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Playing the Game of Democracy Through the Electoral Mechanism: The Democratic Party Experience in Turkey

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ABSTRACT *The commitment to the procedural rules of democracy, particularly to the electoral mechanism, on the part of political leadership is considered necessary for the establishment and survival of democracy. However, the political actors' commitment to the electoral mechanism does not guarantee the well-being of the democratic regime. In newly established democracies, the electoral mechanism itself can also function as a disadvantage to democracy if it is manipulated by the political elite. Based on this assumption, this article analyzes the case of Turkey's Democratic Party (DP, Demokrat Parti) under the leadership of Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes between 1946 and 60 and demonstrates that political actors can exploit the electoral mechanism by either rescheduling elections or amending the electoral regulations despite their acceptance of it as one of the basic procedural rules of democracy.*

Introduction

The commitment on part of the political elite to democracy is crucial for its survival. Moreover, it gains further importance in newly democratizing regimes due to the lack of institutional and social elements. Nevertheless, in addition to the political elite's commitment to democracy, the procedural rules of democracy also become essential for the survival of democracy regarding the fact that these rules can be manipulated by the political elite despite its commitment to them.

The Democratic Party (DP) in Turkey illustrates this point to a great extent. With the establishment of the DP on January 7, 1946, Turkey experienced transition to democracy. Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes were two of the four founders of the DP. Bayar was the first leader of the party, which was established as the strongest opposition party to the Republican People's Party (*CHP, Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi*) of İsmet İnönü. In 1950, when the DP came to power, Bayar became the president of Turkey. During his presidency from 1950 until the 1960 military intervention, Menderes was both the leader of the DP and the Prime Minister. Hence, the

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assumption that the procedural rules of democracy can be manipulated by the political elite in newly established democracies since the political leaders have not yet become accustomed to democratic procedures can be tested through analyzing the DP experience in Turkey.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature on democratization and the political elite and proceeds to discuss the DP case of Turkey. It analyzes the political discourse and praxis of Bayar and Menderes concerning the electoral dimension of the newly established Turkish democracy and concludes that political actors can manipulate the electoral mechanism by either rescheduling elections or amending the electoral regulations despite their acceptance of it as one of the basic procedural rules of democracy.

Democratization and the Political Elite

Concerning the process of democratization, the literature suggests that the process is comprised of several phases. The process starts with liberalization, continues with transition, and terminates with consolidation.¹ Liberalization refers to

...a mix of policy and social changes, such as less censorship of the media, somewhat greater space for the organization of autonomous working-class activities, the introduction of some legal safeguards for individuals... and most important, the toleration of opposition.²

Transition refers to the collapse of the authoritarian regime and emergence of a democratic regime.³ In other words, the transition process is the process from the collapse of the authoritarian regime to the birth of a democratic regime in which the government comes to power with a free and popular vote and has the authority of policy making without the intervention of other bodies.⁴ The next step, consolidation of democracy, can be explained with "...the effective functioning of a democratic regime"⁵ for which maintenance of rule of law, a free civil society, an autonomous political society, constitutional rules to allocate power democratically, and a sufficiently autonomous economy to assure pluralism of civil, political, and economic societies is necessary.⁶

The agency approach explains the course of those processes through the role of political leadership and introduces political agency as the decisive factor for the emergence and survival of democracy. One of the leading scholars of the agency approach is Dankwart A. Rustow, whose four-phase model is well-known. Rustow's model focuses on four respective phases of democratization: background condition, preparatory phase, decision phase, and habituation phase.

Rustow takes national unity as the essential pre-condition since he maintains that it is necessary for people to fully comprehend to which political community they belong. He then focuses on the preparatory phase, arguing that democratization is a dynamic process of uncertain struggle between political actors. He states that despite the fact that the struggle does not usually stem from the goal to establish

democracy, the struggle results in a compromise among the political leaders in favor of democracy. Following such a compromise, negotiation between the political actors then commences. Rustow defines this as the decision phase. After deciding upon the procedures required to be followed in a democracy, the habituation phase begins whereby leaders become accustomed to democratic procedures and consolidate their commitment to the system. Thus, democracy emerges through a sequential process “from national unity as background, through struggle, compromise, and habituation to democracy” in which the political leaders are actively involved.⁷

Juan J. Linz, a very well-known political scientist, also argues for the agency approach. Linz, like Rustow, focuses on political agents and perceives the political process as based on political actors’ acts and decisions. He states that political agency has implications not only for the democratization process, but also for democratic breakdown. In other words, for a regime that has recently experienced a transition from authoritarianism to democracy, it is essential to reflect on the impact of a political leader managing and controlling the political process after the transition.⁸

Furthermore, political actors’ commitment and loyalty to the democratic system itself are essential for democratic stability.⁹ In particular, their commitment to the procedural rules of democracy can be understood as crucial. In other words, these rules such as free elections, inclusive suffrage, right to run for office, and the like as introduced by the minimalist conceptualization of democracy are crucial for the viability of democracy.¹⁰

Yet, commitment to the procedural rules of democracy on the part of leadership is not sufficient for the survival of the regime. The procedural rules of democracy can also be exploited by the political actors, who consider them as the basic requirements. The analysis of the electoral dimension in newly established democracies can explain the manipulation of procedural rules by the political actors. While the political elites in opposition can defend the electoral mechanism as the way to realize democracy, they can exploit it either by rescheduling elections or amending the electoral regulations for their own political interests when they come to power. Thus, in newly democratizing regimes, it is much more possible for political leadership to manipulate the procedural rules of democracy since the habituation phase has not yet been firmly established.

This assumption that the procedural rules of democracy can be manipulated by the political elite in newly democratizing regimes given the fact that the political leaders have not yet become accustomed to procedural rules of democracy can be examined through analyzing the DP in Turkey. Being the founders of the DP, Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes appeared as the prominent figures in the party. In addition to their dominance within the DP, their impact on Turkish political life between 1946 and 1950 when forming the DP as the main opposition party and on the politics of the period following the DP’s taking over the government from the CHP on May 14, 1950 until the breakdown of democracy on May 27, 1960 due to military intervention was apparent.

Hence, the political discourse and praxis of Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes, concerning the electoral mechanism of the newly democratizing regime of Turkey

presents a good case study. Since they formed the opposition between 1946 and 1950 and since Bayar was the President and Menderes was both the Prime Minister and the head of the ruling party between the years 1950 and 1960, the DP case offers much to the understanding of how the electoral mechanism is regarded by the political elite in newly emerging democracies.

The DP's Approach to the Electoral Mechanism in Opposition

The DP's approach to the electoral mechanism in opposition became clear with the developments during the years between 1946 and 1950. The DP was very active during those years with the aim of improving the electoral system in Turkey. The beginning point was the debate that began with the CHP government's decision of holding municipal elections earlier. This decision, which caused conflict between the CHP government and the DP opposition, increased the DP's efforts to amend the election law in order to enable electoral security. Nevertheless, the newly amended law that brought open ballot and secret counting did not suffice to provide electoral security and the first general elections in the multi-party system, which was held with this newly amended law, led to an endless debate attaching attention to the importance of achieving electoral security. Hence, the debate on the election law continued and the process resulted with the amendment of the law to enable secret ballot and open counting.

Municipal Elections

The electoral system was one of the issues that both Bayar and Menderes, and thus the DP concentrated upon. Since its establishment, the DP issued several declarations concerning the electoral system. The first of these was witnessed with the CHP government's decision to hold the municipal elections on May 26, 1946 instead of holding elections four months later in September.¹¹

The DP opposed the CHP's decision. According to Menderes, who was the DP spokesman at the time, the right decision would not be to hold early elections but rather to postpone them, or at least to hold them on the date decided by the law. Menderes interpreted the CHP's decision to precipitate the elections as stemming from its desire not to allow sufficient time for the newly established DP to organize itself. He thought that the decision to move the elections to an earlier date would not only have a negative impact on the electoral turnout, but also would prevent the opposition from getting prepared for the elections. Thus, two essential components of electoral competition, the electorate and political parties, would not be able to play their roles as they should have been able to in a democratic regime.

Menderes perceived the right to vote as the only mechanism available to explicitly express the national will. Accordingly, he held that the democratization of elections was mainly based on eliminating pressure and legal obstacles for political parties, amending anti-democratic laws, and allowing political parties to prepare for elections. Nevertheless, given that none of those measures had been taken, he stated that the

amendment aimed creating a semblance of democracy instead of bettering the democratic quality of the regime.¹²

Accordingly, with the parliament's approval for holding the municipal elections four months earlier, the DP decided to withdraw from the elections. This decision was made public by Bayar in the beginning of May 1946. In his speech, reiterating what Menderes had previously stated, Bayar emphasized that bringing the municipal elections forward aimed to prevent the timely preparation of the DP and could also result in early general elections.¹³ In addition to Bayar's speech, this decision was also announced through a written communiqué on May 8, 1946. The communiqué stated that:

The DP finds the decision of the governing party to hold elections earlier as running counter to the democratic mentality. Such decisions prevent rather than serve democracy. In relation to this, participating in the elections would be detrimental for the future of Turkish democracy. The DP therefore refuses to take responsibility for such a mistake and will not participate in the elections.¹⁴

Therefore, the communiqué also underscored the idea that bringing the municipal elections forward could be a sign of the CHP's intention to hold the general elections earlier and thus, could in the end threaten the future of Turkish democracy.

New Election Law

During the debates related to the municipal elections, the draft law on the parliamentary elections was presented to the Turkish Grand National Assembly on May 14, 1946 by the CHP. In the single-party era, parliamentary elections were held through an indirect electoral system consisting of two phases. Voters from every electoral district elected a certain number of members, who were thus authorized to choose candidates for office. Hence, the elections were not direct and could not be held in a single day. Besides, in the absence of an opposition party, supervision of elections was also impossible. Regarding these, the CHP government explained the rationale behind the draft as holding direct elections on a single day in the presence of opposition party representatives functioning as observers during the counting of votes to achieve electoral security.¹⁵

On this issue, Menderes presented the views of the DP. He expressed his approval of the change toward the direct electoral system, as the change was a vital step toward democracy. Additionally, he asserted that, in practice, the presence of only one observing representative of the opposition party at each polling station would change nothing. He argued that it would have been more meaningful to allow opposition party representatives to participate fully in the ballot station boards with the authority to supervise the elections and to keep minutes. He also stated that the current laws were still far from meeting the needs of a democratic regime, especially since although voting was open, vote counting was secret.¹⁶

Thus, Menderes defended the idea that, despite the positive changes it brought, the bill on the election law should have been prepared with the goal of furthering electoral security and thus, democratic character of the regime. While commenting that certain changes introduced by the new election law would provide corporeal security, he emphasized that these changes would not suffice to prevent spiritual pressure from the government on the electorate. He conceded that even the implementation of perfect laws could bring undesired consequences and therefore the spirit of the application of the laws, as well as the integrity of individuals authorized to apply those laws, was highly crucial.¹⁷

Following the parliamentary discussions, the bill on direct voting for parliamentarians passed into law on June 5, 1946. With Law Number 4918, it was decided that the elections would be held directly by open ballot and secret counting. Additionally, it was decided that when the counting was over, the electoral ballots would be burned.¹⁸

First General Elections in the Multi-Party System

Following the ratification of the law, it was decided on June 10, 1946 to hold general elections on July 21, 1946, one year earlier than had been planned.¹⁹ Upon this decision, the DP realized that it could not make any changes in the situation by boycotting the elections; thus, the DP decided to participate in the elections.²⁰ It was stated by Bayar that the DP had decided to participate in the elections for the sake of the interests of the country.²¹ The DP leader Celal Bayar explained the DP's approach in a speech on June 29, 1946 in Adana:

...The country is ruled in accordance with the present law. We ask the people to vote for the political party that they are in favor of. ... The oppressors are those who do not obey the national will, who are afraid of the national will. By having the courage to participate in the elections within the framework of the existing law, we will prove to them that obeying the national will is the correct behavior.²²

With this statement, Bayar emphasized the nature of the democratic regime and the role of the electoral mechanism for the functioning of a democratic system. He focused on the uncertainty of election results and interpreted it as the core of democracy. Stressing the need for a legal framework in order to secure electoral freedom and the integrity of the election results, he implied that accepting the election results constituted the basic rationale behind the exercise of the electoral practice and that holding elections was among the most fundamental practices of democracies.

The first direct elections in the multi-party system were held on July 21, 1946. According to the official election results, the CHP won 85 percent of the votes, while the DP won 13 percent, and the independents won the remaining 2 percent. This meant 395 seats for the CHP, 64 seats for the DP, and six seats for the independents out of a total of 465 parliamentary mandates.²³

However, the results were contested as the elections were regarded by the DP as corrupted. DP Party leader Celal Bayar blamed the government for the corrupt elections, stating:

I declare, I even accuse wickedness has interfered in the elections. The results of the elections are far from indicating the real will of the nation. If the lawless actions and various pressures imposed upon citizens had not reached such levels our party would have won the elections all over the country...When these pressures and lawless actions proved insufficient, the party in power was forced to falsify the election records...Despite official announcements, the nation chose the Democratic Party. The Republican Party is preserving power only through the forceful methods it applied before and during the elections and thanks to the falsifications of election records.²⁴

The DP's objection to the results of the 1946 elections persisted in the following days and the question of whether to participate in upcoming elections remained problematic. Accordingly, the amendments demanded in the election law with the aim of providing electoral security were at the center of a continuous debate. Bayar summarized the DP's position on November 11, 1946:

There is almost no meeting during which the issue of election law and electoral procedures is not on the agenda. I can clearly state that the elections are not in the spirit of providing security to the country and the people. There cannot be a greater mistake than to claim that the national will can be expressed in a country in which there is no electoral security.²⁵

Hence, Bayar equated the electoral mechanism with the security of the people and the country. He considered that its improper functioning would threaten the security of the country and the people. What Bayar argued was that the improper manifestation of the national will to the parliament would lead to conflicts. In other words, if there were a discrepancy between the demands of the people and the composition of parliament, which would then not reflect the national will, conflicts among the people that endangered the peace of the country would be inevitable.

As anticipated, the 1946 general elections were a lingering subject of debate of the DP's First Grand Congress held on January 7–11, 1947. During the Congress, Bayar stated in his speech that he believed holding early elections was a reflection of the CHP's desire to secure the upcoming four years to its advantage. In the same speech, he emphasized the need to secure principles of national sovereignty and to eliminate all obstacles to democratic development.²⁶

The points that Bayar concentrated upon were detailed in a report entitled 'Freedom Pact' (*Hürriyet Misakı*), to which Menderes contributed much.²⁷ With this document, the party clarified its position and perspective on the electoral mechanism.²⁸ In the Pact, the need to amend the election law in order to secure the votes of citizens and to conform to the principles of national sovereignty was heavily

emphasized.²⁹ In accordance with those statements, the DP leadership declared its ideas on the electoral system when Bayar emphasized the indispensability of holding free and fair elections for achieving national sovereignty:

...the first requirement of democracy is free and fair elections with secret voting. One cannot argue for the existence of national sovereignty in a country, where the elections are not held freely and are subject to any kind of material or even spiritual pressure.³⁰

Hence, the DP leadership stressed at each opportunity the need for amending the election law and of achieving the electoral security in order to assure exact expression of the national will.

Debates Continuing on the Election Law

As the opposition persisted with its demands for more explicit promises and open manifestations for the improvement of the Election Law, the debate on amending the law in order to improve the quality of democracy was still on the agenda of the political parties at the beginning of 1949. In Mersin, Bayar stated in relation to the quality of democracy that:

I should say that we are still far from our democratic goals. Since some anti-democratic laws are still in place, the security of elections has still not been guaranteed, and practices based on an undemocratic spirit and understanding are still prevalent.³¹

In line with Bayar, Menderes put forward his ideas. He argued that the country was in a state of unrest. He related this unrest to the extended period of transition from the single party system to the democratic system.³²

As a response to the opposition, the CHP government submitted to the TBMM Presidency a draft on election law on December 16, 1949. It stated that:

In modern states, real rule by the people emerges with representative government. Principles such as equality of voters, procedures for majority or proportional representation, secret ballot, and open counting are required for the election of representatives in any country that adopted the principle of democracy.³³

According to the draft, parliamentary elections were to be direct and to be held by secret ballot. In addition to those, open counting and judicial supervision were also included among the changes.³⁴ The draft on the parliamentary election law began to be discussed in the TBMM on February 7, 1950 and the new election law enabling direct elections with secret ballot and open counting was approved on February 16, 1950.³⁵

However, despite its support for the draft, the DP made several comments concerning the draft. Menderes took the floor during the discussions on the draft of the parliamentary election law on February 16 and delivered a speech emphasizing the importance of free and fair elections for the exact expression of national sovereignty. He underscored the importance of an election law that would rule out any deception and fraud in the elections and would prevent any pressure on the citizens. Nevertheless, he also declared that ratification of the election law would not be enough and that the positive attitude observed during the preparation of the law should also be maintained during the elections.³⁶ Therefore, the 1950 general elections were going to be held directly and by secret ballot and open counting as regulated by the new election law.

The DP's Approach to the Electoral Mechanism in Government

As can be understood through its efforts to enable elections being held as scheduled and to improve the electoral system for free and fair elections, when it was in opposition, the DP regarded holding elections timely and providing political competition on an equal and safe ground as the core of Turkish democracy. Nevertheless, with its becoming government, the DP either revised the schedule of elections or cancelled them. Moreover, it also amended the election law several times to its own benefit. At the end, the process resulted in the weakening of the electoral mechanism. This led to the weakening of the whole political system and of Turkish democracy that in the end collapsed due to the military intervention on May 27, 1960.

The DP Government Playing with the Electoral Schedule

With the newly amended election law, general elections were held on May 14, 1950. The DP took 83.77 percent of the seats in the TBMM, while the CHP took only 14.16 percent.³⁷ Hence, on May 22, 1950, the Assembly started its new term during which Bayar was the President and Menderes was both the leader of the DP and the Prime Minister of Turkey.

On May 29, 1950, Menderes delivered a speech on the governmental program. In his speech, he emphasized that the people now could replace the government through elections. In accordance with this, he articulated the democratic spirit of the new government when he stated: "it is the first time in our history that our parliament holds in its hands the fate of the country as a result of the exact and free revelation of national will."³⁸

However, Menderes' interpretation of the exact manifestation of the national will as an unquestionable power of the government resulted in the limitation of power of the national will. The DP, once in power, started to either postpone and cancel elections or amend electoral regulations. The DP leadership, having formed the government, began to enjoy the legitimacy that it had obtained through its electoral success. Expecting no change in either the number of the seats of political parties in the parliament or concerning the tense situation in the country, it revised the schedule

of elections. Having come to the government through fair and free elections and with a great number of seats in the parliament, the DP now neglected the importance of holding on-schedule elections, something the party had defended while in opposition.

The case of by-elections was the DP's first attempt to revise the schedule of elections. The DP decided to postpone the by-elections to the following year. Even though the by-elections were scheduled to be held in 1950, the DP decided in its meeting on July 4, 1950 to postpone them. The main argument behind its decision was that holding by-elections would not change the composition of the Assembly.³⁹

Since the DP took the parliament as an emanation of the national will, any elections that would not have been influential on the constitution of the parliament seemed useless to the DP. In other words, it approached the most elementary practice of a democratic regime in a very non-principled way. Unsurprisingly, the opposition reacted strongly to DP's approach but the by-elections, which were due to be held in the autumn of 1950, were postponed until September 16, 1951.⁴⁰

Legal Amendments before and after the 1954 Elections

As mandated, the next general elections were to be held in 1954. During the meeting of the DP Assembly Group, on February 11, 1954, following the approval of the election date as May 2, 1954, Menderes claimed that there was need for some legal changes to prevent any fraud in the elections,⁴¹ stating "elections are the most characteristic manifestation of democratic life."⁴² Accordingly, on February 17, 1954, several articles of the Election Law (Number 5545) were amended. These amendments covered crucial revisions such as a more detailed regulation of electoral registers and the formation of the 'High Election Board' (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) with the authority to examine the election minutes.⁴³

The parliamentary elections were held on May 2, 1954 with a high turnout of 88.63 percent. According to the results, the DP won 503 seats out of 541, while the CHP only won 31 seats. The remaining seats were shared between the other opposition party, the Republican National Party (*CMP, Cumhuriyetçi Millet Partisi*),⁴⁴ and the independents.⁴⁵

Menderes interpreted the election results as the approval of the DP policies by the entire population.⁴⁶ Similarly, Bayar perceived the DP's electoral success as the basis of its legitimacy. Both understood democracy in terms of being in agreement with the people; thus, they perceived the electoral mechanism to be the way through which this agreement could be realized.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, while the DP considered the practice of holding elections as sufficient for realizing democracy, it was observed that the DP exploited the electoral mechanism by revising the electoral schedule and amending the electoral regulations.

With its legitimacy secured by its electoral success, the DP government revised the election law. On June 30, 1954, the parliament enacted Law Number 6428, which amended some articles of Law Number 5545. According to these revisions, the right of a political party candidate from a particular electoral district to be included

on the list of another political party or to become an independent candidate for a different district was nullified. Additionally, the right of a candidate who was not included on the party list to become a candidate of another political party or to become an independent candidate was annulled. Some changes were also made to the articles related to civil servants becoming candidates. It was now obligatory for civil servants to resign six months before the elections in order to become candidates. Furthermore, the right of political parties to present candidates with a joint list was rendered void.⁴⁸

These changes incensed the opposition, which interpreted these amendments as restricting the right to vote. The CMP and the CHP declared their decision not to take part in the local elections (elections for village headmen, provincial council elections, and municipal elections) that were going to be held in September and November 1955. The CMP stated that since the rule of law was not provided and maintained by the government, it would not participate in the elections.⁴⁹ The CHP stated that its belief in the possibility of holding free and fair elections had greatly deteriorated. As to the reasons for its distrust in the government's will and ability to hold free and fair elections, the CHP pointed to the changes in the electoral rules that prevented a free expression of national will.⁵⁰

The decision of the opposition to boycott the elections was criticized severely by the government. Menderes elaborated:

The current crisis is not to be found in the regime but in the morality in the opposition. According to the CHP, while not participating in the elections in 1948 was equal to defaming the country in the eyes of the world and provoking the people to rebellion by leading them off the legitimate path, today, according to the CHP, the very same act is patriotic...⁵¹

He stated that the conditions under which elections were held were significantly ameliorated. Furthermore, he recalled the differences between the conditions under which the elections were held in the 1940s and in the 1950s. Accordingly, he stated that the withdrawal from the elections that were going to be held under free and fair circumstances was denying the legal way for competition.

However, the opposition did not change its mind and boycotted the elections. Making its distrust clear toward the DP-led government like the DP had done when in opposition, the opposition considered the idea of boycotting the elections as a tool to prevent the DP government from exerting pressure on the opposition parties and to make it reconsider its policies.⁵² Thus, in the absence of opposition, the rate of turnout was recorded as around 40 percent in the local elections held in September and November 1955.⁵³

The DP Reamending the Election Law before the 1957 Elections

As the conflict between the DP government and the opposition continued, in 1957, the CHP and the CMP attempted to form a coalition for the elections. However,

due to some amendments to the election law made by the government on the eve of the 1957 general elections, the coalition conditions for the opposition parties became extremely difficult.

With the amendments made on September 11, 1957, political parties were prohibited from participating in the elections with a joint list of candidates. Additionally, political parties were obliged to nominate a number of candidates equal to the number of deputies to be elected in any given electoral district. If political parties did not conform to this rule, they would be considered to have lost the elections in all electoral constituencies. Furthermore, according to the law, one who had applied for candidacy to a particular political party would neither be allowed to be an independent candidate in another electoral constituency nor a candidate of another political party. The law also prohibited the nomination of a political party candidate if the individual had belonged to another political party six months prior to the elections.⁵⁴

Due to these amendments, the attempts of the opposition to cooperate in the 1957 elections became fruitless.⁵⁵ İsmet İnönü, the first prime minister and the second president of Turkey, now as the leader of the main opposition party, stated in Trabzon that the CHP questioned the validity of participating in the elections under these laws. However, he added that because of the CHP's belief in the importance of the electoral mechanism, the party had not decided to withdraw from the elections.⁵⁶ On the following day, İnönü made another speech in Rize, where he stated that the election law had been amended before the 1957 elections by the DP government in order to prevent the DP from losing the elections and to prolong its stay in the government.⁵⁷

Hence, the elections were held amidst these debates on October 27, 1957. According to the election results, the DP won 424 seats, the CHP won 178 seats, the CMP won four seats, and the Freedom Party (*HP, Hürriyet Partisi*)⁵⁸ won four seats. Based on these results, it appeared that although the DP won the majority, it lost some of its political support and the CHP had increased its votes.⁵⁹

Considering the Rescheduling of the Elections and the 1960 Military Intervention

The DP's loss of support and the opposition's gain in strength allowed the opposition to increase its pressure on the government.⁶⁰ As the severity of the opposition increased, to defuse the tension in 1960, the DP decided to hold elections earlier.⁶¹ On October 2, 1959, Menderes attempted to justify his opinion for bringing the elections forward with the assertion that, according to the results of a poll carried out by the party, support for the party was higher in 1959 when compared to 1957.⁶² Upon this decision, on December 16, 1959, Menderes instructed the party rank and file to begin and intensify the electoral campaign in areas where support had been low in the 1957 elections.⁶³ The opposition was expecting the elections to be held in 1960 and İnönü expressed several times that this was his understanding as well.⁶⁴

However, while Menderes defended the idea of holding elections considering that it would strengthen the legitimacy of the government and thus would help to cope

with the political opposition, Bayar defended the idea of not holding early elections under the assumption that the elections would not produce a strong and legitimate government. He argued that since the country was sliding into chaos due to the severe opposition of the people and of the political parties to the DP government, a governmental change under those circumstances would further the chaos.⁶⁵

In light of Bayar's and Menderes' discussions on the idea of holding elections considering the government's legitimacy, the DP government's emphasis on the electoral mechanism and the legitimacy provided due to the electoral victory were evident. It was also clear in the speech Menderes delivered in Izmir just before the military intervention, which was begun as the possible end of the crisis witnessed in the country towards the end of the 1950s due to the civil and political unrest stemming from the DP's seeking for conflict resolution through severe measures and authoritarian solutions. As the DP government resorted to authoritarian policies in order to defuse the tension in the country, the relationship between the government and the opposition deteriorated further.

In his speech on May 15, 1960, Menderes criticized the attitude of the opposition and argued that such an uncooperative attitude of the opposition closed the way toward holding elections. More importantly, he stated that any attempt to eliminate the electoral mechanism would equal an attempt to end democracy, thus clarifying his understanding of the electoral mechanism as a requirement for the survival of democracy.⁶⁶ In the same speech, he exclaimed:

... If they (the opposition parties) have forgotten, they should learn that we have been in government for ten years as a result of three elections. Moreover, we are on the brink of new elections and in preparation for these elections. Putting forward a deceitful statement to the effect that the elections would not be held and basing rebellion and depravity upon such kind of statements are the acts of those who do not have any trust in the election results, who do not understand what democracy is, and who consider debilitating the national will as the only foundation for their policies...⁶⁷

Nevertheless, despite Bayar's and Menderes' emphasis on electoral mechanism as the only way of coming to power,⁶⁸ the DP leadership, given its concern for gaining a high rate of electoral support and forming a strongly legitimate government, abandoned the idea of holding elections in 1960.⁶⁹ Therefore, even though resorting to elections could have appeased the tension,⁷⁰ the idea of holding early elections was abandoned, and the crisis in the country could not be eased before the military intervention, which ended civilian rule by dissolving the parliament on May 27, 1960.

Conclusion

Considering the analysis of the DP experience in Turkey in order to understand whether the procedural rules of democracy can be exploited by the political elite that is committed to these rules, it is apparent that Bayar and Menderes, as the

leading figures of the DP, placed great emphasis on the electoral dimension of democracy. They spent effort to make the electoral regulations much more democratic when the DP was in opposition. However, contrary to earlier efforts to democratize the electoral system, due to the focus on legitimacy gained through elections, once in power, the DP leadership did not hesitate to manipulate both the electoral schedule and the electoral regulations.

Despite Bayar's and Menderes' faith in the importance of holding free and fair elections in democracies, since they perceived the election results to be the only factor on which governmental power and legitimacy were based, while in opposition they boycotted the municipal elections held in May 1946 and questioned boycotting the July 1946 general elections in order to put the legitimacy of the CHP government under question. They considered that due to the lack of the opposition's participation in the elections, the election results would not truly reflect the national will; thus, the legitimacy of the government would remain weakened.

Nevertheless, once the DP formed the government, again in accordance with its emphasis on election results and legitimacy of the government, the DP's election victory was the basis on which the DP justified its position for manipulating the electoral mechanism itself. In several instances, the DP leadership discussed changing the schedule of elections. Furthermore, the DP government amended the election law several times, neglecting the position and demands of the opposition necessary to be considered for the safety of a democratic regime.

Hence, the DP regarded the electoral mechanism as a fundamental principle of democracy. From the establishment of the DP in 1946 until the military intervention in 1960, the DP consistently expressed its commitment to the electoral mechanism and never opted to abolish the electoral mechanism. However, while the DP accepted the electoral mechanism as the basic procedure of democracy, the DP government altered the electoral schedule and the regulations to its own benefit. As a result, this stance led to the deterioration of the electoral mechanism itself and thus, of the democracy, which in the end collapsed due to the military intervention on May 27, 1960.

Notes

1. See Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Huntington argues that democratization involves three steps: the breakdown of the authoritarian regime, installation of the democratic regime, and consolidation of democratic regime.
2. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 3.
3. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
4. Linz and Stepan (1996), p. 3.
5. Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 18.

6. Linz and Stepan (1996), pp. 62–4.
7. Dankwart A. Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Approach,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1970), p. 362.
8. In Turkey, because of the failure in the habituation phase, which means the internalization of democratic rules, the process following transition was interrupted by several breakdowns as it was with the 1960 military intervention. See Ergun Özbudun, “State Elites and Democratic Political Culture in Turkey,” in Larry Diamond (ed.), *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994); Ergun Özbudun, “Turkey: Crises, Interruptions, and Re-equilibrations,” in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).
9. Linz emphasizes the importance of loyalty. Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). In accordance with Linz’s emphasis on loyalty, Powell argues that democratic breakdowns, either by executive or military coup, stem from the lack of democratic loyalty by elected leaders. Bingham G. Powell, *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability and Violence* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 174.
10. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy; Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 3–20.
11. *Ayn Tarihi*, April 1946, p. 6.
12. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 7, Vol. 21, p. 217.
13. Tekin Erer, *Türkiye’de Parti Kavgaaları* [Party Disputes in Turkey] (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınları, 1966), p. 255; Celal Bayar, “Demokrat parti’yi Nasıl Kurduk? [How we Established the Democratic Party?],” in İsmet Bozdağ (ed.), *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes* [My Prime Minister Menderes], (İstanbul: Tercüman, 1986), p. 53.
14. *Cumhuriyet, Vatan*, May 9, 1946.
15. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 7, Vol. 23, p. 246.
16. *Ibid*, pp. 246–7.
17. *Ibid*, pp. 248–9.
18. Tarhan Erdem, *Anayasalar ve Seçim Kanunları (1876-1982)* [Constitutions and Election Laws] (İstanbul: Celtüt Matbaası, 1982), pp. 188–190.
19. Kemal H. Karpat, *Turkey’s Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 159.
20. Erer (1966), p. 272.
21. Özel Şahingiray (ed.), *Celal Bayar’ın Söylev ve Demeçleri 1946-1950 Demokrat Partinin Kuruluşundan İktidara Kadar Politik Konuşmalar* [Oration and Declarations of Celal Bayar. Political Speeches From the Establishment of the Democratic Party Until Its Becoming Government] (Ankara: Doğuş, 1956), pp. 443–6.
22. *Vatan*, June 30, 1946.
23. *Cumhuriyet*, July 25, 1946.
24. Karpat (1959), pp. 164–5.
25. Nazmi Sevgen, *Celal Bayar Diyor ki 1920-1950* [Celal Bayar Narrates] (İstanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1951), p. 135.
26. Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti: Tarihi ve İdeolojisi* [The Democratic Party: Its History and Ideology] (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1970), p. 16; Orhan Mete, *Bütün Tafsilat ve Akisleriyle Demokrat Partinin I. Büyük Kongresi* [The First Grand Congress of The Democratic Party with All Details and Repercussions] (İstanbul: Ticaret Dünyası Matbaası, 1947), pp. 9–17.
27. Orhan Cemal Fersoy, *Bir Devre Adını Veren Başbakan Adnan Menderes* [Prime Minister Adnan Menderes Denominating an Era] (İstanbul: Hun Yayınları, 1978), p. 180.
28. Mete (1947), p. 48.
29. *Ulus*, January 13, 1947.
30. *Vatan*, March 21, 1947.
31. *Vatan*, January 8, 1949.

32. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 8, Vol. 15, p. 165.
33. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 8, Vol. 24, p. 2.
34. *Ibid*, pp. 9–29.
35. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 8, Vol. 24, p. 710; Erdem (1982), pp. 200–38.
36. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 8, Vol. 24, p. 706.
37. *Cumhuriyet*, May 26, 1950; Metin Toker, *DP'nin Altın Yılları:1950-1954* [The Golden Years of the DP] (Ankara: Bilgi, 1990), pp. 25–6.
38. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 9, Vol. 1, pp. 26–30.
39. *D.P.M.G.M.Z.*, Term: 9, Vol. 6, pp. 8–11.
40. Toker, *DP'nin Altın Yılları*, p. 142.
41. Haluk Kılçık, *Menderes'in Konuşmaları, Demeçleri, Makaleleri* [Speeches, Declarations, and Articles of Menderes] Vol. IV (Ankara: Demokratlar Kulübü Yayınları, 1991), p. 348.
42. Kılçık (1991), Vol. IV, p. 350.
43. Erdem (1982), pp. 238–41.
44. The CMP was established on February 10, 1954 after the closure of the National Party, which was founded in 1948 by a group of ex-DP members and then, was closed by the DP government on July 8, 1953 on the grounds that it was involved in reactionary activities.
45. *Ayn Tarihi*, May 1954, p. 30.
46. Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London: C. Hurst & Comp, 1977), p. 50.
47. İsmet Bozdağ, *Darağacında Bir Başbakan: Menderes* [A Prime Minister in the Gallows: Menderes] (İstanbul: Truva, 2004), pp. 103–5.
48. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Term: 10, Vol. 1, p. 42.
49. *Ulus*, August 4, 1955.
50. *Ulus*, August 6, 1955.
51. *Zafer*, August 11, 1955.
52. Karpat (1959), p. 186.
53. Feroz Ahmad, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Politikanin Açıklamalı Kronolojisi 1945-1971* [Annotated Chronology of Multi-Party Politics in Turkey] (Ankara: Bilgi, 1976), pp. 141–3.
54. Erdem (1982), pp. 249–50.
55. Eroğul (1970), pp. 141–2.
56. Sabahat Erdemir, *Muhalefette İsmet İnönü Konuşmaları, Sohbetleri ve Yazılılarıyla, 1956-1959* [İsmet İnönü in Opposition His Speeches, Conversations, and Writings] (İstanbul: Kicicigil, 1959), Vol. II, p. 128.
57. *Ibid*, p. 132.
58. On December 20, 1955, the Freedom Party (*Hürriyet Partisi; HP*) was officially founded by the DP party members being expelled or having resigned following the unease within the party.
59. Fahir Giritlioğlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihinde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisinin Mevki* [The Position of the Republican People's Party in Turkish Political History] (Ankara: Ayyıldız, 1965), Vol. I, p. 363.
60. Rıfki Salim Burçak, *Türkiye'de Milli İradenin Zaferi* [Victory of National Will in Turkey] (Ankara: Demokratlar Kulübü Yayınları, 1994), p. 27.
61. Metin Toker, *Demokrasiden Darbeye: 1957-1960* [From Democracy to Coup D'état] (Ankara: Bilgi, 1990), p. 296.
62. Burçak (1994), p. 36.
63. *D.P.M.G.M.Z.*, Term: 11, Vol. 279, pp. 41–2.
64. İnönü focuses on this issue in his letters to his son. Sevgi Özel (ed.), *Baba İnönü'den Erdal İnönü'ye Mektuplar* [Letters from Father İnönü to Erdal İnönü] (Ankara: Bilgi, 1988).
65. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Menderes'in Dramı 1899-1960* [The Drama of Menderes] (İstanbul: Remzi, 2000), pp. 378–80.
66. Burçak (1994), p. 41.
67. Kılçık (1991), Vol. IX, p. 291.
68. Eroğul (1970), p. 180.
69. Aydemir (2000), p. 341.
70. Toker, *Demokrasiden Darbeye*, p. 290; Burçak (1994), p. 36.