made the Council achieve a much more predominant role and status.<sup>293</sup>

#### **4.2.3. Relations with the Head of State/Presidents<sup>294</sup>**

##### **4.2.3.1. Demirel and the Head of State, President Kenan Evren**

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<sup>292</sup> Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*, p. 276.

<sup>293</sup> Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*, p. 278.

<sup>294</sup> In the two-year period following the 1980 military intervention, General Evren, the leader of the coup, ruled the country as the head of the National Security Council (MGKo) and the head of state. He had the title of the head of state, not president, until the referendum on the constitution. Here, the analysis covers Demirel's relations with Evren during his terms both as head of state and president.



General Kenan Evren, the leader of the 1980 coup, became the head of state during the interim period that ended in 1982. On November 7, 1982, a referendum was held on the 1982 Constitution. A presidential election was combined with the constitutional referendum. The new Constitution, together with Evren, the sole candidate of the presidency, received a 91.37 percent yes vote. In that way, Evren became the only popularly elected president in Turkey.<sup>295</sup>

Evren was known as one of the most outspoken presidents, especially during his early years in that office. During his term of office, he gave great importance to visiting various parts of the country and addressing people. His endeavor was to convince people that what he believed is right. That said, Evren has developed a style of his own as a president who like a father tried to correct, direct and guide. As Dodd has noted, Evren felt obliged to safeguard the Atatürkist principles and the Constitution based on those principles. His lack of trust in the politicians and the political parties of the pre-1980 period were very much apparent. As he stated in his memoirs, for Evren, the “fact” that politicians disregarded the general interest in favor of their personal interests, let the country drift into anarchy. It was a mistake to entrust politicians with the task of governing the country, since they were dishonest, irresponsible and greedy.<sup>296</sup> Evren’s move to ban all of the pre-1980 political parties and their leaders from active politics was the result of this suspicion and distrust.

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<sup>295</sup> As mentioned, by referendum which was held on September 21, 2007, the law concerning the changes in some articles of the Constitution was approved. In accordance with that, the president who was previously elected by the parliament from then on will be popularly elected.

<sup>296</sup> Kenan Evren, *Unutulmuş Gerçekler*, p. 210.

The direct intervention of Evren in the political domain irritated Demirel, who had always highlighted the immense significance of keeping the parliament open no matter what may happen. In fact, at first, Evren had declared that the military regime would not target the political parties. However, other generals influenced Evren, and then the ban was enforced against the political parties, a move which was later admitted as a mistake by Evren himself.<sup>297</sup>

In 1983, the elections were held under the aegis of the military regime. Participation in the elections was limited, in the sense that only three newly established political parties obtaining the approval of the coup leaders by not having “objectionable” names on their lists could compete in the elections. Evren and his friends said that they were in favor of restoring the democratic regime. But this does not mean that they would refrain entirely from intervening in the election process. Evren saw no harm in fully endorsing one of the three parties - the Nationalist Democracy Party (*Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi* –MDP) - allowed to enter the election. Evren made a speech the night before the elections to persuade people to vote for the MDP in preference to Özal’s ANAP. Nevertheless, Evren’s popularity was not sufficient to influence the outcome of the elections, which opened the era of one-party government led by Özal.

The relationship between Demirel and Evren could be better analyzed by examining it in two different periods. In the period before the political bans were lifted, the relationship between the two was under strain. Their differences revolved around the events leading to the 1980 military intervention and its

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

outcomes. For Demirel, the unfortunate set of circumstances forming a basis for the intervention could be avoided if the military used its power effectively under the martial law. Demirel's most probing question was about the ending of the bloodshed on September 12, which had not been prevented on September 11. On the other hand, Evren argued that governments and other political parties did not take the necessary measures in time and thus deepened the rift between different ideological groups. It is clear that both Demirel and Evren indicted the other for not behaving in a responsible manner.

Following the 1980 military intervention, Demirel was placed in a difficult position, being banned from all kinds of political activities. As mentioned above, under the aegis of his guidance, the DYP was formed quickly after the upcoming elections were announced; however, it was vetoed by the junta. Demirel, nevertheless, did not give up fighting. Despite infuriating Evren, he continued to receive visitors at his home from all over the country. He blamed the generals of the coup for not fulfilling their duty of having halted the bloodshed in time but rather used it as a justification for establishing the military regime. The leaders of ANAP could not escape Demirel's criticisms either. Demirel branded Özal as a by-product of the military intervention.

Evren, in his address to parliament in 1985, fiercely criticized Demirel for being too talkative, though without mentioning his name. Evren stated that Turkey paid the price of the demand for "Talking Turkey" that aimed to replace "Silent

Turkey.”<sup>298</sup> Demirel responded with a four-page tract labelling Evren a “biased president” who violated Article 103 of the 1982 Constitution. Demirel emphasized that anger does not befit some posts the most important of which is occupied by Evren.<sup>299</sup> Demirel’s judgmental remarks on Evren and the military regime were so persistent that Evren had to defend himself in public speeches by asserting that the events that occurred in 1980 were not a coup but a defense of the Republic against anarchy.<sup>300</sup> Demirel’s speech in his Black Sea visit annoyed Evren intensely. There, Demirel had argued that Çankaya should change hands without blood, without fight, without political intrigue, and argued that a democratic regime had yet to be installed.<sup>301</sup> During the period that he was barred from all political activities, Demirel in his visits made his criticisms of Evren public, and Evren in turn always took these seriously and responded to them.

At the time, another rift developed between Evren and Demirel over the subject of military recruitment. Being concerned about the threats coming from religious fundamentalism against the secular regime, Evren was opposed to the recruitment of the graduates of the Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools (İmam Hatip Okulları) to the army. As the architect of those schools, Demirel did not keep his silence on this discussion and argued that those graduates could be army officers just like they could be doctors, lawyers, engineers, and the like. In his opinion, it was meaningless to prevent them from joining the military since those schools also had a state-approved curriculum. Demirel clashed with Evren on the headscarf

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<sup>298</sup> Quoted in Akay, *12 Eylül Darbe Yıllarında Bir Kurucu Üyenin Anılarından Bir Partinin Kuruluşu*, p. 228.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>300</sup> See Evren’s speech delivered in Kahramanmaraş on December 25, 1985 in Kenan Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 2* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994), p. 259.

<sup>301</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 2*, p. 354.

issue as well. Targeting the statements of Evren on the headscarf and reactionism, Demirel argued that “attributing ideology to the headscarf of students is wrong. So does searching ideology in the headscarf itself. Wearing or taking off headscarf have no relevance with religious reactionism. Secularism is not damaged by wearing a headscarf.”<sup>302</sup>

Starting from 1987 at which date the political ban was lifted, the strained relations between Evren and Demirel gradually improved. In fact, this was an act of expediency on both sides. Evren, as he stated, had started to be disturbed by Özal’s political actions, especially Özal’s “staying out of the fight against obscurantism and religious reactionism;” therefore, he looked for an alternative for Özal’s ANAP government.<sup>303</sup> Consequently Evren portrayed Demirel, his once leading adversary, as the most suitable person to deal with Özal in politics. Likewise, for Demirel, it was expedient to establish better relations with President Evren. Demirel, just after being elected the chairman of the DYP on September 24, stated that he was not agonizing over the past anymore and not harboring resentment against anybody.<sup>304</sup> Indeed, this was an implicit message for President Evren, who was still holding the office with which Demirel wished to reach rapprochement. On October 6, 1987, Evren received a courtesy visit from Demirel. As Evren reported, the previous disputes were not even mentioned during that visit.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, on May 27, 1988, Demirel made another visit to Evren in order to present forty members of the DYP’s General Administrative

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<sup>302</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>303</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 2*, p. 300.

<sup>304</sup> Quoted in Akay, *12 Eylül Darbe Yıllarında Bir Kurucu Üyenin Anılarından Bir Partinin Kuruluşu*, p. 245.

<sup>305</sup> Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım Cilt 2*, p. 393.

Board. According to Evren, that unprecedented visit could be seen as implying that past was left behind.<sup>306</sup>

The détente policy of Demirel was not maintained in every circumstance though. In 1987, at the opening address of the parliament by President Evren, the deputies of the DYP did not stand up to protest Evren as he gave his speech from the chair of the Speaker of the Parliament. In May 1988, upon the incidents of leftist violence, Evren stated that the Armed Forces could not keep its silence. Demirel responded this immediately, which could be considered as part of the DYP's policy prioritizing civilianization, and reminded Evren that only the parliament had the authority to call upon the Armed Forces to do their duty. He underlined that the nation needs neither protecting nor salvaging, and interventions have made the problems chronic.<sup>307</sup>

#### **4.2.3.2. Demirel and President Turgut Özal**

Following the termination of the presidential term of Evren, Özal was elected the eighth president by the TBMM on October 31, 1989. Those were the years in which Demirel returned to active politics after the ban on political figures of the pre-coup period had been lifted by the referendum in 1987. Indeed this made the tension between two old friends much more palpable and, contrary to what was expected, this grew even worse after Demirel became prime minister in 1991.

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., p. 433.

<sup>307</sup> Akay, *12 Eylül Darbe Yıllarında Bir Kurucu Üyenin Anılarından Bir Partinin Kuruluşu*, pp. 247-248.

Demirel and Özal had known each other for a long time. Both of them were brilliant engineers working specifically on electrification projects. Following the same path and becoming a protégé of Demirel, Özal made a successful career in state institutions before joining to World Bank in 1971. After returning to Turkey, he became the Undersecretary of the DPT. Demirel's confidence in him was so high that until the 1980 military coup he, as Prime Minister, assigned Özal as his undersecretary. It was with the start of the military regime that their relationship started to deteriorate. Following the announcement of the ban by the coup leaders, Demirel, like other pre-1980 politicians, was forced to remain outside of active politics while the political visibility and activity of Özal gained momentum. During the military regime (1980-1983), Özal became a state minister and deputy prime minister in charge of the economy. After the reinstallation of democracy in 1982, Özal founded ANAP, which was one of the three political parties allowed to participate in the 1983 national elections. With the sweeping victory of ANAP, the era of Özal began in that year. Demirel saw the success of ANAP as the capitalization on the political ban and stealing votes from the political base of the defunct AP. This further damaged irreparably the strained relationship between Demirel and Özal.

Özal's campaign against the lifting of the political ban in 1987 by referendum had resulted in just the opposite of what Özal had desired. Indeed, this influenced Demirel's attitude and behavior toward Özal. Demirel's -along with others'- direct and harsh criticisms about Özal's decision to run for presidency can be seen as a reaction to Özal's attempts to block the pre-1980 politicians' return to active

politics. In Demirel's opinion, Özal had wanted to use the referendum as an instrument to eliminate his political rivals but could not succeed. Hence, as the next act of this sort he backdated the general elections.<sup>308</sup>

As another tactic, the Özal government proposed constitutional change and a referendum was held on September 25, 1988. In addition to the change made in Article 127 of the Constitution on the powers of local administrations, local elections would be held a year earlier than its expected date. With the 65 percent no votes as opposed to 35 percent yes votes, the proposed change was refuted. Demirel claimed that the results of the referendum had shown the illegitimacy of the ANAP government. In Demirel's view, this was the articulation of a definite failure; the support of people for Özal government was eroded.<sup>309</sup>

When Özal announced that he would run for presidency, he had already been stranded by the aggressive opposition of Demirel. The DYP organized rallies known as "Get Lost Protests" (*Çek-Git mitingleri*) intending to force the government to resign. After Özal's declaring his candidacy, again rallies with the slogan "Çankaya belongs to the nation" (*Çankaya milletindir*) were organized by the DYP. However, those protests were not enough to make Özal retreat, and on November 9, 1989 he was elected the eighth president (in the third round receiving 263 votes of a parliament consisting of 450 deputies). All of the political parties in Parliament except the ruling ANAP had opposed Özal and had not

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<sup>308</sup> See Demirel's speech in the Extraordinary Convention of the DYP held on September 24, 1987 quoted in Akay, *12 Eylül Darbe Yıllarında Bir Kurucu Üyenin Anılarından Bir Partinin Kuruluşu*, pp. 245-246.

<sup>309</sup> Akay, *12 Eylül Darbe Yıllarında Bir Kurucu Üyenin Anılarından Bir Partinin Kuruluşu*, p. 251.



joined the balloting, which later was thought to have strengthened the hands of the opposition in their questioning the legitimacy of Özal's presidency. From then on, it was toppling not only the ANAP government but also Özal from Çankaya that had become the target of Demirel's DYP. These developments affected the nature of the relationship between Demirel and Özal in the following years. Rather than having established amicable relations, tension was always high between the two even after they began to share the executive power, one as prime minister and the other as president.

Demirel, while chairman of the DYP, argued that with the coming of Özal to the presidential office the era of a "hampered presidency" ("*yaralı cumhurbaşkanlığı*") began. Criticizing the 1982 Constitution, Demirel maintained the necessity of presidents being elected by people. In his view, a candidate who receives less than 50 percent of the votes should not become president. His call was, in his words, for making the nation "sit in the state's armchair."<sup>310</sup> In that way, Demirel intended to put Özal (who had previously proposed the idea of popular election) in a difficult position and open the legitimacy of his presidency to discussion.

To understand how Demirel portrayed presidency during his term in Çankaya, the debate Demirel initiated after Özal's presidential candidacy was announced needs to be more closely examined. Demirel's criticisms about the way Özal fulfilled his presidential duty could give an idea about how Demirel's concept of the office of presidency differed from Özal's. President Özal's meddling in party politics was

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<sup>310</sup> *Hürriyet*, 1 December 1990.

roundly criticized by Demirel. According to Demirel, it was unacceptable for a president to compromise his impartiality in such cases as an internal matter of a political party or a matter for which the government is responsible. However, Özal had a different view on the status and functions of the president. He interpreted the provisions about the presidential powers of the 1982 Constitution broadly. Özal claimed that Çankaya holds the half of political power;<sup>311</sup> he wished to be briefed regularly on the state of the economy, and gave instructions to the government or directly to the bureaucrats. In his opinion, all that was within the scope of the powers conferred upon the president by the Constitution. Consequently, Özal justified his involvement in the internal affairs of ANAP and matters concerning economy and foreign policy.

Özal's active interest in the internal affairs of ANAP was evident in the election of leaders in that party. It is an open secret that he had a profound influence over the election of Yıldırım Akbulut as ANAP's next chairman following Özal's becoming president. Akbulut was nominated as prime minister, and in that post he acted in a subservient manner to Özal. Akbulut's passivity and dependency helped Özal's establishing his absolutism but provoked a sharp reaction. When early elections became a matter of debate, Özal disclosed his views and emphasized the importance of drafting a new constitution before those elections were held.<sup>312</sup> In response, Demirel criticized Özal for misusing the executive power, on the grounds that the president is defined as the politically irresponsible

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<sup>311</sup> *Hürriyet*, 9 December 1990.

<sup>312</sup> *Hürriyet*, 9 December 1990.

part of the executive branch. Referring to Özal's expressing his views on behalf of ANAP officials, Demirel argued that the president's partiality was revealed.<sup>313</sup> Demirel was also uncomfortable with the President Özal's policy on the Kurds. It was a bold move of Özal at that time to spark off a debate on constitutional amendments on the right to freedom of press and freedom of expression targeting specifically abolishment of censorship and the ban on some languages, i.e. Kurdish. In his party group meeting, Demirel fiercely criticized Özal by claiming that Çankaya is in an "act of negligence, perversion, and treachery".<sup>314</sup> He pointed out that the issue should be addressed in a more circumspect manner. Furthermore, Demirel reminded that in Turkey for more than a thousand years twenty three different ethnic groups have been living together without being assimilated and, excluding the non-Muslims, no ethnic group has been considered a minority. Demirel stated that "if Turkish citizens are classified according to their ethnic and religious differences then Turkey would be divided."<sup>315</sup> Those allegations of Demirel were countered by Özal's filing a lawsuit against Demirel; Özal accused Demirel of engaging in defamation. Not unexpectedly, the lawsuit added more fuel to the fire rather than a calming down of relations between Özal and Demirel. Demirel repeated his accusations of treachery against Özal and defined the lawsuit as a "political reckoning"<sup>316</sup>.

The way Özal created a significant shift in the civil-military relations made Demirel feel uneasy as well. Even though the resignation of the Chief of General

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<sup>313</sup> Oktay Ekşi, "Demirel Meydan Okuyor", *Hürriyet*, 11 December 1990.

<sup>314</sup> Here Demirel used the exact wording of Atatürk's Address to the Turkish Youth where Atatürk warned the youth about those in power who might endanger the existence and independence of the Republic.

<sup>315</sup> *Hürriyet*, 20 March 1991.

<sup>316</sup> *Hürriyet*, 29 March 1991.

Staff, General Torumtay, due to the clash with Özal on the strategy to be followed in the Gulf War was interpreted as a remarkable development by Demirel, he did not refrain from criticizing Özal. According to Demirel, president Özal wanted to assume the responsibility of the post of Commander of the Turkish Armed Forces. In fact, as Demirel highlighted, it is stipulated by the Constitution that the president, in peace time, represents the office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces which is inseparable from the spiritual existence of the TBMM (Article 117). What Özal attempted, however, was evaluated by Demirel as transgressing the limits of his presidential powers.<sup>317</sup>

Despite the ongoing tense relations, relations were sometimes relaxed between Demirel and Özal. When a group of Greek protesters threw eggs on President Özal in New York City, Demirel publicly condemned that event. He considered it not as a move solely against the personality of Özal but against the national pride. Demirel, significantly, underlined that he and Özal might confront each other on any issue at home, but abroad they stood up together in unity and solidarity.<sup>318</sup>

In March 1990, Özal made a call for a summit in Çankaya to the leaders of ANAP, the DYP and the SHP, those parties having seats in parliament. For Özal, the mounting terrorist acts of the PKK made such a summit necessary. Those were the days when both Demirel and Erdal İnönü, as opposition leaders, debated Özal's legitimacy. However, as they stated, when the issue was a matter of state like integrity and security it was unthinkable not to attend the meeting. This also exemplifies the importance Demirel has attached to state matters.

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<sup>317</sup> *Hürriyet*, 5 January 1990.

<sup>318</sup> The interview with Demirel, *Hürriyet*, 31 March 1991.

The above account of Demirel's relations with Presidents Evren and Özal demonstrate that those were much more confrontational and tense compared to his relations with the presidents of the 1960s and 1970s, Gürsel, Sunay and Korutürk. Since Demirel was banned from politics by the military regime of September 12, his accusations and criticisms were directed particularly against Evren, the head of the 1980 junta. On the other hand, for Evren the politicians of the pre-1980 period (one of whom was Demirel) were responsible for the worsening political situation. These mutual allegations created a tension in the relationship between Demirel and Evren which lasted until the ban on pre-1980 political leaders was lifted in 1987. From then on, Demirel and Evren had better working relations. What made this possible for both was their being at odds with Özal. Evren began to be uncomfortable with the policies of Özal, who was seen as a political adversary by Demirel. It is interesting that after Demirel was elected leader of the DYP, he underlined that he had no desire to take revenge for the past disputes.

Nevertheless, Özal's explicit opposition to abolishing the ban on the leaders of the pre-1980 period was not forgiven by Demirel. Demirel attacked Özal for being elected president by the parliament only with the support of ANAP, the old party of Özal, and thus questioned the legitimacy of his presidency. Özal's interventionist style as a president in the fields of economics and international relations as well as his partiality towards party politics also received criticism from Demirel. Furthermore, Özal's words and deeds in some issues like the Kurdish question and civil-military relations became unacceptable for Demirel. Demirel's approach to these issues differs from Özal as Demirel's political

understanding is centered on the state and policies on these issues should not put the continuation of the state in danger.

## CHAPTER V

### PRESIDENT DEMİREL AND THE STATE

Since the backbone of the study is to analyze the “statist” role of presidents in the Turkish political system, in particular during the presidential term of Demirel, first what this role implies should be analyzed. The statist role is basically about prioritizing the matters of state with an emphasis on political stability and functioning of the state with a sense of commitment to the constitutional order. It should not be regarded just a matter of preserving the status quo, though. The statist role has furthermore a constructive dimension: acting as a mediating force in order to reduce the conflict between the state elites and the political elites, which in turn is expected to lead to a viable democratic system, as Sartori proposes. Therefore the significance of the statist role of the Turkish presidency regarding the maintaining of democracy is obvious.

In critically scrutinizing the statist role of presidents in the Turkish parliamentary system vis-à-vis the consolidation of democracy, the Sartorian distinction between vertical and horizontal democracy is useful. As mentioned, Sartori underlines the

significance of the state in preserving and promoting the general interest in his conceptualization of vertical structuring of democracy.

### 5.1. The Evolution of the State

In Demirel's conception, the state is a "living organism". Hence it is not a "static" but a "dynamic" entity which has changed through centuries.<sup>319</sup> As a starting point, Demirel points out that the state, in particular, existed where civilizations began to flourish. This means there is a strong link between the state as an organization and the civilization that harbors it. The state emerged as a reflection of the relations between the ruler and the ruled.

For Demirel, concerning the historical evolution of state, there had been a transition from a state in which the right to rule comes from the state *per se* to a state that derives its power from the consent of the governed. In other words, he describes this historical shift as a "transition from the people of the state to the state of the people."<sup>320</sup>

Demirel makes reference to some important declarations to illustrate the historical development of the concept of the democratic state. The first group of those documents has become significant in limiting the power of the ruler and framing the inviolable and sacred rights of the ruled. According to Demirel, these are

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<sup>319</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 19.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



Magna Carta (1215), the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies of the United States of America (1776), and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). Demirel underlines that Magna Carta is a breakthrough in the process of constructing a democratic culture, and the 1789 Declaration of Citizen, on the other hand, led to the birth of consciousness of natural rights by highlighting three concepts: liberty, equality, and fraternity.<sup>321</sup> Belonging to the second group of the milestones in the evolution of state, in the post-World War I period, the Wilson Principles (1918) and the foundation of the League of Nations (*Cemiyet-i Akvam*) (1920); in the post-World War II period, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act (1975), and the Charter of Paris (1990), according to Demirel, have further made the inalienable rights of man universal. After 1953, the idea that the essence of right shall not be violated by limitations has become widely acclaimed, and this, for Demirel, is a real limitation of power.<sup>322</sup>

## 5.2. Features of the State

According to Demirel, one of the most important characteristics of state is *governability (yönetilebilirlik)* which can be defined as the state's ability to implement the laws and to use force when it is necessary. However, what should be kept in mind is that in Demirel's opinion it is only the state itself that could use force. If some organs of the state attempted to use force individually, then that state

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<sup>321</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 10.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

would be impossible to govern. This brings the second feature, that is, the *sovereignty* of the state. For Demirel, power is indivisible, and hence the state should preserve its characteristic of being the absolute and unrivaled authority.

According to Demirel, the first and foremost duty of those administering in the name of the state is to maintain it in a governable situation. The second task which is no less vital than the former is keeping this governable state within the rule of law.<sup>323</sup> Here comes the other feature of the state: *legitimacy*. Demirel states that to realize the legitimate conditions, first the supreme book that is the Constitution, and second, the supreme will, that is the free will of the people, should not be superseded.<sup>324</sup> That said, legitimacy for Demirel means, on the one hand, deriving the power to govern from the consent of the governed and on the other, limiting the will of the people within the framework of legal order and balancing it with law.<sup>325</sup> In order to eliminate the possible increase in the vulnerability of state to turmoil, as Demirel claims, all using the state's authority must have legitimacy in their jurisdiction.

Demirel considers failure in governing the state as the utmost threat for democracy. A *well-functioning* state is beginning of everything in Demirel's understanding of politics. Democracy and the state are linked in his political terminology through the concept of a "state that functions in an efficacious manner" ("*işleyen devlet*"). In such a state, institutions function harmoniously and

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<sup>323</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1999), p. 70.

<sup>324</sup> The Interview, 21 December 2005.

<sup>325</sup> T.C Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 10, 14.

the norms are respected without tolerating any exceptional cases. Democracy in Demirel's conception is the totality of those institutions and norms. It is not possible to maintain a viable democracy only with state's efforts. Nonetheless, as Demirel underlines, without a state, institutions cannot function and norms cannot be salient.<sup>326</sup>

By using an analogy of a "golden triangle," Demirel describes the "strong state."<sup>327</sup> This triangle is composed of democracy, development, and defense, and it is not possible to think any of them as separate from the others. Only if the three exist together may freedom, security and livelihood be maintained.<sup>328</sup> A strong state is not conceptualized as an obstacle to democracy by Demirel but rather the "sine qua non of a viable democracy." Nevertheless, not only the existence of the state but its nature and the way it functions are important for the flourishing of democracy. Parallel to that, Demirel emphasizes that the state is not an end in itself but a means for people's contentment, and therefore in a strong state, the state is protected not only by a specific elite group but by the whole nation.<sup>329</sup> The bond between nation and state is strong in a strong state. The concept of the

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<sup>326</sup> Süleyman Demirel, *Altın Üçgen: Demokrasi, Savunma, Kalkınma* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1999), p. 243.

<sup>327</sup> Here it should be noted that Demirel's reference to the concept of the "strong state" is different from Heper's conceptualization. According to Heper, a strong state is one that has considerable autonomy from social groups and acts as the guardian of the general interest as it itself defines it. See Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Walkington, UK: The Eothen Press, 1985). Demirel uses the adjective "strong" in a similar fashion to Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde's conceptualization. In their strong state versus weak state distinction, they built their arguments on the following concepts: legitimacy of government, sovereignty, the degree of socio-economic cohesion, political threats to the stability of state (ethnic divisions, secessionist actions, terrorism) and idea of state (national identity, organizing ideology, institutions). See Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).

<sup>328</sup> Demirel, *Altın Üçgen*, p. 240.

<sup>329</sup> From the speech Demirel gave on the 35th Anniversary of the Constitutional Court's Foundation in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 31.

state's embracing the nation is used by Demirel to describe this relationship.<sup>330</sup> Hence another feature of the state for Demirel is its *inclusiveness*. In addition to the above examples related to the horizontal dimension of democracy, a further dimension of the concept of the strong state is suggested by Demirel: the institutions grounded upon the free will of the nation and the constitutional norms are the factors that make a state stronger. In a related manner, he underlines the significance of the notions of "civic consciousness" (*yurttaşlık bilinci*) and "democratic culture" (*demokrasi kültürü*), which, in his opinion, derive from the people's trust in the rule of law and the constitutional regime. In such a state, the authority is democratic, legal, and legitimate, and this contributes, according to Demirel, to the harmonious functioning of the organs of a strong state.<sup>331</sup>

As Demirel underlines, the strong state embraces all of its citizens. Parallel to that, it provides moral leverage that upholds people's pride in living in their country. However it is not sufficient for a state to be regarded as trustworthy by people. *Competency* comes to the fore as another feature of the state in addition to *trustworthiness*. As Demirel explains, competency is directly linked to the principles and *resoluteness* of the state,<sup>332</sup> in other words, the state should fulfill what it has promised. The erosion of the trust in state is among the issues Demirel heeds most. At that point he sees the necessity of differentiating between "trust in the state" and "confidence in the government."<sup>333</sup> "Being distrustful to the elected government or criticizing its political acts and deeds are only to be expected. Indeed, the body politic exists to be criticized. Nevertheless it should not be

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., p. 11, 14.

<sup>332</sup> The Interview, 03 January 2006.

<sup>333</sup> Özgüven, *A Life Devoted to the Grand Turkey Ideal*, p. 66.

disregarded that governments are like hats. They could become worn out and one can buy a new one. But the state is the head one cannot dispense with.”<sup>334</sup> This analogy is important to understand the significance Demirel attributes to the state. Moreover this analogy can be useful to clarify the controversial statement of Demirel: “The council of ministers is a political institution. The MGK is state.” Not surprisingly, this statement met with negative reaction from some circles. By saying that the council of ministers is a political institution Demirel did not aim to belittle its importance. There is no intention of making a comparison between the council of ministers and the MGK. In line with the hat and head analogy, he tries to underline that the composition and policies of the council of ministers is not continuous and stable and the change occurs depending on the election results. However since the MGK is not only composed of elected civilians but in addition the president as the head of state and the commanders of the armed forces, the MGK is where the matters of the state are discussed in detail and advisory decisions on national security are taken. That is the reason why Demirel considers the MGK as state not as a political institution. Looking at his understanding of state, this is not surprising and the statement above does not contradict with it.

### **5.3. Functions of the State**

As Rueschemeyer and Evans have noted, such core tasks as maintaining sovereignty, defense and institutional infrastructure should be undertaken by any viable state. The pursuit of general interest and deliverance of collective goods are

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<sup>334</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 49.

therefore claimed to be universal state roles.<sup>335</sup> Drawing on their classification, four main categories can be pinpointed, which Demirel considers as “great matters of state”: law and order, modernization and development, socio-economic issues, and international relations.

As mentioned, Demirel is of the opinion that the concept of the state has been transformed through ages. Likewise, he asserts that the functions of the state have also changed, and thus points out the shrinking of the state. As an example, he observes that states are withdrawing from commercial and industrial activities.

The functions of the state as well as the functions of society have changed. That means the state no longer tackles each and every single problem the country faces. Likewise, the people no longer sit and wait for the state’s aid thinking that the state is required to do that. With the changing functions of state, the “welfare state” is substituted by the “welfare society.” The welfare state meant that the state was required to respond the needs of the have-nots.<sup>336</sup>

Similar to the bringing-the-state-back-in theorists, Demirel argues that, in the current situation, there are still many fundamental functions that the state should continue to perform. Nonetheless, he makes a distinction among these core tasks. Some of them could only be performed by the state. For Demirel, these tasks are related to justice, freedom, security, peace and prosperity, all of which ensure happiness and contentment for the people.<sup>337</sup> He emphasizes that neither distribution of justice nor showing compassion (*şefkat*) should be considered as a

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<sup>335</sup> Rueschemeyer and Evans, “The State and Economic Transformation,” p. 48.

<sup>336</sup> From his speech delivered in a meeting of the Young Businessmen Association of Ankara on 22 June 1998 in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 62.

<sup>337</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in İstanbul Sanayi Odası Meclis Toplantısında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1994).

favor, for the state is obliged to be just and merciful.<sup>338</sup> Apart from these, there are other fundamental tasks concerning which the state functions as a facilitator and coordinator; these are on issues which could also be handled by voluntary and private organizations.<sup>339</sup> According to Demirel, fulfilling duties concerning education and health without privileging any portions of society, adopting measures against environmental problems, and building infrastructure of all kinds are among those latter tasks.<sup>340</sup>

### 5.3.1. Law and Order

During the presidential term of Demirel, there were some serious concerns about two major issues that could disturb the law and order. The violent terrorist acts of the separatist PKK targeting the territorial integrity and internal peace of the country and the religious fundamentalism endangering the secular regime were those two issues. This led Demirel, in his capacity as president, to emphasize the priority of maintaining order and securing justice among the functions of the state. For him, prior to freedom, it was justice and safety that people have sought throughout the ages.<sup>341</sup> Therefore, the state has become a means to make people lead a secure and peaceful life under a free and just order.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Abdullah Uraz, ed. *Devletimize, Demokrasimize ve Kendimize Güven* (Ankara: Desen Ofset, 1995), p. 31.

<sup>339</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 23.

<sup>340</sup> Demirel, *Altın Üçgen*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>341</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 9.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

According to Demirel a country is secure if everybody can move freely within the borders of the country and is able to start any business they want. In other words, that means being free from doubts about insecurity. Demirel highlights that insecurity is something formed in people's minds<sup>343</sup>, and hence first, the state should try to dispel fears and make people feel that they are secure.

Demirel, on avoiding any threats against the political order coming from terrorist attacks or reactionary movements, considered "rule of law" as an assurance since in a state based on the rule of law, there are mechanisms that can sustain law and order.<sup>344</sup> Hence, in that way, everybody can be freed from worries about regime change and secession. Demirel's insistence on showing that there is no threat to the secular democratic regime in Turkey as long as it keeps its trust in and respect for rule of law in the speeches he gave on religious and national celebration days can be interpreted as his endeavor to eliminate formations of possible polarization and tension in the society.

Demirel was anxious to eliminate possible distortions about the fight against terrorism in the southeast region of Turkey which is misrepresented by the PKK as the state's policy of suppressing the Kurdish origin people of the region. In fact, he strongly emphasizes that the state has no problem with its citizens, but rather performs its duty to protect its citizens, frontiers, lands, and democracy with its

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>344</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları (1993-1999)* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2000), p. 55, 64.



legitimate forces.<sup>345</sup> For Demirel, Turkey is a unitary state having one country, one nation, one language and one flag. His usage of nation does not include an ethnic connotation. He admits the differences based on religion, faith, and political tendencies but regards them as a source of richness and power of Turkey. Demirel made public in one of his speeches on December 8, 1991 in Siirt that he has acknowledged the Kurdish reality. This was in fact a bold move when the political atmosphere of that period is taken into account. Nonetheless, on the heels of this sentence, he stressed that “cultural identity together with civic identity constitutes the link of confidence between the individual and state.”<sup>346</sup> Demirel frequently refers to the vitality of the preservation of national unity for the continuation of the Turkish Republican State. Demirel asserts that all citizens, wherever they live within the boundaries of Turkey, regardless of their [ethnic] origins, language, creed, and sex, are “first-class citizens” having equal rights before the law. This is, as he underlines, the basic condition of national unity in Turkey.<sup>347</sup>

In Demirel’s political terminology, rule of law means obedience to the supremacy of law. In a state based on rule of law, where rights, justice and law are the bases, there is no despotism and no one is subjected to injustices. Furthermore, in such a state, one is not obliged to save oneself or to stand upon one’s rights.<sup>348</sup> Rather, it is the state that establishes justice, provides peace and protects human rights through abiding by law. In a state which respects rule of law, as Demirel

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<sup>345</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 51.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>347</sup> Quoted in Cengiz Ergen, *Cumhurbaşkanı Süleyman Demirel’in Söylev ve Demeçleri*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2002).

<sup>348</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 13.

underlines, there are basic concepts, norms and institutions. Free and fair elections, a parliament formed by the free will of the nation, a government which received the vote of confidence of the parliament, independent judiciary, political parties, free media, free universities, and free trade unions are all taken as the institutions of rule of law, and this political regime is called democracy.<sup>349</sup> It is important to note here that in Demirel's political discourse, rule of law, democratic state, and constitutional state are all interrelated concepts he uses frequently and interchangeably.

Demirel argues that rule of law requires a legal order that frames the capacity and objectives of the state and the will of people to live together. It is grounded upon a constitution that defines the rights, duties, responsibilities and relations among institutions.<sup>350</sup> Hence rule of law is a constitutional state. In addition to that, for Demirel, there is a strong link between rule of law and democracy. He conceives rule of law as "the advanced stage in a democratic development" and, in other words, as "the constituent element of democracy extended to a wider area."<sup>351</sup> Demirel points out that in a rule of law the will of the majority is balanced with law and democracy is indeed the rule of law, not the rule of the majority.<sup>352</sup> The will of the people is respected and given importance by Demirel but he sees law as a safety valve against the shift of a democratic regime into a tyranny of majority. Moreover, as already noted, he highlights two concepts, "citizenship consciousness" and "democratic culture," which are claimed to cultivate the rule of law. Loyalty and obedience to the constitution, for Demirel, are the virtues of

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., p. 16, 28.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

citizens, and the balance between the rights, freedoms and responsibilities could only be created in that way. As we have seen, according to Demirel, rule of law, with its “substance democracy” (“*içerik demokrasisi*”) signifying the rights, and its “procedural democracy” (“*yöntem demokrasisi*”) signifying the norms and rules that public authorities should comply with, encompasses both vertical and horizontal dimensions of democracy.

Another related concept with rule of law in Demirel’s political terminology is the strong state. Referring to his “golden triangle” analogy, the coexistence of democracy, development and defense are important for a state to maintain freedom, subsistence and security as reflections of the former three. For him, as mentioned before, a state is strong when it serves its people best by fulfilling its basic functions, which are ensuring security, justice and equality of opportunity.<sup>353</sup> Demirel praises the attentiveness and vigilance of people which he considers the main assurances for the rule of law.<sup>354</sup> Demirel argues that in a strong state people are free to ask for the better conditions and the contentment of the people is prioritized by an open, just and an effective administration. Hence, as he put forward, the politicians should preserve the smooth functioning of state.<sup>355</sup>

Based on the above explanations, it can be argued that Demirel acts as a proponent of the “strong state” which he defines by referring both to the

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<sup>353</sup> From the keynote speech Demirel delivered in the Conference on the Problems of French State Administration and the Solution Offered on 4 April 1996 in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 4.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>355</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 5.

horizontal and vertical dimensions of democracy. Looking at the periods during which Demirel acted as prime minister, Heper has come to the conclusion that “he remained political elite only” without attempting “to double as the state elites” and added that the clash with the state elites made Demirel fail to “appreciate the particular function the state had been performing in Turkey.”<sup>356</sup> However, Demirel in his presidential term has proved the opposite and become aware of the fact that it is required to establish a *modus vivendi* between the state elites and the political elites in order to have a viable democracy.

### **5.3.2. Modernization and Development**

In Demirel’s train of thought, modernization has four pillars. The economic pillar is made up of integration with the global market economy, economic growth, and prosperity. Improvements in the areas of public works and reconstruction and achieving a more prosperous society as an outcome of development, industrialization, and technological advancement form the social pillar. The third pillar, that is the political, requires a democratic system in which the will of nation is considered supreme and fundamental rights and freedoms are secured. The fourth one, the cultural pillar, is becoming modern while preserving national and moral values. It should be highlighted that in Demirel’s conception of modernization, the state is given a central place.

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<sup>356</sup> Metin Heper, “Turkish Democracy Reconsidered: Illusion breeding disillusion?” in *Institutional Aspects of the Economic Integration of Turkey into the European Community*, eds. H. Körner and R. Shams (Hamburg: Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, 1990).

As mentioned before, the state and development are closely linked according to Demirel. In that vein, matters of infrastructure are an important part of the issue of development. Demirel states that it is necessary for the state to continue in a selective way, investing in infrastructure projects for which it is strictly responsible. Energy, communication, and transportation infrastructures should be developed accordingly. Demirel adds that the investments in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey should be completed as soon as possible. He argues that it is wrong to consider these investments as mere infrastructure projects because these become hope for the people of those regions.<sup>357</sup>

In Demirel's thinking, development has also the dimension of technological advancement. To become capable of competing in the globalizing world and fueling economic growth, the country should develop its scientific and technological capacities. In his view, this could be achieved through education. To become modern and developed, becoming a knowledge society (*bilgi toplumu*) has great importance. As Demirel asserts, the state plays a key role, as an architect of a modern education system, in catching up with the level of contemporary standards in the fields of education and science that the information age presupposes, and in increasing the number of citizens who could benefit from the opportunities provided by science and technology and, in turn, make contributions to knowledge production.<sup>358</sup> Demirel states that developing the kind of education system that increases the number of well-equipped individual-citizens is also crucial in raising the level of consciousness among citizens, which is thought to be

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<sup>357</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 55.

<sup>358</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, pp. 30-31.

correlated with modernization.<sup>359</sup> Indeed, for him, this is directly associated with the state's responsibility for creating the necessary environment for the exercise of rights by the citizens who acquire awareness of justice and democracy in the process of education.<sup>360</sup> In Demirel's terms, modernization and the presence of a responsible and active society are intimately connected.

### **5.3.3. Socioeconomic Issues**

Demirel underlines that, besides its being a democratic rule of law, the state's social dimension should not be disregarded. As explained, the state has an obligation not to provide the educational service alone but to support its provision by various other institutions. Demirel claims that the state is primarily responsible for taking the necessary measures to ensure that all portions of society could be given the equal chance to benefit from the educational opportunities at similar standards.<sup>361</sup>

Similarly, on the issue of health, Demirel emphasizes the important role of the state, particularly in making reforms for providing the opportunity of a healthy life for all citizens. Here too, he thinks that the implementation of such reforms should not be left only to the state. Indeed, for Demirel, private entrepreneurs should take part in the health sector, too. While stating the necessity of encouraging the private enterprises, he also pays attention to the matter of

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

supervising the private health institutions. According to Demirel, other than the idea of state control, establishing institutional structures that will enable the private health sector to supervise itself is also important.<sup>362</sup>

In Demirel's view, another issue that the state should be responsive to is the issue of social justice. He believes that it is the task of the state to decrease disparities between different income groups by reallocation of resources at the disposal of the state.<sup>363</sup>

#### **5.3.4. International Relations**

Demirel argues that in the field of international relations the tasks of the state could not be delegated to any other institution. Within the family of states all over the world, the prestige and esteem of a country is very important. According to Demirel, preserving the reputation and increasing the credibility of the country is among the responsibilities of the state.

In Demirel's view, the protection of sovereignty is the other significant issue that a state should tackle. To that end, he gives an important place in the tasks of the state to security and defense. In harmony with his positive conception of politics, Demirel favors following a strategy of foreign affairs predicated upon peace and stability. He thinks that it is advantageous for all countries to cooperate. In his

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<sup>362</sup> Quoted from President Demirel's 1999 opening address delivered in parliament in Güven, *A life Devoted to the Grand Turkey Ideal*, p. 83.

<sup>363</sup> Uraz, *Devletimize, Demokrasimize ve Kendimize Güven*, p. 31.

opinion, conflicts can be resolved through mutual understanding, tolerance, and peaceful dialogue.<sup>364</sup>

Demirel is of the opinion that “foreign policy should be conducted in balance” and that should be done without being “surrendered to the anger of the people.”<sup>365</sup>

The public administrators have to pursue the national interest and fulfill those responsibilities of the state inherited from the past.<sup>366</sup> This might include creating new or activating old zones of influence. Nevertheless, at the same time, the state should be careful not to disturb the peace in its region and the world. Demirel summarizes his views on the continuity of the state’s foreign policy and its independence from individual practices as follows:

Foreign policy is a sensitive issue. It could not be separated from the country’s past. The continuity in state affairs is fundamental. Political executives in power could make engagements in foreign affairs in the name of state. The real owner of the engagement here is the state. [Authorized] People could change but the engagements [of the state] remain unchanged. The continuity on foreign policy is exceptionally important. It may carry the seal of the governments, but it still belongs to the state’s domain. Unless it becomes a state matter, the validity of the policy would be considered dubious when the government changes.<sup>367</sup>

#### **5.4. Demirel’s Conception of Presidency as the “Head of State”**

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<sup>364</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 57.

<sup>365</sup> Nigar Göksel, “Turkey and Democratization in the Middle East: A TPQ Exclusive Interview with Süleyman Demirel,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 4, no.2 (Summer 2005), p. 21.

<sup>366</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 58.

<sup>367</sup> Uraz, *Devletimize, Demokrasimize ve Kendimize Güven*, p. 130.



During presidential elections, Turkish politics tends to lurch into a legitimacy crisis (also sometimes called “state crises”). Considering the presidency as the foremost institution of state shows us that “head” in “head of state” is not just symbolic. Through many years, in spite of the changes made in the presidential elections, the president has never stopped being perceived as the one representing the general interest and acting in a manner for the good of the country as a whole. Article 104 of the Constitution defines president as the “representative of the Turkish Republic and the unity of the Turkish nation”; this provision has inspired Demirel to construe presidency as representing not only the state but the nation as well.<sup>368</sup> Dodd, in his article on Turkish presidency, points out that the president in Turkey is a protector rather than a mere impartial figurehead.<sup>369</sup> This view seems to have been adopted as a principle by Demirel in his Çankaya years.

In analyzing the presidential term of Demirel and the way he perceived and interpreted the statist role of the president, the oath sworn by the president under the 1982 Constitution constitutes a reference point. As he stated, the attributes of the Turkish state are well described in this article (Article 103) of the Constitution. The Turkish state, for Demirel, has been set up on three basic tenets. One of them is national will; the others are the principle of secularism and a unitary state with the indivisible integrity of the country. The Constitution pays

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<sup>368</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 146.

<sup>369</sup> Dodd, “Kenan Evren as President: From Conflict to Compromise,” p. 179.

high attention to these three tenets.<sup>370</sup> What the president swears upon, as the head of state, are the essential elements of the Turkish state, as Demirel stated.<sup>371</sup>

In a similar vein, the speech that President Demirel delivered in the Parliament on assuming office in 1993 is noteworthy in the sense that the points he raised give us a clue about Demirel's perception of presidency. He indicated that it is inconceivable for a president representing the Turkish Republic and the unity of the Turkish nation, who is obliged to embrace all sorts of legal organizations of the citizens including political parties, to act in a partisan manner.<sup>372</sup> Hence it is obvious that Demirel, in parallel with the state elites, highlighted the impartiality of the president. Nevertheless, he added that becoming impartial did not mean that the president would keep his silence in state matters, but rather that he would act in accordance with the Constitution and the democratic-secular character of the Republic.<sup>373</sup>

As mentioned in the second section of Chapter IV, Demirel explains his perspective on what the status and duties of president ought to be in the Turkish political system by frequently criticizing the way Özal acted as a president. For Demirel, Özal acted in a partisan manner and beyond the limits of Constitution where the powers of the president are clearly stipulated. Demirel highlights that in Article 8 the executive power and function is defined as follows: "Executive power and function shall be exercised and carried out by the President of the

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<sup>370</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 330.

<sup>371</sup> The Interview, 21 December 2005.

<sup>372</sup> Ergen, *Cumhurbaşkanı Süleyman Demirel'in Söylev ve Demeçleri*, p. 3.

<sup>373</sup> From the Interviews with Demirel broadcast on TGRT (February 5, 1997) and Show TV (April 21, 1997) in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 70, 194.

Republic and the Council of Ministers in conformity with the Constitution and the law.” It is also clearly stipulated in already mentioned Article 104 that the president “shall ensure the implementation of the Constitution, and the regular and harmonious functioning of the organs of state.”

After mentioning these articles, Demirel has somehow shifted his previous claim that duties and powers of president are *clearly* defined in the Constitution. Surprisingly, he admitted that it is normal to have different perspectives in interpreting these duties and powers and it is also possible to have some differences of view concerning that issue. Moreover, he argues that the statements in the Constitution extend the duties and powers of president. Thus Demirel accepts that during his presidential term, when the circumstances were unclear, he interpreted those statements and acted accordingly.<sup>374</sup> On the other hand, he makes it clear that while interpreting the provisions in question, he paid great attention to the protection of the interests of the nation, and to avoiding any delay in state matters.<sup>375</sup>

Demirel emphasizes that the president represents the unity of the country as well as the integrity of the state. In his words, the office of president is the sole office that state and nation are simultaneously manifested.<sup>376</sup> On the other hand, he also states that the office of president belongs to the nation.<sup>377</sup> In that way, the

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<sup>374</sup> From the Interview with Demirel broadcast on Kanal D (December 11, 1996) in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 39.

<sup>375</sup> Uraz, *Devletimize, Demokrasimize ve Kendimize Güven*, p. 90.

<sup>376</sup> From the Interview with Demirel broadcast on ATV (March 7, 1997) in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 146.

<sup>377</sup> From the Interview with Demirel broadcast on Show TV (May 8, 1995) in *Ibid.*, p. 2.

president leads the efforts to embrace nation and state. According to Demirel, the president is authorized to be the president of each and every person in the country. Therefore, s/he should be above party politics and make clear the ideals that all political views are required to embrace.<sup>378</sup> According to Demirel, the president ought to address all of the significant problems of the country and suggest solutions for them.

Consequently, according to Demirel, the president is expected to safeguard the regime and state. As mentioned, s/he is also responsible for the smooth and harmonious functioning of the state. Demirel believes that even if some people try to hinder this, the president should remain calm so as to overcome such obstacles.<sup>379</sup> To that end, Demirel puts forward the conciliatory role of the president. He states that the president assists the political parties in reaching an agreement. However, the limits of this role have been drawn by the president. Anything could be a subject of compromise except the unity of state and its secular character.<sup>380</sup>

Demirel's view of the presidency paralleled the way he conducted himself in that office. Demirel, who has argued that a president ought to listen, consult, and enlighten, acted in a way that was consistent with that dictum. In addition to the senior state officials and political party leaders, he received the leaders and representatives of many organizations such as labor unions, employers'

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<sup>378</sup> From the Interview with Demirel broadcast on Kanal D (December 11, 1996) in *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>379</sup> From the Interview with Demirel broadcast on Kanal D (December 11, 1996) in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 42.

<sup>380</sup> From the Interview with Demirel broadcast on Show TV (April 21, 1997) in T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 191.

associations, public professional organizations, voluntary initiatives, and foundations. Demirel noted that his objective was to maintain harmony among the state organs and spread that harmony to society, thereby turning the presidency into a “consultation mechanism.”<sup>381</sup> Moreover, he claimed that his endeavor was to mold public opinion for the purpose of sustaining democratization. To realize that goal, he made various suggestions to institutions and organizations so as to lead and guide people, too.<sup>382</sup> As the head of state, Demirel’s general strategy was to closely watch all important developments related to the country and intervene when he deemed it necessary. The events during the February 28 process can set an example in order to understand how Demirel put this strategy into practice. This will be analyzed in detail in Chapter VI. For the purpose of this section, it is sufficient to argue that there might have been a connection between Demirel’s active involvement in the process and his opinion that people’s expectations from the president rise during periods of crisis.<sup>383</sup>

## 5.5. Summary

The state is a pivotal concept in Demirel’s political understanding. It is idealized as being “strong”. In the web of his conception of politics, the state is the only concept affiliated to each and every other concept. For him, the state is not static but has transformed through the ages from “the people of the state” to “the state of

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<sup>381</sup> Uraz, *Devletimize, Demokrasimize ve Kendimize Güven*, p. 92.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>383</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Çeşitli Toplantılarda Yaptığı Konuşmalar III*, p. 39.

the people.” It is interesting that Demirel established a link between state and civilization, seeing them as evolving together.

This analysis of Demirel’s sophisticated views on the features of the strong state has resulted in eight characteristics. The first one is governability, which indicates state’s ability to implement laws and use force when needed. It is closely linked to the state as an absolute and unrivaled authority which implies its sovereignty. Demirel here puts forward the importance of keeping the governable and sovereign state within the rule of law which brought the third dimension, the legitimacy of the state. This is important since the idea of democracy in Demirel’s web of thinking appears at this point. The legitimacy of the state is considered to be closely related to the “consent of the governed” as the basis of state’s power on one hand, and on the other, with the limitation of the “will of the people” by laws. Where there are respected norms and laws, and harmoniously functioning institutions, the state functions. Thus, it is understood that for Demirel a strong state and a viable democracy are not mutually exclusive. It is unique to argue that strong state is a *sine qua non* of a viable democracy. Three d’s, i.e. democracy, development, and defense, are defined by Demirel as the fundamentals of a strong state. The last four features of a strong state are basically about its ties with nation and people. Demirel’s strong state embraces the nation as a whole. This inclusiveness in turn breeds civic consciousness and democratic culture in a constitutional regime. According to Demirel, the competence, resoluteness, and trustworthiness of state are basic requirements for the rule of law.

In discussions revolving around whether state withers or not, Demirel is on the side that holds that it is not fading away. He admits that its functions have changed. Nevertheless, some goods can still be provided only by the state, i.e. justice, freedom, security, peace and prosperity, happiness and contentment, and the like. As seen, these are all abstract and intangible concepts. On the other hand, according to Demirel, there are also some other tasks that the state performs as a facilitator and coordinator. Those are more concrete and tangible issues such as education and health services, environmental projects, and infrastructure.

Demirel's conception of presidency as head of state is influenced by his strong state understanding. He considers the president responsible for the implementation of the constitution with all its institutions functioning harmoniously, and the durability of the democratic regime by activating the conciliation mechanism when deemed necessary. He distinguished state matters from matters of party politics. In that way, Demirel could act decisively concerning some issues without harming the image of the president which is expected to be impartial. The next chapter examines in detail how Demirel's style managed to be both active and impartial.

## CHAPTER VI

### PRESIDENT DEMİREL AND DEMOCRACY

In Demirel's political vision, democracy has primary importance too. As mentioned, for him, state and democracy could not be separated from each other. He stressed that a state without democratic rule would not be a functioning state and pointed out that democracy would not exist in a stateless structure. To repeat it again for the purpose of this chapter, what he envisaged is a state that is cherished by the people, a democratic state where authority is given through the consent of the people.<sup>384</sup> At this point Demirel addressed a concept, "democratic authority" which for him is related to the rule of law.

As mentioned, Demirel defined a well functioning state as a democratic state where there are applicable laws implemented without any exemptions and where a harmony between institutions exists. Demirel believed that as long as the rules are enforced, problems can be solved within democracy. However, what is also important in this process is eliminating a possible loss of people's confidence in

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<sup>384</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in İstanbul Sanayi Odası Meclis Toplantısında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1994).



democracy, because Demirel thought that a democratic system would collapse when the trust of people in democracy totally disappears.<sup>385</sup> For maintaining a viable democracy, the state as an organizing actor is necessary, though not sufficient, because perpetuation of democratic rule depends also upon the sensibility and involvement of public opinion. Therefore in Demirel's political lexicon, democracy, state and people are interconnected. Democracy, in a sense, is a manifestation of the embracing of the people by the state.

Demirel also talked about the "democratic reflex of people" as indispensable in a functioning state; this means that people would not condone injustice but rather, through being organized, legally stand up for their rights.<sup>386</sup> In his political jargon, political participation will not be realized only by elections. Demirel's view that "the majority, as long as it is set free, will not go wrong"<sup>387</sup> can also strengthen the argument made earlier that he has a belief in people. In that regard, he has diverged from the state elites who assume the role of safeguarding the regime. Demirel pointed out that as it is underlined in the Constitution the true guardians of the Republic are the citizens *per se*. He emphasized that if a society leaves the responsibility of the preservation of democracy to the state and to the security forces, democracy will collapse.<sup>388</sup> This viewpoint has paved the way for Demirel's contribution to the efforts in Turkey of maintaining a viable democracy by being a conciliatory figure between the state and its people. Moreover,

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<sup>385</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Çankaya'da Yedi Yıl: Türkiye'nin 9. Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in 7 Yıllık Etkinlikleri* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2000), p. 332.

<sup>386</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Gazetelere Verdikleri Mülakatlar* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2000), p. 55.

<sup>387</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in 1993-1999 Yılları Arasında Verdikleri Mülakatlar* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1999), p. 243.

<sup>388</sup> Demirel, *Altın Üçgen*, p. 210.

Demirel, whose entire political career is marked by his belief in people, has tried to counteract elitist inclinations, which were salient in the state discourse.

Demirel's approach to the increasing violent acts in the southeast of Turkey during his presidential term would also make clear his conceptualization of democracy. He reacted to the attempts of some people to justify these moves by arguing that they emerged due to the defects of Turkish democracy. Demirel stated that these violent acts could only be named separatist acts and there is no place for secessionism in a democracy since democracy could never be related to the acts targeting the indivisible integrity of country.<sup>389</sup> It is obvious that Demirel praised the conception of the unitary state; however, Demirel did not stand for assimilating differences based on ethnicity or religion. Indeed, in his political terminology, nation as a term denotes something more than ethnicity or race. Demirel sticks to what he had expressed just before he was elected president about his conceptualization of nation and nationalism: a common future and a feeling of a shared destiny make a society a nation.<sup>390</sup>

In his mentioned Siirt speech (1991), by referring to the Kurdish reality, Demirel pointed out that the Turkish Republic is the country of people coming from different ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, Demirel interpreted this fact as enriching and strengthening but not as a divisive factor harming national unity. Considering this problematic issue of the Republic, Demirel has proposed an important concept as a remedy, which is "constitutional citizenship" (*anayasal*

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<sup>389</sup> Muharrem Özgüven, *Cumhurbaşkanı Süleyman Demirel: Devlet Hayatında Elli Yıl* (Ankara: EKA, 1998), p. 202.

<sup>390</sup> T.C Başbakanlık, *Press Conference, Istanbul, March 1992* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1992), p. 4; *Tercüman* (Istanbul daily), 17 August 1993.

*vatandaşlık*). For him, it can be defined as treating everybody as equal before the law and ignoring differences based on religion, ethnic origin, and geographical location.<sup>391</sup> Therefore, Demirel suggested that the minority rights issue would be an entrapment and a great mistake for Turkey if it is discussed in the name of democratization.<sup>392</sup>

Demirel always stressed the necessity of everybody's being loyal to the constitutional order. In his entire political career as a party leader, he kept up his struggle for a more democratic constitution. At first sight, it might seem as if there is a paradox between his previous criticisms of the 1982 Constitution and his emphasis on loyalty to the constitution after he became president. Nevertheless, Demirel's statements during his presidential term clearly indicate that he continued supporting the constitutional changes, some of which were planned under his guidance during his premiership. Within the seven-year-term of office, seventeen articles<sup>393</sup> of the constitution have been amended and two articles<sup>394</sup> were abolished.

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<sup>391</sup> Quoted in Özgüven, *Devlet Hayatında Elli Yıl*, p. 212.

<sup>392</sup> Demirel, *Altın Üçgen*, p. 162.

<sup>393</sup> Freedom of association (Article 33), Nationalization and privatization (Article 47), Right of collective bargaining (Article 53), Right to vote, to be elected, and to engage in political activity (Article 67), Forming political parties, membership and withdrawal from a membership in a party (Article 68), Principles to be observed by political parties (Article 69), Composition of TBMM (Article 75), Loss of membership by a deputy (Article 84), Application for annulment of the decision of the TBMM on loss of membership by a deputy (Article 85), Convening and adjournment of the TBMM (Article 93), Recourse to judicial review of administration (Article 125), Local administrations (Article 127), Radio and TV administrations and state financed news agencies (Article 133), public professional organizations (Article 135), Functioning and trial procedures of Constitutional Court (Article 149), Council of State (Article 155), Promotion of cooperatives (Article 171).

<sup>394</sup> Activities of labor unions (Article 52), State Security Courts (Article 143).

## 6.1. Demirel and the Political Parties

When Demirel was elected president by the parliament in 1993, he faced a similar difficulty to that which his predecessor Özal had experienced in his term of office. He had become the President of Turkish Republic while the party that he had led for a long time was in power. However, Demirel was prepared and able to protect himself from harsh criticisms regarding the relationship with the political parties such as he had made while Özal was president. From the beginning of his term, Demirel on every occasion declared that he was and always would be loyal to the requirements of “constitutional presidency,” (*anayasal cumhurbaşkanlığı*)<sup>395</sup> i.e., he would keep an equal distance from each and every political party.

In explaining the term constitutional presidency, Demirel emphasized the impartiality of the president as an essential characteristic of the presidency. On the other hand, Demirel felt the necessity to make it clear that the impartial and above-party-politics position of the president should not be interpreted and understood as his complete detachment from all political issues. At this point, it would be beneficial to look at Demirel’s perception and differentiation of “active politics” from “party politics.” He claimed that the president should not be expected to be indifferent to some particular issues, such as the indivisibility of Turkey, preserving its secular republican character, and defending the principles of justice, fairness, clemency, and conscience.<sup>396</sup> For Demirel, it is a duty of the president that is assigned by Article 104 of the constitution to maintain the

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<sup>395</sup> *Nokta* (Istanbul weekly), 22 December 1993.

<sup>396</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 65.

effective and harmonious functioning of every mechanism in politics within the legal framework.<sup>397</sup>

Contrary to what was expected, throughout his presidency Demirel was careful not to behave in a way that might be interpreted as meddling in the affairs of the party he had previously led. He paid attention to the criticisms of the opposition about the policies and performances of the Çiller-Karayağın coalition government that was at one point in a crisis of confidence due to the economic slump. Demirel conducted the presidential office as an intermediary body between the unsatisfied opposition and the coalition government. At the time, Demirel denied the rumors that Çiller and he did not get on well. On the other hand, he supported clandestinely the growing opposition against the coalition government. When opposition parties, associations such as TÜSİAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), and some media institutions visited Demirel to criticize the government and demand the setting up of a new government, Demirel said that Çankaya is not the place to discuss such issues and directed them to the parliament instead. His sensitivity on this issue is important to understand what kind of role Demirel thinks a president should play. Every three or four months, Demirel came together with all the leaders of the political parties and tried to find out their views on various matters. More importantly, as the head of state, he regarded convening the party leaders on a regular basis as his responsibility. In that way, Demirel successfully opened up a constitutionally legitimate space for himself in active politics without endangering his impartiality. It can be argued

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<sup>397</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Gazetelere Verdikleri Mülakatlar*, p. 84.

that his success in this respect is an indication of his accomplishment in developing a unique style as a president in Turkish politics.

## 6.2. Views on Secularism and Islam

President Demirel considered secularism as one of the bases of a democratic republic. He stressed the incorrectness of equating it with other doctrines or belief systems. For Demirel, secularism has a vital importance as a principle and a method.<sup>398</sup> He objected to distorting the meaning of the concept of secularism to mean atheism or hostility toward religion.<sup>399</sup> Furthermore, Demirel was opposed to the politicization of religion since he believed that using religion for political purposes would mostly endanger religion.<sup>400</sup> Demirel argued that religion should not serve politics, but the latter should serve secularism, which in turn might be an “umbrella for religion,” as a protector.<sup>401</sup>

During the revival of Islamist politics in Turkey with the coming of the RP to power, Demirel was the resident of Çankaya. He struggled to dispel worries about the threat of political Islam in Turkey. On the other hand, Demirel referred to the use of religion as a road map in politics as a violation of the Constitution. He also

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<sup>398</sup> The Interview, 21 December 2005.

<sup>399</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 194.

<sup>400</sup> *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul daily), 25 December 1993.

<sup>401</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Gazetelere Verdikleri Mülakatlar*, p. 168.

vehemently argued that those aiming to establish a secular versus Muslim dichotomy and thus create divisions in Turkish society could never succeed.<sup>402</sup>

According to Demirel, secularism is a warrant for freedom of conscience and belief. Furthermore, he underlined that people in Turkey do not have a problem with secularism.<sup>403</sup> In his conceptualization, secularism could only be a matter for political life not for the people. It is not a characteristic for the individual. For him, an individual could be a believer or a non-believer.<sup>404</sup> Hence Demirel opposed classifying people as secular or anti-secular.

Another significant matter that Demirel proposed was the compatibility of Islam and secularism which, as he argued, is best practiced in Turkey. He claimed that the secular Turkish Republic felt abhorrence neither for Islamic faith nor for its practices. It is just a system in which legal norms are not designated in accordance with *Shari'a*, which was for Demirel the crux of the struggle of Turkey for modernization.<sup>405</sup>

### **6.3. Demirel and Civil-Military Relations**

As explained in the previous chapters, the military has always been an influential actor in the Turkish polity. The Armed Forces intervened in politics in 1960,

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<sup>402</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 66.

<sup>403</sup> *Zaman* (Istanbul daily), 25 December 1993.

<sup>404</sup> The Interview, 21 December 2005.

<sup>405</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Çeşitli TV Kanallarında Yayınlanan Mülakatları*, p. 258.

1971, 1980 and 1997, on the grounds that the Republican regime was under serious threat.<sup>406</sup> Nonetheless, it could not be easily argued that the Turkish generals are motivated by personal or partial interests like their Latin American counterparts.<sup>407</sup> Rather, they always felt the necessity to go back to their barracks as quickly as possible after they thought that they had secured the main pillars of the regime. However, this does not mean that it is in line with democracy by Western standards. Even though, as Heper stated, the series of mini-interventions perpetuating heretofore took place in the policy-making rather than politics arena,<sup>408</sup> the military has continued to perceive itself as the defender of the interests of the state and intervened in politics when the country was seen by them as facing an internal threat.

Demirel is the only political leader in Turkey who was removed from office twice by military interventions, first in 1971 and then in 1980. Demirel's presidency also coincided with a time of problematic civil-military relations. But unlike his premierships, Demirel as the head of state came close to the state elites by sharing their worries about the rise of religious fundamentalism. However, being critical of the democratic breakdowns and claiming to safeguard the regime, Demirel has stated that, contrary to expectations, military take-overs breed nothing but negative outcomes for the nation's interests.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> To intervene in politics, the military referred to Article 35 of the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Code that empowers the military to act as the guardian of the internal as well as the external security of the country.

<sup>407</sup> Metin Heper and Aylin Güney, "The Military and the Consolidation of Democracy: The Recent Turkish Experience," *Armed Forces and Society* 26, 4 (Summer 2000), p. 651.

<sup>408</sup> Metin Heper, "The Military-Civilian Relations in Post-1997 Turkey" in *Globalization of Civil-Military Relations: Democratization, Reform, and Security*, eds. George Cristian Maior and Larry Watts (Bucharest: Enciclopedica Publishing House, 2002).

<sup>409</sup> Demirel, *Altın Üçgen*, p. 344.



President Demirel has become an expert on the negative implications of civil-military confrontations on the democratic regime that Turkey experienced in an interval of approximately ten years, from 1960 to 1997. On every occasion, he has drawn on this experience to warn both the military and civilians not to fall into the same trap. In his statements, Demirel has always been sensitive when the issue is the Armed Forces as an institution. The controversy on the extension of the term of office of the CGS Doğan Güreş that was put on the agenda by the Prime Minister Çiller in 1994 can exemplify the diligence of President Demirel on this matter. Demirel interpreted such ill-timed discussions as attempts which might harm the sensitive balance of civil-military relations. He warned the government not to draw the army into such a meaningless debate, because it would possibly end up with tarnishing the reputation of the military as an institution. Moreover, Demirel dealt with the issue by underlining that it is beyond the government's initiative to decide on such an extension, since without the will of the president it is a stillborn attempt.

The TSK is particularly sensitive to the issues of secularism and national unity. Any action against them is perceived as an attempt to overthrow the regime. Hence, in the 1990s, it was inevitable that Turkey would not see a tension between the military and the Islamic groups that became an important part of the political and social life from then on. During the RP-DYP coalition government (28 June 1996- 30 June 1997), the generals were disturbed by the words, actions, and policies of RP politicians so much so that the continuation of the coalition government was regarded as hazardous for the secular character of the Republic. The confrontation between the military and the RP did not end up in a direct

military take-over. However the February 28 process had long-term impacts on Turkish political life. Four months after the notorious meeting of the MGK, Erbakan resigned and that caused the RP-DYP coalition government to fall in June 1997. A year later, the Constitutional Court closed down the RP.

President Demirel's endeavor to balance civil-military relations in Turkey is demonstrated best by the February 28 process of 1997. Those were the days when secularists in Turkey started to live in a state of alert. They became alarmed by the lack of loyalty to the Kemalist legacies, especially regarding the issues of secularism and territorial unity. The generals had long started to point out that two internal threats were menacing the Republican regime, one of which was Islamic activism, which was regarded as even more dangerous than the Kurdish insurgency in the southeastern Turkey.<sup>410</sup> Indivisibility of the territorial integrity of the country and persistence of the secular regime were the two most important things that the military was resolved to safeguard. The staunch supporters of secularism including some groups from the media, the bulk of the academic circles, the Istanbul-based business community, and civil societal associations as well as the secularists among the people gave a strong hand to the military in combating the Islamist threat.

Demirel, in tandem with this secular alliance, thought that necessary steps should be taken immediately about the Islamist reactionism that was perceived by many

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<sup>410</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 1 April 1994.

as the “undetectable malaise of the Turkish polity.”<sup>411</sup> Demirel’s acting in this manner was interpreted as a shift from his previous stance on the issue and he was criticized harshly by those having conservative orientations. However, apart from Demirel’s sharing the state elites’ worries about the Islamic fundamentalism, he did not miss any opportunity to give messages calling them to be sober in facing such circumstances. For instance, in his celebration address for the feast of Ramadan in 1996, just after the elections in which the religiously oriented RP had been victorious, Demirel emphasized that there was no need for causing political disharmony by making faulty inferences from the election results, which, as he underlined, was the expression of nation’s free will . He added that the latter was a fundamental principle of Turkish Republic.<sup>412</sup> Demirel thus showed that as president he chose to warn both sides and thus tried to act in an impartial manner.

Demirel not only wanted respect and responsiveness to the will of the people, which he considered as the basic component of democracy, but also sent signals to the elected RP to act in a responsible manner and take into account the sensitivities of the regime. Demirel’s end of the year address again displayed his attempt to make opposing sides remain calm. That speech was delivered in the tense atmosphere two months before the February 28 crisis. Demirel, being aware of the seriousness of the situation, put the weight of the presidency behind the issue and reminded everybody of his presidential duty of being the advocate of the Constitution, rule of law, democracy, Atatürk’s principles and the secular

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<sup>411</sup> Ümit Cizre and Menderes Çınar, ‘Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 102, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2003), pp. 310-312.

<sup>412</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel’in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 60.

character of the Republic, which should be differentiated from the impartiality of president *vis-à-vis* party politics.<sup>413</sup> However, it is also important that in his speech he, as president, did not call upon any other bodies but only citizens to defend the main pillars of the Republic. For regime survival, Demirel considered nothing as necessary as the trust of people in the state. It is important to mention it here again that, in Demirel's understanding, the true guardians of the regime were the citizens *per se* and hence without the citizens' protection democracy could not survive in that society. As evidence, Demirel quoted from the Constitution that it "is entrusted by the Turkish nation to the patriotism and nationalism of its democracy-loving sons and daughters."<sup>414</sup>

Despite Demirel's calming messages, the mounting worries of the secular bloc due to the policies of the RP-DYP coalition government escalated the political tension, which was most clearly observed in the February 28 meeting of the MGK. It was a regular monthly meeting of the MGK, but what made it a prominent event in Turkish political history was the ultimatum-like recommendations made in that meeting to the coalition government led by Erbakan as a reaction to the increase in the "relentless pro-*Shari'a* actions and hostility against the secular order." Beforehand, many controversial events had taken place, which had led to discontent and doubts about the coalition government especially its main partner, the RP. For instance, in the eyes of the state elites, Erbakan's Libya visit on October 4-6, 1996 was a real humiliation for the Turkish nation since he could do nothing there to defy the derogatory remarks

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<sup>413</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in Milli Günler ve Bayramlar Dolayısıyla Yayınlanan Mesajları*, p. 64.

<sup>414</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, *Cumhurbaşkanı Sayın Süleyman Demirel'in İstanbul Ticaret Odası Meclis Toplantısında Yaptıkları Konuşma* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1994).

of Muammar Qaddafi. Moreover, at the Prime Minister's residence, Erbakan had given a dinner to the leaders of religious orders (*tarikats*) during the holy month of Ramadan on January 11, 1997, and that was again perceived as a challenge to the secular regime. The attempts to build mosques (one in Istanbul in Taksim Square, which always has had symbolic importance for Kemalists with its famous statue and other in Ankara in Çankaya which is known as the fortress of the Kemalists) were again disturbing, and they, too, deepened the rift between the secularist camp and the RP.

As the grievances increased among the state elites, counter attacks began. With the purpose of defending their democratic rights and freedoms preemptively from being smashed with a possible Islamist revolution that they predicated would take place as long as the RP remained in power, the secular bloc did not avoid taking some measures which in turn were bound to degrade the quality of democracy in Turkey. Numerous briefing meetings were held by the military to inform various public institutions such as universities, judiciary and the like about the extent of the threat. New units within the military were set up to monitor the infiltration of Islamic fundamentalists into the civil service. In the summer of 1996, the military denied the admission of the members of the RP to an army graduation ceremony on the grounds that they were not properly dressed (they had Islamic beards and headscarves). The last straw for the military was the pro-Islamic demonstrations against Zionism that took place in the so-called Jerusalem Night (*Kudüs Gecesi*), which was organized by the RP-controlled municipality of Sincan, a district of Ankara, on January 31, 1997. The reaction of the army was harsh; tanks rolled through the streets of the town, which was something like a premonitory act.

The complaints of the army about the words and deeds of the members and supporters of the RP were conveyed by the CGS Karadayı to President Demirel. Then Demirel visited the headquarters of the general staff on January 17, 1997. Later in an interview Demirel told that during this meeting the commanders proposed to put their complaints about the anti-regime activities of the government on the agenda of a MGK meeting.<sup>415</sup> Demirel considers the initiative of Karadayı to discuss these issues in the MGK meeting instead of staging a coup a civilized move.<sup>416</sup> What is also important about this meeting is that the recommendations were prepared by the military before the MGK meeting but it was revised during the meeting with the participation of all members of the Council. Demirel mentioned in the same interview that he softened some of its statements and added a note stating that sincere Muslims are not the target of these recommendations.<sup>417</sup>

The MGK recommendations were designed to protect secularism in such a tense atmosphere. At first Prime Minister Erbakan refused to sign some of the recommendations, but later he realized that he had no chance but to sign them. Nevertheless, he came under heavy criticism. He was blamed for inciting people's religious feelings for the sake of coming to power and dividing the society into two camps, thus deepening polarization and enmity in the country. Erbakan, who was considered responsible for the political turmoil, became aware the seriousness of the situation and resigned from the coalition government.

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<sup>415</sup> *Zaman*, 12 July 2007.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

In this severe test for Turkish democracy, President Demirel was one of the conciliatory figures as he helped to surmount the crisis. The resignation of Erbakan created an expectation on the part of the deputy Prime Minister Çiller, the chairwoman of the other partner of the coalition government (DYP), of being asked to form the new coalition government. However, Demirel's reading of the ongoing events was different than Çiller's. He thought that Erbakan's resignation was not sufficient to terminate the crisis; the coalition government should itself disband for the sake of social and political tranquility. Hence, in his constitutional capacity Demirel entrusted Mesut Yılmaz, the leader of ANAP, with the responsibility of forming the new government.

Demirel displayed sensitivity to the discomforts of the secular bloc. However, when there were aforementioned undemocratic measures taken to prevent a possible Islamist take-over, he failed to fully assess negative implications of such measures on the portions of society other than the secularists. As a consequence, there emerged a growing distance between Demirel and his traditional political supporters.

Demirel's reputation in the eyes of the military as a statesman despite the previous antagonistic relations during military interventions and his ability to bring about peace and order when things become complex due to his long experience in state matters somehow prevented Turkish democracy from drifting toward another rupture phase; at least the armed forces did not directly intervene in politics. Some people argue that it was the prudence of Demirel that made the then CGS say that

they backpedaled on the idea of staging an intervention.<sup>418</sup> It is suggested that by acting as a buffer between the commanders and the coalition government, Demirel played a critical role in the process of democratic consolidation.<sup>419</sup> However, for some students of Turkish politics, the February 28 process has opened up a new phase of the “crystallization of state-friendly features by almost all political persuasions and a pervasive sense of political inertia, both of which have exacerbated the weakness and instability of Turkey’s civilian politics.”<sup>420</sup> Hence it can be argued that though Demirel acted in conformity with the Constitution, not only the military but the secular bloc behind the scenes managed to pull the system towards a more state-centric, security-oriented inclination. In this process, the presidency as the locus of the state could not detach itself from that struggle and, in fact, could not prevent Turkish politics from moving in that general direction.

Demirel’s personal experience regarding civil-military relations might have made him behave in such a manner; that as the head of state he should have sustained a balance among the rival parties and prevent another political crisis from arising. For him, the February 28 MGK meeting could not be considered as a “post-modern coup” since there had been no direct intervention aimed at the parliament or the ruling government.<sup>421</sup> Demirel suggested that the MGK is a constitutional body comprising not only high-ranking military officers but elected civilians as well. He also argued that the military members of the council are not there as

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<sup>418</sup> Kışlalı, “Demirel Olacağı Biliyor”.

<sup>419</sup> Yeşim Arat, “Süleyman Demirel: National Will and Beyond” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, Metin Heper and Sabri Sayarı, eds. (Boulder: Lexington Boks, 2002), p. 96.

<sup>420</sup> Cizre and Çınar, “Turkey 2002,” p. 316.

<sup>421</sup> The Interview, 21 December 2005.



representatives of the military but as top experts in security. The notorious recommendations in question were, in fact, made with the consent of the civilians. Although Demirel claimed that there was nothing unconstitutional in this process, this does not mean that it did not degrade the quality of Turkish democracy especially when one considers that the 1982 Constitution is a product of the coup. It is possible to argue that Demirel was well aware that the invisible hand of the Armed Forces was again at work. Demirel's later criticisms about Article 35 of the Internal Service Code of the military can be evaluated as his endeavor to save himself from criticisms coming from the liberal and conservative circles; the latter thought that Demirel was an "accomplice" in the February 28 crisis. He argued that the mentioned legislation was the product of the 1960 military coup's search for legitimacy. Demirel added that none of the militaries in other countries has a similar code. For him, the duty of protecting and safeguarding the republic and the constitution could only be assigned to the armed forces by a legal political authority.<sup>422</sup>

#### **6.4. Summary**

This chapter shows that democracy in Demirel's understanding is inseparable from the concept of the state. For the purpose of this essay, it is important to underline the statist role of Demirel as president and its implications for a viable democracy. Hence his relations with the political parties, the military and his views on secularism and Islam are examined in this chapter. Demirel has

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<sup>422</sup> *Sabah* (Istanbul daily), 31 October 2005.

established an intellectual framework for himself which would set boundaries for his behaviour as a president. He called it “constitutional presidency” and tried to remain faithful to the requirements of his framework. Impartiality was the first requirement. In his relations with the political parties, Demirel tried to keep his distance without exceeding the power entitled by the constitution. The second requirement was acting as an intermediary, and he acted accordingly. In fact in the 1990s, the society was on the brink of serious divisions. Secularism had become a shelter for some against the Islamic-oriented RP in government. In such a tense atmosphere, Demirel as president tried to give calming messages to the people to eliminate further conflict. By reminding them that the RP had received the greatest number of votes in the general election (December 24, 1995), he emphasized the necessity of showing respect and being responsive to the will of the people. This in fact illustrates the consistency between his construction of the image of presidency as an intermediary body and how he conducted himself during his presidency.

Nonetheless, the growing antagonism between the secularists and Islamists could not be eliminated. The formation of the secular alliance against the RP-DYP coalition government had resulted in the February 28 process in which Demirel actively took part. Indeed, how Demirel acted as president during the February 28 process illustrates the reflections of the statist role of the presidency. When Demirel realized that it was not possible to conciliate the parties, he tried to solve the issue by using his constitutional powers. Demirel criticized Sunay and Korutürk for not activating the MGK effectively where the commanders could express their unease about the political landscape to the civilians before the

military intervened in politics. Unlike them, Demirel did so and put the growing unrest in the military on the agenda of the MGK. The military's involvement could not be avoided, but at least Demirel did not remain passive. By activating the constitutional instruments, especially the MGK, he managed the conflict without a direct military intervention taking place. That said, this cannot be seen solely as the success of Demirel. For the aims of this essay, it is sufficient to state that the political context was also lessening if not averting the possibility of military intervention

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The president in the Turkish political system is one of the important actors in the development and maintenance of a consolidated democracy, though it is a relatively neglected topic in the relevant literature. The way the presidents interpret the role and function of the presidency provides us with some clues on the vacillation of the system between a “parliamentary system with a presidential corrective” and a “parliamentary system with presidential dominance” that Siaroff defines. He argues that the triple distinction of Duverger is inadequate to fully cover the varying forms of political practice that semi-presidential regimes exhibit. That is why instead of semi-presidentialism as an in-between category in the presidential-parliamentary continuum, Siaroff comes up with three in-between categories: “parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents,” “parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective,” and “parliamentary systems with a presidential dominance.” Siaroff argues that the debate about the regime category centered on the head of government and to whom s/he is accountable and this can

be fuzzy. Thus while formulating his categories he looked through the “prism” of the head of state.

Siaroff formulates eight categories, which are numbered from 1 to 8, first by looking at the position of head of state based on the following three questions: (a) whether the head of state is also the sole head of government or there is a separate head of government; (b) whether the head of state is popularly elected or selected by the legislature; (c) whether the head of government is accountable to the legislature and thus can be removed by a vote of non-confidence. In the first four regime categories, according to Siaroff, there is a unified executive. In Category 1 and Category 2, the president is popularly elected, whereas in Category 3 and Category 4, s/he is selected by the legislature. The head of government is accountable to the legislature in Categories 1 and 3. In Categories 5, 6, 7, and 8 there is dual executive. The president is popularly elected in Categories 5 and 6 but selected by the legislature in Categories 7 and 8. On the other hand, the head of government is accountable to the legislature in Categories 5 and 7 but not in Categories 6 and 8.

Secondly, Siaroff analyzes the measuring of presidential power based on nine key characteristics that together comprise a scale. These characteristics are (a) popular election, which is central to the power and legitimacy of the president, (b) concurrent elections of president and parliamentarians for synchronized terms, (c) discretionary appointment by the president of some key individuals (prime minister, cabinet ministers, high court judges, senior military figures, etc.), (d) ability of the president to chair formal cabinet meetings and engage agenda-

setting, (e) veto power of the president, (f) broad emergency or decree powers of the president in cases of national disorder and/or economic matters which are valid for an unlimited time, (g) central role of the president in foreign policy making, (h) central role of the president in government formation, (i) ability of the president to dissolve the legislature at will. Each of these characteristics is given the numerical value of one if they exist in the analyzed electoral democracies. According to his scale of measuring presidential power if the score is 1 or 2, these regime types are called as “parliamentary systems with figurehead president;” if the score is 6 or more, Siaroff names these systems as “parliamentary systems with presidential dominance;” in case of a score of at least 3 but less than 6, he describes them as “parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective.”

Siaroff includes Turkey in his country analysis by examining it in three periods, i.e. between 1961 and 1971; between 1973 and 1980; and after 1983. In the first two periods, the president chaired cabinet meetings and had veto powers. That means in accordance with Siaroff’s measuring scale Turkey scores 2, so it is classified as a parliamentary system with a figurehead president. After 1983, the new constitution delegated discretionary appointment powers to the president, which made Turkey’s score 3. Thus Turkey shifts to the grouping that Siaroff names “parliamentary systems with a presidential corrective” without a change in its category type. Turkey, until the constitutional changes in 2007 concerning the election of the president, seems to fit into the Category 7 of Siaroff’s distinctions, i.e. there is a dual executive; the head of state is selected by the legislature; and the head of government is accountable to the legislature. With that amendment, the president from then on shall be popularly elected for a five-year term, and

hence Turkey can be put under Category 5, i.e. there is a dual executive, the head of government is accountable to the parliament and the head of state is popularly elected. Turkey's shift that is observed after 1983 is quite distinct for Siaroff. He argues that such a system having a corrective president could only be maintained with the popular legitimacy gained through elections based on universal suffrage, which is suggested as one of the characteristics of Category 5. The positive correlation between the corrective role of president and legitimacy of popular elections that Siaroff suggests becomes invalid for Turkey. The Turkish case in the post-1983 period by having a strong president creates a deviation from the other cases that fit into the same category (Category 7) having similar scores but with weaker presidencies. However, his analysis left incomplete to explain how a president who is not popularly elected could assume a corrective role. The first paragraph of Article 104 of the 1982 Constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic as the Head of State represents the Republic of Turkey and the unity of the Turkish Nation, and shall ensure the implementation of the Constitution, and the regular and harmonious functioning of the organs of state. This essay has shown that Article 104 contributed to the blurring of presidential duties and powers by opening the channels to varied interpretations and thus practices. This made it favorable for transforming the system into a system with a presidential corrective.

Starting from the early Republican days, granting more powers to the president has always become a thorny issue. In earlier decades, such proposals were rejected after heated debates. Yet the charisma of Atatürk institutionalized the influential role of the president over the system. From then on, the significance of

the office of president has continued to be one of the characteristics of the regime. In the institutionalization period after the foundation of the Republic, the office of presidency was mostly designed as a locus of stateness. Until the 1960s, the president was considered the guarantor of the Republican regime and the guardian of Atatürkist principles, who was responsible for maintaining and preserving peace and security. The leading figures of the independence movement who founded the new Republic under the leadership of Atatürk (İsmet İnönü and Celal Bayar) hold the office of the presidency respectively after the death of Atatürk. Although they were not given considerable constitutional powers, in practice they all emerged as dominant presidents. This is to say that their dominant role is not related with their constitutional powers but their position in the system as important contributors to the formulation of state understanding and structuring of the new Republic.

Under the 1961 Constitution, the need for a politically neutral president was highlighted and the era of presidents of military provenance started. Cemal Gürsel, Cevdet Sunay and Fahri Korutürk were the presidents during the period between 1961 and 1980. As these three presidents have a military background, their positions overlapped with that of the state elites. Their expected role of being politically neutral did not lead them to stay out of politics but to monitor and take part in defining the boundaries of political domain alongside the interests of the state in eliminating the conflict of particularistic interests.

After the 1980 military intervention, it was thought that there was a need for a stronger presidency. The loss of trust of the coup leaders in politicians led to a



redesigning of the office of presidency with the expectation that the president would act as state elite to safeguard the state and continuity of the secular order. The perception of the leaders of the military regime was that there had been attempts to make the institutions of the state a mere apparatus of governments. In order to prevent this, under the 1982 Constitution, the president is portrayed as above day-to-day politics, and made responsible for the harmonious functioning of state organs. However, to what extent he would intervene in the functioning of the state mechanism is left to the presidents' interpretations of this statist role. This gives the presidents of the post-1982, Kenan Evren, Turgut Özal, Süleyman Demirel, Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Abdullah Gül, a flexibility to position themselves differently in the clash between the state elites and political elites.

As noted the president is vested with the authority to protect the regime and the principles of the constitution. During the times of political crisis, the state elites expect the president to actively take part in eliminating any moves against the secular character of the Republic. The political elites, on the other hand, put emphasis on the impartial and inclusive nature of the office of president. Therefore discussions on who would be the next president have always been an important part of the Turkish political history. Following the AKP's coming to power in 2002, the secularists were anxious about the transformation of the regime. These fears made the secularists to place great moral responsibility upon the president for protecting the state and the Republican regime. The president is politically irresponsible but he has to shoulder the burden of that moral responsibility attributed to him. The 2007 crisis over the election of the president shows the importance attached to the president by the state elites. The way the

president is elected to the office is influential in defining the degree of maturity of the democratic regime. Hence pre- and post- election debates on issues concerning the presidential elections serve, in a way, as a litmus test to assess the progress in maintaining a viable democracy but this could be analyzed as part of further research.

Following the election of President Gül on August 28, 2007, a constitutional change on the election of the president was put to a referendum and was approved. As a result, from then on the president will be popularly elected. This change was seen by some experts a “shift to semi-presidentialism” in Turkey.<sup>423</sup> Election of a president by a popular vote is argued to further increase the political legitimacy of already powerful president holding extensive powers of appointments (1982 Constitution). It should be noted here that there have been several amendments to the 1982 Constitution since its adoption but none of them included limitations on the extensive powers of the president.

There has been an ongoing clash between the state elites and the political elites in Turkey and this impedes democracy. They have divergent perceptions on how each perceive general interest. These perceptions have created controversy over many political issues and even deep polarization. That is why the role of the president in this clash between the two elite groups is important to be examined. As Sartori argues, striking the balance between different groups’ interests and the long term interests of the country is vitally important in order to have a viable democracy. The president, at this point, might play a crucial role. To clarify this, a

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<sup>423</sup> Elgie, “Duverger, Semi-Presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype,” p. 266.

particular role, that is the “statist role” is used in this essay. The “statist” role of president used in some other studies is based on Özbudun’s observation<sup>424</sup> that president’s ability to act alone pertains to his capacity as “head of state” framed with the 1982 Constitution.<sup>425</sup> This is to say that the reference in these studies to the statist role is made to emphasize the president’s role in safeguarding the state and prioritizing its matters. Without disregarding this dimension of the “statist” role, this study concentrates more on its constructive dimension. It is about ensuring harmony and balance for the smooth functioning of the state. A president who manages to establish well-balanced relations with the state elites and the political elites without engaging with the positions of either of them could fulfill this. The constructive dimension is important because the effective performance of the president in this role might contribute to reducing the conflict between the state elites and the political elites which has important implications for democracy to flourish. Based on the findings of the present essay on the “statist” role of the president, further research may look at the question of how that role may be transformed as a result of the 2007 constitutional change. Other points for further study are the possible impact of this change on the nature of the system and the office of president and on the relationship between the states elites and the political elites.

In Süleyman Demirel’s presidential term is analyzed as the case study within the framework of the “statist” role a president may play in the clash between the state elites and the political elites. For this purpose, Demirel’s ideas on state and

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<sup>424</sup> Özbudun, “The Status of the President of the Republic under the Constitution of 1982,” pp. 42-43.

<sup>425</sup> Heper and Çınar, “Parliamentary Government with a Strong President,” p. 490.

democracy as well as his actions as president are examined. Prior to that, first the development of his state understanding and its links with democracy and then how he put into practice his mentioned ideas when he was the leader of a political party are studied. Demirel did not get along well with the state elites when he was a political party leader. However, since Demirel was cautious not to create political feuds out of frictions during the periods of crisis, he could set up a dialogue with the state elites after he was elected president. Thus he had a relative advantage to succeed in reducing the conflict between the state elites and political elites. He tried to warn the both sides to act responsibly and have a dialogue and thus placate the hardliners of each group. He positioned himself in the same place with neither the state elites nor the political elites at all times. When he emphasized the sensitivities of the regime, his ideas and position overlapped with the state elites. Whereas when he underlined the importance of showing respect to the will of people and relying only on the trust of the people to defend the republic, he took sides with the political elites. In doing so, Demirel came closer to achieve the balance Sartori suggests.

Demirel's perception of the role of president has prevented him from staying out of the social and political transformation that Turkey has begun to experience in the 1990s. In fact, with his emphasis that "Çankaya could not become a mere spectator when the regime was locked in a stalemate," he successfully took part in politics actively. His support for the constitutional changes, his emphasis on the need for reform, his diligence in preventing polarization, his attempts to mediate conflicts while handling the contentious issues such as civil-military relations,

secularism, and political Islam can be listed as the indicators of Demirel's active style.

Some observers share a firm conviction that Demirel's presidential term marks a turning point in his political career. They argue that Demirel's political line has changed in a noteworthy way. It is claimed that as a president he backpedalled from his previous discourse and allied himself with the state elites especially during the February 28 process in contrast with what he voiced in the past. This, they claim, is evidence that Demirel's political views have changed.

Another widely seen contention is that change in Demirel's political line is not a recent phenomenon; indeed he has always been a "spineless politician." This group uses the statement of Demirel "yesterday is yesterday, today is today" to support the claim that he has formulated a style that is opportunistic and pragmatic. Those having this perspective argue that Demirel makes different and contradictory statements in similar situations depending on the conditions of the day. In examining his political line, one should be aware of the risks involved with Demirel's metaphorical language and the possibility of being trapped with his ambiguous usage of words which may lead to misinterpretations.

This essay suggests a different argument than the two opinions stated above, especially when the state and democracy are the issues. Demirel's ability to adapt to the changing context is a fact. It is also true that from time to time deviations were seen from what he stated previously on some policy issues. Yet it should be underlined that when Demirel's terms as prime minister are compared with his

term as president, the state as a concept has had great importance in his political discourse from the very beginning. This study concludes that his state understanding is relatively remained stable. He always prioritized the effective functioning of state so that democracy would flourish. For Demirel, first and foremost a strong state should function effectively. Although Demirel's conceptualization of state is by no means unique, the link he develops between state and democracy is not usual. To highlight it again, the existence of a strong state is considered essential for the existence of democracy in Demirel's views.

Some would criticize Demirel for his rather "populist policies and stubborn and polarizing style of politics" especially during his years in the office of prime minister which eventually led to military interventions and posed an obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in Turkey. For some, this is also valid for Demirel's presidential terms. This essay has shown that Demirel, as president, played an active role in protecting the political fabric of the state. In his view, this was directly linked with preserving the democratic nature of the regime. He took the initiative when rumors that a military coup would be staged were circulated. Demirel got a grip on the situation and tried to find a possible way out within the constitutional limits. He struggled to prevent the foundations and principles of the Republican regime and its institutions from being objects of debate which may have adverse effects for democracy. Some people evaluated this as an indication of Demirel's contribution to the viability of democracy. However, his success in dealing with the February 28 crisis by activating the constitutional mechanisms did not prevent the military's continuing though indirect intervention in the civilian domain.

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