

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CHANGE



Editors

Ahmet ÖZKİRAZ
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PREFACE

Society is far beyond a structure that is formed once and remains static; further, it is a living and changing organism that is constantly being made and reconstructed. Social structure and social change, two utmost sociological concepts, enable us to grasp this dual reality. On one hand, structure represents a certain stability among social institutions, networks of relationships, statuses and roles whereas change describes ruptures, transformations and new equilibria that this stability undergoes over time. These two concepts are inseparable as every structure has its own seeds of change and every change paves the way for a new structure. Society is an assemblage of institutions in which conflict and consensus relationships are constantly negotiated in a dynamic way where this dynamism is linked to the past and the present. This book is the product of an effort to elucidate this dialectical relationship, drawing upon various scales and issues. This effort is designed as the second installment of the previously published work titled *Social Structure and Change* and, for this reason, it has the title *Social Structure and Change II*. Although the eight studies in the book may appear disparate at first glance, they have been brought together around the question of how the social structure is constituted and how it changes.

The study titled *The Reconstruction of the Social Structure: The Phenomenon of Migration along the Axes of Change, Transformation and Development* approaches migration not as a “problem” — as is frequently seen — but rather as a fundamental variable enabling the social structure to reproduce itself and, often, as a source of solutions. The study discusses that migration is not merely a spatial relocation of the population, but a

multi-layered process of structural transformation with demographic, cultural, political, economic, and psychological dimensions. Further, it highlights both infrastructure challenges caused by unregulated population movements and aspects of migration that renew human capital, revitalize urban economies and build bridges for inter-societal integration. Migration is neither merely a crisis nor an automatic mechanism of progress, but rather something that can be transformed into a social benefit through appropriate management strategies.

The study titled *Mosque as an Element of Civilization: The Tokat Sample* focuses on the concept of mosque—one of the most concrete and visible bearers of one of the most central institutions of the social structure in Türkiye. The Tokat Sample study shows mosques are not merely places of worship; they are institutions that shape and organize a city's architectural fabric and social relations through their functions of education, social solidarity, justice and cultural continuity. Together with madrasas, bazaars and charitable institutions, mosques form a focal point that organizes urban life. In Tokat, they must be interpreted beyond simple architectural structures, but as a *code of civilization* that embodies social memory and shapes the city's identity.

From the 1990s until the early 2000s, Turkish academic circles discussed the phenomenon of religion as a concept characterized by a virtually symbiotic relationship with civil society. This concept, which holds a central place in the context of Turkish modernization, cannot be analyzed independently of the processes of democracy and democratization. Consequently, the study titled *Civil Society and Political Participation in Democracies*—which focuses on the relationship between civil society and democracy—demonstrates that these two concepts cannot be considered in isolation from one

another; rather, they exist in a state of constant, mutual interaction. While the development of civil society strengthens democratic legitimacy, the existence of a democratic foundation enables civil society to flourish. In this regard, the study does *not* overlook political participation; it emphasizes that a conception of political participation extending beyond mere voting—and encompassing voluntary involvement in the activities of the organizations and associations that constitute civil society—is an indispensable prerequisite for a democratic civil society.,

The socialist movements in Türkiye proceeded along a path distinct from that of civil society during the process of modernization and democratization, it nonetheless represented a significant turning point regarding modernization during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. Early universal written sources of the socialist movement, debates over socialism, pro-socialist organizational efforts and actions that emerged in Türkiye from the 1960s onwards will serve to develop a perspective on modernization and social change. The study, titled *Process of Socialist Movements in Turkey Becoming Parties in the Shadow of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution*, offers an alternative historical depth and examines the impact of socialist movements in Türkiye. The study shows the Bolshevik Revolution did indeed pave the way for efforts to form socialist parties in Turkish political life; however, this influence proved insufficient. These movements developed along three distinct types: The trade-unionist/doctrinal faction in Istanbul, an Anatolianist Islamic-Bolshevik synthesis and a Baku-based revolutionary group. Due to the weakness of the working class at the time, these movements failed to secure a broad social base; furthermore, the Ankara Government's authoritarian *national* policies blocked all possible ways. Artificial intelligence, formation of public

opinion and civil society and public administration relationship create another important axis of debate over the issue of civil society. The study titled *The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Shaping Public Opinion* demonstrates that artificial intelligence has now become a part of public administration and that this process has entered an irreversible stage. While offering opportunities to enhance transparency, accountability, and the speed of service delivery, this technology also entails serious risks such as manipulation, disinformation, and the steering of public perception. This dual nature underscores, once again, the importance of adopting the technology rapidly yet thoughtfully, and of establishing rules and boundaries in advance.

The section of the book regarding social change focuses on how structure and change within this structure is perceived and understood particularly at the individual level and on the dialectic between official and individual. The study titled *Perceptions of Public Service Principles in Türkiye* shows how public service principles are perceived by citizens, based on interviews conducted in the field. A highly remarkable result of the study shows that participants embrace the principles of continuity, accessibility and participation while they question equality, transparency and accountability due to favoritism and political preferences. Distinctive expressions—ranging from the sentiment of being "state's step-child," voiced by citizens in their own words, to "learned helplessness"—strikingly illustrate how the public administration and the citizenry relationship is experienced in daily life.

The book also includes a study that examines the political consequences of the trauma caused by civil war—a significant factor in social change—and offers a suitable basis for a comparative analysis of the outcomes of such change, particularly

as it moves beyond the specific case of Türkiye. The study titled *Social and Political Traumas of the Ba'ath Regime: Political Psychology and Governance for Syrians* examines the social and political traumas inflicted upon Syrian society by the sixty-one-year Ba'ath regime, particularly during the Assad era. The study discusses how transformation from authoritarian regimes could be made possible through the reconstruction of identity, restoration of trust in institutions and re-establishment of political participation. Thus, the study is significant in that it addresses the relationship between social change and political design.

The study that concludes the book, titled *The Everyday Construction of Nationalist Discourse: Treasure Hunting*, interprets the practice of treasure hunting more beyond being a mere pursuit of material gain than a profound intellectual connection established with nationalism. Although treasure hunting targeting structures left behind by non-Muslims may appear to be a purely individual activity, it emerges as a collective and political act in terms of mutual aid and organization. The study offers an original contribution in that it situates this practice—which appears to be a quest for material assets—within the networks of social structures where nationalist discourse is reproduced in everyday life. This study is of high interest, even though it is a small-scale analysis illustrating how social change—resulting from the journey of modernization from the Ottoman Era to the present—was reflected at the individual level.

After all, this book aims to demonstrate how social structure is formed and transformed across a wide spectrum ranging from migration to mosques, from civil society to revolutionary movements, and from artificial intelligence to public service and treasure-hunting practices. The diversity of topics

across the chapters may appear disjointed at first glance; however, each one seeks an answer to the question of social structure and change from its own specific field and argues how institutions, processes and/or even everyday life weave and transform the fabric of society. We hope this book, having assembled texts from diverse approaches, will deepen the discussion that initiated in the first volume of the *Social Structure and Change* series and open up new horizons for its readers in understanding the multi-layered nature of society. With the hope that the book will prove useful both to the academic community and to a broad readership interested in social issues...

Editor

Prof. Dr. Ahmet ÖZKİRAZ

RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE: MIGRATION ON THE AXIS OF CHANGE, TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Ahmet ÖZKİRAZ¹

Nuriye AYGIN²

Migration is a comprehensive process that has driven profound transformations in the social, financial, cultural, and administrative structures of societies throughout human history. Migration movements—manifesting as individuals or communities leaving their places of residence for other settlements for various reasons—have become increasingly visible today due to integration, digital advancements, economic inequalities, ecological crises, and power vacuums. Migration both signifies population mobility and facilitates the reconstruction of social structures, intensification of cultural interactions, and transformation of economic relations.

The present study aims to establish a conceptual foundation for the phenomenon of population mobility and evaluates the conceptual framework, various forms, and dynamics of migration. Furthermore, we analyze the repercussions of migration on the sociological structure—specifically regarding social change, spatial transformation, and socio-economic development—as well as the structural crises and advantages it entails. Moving beyond classical approaches such as "brain drain" and "assimilation," the study discusses new perspectives introduced by contemporary theories like "brain circula-

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tion" and "social remittances." Employing a document analysis methodology, the study synthesizes the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of migration through a multifaceted approach centered on social change, spatial transformation, and socio-economic development.

Migration is a phenomenon that influences social, political, economic, and cultural change, development, and transformation in terms of its causes, effects, and consequences. By facilitating the reconfiguration and (re)production of the relationship between people and place, migration acts as a phenomenon that shapes the multifaceted transformation of the individual. The fact that migration impacts the entire dynamic structure of societies can be cited as the factor that has elevated migration movements to the top of the agenda for the international community and global actors (Demir, 2025, p. 472). However, migration is beyond a phenomenon to be evaluated solely within fixed frameworks; it possesses a dynamic nature driven by causes stemming from multiple layers—social, political, cultural, economic, geographic, psychological and so forth.,

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of migration on social structure by examining the phenomenon of migration within a theoretical and conceptual framework. In this context, the concept, types, and causes of migration are first addressed; subsequently, the dimensions of social change and transformation associated with migration, its impacts on the economic structure, and the social problems and opportunities it creates are analyzed. Thus, the study seeks to demonstrate that migration is not merely a movement of population but also a significant social process that shapes social transformation.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL BASES OF MIGRATION

Tekeli (2008, p. 18) argues migration is the act of people voluntarily leaving or changing the place where they live. Keleş (1998: 58) defines it as "the act of people moving from one settlement to another for the purpose of settling."

In Turkish language and cultural structure, the concept of *migration* is defined in its fundamental sense as a movement involving a change of location—specifically regarding one's dwelling or abode—and is rooted in the verb *konmak* (to settle or pitch camp), a concept that is inherently socio-spatial. Stemming from the modes of production and the nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles found within the traditional social structure, various concepts shaping folk culture and social life have emerged from these two actions. Indeed, in our language, the verb "to migrate" means several concepts such as migration, nomad, migrant, nomadism, nomadic life, and immigrant; while the verb "to settle" includes broad vocabulary of concepts that shape urban life and housing relationships, such as dwelling, housing, shantytown, slum, lodging, guest, guest house, guest accommodation, subject, neighbor, and location, all of which have become ingrained in the collective memory. This linguistic and cultural accumulation demonstrates that migration is not merely a simple movement of population but plays a constitutive role in the construction of social institutions. From a sociological perspective, migration is a dynamic set of processes that begins with a shift in the individual's perception, proceeds with physical relocation in space, and concludes with adaptation to the destination. In this context, the most comprehensive scientific definition of migration is a process of voluntary or forced horizontal mobility and social change—undertaken for economic, social, political, environmental, cultural, or individual reasons, and aimed at temporary or permanent settlement and housing—

whereby movement occurs from one place to another (Çakır, 2011, pp. 130-132).

According to Castelli (2018), migration is a social fact that requires a multifaceted examination of societies. To understand migration, the phenomenon must be evaluated within the framework of multiple causes rather than a single one, necessitating a holistic approach to the factors involved. In this regard, migration should be addressed across macro, meso, and micro dimensions. Macro factors can be categorized as political causes (war, human rights violations, acts of terror), economic causes (poverty, unemployment, high inflation, income inequality, corruption), and environmental factors (floods, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic activity).

Meso-level factors can be defined primarily in terms of societal dynamics—such as social communication networks, incentives from kinship and hometown associations, and advancements in telecommunications and transportation services (Castelli, 2018, p. 2). Castelli notes that the phenomenon of migration occurs on multidimensional social causes.

The sociological counterpart—within the context of internal migration and urbanization practices in Turkey—to the informal communication networks emphasized by Castelli at the level of "meso-factors" is embodied in the functions performed by associations of fellow townsmen (*hemsehrî* associations). Indeed, an empirical field study conducted by Özkiraz and Acungil (2012) in the province of Tokat demonstrates that these associations serve as a structural "buffer mechanism" for individuals migrating from rural to urban areas. By establishing a transitional bridge that softens the interface between the rural value systems brought by migrants and the complex institutional structure of urban culture, these solidarity networks facilitate the resolution of fundamental

urban needs—such as housing, employment, and social security—through informal channels, thereby preventing individuals from succumbing to urban anomie (normlessness) or experiencing potential crises of adaptation.

Migration influences the process by which society and individuals adapt to changing societal conditions. Settlement patterns must adapt to new circumstances due to factors such as shifts in a society's external political and economic relations and the disproportionate growth associated with its economic development. It is at this juncture that migration emerges as the element constituting the social mechanics of this adaptation (Tekeli, 2006, p. 69).

The transformative impact of migration on social structure is also explained by classical approaches in economic studies that account for the transfer of labor from rural areas to cities. In this context, the development approach based on an unlimited supply of labor—pioneered by Arthur Lewis (Lewis, 1954; cited in Aktaş, 2015)—elucidates the role of migration in economic transformation as industrial and other modern sectors expand. According to Lewis's theory, the traditional agricultural sector harbors a labor surplus wherein the contribution of additional labor to production is minimal. The migration of this surplus labor to urban economic centers serves as a crucial mechanism of transformation; it facilitates increased investment capacity and productivity in urban industry without causing a loss in agricultural output (Aktaş, 2015, pp. 37–48). Therefore, the phenomenon of migration can be viewed not merely as geographical mobility, but also as a process that supports the transfer of labor to more productive sectors and the transformation of the economic structure.

Migration can be defined as leaving the place where one was born and raised for specific reasons. It refers to the process of individuals settling in new areas, moving away from

their current place of residence or geographical location for particular purposes and reasons (Kirman, 2017, p. 109).

Migration varies across different eras and centuries, depending on the prevailing conditions of the time. "Migrations that have occurred over centuries now emerge as a significant issue, driven by the impact of globalization and shifting global dynamics. For nations, this issue typically arises from sociological factors, such as economic concerns and security anxieties. Yet, migration is a tragic event that inflicts trauma upon the lives of those who migrate—particularly those compelled to do so" (Çalışkan, 2018, p. 2). Such trauma can stem not only from the factors that precipitated the migration but also from the challenges of adapting to—and the unfamiliarity with—the cultural, social, political, and economic conditions of the destination.

Marshall defines the phenomenon of migration sociologically as the permanent movement of an entire society—or a specific segment thereof—out of the country toward new settlement areas, other nations, or other societies. The Turkish Language Association, on the other hand, explains the concept of migration as the movement of individuals or communities from one country to another, or from one settlement to another, for social, political, or economic reasons (Marshall, cited in Kaygalak, 2009, p. 9).

TYPES OF MIGRATION

Throughout human history, individuals and/or societies may be compelled—either voluntarily or involuntarily—to leave their locations (whether within or outside the country) due to reasons such as war, famine, or economic, cultural, political, or educational factors. In this context, the concepts of internal and external migration emerge based on whether the movement occurs within or outside the country, while the

concepts of forced and voluntary migration arise based on whether the migration is involuntary or voluntary.

Internal migration refers to the relocation of the population within national borders. Depending on their circumstances, individuals or groups may relocate within the country to work, pursue education, or live under more favorable conditions (Akkayan, 1979, p. 23; Başel, 2011, p. 515).

Internal migration refers to the temporary or permanent relocation or movement of individuals or communities within the borders of the same country. It involves changes of location within national boundaries and can occur for various reasons—frequently due to a desire for better living conditions, employment prospects, educational opportunities, or socio-cultural activities, or as a result of natural disasters.

The most common form of this type of migration is the movement from rural to urban areas, driven particularly by increasing industrialization and the mechanization of agriculture. However, migration also occurs from urban to rural areas and between urban centers (Birel, 2024, p. 8). Internal migration can lead to a number of adverse consequences. As a result of unregulated internal migration, both long-term residents and migrants may face challenges such as inadequate municipal, educational, and healthcare services; employment difficulties; infrastructure and transportation issues; rising housing costs; and housing shortages. Furthermore, regional disparities have been observed in areas receiving migrants from rural regions. Although internal migration gives rise to various problems, these issues remain confined to the national level—specifically within regions—and do not escalate into international problems (Es & Güloğlu, 2004, pp. 83-84).

The migration of individuals or specific segments of society to other countries—beyond national borders—in pursuit of better education and living standards, as well as healthier

conditions, can be described as transnational or external migration. It is important not to confuse external migration with the movement of asylum seekers or refugees, or with transit migration; whereas the migration of asylum seekers involves masses or individuals seeking refuge in other countries due to adverse living conditions in their home countries, external migration does not entail relocating to other countries out of necessity (Demir, 2025, p. 478).

"Forced migration" refers to situations where individuals or specific segments of society are compelled to migrate due to factors beyond their control—such as natural disasters, human rights violations, war, conflict, genocide, or economic reasons. The circumstances driving forced migration—including wars, conflicts, political conditions, and economic factors—encompass the forcible removal of people against their will. A prime example of this is the forced transportation of individuals from Africa into slavery for sugar and cotton production following the discovery of the Americas (Erdil, 2020, p. 74).

The mass population movement that occurred following the 1864 Great Circassian Exile and Genocide is one of the most prominent and painful examples of forced migration in Turkish history. In the wake of this massive exile, the Ottoman Empire had to develop various immigration policies and settlement strategies to address the socio-cultural integration challenges faced by the people seeking refuge in Anatolia. The Empire's policy stance regarding this wave of mass forced migration and the administrative settlement decisions it implemented constitute the historical-political backdrop to the migrants' struggles for survival and integration into the social fabric of their new settlements (Özkiroz & Çetin, 2015, pp. 9–10).

Migration has persisted for various reasons. Voluntary migration is fundamentally the act of moving from one's current location to another by choice and through planning. The reasons behind this include a desire to change one's circumstances, as well as factors such as better economic opportunities, favorable climatic conditions, superior educational prospects, and a better living environment. In this context, individuals and/or groups plan their voluntary migration or relocation with the aim of working, living, or pursuing education under better conditions (Karakaya, 2020, p. 97).

CAUSES OF MIGRATION

Unemployment, low standards of living, lack of food and housing, and the like are the primary economic factors that have affected migration globally. (Urbański, 2022, p. 2). The most prominent known cause of migration—a concept as old as human history—is economic. This phenomenon accelerated with the Industrial Revolution, driven by global scientific advancements, inventions, and mechanization. In particular, the widespread adoption of machinery in agricultural activities led to employment issues in the sector, thereby paving the way for the rural population—those engaged in agriculture—to migrate away from rural areas (Taşçı, 2009, p. 85). Kaya, however, lists the economic causes of migration as follows: Low wages for their labor, high tax burden and governmental and administrative uncertainties. These conditions make people worry about their futures and have them migrate either voluntarily or involuntarily (Kaya, 2017, p. 145).

Migrant workers are often willing to take on low-level jobs—such as those in construction, agriculture, industry, and domestic services—that local workers will avoid due to harsh working conditions. Although the wages migrants earn in these unskilled roles are low by the standards of the host

country, they are significantly higher than what they could earn in their home countries. Consequently, the socio-economic status of these migrants improves over time (Czaika & de Haas, 2012, p. 425).

In addition to the pursuit of better opportunities, higher wages, and improved living standards, migration movements are driven by socio-cultural and political factors—such as discrimination stemming from ethnic differences in destination regions or countries, political instability, regime changes, and population exchange policies. This phenomenon may occur between countries or arise from issues and imbalances between different regions within a single country (Aksoy, 2012, p. 294).

The first major mass migration occurred in the mid-4th century when groups of people were seeking to escape the dominion of Chinese states by heading west, which laid the foundations of today's European nations. In the 20th century, the Second World War forced many people into involuntary migration. Following the war, European countries seeking to rebuild their systems asked less developed and developing nations to meet their labor needs, recruiting workers from Greece, Spain, and Türkiye between 1954 and the 1970s (Naz, 2015, p. 15).

Some other factors such as wars, internal unrest, and terrorism may also drive migration. Events involving major tragedies, particularly wars, serve as the most striking examples of this. The experiences of Bulgarian Turks at the Belene camp in the recent past can be cited as a case in point. Another example is the migration that occurred following an accident during nuclear bomb testing in Kazakhstan (Hatipler & Daşkıran, 2021, p. 718). In the present day, the events unfolding in Syria and Iran stand out as the most obvious examples of this phenomenon on the Asian continent.

Environmental factors constitute another cause of migration. Conditions such as drought in the region or locality, inadequate educational and healthcare facilities, a lack of job opportunities for large young populations in the current economic climate, as well as floods and geopolitical issues, may lead to migration.

Among the social and cultural causes of migration, the most prominent factors include healthcare needs, the desire for better career prospects, and the aim of obtaining a quality education. Cultural factors—such as the "bride price" (which can hinder marriage) and blood feuds (which can threaten one's life)—are also cited as cultural reasons for migration (Akgür, 1997, p. 65).

THE IMPACTS OF MIGRATION ON SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURES

Multidimensional repercussions of spatial mobility on destination centers can be examined from a wide range of perspectives; however, this research limits its scope within the effects of migration on social formations to specific parameters. Accordingly, the present study aims to provide a structural analysis by focusing on some components including demographic growth, educational infrastructure, mass unemployment, areas of urban poverty and per capita income—a key indicator of macroeconomic prosperity.

Population growth varies depending on whether an area is a source or a destination for migration. Globally, population growth rates are high in less developed countries; within a national context, high rates are observed in underdeveloped regions and rural areas reliant on agriculture (Başel, 2011, p. 525). In rural areas, the high population growth rate—particularly among the agricultural population—leads to increased unemployment and a surplus labor supply; this, combined

with the fragmentation of agricultural land and diminishing returns, accelerates migration from rural areas to cities (Kocaman, 2008, p. 1). Migration movements negatively affect the existing structure both in the areas people leave and, in the destinations where they arrive, leading to an uncontrolled surge in migration.

Education is another factor that has impacts on migration and social structure. Schools are the primary settings where education exerts a direct impact. In this context, migrating to other provinces or countries for educational purposes is considered a viable option for individuals. However, highly educated individuals may choose to migrate to locations with more favorable conditions, weighing these against the challenges of their current environment (Ayдын & Levent, 2021, p. 402). In other words, just as individuals with lower levels of education might migrate for educational reasons, those with higher levels of education may leave their current locations to move to places offering better conditions. Thus, the education factor may vary depending on conditions and possibilities.

The shift of skilled labor migration from a classic, unidirectional *brain drain* perspective to a multilateral *brain circulation* process is regarded as a fundamental mechanism in the establishment of international knowledge networks and communities (Metin, 2025; Saxenian, 2002). Contrary to the traditional *winner-loser* mindset, it is observed that skilled migrants contribute to both their host countries and their countries of origin by building bridges of knowledge, technology, and capital between these regions (Saxenian, 2002).

Saxenian (2002) argues that immigrant entrepreneurs facilitate access to global markets through international professional networks and that this reciprocal mobility serves as a strategic tool in economic development of nations. Accelerated by globalization, diminishing importance of borders,

and concept of *boundaryless careers*, this cyclical process moves beyond the traditional notion of one-way brain drain, evolving instead into a flow of skilled human capital that enhances the global competitiveness of nations (Tung, 2008). Recent studies conducted in Türkiye have revealed some concrete reflections of this brain circulation. Metin (2025) carried out a micro-data analysis on 160,789 higher education graduates who lived abroad between 2010 and 2022 and found that 67,366 of these graduates returned to Türkiye, establishing the country's brain circulation rate at a remarkable 41.9%. This finding empirically demonstrates that the mobility of a skilled population represents a dynamic and circular circulation of human capital rather than a permanent loss (Metin, 2025),.

Per capita income is yet another factor leading to migration. More industrially developed regions, such as cities, offer opportunities in cultural, economic, social, and healthcare sectors that will attract intention to migrate (Kırdar & Saracoğlu, 2012, p. 3). Thus, per capita income is a significant driver of migration that will shape migration patterns so that people migrate to places with greater economic opportunities. In the modern era, economic conditions are the primary causes of migration movements (Aksoy, 2012, p. 294). Migration toward economically developed cities impacts development negatively and simultaneously creates a need for new employment opportunities.

This refers to the situation where individuals are unable to find employment despite being willing to work at prevailing wage rates (Akkaya, 2017: 4). Factors such as disparities in economic conditions, a lack of flexibility to adapt to change, and the nature of technological shifts and their diffusion—often associated with a failure to achieve sustainable development—contribute to regional unemployment. This situation

can lead to migration from the region (Özer & Topal, 2017, p. 55).

Deprivation and/or poverty can cause groups of people to move en masse. Poverty is a common problem that plagues all nations globally (Levent & Arvas, 2019, p. 173). According to Güneş, poverty is a condition in which individuals work for insufficient wages/salaries in order to meet basic needs and must limit their expenditures accordingly (Güneş, 2009, p. 451). Absolute poverty is defined as the state in which individuals, households, and social groups fall below the minimum income and expenditure levels required to meet basic physiological needs, such as nutrition and housing. Relative poverty, on the other hand, is based on both biological and social needs (Aydin & Levent, 2021, p. 400). Poverty drives migration flows worldwide and can compel people to head for socially unapproved paths for sustaining their physiological needs. This situation may bring about fundamental changes that will affect the entire society in the fields of security, justice and education.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANATOMY OF MIGRATION: SOCIETAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Tekeli discusses the migration issue from four different aspects as follow: It leads to a need for collective partnerships at both local and global scales; it multidimensionally affects political, economic, socio-cultural, religious, legal, and demographic structures, and public order and security; it is a dynamic phenomenon with a universal scope; and it can be classified in various movement-based ways (2018, p. 18). According to the author's first observation, spatial movements may occur with the aim of eliminating social imbalances and re-establishing order. Consequently, an effort to mitigate existing injustices lies at the root of migration. Although it might

be assumed that migration would subside once social disparities are bridged, the persistence of mobility indicates that inter-regional imbalance has not yet been overcome. According to the second perspective, however, the process is a unidirectional movement of adaptation that unfolds concurrently with social change. According to Tekin (2007: 45), migration should be accepted as an inevitable social reality—akin to birth and death—rather than being fundamentally framed as a problem. Underlying this mobility is a dialectic between structure and agency; while the social and environmental factors that pave the way for migration represent the structure, it is the individuals themselves who are subject to the transformative effects of that structure. Consequently, social and environmental conditions that arouse waves of migration leads to certain instabilities and imbalances at the macro level. Migration, which is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature, profoundly affects both the individual and public life through its social, political, ecological, cultural, and economic causes and consequences. According to Güvenç (1972, p. 78), this phenomenon—which triggers a multifaceted transformation in both the settlements that send and those that receive populations—is a source of mass social mobility. Consequently, one of the most clearly observable outcomes of migration is social change; indeed, this mobility lays the groundwork for collective transformation and social development (Adıgüzel, 2016, p. 40). Balcıoğlu (2007, p. 58) focuses on the cultural dimension of the process and views migration as a practice of integration from one culture into another. This mobility, which triggers psychological and biological changes in human makeup, acts as a bridge between the traditional and the modern while simultaneously disrupting the existing cultural structure and generating new value systems.

Migration-induced new value systems and changes in social and cultural structures are fundamentally linked to the

process wherein space itself—transcending its role as merely a physical area or geographical framework—is reshaped through social interactions. In the literature on the sociology of space, Henri Lefebvre argues that every culture produces its own space and that space is not a static entity but a dialectical product created directly through social interactions (Lefebvre, 2016, p. 56). Immigrants satisfy their housing needs in the urban areas where they settle and they create a distinctive *place identity* by transferring their daily routines, consumption habits and cultural values. David Harvey, too, posits that the differentiation between places takes precedence over the differentiation of behaviors, emphasizing that the social relationships people forge within a shared geography significantly transform the urban living environment, social behavioral patterns, and local identity structures (Harvey, 2002, pp. 147-148). Urban spaces formed as a result of migration movements constitute a dynamic realm of social behavior and cognition where local communities and migrants reshape social boundaries, meet on common ground, or—at times—generate conflict and tension.

According to Kuruyazıcı (2001, p. 4), communities that establish a unique socio-cultural world in the geography to which they migrate carry their languages, belief systems, intellectual traditions, and daily life practices with them. Within this newly constructed realm, migrants strive to live in harmony with the local society while simultaneously struggling to preserve their own identities. However, this quest for balance becomes increasingly complex with the involvement of the second generation. This is because the expectation of host societies—even if not explicitly stated—is not mutual adaptation, but rather that immigrants abandon their own cultural identities to fully adopt the dominant culture and undergo assimilation. Moving beyond this assimilation-versus-adapta-

tion dilemma, contemporary post-colonial sociological theories reframe the encounter between immigrant and local cultures, shifting it away from being a static site of conflict (Kuruyazıcı, 2001, p. 4). The concepts of the *third space* and *cultural hybridity*, developed by Homi Bhabha (1994), demonstrate that in the spaces where different cultures meet, neither the dominant culture nor the immigrant culture retains its pure form; instead, both structures undergo transformation to construct a brand-new, creative, and synthesized shared social identity. This site of dialectical encounter liberates the social structure from the stagnation inherent in homogeneity, generating—within art, philosophy, science, and everyday life practices—an intense intellectual richness and social innovation fueled by cultural diversity (Bhabha, 1994; 2016).

Tapan (2001, p. 104) argues the process can be seen as an advantage contrary to the potential problems arising from migration-caused diversity. The new generation of immigrants—raised with the codes of two distinct societies, fluent in both languages, and intimately familiar with both cultural climates—transforms this background into a multifaceted identity. Thanks to this multi-layered identity structure, the ability of these young people to serve as cultural bridges fostering reconciliation between two different societal poles constitutes one of the most significant positive outcomes of the process.

Türkyılmaz et al. (1998, p. 5) discussed both constructive and destructive effects of migration on the social future. Authors examining the negative aspects of the process cite the ruralization of the socio-cultural and physical fabric of cities, rising crime rates, bottlenecks in municipal services, and disruptions in the healthcare system as primary disadvantages. On the other hand, the positive contributions of migration to the social structure are quite diverse. In this context, the rise

in rates of legal marriages and births, the strengthening of national-level social cohesion and integration processes, the spread of urbanization awareness, the acquisition of new statuses by individuals through upward social mobility, and the transformation of personal perceptions are among the positive dynamics brought about by migration.

The impact of migration processes on sending countries cannot be explained solely by the transfer of economic resources; it can also lead to about more comprehensive socio structural changes. The Social Remittances theory, developed by Levitt (1998), discusses that migrants transfer modern ideas, behavioral patterns, gender perspectives, organizational skills and social capital they have acquired in host countries to the communities in their home countries. This process of cross-border interaction renders the value and norm systems of local communities in regions of emigration more flexible and yields positive social outcomes including modernization, heightened educational awareness and spread of democratic values (Levitt, 1998).

According to Aksoy (2012, p. 293), domestic and international migration movements aimed at improving living standards yield complex consequences. He posits that the flow of multicultural life, which is the most prominent outcome of cross-border migration, shapes interactions between different segments of society in both positive and negative ways. Discrepancies and conflicts may arise regarding cultural freedoms and levels of social cohesion since global migration waves directly trigger the effort of people from diverse backgrounds to build a shared life, the need to bridge vast distances and the challenge of overcoming communication barriers.

ORSAM Report 195 (2015, pp. 17–18) states the impact of Syrians on the national and regional economic structure entails both advantages and disadvantages. The negative aspect includes skyrocketing of rents, housing costs, and food prices driven by surging market demand in border cities, eviction of established tenants and rising cost of living. Further, the use of informal, low-cost and child labor in agricultural, industrial and small-scale commercial enterprises has been identified as a serious issue in the Report. On the other hand, the demand for unskilled labor in industrialized provinces such as Mersin, Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş has been met by migrants rather than local workers, which has eased pressure on the labor market. Sourcing supplies for camp residents—such as accommodation and textiles—from local tradespeople using global and aid funds has injected *hot money* into the market, thereby opening a door to economic opportunity.

This regional-level economic dynamism and the increased flexibility of the labor market—as highlighted in the ORSAM report—are also supported at the general economic level by various field studies conducted across Türkiye. Comparing GDP growth in Türkiye’s border provinces with similar provinces that received no migration, Ökmen (2022) found that border provinces affected by migration flows exhibited an average growth rate 5.48 percentage points higher than that of provinces that received no migration (Ökmen, 2022, cited in Öztop & Kaygısız, 2025, p. 284). Tümen and Balkan Konuk (2016) found that the advantages in labor costs arising from labor supply of undocumented migrants reduced price pressures at the local level by lowering nationwide consumer price index (CPI) by approximately 2.5% (Tümen & Balkan Konuk, 2016, cited in Öztop & Kaygısız, 2025, p. 284).

CONCLUSION

This study approaches migration not merely as a displacement of population, but as a complex structural transformation that encompasses demographic, cultural, political, economic and psychological dimensions. Findings derived from both theoretical approaches and practical field research confirm that migration is not a permanent *problem* or a source of crisis; rather, it is an inevitable global reality of social structures. Migration possesses a multifaceted structure in which push and pull forces operate alongside dynamics at the micro, meso, and macro scales. The fundamental insight of this research is the fact that migration simultaneously presents significant opportunities for development alongside structural challenges. As for adverse effects, notable issues include physical deterioration of cities caused by uncontrolled population concentrations, operational bottlenecks in public health, education and municipal services, rising living costs and inevitable cultural incompatibilities.

Among the advantages of the migration process are its role in fostering collective vitality, replenishing human capital pool and building strong bridges of integration between societies through diversified social structures and younger generations. Syrian refugees served as a concrete example that practically illustrates this dual nature of migration. On the negative side of the process, there are serious socio-economic threats—particularly in border cities—such as sharp increases in housing, rent, and food prices driven by a surge in consumption demand, rising living costs, and the spread of informal child labor. However, the demand for labor in unskilled and arduous sectors—which local citizens shun—has been met by refugees. Furthermore, the fact that asylum seekers procure their basic necessities from local merchants, combined with the injection of external humanitarian aid into the

regional economy, has created significant opportunities for financial gain and growth within local industries such as food and textiles. Mitigating the negative aspects associated with the process—such as socio-cultural friction, infrastructural bottlenecks and unfair market competition—while simultaneously leveraging advantages like commercial dynamism, a vibrant labor market, and a multicultural structure for the public good, is possible only through effective management strategies. Thus, the placement of this dynamic structure on sustainable basis depends on establishing strong coordination at both international and national levels and on developing rational, inclusive macro-integration strategies based on scientific parameters rather than temporary forms of intervention.

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MOSQUE AS AN ELEMENT OF CIVILIZATION: THE TOKAT SAMPLE

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This study examines the reciprocal relationship between the city and civilization—using Tokat as a case study—and investigates the pivotal role mosques play within this relationship. Cities are not merely physical spaces; rather, they are multifaceted structures where social, cultural, and religious values find concrete expression. Mosques are among the most significant of these structures. Situated at the heart of the urban concept in Islamic civilization, mosques have served—beyond their function as places of worship—vital roles in education, social solidarity, the administration of justice, and the preservation of cultural continuity. This study outlines the fundamental characteristics of the Islamic urban concept and elucidates the central position of the mosque within this framework. In this context, attention is drawn to the foundational role played by the mosques built during the era of the Prophet Muhammad in the process of urbanization. It is further noted that mosques, together with madrasas, bazaars, and charitable foundations (*waqfs*), formed a focal point that organized urban life. Additionally, the final section of the study examines the city of Tokat, addressing its historical development, the influence of various civilizations, and the mosque architecture that took shape—particularly during the Turco-Islamic period. The study concludes that the

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mosques in Tokat are not merely architectural monuments but also institutions that preserve social memory and shape the city's identity. The research was conducted using an interpretive approach and drew upon secondary sources; the findings also incorporate insights gained from years of informal observations made in Tokat.

The word *şehir* (city) is of Persian origin and denotes large settlement centers where a significant portion of the population is engaged in sectors such as trade, industry, and administration. In Turkish, however, the Sogdian-derived word *kent* and the word *balık*—which signifies a fortress or palace—have been used since the 11th century to denote the concept of a city. In Arabic, terms such as *medîne*, *belde*, and *mısır* have been preferred to express this concept. Each of these terms reflects the fact that a city is not merely a physical settlement area but also a social, administrative, and cultural organization (Küçükaşçı, 2010, p. 38).

Cities are fundamental settlements where the multifaceted activities of social life are concentrated and which serve as focal points for economic production and cultural accumulation. In this respect, the city is a center where social relations are shaped and the social order becomes institutionalized. While historical analysis suggests that the earliest examples of urbanization emerged in the fourth millennium BC in the regions of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, recent archaeological data indicate that the settlement of Çatalhöyük—located southeast of Konya in Anatolia—dates back to around 6800 BC (Küçükaşçı, 2010, pp. 38, 441).

Cities are not merely physical spaces where people coexist; they are also living organisms that reflect the intellectual realm, value system, and cultural heritage of a civilization. A city's identity is directly linked to its historical journey, architectural fabric, and social structure. In this context, cities

emerge as dynamic entities that both bear the traces of the past and shape the future. To understand cities, one must correctly interpret the civilizational vision to which they belong; for every civilization projects its worldview onto its cities and gives concrete form to its existence through them. The fact that the mere mention of cities such as Baghdad, Rome, or Istanbul instantly evokes the civilizations they represent serves as clear evidence of this phenomenon (Kendir, 2004, pp. 79–81; 463–464).

The City and Civilization Relationship

Cities are more than simple physical settlements; they are multi-layered entities that embody historical continuity and bear witness to the past. This testimony is transmitted across generations—sometimes through written sources and at other times through the reflection of the city’s historical and cultural heritage in its architectural structures—eventually evolving into a shared cultural memory (Küçükaşçı, 2012, p. 9). To accurately analyze a city’s social structure, inhabitants, and historical evolution, one must first possess a comprehensive understanding of the civilizational sphere and cultural background to which it belongs. Indeed, every city possesses a unique historical experience and narrative; this distinctiveness is tangibly observable, particularly in its historical monuments and architectural styles (Kutluer, 1995, p. 5). Consequently, making sense of a city requires examining the nature of the elements that define it as a city and analyzing the civilizational vision upon which those elements are grounded (Gündüzöz, 2012, p. 3).

The city is regarded as a tangible manifestation of a civilization and its accumulated culture. Indeed, the fact that the mere mention of cities such as Jerusalem, Mecca, or Rome

evokes mental images of the civilizations and cultural backgrounds associated with them clearly demonstrates the strong relationship between the city and civilization. Societies are often judged by the cities they possess, as cities are considered fundamental indicators reflecting a society's identity, value system, and historical heritage. In this context, cities serve almost as a seal reflecting the character of the societies to which they belong. Consequently, the interaction between cities and civilizations is not unidirectional but rather reciprocal and dynamic; while cities are products of civilization, they simultaneously contribute to the shaping and continuity of that civilization (Elik, 1998, pp. 40-55).

Distinct differences are observable—even at first glance—among European, Chinese, and Islamic cities. These differences stem not merely from geographical conditions but rather from the diversity in the belief systems, lifestyles, priorities, and value frameworks of these societies. In this context, cities can be viewed as multi-layered, complex structures that reflect the shared values, mentalities, and cultural codes of the societies to which they belong. As Fernand Braudel aptly noted, every city is a product of the civilization to which it belongs and is grounded in a specific historical and cultural pattern. Consequently, civilizations develop and become visible through the cities that reflect their characteristic traits. Thus, cities emerge as the fundamental spatial settings where civilizations take concrete form, come to life, and achieve continuity (Haydar, 1991, pp. 22–76).

In Islamic thought, space acquires meaning within a God-centered order; this order is intended to constitute a structure that is contingent upon the divine will and shaped around it. In this context, human beings—as integral parts of this existential order—are expected to comprehend their position vis-à-vis the Creator and grasp their own powerlessness in the

face of divine might. Beyond being a spatial organization where the material and the spiritual are integrated in harmony, the Islamic city possesses a structure that upholds the principle of balance within this unity. This urban concept is characterized by a mutual harmony between physical elements and spiritual values. In contrast, while Western cities often prioritize the assertion of human presence and dominance, cities in Islamic civilization were built with the aim of preserving and enhancing the existing order, adopting a perspective that encompasses both humanity and the natural environment. In this respect, the Islamic city can be viewed not merely as a settlement, but as the spatial manifestation of an ontological and ethical vision (Armağan, 2010, pp. 115-138).

In Islamic cities, architecture is designed with human proportions in mind—rather than based on a philosophy that subjugates or diminishes the individual—offering a perspective that embraces the person without looming over them. Within this framework, urban development takes shape in harmony with the natural environment, and the city is conceived as part of a holistic organism. Furthermore, elements such as cleanliness, human comfort, and the facilitation of daily life play a decisive role in the Islamic concept of the city. This approach demonstrates that urban planning considers not only physical needs but also factors aimed at ensuring human peace and well-being (Keleş, 2019, pp. 107-110). At the same time, the parallel drawn in Islamic thought between the construction of the "city of the heart" and the development of the physical city is noteworthy. Indeed, just as the construction of a material city requires elements such as stone, brick, sand, and soil, the construction of the spiritual realm of the heart is achieved through practices such as worship, remembrance (*dhikr*), contemplation, and spiritual vigilance (*mu-

raqaba*). In this respect, the city represents a holistic construction process that encompasses both material and spiritual dimensions (Cebecioğlu, 2013, p. 104).

The identity of cities is shaped as individuals who transform their beliefs into a way of life project those values onto the urban space. Although the human being is the subject that constructs the city, the city eventually becomes a partner in this process of constitutive agency; thus, the city becomes both an object that is constructed and an element that constructs. As a result of this mutual interaction, the human and the city continuously influence, transform, and reshape one another. While the individual imbues the city with meaning and spirit derived from their own existence, the city offers the individual a new identity and a sense of belonging. Indeed, by binding the individual to a specific place—to the land, air, and water—through the bond of civic fellowship, the city paves the way for the formation of a shared value system. In this manner, cultural and social values acquire concreteness and continuity within a specific spatial context (Kemikli, 2010, pp. 45-52).

The legends surrounding the Mostar Bridge serve as striking examples that symbolically reflect the relationship between the city and civilization. Narratives suggesting that the bridge was constructed from 114 large stones—representing the 114 surahs of the Quran—along with two towers symbolizing the *Muavvizeteyn* surahs, demonstrate that architecture in Islamic cities was conceived not merely for function but as a structure imbued with meaning. Ultimately, this approach both endows Islamic cities with an identity and breathes soul into them. In other words, while humans construct the space, the space in turn shapes the human; this process of mutual construction reveals the dynamic and holistic

relationship between the city and the individual (Söylemez, 2012, p. 1).

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) not only theoretically revealed what kind of city order and civilization understanding Muslims should live in, but also exemplified it by applying it in practice. In this respect, the Prophet is considered both the founding and inspiring model of the Islamic city. As a matter of fact, the Medina Document constitutes an important turning point in history in terms of his urban vision and understanding of social order. With the document in question, the Prophet established his political authority in Medina, took over the city administration and brought together different social elements within a common legal order. This development is considered a fundamental stage in the construction of the Islamic state and city model.

The Islamic city possesses a structure fundamentally based on principles of law and justice, prioritizing moral values and the ideal of the good life. Within this framework, elements such as justice, brotherhood, a sense of community, neighborly relations, commercial ethics, aesthetic sensibilities, solidarity, peace, and—when necessary—struggle have acquired an institutional character. Integrating religious and worldly elements through its architectural and spatial dimensions as well as its social, political, and cultural aspects, the Islamic city has become a living space that embodies the principle of *tawhid* (Divine Oneness) (Alver, 2015, pp. 32-40).

Islamic civilization can essentially be characterized as an urban civilization. Within this civilization, the city served as a center where faith was preserved and kept alive (Şahsuvaroğlu, 2014, pp. 199–210). Indeed, the practice of granting stipends to city dwellers and encouraging nomadic populations to settle in cities during the era of Caliph Umar underscores

the importance of sedentary life in the construction of civilization. This approach demonstrates that urbanization is viewed as an indispensable element regarding historical continuity, social order, and the development of civilization (Söylemez, 2012, p. 1).

Islamic Civilization and Mosque

Islamic civilization possesses a profound vision—shaped by the belief in **tawhid** (Divine Oneness)—that interprets the relationship between the individual, society, and space through a divine perspective. One of the most tangible and central manifestations of this vision is the mosque. Far more than merely a place of worship, the mosque is a multifaceted institution that serves as the focal point of the religious, social, cultural, and even intellectual life of Islamic society. Having played a decisive role in the founding of cities since the early periods, mosques have occupied the center of spatial organization, creating a sphere of attraction that is both physical and spiritual. In this regard, the mosque stands out as a fundamental building block that reflects the value system of Islamic civilization and reinforces a sense of social unity and belonging (Yılmaz, 2019, pp. 21-25). Furthermore, the necessity of establishing places of worship to facilitate the collective and orderly performance of acts of devotion—combined with other social, economic, and administrative factors that required a settled lifestyle—accelerated the urbanization process of nomadic or semi-settled Muslim communities and paved the way for the rapid creation of permanent urban settlements (Cin, 2014, p. 27).

With the migration of Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims from Mecca, the settlement known as "Yathrib" acquired the identity of "Madinat al-Nabi" (City of the Prophet) and became the center of a new vision of civilization (Tekineş, 2010,

p. 82). The Prophet's Mosque (Masjid al-Nabawi), constructed under the Prophet's instruction, affirmed this location as an Islamic homeland on both symbolic and institutional levels, while also serving as the starting point for social transformation and institutional structuring. This process ushered in a period of comprehensive change and reconstruction that encompassed both individual and social life. In this context, places of worship held a significant place among the institutions that embodied a way of life aiming for felicity in both this world and the Hereafter. By being situated at the heart of the city, mosques became not merely places of worship but also organizing elements of social life. Thus, urban life took shape around this center and achieved continuity (Yiğit, 2013, pp. 13-14).

Throughout history, it is observed that not only mosques but also places of worship belonging to various religions and faiths have predominantly been situated in the central, core areas of settlements. This pattern is closely linked to the role these places of worship play in fostering social interaction and integration, alongside their primary function as sites for worship. Central areas of settlements serve as common spaces that are accessible to residents in the shortest possible time and allow for the most spatially balanced form of gathering. Given this nature, it is natural for places of worship—where adherents of the same faith gather for communal prayer—to be located centrally, ensuring easy access for diverse segments of society. Consequently, the positioning of a place of worship—and specifically a mosque—within the core of a settlement can be viewed as serving a functional purpose, facilitating both communal worship and the strengthening of religious and social ties (Cin, 2014, p. 104).

Mosques and masjids have emerged not merely as physical structures, but as fundamental elements defining the

identity of cities and the communities inhabiting them. Indeed, the formation of bazaars and markets around the mosque, the organization of commercial life in proximity to this center, and the positioning of social institutions—such as bathhouses, libraries, and soup kitchens—around the mosque demonstrate that religious, social, and economic life in Islamic cities was approached within an integrated framework (Yiğit, 2013, pp. 13-14).

When the Prophet sent Ali to Yemen, he gave him a stone and instructed, “Establish your mosque where you go, and use this as the foundation stone.” Consequently, this stone—which still rests in a special location within the Great Mosque (Jami’ al-Kabir), the largest and oldest mosque in the center of Sana’a—is carefully preserved. Similarly, he entrusted his camel, Qaswa, to Muadh ibn Jabal, whom he sent to the city of Taiz in Yemen, instructing that a mosque be built wherever the camel chose to kneel. By telling the Companions whom he dispatched to distant lands to spread Islam that they should “build a mosque first,” the Prophet effectively reminds us of the vital function a mosque performs (Uğurluel, 2013, p. 27).

Islamic civilization, which took shape around the mosque, encompasses numerous benefits—such as gathering, education, coming together to vie in good deeds, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in shared serenity, and fostering collective consciousness and both physical and spiritual unity (Uğurluel, 2013, p. 27). We observe that, particularly during the first three centuries of Islam, mosques in Islamic cities were intensively utilized for social, cultural, political, military, and even economic purposes (Çelebi, 1983, pp. 95–107; Cin, 2014, p. 108).

In traditional Islamic cities, the mosque is not merely a venue for religious activities—as is often the case in modern

times—but also serves to interconnect the palace, the *mad-rasa* (school), the marketplace, and the neighborhoods. Thus, a life integrated around the mosque ensures the city's unity, enabling the Islamic concept of *tawhid* (divine oneness) to be lived out in daily life (Nasr, 1998, pp. 68–93).

The mosque primarily serves as a place of worship. It unites all believers—regardless of ethnic identity, language, skin color, sect, or school of thought, and spanning all ages and economic backgrounds—under a single dome, rendering them equal in the sight of the Lord. Drawing on the psychological principle that affection, camaraderie, and—consequently—solidarity emerge among those engaged in the same activity, we can state that obligatory prayers performed in congregation strengthen the unity and togetherness of believers and foster a sense of social consciousness. Furthermore, the practice of performing obligatory prayers behind an imam is intended to instill in believers a sense of obedience as they gather behind a qualified leader (Daryal, 1969, p. 14). We also learn from the Hadiths of the Prophet that collective worship in the mosque is twenty-five or twenty-seven times more meritorious than worship performed alone at home (Bukhari, 1422/2001, p. 30; Muslim, 1427/2006, p. 272).

Mosques served as centers of learning; indeed, the Prophet designated a section of the *Masjid al-Nabawi* (Prophet's Mosque) as the *Suffa*. Around 70 to 80 Companions—a number that later rose to as many as 400—studied Quranic sciences, theology (*aqidah*), and writing there (Baltaci, 1985, p. 236). In subsequent periods, the study circles established in mosques facilitated the training of numerous jurists and scholars of Hadith, effectively serving the function that modern universities do today.

Mosques are venues for sermons and religious guidance—a duty of guidance that is not limited solely to the

Prophet; rather, it is an obligation incumbent upon all Muslims until the Day of Judgment (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil). The Prophet conveyed the immense value of this sacred duty to Ali, stating: "Know that for a single person to become a Muslim through your guidance is better for you than being given red camels—the most prized of spoils" (Bukhari, 1422/2001, p. 34). Through the divine command—"The mosques of Allah are to be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish prayer, give alms, and fear none but Allah; it is they who are expected to be rightly guided"—we are called upon to enliven the interiors of the mosques we have adorned with fine architecture, filling them with men, women, and children. Otherwise, they would remain nothing more than artistic museums.

From the perspective of social psychology, mosques serve a therapeutic function. Through their spiritual role, they soothe the human soul. Those who visit the mosque find rest, experience a sense of spirituality, and are reminded of the Hereafter and religious values. Traditional mosques are often surrounded by cemeteries; as individuals pass by these burial grounds on their way to the mosque, they are reminded of death. Reflecting on the reality of death, the imminence of the Reckoning, and the primacy of the Hereafter, they become vigilant against the deceptive nature of the world and the temptations of Satan (Şentürk, 2017, p. 28).

Mosques have also played a significant role in the establishment of justice. The people of Medina had the opportunity to visit the mosque five times a day to share their concerns with the Prophet, who acted as an arbiter among them. In fact, some offenders were even detained within the mosque (Baltacı, 1985, p. 239), and a prisoner of war was once tied to one of its pillars. Beyond this, mosques served functions in the realm of social services; the state was administered from

there, visiting delegations were received in the mosque, pledges of allegiance (*bay'ah*) were taken there, and the affairs of the *Ummah* were deliberated upon with the Companions. Parallel to the Westernization of institutional structures in the Islamic world, the cultural, political, economic, and military dimensions of mosques were severed, and in the process of urbanization, the mosque was pushed to the periphery of the city. Despite all such efforts, mosques continue to withstand the test of time, remaining—alongside their religious mission—the most important and dynamic institutions of the entire Muslim world (Çakan, 2019, pp. 48-49).

A look across the globe reveals that at least two-thirds of such structures belong to Islamic Civilization. In one respect, Islamic Civilization is a civilization of *waqf* (endowments). There are inns, bathhouses, soup kitchens, hospitals, and caravanserais—spaced at regular intervals along travel routes—that date back to the eras of the Umayyads, Abbasids, the peoples of Western Asia, the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks, Al-Andalus, and the Ottomans; these were built and developed solely for the benefit of people, with the aim of easing their living conditions. It is also possible to speak of the existence of shelters and sanctuaries not only for humans but for animals as well (Duman, 2011, pp. 1, 20).

Mosques of Tokat: Bearers of Civilization Through Their Architecture and Social Aspects

Turks, having entered the sphere of the Islamic religion and civilization, both adopted the material and spiritual characteristics of this faith and also maintained their own customs, habits, and traditions within this civilization. In embracing Islam, they demonstrated the ability to harmonize, integrate, and align their own modes of thought, understanding, and traditions with the Islamic religion (Şeker, 2007, 173-183).

There are numerous Turco-Islamic cities that continue to bear the traces of Islamic civilization. These cities shed light on history not only through their architectural monuments but also through their customs and traditions. A nation's greatest wealth and heritage from the past is its historical environment. By blending this historical environment, the legacy of the past, and the works of their own era, people construct a new culture and, in doing so, build their future (Çolak & Türkmen, 2018, pp. 2, 469).

The Byzantine cities encountered by the Turks during their settlement in Anatolia following the Battle of Manzikert provided a significant foundation for the shaping of Turkish urban culture. The physical structures and material cultural elements of existing cities were reshaped by the urban planning concepts introduced by the Turks, thereby contributing to the formation of a distinct Turkish-Islamic urban identity. As Turkish urbanization accelerated from the mid-12th century onwards, bazaars, markets, and other socio-economic spaces developed around the mosque; construction and development activities intensified—particularly during the reign of Alaeddin Kayqubad I—driven by the revitalization of trade. While Anatolian cities were transforming into Turkish-Islamic urban centers that encompassed religious, economic, social, and cultural functions, Sufi figures such as Mevlânâ Jalal al-Din Rumi and Yunus Emre also contributed to shaping the cultural life of these cities. Tokat stands as a significant example of this broader urbanization process in Anatolia; the city's existing settlement fabric was gradually reshaped in accordance with Turkish-Islamic urban planning principles, playing a decisive role in the formation of Tokat's social, economic, and cultural structure (Dimez, 2015, pp. 805-806).

Tokat, a prominent Turkish-Islamic city, is a significant Anatolian urban center that bears the traces of diverse civilizations throughout history and reflects its rich cultural heritage in its architectural and social fabric. Thanks to both its geographical location and the various civilizations that have shaped its history, the city possesses a multi-layered cultural structure; these characteristics have made it a noteworthy hub for local and regional history and culture. Having served as a major settlement since ancient times and home to various civilizations—boasting a deep-rooted history and cultural legacy—Tokat continued its existence as a Turkish-Islamic city following Alparslan's conquest of Anatolia. Tokat is a significant city with a settlement history in Anatolia dating back to the Chalcolithic Age (5400–3000 BC). Civilizations such as the Hittites, Phrygians, Cimmerians, Scythians, Medes, and Persians established dominion over the region, and Tokat held strategic importance. Alexander the Great's Anatolian campaign in 332 BC brought an end to Persian rule but left the Satrapy of Northern Cappadocia untouched. Following a brief period of Macedonian rule after Alexander's death, Tokat came under the control of the Kingdom of Pontus and, subsequently, Roman administration (Açikel, 2012, p. 219).

Tokat's historical background began to take shape with the settlement of Christian communities arriving from Comana Pontica; the settlement that developed around Dazimon Castle maintained its existence as a frontier and garrison center during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Consequently, prior to the conquest, the city possessed the character of a limited settlement rather than that of a fully developed urban center. Indeed, the fact that the Danismends encountered a large church and a community of 360 clergy members outside the castle during their conquest of Tokat indicates the presence of a limited settlement area beyond the walls (Aksulu, 2015, p. 413). On the other hand, the Islamic

raids that began during the Umayyad era and the military campaigns of the Abbasid period increased the interaction of Tokat and its environs with diverse political and cultural elements; with the establishment of Turkish rule in the region, the city entered a new era in which its existing settlement fabric was reshaped in accordance with the Turkish-Islamic urban planning tradition (Açıkel, 2012, p. 219).

Following the 1071 Battle of Manzikert, Turkish rule began in Anatolia, and Emir Danishmend conquered Tokat in 1074. In 1175, the Anatolian Seljuk Sultan Kilij Arslan II eliminated the Danishmendids and incorporated Tokat into Seljuk territory. When Kilij Arslan II divided the realm among his sons in 1184, Tokat came under the rule of Rukn al-Din Suleiman Shah II. Upon Kaykhusraw I ascending the throne for the second time in 1205, Ala al-Din Kayqubad was appointed *melik* (ruler) of the Danishmend province, with Tokat as its center. Support for the Baba Ishaq Rebellion emerged from the vicinity of Tokat in 1240; following the Battle of Köse Dağ in 1243, the Ilkhanids granted the Emirate of Tokat to Muin al-Din Suleiman Pervane. The city was under the administration of Nureddin Cibril in 1276 and continued to be governed by various emirs in the post-Seljuk period. Following the rebellion of the Ilkhanid governor Timurtash in 1327 and the death of Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan in 1335, Tokat came under the dominion of the Eretnids. In 1381, Qadi Burhan al-Din Ahmed ceded the Emirate of Tokat to Sheikh Najib; in 1398, the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I incorporated Tokat into Ottoman territory at the invitation of the local population (Açıkel, 2012, p. 220).

The city of Tokat, with its deep-rooted history, stands as one of the tangible examples of this vision of civilization. While it has been home to various civilizations throughout history, the city—particularly under Turkish-Islamic rule—

acquired an identity infused with the architectural, cultural, and spiritual elements of Islamic civilization. The mosques in Tokat are not merely architectural structures; they are vital institutions that nourish the city's soul, keep social memory alive, and transmit civilizational values to future generations.

The mosques located in Tokat have assumed a significant function beyond merely serving as places of worship; they have acted as central institutions where knowledge is produced, taught, and disseminated. From the early periods onwards, these mosques became venues for Quranic education, the narration of hadith, discussions on jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and various other scholarly activities. In this respect, Tokat's mosques played a decisive role in shaping both individual worship and social consciousness, while also laying the groundwork for social and cultural development alongside religious scholarship. This strong bond between the mosque and scholarship was also a defining factor in the formation of Islamic cities. Indeed, within this context, mosque-centered institutions in Tokat—such as *madrasas*, libraries, and study circles—contributed to the institutionalization of knowledge in the city and ensured the continuity of the scholarly tradition. Mosques played a fundamental role in shaping Islamic civilization not merely as sites for the transmission of information, but as dynamic educational centers where ideas were generated, debated, and passed on to future generations (Argun, 2007, pp. 27-39).

In Islamic cities, the mosque has functioned not merely as a place for worship but as a multifaceted institution situated at the heart of social life. This holds true for the mosques in Tokat as well; the rhythm of daily life was largely shaped around the mosque, where people gathered to fulfill their religious obligations and strengthen their social ties. The bazaars, markets, charitable foundation services, and various

social solidarity activities that emerged around the mosque contributed to fostering a sense of solidarity and unity within the community. In this respect, the mosque serves as a fundamental social hub that enhances communication among individuals, reinforces shared values, and ensures the continuity of social order (Yılmaz, 2019, pp. 21-27).

Tokat Kale Camii (Citadel Mosque)

The development of the city of Tokat through endowment (*waqf*) revenues and the centering of the mosque—a prominent element of settlement in Islamic cities—defined the urban planning approach of this era. The Danishmends constructed the Melik Gazi Mosque within the citadel and the Garipler Mosque on its northern slopes; subsequently, the Seljuks continued the development of religious and social spaces in the city by building the Great Mosque (*Ulu Camii*) on the southern slope of the citadel. There was also a small mosque (*masjid*) within the citadel designed to meet the needs of the military garrison. Known as the Citadel Mosque (*Kale Mescidi*) during the Ottoman period, this structure is mentioned in endowment records from 1574; it appears to have been converted into a full mosque through the addition of a *minbar* in 1655 and was recorded by Evliya Çelebi in 1656 under the name Yıldırım Bayezid Han Mosque. Thus, the mosque-centered tradition of urban development and endowments, which began in Tokat under the Danishmends, persisted through the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, playing a pivotal role in shaping the city's Turkish-Islamic identity (Açıkel, 2013, p. 62).

Garipler Mosque

Given Tokat's historical fabric, it is appropriate to mention the presence of very old, historic mosques. The most significant among them is the Garipler Mosque. The mosque retains its importance today as one of the oldest Islamic structures in both Tokat and Anatolia. Situated in the Pazarcık Neighborhood on the slopes of Tokat Castle, the Garipler Mosque is known locally by that name, although historical sources refer to it by titles such as the Melik Dânişmend Gazi Mosque, Câmi-i Melik, and Câmi-i Tokat. Believed to have been originally commissioned by Dânişmend Gazi in 1074, the mosque underwent various repairs during the Seljuk, Ilkhanid, and Ottoman periods. The structure features a square plan and a central design, with a domed main hall resting on a load-bearing system composed of four piers and four columns. The side sections are covered by vaults, and the general plan layout has partially lost its original character due to alterations made over time. Today, while the dome covers the main hall via a system rising on pendentives, a second, smaller dome and vaulted side units add dynamism to the structure. One of the mosque's most striking features is its minaret, distinguished by its brickwork and glazed brick decorations. The minaret's location and construction technique indicate that it belongs to a different period than the main structure, yet it reflects the distinctive characteristics of Danishmendid architecture. The *mihrab* (prayer niche) is one of the structure's oldest sections; according to the inscription upon it, it was constructed by Resûl b. Muhammed in 1333. The mihrab, notable for its stonework, *muqarnas* hood, and inscription featuring verses from Surah Al-Imran, is one of the mosque's most significant elements from an art-historical perspective (Gündoğdu et al., 2006, pp. 33–37; Mülâyim, 1996, pp. 381–382).

Niksar Great Mosque

The Niksar Great Mosque (Ulu Cami)—also known as the Melik Gazi Mosque—is dated to the year 540 (1145) based on local oral traditions, despite the absence of an original foundation inscription; it is generally accepted to have been built during the reign of the Danishmendid ruler Nizâmeddin Yağıbasan. The structure, which features a rectangular plan extending in depth, is notable for its rubble-stone walls and a multi-bay prayer hall layout defined by pointed arches resting on cut-stone piers. The prayer hall consists of numerous units employing varied roofing systems: domes cover the area in front of the *mihrab* and the central section, while vaults are used in the other spaces. The monumental portal on the north façade, the secondary entrance to the west, and the minaret attached to the western side of the building are among the mosque's distinctive architectural features. Geometric and vegetal ornamentation adorning the portal and the *mihrab* further complements the structure's aesthetic qualities. Currently covered by a wooden roof with clay tiles, the building features a wooden-pillared portico for latecomers (*son cemaat yeri*) on its northern side. The Niksar Great Mosque holds a significant place in the evolution of Turkish-Anatolian mosque architecture, as it represents one of the early examples of the multi-support, multi-bay mosque plan in Anatolia and showcases an architectural layout that combines diverse roofing elements (Tanman, 1993, pp. 474–477).

Grand Mosque

Located in the Camii-kebir Neighborhood of Tokat's city center, the Ulu Cami (Grand Mosque) is a Seljuk structure believed to have been originally built during the 12th-century Danishmendid period. Having fallen into ruin following a disaster, the mosque was reconstructed in 1679 in a manner

faithful to its original form. The rectangular structure (measuring 22.5 × 28 m) is constructed of cut stone and covered by a wooden roof. While the mosque's north façade abuts the castle, porticoes for latecomers (*son cemaat yeri*) are situated on the east and west façades, and the southeast corner is chamfered to accommodate the adjacent road. The prayer hall (*harim*) is divided into three naves running perpendicular to the *qibla* wall, with the central nave being wider than the others. Notable features of the structure include a wooden gallery, a simple marble *mihrab* (prayer niche), and a *minbar* (pulpit) distinguished by its exquisite woodwork. The ceiling decorations and hand-painted ornaments (*kalem işi*), in particular, reflect a rich aesthetic sensibility through their geometric and floral motifs (Gündoğdu et al., 2012, pp. 117–118). The location of the Ulu Cami—situated between the city and the castle—is noteworthy; positioned between the two, the mosque is large enough to accommodate the inhabitants of both the city and the castle (Baykara, 1987, p. 293).

Takyeciler Mosque

Although a Great Mosque (Ulu Cami) dating back to the Seljuk period already existed in Tokat's Sulu Sokak district, a second Great Mosque—known as the Takyeciler Mosque—was constructed in the first quarter of the 15th century. This development indicates a growing need for places of worship, driven by the city's increasing population and evolving social structure. The mosque is notable for its roofing system, which consists of nine domes supported by arches resting on four independent central piers. This layout bears a resemblance to the Old Mosque (Eski Cami) in Edirne and reflects the multi-domed mosque concept characteristic of early Ottoman architecture. Access to the building is provided through a simple doorway on the western façade, and its overall architectural

design emphasizes functionality and simplicity. In this regard, the Takyeciler Mosque is considered a significant structure that reflects the transition from Seljuk to Ottoman architecture in Tokat (Gündoğdu et al., 2012, pp. 79–83; Seçgin, 2012, pp. 223–226).

Hatuniye Mosque

Located in the Meydan Neighborhood of the city center, the Hatuniye Mosque (Meydan Mosque) was commissioned in 890 (1485) by Gülbahar Hatun—mother of Sultan Bayezid II—and originally served as the centerpiece of a **külliye** (social complex) comprising a mosque, a **madrasa** (theological school), and an **imaret** (public soup kitchen). The **külliye's** endowment deed (**vakfiye**), dated 898 (1492), is significant for illustrating the structure's social and religious functions. Constructed of cut stone, the mosque reflects the characteristic features of 15th-century Ottoman architecture through its square-planned, single-domed prayer hall, domed **tabhâne** (guest/dervish lodge) spaces on either side, a five-domed portico for latecomers (**son cemaat yeri**), and an ornate monumental portal (**taç kapı**). The polygonal-shafted minaret with a single balcony, situated to the northwest of the structure, and the ablution fountain (**şadırvan**) in front of it, are elements that complete the mosque's architectural integrity. While the complex's **madrasa** has not survived to the present day, the **imaret** located to the east is largely in ruins. The mosque sustained damage during the earthquakes of 1939 and 1943; its subsequent extensive restoration in 1953 played a pivotal role in shaping its current appearance. Consequently, the Hatuniye Mosque stands out not merely as a place of worship, but as a significant example of the **külliye** concept—an integrated complex that simultaneously addressed the religious, educational, and social service needs of

the era through its constituent units, such as the *madrasa* and *imaret* (Gündoğdu et al., 2012, pp. 53-63; Çobanoğlu, 2004, pp. 499-500). On the other hand, the Tokat Hatuniye Complex—along with the Sokollu Mehmed Pasha Complex in Lüleburgaz—can be cited as an example illustrating how such complexes contribute to shaping the economic and commercial functions of city squares, particularly in terms of their location within the city center and their relationship with surrounding commercial activities (Özgen, 2017, p. 42).

Behzad Mosque

Located on Behzad Street, the Behzad Mosque was commissioned by Hoca Behzad b. Fakih al-Shirvani in 942 AH (1536 CE), according to the construction inscription on its northern façade. Records regarding the mosque's endowment (*waqf*) indicate that, in addition to the mosque itself, a fountain named Oğulbek and the Bat Bazaar—along with its shops—were endowed; this demonstrates that the structure served not only a religious function but also social and economic ones. Inscriptions reveal that the mosque was expanded in 1309 AH (1891–1892 CE) during the reign of Abdülhamid II because its small size could no longer meet the needs of the growing population, and it was subsequently repaired by Ahmed Lütfi Pasha following a devastating flood in 1324 AH (1908 CE). Described by Evliya Çelebi as a structure featuring a dome, a lead roof, and an ornate *mihrab* and *minbar*, the mosque consists of a rectangular prayer hall (*harim*); this hall is divided into two sections by a large arch, with the southern section covered by a dome and the northern section by a mirror vault. Constructed using rubble stone and brick, the building features a cut-stone minaret at its southeastern corner, characterized by an octagonal base, a cylindrical shaft, and a single balcony (*şerefe*). The current *son

cemaat yeri* (narthex/outer prayer area) was added in 1956 using reinforced concrete and differs in character from the building's original architectural style. The Behzad Mosque—particularly due to the vaulted section situated in front of the domed main space— [reflects the architectural style of] the 16th century. It is regarded as one of the notable examples of the approach to expanding spatial boundaries observed in Tokat during the first half of the century (Gündoğdu et al., 2012, pp. 63–68).

Although the construction date and architectural features of the Hoca Behzad Muallimhanesi (primary school) are not precisely known, the earliest record concerning the structure appears in the *Rum Eyaleti Evkaf Defteri* (Pious Endowments Register of the Rum Province) dated 1574 (TK. KKA, 583, 38a). This record states that the teacher serving at the school was paid a daily wage of one *akçe*. It is likely that the structure—thought to have been situated adjacent to the mosque—was built either contemporaneously with the mosque or at a later date. It appears that the institution ceased operations in the mid-19th century and was converted into an *iptidai mektep* (elementary school) towards the end of the century. However, there is no definitive information as to whether education continued within the same structure or if a new school building was constructed (Açıkel, 2023, p. 3).

Güdük Minaret (Rüstem Pasha) Mosque

Although the Güdük Minare (Rüstem Çelebi) Mosque is a small-scale structure located in the Rüstem Çelebi neighborhood, it possesses noteworthy features regarding its floor plan. The rectangular building, measuring approximately 18 × 10 meters, consists of a large central dome flanked by smaller domed units to the east and west. It is evident that the

domed sections on the eastern side were added to the structure at a later date. The mosque has a single minaret attached to its southern façade, but no foundation inscription remains. Its current name, Rüstem Çelebi Mosque, is derived from the neighborhood in which it is situated. In terms of its floor plan, the structure represents a simplified version of the layout found in the Üç Şerefeli Mosque in Edirne and the Hatuniye Mosque in Manisa (Uysal, 1986, p. 317).

Mahmud Pasha Mosque

A significant number of the mosques built in Tokat during the Ottoman era are structures featuring wooden ceilings. One notable example of these structures is the Mahmud Pasha Mosque, located on Behzad Boulevard in the Devegörmöz Neighborhood of central Tokat. Although the mosque—which has a rectangular plan approaching a square shape—possesses a simple exterior, its interior stands out due to rich **kalem işi** (hand-painted) ornamentation applied to the woodwork. The exact date of construction cannot be determined, as the structure lacks a foundation inscription and foundation records contain no definitive information regarding its date. Nevertheless, based on the identity of its patron, it is possible to date the structure to the 17th century. The hand-painted decorations on the mosque's ceiling, women's gallery, and **minbar** (pulpit) were revealed during a restoration carried out by the General Directorate of Foundations in 2005, when the layers of paint covering them were removed (Atak, 2015, pp. 201-202).

Ali Pasha Mosque

There is no definitive information regarding the patron or the construction date of the Ali Paşa Mosque, which ranks

among Tokat's significant religious and architectural structures from the Ottoman era and constitutes a noteworthy element in the formation of the city's historical fabric. However, an Arabic **waqfiyya** (endowment deed) dated 980 (1572–73)—reportedly held by the Tokat Directorate of Foundations—indicates that the structure was commissioned by Ali Pasha. Funerary inscriptions in the mausoleum located next to the mosque further reveal that Ali Pasha died in 980 (1572–73) and his son, Mustafa Bey, in 972 (1564–65), supporting the view that the structure was likely built during the second half of the 16th century. Nevertheless, various theories regarding Ali Pasha's identity and his relationship with the Ottoman dynasty remain inconclusive. Constructed of cut stone, the mosque stands as a significant example of 16th-century Ottoman architectural style in Tokat, featuring a square-plan, single-domed prayer hall (**harim**), a broad-domed portico for latecomers (**son cemaat yeri**), and an attached minaret. Distinctive architectural features include the transition to the dome via squinches at the corners of the prayer hall and the sense of spaciousness created within the interior by the wall thickness and niches. The two-toned marble **mihrab** (prayer niche) and **minbar** (pulpit)—characterized by simple yet meticulous craftsmanship—also contribute to the structure's aesthetic appeal. The domed mausoleum situated beside the mosque is another key component of this building complex (**külliye**). Having sustained severe damage during the earthquakes of 1939 and 1943, the mosque underwent repairs in 1953; During this process, the historical burial ground was eliminated (Gündoğdu et al., 2012, p. 69; Eyice, 1989, pp. 430–431).

When the historical mosques of Tokat are considered as a whole, it becomes evident that these structures were not merely venues for religious worship but also played multifaceted roles in shaping the city's physical and social fabric.

Mosque-centered complexes (*külliyes*) and *waqf* (endowment) structures facilitated the organization of education, social welfare, and economic activities alongside worship services, thereby transforming mosques into institutional hubs that interconnected various spheres of urban life. The co-location of the mosque, *madrasa* (theological school), and *imaret* (public soup kitchen) within the Hatuniye Complex exemplifies the integration of educational and social welfare functions, while the inclusion of markets and shops among the endowments of the Behzad Mosque provides concrete evidence of the relationship between religious institutions and economic life. Furthermore, the strategic location of these mosques—situated in city centers, near markets and transportation routes, or at the heart of residential areas—established them as public spaces for social interaction and shared religious experience. The gathering of diverse social groups in these shared spaces for Friday and Eid prayers, sermons, and other religious activities fostered social integration and solidarity. From an architectural perspective, the evolution from early examples—such as the Kale, Garipler, and Niksar Ulu Mosques—to later structures like the Takyeciler, Ulu, Hatuniye, Behzad, and Ali Pasha Mosques reveals a significant architectural repertoire that reflects the transformations and continuities within Tokat's Anatolian Turkish-Islamic and Ottoman architectural heritage. Consequently, the mosques in Tokat emerge not merely as places of worship that regulate the city's religious life, but as multifunctional institutions where educational activities, economic interactions, social solidarity, and social integration take place—while also contributing to the formation of the city's architectural and spatial identity.

The roles played by historical mosques in Tokat's urban life demonstrate that these structures served not merely as

places of worship but as multifaceted centers facilitating education, social welfare, cultural transmission, economic activity, and social integration. The *külliye* (mosque complex) and *waqf* (endowment) structures surrounding the mosque enabled the conduct of educational and social solidarity activities alongside religious services; furthermore, through religious observances—such as funerals, holy nights, *tarawih* prayers, *mukabele* (collective Quran recitation), and Eid prayers—they contributed to the transmission of the community's shared memory and cultural values. In this respect, mosques have played a vital role in maintaining social and cultural continuity alongside religious traditions. This historical experience serves as a significant reference point for re-evaluating the social function of contemporary mosques. Given the changing urban landscape and evolving societal needs, it is crucial to move beyond designing mosques solely as places of worship used only during prayer times; instead, they should be envisioned as religious, social, cultural, and educational hubs that center on worship while fostering continuous interaction among diverse age and social groups. In this context, integrating facilities such as libraries, study and education centers, multi-purpose meeting halls, and areas for children and youth into the mosque complex can strengthen the mosque's social function. Thus, by becoming—as it was in the past—one of the central elements of urban life, the mosque can acquire the character of a living community center that strengthens the bond between worship and social life, while fostering social solidarity and the intergenerational transmission of shared values (Ok, 2018, pp. 107–121).

CONCLUSION

Temples—significant spaces shaped by religious beliefs and devotional life throughout human history—have not remained merely structures for the performance of religious rituals; over time, they have also assumed vital roles in organizing the social, cultural, economic, and spatial lives of societies. In Islamic cities, the mosque has stood at the center of these functions. Beyond serving as a venue for communal worship, the mosque has evolved into a central institution where educational activities are conducted, social solidarity is fostered, economic interactions are supported, social ties are strengthened, and the urban landscape is shaped. Consequently, viewing the relationship between the mosque and the city solely in architectural or religious terms would mean overlooking a significant portion of the mosque's historical functions within Islamic societies.

Assessments based on the example of Tokat also support this general framework. The locations, architectural features, *külliye* (social complex) structures, and endowments of the city's historical mosques—as well as the relationships they established with their surroundings—demonstrate the significant role these mosques played in Tokat's physical and social development. The progression from early-period examples—such as the Kale Mosque, Garipler Mosque, and Niksar Grand Mosque—to Ottoman-era structures like the Tokat Grand Mosque, Takyeciler Mosque, Mahmud Pasha Mosque, Hatuniye Mosque, Behzad Mosque, and Ali Pasha Mosque reveals that these mosques are vital bearers of the city's historical memory. At the same time, these structures stand as tangible spaces where the religious, social, economic, and architectural transformations Tokat underwent across various historical periods can be traced.

The impact of mosques in Tokat on the urbanization process is clearly evident, particularly through their locations within the urban fabric. Over time, the structures that emerged around the mosques contributed to certain areas of the city acquiring a central character. The integration of the mosque with facilities such as a *madrasa* (theological school), *imaret* (public kitchen), fountain, mausoleum, and commercial units—especially in complexes designed as *külliye*—demonstrates the direct connection between religious spaces and various facets of urban life. The Hatuniye Külliyesi serves as a notable example in this regard; this complex, comprising a mosque, a *madrasa*, and an *imaret*, united services related to worship, education, and social welfare within a single spatial entity. Thus, alongside the surrounding institutions, the mosque contributed to shaping not only religious life but also social relations within the city.

The educational function of mosques is also a significant aspect of their impact on urban life. In particular, the integration of the mosque and the *madrasa* highlights the mosque's central role in the production, transmission, and passing on of religious knowledge to future generations. Furthermore, activities such as sermons, religious talks, and instructional sessions conducted in mosques enabled urban residents who were not enrolled in *madrasa* education to access religious knowledge. In this respect, the mosque served not merely as a place of worship situated alongside educational institutions, but also as a center for widespread religious education capable of reaching diverse segments of society.

The relationship between mosques and economic life manifests itself primarily through the **waqf** (endowment) system. The fact that the Bat Bazaar and various shops were included among the endowments of the Behzad Mosque

clearly demonstrates that religious institutions were not isolated from economic activities. While endowed shops, markets, bathhouses, and similar revenue sources provided the economic foundation ensuring the continuity of mosques and their associated complexes (*külliyes*), they also contributed to the development of commercial spaces within the city. This situation reveals that the relationship between the mosque and commerce was not one-sided; just as religious institutions required economic resources, the social activity generated around them also bolstered commercial life. Consequently, the *waqf* system established an institutional link between religious services and the urban economy.

Another significant function of mosques is fostering social integration and solidarity. The mosque has served as a primary venue where individuals of diverse ages, professions, and economic backgrounds could come together to share a common religious experience. Events such as Friday and Eid prayers, sermons, and other collective religious activities facilitated the regular gathering of city residents. This togetherness contributed to strengthening shared religious values and a sense of social belonging. Meanwhile, social service institutions like the *imaret* (public soup kitchen) institutionalized aid for the needy, thereby reinforcing the mosque-centered ethos of solidarity. Thus, the mosque played a vital role in shaping the relationship between the individual and society and in keeping social bonds vibrant.

Furthermore, the mosques in Tokat have played a decisive role in shaping the city's architectural identity. Built across various eras, these mosques constitute an architectural repertoire that allows one to trace the evolution of Anatolian Turco-Islamic architecture. This diversity—ranging from multi-support and multi-space mosque designs to multi-domed structures, and from central-domed Ottoman

mosques to buildings employing a combination of different roofing systems—reflects not only Tokat's religious heritage but also its architectural legacy. Consequently, these mosques serve not merely as architectural records bridging the city's past and present but also as fundamental spatial elements that contribute to the formation of Tokat's historical identity. It is important to emphasize here that the mosque's multifunctionality does not relegate its primary purpose—worship—to the background. On the contrary, integrating activities such as education, culture, social aid, and community solidarity within a worship-centered framework fosters continuity between the mosque's historical roles and contemporary needs. In this context, drawing upon the historical concepts of the *külliye* (social complex) and the *vakıf* (endowment) that once centered around the mosque, it is possible to reimagine the mosque today as a hub capable of reaching and uniting diverse segments of society. It is particularly significant for strengthening the mosque's role in social integration that the relationship established with the mosque by children, youth, women, the elderly, and various social groups extends beyond the specific times set aside for worship.

While this study examines the functions of mosques in urban life through the specific example of Tokat, it also highlights the need for further research on the subject within a broader framework. First, the economic and social functions of Tokat's historical mosques—beyond their architectural features—could be investigated in greater detail using endowment records, *sharia* court registers, archival documents, and inscriptions. In particular, examining the endowment revenues of each mosque—including the sources of this income, the populations served, and how these aspects evolved over time—would make it possible to more concretely demonstrate the relationship between the mosque and the urban economy. Similarly, studying the historical development

of the neighborhoods that formed around these mosques could yield significant insights into their impact on urbanization and neighborhood formation. The relationship between mosques and education represents another potential avenue for future research. Furthermore, the roles mosques play in social integration and solidarity constitute an important area ripe for further study.

In conclusion, viewing the mosque solely as a place of worship leads to an incomplete understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and educational functions it has fulfilled throughout history. The example of Tokat demonstrates that mosques are multifaceted institutions that shape the physical fabric of cities, support educational and social welfare activities, engage with commercial life, strengthen social solidarity, and contribute to the formation of a shared urban identity. This historical experience offers significant opportunities for rethinking the function of the mosque in the present day. Thus, the mosque of the future can be envisioned not merely as a replica of past functions, but as a center that—while keeping worship at its core—addresses the religious, social, cultural, and educational needs of contemporary society, brings different generations together, and maintains a vibrant connection with urban life. This perspective will contribute to repositioning the mosque not just as a physical structure, but as a living institution that nourishes the religious and social life of the community. In this light, Tokat's historical mosques should be regarded not only as architectural heritage from the past but also as a vital historical experience that can inform the development of future concepts regarding mosques and cities.

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THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEMOCRACIES AND ITS EFFECT ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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INTRODUCTION

Although civil society is an ambiguous concept used by a wide variety of groups, it is generally understood as a pluralistic domain of voluntary organizations that operate independently of the state. Although it maintains a certain degree of connection with the state, civil society does not aim to seize political power. Instead, it represents an independent social sphere in which citizens pursue common interests that are represented neither by the family nor by the state. Because civil society coexists with the modern state and can emerge under all forms of government—including non-democratic regimes—it does not necessarily have to develop in direct parallel with democracy. Therefore, in theory, civil society, as a sphere encompassing diverse viewpoints, needs and competing interests, may not by its nature correspond to democratic governance. In practice, however, the existence of an ideal civil society is closely related to democracy.

The renewed interest in debates surrounding civil society has been significantly influenced by the search for new political arrangements following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc regimes. Indeed, one of the fundamental aims of the new democracies that emerged from the former Soviet Bloc has been

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The Claude artificial intelligence program was used in the English translation and review of this study.

to rebuild the organizational structures that support civil society.

Moreover, although the earliest debates on modern society did not directly associate civil society with democracy, today the two concepts are generally addressed together. Discussions of civil society—its importance, the challenges it faces worldwide, and how it can be made healthier and more effective—almost always refer to democracy. In this context, civil society is regarded as one of the most important instruments for overcoming authoritarian or military rule and facilitating the transition to democratic governance.

One of the defining features of democracy is citizens' ability to participate freely in public life. Citizens must be informed about problems within the existing system and be able to express their views and interests without restriction, so that they can monitor how political leaders and representatives exercise their authority. In other words, they must be included in decision-making processes. In democratic systems, political participation goes beyond voting to include freely participating in and taking part in the activities of the associations, institutions and organizations that constitute civil society. Most importantly, in a democracy both civil and political participation must be entirely voluntary.

This study focuses on the definition of the concept of civil society, its history and process of development, and the reasons for its renewed popularity today, and attempts to examine the relationship between civil society and democracy. It also focuses on the relationship between the concept of democracy and political participation. In addition, the study attempts to assess how civil society affects political participation.

Definition of Civil Society

The foundation of civil society, which emerged in the West as self-generating cities, was laid by the emergence of the bourgeoisie alongside the rise of cities in Western Europe. Subsequently, the need for organization increased relations within the social sphere while also enabling the emergence of civil society. As the bourgeoisie grew stronger, it strove to build a structure autonomous from the state and began to view political structures as an obstacle to itself. While civil society emerged in the West as a set of organizations whose legitimacy was recognized, enabling individuals to secure their interests outside the state, when one considers the way it has been used within the discourses and strategies of different political, economic and cultural actors and state officials, it can be said that over time the concept has acquired a flexible moral and political identity and value, becoming an ambiguous notion. These organizations also perform an intermediary role between the state and the private sphere (Arslanel, 2017: 11-12).

In its dictionary sense, civil society refers to a community of individuals who act beyond state control, make autonomous decisions and participate in social activities (Hışım and Keser, 2016: 205). The term “civil,” of French and Latin origin, refers to matters concerning citizens, a community of citizens, their governance, or their relations with one another. It can also refer to something urban rather than rural, suited to city life, non-military or non-religious, civilized, cultured, polite and well-mannered. However, its combination with the word “society” to form the concept of “civil society” emerged in connection with particular social and political movements. In this sense, civil society is understood as a form of social life (Aslan, 2010: 359).

Civil society is frequently understood as the opposite of the military, but this interpretation rests on a misconception.

Şerif Mardin argues that civil society should not be contrasted with military society, but rather that it refers to a civilized or urbanized society, the opposite of which is an uncivilized society. Although civil society maintains a relationship with the state, it does not aim to acquire political power. Instead, it constitutes an autonomous social sphere that represents citizens' common interests beyond the domains of the family and the state. It encompasses groups and social classes that lie outside the state—understood narrowly as political society—and beyond political society in the broader sense (Mardin, 1991: 9).

In its broadest sense, civil society refers to an autonomous sphere of organized social life that is voluntarily established, develops its own structure, and operates within the bounds of a legal framework or a shared set of values. It can also be understood as an intermediate sphere in which the state and individuals negotiate and integrate without coercion or restriction (Diamond, 1994: 15).

In general, while the literature agrees that civil society, in its broadest sense, exists outside the state, there is no full consensus on the areas it covers and the types of activity it involves. The dominant view today excludes the economy from civil society. Arato, for example, defines civil society as the sphere of social relations located between the economy and the state. Gellner, by contrast, challenges the dominant approach that positions economic life outside civil society. In the industrial age, he argues, a civil society independent of the state can exist only in the economic sphere, not in the political or religious spheres. According to Gellner, civil society cannot occupy the political sphere of modern society because a political community can contain only a single apparatus of coercion, which makes the centralization of political authority both inevitable and problematic (Aslan, 2010: 360). Walzer, a

contemporary theorist of civil society, defines it as a sphere in which human communities can carry out their activities without the pressure of any authority. At the same time, it is shaped by a complex network of relationships—encompassing family, interests, beliefs and ideologies—through which these communities define their own existence (Arslanel, 2017: 45).

Civil society can be defined as an intermediary sphere between the state and the family; it consists of autonomous, voluntary and pluralistic social organizations that operate in public life and facilitate negotiation between individuals and the state.

History and Process of Development

With the decline of feudalism, the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the revival of cities in Western Europe from the twelfth century onward, Roman law, which regulated urban life, began to be used again. In this context, the concept of “civil society” also encompasses the norms and traditions of urban life. Accordingly, the term “civil” expresses the rights and responsibilities that come with living in a city (Bayhan, 2002: 4).

As trade expanded along with the growth of cities, and as the feudal nobility increasingly benefited from the commercial activities of the productive classes, a compromise emerged between the nobility and city dwellers. This arrangement involved the nobility refraining from interfering in urban affairs, cities establishing their own military forces, and legal rules being determined and enforced by the cities themselves. During this period, urban communities supported the establishment of kingdoms as a means of securing their safety. As these political structures evolved into centralized bureaucratic states, their continued dependence on the support of the productive classes led them to avoid measures that

would restrict the economic productivity of the urban population (Mardin, 1990: 9–12).

The market economy, which began to develop especially in the cities of Western Europe in the thirteenth century, contributed to the more widespread use of money, increasing prosperity and luxury, the expansion of private property, and the emergence of diverse lifestyles. The development of civil society was further supported by urban autonomy—aimed at rationally managing production and increasing economic welfare—the growth of mass communication, the emergence of public opinion, the extension of economic and political rights and privileges to city dwellers, the separation of powers, and the establishment of municipal councils (Aslan, 2010: 361).

The growth of European cities stimulated economic activity and strengthened the bourgeoisie, increasing the tendency to organize its sphere of action independently of the state. Because both the feudal order and the subsequent concentration of absolute power hindered the advancement of the bourgeoisie, the emergence of civil society became inevitable. Accordingly, civil society took shape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the cities that served as the centers of economic life in Western Europe. This development was driven by the expanding bourgeoisie and further reinforced by the increasing recognition of private property (Mardin, 1990: 13).

The decline of the feudal system and the concentration of social activity in cities created a freer environment for the bourgeoisie, which played a leading role in the rise of capitalism. The expansion of the market economy, the increasing use of money, the spread of wealth and private property, and the diversification of lifestyles contributed to urban autonomy

and strengthened the bourgeoisie as an alternative to the feudal order. As a result, the ancient Greek understanding of civil society—based on membership in and identification with the state—was redefined. Civil society came to be understood as a separate sphere of power that sought to secure the political and economic rights and freedoms of individuals and groups against feudal, and later absolutist, regimes (Aslan, 2010: 361).

Until the eighteenth century, civil society largely meant the civilizing of society; that is, the regulation of relations between individuals and the state through the rule of law rather than the arbitrary authority of a despot. The Scottish moral philosophers, who regarded civil society as the source of morality, similarly argued that values originated from society itself rather than from external institutions such as the monarchy or the church. According to Gellner, civil society emerged and developed within the historical evolution and political tradition of Western societies, which rejected both oppressive communism and centralized authoritarianism. Historically, therefore, the concept was initially grounded in the principles of individual rights and personal autonomy (Aslan, 2010: 362).

The collapse of the medieval feudal order, together with the expansion of urban life and capitalist economic relations, intensified debates on civil society. With the Renaissance, the feudal lord, who had embodied public authority in his own “private” person, gradually lost this representative role, and public life came to focus increasingly on the estate rather than on the person of the lord (Habermas, 1997: 70).

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, the state and civil society were not regarded as separate spheres. The identification of civil society with the state dates back to Aristotle. The concept of “*politike koinonia*,” meaning political society,

described a moral public sphere composed of citizens recognized as free and equal and governed by a system of law. Accordingly, to belong to civil society meant to belong to the state and thus to obey its laws and to refrain from harming its other members (Keane, 1994: 76).

According to Keane, the first stage portrayed civil society as a means of legitimizing the existence of the state, while the state was seen as an instrument enabling the development of independent associations within civil society. Although many thinkers supported this perspective, the views of Hobbes and Rousseau are particularly associated with this stage (Keane, 1994: 49).

The revival of the concept of civil society in eighteenth-century Europe reflected an effort to explain the transition from traditional to modern society and to define the emerging modern bourgeois order. At that time, civil society was largely synonymous with modern society and was understood in the context of individual autonomy and the free market. Its contribution to democracy was not yet a central concern; attention instead focused on the relationship between civil society and modern individual identity. Adam Smith placed at the heart of civil society a sphere of freedom in which individuals could pursue their own interests without state intervention. This sphere was characterized by economic activity and the functioning of the market, shaped by the division of labor, skills, resources and wealth in production and exchange. Civil society was thus conceived as a model that facilitated the transition to modernity, secured individual rights through private property and the free market, and enabled the economically powerful bourgeoisie to strengthen its social position by acquiring political and economic rights (Aslan, 2010: 362).

A politically active public first emerged in eighteenth-century England. Groups seeking to influence government decisions and gain recognition for their demands regarded a rationally debating public as an important instrument. As part of this development, assemblies of elites gradually evolved into modern parliaments and became permanent political institutions (Hışım and Keser, 2016: 205).

Civil society began to be recognized as a sphere separate from the state only after the eighteenth century. From Aristotle's political thought to the natural law theories of modern society, civil society had generally been treated as synonymous with the state. It was understood as a public sphere in which individuals possessed certain rights and obligations. This understanding also formed the basis of eighteenth-century social contract theory (Çaha, 1996: 20).

In this context, Thomas Hobbes's proposition that "man is a wolf to man" (*homo homini lupus est*) reflects the view that individuals in the state of nature are in constant conflict and competition. Driven by fear of death and the need for security, individuals transfer all their rights to a sovereign or an assembly through a social contract, thereby concentrating collective authority in a sovereign power and laying the foundations of the state. As a result, civil society comes to encompass the whole of society. Hobbes places all elements, including religion, under the authority of the state. Since the state is the source of all law, religious law ceases to be independently necessary, and obedience to the state becomes a duty toward God as well. Thus, although Hobbes begins with certain liberal premises, he ultimately arrives at an absolutist regime accountable only to God. By subjecting a pluralistic social order based on diverse interests to a single sovereign authority, his theory limits the development of civil society as a contemporary sphere of difference and diversity (Çaha, 1996: 190).

Like most social contract theorists, Hobbes does not draw a conceptual distinction between political society, civil society and the state. The transition from the state of nature through the social contract signals the establishment of civil or political society—that is, the state—and at the same time represents the gradual realization of human reason, and thus progress. In Hobbes's thought, civil society is defined in opposition to the state of nature: it is a society organized under state authority, and it represents the progress achieved through this form of political organization (Kaynar, 2005: 344).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau adopts a position similar to this perspective. In his view, human beings are happy in the state of nature, whereas social life gives rise to struggles and conflicts. To live together and protect their property, individuals unite and establish a social contract by transforming their particular interests and desires into a general will. In return, the contract guarantees their property rights and personal security (Bayhan, 2002: 151).

Both Hobbes and Rousseau begin from the individual and emphasize individual interests and consent, but they ultimately arrive at an absolutist and all-encompassing understanding of the state and the public sphere. In their accounts, individuals unite and transfer their sovereign rights to a single authority established through their collective agreement. Thus, in the first stage of its conceptual development, social contract theorists understood civil society as a community that emerges from the state of nature and organizes itself around a common political authority (Akpınar, 1997: 21).

In the second stage of its conceptual development, civil society began to be seen as an entity separate from the state. The identification of civil society with the state was thus replaced by a dual understanding of state and civil society. At this stage, an influential argument emerged that societies

needed to protect themselves against state power. Locke's ideas, particularly the distinction between civil society and the state, played a central role in shaping this understanding (Keane, 1994: 52).

In the seventeenth century, Locke conceived of civil society as the opposite of the state of nature. According to him, individuals living within family-based tribal structures came together and, through mutual agreement, established civil society. This social order, governed by civil law, possessed inseparable social and political dimensions and thus encompassed both within a broader framework. In this period, marked by the rise of industrial society, the decline of feudalism, and the emergence of a new form of political union, civil society generally referred to the newly developing social order (Çaha, 2000: 77).

Locke similarly explains the emergence of civil or political society by first defining the state of nature and then introducing the social contract. Unlike Hobbes's conflict-ridden conception, Locke's state of nature is a domain in which individuals live under natural law. Although people can coexist peacefully while pursuing their interests in accordance with these laws, political authority remains necessary. As in Hobbes's theory, this need arises primarily from concerns about security. More specifically, the need for an authority capable of protecting the natural rights held in the state of nature provides the fundamental justification for the transition to civil society (Marshall, 1994: 293).

In Hobbes's thought, civil society—or the state—is opposed to and replaces the state of nature. This fundamental difference between the two thinkers' social contract theories allows Locke's conception of the contract to be characterized as representative, while Hobbes's is regarded as alienating (Kaynar, 2005: 345).

According to Locke, civil society represents the translation of individuals' rational preferences into public policy. Policies take shape as these preferences are expressed in the public sphere and conveyed to the state. By distributing the general will among different social groups, Locke established a sphere of social action independent of political authority (Hışım and Keser, 2016: 207).

Locke, reinterpreting Epicureanism and Stoicism in light of modern concepts, transformed their fundamental principles into a systematic philosophy centered on humanity and freedom. Unlike Hobbes, he advocated a state with limited rather than absolute powers and placed society above the state. For Locke, the state of nature was not a condition of lawlessness but of freedom. Nevertheless, the absence of an impartial judge backed by public authority and of consistent standards for administering punishment compelled individuals to establish a political society (Karadağ, 2005: 67).

According to Locke, individuals who are free in the state of nature enter into a social contract to protect their property. These free, equal and independent individuals establish political or civil society through their voluntary consent. Locke's theory involves a two-stage contractual process: individuals first unite to form civil society and then establish a particular form of government. Unlike Hobbes, Locke also attaches great importance to the role of social groups within civil society (Bayhan, 2002: 151).

Keyman argues that John Locke and Montesquieu, in addressing the question of what constitutes modern society, refer directly to civil society and associate it with the market, the bourgeoisie and individual rights. From this perspective, civil society appears as a defining feature of bourgeois society, and the two develop in close connection with one another. Consequently, any discussion of civil society is situated, to

some extent, within the liberal paradigm. Keyman therefore views civil society as a concept that historically emerged together with modern society, the market and the bourgeoisie (Gözübüyük Tamer, 2010: 95).

Keyman, who identifies modern society with civil society, examines Locke's analysis by emphasizing the importance of civil and subjective rights. He argues that the combination of the free market, the individual and civil rights produces modern society. Accordingly, to discuss modern society is also to discuss the market society and the individual. Within this framework, the individual acts as a bourgeois—that is, as an economic actor, or *homo economicus*—while simultaneously possessing rights against both the state and political authority. Although Locke and Montesquieu emphasize different historical processes and developments in explaining the emergence of civil society, both associate it with individual autonomy and the free market. They also agree on the importance of the legal recognition of subjective rights that emerged toward the end of the feudal period (Gözübüyük Tamer, 2010: 96).

In the third stage, the view that the state needed to be weakened as a result of the distinction between civil society and the state began to lose its influence (Keane, 1994: 52). Hegel, one of the most influential figures in nineteenth-century political thought, was the leading representative of this approach and offered the most comprehensive analysis of the distinction between state and civil society. His philosophy emerged largely as a reaction to liberal thought and, through abstract and often difficult terminology, sought to redirect liberal concepts toward a transcendent, state-centered perspective (Çaha, 2000: 77).

Hegel was the first thinker to draw a clear distinction between the state and society; he defined civil society and political society as separate spheres and positioned civil society outside the domain of political authority. He viewed civil society as a product of the modern world, emerging through a historical process of transformation. Within this sphere, individuals seek to satisfy their needs and, in doing so, become mutually dependent on one another (Hışım and Keser, 2016: 206).

Unlike Hegel, Marx did not regard political society and civil society as separate spheres. In Marx's view, civil society has existed throughout history and represents a system of class relations shaped by the productive forces. Since the state is dependent on society, it is civil society that gives rise to and determines the state (Hışım and Keser, 2016: 206).

In Hegel's interpretation, civil society is conceived not as a natural condition of freedom, as Paine understood it, but as a historically constructed sphere of ethical life situated between the limited world of the patriarchal household and the universal state (Keane, 1994: 67).

Hegel divides ethical life into three distinct spheres—the family, civil society and the state—each governed by its own set of values. Family life is shaped by mutual love, respect, self-sacrifice, obedience, unity, and shared feelings and beliefs. The ethical order of civil society, by contrast, is organized around conflict, competition and ambition, all of which prioritize individual self-interest. Hegel therefore argues that civil society weakens family ties, disrupts harmony among family members, and turns them into rivals or enemies (Çaha, 1996: 185).

In Hegel's thought, civil society constitutes a sphere of difference, particular interests and conflict located between

the family and the state. Within this sphere, individuals, social classes, and various social institutions and organizations collectively make up civil society. Unlike earlier thinkers, Hegel did not view civil society as a self-sustaining natural condition; rather, he considered state regulation necessary for its preservation. In his view, the excessive growth or influence of one segment of civil society could hinder or suppress the development of others (Keane, 1994: 68).

The state constitutes the third sphere of ethical life, governed by principles distinct from both the family and civil society. In Hegel's dialectical philosophy, it emerges as a synthesis following these two spheres. Regarded as both necessary and unquestionable, the state imposes important duties and responsibilities on its citizens, which it believes serve their best interests. Its fundamental function is to reconcile the conflicting elements of civil society within a higher unity. Hegel therefore grounds the relationship between the state and society not in a social contract, but in individuals' natural acceptance of state authority (Çaha, 1996: 186).

Because of its internal contradictions, conflicts and inconsistencies, civil society cannot sustain a coherent and stable course of rational development throughout history. Since the rational realization of the historical spirit is possible only through the state, civil society becomes dependent on state authority and consequently loses its autonomy. According to Hegel, the state is necessary to preserve bourgeois society and is therefore superior to civil society. Its role is to reconcile the contradictions within bourgeois civil society without eliminating civil society itself (Sarvan, 1984: 153–165).

Accordingly, in Hegel's thought, civil society neither guarantees individual freedoms nor arises through a social contract. Rather, it is the product of a historical process that

reaches maturity in modern society. It encompasses the market economy, social classes, economic enterprises, individuals, and various institutions and organizations that exist independently of the state. Civil society thus represents a diverse mosaic of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations situated beyond direct state authority (Bayhan, 2002: 151).

Following Hegel, Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci emerge as two important thinkers who developed different perspectives on civil society. Although their approaches do not belong directly to the third stage of its conceptual development, their views deserve consideration for the crucial role they played in shaping its modern meaning. While Hegel placed primary emphasis on the state, Marx and Gramsci shifted attention toward civil society (Keane, 1994: 66).

Gramsci sought to overcome the dichotomy between civil society and the state by expanding civil society toward the state, ultimately envisioning the gradual withering away of the state. He developed this approach by combining Tocqueville's concept of political society with Hegel's ethical state, interpreting both through Marx's theory of proletarian revolution. The concept of hegemony lies at the center of this analysis. Concerned with the problems of the Italian socialist movement and seeking to formulate a revolutionary strategy suited to Italy's particular social and political conditions, Gramsci compared the sociopolitical structures of Western and Eastern societies, examined the Russian Revolution, and sought to draw lessons applicable to Italy. According to Gramsci, the state cannot be understood merely as an instrument of bourgeois oppression, because it sustains and reproduces itself not only through force and coercion but also through organized consent. Civil society, through which the state exercises persuasion, and political society, through

which the state exercises coercive and commanding authority, together constitute the state—that is, hegemony reinforced by coercion. Accordingly, a state cannot sustain itself merely by exercising coercive force in political society or by establishing hegemony solely within civil society (Kaynar, 2005: 353–354).

The fourth stage emerged as a reaction to the third and rested on the argument that increasing state intervention would gradually suppress civil society. Tocqueville was the leading representative of this perspective. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, liberal thinkers—particularly Montesquieu and Tocqueville—warned that centralized governments could abuse their political authority and sought institutional safeguards against such abuse. Within this framework, civil society came to be seen as a protective mechanism against the potential abuse of power concentrated at the highest levels of the modern political order (Erdoğan, 1998: 12–14).

Alexis de Tocqueville, a liberal thinker who emphasized the egalitarian character of democracy and advocated limiting state intervention, examined in *Democracy in America* how Americans were able to solve their own problems and protect themselves against state oppression. Unlike France, where aristocracy had been abolished through revolution and no intermediary institution remained between citizens and the state, the United States developed without an established aristocratic order. Tocqueville observed that Americans responded to almost every social problem by forming associations and foundations—that is, through civil society organizations. He therefore argued that in societies without an aristocracy, politically and legally equal citizens could resolve their collective problems and reduce their dependence on the state only through such intermediary institutions (Gözübüyük Tamer, 2010: 99–100).

Tocqueville regarded the reconciliation of freedom and equality—or the preservation of freedom within an egalitarian social order—as a fundamental problem. He argued that freedom could be secured mainly in two ways: through a decentralized administrative system, and through the establishment of associations and unions, particularly in fields such as politics, economics and science. In his view, granting administrative autonomy to smaller regions would prevent the concentration of power in a single center and thereby preserve political freedom. Associations, in turn, would enable citizens to move beyond their private interests, participate in public affairs, and advocate for various collective concerns. Tocqueville was the first thinker to define civil society as a distinct sphere of organization. He also described civil society organizations, particularly political associations, as “great free schools” in which democratic values such as trust, compromise, tolerance and equality are cultivated among citizens (cited in Gözübüyük Tamer, 2010: 100).

The worldwide importance of civil society stems largely from its increasingly recognized connection with democracy, particularly since the 1980s. Developments that began in the 1970s, accelerated after the mid-1980s, and ultimately brought an end to the bipolar world order created favorable conditions for the reassessment of political systems on both sides of the ideological divide. While Western liberal democracies were criticized for reducing democratic practice to elections, parliaments and political parties, developments in the Eastern Bloc revealed the consequences of the social engineering carried out in the name of socialism. These parallel experiences directed both academic and public attention toward civil society and its relationship with democracy. Civil society came to be seen both as a means of revitalizing capitalist representative democracy by extending participation into the social

sphere, and as a safeguard against the social engineering imposed by authoritarian regimes. Accordingly, one of the most important lessons drawn from the Cold War for political science and contemporary political debate is that an active and dynamic civil society is essential to the existence, effectiveness and proper functioning of modern participatory democracy (Kaynar, 2005: 340).

The Relationship Between Democracy and Civil Society

What Is Democracy?

As widely explained in the literature, the term “democracy” derives from the ancient Greek words *demos*, meaning “people,” and *kratos*, meaning “rule” or “power.” Accordingly, the word *demokratia* literally means “rule of the people” (Hışım and Keser, 2016: 201).

In this context, democracy can be defined as a system in which the citizens who make up a society govern themselves through elected representatives. In ancient Greece, however, Athenian direct democracy operated in small city-states. This city-state democracy was based on the participation of men over the age of twenty who were recognized as citizens, and thus constituted a community-based form of democracy. Accordingly, democratic participation took place within a relatively homogeneous society characterized by a limited territory and population (Bayhan, 2002: 1–2).

Although democracy can be classified in many ways, it is generally understood through two main approaches. The first, normative democratic theory, goes beyond the dictionary meaning of democracy to focus on an ideal political order—that is, democracy as it ought to be. From this perspective, a regime can be considered democratic only if it fulfills the will and preferences of the people. The primary aim of

normative theory is to assess the legitimacy and persuasiveness of democracy as a form of government. While the importance of this ideal is acknowledged, it is considered inappropriate to define existing democracies solely on this basis. The second approach is empirical democratic theory. Unlike normative theory, it examines existing democratic regimes that approximate the ideal, rather than democracy as it ought to be. It therefore focuses on concrete political systems and generally aims to identify the common characteristics of regimes typically classified as democratic (Gözlér, 2014: 60–61).

Democracy is founded on the recognition and protection of both individual and collective freedoms by public institutions. These freedoms can be fully realized only when those who exercise political power are chosen by the governed through free elections, and when citizens are able to participate in the establishment and transformation of public institutions (Touraine, 2004: 54).

On the basis of these definitions, democracy can be understood, in the literal sense of the word, as “the rule of the people” or “the power of the people.” Sartori describes democracy as a transparent term because its meaning can easily be traced to its linguistic roots. However, a purely literal definition amounts to little more than a direct translation of the word’s Greek origins. Democracy also represents an ideal; the question, therefore, concerns not only what the term means but also the nature of the ideal it represents. Although the literal meaning of democracy is clear, it is insufficient for understanding actual democratic governance. Consequently, the question of what democracy is cannot be separated from the question of what democracy ought to be (Sartori, 1996: 8).

Today, democracy is most commonly defined as “government by the people.” In a broader sense, it refers to a political system in which those who govern are chosen from

among the people through fair, free and regular elections. However, differing interpretations of the concept of demos have given rise to various, and at times contradictory, definitions of democracy. Some understand demos as the poor masses and therefore define democracy as their rule. Yet the direct rule of the poor has never been fully realized. Historically, the closest example may be the rule of the working class, which is generally not classified as democracy but rather associated with the dictatorship of the proletariat. From this perspective, defining democracy as the rule of the poor masses may have been intended to express the removal of political power from the aristocracy. Indeed, democracy emerged and developed primarily in opposition to systems in which kings, sultans and their families benefited from privileges obtained through inheritance, passed the throne to their descendants, and based their political legitimacy on blood or lineage. Democracy rejects the acquisition of such privileges by any family or dynasty and prohibits the hereditary transfer of sovereignty and authority. Instead, citizens decide, at both the local and national levels, who will exercise and govern with sovereign power. They choose their representatives and governments from among competing political parties through fair and free elections (Kapani, 1989: 119–120).

In a democracy, the people constitute the highest source of political authority, and those elected to govern for a specified period derive their power and legitimacy from them. Enacting laws, making political decisions and determining policies concerning the governance of the country generally requires a parliamentary majority. However, majority rule does not permit the majority to act without limit or to disregard the rights of minorities. Democratic systems protect minority rights through various legal and institutional safeguards. Every citizen possesses fundamental rights that cannot legitimately be revoked or violated by anyone, including the state,

and these rights are also protected under international law. Citizens are free to adopt the religion of their choice, to hold their own views, and to decide how and in what manner to express them. Democracies therefore guarantee freedom of religion and conscience as well as freedom of thought and expression. Individuals have the right not only to hold their beliefs but also to live and act in accordance with them. Moreover, every individual—including members of small communities or minority groups—has the right to preserve, practice and develop their own culture (Aktaş, 2015: 91).

Just as there are many definitions of democracy, there are also numerous classifications of it. In terms of how sovereignty is exercised, however, democracies can be examined under three main headings: direct democracy, semi-direct democracy and representative democracy. Beyond this distinction, liberal democracy—which addresses the state–society relationship and is of particular relevance to this study—also warrants special attention, since it describes the political process encompassing both the political institutions and the legal order that safeguards them.

Direct and Semi-Direct Democracy

In direct democracy, the exercise of sovereignty is shared between the people and their representatives. Semi-direct democracy is a system that combines elements of both direct and representative democracy, in which sovereignty is shared between the people and their elected representatives. Although sovereign authority is exercised primarily by representatives elected by the people, citizens can participate directly in certain matters through mechanisms such as referendums. Semi-direct democracy is therefore essentially regarded as a form of representative democracy that allows citizens to participate directly in the exercise of sovereignty on specific issues. For

this reason, it is sometimes also referred to as “semi-representative democracy,” although the term “semi-direct democracy” is more widely accepted and used. In this system, the main instruments of popular participation include referendums, popular vetoes, popular initiatives and the recall of representatives. Switzerland and Italy exemplify semi-direct democratic practices (Gözlér, 2013: 104).

Representative Democracy

For many years, theorists of representative democracy, which developed following the Industrial Revolution, conceived of democracy as a political system in which only property-owning men above a certain age could exercise political rights. Spinoza likewise argued that, since children remained under their fathers’ authority and women under their husbands’, and since they lacked independent will, they should not have the right to vote. He nevertheless maintained that the right to vote and to participate in public affairs belonged to everyone born to parents with civil rights, born on state territory, entitled to legal membership in the republic, or otherwise granted citizenship rights by law. Such persons could fully claim these rights and could not be deprived of them unless convicted of a crime or possessing a criminal record (Spinoza, 2007: 14).

Representative democracy is a form of government in which sovereignty, belonging to the nation, is exercised by representatives elected at regular intervals for fixed terms. Elections constitute its principal mechanism. Although the direct link between voters and their representatives is established primarily during elections, citizens can also participate in government through instruments such as the right of petition. Representative democracy rests on the principle of national sovereignty, and each elected representative represents

not only the constituents who elected them but the nation as a whole (Gözler, 2013: 104).

For elections to be free and fair, the state must remain neutral toward all political parties and candidates. Every party and candidate must have equal opportunity to communicate with voters, both directly and through the mass media, and must enjoy equal access to public resources for this purpose. The state must also take all necessary measures to ensure that citizens can vote freely and in secret, without violence, intimidation or coercion. Effective measures must be taken to prevent fraud and other irregularities during both voting and the counting of votes, and independent observers must be allowed to carry out their duties without obstruction. Impartial and independent courts are essential for investigating and resolving electoral disputes, including allegations of fraud and corruption affecting election outcomes. Organizing genuinely free, fair and democratic elections is therefore a demanding and time-consuming process. Although any country can hold elections, ensuring their integrity and fairness requires substantial institutional and organizational effort. Accordingly, representatives of political parties, civil society organizations and other institutions involved in election monitoring must complete thorough preparations and receive appropriate training in advance (Aktaş, 2015: 93–94).

Liberal Democracy

The earliest understandings and practices of democracy were based primarily on majority rule. In later theoretical approaches, however, democracy came increasingly to be interpreted as a form of government exercised by an elite. The bourgeoisie, strengthened by the Enlightenment, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution, sought to limit aristocratic power and mobilized broad popular

masses to this end. However, the political rights it initially obtained were reserved for property-owning, tax-paying men above a certain age. With the subsequent development of liberalism and liberal democracy, this restricted political order gradually evolved into what is today defined as liberal pluralist democracy (Aktaş, 2015: 94).

While liberalism primarily defines itself through the principles of limited government and individual autonomy, it approaches these concepts cautiously within the broader framework of freedom. Liberal democracy, however, acquires its binding character according to how democracy itself is understood. Liberalism emphasizes freedom, individual initiative and a legally limited state order, while democracy foregrounds equality, social welfare and collective unity. Liberal democracy therefore seeks to reconcile these principles by pursuing equality through freedom (Sartori, 1996: 420–421).

In its most general sense, liberal democracy is defined as a system that guarantees all citizens the right to universal suffrage and political organization, regulates state–individual relations according to the rule of law, establishes a state governed by law that secures individual rights and freedoms, and recognizes the pluralism of society (Keyman, 1996: 98). Liberalization, on the other hand, which refers to the emancipation of economic man, also encompasses the personal rights that protect individuals from the state in their economic activities, as well as the values of liberalism. Historically, the emergence of liberalism preceded democratization. Democratization, which refers to the emancipation of political man, describes a process of change through which the monopoly of power is dismantled through citizens' participation in political decision-making. Hayek, by contrast, distinguishes between democracy and liberalism. According to him, liberalism is a the-

ory “concerning what the law should be,” whereas democracy is a theory “concerning how the law is to be determined.” For Hayek, democracy is “a method to be judged by its results,” while liberalism is a theory “concerning the scope and purpose of government.” Agh, meanwhile, argues that once liberalization begins, it becomes very difficult to prevent the development that will inevitably lead toward democratization, because liberalism will ultimately give rise to civil society and, at the same time, lead the way in generating demands for democratization (cited in Tosun, 2021: 111–112).

Liberal democracy, however, has proven inadequate in the process of democratizing the public sphere. At the same time, a crisis has emerged in the representative mechanisms of liberal democracy. In other words, liberal democracy fails to remedy the complexity of a changing social structure. As Giddens puts it, there is a need to “democratize liberal democracy,” and the question of “what kind of liberal democracy” must be debated. The answer to this question is radical democracy—the need to restructure liberal democracy in a manner appropriate to the late/postmodern condition in which we now find ourselves. The aim here is an institutional initiative capable of achieving democratization. In other words, while the public sphere is the foremost condition for democratization, the goal is, on the one hand, to establish a democratic state–civil society relationship, and, on the other, to ensure that both an institutional and a normative understanding of democracy—one capable of implementing liberal democracy through participatory methods—comes to dominate politics (Keyman, 1996: 99–100).

Among theories of democracy, liberal democratic theory aims to limit the scope of state activity while supporting civil society in gaining strength. The limited state envisioned by liberal democracy rests on the values of freedom and equality,

regarded as the essential elements of democracy. Furthermore, because liberal democracy presupposes a consent-based understanding of governance, and because some form of government is necessarily required, it must be said that the fundamental duty of those who govern is to protect citizens' rights and freedoms and to meet their needs.

The Effect of the Civil Society–Democracy Relationship on Political Participation

The governance models of states vary according to historical, cultural and social conditions. Each governance model has its own range of forms of implementation and instruments, and these instruments are important both for ensuring the functioning of the governance model and for establishing the relationship between the people and the government. In state governance, what proves decisive is either the individual will of the ruler or the collective will of the people. At this point, the channels of political participation that enable the people's direct involvement in decision-making processes play an important role in democratic systems. Political participation, by enabling the people to express their views on particular issues, gives democracies a complementary quality and contributes to strengthening participation.

Political participation is an important concept that determines the relationship individuals establish with the political system and shapes their attitudes, behaviors and roles. To regard this participation as limited solely to voting during elections is to narrow the scope of the concept. Political participation does not occur at the same level for every individual; while some people engage closely with political processes, others display a more distant and indifferent attitude toward political developments (Kapani, 1989: 144).

Political participation is a process encompassing all behavior—whether individual or collectively organized, legal or illegal, successful or unsuccessful—undertaken by individuals with the aim of influencing central or local government bodies. At the same time, it refers to all actions individuals take in relation to decisions that have been made or are planned to be made. Political participation is not merely the exercise of a right but also an important democratic function through which individuals can express their preferences regarding governance. It also plays a fundamental role in determining the forms of relationship between the governed and those who govern. This process, while determining the nature of the bond individuals establish with the political system, also contributes to shaping the attitudes and behaviors they develop toward that system. As a result of the public's evaluation of political decisions and administrative activities, political awareness develops among individuals; this awareness, in turn, fosters more conscious and effective citizen behavior in the social sphere (Büyüktosunoğlu, 2013: 19–21).

The best-known form of political participation is voting behavior, but this form of participation is not limited to the ballot box alone. Many activities—taking an active role in political parties, participating in civil society organizations, attending political panels and conferences, or protesting decisions taken or not taken by the state—are considered part of political participation. When individuals are able to draw the attention of political actors or influence decision-making processes through such actions, these activities can be characterized as political participation. This process begins with an individual's interest in political matters and continues through the acquisition of information. The extent to which a person remains attentive to developments in the society in which they live is closely related to how much the political system allows for participation. In systems where opportunities for

participation are extensive, individuals both enhance their social functionality and gain the potential to influence their surrounding environment (Çukurçayır, 2000: 50).

One of democracy's fundamental features is citizens' freedom to participate in public life. To monitor how political leaders and representatives exercise their authority, citizens must have access to information about public affairs and be able to express their views and interests without restriction. Although voting is an important civic responsibility, meaningful participation also requires that citizens be free to hear all candidates and choose their representatives among them without interference. Citizens must also have equal opportunities to join the political party, association or organization of their choice, participate in election campaigns, engage in political advocacy, and organize related meetings and demonstrations (Kapani, 1989: 119–120).

Political participation is a process, and it is possible to formulate a different definition of political participation for each of its stages. However, because political participation is a process, all these elements together display a certain unity, since political participation also requires a certain level of curiosity, interest, knowledge and action. In everyday life, not every segment of society shows the same interest in and attaches the same importance to political events. This situation necessitates a certain distinction, the determining point of which is whether or not people participate in elections and whether or not they vote for a particular political program (Görücü, 2021: 158).

Voting is the most widespread and actively practiced form of political participation. It is a democratic mechanism through which citizens choose their political representatives. Historically, the right to vote emerged as a fundamental civic

right won through prolonged struggles, particularly by women and the working class (Kapani, 1989: 144).

In countries with low levels of political participation, problems such as inequities in political representation, a disconnect between political elites and citizens, and political apathy are more prevalent. In this context, the answers to the question of why citizens do or do not participate in politics allow for analysis not only of political behavior but also of the general condition of the political system (Görücü, 2021: 178).

One of the fundamental dimensions of political participation is that citizens are able not only to vote in elections but also to participate in the associations, institutions and organizations that constitute civil society. These organizations may represent a wide range of beliefs and interests and can include professional associations, civic groups, women's and student organizations, and human rights groups. In a democracy, both civil and political participation must be entirely voluntary, and no individual or group may be compelled to participate against their will. Although political parties are indispensable institutions of democracy and citizens' membership in them can strengthen democratic life, no one can be forced to join, or prevented from joining, a political party through coercion, intimidation, or threats to their interests. Participation must therefore remain voluntary, peaceful and lawful, and differing opinions must be treated with tolerance (Aktaş, 2015: 96–97).

In democratic systems, citizens are free to scrutinize and criticize their political leaders and elected representatives. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press enable both individuals and media organizations to monitor and evaluate how public officials govern the country. The existence of diverse and independent media outlets also allows political is-

sues and matters of state to be interpreted from different perspectives. Individuals may freely join the political party, association, civil society organization or union of their choice. They also have the freedom to travel wherever they wish within the country and to arrange their lives according to their own preferences. Citizens may assemble peacefully, express their views on public affairs, and criticize or protest government policies and decisions with which they disagree. However, these rights must be exercised peacefully, in accordance with free and democratic laws and with due respect for the rights of others. The use of violence in exercising such freedoms is incompatible with democratic principles (Görücü, 2021: 167–168).

Civil society performs a democratic function when it possesses greater moral and political power and influence than the state. From this perspective, political science generally classifies regimes with a strong and effective civil society as democratic, regimes in which civil society is banned or eliminated as totalitarian, and regimes that grant civil society a limited degree of freedom while subjecting it to strict state control as authoritarian (Erözden, 2004: 67).

The development of civil society, regarded as a precondition for democracy, depends largely on the nature and quality of its organizations. Not every intermediary institution or association can be considered part of civil society. In agrarian empires characterized by centralized political authority, for example, subjects could at times resist state power through forms of social organization. Tribal structures could be strong enough to keep central authority at bay, but they generally achieved this by demanding absolute obedience from their members. Civil society, by contrast, rests on a two-way balance. On the one hand, the central state protects individuals

from the pressures imposed by social groups, thereby securing individual freedoms. On the other hand, state power is monitored and constrained by the intermediary institutions formed by autonomous individuals, which together constitute civil society (Bayhan, 2002: 7–8).

For civil society to function effectively, professional identities must free themselves from dependence on the state and political parties and attain genuine autonomy. In Middle Eastern countries, democratization is generally expected to transform civil society into a center of opposition to dictatorship, autocracy and other arbitrary forms of governance. However, the excessive politicization of civil society constitutes the greatest obstacle to this process. A lack of autonomy among pressure groups, professional associations, media organizations and trade unions is a shared feature of the region. In Turkey, for example, in the 1970s, student associations, unions, professional chambers and various interest groups became closely tied to right- or left-wing politics, contributing to ideological polarization. As a result, the distinct identities of these organizations were absorbed into totalitarian political projects aimed at seizing state power. After 1983, however, the decline of forward-looking revolutionary politics and the growing importance attached to specific issues facilitated the emergence of new political actors, including women, businesspeople, engineers, environmentalists and other groups seeking to voice their own particular demands. Democratization becomes possible only when social movements recognize the limits of their own claims and when civil society frees itself from totalitarian projects. When social actors claim a monopoly over truth, opposing movements may respond in kind by developing similarly totalitarian political projects. Accordingly, any totalitarian tendencies that may emerge within civil society can be curbed only through a shift from identity-based

politics to interactive politics. In this regard, interaction-oriented civil society organizations have become increasingly widespread in Turkey. Foundations, professional organizations, business associations, discussion groups, journals and publishing houses, along with the intellectual movements that formed around them, Lions and Rotary clubs, environmental protection associations, and the green and feminist movements are among the horizontal and autonomous forms of organization that have come to the fore in society (Göle, 2000: 80–81).

The principle of the separation of state authority into three distinct branches has also provided a basis for classifying political regimes. Systems in which legislative and executive powers are concentrated in the same authority are defined as systems based on the “union of powers,” while systems in which these powers are entrusted to separate and independent bodies are characterized by the “separation of powers.” John Locke divides governmental power into legislative, executive and federative branches. Federative power refers to the authority to act on behalf of the entire political community in foreign relations, including declaring war, making peace, forming unions and alliances, and conducting relations with individuals and communities outside the state. The division of governmental power aims to prevent those who come to office through democratic processes from establishing tyranny. Democracy is governed by laws, not by the arbitrary will of individuals. The rule of law protects citizens’ rights, ensures public order and limits governmental power. All citizens are equal before the law, and discrimination on the basis of language, religion, race, ethnicity or gender is legally prohibited. No one may be punished, imprisoned or exiled without a fair trial before an independent court. Everyone who is detained has the right to be informed of the charges against them, and every defendant is presumed innocent until

proven guilty. Persons accused of a crime also have the right to a prompt trial before an independent and impartial court. Moreover, no one may be taxed or prosecuted except under laws enacted and publicly announced in advance (Aktaş, 2015: 97–99).

Democracy requires citizens to limit the exercise of their sovereignty by obeying the law and entrusting political authority to elected representatives. At the same time, it guarantees the separation of powers, secures individual rights and protects private life. Democracy therefore presupposes the existence of diverse ideas and interests. Respect for this diversity means that democratic governance cannot be reduced to the domination of minorities by the majority. Instead, it must recognize the rights of minorities and dissenters to exist, to express themselves freely, and to voice their opposing views (Morin, 2000: 197–198).

In a democratic system, no individual—including the sovereign or head of state—is above the law, and everyone is equal before it. Laws must be enforced, and courts must operate impartially, fairly and consistently, without interference from other branches or institutions of government. Torture, oppression and all forms of cruel or inhuman treatment are strictly prohibited under all circumstances. The rule of law stands above governmental authority, and neither governments nor public officials may act beyond its limits. No state official, prime minister, minister or political party representative may instruct judges or judicial bodies on how to conduct proceedings or decide cases. Likewise, public officials may not abuse their authority for personal gain or to enrich themselves, their relatives, or those they favor. Anyone whose guilt has been established by a competent court is subject to the penalties prescribed by law (Aktaş, 2015: 100).

To clarify the relationship between democracy and civil society, it is useful to examine deliberative democracy as a distinct model of democracy. This approach emphasizes mutual discussion—that is, deliberation, negotiation and participation—in the establishment of state institutions, the making of public decisions, and the resolution of all kinds of problems (Derdiman, 2006: 117).

Deliberative democracy is an alternative model proposed on the grounds that liberal democracy has proven inadequate in resolving the problems societies face in a changing world and has given rise to a crisis of legitimacy. According to this view, the shortcomings of liberal democracy can be summarized as follows (Sitembölükbaşı, 2005: 139–144):

- Because liberal democracy prioritizes the individual and relies on a contractual bond with citizens, it fails to produce solutions to issues such as minority rights, gender discrimination and ethnic differences.
- Although liberal democracy holds regular elections that ensure popular participation, citizens' influence over decision-making processes concerning themselves remains almost negligible. This is because the actions, perspectives and interests of those who represent citizens differ from those of the citizens themselves.
- Once the party that comes to power gains control of all governing bodies, its use of the authority conferred by power to obstruct the minority—which has lost its former influence—from accessing its rights creates inequality in society and prevents democracy from being fully implemented. Likewise, when those in power act in accordance with their own interests and fail to fulfill their responsibilities toward citizens, trust in democratic institutions diminishes.

- The absence of a balanced and equal distribution of power between those in power and citizens causes practical problems as well as social imbalances and injustices.
- The inequalities that exist between civil society and political institutions affect the impartiality of preferences. As a result, the decision-making process emerges not according to the characteristics of the circumstances but through the aggregation of preferences.
- While the principle of equal voting ensures democratic participation and awareness of participation, it also allows the will of the majority to determine the political process, leaving subcultural groups with minority views and tendencies outside the governing process.

In light of these criticisms, alternative models to liberal democracy have been proposed within the traditional pluralist understanding based on individual and group conflict. Former U.S. President Clinton expressed the need for an alternative model—a “third way” involving strengthened civil society, somewhat greater restriction of the excesses of government, and cooperation between state and society. This arrangement, referred to as the third way, was meant to meet the needs of both society and the state. This model, proposed as an alternative by critics of the liberal system, is deliberative democracy, in which citizens are informed, exchange information with one another, participate in forming views on societal matters, and become involved in political processes. Indeed, it can be said that deliberative democracy is quite close to direct democracy. In deliberative democracy, citizens participate in the decision-making process—in other words, decisions are made through deliberation. While this approach asserts the necessity of citizens’ active involvement in political decision-making, it also acknowledges that civil society is grounded in the liberal democratic principle. Civil society and

political institutions are considered susceptible to exploitation by various forces (Site mbölükbaşı, 2005: 141–145). In deliberative democracy, the deliberation of all kinds of views is a fundamental requirement. The views to be deliberated are proposed by civil society organizations, while the boundaries of deliberation are determined by the state (Tosun, 2001: 115). From the standpoint of deliberative democracy, the preferences of civil society lie outside the political structure but are not distant from it either.

Modern democracies generally reduce democratic participation to voting and regard citizens' responsibility as limited to elections held every three to five years. This understanding has produced a model of citizenship characterized by indifference to social and political issues—one that treats citizenship not as a continuous civic role but as an identity that becomes active only during election periods. For this reason, participation in elections alone is not sufficient to constitute responsible citizenship. For citizenship to acquire sustainable and meaningful significance, citizens must be included in decision-making processes concerning important public matters. Semi-direct democratic institutions such as referendums should be used to increase public interest in political and social issues. Citizens should also be encouraged to participate in political, social and economic institutions and organizations. Such participation meets an important psychological need and contributes to the development of conscious, responsible and rational individuals (Uygun, 2014: 192–193).

CONCLUSION

Civil society is a sphere that, through mechanisms of influence particular to itself, exerts an effect on politics vis-à-vis political authority and confers legitimacy on political powers. The defining characteristic of civil society is its opposition to

the state. This should not be understood, however, as meaning that civil society operates in search of a society without a state. It should instead be understood as possessing an autonomous sphere while maintaining some form of allegiance to the state, and as carrying out its activities through voluntary organizations.

Civil society produces important consequences for the continuation of democracy as an ongoing process. Democracy and civil society are always in a relationship of mutual interaction. The development of civil society can be described as the result of a state being democratic, and the development of civil society, in turn, secures the legitimacy of political authorities and the advancement of democracy.

It is an undeniable fact that civil society contributes to the development of democracy. When we look at this, we can point to the limitation of state power as the most important concrete reality. To illustrate with an example from our own country: just as the regular holding of elections at fixed intervals contributes to democracy, the vitality and development of civil society in a democratic society contribute to the same degree.

Civil society's contribution to democracy depends not only on the number, diversity and effectiveness of the formations within the sphere of civil society, but also on these organizations treating the democratic relationships and values among themselves as a dominant factor. In this respect, top-down support and regulation by the state in the establishment of associations is important, and indeed often necessary. For example, while strong and well-established civil society associations can more easily achieve internal coordination, increasing the cohesion and effectiveness of weaker associations falls, to some extent, to political authorities as a democratic state. This will help consolidate the democratic system.

Individuals become freer and more open in expressing themselves through civil society. In other words, civil society brings together the diversity within society on common ground, granting citizens freedom of expression in the face of shared problems and demands. Civil society is not merely a formation that limits state power; it also functions to narrow the distance between citizens and the state with respect to everyday needs. In short, civil society contributes to strengthening the bond of citizenship.

In today's political life, people's participation in political processes is also described as a civic duty. However, not every individual participates in political processes to the same degree. Numerous factors influence political participation, and these factors can directly affect individuals' interest in, access to, and contribution to political processes. In this context, identifying the factors that increase or restrict political participation is important for the development of democratic functioning. Political participation is not merely a right but also a necessary element for the continuity of democracy.

Liberal democracy, in its most familiar form, is defined as a political system in which all citizens possess the right to vote and to engage in political organization, in which state-individual relations are regulated according to the principle of the rule of law, in which there exists a state governed by law that secures individual rights and freedoms through legislation, and which accepts the pluralism of society. One point that should be noted here is that the fundamental mechanism regulating the state-society relationship within the political system is the institution of representation, and the operational dynamics of this institution of representation are also the fundamental determinant of the relationship between the state and civil society. In liberal democratic theory, it is accepted that the emancipation of civil society vis-à-vis the state is a

precondition. At this point, however, it should not be overlooked that the precondition in liberal democratic theory—that the state secure individuals' rights and freedoms—may also place the state and individual freedoms in opposition to one another. At the same time, it should be noted that, in liberal democratic theory, institutions of representation play a role both as intermediaries and as elements of balance between the state and civil society, and between the public and private spheres.

Deliberative democracy, proposed as an alternative by critics of liberal democratic theory, is a model in which citizens are informed by those who govern and exchange information with one another, and participate in political decision-making processes through the formation of views on societal matters. In deliberative democracy, citizens participate in the decision-making process—in other words, decisions are made through deliberation. While this model asserts the necessity of citizens' active involvement in political decision-making, it also acknowledges that civil society is grounded in the liberal democratic principle. This model regards civil society as an intermediary layer capable of governing, resolving disputes between the individual and the state, and enabling its members to carry out their activities without being materially bound to the state.

As a final statement, civil society alone cannot bring about democratization. Within the democracy–civil society relationship, for a democratic civil society in which political participation is also secured to be realized, civil society must first articulate the interests, problems and demands of individuals or society vis-à-vis those who govern. In doing so, civil society must organize autonomously, outside the jurisdiction of state power. The fundamental condition for speak-

ing of a democratic civil society is that it possess political, social and economic freedom. However, one point that must not be forgotten is that, although the constituent element of democracy and the maker of legal regulations are the central political institutions, civil society — characterized as non-governmental — is important enough to play a leading role in democratization.

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THE PARTY-FORMATION PROCESS OF SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS IN TURKEY IN THE SHADOW OF THE 1917 BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

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Semi DOĞU²

INTRODUCTION

The earliest socialist movements in the Ottoman Empire are found among the activities of minorities with strong commercial and cultural ties to Europe. Because of the empire's limited industrialization and the consequent absence of a strong working class, socialist ideas were, for a long time, not embraced by the Muslim-Turkish population beyond a narrow intellectual stratum. Left-wing and socialist ideas emerged in the Ottoman Empire considerably later than in Europe, sprouting primarily in the relatively free environment created by the 1908 Young Turk Revolution (the Second Constitutional Era). The Ottoman Socialist Party, founded in 1910 under the leadership of İştirakçi Hilmi, emerged onto the historical stage during this period as the first left-wing organization to use the name "socialist." This party, which lacked

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The Claude artificial intelligence program was used in the English translation and review of this study.

theoretical grounding and Marxist class analysis and was primarily concerned with occupational representation and trade-union rights, never advanced beyond what might be called the “embryonic period” in the history of socialist organization; the harsh measures taken by the Committee of Union and Progress government to ban strikes and unionization, together with the intervening war years, further disrupted the development of socialist formations.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was not merely a local political upheaval that brought down Tsarist Russia and installed a new regime in its place, but a global rupture that profoundly affected twentieth-century world politics and the international balance of power. The waves emitted by this historical shock found multilayered reflections in the neighboring Ottoman Empire—then on the verge of disintegration under the devastating consequences of the First World War—and in the Anatolia of the National Struggle that sprouted immediately after the war. Initially welcomed with sympathy and excitement, chiefly for the relief it brought to the army at the front and the hope of peace, the revolution would reveal its ideological effects during the armistice years that began with the end of the war, laying the groundwork for socialist party formations to gain ground in Turkish political life.

The October Revolution of 1917 and its institutional projection, the Third International (Comintern), exported to left-wing tendencies a revolutionary character and a centralized party model. In this context, the revolution transformed Turkish socialism from a mere pursuit of rights into an institutional process of party formation aimed at state power. In the authority vacuum created by the Armistice and National Struggle years, this process proceeded not from a single center but along three main branches, differentiated geographically, ideologically and sociologically:

1. In Istanbul, the Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party (TİÇSF), led by Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer), and the Turkish Socialist Party (TSF), revived by İştirakçi Hilmi.

2. In Anatolia, the Green Army Society and its legal successor, the attempted Turkish People's Party of Participation (THİF), which developed within the pragmatic environment created by the Ankara Government's pursuit of Soviet Russia's military and financial assistance against Western imperialism, and which sought to synthesize Bolshevism with Islamic sanctities.

3. The revolutionary and institutional external center led by Mustafa Suphi, which sprang from among Turkish prisoners of war and exiled intellectuals in Russia and became fully integrated into the Leninist and Comintern line.

This study examines, from a historical perspective, how the scattered socialist tendencies that first sprouted around the "İştirak" circle in Turkey during the Second Constitutional Era, lacking theoretical depth, evolved into an institutional process of party formation under the influence of the anti-imperialist vision of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and Comintern discipline. The study analyzes the development of the Turkish left along three main branches within the complex socio-political climate of the Armistice and National Struggle years: the Istanbul branch, caught between pragmatic trade unionism and doctrinaire Marxism; the Anatolian branch (the Green Army and the THİF), which sought a synthesis of "Islamic Bolshevism" dictated by geopolitical necessity; and the revolutionary Baku branch, affiliated with the Comintern and led by Mustafa Suphi. In light of primary archival and literary sources, the study demonstrates how the theoretical unity that was sought under the umbrella of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP) at the Baku Congress of 10 September

1920 came to fracture in the face of the country's objective sociological conditions and the intervention of the state-controlled "Official TKP" established by the Ankara Government.

INTELLECTUAL PREPARATION AND EARLY ORGANIZATIONS: THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL ERA (1908–1917)

The Proclamation of the Constitution and the Wave of Strikes

Within the relatively liberal atmosphere created by the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era in the Ottoman Empire, socialist thought also translated into action (Tunaya, 2024, p. 239). The fact that political movements, which had continued to exist covertly underground during the reign of Abdülhamid II, now found the freedom to propagandize and organize openly enabled dissident voices to enter the public sphere (Tekin, 2002, p. 172). The first mass manifestation of this climate of freedom was a wave of strikes that spread across the country like an "epidemic," breaking out one after another and paralyzing public services (Şişmanov, 1990, p. 41). Although socialists exerted some influence on the labor movements of this period, the principal driving factors were poor working conditions and economic hardship. The state's response to this wave of unrest was the Strike Prohibition Law (Ta'til-i Eşgal Kanunu) enacted in 1909, which significantly restricted the right to strike (Aydar, 2014, pp. 67–68).

Hüseyin Hilmi Bey, the İştirak Circle, and the Ottoman Socialist Party (OSF)

The first serious institutional attempt by Turkish and Muslim elements to enter the political arena openly under the title "socialist" was the Ottoman Socialist Party (OSF), founded in 1910 under the leadership of Hüseyin Hilmi —also

known as “İştirakçi Hilmi” because he owned the party’s organ, the newspaper *İştirak*. Neither the party’s founder nor its other leading figures included any workers, and its cadres possessed only a weak grasp of socialist theory. The party was never represented in the Assembly and therefore made no contribution whatsoever to the expansion of workers’ rights, the resolution of labor problems, or the discussion of socialist thought within parliament (Tunaya, 2024, p. 241). An examination of the party program published in the newspaper *İştirak* reveals demands that were largely liberal in nature—free and open general elections, a free press, and the abolition of the death penalty. The weakness of the program on socialist grounds indicates that Hilmi and his circle had not fully grasped socialist thought. A notable feature of the party program is its effort to present socialism and Islam as two compatible structures meeting on common ground, free of contradiction. Certain articles published under the signatures of Hilmi and his circle in *İştirak* were likewise written to establish the religious legitimacy of socialism, aiming to bring the public closer to socialist ideas (Tekin, 2002, p. 174; Tunçay, 2009, p. 50).

Following the assassination of Mahmud Şevket Pasha in 1913 and the ensuing harsh purge of the opposition by the Committee of Union and Progress, party leader Hüseyin Hilmi Bey was arrested and exiled to Sinop. Left without a leader and without an organization, the Ottoman Socialist Party, although never formally dissolved, effectively disintegrated along with its organ, the journal *İştirak*, vanishing from the historical stage until it reemerged during the Armistice years in an effort to pursue a more effective politics (Tunaya, 2024, p. 246). This period of silence was not confined to the Ottoman Socialist Party alone. Early Ottoman socialism, both ideologically and organizationally, would have to await the impact of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—which

was about to erupt just beyond the border—in order to rise from its ashes. Having waited out the war in a state of dormancy, the socialist movements would find a renewed opportunity to revive once the war ended with the armistice, thanks to the departure of the Committee of Union and Progress from government and the resulting authority vacuum within the state (Tunçay, 2009, p. 67).

Dr. Refik Nevzat and the Paris Initiative

Dr. Refik Nevzat was a former Young Turk living in Paris and an opponent of the Committee of Union and Progress (Tunçay, 2009, p. 53). Authors such as Tunaya (2024, p. 244), Tunçay (2009, p. 54) and Şişmanov (1990, p. 53) regard the group Dr. Refik Nevzat founded in Paris in September 1911 as the Paris Branch of the Ottoman Socialist Party, whereas Sayılğan (2009, p. 39) argues that Dr. Nevzat's temperament was unsuited to working under Hüseyin Hilmi's authority and claims that the group operated independently. Tunaya (2024, p. 244) and Şişmanov (1990, p. 53) state that the branch was established without permission from the Istanbul center, while Tunçay (2009, p. 54) states that it was established in correspondence with Hilmi's circle in Istanbul. According to Tunaya (2024, p. 245), the party's Paris branch had a firmer grasp of socialist concepts than the center, was more committed to Marxist ideology, and possessed a more detailed program. The Paris branch published a journal called *Beşeriyet*, named after *L'Humanité*, the organ of the French Socialist Party, in which articles sent by Hüseyin Hilmi and news from Turkey were published (Şişmanov, 1990, p. 53). After its sixth issue, however, the journal was banned from entering Turkey (Aydar, 2014, p. 77).

THE TURNING POINT: THE 1917 BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN TURKEY

The First Echoes of the Revolution in the Ottoman Empire

The Bolshevik Revolution, which erupted in Russia at the end of 1917, produced multidimensional repercussions in the Ottoman Empire, then crushed under the heavy burden of the First World War and facing the danger of disintegration. Rather than being perceived as a Marxist class struggle with the potential to transform the world, the revolution was initially understood as a strategic rupture that would end the war; over time, this sense of military relief gave way to ideological curiosity and a deep sympathy for the discourse of the Bolshevik leaders (Kocabaşoğlu & Berge, 2006). According to Murgul (2017, p. 7), Russia's withdrawal from the war without making any demands, and the departure of Russian troops from the Caucasian Front, prolonged the survival of the Ottoman Empire. Toprak (2017, p. 72) likewise notes that, at a time when things were going badly for the Ottoman Empire in the war, the consequences of the revolution brought at least some relief on the Caucasian Front. Since Ottoman foreign-ministry officials did not believe, in their reports, that the new regime would remain in power for long, they paid little attention to the ideological impact of the revolution or to its capacity to affect global politics. Enver Pasha, too, focused on the chaos created by the Bolshevik Revolution, setting his goals on exploiting that chaos, on the assumption that the Bolsheviks would be unable to establish control over the former Tsarist territories (Murgul, 2017, p. 25). The situation was similar for Ottoman intellectuals. Following developments in the revolutionary process first through the French and British press, Ottoman intellectuals tracked events on the basis of limited and biased information; although they later also drew

on the German and Austrian press, they focused less on analyzing the new ideas the revolution offered than on the peace they hoped it would bring (Günay, 2019, pp. 359–360, 373). According to Baytal (2023, p. 73), the Ottoman government failed to recognize the revolution as a social movement, attributing it instead to problems within the Russian army. Although the publication of the secret treaties concluded under Tsarist Russia created a somewhat favorable view of the new government, the Ottomans waited to see the position Germany and the Entente Powers would take before formulating their own policy toward the revolution (Baytal, 2023, p. 73). In sum, although the Ottoman Empire’s first reactions to the revolution were favorable, little attention was paid to its socialist character; Bolshevism was not coded as an ideological current threatening domestic politics, and attention instead centered largely on what the war might mean for the interests of the state.

The Perception of a “Necessary Ally” against Western Imperialism and Political Rapprochement

Following the Armistice of Mudros, signed on 30 October 1918, the effective occupation of Ottoman territory by the Entente Powers and the beginning of national resistance in Anatolia—together with the Entente Powers’ policy, on the Russian side, of supporting former Tsarist loyalists in an effort to remove the Bolsheviks from power—shifted the impact of the 1917 Revolution on Turkish-Russian relations onto the ground of a pragmatic community of interest, giving rise to a natural basis for alliance (Ada, 2020; Arıkan, 2024, abstract). Ada (2020, p. 87) notes that, for the Turkish state, drawing closer to Russia—a country that had carried an imperialist burden over Ottoman territory for centuries—was, at that time, a matter of necessity. For both sides, this alliance never

proceeded on a sincere or secure footing. For Mustafa Kemal, leader of the National Struggle, the real aim was to obtain the necessary Soviet assistance without compromising independence (Ada, 2018, p. 1085). Moscow, for its part, planned to create a buffer zone under its own influence between itself and the West. For this reason, once the Grand National Assembly convened, Mustafa Kemal established his first official contacts with Russia; although he felt no ideological affinity, he remained silent for a time regarding communist organizations within the country and even, at times, showed a degree of sympathy toward Bolshevism (Ada, 2018, p. 1087). Yılmaz (2015, p. 39) notes that *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, the semi-official newspaper of the National Struggle period, framed the rapprochement with the Soviets in terms of the struggle against a common enemy, while emphasizing that socialist ideas were not, from a national and religious standpoint, a regime suited to Turkey—thereby clearly demonstrating the newspaper’s ideological line of distinction.

This pragmatic and protective climate, while sustaining a balance between the Soviets and the West at the state level, also created, in both Anatolia and Istanbul, a favorable organizational ground in which local left-wing actors—taking advantage of the freedom brought by the armistice and the ideological green light the state had extended to the Soviets—rapidly set about forming parties (Akbulut and Tunçay, 2020).

PARTY FORMATION ALONG “THREE BRANCHES” DURING THE ARMISTICE AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE PERIOD (1918–1920)

The signing of the Mudros Armistice in 1918 and the subsequent effective occupation of Ottoman territory by the Entente Powers created a major vacuum of political authority in the country. The lifting of the political pressure that had prevailed under the Committee of Union and Progress, which

withdrew from power immediately after the armistice, allowed left-wing cadres who had been underground or in exile since 1913 to re-enter the public sphere. The institutionalized existence of the 1917 October Revolution just beyond the border served Turkish socialists as both an ideological point of reference and a source of organizational courage. The political revival that emerged in this period did not proceed from a single institutional center or a homogeneous ideological line; rather, it entered a phase of party formation along “three main branches” that diverged from one another in terms of their geographic position, class base, and distance from Comintern doctrine (Akbulut and Tunçay, 2020, p. 117).

The Istanbul Branch: The Rift between Trade-Union Populism and Doctrinaire Marxism

Occupied Istanbul was, during the armistice period, one of the centers where socialist party formation was most intense. On one wing of this activity stood the Turkish Socialist Party (TSF), founded in 1919 by İştirakçi Hilmi upon his return from exile. Established as a continuation of the Ottoman Socialist Party, this party reemerged with a new name, statute and program, forming a far stronger and more effective political force than before (Tunaya, 1986 [vol. 2], p. 401; Tunçay, 2009, p. 68). The TSF was closer to the reformist line of the Second International than to the revolutionary line of the Comintern. According to Şişmanov (1990, p. 57), this choice on Hilmi’s part prevented the unification of the Turkish working class within a genuinely revolutionary socialist party. Hilmi successfully organized, in particular, the major tram, tunnel and port strikes of May 1920 that virtually paralyzed Istanbul, and through highly professional trade-union agitation secured hundreds of new party members each day (Tunçay, 2009, pp. 74–75). Emboldened by the victories he

had won in these strikes, Hilmi's increasingly dictatorial conduct within the party provoked internal opposition and defections, and although he and his team were eventually removed from office, Hilmi returned to the head of the party through legal means (Tunaya, 1986 [vol. 2], p. 402; Tunçay, 2009, p. 76). However, this mass success of Hüseyin Hilmi's has remained overshadowed, in left-wing historiography, by serious allegations and accusations (Sayılğan, 2009, p. 50). The revolutionary left-wing cadres of the period—foremost among them Şefik Hüsnü and the circle around Aydınlık—accused Hilmi of diverting workers' dues into his personal fortune, of taking bribes from employers in exchange for breaking strikes, and, most seriously, of secretly collaborating with the intelligence units of the British occupation forces (Tunçay, 2009). Following Hüseyin Hilmi's assassination in 1922—the perpetrator and motive of which remain disputed—the party, too, came to an end (Sayılğan, 2009, p. 50).

The second, and ultimately more enduring, pole of the Istanbul branch was the Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Party, founded by Turkish students who, while studying in Germany, had been influenced by the "Spartacist" movements; the party later added the word "socialist" to its name upon the joining of Dr. Şefik Hüsnü, becoming the Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party, which began operating in September 1919 (Sayılğan, 2009, p. 60; Tunaya, 1986 [vol. 2], p. 494). Dr. Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer) was a physician who had studied in Paris, where he came under the influence of Jean Jaurès and adopted socialist ideas. He returned to Turkey in 1912 and took part in the Balkan Wars and the First World War (Sayılğan, 2009, p. 57). According to the testimony Dr. Şefik Hüsnü gave at the time of his arrest in 1946, as relayed by Sayılğan (2009, p. 58), he stated that during the armistice years there was no organization capable of bringing the socialist groups together, and he described İştirakçi Hilmi

as a wholly uneducated man. For this reason, he said, he brought together the young people who had been influenced by the German Spartacists, led them, and together they founded the party. The nominal head of the party was Mehmet Vehbi, while Dr. Şefik Hüsnü served as its Secretary-General. Although the party worked to bring together the various socialist groups and formations under a single, unified movement, it did not succeed in this aim (Tunaya, 1986 [vol. 2], p. 496; Tunçay, 2009, p. 717). Shortly after its founding, the party began publishing an organ called Kurtuluş, but its print run lasted only five issues before it was banned following the occupation of Istanbul. After the occupation, a divergence occurred among the party's members: while its leading figures did not leave Istanbul, some crossed over into Anatolia. Unlike Hilmi's party, this party supported the National Struggle, and the members who crossed into Anatolia joined it (Akbulut and Tunçay, 2020, p. 112; Tunaya, 1986, p. 499). Another difference from the TSF was that this party, as an intellectuals' party centered on scientific socialism and class analysis, affiliated itself with the Third International (Tunaya, 1986 [vol. 2], p. 495).

After the closure of Kurtuluş, the party went through a period of relative silence; its publishing activity revived after its members split between Istanbul and Anatolia, through the Aydınlık journal established by the Istanbul circle. The party is thought to have served, from the summer of 1921, as the aboveground extension of the clandestine Turkish Communist Party operating underground; the newspaper Aydınlık, in turn, continued to function as this clandestine TKP's legal organ (Tunaya, 1986 [vol. 2], p. 496; Tunçay, 2009, p. 722). With the assistance of the International, Şefik Hüsnü and his associates founded the Turkish Workers' Association in 1921 in an effort to bring together the socialists of Istanbul, but here too they failed to achieve unity (Tunaya, 1986, p. 497;

Sayılğan, 2009, p. 63). Although the party's leading figures suffered their first major blow from the Ankara Government in May 1923, being arrested, they were acquitted owing to uncertainties in the application of the Law on Treason against the Homeland (Hıyanet-i Vatanîye Kanunu). The Aydınlık circle, which had supported the National Struggle and welcomed the abolition of the sultanate, would, after the proclamation of the Republic, gradually abandon its discourse that the government represented the rule of the people (Tunçay, 2009, pp. 734–753). By 1924, according to Tunçay (2009), the party's activities had come to an end. The Aydınlık journal had been aimed mainly at an intellectual readership; although an association was founded to unite the workers, a newspaper directed at workers, named Orak Çekiç, was not published until 1925 (Tunçay, 2009, p. 766). Although Orak Çekiç opposed the Şeyh Sait rebellion that broke out that same year and sided with the government, both Aydınlık and Orak Çekiç were shut down following the enactment of the Law on the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu) (Tunçay, 2009, p. 779). With the establishment of the Independence Tribunals, some party members were arrested, while several senior figures, including Şefik Hüsnü, fled abroad, bringing this chapter of the Turkish left to a close as well (Tunaya, 1986, p. 499).

The Anatolian Branch: The Green Army and the Turkish People's Party of Participation

Unlike the Istanbul branch, the Anatolian branch of the socialist movement did not emerge from an industrial working-class base or from the theoretical pursuits of expatriate intellectuals, but was shaped entirely as a product of the Ankara Government's geopolitical and military balancing policy toward Soviet Russia, pursued in order to sustain the National

Struggle (Ada, 2020, p. 92). Vitally dependent on the arms, munitions and gold assistance expected from Moscow against Western occupation, Ankara was compelled to create a flexible and tolerant climate toward Bolshevik ideas (Çolak, 2006, p. 33 ff.).

Within this pragmatic political atmosphere, the clandestine Green Army Society was established in May 1920, with the knowledge of Mustafa Kemal Pasha himself and through the founding initiative of his close associates (Arbaç, 2017, p. 44). The society's fundamental mission was to produce an original synthesis of "Islamic Bolshevism," blending the egalitarian and just principles of Islam with Bolshevism's anti-colonial, anti-imperialist theses, without offending the pious sensibilities of the Anatolian peasantry and religious population. Shortly after its founding, however, the Green Army slipped from the control of Ankara's central authority. The domination of the society by Çerkez Ethem and his brothers—who resisted the establishment of a regular army and, through the Kuvâ-yi Seyyare under their own command on the Western Front, had become a major military force—placed the organization in a position of open military-political threat to Ankara (Arbaç, 2017, pp. 46–47). The fact that Dr. Nazım Bey, the candidate of the society's parliamentary bloc, the Halk Zümresi, defeated Mustafa Kemal Pasha's own candidate, Refet Bey, in the election for the Ministry of the Interior, further intensified Mustafa Kemal Pasha's focus on the society (Başkaya, 2017, p. 910). For these reasons, although the organization was able to continue its activities for a time in Eskişehir, where Çerkez Ethem held strong influence, it was definitively dissolved in the autumn of 1920 (Tunçay, 2009, pp. 291, 296).

Following the closure of the Green Army under pressure from Ankara, those within the society who were genuinely

committed to communist thought founded, in December 1920, the Turkish People's Party of Participation (THİF), a legal political party that adopted the Bolshevik Program of the Third International, while another segment joined the official Turkish Communist Party established by Mustafa Kemal Paşa. According to Sayılğan (2009, p. 131), the THİF was founded in July 1920 under the name of the Clandestine Turkish Communist Party by individuals that included the Russian agent Şerif Manatov. Tunçay (2009, pp. 315–316) suggests it is possible that this clandestine party was conceived as the Anatolian branch of the Turkish Communist Party founded in Baku by Mustafa Suphi. Çerkez Ethem also joined the party, but following his rebellion and flight to seek refuge with the Greeks, party members denied any connection with him during their trials before the Independence Tribunals so as to avoid difficulty (Sayılğan, 2009, p. 131). Nazım Bey, one of the party's founders, established contact with Mustafa Suphi in Baku, requested financial assistance for the party, and invited Suphi to Anatolia. Although the party was reactivated after its closure in 1920, it was definitively shut down in October 1922 (Sayılğan, 2009, p. 131).

The Baku Branch: The Comintern Axis, the Vanguard Party, and Mustafa Suphi's Organizational Work

The principal institutional channel through which the revolutionary spirit of the 1917 October Revolution and the Leninist party model were exported to the Turkish left was the Baku Branch, established beyond the border. Unlike the trade-union crises of Istanbul and the conjunctural religious-political syntheses of Anatolia, this branch remained entirely faithful to the Comintern's universal Marxist-Leninist doctrines (Aslan, 1997, p. 19). The architect of the Baku branch was Mustafa Suphi. As detailed in Yavuz Aslan's (1997,

pp. 11, 23) work *The Founding of the Turkish Communist Party and Mustafa Suphi*, Suphi—exiled to Sinop in 1913 as a result of the Unionists’ policy of banishment, from where he fled to Tsarist Russia—was interned in a prisoner-of-war camp upon the outbreak of the World War. With the occurrence of the 1917 Revolution, Mustafa Suphi joined the Bolshevik party and swiftly assumed critical roles in the revolution’s Eastern policy. Working to win over, through agitation, the thousands of Ottoman soldiers and intellectuals held in prisoner-of-war camps across Russia to the communist cause, Suphi established the “Turkish Communist Organization” in Moscow in 1918, building the institutional skeleton of the external center. To carry out the intellectual and political propaganda of this organizational structure, the newspaper *Yeni Dünya* began publication in Moscow under Mustafa Suphi’s direction (its first issue appearing on 27 April 1918). The newspaper was printed in Turkish with the aim of introducing the thousands of Ottoman prisoners of war in Russia to revolutionary ideas, organizing them, and supporting the anti-imperialist awakening in Anatolia. As the organization’s center of activity shifted, the newspaper’s place of publication later moved to Crimea and then to Baku (Akbulut & Tunçay, 2020, pp. 33, 69). According to Aslan (1997, p. 110), the newspaper’s true purpose was to conduct communist propaganda among the Turkish people and to cultivate sympathy for the Russian revolution. Intellectuals such as Ethem Nejat—who had initially been a Turkist, but who, after going to Germany, came under the influence of left-wing thought and later moved to Russia, eventually becoming Suphi’s secretary-general—contributed theoretical articles to the newspaper (Tunçay, 2009, p. 336). The ultimate aim of Mustafa Suphi’s systematic organizational activities in Russia was to realize the Comintern’s insistence on “a single communist party in each country.” Indeed, on 10 September 1920, the historic First

Congress of the Turkish Communist Organizations convened in Baku (Demirel, 2002, p. 14). According to the Comintern archival documents transcribed by Yücel Demirel (2002, pp. 15–16), this congress was attended by 74 delegates representing a total of 22 different, scattered left-wing factions from the Istanbul branch, the Anatolian branch, and the prisoner-of-war camps in Russia. According to Demirel (2002, p. 16), the congress's most important outcome was the unification, under the umbrella of the Turkish Communist Party, of all the Turkish communist groups that had until then acted independently of one another for various reasons. With the formal proclamation of a unified Turkish Communist Party (TKP) fully bound to the Comintern program, Mustafa Suphi was installed as party chairman and Ethem Nejat as secretary-general (Aslan, 1997, p. 264). Mustafa Suphi also planned to form a military unit composed of Turks in Baku, with which he aimed both to liberate Turkey from occupation and to bring the Soviet regime to Turkey; however, this plan failed, as the unit was halted by Armenian irregulars in Zangezur and never reached Turkey (Aslan, 1997, pp. 116–123). This revolutionary and centralist structure of the Baku branch had to contend with the handicap of having been established outside Turkey's own borders. For the TKP to transform this institutional unity, which existed on paper, into a real alternative for political power, it was an inescapable necessity that its leading cadres personally cross into Anatolia to make contact with the masses. For the party to have any genuine impact, it would need to enter Anatolia, the heart of the National Struggle.

The TKP Central Committee, established in Baku, decided to cross into Anatolia in order to personally direct the revolutionary process in Turkey from within and to implement the Comintern's directives (Aslan, 1997, p. 284). Trusting in the diplomatic rapprochement between Ankara and

Moscow, Mustafa Suphi anticipated that this crossing would proceed without difficulty; this decision, however, marked the beginning of a tragic process that would bring about the party's end.

As detailed by Bayur (1971, pp. 642–652), when Mustafa Suphi and his comrades arrived in Erzurum via Kars in December 1920, they were met with violent protests organized by the civilian population, with the knowledge and direction of Kâzım Karabekir, commander of the Eastern Front. Categorically denied passage to Ankara, the delegation was redirected to Trabzon to be deported. On the night of 28–29 January 1921, Mustafa Suphi and fourteen of his comrades (including Ethem Nejat), who had been placed aboard a boat in Trabzon to be sent back to Soviet Russia, were murdered off the Black Sea coast by Yahya, the head of the boatmen. This event, which entered history as the “Affair of the Fifteen,” physically annihilated the most capable vanguard cadre of the Turkish communist movement. As Aslan (1997, p. 338) points out, despite this massacre, Soviet Russia did not break the strategic alliance it had formed with Ankara against the West, and the affair was diplomatically glossed over by both states in the name of their “higher interests.”

ANKARA'S STRATEGY OF “CONTROL”: THE STATE-CONTROLLED “OFFICIAL TKP”

Although the Turkish left-wing movement—developing during the Armistice and National Struggle periods along three distinct channels through Istanbul, Anatolia and Baku—acquired, on paper, a central umbrella (the TKP) with the Baku Congress of 10 September 1920, this institutional unity would soon fracture upon colliding with the real political conditions of Anatolia and the “national” reflexes of the Ankara Government.

The growing strength of independent left-wing movements in Anatolia inclined toward direct contact with Soviet Russia—particularly the Çerkez Ethem-backed Green Army and its successor, the THİF—was perceived by the Ankara Government as an open internal threat to central authority. Agents belonging to the Baku branch, moreover, were engaged in intensive espionage activity and communist propaganda within Anatolia (Başkaya, 2017, pp. 911, 920). Because Ankara, in its foreign policy, needed Soviet assistance against Western imperialism, it developed, rather than a frontal attack on Bolshevism, a highly pragmatic political maneuver. As related by Kandemir (1965, pp. 118, 122) on the basis of testimonies and documents, in October 1920, on the direct instructions of Mustafa Kemal Pasha himself, the highest-ranking figures of the state and the army (such as Fevzi Çakmak, Kâzım Karabekir, Ali Fuat Pasha and Refet Bele) were made founding members, and the Official Turkish Communist Party was established. Genuine socialists, including Çerkez Ethem, were also invited to join the party, but these invitations were declined. According to Sayılğan (2009, p. 134), an application for membership in the Third International was also made but was likewise rejected (Tunçay, 2009, p. 314). The fundamental purpose of this maneuver was not to bring about ideological transformation, but to place the legal monopoly over the label “communist” in Turkey directly in the hands of the state itself. Through this strategy, Ankara, on the one hand, guaranteed the continuation of arms and financial assistance by sending Moscow the message that “Turkey was not hostile to communism,” while, on the other hand, drying up the legal political ground available to the Mustafa Suphi movement coming from abroad and to the THİF at home (Tunçay, 2009, pp. 308, 314; Kandemir, 1965). Indeed, immediately after the establishment of the Official TKP, the Independence Tribunals were activated and Çerkez Ethem’s

forces were eliminated. According to Sayılğan (2009, p. 136), having completed its task, the Official TKP subsequently dissolved of its own accord.

CONCLUSION

The 1917 October Revolution marks the absolute turning point at which the socialist movement in Turkish political history broke free of its infancy and began its effort to transform itself into an organized, programmatic political force aimed at seizing state power. Before the revolution, Ottoman socialism—which had emerged in the relatively free environment provided by the Second Constitutional Era under the leadership of figures such as İştirakçi Hilmi and Dr. Refik Nevzat—was a feeble movement lacking theoretical depth and class consciousness, populist in character, and largely confined within the reformist framework of the Second International.

With the October Revolution, the Bolshevik model, which had overthrown the Tsarist regime in the neighboring geography, opened an entirely new revolutionary horizon for Ottoman intellectuals and for the cadres of the Armistice period. Although initially perceived as a military relief at the front and a hope for peace, the revolution came, particularly during the National Struggle, to rest on a strategic footing of alliance forged around the “common enemy” of imperialism. This favorable political climate did not cast the Turkish left into a single uniform mold; rather, in keeping with the complex sociology of the period, it developed along three branches, each possessing distinct dynamics: the trade-union and doctrinaire wing of Istanbul (the rivalry between Şefik Hüsnü and İştirakçi Hilmi); the Islamic-Bolshevik synthesis of Anatolia, shaped by geopolitical necessity (the Green Army, THİF); and the revolutionary center beyond the border, backed by the Comintern (Mustafa Suphi’s TKP).

However, the vision of unifying this scattered, multi-headed structure under a single Communist Party through the Baku Congress of 10 September 1920 was shattered upon colliding with Turkey's objective sociological conditions and the uncompromising pragmatism of the National Struggle's leading cadre.

Ultimately, although the 1917 Revolution instilled in Turkey's socialists the courage to organize, Comintern discipline, and an anti-imperialist vision, this movement, faced with the weakness of the era's working class, the strategic errors of its leading cadres, and Ankara's authoritarian "national" politics, failed to develop into a lasting alternative for political power in the 1920s.

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THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon known as social order, which emerged as a result of human beings living together, has undergone many changes and transformations over time. Humanity has gone through a great variety of changes and different stages to arrive at the order that exists today. The construction of a structure in which shared decisions, shared opinions and the will of the majority prevail has naturally taken a long process. Technological progress, which emerged with the help of the technical knowledge developed in the twentieth century, has made it possible to manage processes more quickly and effectively while also considerably easing everyday life. As sectors seeking to benefit from the conveniences that new and advanced technologies provide in every area of life quickly adapted to this process and began incorporating the increasingly popular technology of artificial intelligence into their own operations, this transformation is seen to have begun taking hold not only in fields such as education and health but also in fields such as politics and administration.

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The Claude artificial intelligence program was used in the English translation and review of this study.

Today, concepts such as technology, digitalization and artificial intelligence, along with their technological applications, have adapted to human life at great speed, reaching a point where an order without them can no longer be imagined. Naturally, no one wishes to return to the old order once accustomed to things that are easy and fast. However, as a cost of the convenience provided by technology, it is also necessary not to overlook the negative consequences that may arise from the resulting information pollution. Access to accurate information has recently become fraught with difficulty, and content generated by artificial intelligence has begun to be presented in digital environments. Yet the content that emerges in the digital world and is produced by artificial intelligence should not be seen merely as a source of informational confusion. This is because it is undeniably clear that artificial intelligence, which has significant fields of use and application across many disciplines from education to health and from sociology to politics, also has considerable positive effects. On the other hand, the use of artificial intelligence, which is no longer confined to simple content sharing, creates very serious threats just as it produces positive outcomes for electoral processes, public perception and the social structure.

Although sectors and individuals wishing to benefit from the advantages of technology make use of artificial intelligence to secure public support, it is also a fact that this system, whose limits have not been defined within this newly developing order, at the same time poses a danger that requires attention and precautionary measures.

The subject of digital technology and artificial intelligence, which has begun to be used intensively in every sphere of life, has led us to question how digitalization interacts with democracy and, in particular, how it is used in the formation of public opinion.

As regards the content of the study, brief explanations of the basic concepts will be given, information will be provided on certain artificial intelligence applications carried out with respect to public opinion during election processes, and, with particular emphasis placed on the ethical dimension of the subject, the measures needed to protect the groups that will be affected before this technology comes into use will be addressed. The study will also examine how artificial intelligence has set democracy on a different evolutionary path and how public perception is being directed in this process.

THE EFFECTS OF DIGITALIZATION ON DEMOCRACY

It is a notable fact that human life has undergone very different transformations alongside the development of science and technology. In the process of the production and dissemination of information, this process, which acquired a very different dimension with the transition from the manually operated printing press to the machine-powered printing press, reached a complex stage. The next stage after all of this manifested itself in the 1920s with the discovery and use of another source of energy, electricity. As electricity took its place in social life, the processing and transmission of information underwent a radical change, and the infrastructure of the period known as the Information Age was also formed. The discovery and feasibility of the wireless transmission of signal and sound paved the way for the development of advanced electronic devices capable of achieving the accurate and rapid transfer of information; accordingly, the computer and the internet were discovered in this process and their use spread with great speed. In addition to all these historical developments, the rise in prosperity and the advancing technology that followed the Second World War (1939–1945) became even more pronounced. With the increasing demand for

changing services, the infrastructure of the Information Age was completed in the last decades of the twentieth century (Acun, 2020, p. 69). In this respect, like every discipline, the phenomenon of democracy has also undergone fundamental and serious changes. These issues will be briefly examined in the study.

Technology and Democracy

It is useful, first of all, to explain what these two mutually influencing concepts mean. The word technology derives from the Greek term for technique, “*techne*.” Its Turkish equivalent is given as “to bring forth” (açığa çıkarmak). To bring forth is also known in the sense of “to produce,” and the term *technical*, in the sense of “producing,” is used to mean bringing something out from one place to another, into the open, or manufacturing it (Günay, 2017, p. 163). Throughout history, many innovations can be characterized as technological steps. For example, things that seem simple today, such as the discovery of fire or the invention of the wheel, were advanced technological innovations when they first appeared.

Democracy, meanwhile, derives from the ancient Greek word “*kratos*,” meaning “power” or “to rule,” and is used to describe governance by the “people,” that is, the “*demos*.” It is also known, in Abraham Lincoln’s phrase, as “government of the people, by the people, for the people” (Heywood, 2022, p. 272).

Most expressions relating to democracy, whose word root rests on election and the people’s participation in decision-making processes, contain the words “people” and “election.” Accordingly, the most widely known definition of democracy concerns the rule of the people. Through competing political parties, the people choose those who will govern

them by means of free and fair national and local elections (Aktaş, 2015, p. 87).

Types of democracy are known, in brief, as direct democracy, semi-direct democracy, representative democracy, and liberal democracy, which falls under the heading of representative democracy (Heywood, 2022, pp. 273–278).

In the type of democracy called *direct*, classical or radical democracy, in which the people's participation is direct, unmediated and continuous, there is no distinction between civil society and the state (Heywood, 2023, pp. 79–83). However, it was made feasible in the Greek polis states by the fact that citizens had slaves who carried out their daily affairs and thus had time to attend to affairs of state. Today, it is quite clear that it is very difficult for the millions of people living together in society to participate directly in decision-making processes (Aktaş, 2015, p. 92).

In *representative democracy*, by contrast, one can speak of the existence of representatives who compete to win the votes of the people and, having succeeded in doing so, are authorized to act on the people's behalf. The most widespread form of representative democracy is liberal democracy. Liberal democracy, in turn, comprises a regime that combines the liberal idea of limited government with a belief in democratic rule by the people (Heywood, 2023, pp. 77–83):

The effects of the technological innovation of artificial intelligence on policy design, which will be explained in more detail later, are also connected to its broad consequences for democracy, since this technology carries both empowering qualities and destructive potential. Its use in a transparent and accountable manner can enhance democratic legitimacy. Its capacity for disinformation and manipulation, of course, can also threaten democratic processes by distorting public

opinion. While artificial intelligence encourages equal political participation on the one hand, it also carries within it, on the other hand, the risk that algorithmic control may form the basis for authoritarian regimes (Gençay, 2025, p. 569).

In light of all this, technology's journey together with digitalization is bringing the concept of direct democracy back onto the agenda. By making access to every individual easier, digitalization may also be transforming the concept of democracy and perhaps opening the door to voting carried out through the participation of citizens, as in ancient Greece. Naturally, it is first important to explain the concept of digitalization in detail.

Digitalization

It would not be wrong to say that the point digitalization has reached in recent years is quite striking. It is also clearly seen that digitalization has become increasingly important in education, in administration—including public and local government—and in every conceivable area of economic and social life such as health, tourism and marketing, and in all organizations and processes engaged in the production of goods and services. As the world digitalizes, in order for all organizations to adapt to changing conditions in a way that allows them to compete and survive, being able to produce the goods or services they offer with the quality, efficiency and low cost needed to meet demand, and to deliver them rapidly, has today become possible only by making greater use of digital technologies and incorporating them into their operations (Birinci, 2023, p. 22).

By definition, digitalization means the digitization of various information and content in parallel with technological developments and the expanding use of the internet. In addi-

tion to technological transformation, digitalization, which encompasses the storage and transmission of data, has an effect in many areas. Alongside the digitization of various information and content, digitalization, in parallel with technological developments and the expanding scope of the internet, also possesses a digital structure of its own. In particular, images, video and text are now transferred to a digital platform. This platform for sharing and transmitting information, in turn, expands and changes in scope and content with each passing day, alongside technological developments, acquiring a new form (Beyaz Özbey, 2022, p. 146).

The Effects of Digitalization on Democracy

In general terms, the concept of e-democracy, which describes the participation in decision-making processes of persons governed by electronic means in democracies, consists of processes that encompass forms of electronic interaction in all activities—such as the provision of information, mutual deliberation and voting—between public institutions, the parliament formed through elections, the government and opposition parties, and citizens. In this respect, the concept of e-democracy, used to describe the effects of Information and Communication Technologies on the relationship between government and citizens within the process of democratic governance, in fact encompasses many different applications, including e-service, e-governance, easy digital access to information, e-participation and e-voting. Examining examples of e-democracy, one frequently encounters e-democracy applications in which citizens are included in decision-making processes through a top-down approach led by the government, in line with what liberal or deliberative democracy models envisage. Of course, the fact that the government sets the agenda in the e-participation process does not mean that e-democracy

applications are ineffective. It is also possible for citizens to participate in agenda-setting discussions through e-democracy tools. It is clear that e-participation can also take place, in a more bottom-up process, through initiatives launched by citizens themselves (Afşar, 2019, p. 1115).

First of all, many definitions can be given of political participation, one of the important subjects of political science. While political participation, narrowly defined, is characterized simply as voters taking part in elections, from a broader perspective it encompasses citizens' ability to take part in almost every stage of the process by which many political decisions concerning society are made. With the digitalization of politics, for instance, the perception of time and space has also changed. In this sense, voters have built a more direct and active sphere for themselves. This has led to an expansion of the sphere in which voters become involved in politics. The fact that those who govern must, in the face of this sphere, be in a more active and responsive position raises important debates. At this point, the concept of e-participation emerges as an expression that makes this whole process meaningful. For citizens can now follow and become involved in many of the political, social or economic issues they ideally wish to pursue, whether at the local, national or even global level (Şener, 2022, p. 33).

Reinforcing the problems experienced by representative democracy through e-participation, making the existence of pluralism more pronounced and raising the general public's political interest can make it easier to overcome these problems. It is necessary to state the expectation that, with each passing day, more public and political activity will be moved into the digital environment. The internet, by assuming various functions for political parties, leaders and individuals, can contribute to the circulation of information in the political

sphere and to the expansion of the ground for deliberation. However, apart from a certain range of effects, the expectation of direct democracy does not appear very realistic (Güngör, 2017, p. 2272).

As for the concept of Artificial Intelligence, which has emerged alongside advancing technology, academic studies on its effect on politics draw attention to this technology's transformative potential for political systems. Looking at these academic studies, its multidimensional effects on governance, decision-making processes, democratic processes and global politics are particularly examined. This matter will be examined in particular in the later parts of the study (Gençay, 2025, p. 571).

THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

Although public opinion, a subject to which contemporary political science attends, has existed since very ancient times, it can be said that it has only recently begun to be examined as a subject of scientific research. It is regarded as an important field of political science because it influences the political decision-making process of those who govern and involves a two-way relationship between the electorate and those who govern (Bektaş, 2000, pp. 41–52).

Public opinion also has a highly important quality in terms of the pressure it exerts on political power with regard to the making and implementation of political decisions in particular. Today, especially thanks to the means of communication, public opinion has become quite effective and has come a long way in influencing the agenda (Temizel, 2008, p. 127). Given the effect of technology in making rapid and easy access possible for every individual, it is a quite obvious fact that politics and democracy will be directly affected by

this. The effects of technology on the formation of public opinion will be carefully addressed in the later parts of the study.

The Concept of Public Opinion

The concept of public opinion entered the Western languages by being derived from the Latin words *publicus* and *opinio*, and is expressed in English by the words “public opinion.” As the equivalent of the concept of public opinion that passed into Turkish from the West, terms such as *efkâr-ı umumiye*, *halk efkârı*, *amme efkârı* and *kamu efkârı* were used at first. Today, however, it has come to be used as a single word, *kamuoyu*, formed by combining the words *kamu* (public) and *oy* (opinion/vote). The phenomenon of public opinion has primarily been an important subject that scholars have focused on since the beginning of the twentieth century. The reason for this is that the industrialization, urbanization and democratization that began to manifest themselves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, together with the spread of mass communication tools and the rise in literacy rates, also gave rise to the phenomenon of public opinion in its modern sense (Atabek, 2002, p. 224).

Looking at the origin of the word “public” (*kamu*): although it symbolizes today, as the opposite of “closed,” a meaning open to everyone, it in fact referred, in Ancient Greece, to “free citizens”—a privileged group granted certain rights. In the Middle Ages, this concept, which carried the same meaning as the nobility, passed into a new stage with the emergence of the press in the seventeenth century and generally began to be used in its present-day sense. The word “opinion,” the English and French equivalent of the concept of “vote” (*oy*), corresponds in Turkish to notions such as conviction, thought and attitude. In short, opinion can be charac-

terized as a conviction that is stronger than feeling or impression, and readily but not fully demonstrable—or that may be regarded as less valid than positive knowledge (Bektaş, 2000, p. 42).

We can say that public opinion has a great influence on the shaping of politics. Today, public opinion is a segment that political leaders try, through various means and discourses, to draw attention toward themselves. At this point, cutting-edge technological fields such as digitalization and artificial intelligence in particular can be seen, from this perspective, as a serious sphere of influence. These will be discussed in particular in the sections that follow.

THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

The History of Artificial Intelligence

The concept of artificial intelligence, first articulated in 1956 by John McCarthy at the Dortmund conference, is, through the changes it has undergone up to the present day, recognized as one of the important research areas in computer engineering and, without dispute, as the driving force of technology since the first half of this century. With features that can be counted among the definitions of artificial intelligence—such as learning, making intelligent predictions, solving complex problems, adapting to changing conditions, and adapting to different human languages and experiences—artificial intelligence has begun to manifest itself in many fields over time (Arslan, 2020, p. 71).

Artificial intelligence is the general name for the modeling of systems inspired by the behavior of living beings and human beings. This behavior was given the name “Artificial Intelligence” in the 1950s. Artificial intelligence can be treated

as an interdisciplinary concept. In addition to easing humans' workload, this technology also copies human-like characteristics, allowing a character and a capacity for thought to form within itself (Sucu and Ataman, 2020, p. 40).

Artificial intelligence can be examined under three categories; the brief definitions of the concepts of Narrow, General and Super Artificial Intelligence are as follows (Gençay, 2025, p. 574):

4. **Narrow Artificial Intelligence:** a technology encompassing systems that exist today and are designed for specific tasks; for example, capabilities such as facial recognition, voice assistants and playing chess fall into this category, and they cannot go beyond these areas.

5. **General Artificial Intelligence:** refers to systems that can operate effectively in more than one domain and can transfer learned knowledge to different areas.

6. **Super Artificial Intelligence:** manifests itself as an entirely thought-provoking concept that surpasses human intelligence. The applications currently in existence are predominantly concentrated on Narrow Artificial Intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is a general name given to algorithms that improve themselves by learning from data and can thus make better predictions over time. Artificial intelligence technologies are developing at an extremely rapid pace and are, with each passing day, capable of achieving better results than humans in areas thought to be uniquely human. While artificial intelligence is an interdisciplinary field of science that also finds a place in nations' high-level strategy documents, it is certain that developments in this technology will have significant effects on the joint-stock companies that lie at the center of commercial life (Gözübüyük, 2021, p. 1206).

It is thought that artificial intelligence will, in the process ahead, fundamentally reshape many disciplines. At this

point, politics and democracy themselves may perhaps be what will be affected most by this. It is seen that various laws and regulations are needed in order to prevent and control the misuse of this technology, which harbors drawbacks as well as conveniences. This matter will be discussed in particular toward the end of the study.

The Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Public Administration

The widespread use of artificial intelligence technologies in public administration provides savings in efficiency and cost, while also having a positive effect on citizen satisfaction by increasing the speed of service delivery. Artificial intelligence technologies strengthen the principles of transparency and accountability in public services and offer significant benefits by providing administrative convenience, particularly in times of crisis. Thanks to their advantages in terms of reach and scope of impact, these technologies allow for an improvement in service quality in the future while making access to data and information easier and more economical. It is also possible to create a sustainable and environmentally conscious public service environment in which citizens participate more intensively (Güven, 2024, p. 146).

If we are to address the use of artificial intelligence in public administration in Turkey, local governments and smaller public institutions in particular are having difficulty contributing to the digital transformation process because of outdated technological infrastructure. Such infrastructural deficiencies disrupt the transformation process while also making the effective use of artificial intelligence technologies more difficult. For example, in some provinces in Turkey, municipalities have difficulty offering digital services, which reduces citizens' access to services. At the same time, however,

various ministries in Turkey are making it possible for public services to be delivered more efficiently and rapidly through the use of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence holds great transformative potential for public administration in Turkey. However, one can point to major challenges—such as developing infrastructure, ensuring data security, and overcoming bureaucratic obstacles—that must be addressed before this technology can be integrated into public administration processes. With the right strategies and applications, of course, artificial intelligence offers great opportunities that can increase efficiency, transparency and citizen satisfaction in public administration (Vakifli, 2025, p. 19). It is seen that the use of artificial intelligence, a new technology, is advancing at a striking rate in public services.

Public Opinion Formation Through Artificial Intelligence

The use of artificial intelligence, particularly by means of algorithms produced through machine learning and deep learning models, makes it possible for quite large data sets to be processed within a very short time, transforming raw data into organized, concrete sets of information, and enables the production of models that put this data into an appropriate form. It thus holds significant potential for bringing clarity to the events and phenomena under consideration and for resolving the issues involved (Şengöz, 2024, p. 110).

Under the impact of digitalization, the structure of politics has changed considerably, and, together with technological developments such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics, the content of political communication and election campaigns has been significantly transformed. The historical process of political communication has undergone a transformation extending from mass media to digital platforms and from there to artificial-intelligence-supported strategies. This

process of transformation allows political actors to target voters more effectively, to make strategic decisions, and to manage their campaigns more actively. The limited interactive possibilities of traditional media have given way to algorithmic analyses, micro-targeting techniques and the capacity for real-time data processing (Sayın and Ceyhan, 2025, p. 30).

In the 2010s, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, along with digital platforms such as Google, began to form the center of political processes by reaching a significant portion of the world's population. Social media transformed the structure of politics by making its presence felt in a great variety of domains, from political protests to election campaigns. Particularly during the Arab Spring, social media directed political processes in many respects, from the organization of protests to election campaigns. In the 2016 US Presidential Election as well, artificial intelligence applications such as social bots became critical actors in political processes. The effects of this technology on the political sphere have, especially since that date, become an increasingly frequent subject of debate in political and academic circles. As a wide-ranging technological revolution that has penetrated many areas of social life, artificial intelligence also has a multidimensional and complex effect in the political context (Gençay, 2025, p. 588).

Obama's 2012 "Narwhal" project is one of the successful examples of this; following its encounter with artificial-intelligence-based models, a transition was made to the period in which India's "Shakti Platform" and Biden's 2020 artificial-intelligence-supported dialogue systems would be used, and the impact of data use in political communication increased considerably. Real-time sentiment analyses enable political actors to respond instantly to public reactions (Sayın and Ceyhan, 2025, p. 45).

In critical periods such as the 2016 US elections as well as the UK's 2020 Brexit vote, the manipulative situation created by fake and bot accounts was expected to be intensified with the support of artificial intelligence, and it was considered appropriate to make use of artificial intelligence technology once again for the precautions that could be taken in this regard (Saitoğlu, 2025, p. 58). The Cambridge Analytica scandal, meanwhile, revealed the use of artificial intelligence tools to collect and manipulate Facebook data without users' consent. This scandal opened the door to debates of a serious scale by demonstrating the importance of the ethical use of artificial intelligence and of personal privacy rights (Kırık and Özkoçak, 2023, p. 91).

In general, the effect of artificial intelligence on elections appears limited, given the relatively small scale of the activity in question (voting). Although indirect effects are possible through potential opportunities for competitive differentiation, there is also doubt as to whether, given the widespread availability of artificial intelligence tools, this will turn into a consistent and systemic shift in power. What is more likely is the indirect effect mentioned above: as expectations regarding the presumed powers of artificial intelligence are transferred from industry and science into politics, the public may come to believe that artificial intelligence can actually balance out the "organized uncertainty" of democratic elections. This alone could weaken public confidence in elections and the acceptance of election results. For this reason, it is important, in the face of artificial intelligence, to keep organized uncertainty alive and not to weaken it with irresponsible and fanciful ideas (Jungherr, 2023, p. 10).

Artificial Intelligence and Ethics

When the relationship between artificial intelligence and ethics is generally considered, the most fundamental problem

is the use of artificial intelligence in areas that have a social and cognitive dimension. This is because artificial intelligence possessing consciousness has still not been developed today, and existing artificial intelligence systems have made serious errors in decision-making and choice. Despite this, the use of artificial intelligence is increasing at great speed and is spreading into important fields directly related to human beings, such as politics, security, law and banking. Although technology is presented as the perfect solution for a flawless and comfortable future life, it also harbors serious dangers for human life (Topakkaya and Eyibaş, 2019, p. 95).

While the exciting potential of artificial intelligence for societies, commercial structures and states is beyond doubt, this transformation, depending on how the technology is designed, developed and applied, may also bring with it ethical problems such as interference with human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These ethical problems manifest themselves in three basic categories: bias and discrimination; data privacy and violations of privacy; and problems of transparency and accountability (Yılmaz, Sözer and Elver, 2021, p. 449).

Because it is able to understand what you think and whom you support or oppose, there is a high likelihood that it can be used very effectively to change your thoughts or opinions by generating content tailored specifically to you, through messages and posts that only you can see. Of course, this may be only the visible part of the iceberg. In other words, artificial intelligence can now act as a social engineer. In order to eliminate the risks involved here, it is important to take administrative, political, academic and technical measures. Depending on the type of artificial intelligence and the specific sector, legal and institutional measures should include the following (Efe, 2021, p. 18):

1) The establishment, at the national level and within the framework of international norms, of separate ethical rules for coders, investors, users and consumers,

2) The determination of the conditions necessary to establish who is responsible for the risks, dangers, losses or damages caused by artificial intelligence,

3) The establishment of an insurance framework, as advocated in the European Parliament's Resolution on Civil Law Rules on Robotics, to protect those harmed by artificial intelligence systems,

4) The development of a special curriculum, in terms of both formal and non-formal education, relating to algorithm, artificial intelligence and coding skills,

5) The establishment of a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy,

6) The establishment of a registration process defining, for artificial intelligence systems, the intended use, the creator, the training data sets, the algorithms, and the optimization objectives,

7) The labeling of an artificial intelligence system with an identity in order to maintain a clear balance of accountability,

8) Giving priority importance to taking ethical values and international norms into account in studies in the field of artificial intelligence funded by public institutions such as TÜBİTAK and the Development Agencies.

The ethical problems and challenges brought about by artificial intelligence give rise to concerns regarding fundamental principles such as data privacy, anonymity and algorithmic transparency. Although various ethical guidelines and regulations have been developed at the international and national level, additional recommendations and regulations are

needed for the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence. The role of ethical responsibility is of critical importance in managing the societal effects of technology and in establishing trustworthy research practice. The priority objective should be to develop dynamic regulations, together with continuously updated ethical standards, in order to reduce the risk that artificial intelligence will deepen social inequalities and to promote the fair use of data (Maral, 2024, pp. 30–31).

CONCLUSION

In light of all this evidence, it is seen that digitalization and artificial intelligence technologies, as a major source of transformation for our age, have made change necessary for many disciplines. These technologies have carried the democratic dimension of politics to a different level and have paved the way for today's applications. Through technological steps taken in electoral processes worldwide, attempts have been made to influence public opinion, revealing that artificial intelligence is a significant force in this regard. Certain examples of artificial-intelligence-supported manipulation, which began to show themselves more prominently after the 2016 US elections and the UK's 2020 Brexit vote, have attracted considerable attention. Similar technological applications, which have become the object of a race worldwide, are transforming politics and democracy day by day and are seen to be opening the door to some unsettling instances of manipulation and disinformation.

At this final point we have reached, it is evident that we stand at a highly uneven threshold. While trying to adapt to this new process, a certain number of errors and abuses appear to be inevitable. Artificial intelligence technology may

perhaps make it possible, in the future, to build a system capable of producing very good results, but during the construction of this system, certain problems relating to ethics and the direction of public perception may also arise. For this reason, adapting to this process quickly but thoughtfully carries essential priority. A set of rules should be established for artificial intelligence and for identifying the individuals who will assume responsibility for it, and the misinformation that may arise should be prevented. Although technology is marketed as humanity's friend, unfortunately, because a system of rules defining its own limits has not yet been established, it also carries the capacity to give rise to malicious uses. For this reason, before focusing on the use of this technology, the priority objective should be to take steps aimed at protecting every individual, state and social order that will be affected by this technology.

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PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE PRINCIPLES IN TÜRKİYE¹

Ümit ŞİMŞEK²

INTRODUCTION

Public service has been transforming since the 1970s. This transformation is based on opening up every area that previously existed as a public service space to the private sector. The expectation is not only that public service will shrink through privatization, build-operate-transfer, and public-private partnerships, but also that it will transition to a more harmonious operation with the private sector.

The intention to harmonize public service with the private sector is reflected in the new principles. These principles, referred to as operating principles, are transparency, participation, accountability, accessibility, simplicity, adaptability, and reliability. Looking at these principles, it is not surprising to see the effects of new public management here as well. However, despite the new principles and approach, the principles of equality, continuity, adaptability, and gratuitousness, inherited from the Weberian bureaucracy model, remain accepted as fundamental to public service.

Empirical studies on public service principles are extremely scarce. This study aims to fill this gap. It focuses on

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how Turkish citizens understand and perceive public service principles. To achieve this, 14 individuals were interviewed in depth. The interviews were categorized and analyzed using MAXQDA.

Public Service

The concept of public service is defined in three ways: organic, material, and formal. The organic definition considers public service to be public legal entities, their personnel, and their means, i.e., their organizations. The material definition defines public service as activities that serve the public good or meet public needs. The formal definition, on the other hand, characterizes public service as a legal regime distinct from private law and possessing public characteristics. (Arantaş, 2016: 19)

While these three definitions provide some insight, organic and formal definitions are not considered a distinguishing element of public service. This is because it is accepted that public service can be provided not only by the state and public legal entities but also by private individuals, and that public service exists even in the absence of a legal regime with public characteristics (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 153-157; Arantaş, 2016: 20) In other words, when it comes to public service, what matters are activities that serve the public interest and meet public needs.

Based on this, public service can be defined as services provided for the public good by the state or other public legal entities, or under their supervision and control, to meet society's general and common needs. (Gülan, 1998: 103; Derbil, 1950: 35-36; Akıllı, 2013: 93) Production in public service takes place to meet an unmet social need. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 45; Özay, 1998: 295)

Two approaches have been developed for determining what constitutes a public service and what does not. The objectivist approach prioritizes inherent qualities in determining public service. That is, various qualities define public service. Because of these qualities, there are certain areas of activity that the legislator cannot exclude from being considered public services. These qualities vary considerably. The most frequently encountered include: being connected to state functions, having strategic importance, the indivisibility of its benefits, impossibility or inefficiency in operating according to market principles, the absence of private individuals willing to operate in the country, the impossibility of competition in the field of activity, and the potential for social unrest if not met. (Artantaş, 2016: 20-21)

The subjectivist approach argues that the fundamental factor in determining public service is the legislator's will. The legislator can designate any field of activity as a public service or remove it from that category. (Artantaş, 2016: 21; Kaymak, 2002: 5)

Fundamental Principles of Public Service

Public service has four fundamental principles: equality, continuity, adaptation, and gratuitousness. The principle of equality is based on Article 10 of the Constitution, which states that everyone is equal before the law regardless of "language, race, gender, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion, sect, and so on." Article 10 of the Constitution also obligates state organs and administrative authorities to "act in accordance with the principle of equality before the law in all their actions." Therefore, the state is obliged to carry out its activities without considering "language, race, gender, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion, sect, and so on." For

this reason, the principle of equality is also expressed as impartiality and neutrality.

Those who benefit from public services will be able to do so if they possess the qualifications required for the service; however, these qualifications cannot include elements such as language, race, gender, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion, sect, or similar factors. Exclusions from these services based on required qualifications should be used to ensure equality and impartiality. However, in practice, situations can arise in which these are used to commit violations. Therefore, impartiality and neutrality should be means of ensuring equality and should be based on preventing any one idea or situation from being prioritized and thereby violating equality for others. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 207)

Equality in public service refers to formal equality. Those who possess the same conditions and qualifications can benefit from public services in the same way. When there is an imbalance between the public needs that must be met and the services that can be provided, it becomes necessary to choose among potential users. (Gölcük, 1992:13,34) Here, due to the principle of equality, differences cannot be created solely based on the elements listed in the Constitution. Differences can create differential treatment. The fundamental conditions for creating differences are justifiable reasons and the public interest. In other words, inequalities are accepted, but the use of some of them as elements of inequality in state activities is prohibited. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 217-219; Göküş, 2011: 28)

The principle of equality is also expressed as objectivity (Kaymak, 2002: 11-12) and secularism (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 200), although objectivity is a different usage of impartiality and neutrality. Secularism, on the other hand, is seen as an aspect of equality (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 206-210) aimed at

preventing the religious element from being included in public service as a discriminatory factor. Apart from these, the term generality is also mentioned alongside equality, as citizens with the appropriate qualifications cannot be excluded from public services (Gölcük, 1992: 12).

The changes in public services are leading to the abandonment of providing a greater number or wider range of services. This new structure, based on the assumption that disadvantaged citizens may be excluded from service provision, disrupts equality. (Haque, 2001: 68)

Continuity refers to the uninterrupted and regular performance of public services, except for those stipulated by law (Göküş, 2011: 25; Akıllı, 2013: 93). The foundations of the principle of continuity are linked to the continuity of the state; the mention of "...continuous duties required by public services..." in Article 128 of the Constitution and the continuation of the duties of a part of the executive branch, such as the Presidency, until a new one is elected (Article 102 of the Constitution) are constitutional foundations for continuity (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 191). Rules such as the prohibition of strikes by public officials, the requirement for a civil servant who resigns to wait a month for a new civil servant or deputy to take their place, the obligation of the concessionaire to continue providing public services even if they incur losses under certain conditions, and the prohibition of public assets from being transferred to private individuals, all stem from the principle of continuity. (Gölcük, 1992: 13; Kaymak, 2002: 10)

The state's provision of continuity in public service reflects an indirect reality: individuals' needs do not end with a single fulfillment but continue. (Özay, 1998: 295) Meeting individuals' needs, that is, continuity, creates a greater impact, guaranteeing the continuation of both the economic and political systems. (Karabulut Uçar, 2006: 70; Karahanoğulları,

2015: 190-191) Understanding continuity as a temporal continuity is incorrect. Because many public services do not continue uninterrupted, while some, such as law enforcement and healthcare, do, many others experience various interruptions. Even if services like law enforcement and healthcare are provided continuously, education can be interrupted for weeks or months. Therefore, continuity should be considered as regular fulfillment. Indeed, some define the principle of continuity not only in terms of regularity but also in terms of satisfying the need it addresses. (Gölan, 1987: 34; Karahanogullari, 2015: 200) It is argued that public services that do not satisfy the needs they are intended for, do not function at all, or function slowly, violate the principle of continuity, resulting in increased unrest and disruption of public order. (Özay, 1998: 295)

The principle of adaptability or variability states that services may change over time due to both technical advancements and changes in working methods, and that public administration must adapt by modifying the content, methods, tools, and equipment of the service to keep pace. (Karahanogullari, 2015: 221) Although the constitutional roots of this principle are weak, expressions related to the social state, such as "humane living conditions for employees" and "ensuring a minimum standard of living worthy of human dignity," place the responsibility for restructuring public services in line with new developments on the administration. (Atasayan, 2012: 89; Bağrıaçık, 2014: 11) Furthermore, change and adaptation of public services become necessary to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector. The principle of the continuity of public services also requires these services to be adapted to the needs of the public. (Göküş, 2011: 26; Özay, 2004: 235-236; Deli, 2015: 65) This principle is generally used to explain the abolition of a public service. (Karahanogullari, 2015: 224)

"Meccanilik" is an Arabic word meaning "free" or "gratis" (TDK, 2024). While not commonly used in everyday life, it exists as a term specific to public services, signifying that these services are provided without compensation (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 228). A public service without compensation means no price or fee is charged for benefiting from it. This is because citizens participate directly or indirectly in the functioning of public services through taxes (İzci, 2019: 8, 10). Therefore, it cannot be said that public services are entirely without compensation. The limit for receiving a fee or payment can be extended to a non-profit arrangement (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 228-234; Akıllı, 2013: 93). However, calculating the cost of a public service is not always possible. Therefore, a profit situation is also possible. However, even if a profit is made, it is thought that the social function is still fulfilled, and that a relative increase in well-being occurs because users benefit from these services at a below-market price. (Artantaş, 2016: 53-54)

Article 73 of the Constitution regulates taxation, stating that public services have a cost borne by society and that, by imposing financial obligations, the state can make access to public services conditional on the payment of a specified amount. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 232-233) It is stated that these fees are imposed not to create financing, but to prevent the exploitation of public resources. (Artantaş, 2016: 52) In other words, while the principle of gratuitousness ensures equality in practice, it aims to eliminate factors that would disrupt equality in terms of access. (İzci, 2019: 9-10) In addition, financial obligations can be collected from individuals to ensure the continuous and regular provision of public services. (İzci, 2019: 12) The Constitution only stipulates that the "right and duty to education and learning" is "free of charge in state schools," thus providing for free access to a public ser-

vice. In France, the principle of gratuitousness is not considered a common principle of public service and is even referred to as a "false principle" (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 230). The number of practices in which public services are free or offered at no charge is decreasing (İzci, 2019: 72).

Operational Principles of Public Service

With the new public administration approach, the principles of transparency, participation, accountability, accessibility, simplicity, adoption, and reliability have been added as new principles or operational guidelines to public service. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 249; Göküş, 2011: 69) These principles exist as a product of the new public administration understanding. (Karabulut Uçar, 2006: 79-133; Aydın, 2013: 6-24; Uysal, 2013: 9-99; Çakır, 2014: 108-138)

Accountability is an obligation to explain. It is the act of a person explaining to others that they are justified in their actions or transactions. However, for this to happen, a network of relationships is needed to compel that person to make this explanation (Bovens, 2004: 4). Here, both parties can be individuals or institutions. It involves a three-stage process. In the first stage, the accountable party is expected to present information, including procedures and results, to the relevant parties. This is the most important stage because it is based on this information, whether those who will demand accountability have any questions to ask. The second stage, where the adequacy of the information and the legitimacy of the behavior are questioned, thus begins. A decision is reached as a result of the discussion (Bovens, 2004: 5). If the decision is negative, formal sanctions such as fines, disciplinary actions, and criminal penalties may be implemented, as well as informal, implicit sanctions such as having to account for oneself on television, damage to public image and career (Bovens, 2004: 5).

Ultimately, the process relies on being able to manage different expectations. (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987: 228)

Transparency refers to access to information regarding decisions made by the state. What is important here is that the state provides this information in a timely, understandable, and reliable manner. Furthermore, ensuring participation in decision-making is a method of achieving transparency. (Göküş, 2011: 70-71)

Participation is a mechanism that enables the provision of a service by taking preferences and demands into account. It paves the way for the public to determine the quality and scope of public services. (Ayman Güler, 2003: 104) Thus, responsibility is spread to the grassroots level; not only managers and officials, but also those who benefit from the service, and citizens become part of it. Because broad segments and different groups are involved in the process, it contributes to the formation of a consensus. Furthermore, since preferences and demands are taken into account, the quality of public service meets citizens' expectations. (Göküş, 2011: 73)

Accessibility refers to the ease with which employees, managers, and personnel can reach public institutions and organizations. The narrowing and increased cost of public services can be a factor limiting accessibility. (Göküş, 2013: 75-76; Karahanoğulları, 2015: 254) When accessibility is considered in terms of time, the principle of continuity is encountered. However, in addition to the time dimension, the spatial dimension, which enables organization by user category, is also important for accessibility. Public services must also be geographically available and accessible. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 253)

The principle of simplicity means that public service texts should be written in a language that citizens can understand. In particular, the law's specific language and style can

make it difficult for citizens to understand. Thus, clarity and comprehensibility are ensured in public services, paving the way for transparency. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 252) Furthermore, reducing hierarchical levels, decreasing the number of processes and steps in public service, and increasing accessibility all contribute positively to simplicity. (Göküş, 2013: 76)

We have already mentioned the principle of adaptation among the fundamental principles. However, it is surprising that this principle is both fundamental and operational. This is because this principle paves the way for new principles sought to be included in public service. In other words, the principle of adaptation prepares the ground for the idea and strategy that public service can change, transform, and be implemented in different ways. It facilitates the inclusion of new principles. (Haque, 2001: 65)

The principle of reliability involves clearly defining the services provided, establishing standards and processes in advance, and ensuring that citizens are informed so that everything is carried out in accordance with these standards (Göküş, 2013: 77-78). As the state transparently shares the processes and results of its operations and actions, reliability will be positively affected. Furthermore, the accountability of those providing public services—acknowledging their mistakes, correcting them as soon as possible, providing compensation, and drawing the necessary conclusions about service operations—supports reliability (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 256).

Empirical Studies on Public Service

Public service literature is an area where the rule of law prevails. That is, almost all studies in the field of public service are related to administrative law. The fact that public service is the fundamental concept defining administrative law

makes this unsurprising. However, putting this aside, the main reason studies in Turkey are limited to law is that the prevailing view rests on two foundations: the absolute dependence of public services on the will of the legislator and the view of market inadequacy. (Karahanoğulları, 2015: 95) The idea that market inadequacy is a factor determining the breadth/narrowness of public services, that is, defining the boundaries of public service, can be useful for those who want to say something about the external contours of public service. Those seeking information about the content or inner workings of public service are confronted with the will of the legislator, legal texts, and judicial decisions.

The study's aim to understand the inner workings of public service, while approaching the topic with skepticism, necessitates a departure from the legal framework. This is where Göküş's (2013) study, conducted in the Selçuk district of Konya province, comes into play. The study investigates satisfaction with the principles of public service by formulating them into sentences. The study indicates that satisfaction with the fundamental principles of public service is moderate, suggesting that these principles are not adhered to during service delivery, which leads to negative perceptions of public services. Furthermore, this general opinion does not differ by income level, education level, or age group. Regarding the quality of service related to the fundamental principles, it was found that while expectations were high, the probability of these expectations being met was low, and the perceived quality of service was negative, meaning that public service was perceived as low-quality. (Göküş, 2013: 180-186) Regarding the operating principles of public service, participants' satisfaction with the principles other than simplicity and transparency was moderate, similar to their satisfaction with the fundamental principles. The principle with the lowest average value was the principle of participation. Similar to

the fundamental principles, there were no differences in income, education, or age groups. Regarding expected, actual, and perceived service quality, expectations were high, the probability of actual delivery was low, and perceived service quality was negative, indicating poor public service quality. It is worth noting that the principles of participation and accessibility were more negative than the other principles. (Göküş, 2013: 186-197)

From Göküş's (2013: 180-234) study, the following can be inferred for this study:

1) Participants stated that the principles of equality, continuity, adoption, and gratuitousness were not adequately observed in public service practices.

2) It is stated that the operating principles of public service, as well as its fundamental principles, are not being adequately implemented.

3) Participants appear dissatisfied with the way complaints are handled in public services.

4) The study, which investigates satisfaction with the principles at three different levels—expected, actual, and perceived—eliminates the doubt about the perspective from which participants viewed the issues when giving their answers. This study, which examines perceptions of public service, raises doubts about the perspective from which participants viewed the issues when answering, as it offers no guidance.

Research Design

Permission for the implementation of the study was granted by the Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Social, Human and Administrative Sciences Research Ethics Committee with decision number 01.12 at session number 01 on

27.01.2026. This study was conducted to determine how citizens perceive the principles of public service in Turkey. To this end, participants were first asked to complete a two-question questionnaire. The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. How often do you think you use public services?

a) Never b) Rarely c) Occasionally d) Frequently e) Always

2. Which of the following do you think are present in public services provided in Turkey? (You can select more than one)

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| a) Equality | b) Continuity | c) Adoption |
| d) Free of charge | e) Accountability | f) Transparency |
| g) Simplicity | h) Participation | i) Accessibility |
| j) Reliability | | |

The first question, which asked about frequency of use, aimed to determine whether individuals with varying levels of use perceived public services differently. The second question, on the other hand, detailed their perceptions of public service principles. This detailed examination was conducted through in-depth interviews. The following questions were posed to the participants during the interviews:

1. You have indicated that you have used public services to a certain extent (never, occasionally, etc.). What public services do you utilize?

Ending Question: In what way/how do you utilize these public services? (the process of utilizing public services)

2. How do you feel when you want to utilize public services but cannot, or when you cannot utilize them appropriately or as you expect?

Ending Question: What do you do in such a situation? Do you have a specific approach/strategy?

3. You have indicated that the following are principles of public service (equality, continuity, etc.). Why do you think these are principles of public service?

Ending Question: Is there a general situation in your opinion where these should be considered principles of public service? What does equality represent? What does continuity represent? (Detailing the options considered to be principles)

4. You have indicated that the following are not principles of public service (equality, continuity, etc.). Why do you think these are not principles of public service?

Ending Question: Is there a general situation in your opinion where these should not be principles of public service? What does equality represent? What does continuity represent? (Detailing the options considered not to be principles)

The interview was conducted with 14 participants. Six participants were women, and eight were men. They had different educational levels, including high school, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree. They came from various professions, such as housewives, civil servants, students, and cargo workers. While their age range was concentrated between 20 and 40 years old, participants from other age groups were also present. (Table 1)

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

	Gender	Age	Education Level	Profession
Participant 1	Woman	29	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher
Participant 2	Woman	50	High School Degree	Public Employee
Participant 3	Man	24	Associate Degree	Salesperson
Participant 4	Man	22	Bachelor's Degree	Student
Participant 5	Woman	32	Bachelor's Degree	Court Clerk
Participant 6	Woman	38	Bachelor's Degree	Social Worker
Participant 7	Man	34	Bachelor's Degree	Lawyer
Participant 8	Man	42	High School Degree	Delivery Employee
Participant 9	Man	38	Associate Degree	Enforcement Officer
Participant 10	Man	19	Bachelor's Degree	Student
Participant 11	Woman	45	High School Degree	Housewife
Participant 12	Woman	53	High School Degree	Housewife
Participant 13	Man	27	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Servant
Participant 14	Man	30	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Servant

Research Findings

When examining the frequency of public service use among the 14 participants, none answered "never." Five participants stated they used public services "always," four "frequently," three "occasionally," and two "rarely."

When participants were asked what they consider public services, 12 people identified healthcare, followed by transportation and security, each identified by 8 people. 6 people considered education a public service. Beyond these, water (4 people), municipal services (3 people), and justice (3 people) were also included as public services. Those who answered "always" and "frequently" considered 9-10 services as public services, while those who answered "occasionally" and "rarely" included only 5 services in the public service category. Therefore, a correlation is likely between the frequency of use and the services considered public services.

When asked how they felt when they encountered negativity while accessing public services, 5 people responded

with sadness, and 3 with anger. Only one person stated that they felt no emotion. The other emotions, tension, inadequacy, and disappointment, were repeated once each.

"To be honest, I wonder if I'm the stepchild of the state, and generally my turn at the hospital is delayed, or I can't get an appointment." (Participant 3)

"I feel bad. As a citizen, if I pay my taxes, I think I have the right to benefit from the public services of the state, and I feel bad. In such a situation, I can't do anything; it demoralizes me." (Participant 8)

"What do I feel, for example, when I can't get an appointment? I get a little angry, to be honest." (Participant 1)

When asked if they had a strategy in place when they experienced a negative situation, six people each responded with "complaint" and "learned helplessness." Those who responded with "learned helplessness" showed that they wanted to complain but accepted the situation helplessly because they believed that complaining to each other within the same institution would not yield any results:

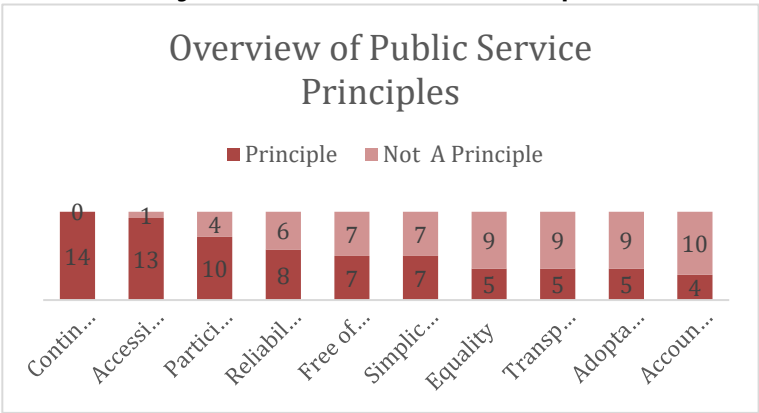
"When I encounter a situation like this, I truly feel helpless. The fact that I can't do anything at that moment really upsets me. When I think about complaining, the thought comes to my mind, 'Who are we going to complain to? Who will bother complaining? I won't get anything out of it anyway,' and I act accordingly. Maybe complaining is necessary, but helplessness is more dominant in me." (Participant 14)

"When we come to small towns, there are disruptions, especially in transportation or generally in cleaning services. In such a situation, we can complain, but honestly, I've never tried. They say, 'What kind of result can we get if we complain?' I think, 'Who are we complaining to?'" (Participant 6)

Aside from these two dominant responses, one person stated they had no strategy, saying they "take advantage of whatever comes their way"; another offered a warning; and yet another indicated they turned to private services.

Before examining public service principles individually, it is important to understand which principles are considered public service principles and which are not, and why these principles are or are not included in public service, to gain a general overview of public service. Looking at Figure 1, the public service principles most frequently regarded are continuity, accessibility, and participation, while accountability, compliance, transparency, and equality are the least frequently regarded.

Figure 1. Overview of Public Service Principles



These principles, generally considered public service principles, fall into two categories: meeting needs (6 participants) and being a requirement of the welfare state (5 participants).

"In general, this is one of the most fundamental principles of statism. That is, ensuring the safety, health, and housing of the people—how should I put it—is one of the most

important foundations of the state, or government, I don't know, but it's probably the state, because if you keep the people alive, the state lives. Therefore, this is one of the most basic elements of the social state concept." (Participant 3)

"In general, I think people have needs, and these are determined according to people's needs. That's what I think." (Participant 1)

The participants share the objective of "meeting the general and common needs of society," which is included in the definition of public service. Their view of public service as a requirement of the social state points to a structure where the state is more prominent. Beyond these two categories, the expressions "to provide service" (2 people) and "for the benefit of society" (1 person) also find their place.

The principle of continuity is one that every participant, without exception, considers a public service. This principle can be categorized as continuous provision (10 participants), regular provision (3 participants), and continuity of the state (1 participant). Although the principle of continuity is seen in the literature as the regular provision of services, even if intermittent, rather than the uninterrupted provision, the vast majority of participants view it as the uninterrupted provision. *"Kamu hizmetleri süreklidir devamlı yürütür ve kesintiye uğramaz."* (Katılımcı 13)

"The reason for the continuity is that in recent years, while electricity and water used to be constantly cut off, we haven't experienced such cuts in recent years; they happen occasionally. But given the country's geographical location and water shortage, these are natural issues, and since it's not intentional, they are doing as much as they can. However, if it were cut off daily or due to other circumstances, then I would think about it accordingly." (Participant 2)

"I think there is continuity because there was the corona period and other periods as well, and it never stopped; it always continued, just like education." (Participant 5)

The accessibility principle is generally accepted as a public service principle by all participants except one. Most participants consider accessibility as access to services (9 participants):

"As for accessibility, have you ever seen a state hospital closed, or a police station closed? We can access them at any time. The private sector can close, go on holiday, but the public sector is always open; we can go whenever we want." (Participant 8)

"Accessibility is definitely important, whether online or in person. I can always access public services unless it's the weekend." (Participant 5)

In addition to accessibility, availability is also used as a measure of prevalence (3 participants):

"Accessibility is important; in most cities, municipalities have social facilities, hospitals, and public areas that are easily accessible. Therefore, since they are available in every city, you can easily go and get there." (Participant 4)

However, while participants believe public services are accessible, they sometimes experience difficulties (4 participants) and state that favoritism (1 participant) hinders accessibility:

"I think the reason for the lack of accessibility is that it's not properly controlled, and some people, I don't know, the more powerful ones, are getting in the way." (Participant 1)

"Because we utilize healthcare services more, I'm experiencing difficulties with accessibility. For example, while

there are more doctor options and accessibility is easier in large cities, you may not be able to find the specialty you want in smaller places. Or, when considering municipal services, there are more opportunities and advantages in large cities, which is a very noticeable factor in terms of transportation, in my opinion." (Participant 6)

The majority of participants see the principle of participation as a principle of public service. In the literature, participation is defined as citizens' involvement in the creation of services and decision-making processes. Of the participants, 4 use the term in this sense. One emphasizes decision-making processes, while the remaining 3 emphasize considering opinions.

"As I mentioned above, regarding participation, I believe that citizens cannot fully participate in the decision-making and implementation processes and are forced to accept them as managed by the administration." (Participant 13)

"Participation means that citizens can participate in public decisions, policies, programs, and service implementations. We can access centers that operate directly under the Presidency's name, such as CIMER, via e-government. Therefore, citizens can express their concerns and participate in this way." (Participant 9)

Of the remaining participants, 1 defined participation as entering public service, while 8 saw it as everyone being able to benefit from public service:

"Because participation means everyone participates, and it is provided to everyone." (Participant 2)

"The reason I think participation exists is that public services are everywhere in our lives; it's impossible to say we don't participate in any of them. We participate in municipal concerts, voting, going to the army, and so on." (Participant 7)

Therefore, participation is being considered as it should be. This can be taken as evidence that citizens are not participating in the creation and decision-making processes of public services, that these mechanisms are not being established or operated, or that citizens are unaware of how they can be included in these mechanisms.

The principle of reliability is one that more than half of the participants see as a principle of public service. In this principle, the existence of the state and the absence of doubt are considered by four people as the fundamental points determining reliability:

“Reliability is the most important thing for me. When I go to a public institution and receive a document, it creates the perception in me that this is reliable, that the state protects this.” (Participant 5)

“Reliability means trusting without question or doubt.” (Participant 6)

Another point emphasized when it comes to reliability is expertise (3 participants):

“Reliability is the same way. I mean, let me give another example from hospitals. We can consult them about our personal problems. If we couldn’t trust them, I think hospitals wouldn’t be so crowded. That’s why.” (Participant 10)

Two factors are highlighted as undermining credibility: first, a lack of transparency (3 participants); second, favoritism (2 participants).

“Regarding trustworthiness, as I mentioned before, those who are close to them seem to benefit more, I think, but I’m not sure.” (Participant 1)

"As I said, there are explainable examples of this nowadays, but how can I explain it? They don't make you feel a sense of trustworthiness." (Participant 3)

Participants view the "Meccanilik" principle as a 50/50 public service principle. Half of the participants (7 participants) consider this principle to be based on the idea that public service financing is provided through taxation:

"As I said, it's free, you don't pay any fee, but as I mentioned, it's deducted from your insurance, of course, depending on the service you receive." (Participant 4)

"The reason I don't think it's free is that I think we pay more than it should. I think we pay too much tax; taxes are paid for public services, so I don't think it's free." (Participant 7)

Three of the participants viewed the service as one that benefits from something without any payment. Although these individuals did not directly mention taxes, it would not be wrong to say that they considered these to be public services financed through taxation, without any additional cost or fee being paid for their use:

"When we talk about the principle of free transportation, many different things come to mind. I came up with this idea because people over 60 can use public transportation services free of charge or at a discounted rate, provided by public administrations. For me, 'free transportation' means it is free of charge." (Participant 9)

Three participants stated that fees are charged when using public services. Therefore, they do not consider free services to be a principle of public service.

"It should be free because everything has a cost. For example, we actually pay a fee for most public services. If

a student wants to stay in a dormitory, that's a public service, but they pay a certain fee. If we want to eat, we pay a fee for the school's or workplace's cafeteria. That's why I think it should be free." (Participant 1)

"The reason I don't think it should be free is that I currently work in a public institution. Some services here are provided for a fee, and I am completely in favor of them being free. Ten years ago, even a criminal record certificate cost 5 TL. A government decision later abolished it. Of course, it depends on the situation; even though some things have been abolished, some services are still paid for, and I am against that." (Participant 5)

It can be argued that the view that public services are not free because they are financed through taxes is also valid for Turkey. While half of the participants stated that public services are not free because they are financed by taxes, the other half supported this approach, emphasizing that no fees should be charged for these services.

Simplicity, like gratuitousness, is seen as a principle of public service by half of the participants. Simplicity, in turn, is perceived by participants most as clarity (5 participants) and plainness/lack of exaggeration (4 participants):

"As for simplicity, there's no natural presentation. I think it's overdone in public services. Simplicity directly implies doing things naturally." (Participant 8)

"I hadn't really thought about why I didn't mark simplicity. Because, you know, everything happens without us knowing, it's not presented in an open environment. For example, we're not asked how much to pay for a public service. It's adjusted according to the system; the public and society aren't consulted. That's why I didn't mark it." (Participant 1)

While nine of the participants did not see equality as a principle of public service, five did. Ten participants perceived equality as impartiality. They even referred to the equality clause in the Constitution:

"For me, equality means that people can access public services with equal rights regardless of religion, language, race, or gender, and I believe that public services are founded on equality." (Participant 11)

"As stated in the Constitution, everyone is equal in terms of religion, language, and race." (Participant 13)

After neutrality, favoritism was the most frequently cited issue in discussions of equality. Six participants referred to favoritism when speaking about equality:

"Equality means everyone can get whatever they want done. Those with connections can get their jobs done, while those without connections can't. Unrealistic jobs are being done." (Participant 7)

"When equality is mentioned, everyone thinks of not discriminating based on language, religion, race, or gender. But, for example, a citizen who wants an interview can't get that position, even though they deserve it, because those with political connections and money get it. In our country, to be equal, we need to have political connections and money, so I don't think we are equal." (Participant 9)

When it comes to equality, it was expressed by impartiality (2 participants) and geographical imbalances (1 participant). It is noteworthy that those who mentioned impartiality were public employees:

"My reason for thinking that there is no equality is that I believe every citizen should be treated the same way, but unfortunately, in our country, this equality varies depending on clothing, profession, and appearance, and it is not

given much attention, so I don't think it exists." (Participant 5)

"If we talk about equality, when we evaluate it in terms of big cities and small cities, I don't think it's equal in this regard. For example, when we look at hospital facilities, some places have a greater variety of doctors and departments, while others don't, or even if they do, we can't access them. Or, when we evaluate it in terms of municipal services, quality services are not provided due to budget constraints or other factors. In terms of transportation, since we live in small places, there are no shuttle services, and as a result, we have to choose the neighborhood we will live in accordingly." (Participant 6)

9 participants do not see transparency as a public service principle, while 4 do. Transparency is perceived as openness by nine participants:

"I don't think transparency is widely practiced in our country. There are many examples in the country of tenders being closed to a specific person, with the public not being informed, and the tender being swept under the rug." (Participant 9)

"Transparency means that no hidden agendas are being pursued in the background." (Participant 14)

While nine participants did not see adoption as a principle of public service, five did. There is no clear perception or approach here. Perceptions that are not very different include: services being adopted by citizens (3 participants), inter-institutional adoption (3 participants), employee adoption (2 participants), systems adapting to the service (2 participants), and preventing chaos (1 participant).

"There's no adoption between them; I don't think any of the institutions are aware of each other. That's my opinion. For example, even with a system in place, if a file gets lost

between the Social Security Institution (SGK) and the Ministry of Finance, nobody can explain it in some cases. Or there are many things related to this issue that lack communication between them. Of course, that was the case before; I don't know how it is now." (Participant 4)

"There's no adaptation either, because plans and projects aren't made according to the public's wishes. They build that structure and then force the public to conform to it." (Participant 9)

Accountability is seen as a public service by the fewest participants (4 participants). The remaining 10 participants do not see accountability as a principle of public service. Participants (10 participants) see receiving a satisfactory answer when a question is asked or a problem arises as accountability:

"From an accountability perspective, when I encounter problems with the services I receive, I don't get sufficiently solution-oriented answers regarding these problems, and this shows me that the service provided is inadequate." (Participant 11)

"Because sometimes the answers I receive are not satisfactory or are evasive, I did not indicate that it is accountable." (Participant 2)

CONCLUSION

Public service principles are examined through two categories: fundamental principles and operational principles. These two categories define public service as a manifestation of the Weberian Bureaucracy Model and the New Public Administration approach. However, as in many other fields, principles in public service are accepted as foundations whose existence is not questioned. This prevents studies that

question these principles. This study, however, pursues this line of inquiry by measuring citizens' perspectives on public service principles.

Based on interviews with 14 individuals, perceptions of the presence or absence of public service principles fall into two categories. The positive approach focuses on access to public services, treating them as means of meeting needs and grounded in the welfare-state principle. The negative approach attributes the problems experienced in public services, as well as the absence/failure of these principles, to favoritism and political preferences.

The majority of participants agree that the principles of continuity, accessibility, participation, and reliability constitute the principles of public service. They link the principle of continuity to the uninterrupted continuation of public service. They consider the principles of accessibility and participation to be access to public services. Therefore, the participants are far from understanding the principle of participation, which relies on citizens' opinions at every stage of the establishment and delivery of public services. This result may stem from two points: first, participants are unaware of the ways and methods for participating in the decision-making stages of public service. If this is the case, public service organizations should more frequently announce that citizens can participate in decision-making, which could help solve the problem. Secondly, the principle of participation may not function in public services. That is, even if citizens want to, they cannot express their opinions or participate in the establishment and delivery of public services. The second situation seems more likely. When asked what happened and what they did when they experienced problems while using public services, the majority of participants described a state of learned helplessness. In such situations, even when complaints

are filed, no resolution is reached; in other words, it is a common narrative that those providing public services do not show the necessary interest, concern, or approach, and that they protect one another.

The principles of gratuitousness and simplicity were viewed as principles of public service by half of the participants, while the other half did not. Regarding the principle of gratuitousness, it is important to note that, whether it is considered a principle of public service or not, the consensus is that public services are not free of charge but are financed through taxes. The situation in France, where the principle of gratuitousness is seen as a false principle and not accepted, is also true in Turkey. The principle of simplicity, defined as straightforward and free from exaggeration, was the one that participants found most difficult to define and answer during the interviews.

The majority of participants do not see equality, transparency, adoption, and accountability as principles of public service. The main reason is that favoritism and political preferences manifest in public service. What is important among these principles is that the principle of equality is defined by impartiality, which even reiterates the principle of equality found in the Constitution.

In conclusion, public service in Turkey is clearly defined by accessibility. The fundamental expectation is that citizens should have easier and faster access to public services. Factors that undermine this expectation include favoritism, political biases, and a lack of participation. Establishing a structure that is sensitive to citizens' expectations, wishes, and demands in the creation, delivery, and aftermath of public services could shift the approach to public service in a more positive direction.

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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRAUMAS OF THE BA'ATH REGIME: POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND GOVERNANCE FOR SYRIANS

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Mücahit AVCİ²

INTRODUCTION

The war environment severely damages individuals' sense of security, belonging, and control. In the case of Syria, continuous experiences of conflict and displacement have increased the dimensions of social trauma. The political psychology of the people has been shaped around feelings of fear, insecurity, and alienation, which are traumas in this process.

The Turkish Language Association (TDK, 2024) defines the term trauma as "concussion" as the first meaning and "local wound, injury, or damage that disrupts the structure and shape of a tissue or organ and occurs as a result of an external mechanical reaction" as the second meaning. The American Psychological Association defines trauma as

"an actual situation or threat that may cause death, serious injury, harm, or sexual Violence, and that creates extreme stress, intense fear, helplessness, or feelings of terror in the individual, a close family member, or a close friend. It is defined as experiences such as military War, sexual, physical, or terrorist attack, theft, robbery, ab-

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duction, kidnapping, hostage-taking, torture, imprisonment, natural or artificial disasters, severe automobile accidents, or life-threatening illness” (APA, 1994).

Trauma is also defined as crises that create adverse effects on the historical and cultural values of individuals and societies, while simultaneously weakening their capacity to cope with destructive events (Derin and Öztürk 2023: 67). As a result of traumatic experiences, individuals may encounter various psychiatric problems. These problems may include sadness, anger, recurrent and disturbing thoughts, symptoms that make breathing difficult, physical tension, and substance abuse (Cottam et al. 2017: 28). In addition, individuals who experience trauma may have difficulty understanding their emotional state and may have difficulties in expressing their emotions. This may lead to restriction of emotional awareness and expression (Özyanık and Tarlacı 2023: 122). Traumas have a wide-ranging impact at the social level, affecting not only the individuals who directly experience the event but also the people who witness it. Following such experiences, some societies may exhibit symptoms similar to those experienced by individuals. A range of emotional states, including fear, restlessness, hopelessness, a sense of loss, anger, pain, and loneliness, can be commonly observed in communities.

Social traumas occur as a result of events affecting a large number of people. Phenomena such as plane crashes, public transport accidents, natural disasters (fire, flood, earthquake), rape, terrorist attacks, exposure to concentration camps, internal War, Violence, and migration can negatively affect the psychological state of a large number of individuals. When such negative moods spread to society as a whole, this situation is considered a social trauma (Kılınç, Yıldız, and Hamamcı 2017: 182). Such traumatic events lead to regres-

sions in the social, political, cultural, psychological and economic structure of the society, shake beliefs about the past and the future, and reveal a complex situation that requires interventions at different levels (Özyanık and Tarlacı 2023: 123; Hamburger 2020: 60). In this sense, Herman (1992) mentions three phases for recovery in trauma situations: safety, remembering and mourning, and reconnecting with life.

Countries that have experienced social trauma and transitioned from authoritarian regimes have also embarked on democratization processes while trying to come to terms with their past traumas. Argentina experienced significant trauma during the so-called "Dirty War" between 1976 and 1983 under a military dictatorship. During that period, thousands of people disappeared, were tortured, and were victims of unsolved murders. These traumatic events created a great divide in society, and the effects of the trauma are continuing. Chile, under the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, experienced significant trauma between 1973 and 1990. During this period, human rights violations, disappearances, torture, and political repression were experienced. South Africa is a country where the society suffered significant trauma after the apartheid regime (racial discrimination). Apartheid led to many traumatic events, such as oppression and discrimination against blacks, human rights violations, forced displacement, Violence, and social injustice. Following this period, the country has become a society in transition, seeking solutions to confront social trauma. Bosnia and Herzegovina is struggling with social trauma after the Bosnian War in the 1990s. This War resulted in ethnic cleansing, genocide, and war crimes, and deeply affected different ethnic groups of the country. Traumatic experiences, such as the oppressive policies of authoritarian governments, human rights violations, and social divisions, have profoundly affected societies in these countries. As a result, they have developed various

strategies to cope with these experiences and have implemented some political, social, and psychological solutions to advance democratization processes healthily.

The 61 years of Ba'ath party rule in Syria, in general, and the Bashar al-Assad era, in particular, have been the subject of many events that can be labeled as social traumas for Syrians. Syria experienced civil War and chaos for more than a decade under the authoritarian rule of Bashar al-Assad. Syria was not only under Assad's rule but also under the authoritarian rule of the Ba'ath party for 61 years. The removal of Assad and the end of Ba'athist rule in general will have profound psychological and political effects on the population. By analyzing the effects of such a transformation, this study examines how social structures, collective identities, and individual psychologies can adapt to a new political reality.

The transition from authoritarian regimes presents challenges in dismantling entrenched power structures and fostering a culture of political participation. Drawing on lessons from transitions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, this study highlights the interactions between social trauma and political behavior. It offers important insights into the psychological underpinnings of political transitions.

In this sense, the central questions in the study will be as follows. 1- How will Syrians cope with the social trauma caused by authoritarian rule and prolonged conflict, and what are the political consequences of this trauma? 2- How will identity reconstruction shape Syria's political future? 3- How can trust in political institutions and citizens be rebuilt? 4- What psychological factors encourage or inhibit political participation in post-Assad Syria?

SOCIAL TRAUMA AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

Authoritarian regimes leave a legacy of fear, mistrust, and division. The years-long conflict in Syria has deepened these problems and created a social trauma that affects political behavior. Social traumas occur as a result of traumatic events that affect a large mass of people and can have significant psychological, political, social, and economic consequences at both individual and societal levels. The political consequences of such traumas can also be quite broad and deep. In addition, War and conflict have a profound impact on the psychological state of individuals. The psychological traces of these traumatic experiences can be passed on to the next generations (Lederach 1997; Derin and Öztürk, 2023: 75). Violence against civilians is often understood primarily as physical harm inflicted upon individuals; however, it encompasses a much broader range of actions. The destruction of civilian infrastructure, disruptions to food supply systems, water and sanitation services, as well as damage to communication networks and social structures, also constitute forms of such Violence. These types of attacks profoundly affect the lives, livelihoods, health, and overall well-being of civilian populations (TİHEK, 2025: 54).

One of the primary methods through which the Assad regime has repeatedly violated fundamental legal principles is the widespread practice of arbitrary arrest, detention, and execution. In some cases, these practices have resulted in enforced disappearances, while in others, similar outcomes have occurred despite the victim's whereabouts being known, due to the arbitrary nature of the detention. The most basic rights to defense and due process have been systematically disregarded; detention has been prolonged on political grounds, and detainees have been denied contact with their fa-

milies. Even more gravely, victims have been subjected to torture in detention centers and prisons, frequently resulting in death. Even in cases where detainees are ultimately released, the abuses experienced during periods of detention or incarceration have resulted in enduring physical and psychological harm affecting both survivors and their families. Furthermore, the families of individuals who died after arrest, were forcibly disappeared, or whose whereabouts remained unknown following detention have likewise endured severe and lasting suffering. These violations have generated a collective societal trauma and have evolved into practices that exploit social and cultural norms in order to humiliate political opponents and subject them—men, women, and children alike—to inhuman and degrading treatment (TİHEK, 2025: 68).

Social traumas can create distrust between individuals and societies. For example, after terrorist attacks or wars, public trust may be shaken, leading to political instability. People may lose trust in governments and public authorities, which can lead to political unrest and social tensions. Social traumas may cause people to lose trust in existing political systems and turn towards alternative ideologies (Papadopoulos 2004; Çoymak et al. 2015: 267-270). In particular, traumatized individuals may become inclined towards more radical and extreme political views. This may lead to extreme right-wing or leftist movements gaining power. Social traumas can undermine the collective identity of a society and lead to a weakened sense of belonging among people. For example, after a war, societies may become polarised around ethnic or religious identities. This can lead to social divisions and discrimination, deepening political polarisation (Jeffrey, 2004).

Enforced disappearances constitute a national trauma that will continue to affect Syrian society for decades to come. At the same time, the fate of thousands of individuals remains

unknown not only due to incommunicado detention, but also as a result of other factors. As the conflict persists, widespread destruction on the ground and large-scale displacement have rendered the process of locating missing relatives—whether those who have disappeared or are presumed dead—highly complex to affected families (TİHEK, 2025: 65). In the aftermath of social traumas, the need to mourn the missing and commemorate the trauma can be addressed by public policy. This can lead to shaping policies related to recognizing trauma, defending victims' rights, and social healing processes. This could include support programs for the families of those who lost their lives during the Assad era or the establishment of days of remembrance. Social traumas can also lead to the strengthening of social solidarity. Such events can increase the sense of social unity and solidarity and mobilize society to develop more inclusive and egalitarian policies. Societies may adopt more sensitive and benevolent policies in response to the traumas they have experienced. One of the political consequences of social trauma is the initiation of social recovery and reconstruction processes. This may involve aid and reconstruction efforts by governments and international organizations. Policies such as economic development, educational reforms, and strengthening social services can be implemented to reduce the effects of trauma (Tilly, 2003)

The concept of "perceived self-efficacy," which Bandura accepted as one of the primary determinants of individuals' behaviors, holds significant importance for individuals in the political field following social trauma. According to Bandura, an individual's ability to perform in any subject depends on their ability to utilize their self-regulation capacity, that is, their belief in their ability to control their behaviors. This concept refers to an individual's subjective assessment of their ability to organize and implement the necessary activities and apply them effectively. In other words, self-efficacy reflects an

individual's confidence in their ability to overcome the difficulties they may encounter and achieve success. This concept refers to an individual's self-evaluation. It refers to his/her belief in his/her ability to plan and implement the necessary actions to solve a problem or complete a task (Senemoğlu 2015: 234; Vecchione 2014: 369-370). In other words, political self-efficacy is defined as "the individual's feeling that his/her political actions or political stance have an impact on political processes" (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954: 187). Political efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to participate effectively in democratic processes. Individuals with high levels of political efficacy do not hesitate to participate in activities in democratic societies, such as voting, participating in social protests, writing in newspapers, or collecting signatures. However, individuals with low political efficacy may be alienated from the political process, leading to apathy and inaction (Kansu and Tarhan 2018: 1-12).

Although political efficacy and trust are among the measurement tools frequently used in research on political attitudes, they are sometimes criticized regarding reliability and validity. In addition, individuals' perception that governments do not meet their political demands may weaken their political efficacy and negatively affect their political interest and participation tendencies.

Chile experienced significant social trauma between 1973 and 1990 under the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. During this period, human rights violations, disappearances, torture, and political repression were experienced. These traumas had a profound impact on society, and the country's democratization process was significantly complicated. To increase political competence and confidence, traumas were confronted, and processes were initiated to investigate the truth about past human rights violations (Özcan,

2022). In addition, the "Museum of Memory and Human Rights" was opened in Santiago, the capital of Chile, to commemorate and commemorate the victims of human rights violations committed in Chile during the military dictatorship (1973-1990) and has a wide range of testimonies, documents and archives in different formats and supports, exhibiting memoirs of human rights violations committed during the military dictatorship (1973-1990), their background and the democratic transition process (Museum of Memory and Human Rights 2023).

IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION

Identity reconstruction after social trauma is the process by which individuals and societies affected by trauma redefine themselves while coping with their experiences. This process encompasses a period during which individual and societal traumas can have lasting effects on identity, values, beliefs, and social ties (Hamburger et al., 2021). Identity reconstruction involves the process of confronting the effects of trauma, healing, and recovery.

Identity reconstruction after social traumas is directly related to social memory and collective memories. Societies can utilize tools such as commemorations, memorials, monuments, documentaries, and educational programs to understand the traumas they have experienced and to incorporate the effects of these traumas into their collective memory. This process enables the trauma to be recognized and society to acknowledge the pain of the past. Thus, through traumatic events, societies construct an identity for themselves, an attempt to cope with the pain of the past and develop hope for the future. In Argentina, for example, social groups such as the "Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo" have fought to learn the fate of the disappeared and have played an important role

in keeping the memory of missing people alive. Such movements have created a collective memory to overcome social trauma and increase social participation (Arditti, 2002). In this sense, the education system in South Africa has been restructured with an understanding that explains the effects of the apartheid regime and strengthens the unity of the society. Understanding the traumas of the past, providing accurate information about the past, the importance of living together, and respect for democracy were emphasized in schools. After the apartheid period, the economic and social rights of black people were improved, and egalitarian policies were implemented. This is an important step in supporting post-traumatic healing.

After traumas, societies may reconsider their cultural practices and social norms. After the trauma, social identity and sense of belonging are reshaped. In this process, societies can organize various activities to fill the cultural gaps created by past traumas, rebuild their traditions, and unite through shared social values—for example, integration projects for war victims, initiatives promoting social cohesion, and identity formation processes.

Post-traumatized individuals may experience changes in their identities due to their experiences. This is related to both the psychological effects of the trauma at the individual level and the general mood of society. When individuals recognize and accept the pain they have experienced, they can rebuild their old identities. In this process, social relations play a significant role. Individuals can construct a new identity by empathizing with other members of society, feeling a sense of social support, and actively participating in the healing process. A crucial step in identity reconstruction is recognizing the rights of victims and providing social justice. Recognition

of the victimization of traumatized individuals is a critical factor in the reshaping of social identity. This may require steps to be taken by the state and society, such as implementing compensation policies, providing rehabilitation services, and establishing legal arrangements for victims. Ensuring societal justice allows individuals to rebuild trust and reconstruct their identities (Elster, 2004). This identity influences the political and administrative practices that determine the daily lives of every citizen (Smith, 1994).

Identity reconstruction is also closely related to the strengthening of social ties. Social traumas can create mistrust and separation between individuals. In this context, social support groups, social integration projects, and collective healing processes can help rebuild social bonds. In addition, individuals acting together and coming together for a common purpose to heal the wounds caused by trauma can be an important step in reconstructing social identity (Ledarach, 1997; Tilly, 2003).

Post-traumatic identity reconstruction includes the process of making sense of past traumas and redefining social goals. By making sense of the pain and loss, societies can develop a new meaning and perspective on the future. This requires the reinterpretation of social values, the identification of goals for the healing process, and the implementation of policies to build a more just and egalitarian society (Volkan, 1997). Identity reconstruction after social traumas can be combined with demands for social justice and equality. Especially after major social traumas such as War, terrorist attacks, or ethnic cleansing, societies can make political changes in order to ensure justice and recognize the rights of victims. This may involve new policies on social equality, human rights, and freedoms, as well as fundamental changes in the legal system (Elster, 2004). Argentina, for example, has chosen the legal

route to confront social traumas. The Argentine government, which began democratization in 1983, initiated the prosecution and trial of those responsible for human rights violations within the framework of the "Memoria, Verdad y Justicia" principle (Memory, Truth, and Justice). These trials have been important in ensuring social reconciliation and justice (Üstündağ, 2011).

RESTORING TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

Restoring trust in institutions after social trauma aims to rebuild the trust of traumatized individuals and communities in state institutions, legal structures, health services, and other social structures. Traumatic events often undermine societies' trust, thereby compromising the functioning and effectiveness of social structures. Institutions play a crucial role in restoring trust after trauma, which involves several key steps.

In this sense, the political structures and previous institutions established in Syria should adopt the principles of transparency and accountability to rebuild trust in society. These principles are vital, especially for society's trust and the relationship between politics and bureaucracy. Establishing this relationship with a sense of trust will serve the establishment of an order based on rights and justice. It will also contribute to the state's development and the welfare of society (Şamdan, 2023, p. 926).

After 61 years of trauma, the government and other social institutions can gain public trust by providing open and honest information about their activities. Institutions can involve the public in a participatory process by openly sharing the reasons for their decisions, processes, and results with the public. This transparency can increase victims' trust and the representative segments of society in institutions. Therefore,

the principles of transparency and accountability will be one of the most important issues facing Syrians.

The rebuilding of institutional trust after trauma is directly related to providing justice to victims. Ensuring legal and social justice, recognizing the rights of victims after traumatic events, providing compensation, and initiating rehabilitation processes are critical to rebuilding trust. Ensuring justice contributes not only to the physical but also to the psychological recovery of victims. Institutions should accelerate legal processes and provide necessary support to victims in order to establish social justice (Elster, 2004).

Institutions should involve different segments of society, especially trauma-exposed groups, in decision-making processes. Public participation and effective communication are key tools for rebuilding institutional trust. This is a process that not only informs about the work of the institutions but also takes into account community demands and concerns. Organizations should communicate directly with the public and show sensitivity to their demands for security and improvement (Galtung, 1996). In this sense, public relations should be seen as a management function and used to build public trust (Kömür and Köroğlu, 2022: 553-554). In addition, to restore institutional trust, institutions need to organize training and awareness programs that will increase the capacity of society to cope with traumas. Public officials, security forces, health workers, and social service workers should understand post-trauma recovery processes and show an empathetic approach to victims. Institutions should increase their awareness of trauma and provide a more sensitive service. For these reasons, institutions in Syria should provide psychosocial support and rehabilitation services for the post-trauma community. Psychosocial support focuses on preventing psychological adaptation problems that individuals may

experience after trauma, alleviating or eliminating trauma-related symptoms. It also promotes the rebuilding of disrupted social relationships, enables individuals to discover their potential, and empowers and supports them to use this potential effectively. The accessibility of such services helps traumatized members of society regain a sense of confidence (Özen, 2017, p. 860).

Organizations should develop community-based interventions at the local level to address the needs of their target populations. Community-based approaches can enhance the effectiveness of post-trauma confidence-building by engaging local leaders and communities. Such interventions strengthen social bonds, increase solidarity, and build a stronger bond of trust between organizations and the public. In particular, the participation of victimized groups in the community is a crucial part of the trust-building process.

Human rights and equality principles must be strictly adhered to in restoring institutional trust after trauma. Institutions should recognize that all individuals have equal rights and should be treated fairly. Institutions that combat ethnic, religious, or other forms of discrimination will play a crucial role in rebuilding social trust. Institutions should develop inclusive and healing policies for rebuilding trust after social trauma. These policies should consider the different needs of various social groups and allow everyone to participate equally in the healing process. In particular, marginalized groups should be included in post-traumatic processes and be involved in recovery processes. In South Africa, a country with a history of significant social trauma, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to confront past human rights violations and promote societal healing and reconciliation. The Commission initiated a process of peace and reconciliation, giving both victims and offenders a

voice. Granting amnesty in return for the confession of criminals contributed to the construction of social peace (Tezcan, 2023; Institute for Democratic Development, 2013). Similarly, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) and National Courts tried war criminals and provided justice (Çakırca, 2020). These and similar initiatives are an important step towards overcoming social trauma.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND RESILIENCE

Post-traumatic political participation and resilience refer to the ability of traumatized individuals and communities to re-engage in and influence social and political processes after traumatic events and gain strength for social recovery. Social traumas often inflict deep psychological and social wounds on individuals and communities; however, this process also enables them to become stronger and more resilient (Derin & Öztürk, 2023). Political participation and rebuilding resilience play a crucial role in the post-traumatic processes of societies (Bildt, 2023).

Post-traumatized communities can engage politically through mutual support and solidarity. Social solidarity mitigates the effects of trauma and allows for community regeneration. By strengthening their social ties, people can collectively make their voices heard through structures such as social movements, voluntary organizations, or local community groups. Such solidarities constitute the most basic and local forms of political participation, contributing to the recovery of society after trauma (Tilly, 2003).

Traumatized communities may turn to social movements and activism to express their suffering and victimization. Such movements can address issues such as social justice, rights violations, the effects of War, or the consequences

of natural disasters. These movements can increase post-traumatic social resilience as people take collective action to defend their rights and reconceptualize traumatic events. Moreover, social movements can be a powerful policy tool for changing society and addressing the effects of trauma. Additionally, accurately teaching the past to enhance social resilience is crucial for fostering a more peaceful society. Post-traumatized communities need to build strong voices to ensure they are represented, thereby increasing their political participation. Traumatized groups need to demand more excellent voices and representation in decision-making processes. Political participation means an increased representation of individuals and groups through local authorities, parliaments, government bodies, and civil society organizations. This means defending rights and taking an active role in restructuring society (Parver, 2008). This can also be recognized as a civic renewal.

Education and awareness are crucial for political participation after social trauma. Traumatized individuals and communities should be educated about their role in participating in democracy, human rights, social justice, and the political system. Such trainings facilitate the participation of individuals in political processes and makes them more aware of social problems. Ensuring that individuals who have experienced social trauma possess the necessary knowledge to participate in political processes is crucial in enhancing their social resilience. To overcome the effects of social traumas, societies typically act in cooperation and solidarity, entering into a process of reconstruction. In this process, individuals play a critical role in supporting themselves and others, as well as in restoring a sense of security, dignity, justice, and social integration (Elster, 2004; Desmond, 1999).

Building social post-traumatic resilience is only possible through active participation in the community's healing process. The healing process refers to the recovery of individuals from their traumatic experiences and their subsequent reconstruction at the societal level. Individuals can contribute to social recovery by actively participating in social and political decision-making. In this process, a typical recovery strategy can be established between local governments, non-governmental organizations, and the public (Paffenholz, 2021).

Political participation can be strengthened when post-traumatized communities demand the development of rights-based policies. These policies aim to eliminate social inequalities and promote social integration. When communities, especially those that have been traumatized, demand equitable and inclusive policies, it helps increase resilience and political participation. Inclusive policies are a fundamental basis for victims to have a voice and be part of the healing process in society. Political participation should parallel individuals' psychological and social recovery processes. Psychosocial support facilitates the active participation of post-traumatized individuals in social and political processes. Such support helps individuals develop confidence, fulfill their social responsibilities, and make greater contributions to society. Health, education, and social service institutions can play a crucial role during this process, preparing individuals for social participation (Çertinkaya & Hamarta, 2023).

Governments and other public institutions play a crucial role in building community resilience and fostering political participation following trauma. The state should develop a range of policies to support traumatized individuals and communities in post-traumatic processes. It is also the responsi-

bility of the state to create environments that encourage public participation in politics and to ensure that this participation is safe and transparent.

Post-traumatic resilience begins with confronting the traumatic events of the past. This confrontation should be viewed as a recognition of victims' rights and a path to social reconciliation and peace. By confronting past traumas, societies can achieve a more peaceful and resilient future. In this context, forgiveness processes aim to transform past traumas and promote social solidarity (Sayar, 2020). In Chile, for example, post-dictatorship human rights groups, families of the disappeared, and victims have brought the traumas of the past to the agenda through movements such as document collection and collective memory work. This is a crucial step in enhancing social resilience and promoting political participation (Özcan, 2022).

CONCLUSION

In Syria, where one of the Middle East's most repressive regimes and most pervasive patterns of human rights violations have been entrenched, developments between 2011 and 2024 clearly illustrate the methods of repression and mass violence employed by the Assad leadership to preserve its hold on power. The regime, initially consolidated under Hafez al-Assad through a security apparatus rooted in Ba'athist ideology and the Alawite sect, has for decades systematically relied on widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law to suppress and eliminate political opposition. This governance model—centered on the security and interests of a dictator and a narrow ruling elite—has resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the forced displacement of millions. Inspired by the wave of popular uprisings across the Arab world, Syrians articulated

demands for democracy, transparency, and respect for the rule of law in pursuit of a freer society. The regime's disproportionate and violent response to these demands precipitated the outbreak of civil War, plunging the country into a period marked by profound, large-scale, and primarily irreparable human suffering (TİHEK, 2025: 178).

Syria has witnessed various social traumas under the oppressive rule of the Ba'ath Party for 61 years. The most prominent and destructive phase of this period took place under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad. Assad's authoritarian rule plunged the country into civil War and political instability for more than a decade, during which millions of people were displaced, and social structures were severely damaged. However, the authoritarian rule in Syria was not limited to the Assad era but deepened as a product of the repressive policies pursued by the Ba'ath Party for decades. The end of the Assad regime and the removal of the Ba'ath Party from power have left strong and lasting effects on the social, psychological, and political lives of Syrians and initiated a critical transformation process that has shaped the future of the country. Syrians are divided along ethnic, sectarian, and ideological lines, which may hinder national unity. Competing narratives about the conflict can perpetuate cycles of blame and complicate efforts at reconciliation. High levels of anxiety and depression can affect public political participation and civic engagement.

The fall of the Assad regime represents the beginning of Syria's political and psychological reconstruction process. Addressing social trauma, building inclusive identities, and restoring institutional trust are vital for continued progress. By learning from other countries that have transitioned from authoritarian regimes, Syria can manage this transition with greater resilience and avoid allowing the wounds of the past

to define its future. Countries worldwide that have experienced social trauma and transitioned from authoritarian regimes have attempted to erase the traces of the past and strengthen their democratization processes by employing various strategies. Justice-seeking, social memory studies, educational reforms, social movements, and transitional justice mechanisms stand out among the solutions applied in these countries. These processes have erased the traces of trauma and facilitated a collective healing process, making society more resilient.

Identity reconstruction after social trauma is the process by which a society comes to terms with its past suffering, builds its collective memory, and develops a hopeful perspective for the future. This process requires empathy, support, social justice, and cultural healing at individual and community levels. Identity reconstruction aims to heal the effects of trauma and build social solidarity and hope for the future. Restoring trust in institutions after social trauma involves the functioning of institutions and the process of community reunification and healing. This process should be built on fundamental principles such as transparency, justice, empathy, participation, and effective communication. Institutions should implement effective, fair, and responsive policies to erase the traces of social traumas and regain public trust.

The Syrian civil War has left deep scars on the political psychology of the people. In the post-Bashar al-Assad period, justice, social reconciliation, and economic stabilization are critical for the people to regain a sense of hope and confidence. Overcoming the social trauma caused by the War will be possible by rebuilding the individual and society's collective identity. Following authoritarian regimes, reconstructing a shared national identity is crucial. In Syria, ethnic and sec-

tarian reconciliation must be achieved by addressing divisions between groups such as Arabs, Kurds, Alawites, and Sunnis. A shared vision of citizenship that transcends sectarian and ethnic affiliations needs to be promoted.

Within the framework of the principle of justice in Syria, it should initiate lawsuits on human rights violations and prosecute those responsible. These trials would be a crucial step toward social reconciliation and justice. Through the establishment of human rights groups, families of the disappeared and victims should bring the traumas of the past to the fore through document collection and collective memory work. This is a crucial step toward building a collective memory, enhancing social resilience, and fostering political participation.

Political participation and resilience after social trauma are possible when individuals and communities are involved in political processes, despite the traumas they have experienced, make their voices heard, and contribute to the social healing process. This process can be strengthened through social solidarity, education, rights-based policies, state support, and inclusion. Building the resilience of traumatized communities through social participation helps erase the past and strengthen the future social structure. The education system should be restructured to address the effects of the authoritarian regime and strengthen community cohesion. Schools should emphasize understanding past traumas, providing accurate information about the past, the importance of living together, and respecting democracy. In Syria, as in Chile, the Sednaya prison should be turned into a museum to commemorate the victims of human rights violations. To increase political competence and confidence, traumas should be confronted and a collective memory built.

Syria's long-standing experience of authoritarian rule and civil War has left profound impacts on social memory, identity, and trust. The success of the post-Assad transition depends on properly addressing traumas, ensuring social justice, and transparent democratization processes. The recommendations discussed in this study provide strategies for building lasting peace and social resilience in Syria's future. Confronting the traumas of the past and implementing inclusive policies will enable the Syrian people to heal at both individual and societal levels.

In summary, this study examines the impact of social traumas experienced by societies under authoritarian regimes on individual and collective psychology, as well as the political consequences of these traumas. The analysis of the Syrian case reveals how political and social behaviors shaped under long years of conflict, oppression, and authoritarian rule are transformed by traumatic experiences. The study reveals that social traumas have adverse effects, including loss of trust, identity fractures, and decreased political participation. This situation has lasting effects on individuals, political systems, and social structures. In the context of post-Assad Syria, confronting traumas and promoting democratization involves critical stages, including regaining the political self-efficacy of individuals, supporting identity construction processes, and restoring trust in institutions. The study presents three key recommendations for countries, such as Syria, that are undergoing social transformation following prolonged periods of authoritarian rule.

1. Past human rights violations and collective traumas should be publicly acknowledged, and the rights and dignity of victims must be formally recognized. This process may be advanced through the establishment of memorials and museums, as well as through documentary

and archival initiatives aimed at preserving historical memory.

2. Reconstructed political and social structures should be organized, accountable, and inclusive, encouraging public participation. This will contribute to rebuilding trust by involving various segments of society in the decision-making process.

3. Individuals exposed to trauma should be integrated into political processes through education and awareness programs, and resilience should be increased by strengthening social bonds. This will encourage individuals to assert their rights and engage in political participation.

In conclusion, the Syrian case provides valuable insights for societies transitioning from authoritarian rule to democratic governance. Confronting the legacies of social trauma and adopting effective political strategies are essential to addressing past injustices and fostering a more peaceful and equitable future. In this context, the functionality of political psychology and transitional justice is important for a sustainable democratization process. In addition to these measures, during the transitional period, United Nations Member States and the authorities in Damascus must adopt a range of steps aimed at addressing past traumas, alleviating the suffering endured, and preventing the re-emergence of conditions that could enable similar violations in the future.

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THE EVERYDAY CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONALIST DISCOURSE: TREASURE HUNTING

Taylan ŞENGÜL¹



Figure 1: The Church of Surp Toros in the Tavlusun neighborhood of Kayseri, <https://kulturenvanteri.com/yer/surp-toros-kilisesi-kayseri/>, Accessed: 07.08.2026

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INTRODUCTION

This study emerged from the reflections prompted by the photograph above. The graffiti encountered in this photograph of the interior of the Church of Surp Toros, located in the Tavlusun neighborhood of Kayseri's Melikgazi district, is the most fundamental actor in shaping this study. This photograph of the church, known to have existed since the nineteenth century,¹ contains a layered narrative. Above all, the structures left behind by non-Muslims—who once had settlements, and consequently various architectural buildings, in every region of Anatolia, but who were forced by wars, forced migrations, deportation, and population exchanges of various kinds to leave the places where they lived—have, in some places, been completely demolished, while in others, as in the case of Tavlusun, they have remained standing as a kind of monument, even if left to their fate. In this context, it should be remembered that structures left behind by non-Muslims have, where the occasion arose, continued to be used through conversion (for instance, a church into a mosque, a mansion into a school or a public building...). As it happens, this situation is important in that it demonstrates the resilience of an identity whose population has today considerably diminished. On the other hand, the following question is equally important: why is it still possible to find traces of these works in one region while, in another, traces belonging to the same culture have been cleansed as though uprooted at their very root? It does not seem possible to think that there is a single, comprehensive answer available in every case—whether this can be explained solely by a lack of awareness, or whether a form of collective hatred is at issue.

¹ Information about the church can be obtained from a website called "Kültür Envanteri" [Cultural Inventory]; see <https://kulturenvanteri.com/yer/surp-toros-kilisesi-kayseri/>, Accessed: 07.08.2026.

Another point the photograph prompts us to consider yields more answers to the above question. Although little remains of the church beyond bare stones due to neglect, an intriguing point conveyed by the ruins is this: in many historical monuments remaining in Anatolia, regardless of whether they belong to Islamic or non-Muslim culture, it is possible to encounter a shared scene—alongside love-hate discourses addressed to a lover or beloved person written upon the ruins, nationalist and even racist slogans and symbols feature prominently. Accompanying all this is another scene in which the walls, floors and so forth of spaces where the religious rituals of non-Muslims in particular were performed, and which have been left officially unprotected or neglected, are seen to have been torn apart. It is therefore possible to observe widely the intellectual framework operating within the context of love-hate-nationalism-treasure hunting.

A similar situation can be observed when looking at other photographs showing the interior of the Church of Surp Toros. However, an inscription located in the church's altar section points, as it were, to something beyond this entire picture: "I have not forgotten"! What is it that has not been forgotten? Knowing this is, of course, not possible. Yet amid so many varied slogans in an abandoned church, this expression—written in rather large letters, precisely in the altar section—seems to stand in contrast to the others; what is not forgotten seems, as it were, to be an identity like this very church, which remains standing despite all its losses and destruction; perhaps an identity that was sought to be made to be forgotten through the processes of deportation and displacement, and yet was not forgotten... Perhaps what is not forgotten is the answer of someone in the area who still secretly tries to live the faith they define as "their own." When we continue to think of what is written in this way, it also becomes possible

to say that the church has continued to fulfill one of its functions; the slogans scratched onto the walls, the declarations of love, the discourses of hate, and so forth, are all in fact akin to the emergence, in some form, of what could perhaps not be said fully to its addressee in everyday life and of what has been repressed; they are like a confession. In an abandoned church, as if to make confession to one who is no longer there, a ritual unknown to, forgotten by, or made to be forgotten by those who are there is repeated; it is as though a collective confession is at issue.

Ultimately, what has been mentioned above consists of what a photograph prompts us to think; apart from the photograph, we possess no other record concerning the situation. However, another matter the photograph reveals—the extent to which the space has been destroyed, and in particular the fact that the floor is riddled with holes—has made it necessary to reflect on another collective act. As is known, “treasure hunting,” as a highly widespread activity, targets in particular spaces thought to contain buried caches, and in precisely this sense, beyond simply offering a means of making easy money, it plays a role in the destruction of the identity of the “other.” In this sense, although treasure hunting may be thought of as an individual, independent activity, it is, because of its own particular market, organizational scheme, financial backing and so forth, a thoroughly organized and collective activity—one that, by virtue of this characteristic and of the fact that it targets the destruction of an identity, makes it possible to define treasure hunting as a “political” activity. Moreover, it can also be argued that the process by which non-Muslims were displaced through various means during the transition to the nation-state, and by which the property and capital they left behind were transferred through various channels to the Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie, opened a door

to, or created an intellectual ground for, a smaller-scale organization such as treasure hunting is thought to be. In this context, the destruction in question is brought particularly close to a discourse of “national economy.” In short, this study, treating treasure hunting within the framework described above as a political act, evaluates it as an activity that was carried out, first and foremost, by the hand of the state, and that has continued to be carried out through the means at the state’s disposal. In this context, as shown by the primary and secondary sources on treasure hunting that could be accessed, it will be seen that the intellectual relationship established between treasure hunting and, in particular, nationalist discourse points, fundamentally, to a facet of official ideology, owing to its character of reconstructing nationalism anew each time.

WHAT IS TREASURE HUNTING?

Define [treasure], derived from the word “defin” [burial], can be used, in its crudest sense, for antiquities or valuable objects found underground whose material worth can be converted into money. In this framework, archaeological objects buried underground are today also treated as treasure (Kon-yar, 2009: 2222). Treasure hunting can accordingly be defined as the activity of those who search for objects that have remained underground and possess a certain material value, and who try to derive benefit by extracting them from the ground. It is possible to say that treasure hunting today has two dimensions, official and unofficial. As will be discussed further below, in the official dimension of treasure hunting, searches can be conducted within a framework determined by law, and for an object obtained to qualify as treasure, it must also meet certain criteria. According to Dinç (2009),

however, treasure hunting, as a phenomenon widely encountered today, is an act in which certain criteria have fallen away and in which the mere material value of the object is deemed sufficient. Whereas the word “treasure” once referred to “lost hoards” and hence to commodities such as gold, coin and ornaments, in the present situation even a 150-year-old Ottoman gravestone can be seen to be regarded as treasure. The most basic reason cited for this is that certain people have begun paying large sums of money in order to possess any kind of historical artifact. Accordingly, because treasure hunters take an interest in every kind of artifact, going well beyond classical treasures, treasure hunting also leads to the destruction of cultural and historical heritage (Dinç, 2009: 37).

According to Erdoğan (2013), treasure is legally regulated by Article 772 of Turkish Civil Code No. 4721. Accordingly, treasure is defined as “valuable things which are understood with certainty to have been buried or hidden long before their discovery and whose owner, given the circumstances, can no longer be identified...” Subject to the provisions concerning items of scientific value, treasure belongs to the owner of the movable or immovable property in which it is found (TCC 772/I-II). Likewise, under Article 63 of the Constitution, the state takes supportive and encouraging measures to ensure the protection of historical, cultural and natural assets and values. Beyond these, Article 773 of Turkish Civil Code No. 4721 and Law No. 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Property (Erdoğan, 2013: 516–517)² constitute the relevant legislation. Beyond these, it should also be noted that the provisions of the Treasure-Hunting Regulation form the

² Law No. 1710 on Antiquities, cited in Erdoğan’s study, was repealed by Law No. 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Property, adopted on 21.07.1983; for this reason it has not been included here.

basic regulatory text. At this point it should be noted that, under the Turkish Civil Code, treasure hunting is a right granted to citizens (Akkuş and Efe, 2015: 110). The legal status of treasure is not the focus of this study, but there are points where discussing its legal dimension is nevertheless important. One of these points concerns, first of all, the definition of treasure itself. For instance, when one considers the statements in Article 16 of the Treasure-Hunting Regulation—“Should cultural or natural property be found in the course of treasure searches, the search shall be halted immediately and the matter reported to the Ministry” and “The searcher may assert no right whatsoever over any cultural or natural property found”—it would be incorrect to say that every object extracted from underground is characterized as treasure. On the other hand, technical matters such as the ownership status of the area in which the treasure is located (the question of whether it belongs to private property or to the public), and hence the treasure’s being subject to private ownership, the limitations placed on ownership, the treasure’s being subject to public ownership, the amount of the reward, and so on, can alter the nature of the treasure. For example, although treasure that is under the ownership of a private-law person is subject to private ownership, this right, too, can be subject to various restrictions under the Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Property³ (Erdoğan, 2013: 533). It can be observed here that the state, by virtue of their historical and cultural characteristics, keeps certain objects under its protection in every circumstance while permitting others to remain in the ownership of private persons. Is this distinction, made in an official sense, merely a distinction drawn in a legal sense? Or is it a form arising from a particular mentality? In any case,

³ For an assessment of the legal status of treasure, see Erdoğan, İhsan (2013), *Hukuki Açıdan Define [Treasure from a Legal Perspective]*, *Gazi Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 17(1-2), 513-533.

the existence of such a distinction shows that political authority draws a line between what it “wishes to retain within itself” and what it “sees no harm in allowing to remain with private persons.”

Beyond being a legal distinction, this distinction drawn around treasure hunting is also the reason why treasure hunting is such a widespread activity. Ultimately, treasure’s becoming a commodity subject to private ownership leads treasure hunting to occur more widely in an unofficial form. Moreover, despite being unofficial, it continues to be a collective organization. In this context, treasure hunting, by virtue of possessing its own rules, traditions, organizational form, communication structure and so on, is a phenomenon with a distinctive culture of its own. Indeed, because beliefs and practices related to treasure hunting exist in nearly every region of Turkey, even in its most remote corners, it can also be defined as a folkloric element (Çelik and Elmas, 2025; Kaplan, 2024; Taşbaş and Tiryaki, 2023; Yolcu and Karakaya, 2017). In this context, according to Yolcu and Karakaya (2017), there are different types of treasure hunting (diggers of old graves, diggers of ruins and mounds, seekers of talismans, those who search for what they have seen in their dreams, those who search believing there to be a code in ancient ruins, those who search with copper rods or with modern devices, and so on), along with certain patterns that vary in accordance with these types. On the other hand, when one considers treasure locations, the signs and symbols found around a treasure, the traps that prevent access to the treasure, the times for treasure hunting that vary according to religious beliefs and periods (for example, searching for treasure during the month of Ramadan, because it is believed that the hands and arms of jinn are bound at that time, or digging at night for the sake of secrecy...), the methods of determining a treasure’s location—spells, taboos and rituals, as well as efforts to uncover

the treasure together with religious functionaries, legends concerning treasure... it becomes apparent that there is no single type or method of treasure hunting (Yolcu and Karakaya, 2017). Ultimately, treasure hunting has gone far beyond being merely an effort to find a valuable commodity and has turned into a cultural phenomenon blended with numerous beliefs. Nevertheless, it must be said that, without remaining confined to its folkloric-cultural dimension, the power relations interacting with it have also permeated treasure hunting. As it happens, to regard treasure hunting merely as cultural also carries the danger of contributing to its naturalization. One of the reasons treasure hunting is so widespread in Turkey is precisely this naturalization and normalization. Given that it is understood that a great many people engage in it and that the ways of evading legal sanctions are known, treasure hunting becomes an activity that is tolerated and treated as ordinary, and the discourse, too, legitimizes the activity precisely through this sense of ordinariness.

Although treasure hunting is seen today, in particular, as an economic relationship and a form of material gain, it moves within a dynamic that oscillates between two poles in the relationship between the protection and the destruction of cultural assets. On the one hand, historical-cultural assets are damaged owing to unconscious excavation, while on the other, treasure hunters defend themselves by saying, "Thanks to us, artifacts are being preserved and finding their value. Thanks to us, they are not going abroad; we are looking after them" (quoted in Dinç, 2009: 37). When it comes to the return to Turkey of artifacts smuggled abroad, meanwhile, these repatriations are presented by the state's hand as a "national victory" and a "re-establishment of cultural sovereignty," while the question of through which networks of circulation the artifacts left the country in the first place remains in the background (Özarslan, 2026: 325). Thus, the treasure hunter's

discourse of “protection” and the state’s discourse of “rescue/repatriation” can be considered together as different-scale manifestations of the same logic of appropriation. At this point, although the need to protect assets found in a buried state, and which carry importance owing to their material and spiritual value, is evident, the theft of assets belonging to cultural heritage through such methods as robbery, plunder, illicit excavation and unlicensed treasure hunting, their smuggling abroad (Akkuş and Efe, 2015: 107), or their being seized by buyers such as collectors and thereby drawn into the unofficial market, owing to the indifference or inadequacy of the institutions responsible, leads above all to the destruction of cultural assets. Yet it is equally difficult to say that this destruction occurs solely at the hands of treasure hunters. Indeed, according to Dinç (2009), one can speak of a tacit understanding between museum officials and treasure hunters, and it is even pointed out that excavations are at times carried out to order. When it comes to the transfer of artifacts extracted through excavation to a museum, this situation is somehow overlooked. The method whereby information obtained after a historical site has been scouted and the spot requiring excavation identified—by an urban buyer, tourist, or traveler—is then passed on to a treasure hunter so that the excavation can be carried out, is regarded in this sense as a new variant (Dinç, 2009: 39). Moreover, “it is a disaster to expect the ‘legal treasure-hunting permit’ under museum officials’ oversight from a museum official who continually opens protected sites to development by downgrading their conservation status” (Kaplan, 2024: 1101). It must accordingly not be overlooked that, while treasure hunting destroys cultural and natural assets, the institutions responsible for protecting these assets are also, on the other hand, complicit in the plunder.

At precisely this point, returning to what the photograph at the outset prompts us to think, the following question may

also be added: why are cultural assets important? To say that their value derives solely from their value as commodities would be inadequate. It must also be recognized that these artifacts, which are hundreds or even thousands of years old, have taken shape as a constitutive element. When one considers that the modern Republic's "writing of time" extends back to Antiquity, and its "writing of place" to the Eurasian region (quoted in Cantek, 2011: 33), there is a reference here to the founding debates that sought to situate the origin of the nation-state through the ruins of various civilizations, and, in this sense, to provide a ground of legitimacy through shared roots with the "West." In the context of Turkish modernization, the idea of associating Turkishness with the West, and even of being more Western than the West itself—"Blue Anatolianism," an approach shaped in particular around "Mediterranean" civilization and geography, which pointed to the Mediterranean rather than to ancient Greece as the origin of civilization—also conceived of Anatolia as the meeting point of Islamic and Christian civilizations (Bora, 2017: 88–90). It must therefore be said that, even if it was not the main current of Turkish modernization and nationalism, there existed an intellectual branch capable of encompassing civilizations beyond the Turkish-Islamic ones, and, as will be discussed further below, treasure hunters, too, are able to draw on this relationship where the occasion arises. Yet, as noted above, the very existence of a "sensitivity" (!) among treasure hunters toward protecting historical artifacts shows that such artifacts have, to a certain degree, been internalized within national identity.

In this context, it has been pointed out that treasure hunting—which destroys archaeological artifacts as well, in the effort to find the valuable belongings that displaced persons could not take with them and thought they might one day re-

turn to reclaim—has a “national appearance” (quoted in Akkuş and Efe, 2015: 115). Is it possible to say that the discourse which, on the one hand, considers itself to be playing an important role in bringing to light and protecting artifacts belonging to Anatolian and even Mediterranean culture, views, on the other hand, with the very same eye the process of nation-building constructed, particularly over the last century, through the “purification” of the country of non-Muslims and what has been left behind by those no longer here? That is, does treasure hunting try to bring to the surface the valuable belongings left by Greeks and Armenians “in order to protect” them? At this point, the discourses of treasure hunters who limit treasure hunting to finding what has been left by those displaced through the processes of deportation and population exchange—even if the conformity of this with the legal text is debatable—can be sufficiently clear. For example, Uğur Kulaç,⁴ who states that he is currently engaged in treasure hunting in Turkey and who is trying to turn treasure hunting into an official, organized activity, states that treasure hunting should not be confused with treasure raiding [hazine avcılığı]. According to him, valuable belongings left over the past century by Greeks and Armenians fall within the scope of treasure hunting (Uğur Kulaç, live broadcast of 20 April 2026, Dedektör, Define Kayıtları, Türkiye’de Definecilik, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPEQMLLJrTA>, Accessed: 15.08.2026). Likewise, as related by Çelik and Elmas (2025), who conducted research on treasure hunting and

⁴ The name Uğur Kulaç is also significant in that, as noted, he openly states his involvement in treasure hunting. A brief internet search reveals countless news items about him. It can even be said that he has been deemed important enough to appear live on major television channels; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXqQWbulCLO>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvwXA1i0aRM>. For further information on Uğur Kulaç, see also (Çalışkan, 2019: 6).

treasure culture in the Sivas region, the wealth belonging to the Armenian community that once lived in this region triggers treasure hunting and hence amateur, unlicensed excavation activity; the belief in the existence of families who have grown rich through treasure hunting, together with economic hardship, is seen as the main reason driving people toward this activity. In this context, the villages inhabited by Armenians until the 1915 deportation, and their surroundings, are concentrated as excavation sites (Çelik and Elmas, 2025: 252, 255). It is therefore possible to read these examples, whose number could be multiplied, as a matter of “national appearance.” The idea that the economic values left behind by “those who left” remain idle, together with the idea that finding them would bring relief to and strengthen the national economy, points to a public role suddenly assumed by treasure hunters. It can be argued, however, that this public role is not entirely one that treasure hunters have conjured up for themselves, but is rather a reflection of a process of “nationalization” that developed along different channels alongside the transition to the nation-state. It is precisely for this reason that treasure hunting carries a nationalist tone. In this context, however, nationalism must be taken as a discourse that continually constructs itself upon an economic foundation. What is critical for this study is that, at this point, nationalism emerges as a source of legitimacy.

Before entering into a discussion aimed at establishing the relationship between treasure hunting and nationalism, a few notes should be made regarding the fact that treasure hunting is, in and of itself, an economy. First of all, as noted above, because treasure contains valuable belongings, it has come to be the subject of a market that proceeds through unofficial channels. Yet it would not be wrong to emphasize that, precisely because it is such a widespread activity, this

market is in some way tolerated. It is a frequently encountered phenomenon that both natural and legal persons form expectations when treasure is at issue. Indeed, this expectation creates a particularly more complicated situation for the public authority itself; the lawful (that is, legitimate) authority, which has *de jure* bound both its citizens and itself, tries to go beyond these limits *de facto*, and, where the occasion arises, can even take part in unofficial treasure hunting. Yet the functioning of such an economic form is sustained, whether officially and through public means or not. There is, then, a certain persistence at this point; this persistence is kept alive above all for the sake of seizing what has been left behind by those displaced in the course of the nation-state process. It is in this context that treasure hunting, although regarded as an economic form with material returns, is fundamentally an activity that operates within a conception of the nation shaped around “Turkishness” and “Muslimness.” The political economy operating in the background is thus the basic drive behind treasure hunting’s continued prevalence. However, it must be underlined that the idea that keeps treasure hunting alive is not merely a discourse repeated at a particular time and place within public discourse, but rather one that operates repeatedly, precisely as an everyday matter, in various moments and spaces of everyday life. It will be an important distinction to examine this relationship—which will essentially be explained through the concept of “banal nationalism”—by focusing both on the side of public discourse and, in the context of treasure hunters, on the side of those who try to evade the sanctions of authority.

TREASURE HUNTING AS THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

State, Nation and Legitimacy: The Importance of Legitimacy in Grounding the Public Discourse of Treasure Hunting

Mention was made above of a search for legitimacy at the foundation of the dynamic through which treasure hunting is constructed by being legitimized through nationalist discourse. In this context, the concept of legitimacy in particular needs to be emphasized. To state that the process, experienced during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, in which non-Muslim communities were systematically displaced or compelled toward displacement in the course of modernization, reinforced such an informal practice is also to imply that this was not an exceptional instance occurring within a specific historical period. In this context, if we recall Agamben (2005), when exceptional measures emerge during periods of political crisis, and these measures cannot find meaning on legal grounds, they appear legally in the form of that “which cannot take a legal form” (which is why they must be understood as political). This “state” is at the same time defined as the limit concept of law, insofar as it is taken as the suspension of the legal order itself (2005: 1–4). In periods of lawlessness and crisis, social structures, roles and behaviors are disrupted. On the other hand, if a sovereign is *nomos*, and if lawlessness coincides with *no-mos* in the person of the sovereign, then, in the sovereign’s absence, the state of exception must be converted into public mourning, and mourning into exception—into *iustitium*—and the anarchy that may thereby emerge must be ceremonialized and thus kept under control. The sovereign is, internally, lawless; he is the living law. Thus the state of exception is the hidden but true life of the law (Agamben, 2005: 65–70). When we consider, in particular, the roughly final quarter-century of

the Empire, it is possible to situate even the 1915 deportation activity within this very framework; the process carried out by the Committee of Union and Progress government despite the sultan's continued presence—because the law was not, in this sense, integrated within a single body—led to the spread of *nomos* and anarchy through the state into society, and prepared the ground for *iustitium*. Because this anarchy was not brought to a close through a ceremony, and because it spilled over in particular into the transfer of property and property relations, this gap has continued as an unclosed state of exception. It can be stated that treasure hunting, too, has settled precisely in this sense as a practice of the state of exception.

It was noted that, in order for treasure hunting to function as an exceptional practice, it operates on a ground of legitimacy. In this sense, legitimacy is also an important concept for explaining the modern nation-state and its crises, since it arises in a period when the boundaries of the state and the nation begin to coincide. It is precisely for this reason that legitimacy can be considered together with the state of exception; it relates directly to sovereignty, owing to its debate over law/legality and the limit of law.

Weber (1978), who treats the legitimacy of power in particular as a matter of authority and sovereignty, points to the amorphousness of the concept of power within social relations, emphasizing not only that the domination power can exercise must be approved, but also that the command given requires a certain level of organizational/administrative support. Within this framework, the state is defined through its capacity to continuously establish order in a given territory by means of an administrative staff and the use of physical force, while the legitimacy of the monopoly on the use of force at the same time enables this political force to be called a

“state.” Indeed, because the capacity to use force is a distinctive element determining the political character of an organization (Weber, 1978: 53–55), this also provides a ground for us to define the state as the most political organization of all. As Weber (2004) particularly emphasizes, the concept of the state will be possible only through the recognition of violence as an instrument and the use of this legitimate physical violence within a given territory. On the other hand, Weber, who emphasizes the need of power-holders to reinforce their dominant position, explains the formation process of the modern state through the sovereign’s dispossession of the holders of military, administrative, fiscal and political resources and through the monopolization of the political means of production (Weber, 2004: 32–37). Accordingly, when approval is at issue, even when speaking of the types of sovereignty that vary among power-holders according to their “claim to legitimacy,” it is vital to establish belief in legitimacy rather than mere obedience shown to authority (Weber, 1978: 212–213).

The treatment of the interaction between political power and the state through Weber’s concepts of authority and legitimacy, and hence the consideration of the use of violence as a distinguishing phenomenon, creates an ambivalent situation owing to the use of violence. According to Barbalet (2023), because public affairs are related to politics and hence to the use of violence, this creates a kind of ethical dilemma, since politics and administration, while apparently distinct, in fact fall within the domain regulating political life. On the other hand, the legitimate use of violence over a given piece of territory has made it the “principal instrument” among the other instruments belonging to the state. Nevertheless, there is a consent granted to the use of legitimate violence specifically by the state, rather than by government as a political organ (Barbalet, 2023: 21–23). For this reason, in Weber, legitimate violence, on the one hand, overcomes its own dilemma

“by virtue of” its own instrumentality, while, on the other, it merges with the territorial character of the consent granted to violence, bringing to the fore, in this respect, the matter of a political unity inherent in the state.

To repeat, the instrumentality peculiar to the state of legitimate violence also opens the door to a form of political unity. In this context, the idea of the nation in Weber rests not merely on dependence upon economic-political conditions based on the collective character of social motives, meanings, orientations and values that come to affect individual actions, but on a desire to be a “community of power,” and the state accordingly takes shape as the worldly organization of national power (Barbalet, 2023: 56–60). For Weber, who treats domination as a worldly-sociopolitical phenomenon, struggles for power, proceeding from Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power, impose a new direction and new values upon an internally chaotic reality, and, in this context, express the irreconcilable conflicts of value systems opposed to one another⁵ (Callinicos, 2007: 154). Weber, however, even while attaching importance to socio-economic relations, does not read the incompatibility among values as a form of class conflict. Weber (2002), who developed a critical discourse against the determinative primacy of the infrastructure in particular, argues that economic nationalists—a milieu in which he includes himself—hold that the nation’s enduring economic-political power interests are fundamental, and that economic successes are contingent upon positions of political power. He

⁵ The “will to power,” which expresses the shaping of power and its spreading out in order to bring others under its dominion, is a temporal process of transformation arising from the endless struggle of nature—understood as the interaction between physical bodies and the development of living organisms—among rival, multiple centers of power, and, for this reason, “reality is internally plural... internally indeterminate”; as such, any attempt to establish a physical law over nature would be an inadequate effort to take a cross-section of this endless process (Callinicos, 2007: 119).

thus states that the nation-state rests upon psychological foundations with “deep roots” in the nation’s broad, economically dependent strata, and that this is more than a mere superstructural organization of the ruling economic classes, thereby expressing that the national-political goal is a structure positioned beyond economic and political classes (Weber, 2002: 20–21). In Weber, then, while the legitimation of the nation-state through power carries the claim of having deep roots within the social structure, it does not deny the class differences inherent in society but renders them insignificant. Moreover, because such an approach tends to view the population over which the state exercises its sovereignty and legitimate violence as subjects who benefit from this power relation, it is inclined to read the social in a one-sided manner:

According to Weber, domination was legitimate, that is, it was seen as legitimate by those subject to it (Weber was not concerned with illegitimate power). In our view, the problem with this definition is that it does not limit the idea of domination to a state of acceptance that leads to subjection or submission—one in which power functions as an imposition or restriction, contrary to the interests of those subjected to it. Weber’s concept is compatible with a wide range of positive power relations in which those under domination voluntarily comply and from which, along with others, they generally benefit (Lukes, 2016: 158).

Such an “instant,” in which the political-economic interests concerning society as an element of the state are set aside, resembles, in a way, a photograph. This instant, in which economic-political interests—which Weber himself did not deny—are drawn out of focus and blurred, and authority is put in their place as political power, contains, to the extent that it takes as its basis a phenomenon of the “state” constructed over the interaction between state and society and

over class conflicts whose stasis can scarcely be defended, a discourse capable of reproducing its own legitimacy. Naturally, at this point, insofar as it is proceeding from a Nietzschean perspective—as is also the case in Weber’s pointing to definitions of sovereignty that vary according to types of legitimacy—it does not claim, in Callinicos’s words (2007), that this photograph to be taken possesses the character of a kind of “social-scientific law,” and Weber emphasizes the need to attend to distinct historical periods in the study of social phenomena (2007: 157). This approach, resting on Nietzsche’s (1968) critique of mechanistic theory, criticizes “necessity” and “law,” stating that every force may reveal its ultimate consequences at every moment, and that there is no “law.” This is also a critique of “calculability”; “things” are calculable “because they cannot be other than they are” (Nietzsche, 1968: 337).

This critique directed at the mechanistic perception of life also represents a stance against treating the state mechanically. According to Schmitt (1996), the state has, since Hobbes, been a machine into which a sovereign representative, as *homo artificialis*, has breathed a soul, and, because it also led to man’s transformation into a “machine-man” (*homme-machine*), it points to the transfer of soul into machine, from the greatest to the smallest scale. Indeed, this development of the state in this direction is at the same time the intellectual precondition, and a prototypical work, of the new technical-industrial age. Such a mechanistic understanding, on the other hand, also brings law to positive law, legality to legitimacy, and legitimacy to the positivist function of the state mechanism, thereby allowing new possibilities of calculation for the “machine” to penetrate the sphere of security and freedom (Schmitt, 1996: 91–100). It should therefore not be overlooked that the phenomenon of the “state,” which Weber treats as an authority resting, in the modern sense, on the “rational” use

of legitimate violence, is a “type” of the new technical-industrial age, and is situated at least within this period. At this point, however, a difference arises between Weber and Schmitt stemming from the relationship between state and legitimacy, and this difference acquires meaning when we attempt to take a cross-sectional, periodized view of the state as modern authority—when we attempt to take, or to evaluate an already-taken, historical photograph of the state.

According to Kökerer (2025), while for Weber the source of legitimate sovereignty is likewise seen as belief in these foundations, for Schmitt legitimacy rests on an “existentialist” interpretation deriving from popular consent. This distinction arises in particular from a period in which liberal politics—in which sovereignty is shared among different powers—became problematized as of the early twentieth century; Weber, taking into account the plebiscitary democracy of the Weimar period, states that belief in charismatic authority is suspended within the process of democratic legitimation because the leader comes to office through election, and that the election itself has now become the very source of legitimacy. In this sense, a leadership freely elected can also, essentially, exist owing to belief in charismatic authority, and legitimacy, too, essentially becomes a form of “surplus value” for the establishment of sovereignty; belief in charismatic authority points to this surplus value even within a plebiscitary democracy. In Schmitt’s understanding, by contrast, because in democracies those who govern are leaders separated from the people—from within the people (Kökerer, 2025: 1210–1214; 1219)—it is possible to speak of a kind of break from a Weberian conception of legitimacy. What is radical in this break is Schmitt’s viewing modern democracy in an authoritarian manner (Magalhães, 2021: 66), and, in this respect, the people’s emerging as a directly acting actor rather than as a source of legitimacy consisting of belief held by the people. Schmitt, on the

one hand, bends the universalist and individualist meaning of the concept of nation, which developed under the influence of the French Revolution, toward an absolute and collective meaning, drawing a distinction between the concepts of “nation” [ulus] and “people” [halk], and setting against the “people”—as a mass, as a politically formless, culturally amorphous crowd—the “nation,” as a politically acting, willing and organized totality. Democracy, accordingly, takes shape as a political form in the sense of a sovereignty belonging not to the people but to a specific, homogeneous community (Magalhães, 2021: 97). Schmitt (2008), who distinguishes a politically conscious political will from political form, holds that the point at which the people, proceeding from the French Revolution, decide to determine their political existence is their according themselves a constitution. At this point, the people, by becoming a nation, attain consciousness of their political unity. However, in this process by which the people become conscious, the people’s according themselves a constitution and the founding of the state are separate processes; political existence precedes the constitution, and the nation, as the subject that makes the constitution and finds within itself the authority to make it, has, by resisting the king’s absolute power, been able to make a place for itself within his absolute regime, and the people have become politically identified with themselves (Schmitt, 2008: 102).

This distinction Schmitt draws between people and nation, in describing the subject that makes the constitution as a text regulating state-society relations, points, alongside the distinctions within the process, also to continuities. In this context, the point Schmitt draws attention to in comparing the process of independence in America with the revolution in France is that the new political formation in America proceeded simultaneously with the formation process of a series of new states, and that, for this reason, despite the emergence

of a new political form alongside the existence of the people as the political subject making the constitution, a new political principle did not emerge as clearly as it did in France; in France, the state, apart from the nation, existed both before and after the Revolution, whereas in the American case the people's consciousness of constitution-making and of becoming a nation is far more pronounced (Schmitt, 2008: 126–127). What the Prussian example brings into sharp relief, meanwhile, is the distinction between representation and legitimacy, and the fact that legitimacy alone is not sufficient to establish authority or power; the nineteenth century's effort to restore monarchy on the basis of legitimacy remained merely an attempt to balance the *status quo* legally, and the lack of forms of political representation was sought to be addressed through the introduction of the concept of private law into political life. The element historically present in the formal principle of monarchy is not to be found in legitimacy. In this context, the Prussian monarchy is, in political terms, the strongest, and a monarchy that is nothing more than legitimate is historically dead (Schmitt, 2008: 245).

Adding Migdal's (2001) perspective on the state-society relationship to the debate between Weber and Schmitt over the concepts of state-sovereignty-legitimacy will be significant in highlighting a point that remains ambiguous in this debate. Migdal, who views state-society relations as a process of mutual interaction, and who in this respect also criticizes a Weberian understanding of the state, proceeds from Shils' "center-periphery" theory. This approach, which holds that the values, beliefs, institutions and elites constituting the center, and the interaction among them, spread out into society, does not overlook organizations inherent in society, and notes that non-state social organizations can, where the occasion arises, combine their strength with certain segments of the state and put into practice measures that conflict with legal

norms; it further notes that the state, where the occasion arises, cooperates with non-state organizations, giving rise to a contradiction-conflict between the state's practices and state reason [*raison d'état*]. The state, accordingly, is also seen as a kind of arena of conflict harboring conflicts among its own internal compartments. At this point, the fundamental actor of social change remains the state, and it can be stated that these conflicts inherent in the state spill over into society (Migdal, 2001: 41–49). Migdal's contribution to the Weberian approach, which treats the state according to its capacity to exercise legitimate violence, thus gains importance because it points to the capacity of intra-state struggles and conflicts to affect the entire social structure at the same time.

This critical contribution of Migdal's to a Weberian concept of the state functions, in a sense, to "take a photograph" of the state. Unlike Weber, Migdal, who states that a real state is formed of two things—image and practices—states that the image, along with the state's dominant-holistic-autonomous existence, is a perception. This perception renders, in a sense, invisible the conflict among the executors and institutions behind the holistic appearance. The image of the state, on the other hand, is again positioned over a particular territory/border. Practice, meanwhile, concerns how those who implement the state behave, and practices may contradict the image. A two-level analysis is therefore required for the state and sovereignty; on the one hand, an actor that is a singular, clearly bounded, unified organizational image acting in an integrated manner to govern a territory, and, on the other, the practices of a loosely interconnected mass of parts with unclear boundaries among themselves and with other groups both within and outside the official state borders, contradicting one another and legal norms, must be considered together (Migdal, 2001: 16–18; 22).

This approach of Migdal's gains importance in evaluating treasure hunting's position as a border activity, and, once again, its relationship with groups that remain "outside" it. It accordingly provides an impetus not to view legitimacy, in a Weberian sense, as a concept grounded in law and closed in upon itself. Moreover, grounding legitimacy in Schmitt's sense, within the context of the nation, also suggests that treasure hunting, as an informal practice, does not actually legitimize itself through the nation as such an integrated appearance, but rather that different groups within the state, despite their differing interests, legitimize the nation. Accordingly, treasure hunting's being legitimized through the nation-state derives, in essence, from the need to construct a discourse of "unity" by covering over the way in which different interest groups, different projects, or different mentalities of development within the state fundamentally reflect upon society.

The Role of National Economy

The discourse of "contributing to the national economy," frequently used by treasure hunters, can be considered within the framework of the idea of national economy. The theory of national economics—which emerged as an effort by Bismarck, in order to achieve German unity, to place Friedrich List's classical liberalism at the foundation of the nation-state economy, but which, in late-capitalizing countries, turned into a form of "national protectionism" running contrary to liberal principles⁶—also constituted a source of strength for nationalism as of the Ottoman Empire's final period (Bora, 2017: 50). On the other hand, while modernization and the

⁶ List draws this distinction between a cosmopolitan economics taking all of humanity as its basis and a political/national economics taking a particular national interest as its basis (1856: 189).

idea of the West were also being debated in late Ottoman thought, it can be said that the idea of the conquest and seizure of the West's material and technical knowledge (Bora, 2017: 69)—an idea seen in Gökalp's thought and extending along a line reaching even to Necip Fazıl—coincided precisely, within the framework of the relationship of “otherness” it established with the foreigner, with the ideology of national economics. Indeed, Toprak notes that, according to Gökalp, national economics brings into play not only economics but also a “sociology” [*içtimaiyyat*]; that the realization of a national economy requires a kind of homogeneity that could be called ethnic. In this context, it was emphasized that a society in which Muslim-Turkish elements were soldiers and officials while non-Muslim communities were artisans and merchants could not become a modern state (Toprak, 2014). As it happens, the implementation of a national economy required, above all, the economic separation of non-Muslims, seen as the “other.” It is a matter of this understanding also evolving, after 1915 and during the transition to the Republic, into the transfer of capital and immovable property belonging to non-Muslims for the sake of creating a national bourgeoisie. It must be said, then, that the idea behind this transfer, realized at the macro level, is reflected, at the micro level, in the phenomenon of treasure hunting, through nationalism. Yet it is also difficult to say that nationalist discourse possesses an internal coherence and is constructed systematically in the manner of the discourse of official ideology; it is, rather, more a matter of a discourse that is repeatedly constructed as a complementary element either trying to legitimize treasure hunting or already generated by nationalism itself. For this reason, it can be seen that treasure hunting is carried out on the axis of nationalism within everyday discourses and practices. Ultimately, this intellectual ground, which can be addressed through the concept of banal nationalism, feeds the

intellectual background of treasure hunting. If we consider illegal excavation activities, however, in addition to banal nationalism, it will also be necessary to point to the “hidden scenarios” and “tactics and strategies” concerning how one remains distant from the sphere of oversight and the public discourse of official authority. It is therefore necessary, in order to establish the relationship between nationalism and treasure hunting, to touch on the theoretical debate concerning how, on the one hand, discourse is constructed while, on the other, it is evaded.

“Banal Nationalism” in Everyday Life

According to Fox and Miller-Idriss, nationalism, as a project attempting to align the state as a political unit with the nation as a cultural unit, implies that every state has a nation and every nation its own state. On the other hand, nationalism is an economic force arising from the simultaneity of modernization and industrialization. In this context, nationalism requires the cultural construction of a collective belonging that is realized and legitimized through institutional and discursive practices. The people, meanwhile, are rendered “national” through “inclusion and exclusion.” It is pointed out, at precisely this juncture, that the people, or the phenomenon of the masses, has been academically overlooked. Emphasis is accordingly placed on the fact that the “nation” is not simply the product of macro-structural forces, but emerges spontaneously in the routine actions of ordinary people. In the process described, nationalism is constructed along four paths: first of all, the nation is constructed through discourse; it is not established solely by the dictation of elites. On the contrary, it is a discourse that is legitimized by being constructed within the contingency of everyday life, and that is constructed in routine speech. Secondly, the nation is a choice

made by people, and choosing the nation is likewise shaped by the choices made by ordinary people. At the third stage, everyday meanings and national symbols are invoked. At the fourth step, one can speak of a “national distinction” shaped through the choices of ordinary people. In this sense, too, the nation is consumed; national “difference” is produced and expressed through everyday consumption habits (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 536–538). What is stated at the first stage—that the nation is a discourse constructed in routine speech—is also important for treasure hunting, because nationalism, in treasure-hunting discourse, is constructed precisely within such an everyday context; it is a discourse constructed without any particular system, and without it being very clear how it envisions the public sphere either. Indeed, because the construction of nationalism by an “informal economy” such as treasure hunting involves spontaneity, routine and symbols, and because these are closely related to “how” they are consumed and to the choice involved in how they are consumed, treasure hunting, too, becomes an element of everyday nationalism/the nation.

Fox and Miller-Idriss note that nationalism is an act of production, but that what is national is produced spontaneously within the everyday activity of consumption. This activity of consumption is, moreover, a domain in which social membership is established, supported and bound together. On the other hand, certain objects that enable the consumption of nationalism are, beyond a merely symbolic meaning, commodified. A flag, for instance, is not merely a symbol; it is something that can be bought and sold, reproduced and distributed. In this sense, a flag can be hung in windows, carried on shoulders... In short, the nation is commodified; consumers, too, do not merely purchase national products. Commodification produces national sensitivities, produces national pride, negotiates national meanings. In this framework,

creating the nation becomes a striking moment of everyday life (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 550–551).

The reproduction of nationalism through its consumption in everyday life also expresses the fact that it becomes ordinary within a particular routine. In this sense, nationalism continues to re-express itself in ways different from official discourse and from “master narratives,” and to present itself within the everyday. The real issue, therefore, is shaped less by a relatively more historicist perspective aimed at explaining when nationalism emerged than by, when modern social structures are considered, for example how a nation is constructed among different classes. In this context, although it is Balibar who shaped the debate on nationalism, it is Billig who explained, through the concept of “banal nationalism,” the determination of the “conditions” of the concept of the nation, which has preserved its existence for a long time despite the potential for conflict arising from inequality among classes (Özkırımlı, 2019: 224).

The basic thesis of Billig’s study concerns the fact that, particularly in established nations, nationhood is continually pointed to and reminded, while these nations’ own continuity is fully believed in and expressed particularly through states defined as Western. In this context, the adjective “nationalist” becomes a quality that need not be further specified. Yet “being a nation” constitutes a ground for political discourse, cultural products, and so forth. Through various small pretexts, subjects are continually reminded of their “national position within the world of nations,” and, precisely because of this continuity, it is not recorded as such. In this context, Billig points out that the image of banal nationalism is “not a flag consciously waved with fervent passion, but the flag hanging unnoticed outside a public building.” National identity,

meanwhile, encompasses this “forgotten reminder,” and national identity is to be found in the “embodied habits of life.” These habits also include certain habits pertaining to thought and the use of language (Billig, 2002: 18). It must be said that the nationalist content encountered in treasure hunters’ discourses likewise stems, precisely in this context, from an “embodied habit” reflected in thought and language.

As Billig emphasizes, the concept of banal nationalism is also important for the purpose of criticizing the way established Western nationalist thought, in particular, tries to distance itself from this very concept, attempting to attribute nationalism to the “other.” Banal nationalism is accordingly used, in fact, to reveal what is sought to be concealed as being “here.” Concepts such as “patriotism” or “social contract,” thought to belong to “us” as against the nationalism of the “other,” likewise occupy a fundamentally ideological position on the grounds that they overlook the nation-state (Billig, 2002: 26). In this context, according to Billig, it is necessary to note that the ideology of nationalism operates within a dialectic built upon forgetting one’s own nationalism while remembering that of the other. The construction of nationalism in a banal manner, meanwhile, likewise takes place within this relationship of “forgetting and remembering”; nationalism that is continually reminded, owing to the frequency and familiarity of its messages, is no longer experienced as remembering and essentially becomes a matter of forgetting. At the same time, because this is a sociological forgetting, it takes shape around a nationalism that belongs to “us” and that is made to be forgotten. Accordingly, nationalism, which comes over time to be defined as “emotional and irrational” and hence deemed dangerous, is now coded as a trait belonging to the “other” (Billig, 2002: 50–51). Returning to the photograph in the introduction, the irony begins precisely at this point; the many names, symbols, slogans and so forth

scrawled by the one who remembers, saying "I have not forgotten," inside the church, also show that the message has in fact been poured out to an excessive degree. Ultimately, if we are to speak of the process by which an identity is destroyed, mutual and ever-present "remembering" carries within itself, after a time, the potential for "forgetting"; in the process accompanying this forgetting, the "other" begins to be constructed in a fictional manner, and the pejorative imagery belonging to nationalism is registered onto the other. What confronts us in the phenomenon of treasure hunting is, in a sense, precisely this process; every Armenian has a buried hoard; Armenians or Greeks are very wealthy and could not be loyal to the Ottomans, and so on... As it happens, an "other" identity is first constructed, and subsequently the process of the "conquest" or "seizure" of the values belonging to this other comes into play. Again, according to Billig, patterns of social life "embody the past" because they become "habitual and customary," and this is called "habituation." Thoughts, reactions and symbols turn into customary habits; the past, too, becomes habituated and positioned in the present through the dialectic of forgetting-while-remembering (Billig, 2002: 55). It must therefore be reiterated that treasure hunting, as an occupation in its own right, has likewise become habitual and customary. The very fact that illegal excavations are so widespread, and that certain escape routes—"tactics and hidden scenarios"—have even been produced in order to evade the law, can already be read as a sign of the habituality and customariness of treasure hunting as a nationalist discourse and performance.

Having reached this point, while pointing out that nationalism is constructed in accordance with the routine actions of ordinary people, it has also been noted that this occurs, on the one hand, within the dialectic of remembering and forgetting/being-made-to-forget, and, on the other,

through an ideological positioning. Attention has thus also been drawn to the warning that nationalism cannot be understood merely as an “elite discourse,” and that, in this respect, it must be examined from a perspective coming “from below.” Yet becoming entirely absorbed in examining nationalism “from below” may also carry certain drawbacks. In this context, according to Smith, the first of these problems concerns the nature of the “ordinary person.” When, in particular, one seeks an answer to the question of “why” a nation exists, rather than the question of what a nation is or when it became a nation, he emphasizes that this category, whose particular characteristics cannot be observed, must necessarily be divided into non-elites, interest and status groups, and classes within existing politics. At this point, one frequently encounters the interaction between elites who present a nationalist project and message, and non-elites who do not accept, who overlook, or who alter it; a line emerges linking “nationalism from below” with the “nationalism from above” put forward by elites. Another matter Smith draws attention to concerns the risk that, because nationalism increasingly focuses on the “present,” its relationship with history is overlooked. Moreover, treating the nation as an object of research subject to a relationship of “choice” and “consumption” also carries a risk, because such studies will be meaningful only within liberal-democratic societies, and thus also carry the possibility of an ethnocentric perspective. Accordingly, according to Smith, in order to understand what constitutes a nation, it is necessary to consider micro-analyses alongside a “broader and more dynamic framework”; micro-analyses must be reconciled with long-term historical analyses as well as with elite nationalism (Smith, 2013: 112–113). When we look at the phenomenon of treasure hunting being constructed through nationalist discourse, we can see that a set of ordinary (nationalist) elements are woven into the discourse, while it is also

possible to situate this discourse within a broader historical context. For example, the discourse that treasure hunting is an activity carried out “for the benefit of the country” can quickly become ordinary because it rests upon a discourse of “public benefit” based on an anonymous mass of people whose content has not, in one respect, been entirely clarified. On the other hand, precisely because it requires attention toward “others” —excluded yet internalized—whose presence within this very anonymous mass must always be “remembered” (for example, it is debatable to what extent ethnic identities such as the Armenians and Greeks who still live, or are known to have lived, in Turkey, yet who are not much spoken of, could benefit from this discourse of publicness), it must establish its connection with history correctly or incorrectly. It can be argued that the phenomenon of treasure hunting, which rests in particular on the discourse of the country’s economic development and growth, and which, in doing so, sees no harm in bringing the valuable belongings left by displaced persons into the economy, establishes, precisely at this point, a link with the “ideology of national economics” as a macro level. Or, the anxiety, frequently encountered in treasure hunters’ narratives, stemming from “the belief that underground riches will become ‘touchable’ as of 2023, when the Treaty of Lausanne comes to an end,” points to the ideological bridge established between the state, as a national and international political actor, and the treasure hunter, revealing the relationship between the micro level and the macro level.

Nationalist-Treasure Hunting Against Public Discourse

There is no need to say further that the nationalism constructed as inherent to treasure-hunting discourse up to this point has a self-generated truth of its own. This situation, however, does not permit us to say that treasure hunters, or

the discourse inherent to treasure hunting in general, is entirely an element of “falsehood”; it becomes apparent, ultimately, that the discourse constructs its own reality, if one takes into account that the points of intersection among treasure-hunting narratives conveyed in separate places and times at different points contain a certain system. It must therefore be stated that the everyday, and even banal, nationalism inherent to these narratives possesses a certain reality. But toward what purpose does this content come to operate? Because treasure hunting, officially or unofficially, establishes a relationship with the law in every case, it is subject to oversight within the bounds of the law. In this context, must it be said that the nationalist discourse of treasure hunting tries to evade the law by establishing a hegemonic bond with the nationalism of official ideology, or that it tries to derive legitimacy through the law? At this point, it may be possible to begin with a questioning proceeding from treasure hunting’s status as an individual habit and disposition, despite its collective discourse.

According to Certeau (2008: 43), habits, dispositions and practices need to be examined with the “individual” as the basic unit of research. Moreover, the relations established between the dominant and the subordinated have generally revealed the transformed use, by those who appear to submit to the dominant order, of that order’s rituals, representations and laws. Although the rules have not been rejected or altered, they have been transformed by those subject to them. Thanks to this game working against the dominant, it becomes possible to escape the order without abandoning it. The real difference, meanwhile, stems from the ways in which the rules, rituals, ideas and so forth pertaining to the order are consumed (Certeau, 2008: 46). Everyday nationalism’s becoming precisely an object of consumption likewise opens up

a space that allows treasure hunters, by consuming the discourse, to evade the legal authority while remaining within the order. For example, even the treasure hunter's regarding himself as the protector of cultural assets corresponds to just such a game; by evading the law, they are in fact rendering public service and thereby assuming the responsibility of the public. In this context, an attempt is also made to obtain a kind of legitimacy through law and legal authority.

Fundamentally, it is also possible to read the relationship treasure hunting establishes with the law or with authority through Certeau's distinction between "strategy" and "tactic." Strategy is the assessment of power relations formed by the isolation of subjects of will and power within a particular environment; it requires the existence of a domain whose boundaries are drawn as a belonging. This domain is one that makes possible an administration allowing an external view of relations, and that constitutes the ground of that administration. It is this model, too, in which political, economic or scientific rationality is established. A "tactic," on the other hand, is assessed neither through belonging nor through the distinguishing boundary of the other; a tactic has, as its field of application, the domain of the other. Tactics infiltrate the other's domain slowly and piecemeal, without fully encompassing this domain and without being able to remain at a certain distance from it. Because tactics are placeless, they are bound to time, and remain constantly alert so as not to miss possibilities that can be used to their own advantage. A tactic, however, cannot secure its gains; it remains occupied with the constant effort to turn events into opportunity. The "weak," who try to derive benefit from forces foreign and not their own, bring together disparate elements to create favorable moments, and try to derive an advantage from them. Tactics, encompassing many of the habits, dispositions and practices of everyday life, possess a kind of knowledge whose origins

reach very far back (perhaps even into prehistory)—*mētis* (Certeau, 2008: 54–55). It is accordingly possible to view treasure hunting, first of all, as a “tactic.” In terms of its relationship with the state, treasure hunting does not possess the power to alter entirely the norm or normative order set by authority; it turns into an opportunity, for its own benefit, the possibilities afforded by legal gaps or by gaps that arise in practice. Or, by trying to “infiltrate,” and succeeding in infiltrating, the ground of legitimacy created by treasure hunting’s already being a widespread occupation, it tries, even if it does not entirely encompass legality as its own other, to create a demand aimed at transforming it as well. For example, as in the case of trying to organize into an “association” through officially permitted treasure hunting, it also tries to secure a place within the domain of legality. Yet to view treasure hunting merely as a tactic, insofar as it is a game played by individuals, would also not be fully explanatory of the relationship among treasure hunting, nationalism, and even legal-legitimate authority. At this point, the discourse that emerges the moment public institutions, public officials, or the “state” itself⁷ becomes involved in treasure hunting encompasses too extensive a domain to still be regarded as “the game of the subordinate.” It is accordingly possible to find the conceptual framework needed to make sense of this discourse in the distinction between official/public and hidden scenario [i.e., public transcript and hidden transcript].

Scott defines the public transcript as the self-portraits through which dominant elites present themselves as they wish to be seen. In this context, the public transcript affirms

⁷ The state’s having recognized treasure hunting, to a certain degree, as a right belonging to citizens positions it as an actor already present within this relationship.

and naturalizes the power of the dominant elite, thereby concealing that elite's power. Yet, in order to be able to sustain its power, the dominant elite must also make certain concessions. Rulers seeking, in a Gramscian sense, to establish hegemony must also, to a certain degree, ideologically prove that they govern on behalf of their subjects (Scott, 1995: 48–49). Accordingly, the public authority that recognizes treasure hunting as a matter of right, thereby makes this concession because of the dominant ideological and class structure behind that authority—owing either to legality or to its inadequacy in taking measures against the sheer prevalence of informality. Because the granting of this concession is, in an ideological sense, a gain; in particular, the cleansing, above or below ground, of every kind of memory belonging to those coded as the other of official ideology in Turkey, ensures the repeated reproduction of “being a nation.” On the other hand, according to Scott, while the behaviors of subordinate groups required by the public transcript are coded as visible and known practices, the practices lying outside this are defined as the “hidden transcript”; the hidden transcript is created by the “practice of domination.” The harsher the domination, the richer the hidden transcript that emerges in proportion to this harshness. In this sense, both domains take shape as domains of power and interest. More importantly, however, the hidden transcript arises not merely as a mask worn by the subordinate before the dominant, but as a mask stemming from power relations among equals within both groups. In this context, the dominant, too, has a hidden transcript, and this, too, is a product of the exercise of power (Scott, 1995: 55). Again, such a discourse—one in which legitimate authority or the state, despite its own resources, draws treasure hunting, under certain conditions, outside the oversight of the law, or one that emerges at least in the narratives of those engaged in treasure hunting—is important in that it points to the hidden

transcript of officials who hold the public transcript. It can be considered that narratives grow even more complex at points where public officials, or those with the authority to make use of the state's organizational capacity, evade legal oversight and take part in treasure-hunting activity; at the moments when it becomes unclear whether an official exercising public authority is using this power for individual gain or truly for the public benefit, we may be confronted with a product of the dominant class's discourse's effort to reconcile its own interests with those of the subordinate. Or, this situation may even point to a rivalry among those holding public authority, in which sense we would be speaking of the hidden transcript of the public itself. Ultimately, however, it seems possible for now to say that treasure hunting, developing through nationalist discourse, moves in an oscillating fashion between the public transcript and the hidden transcript. When treasure hunters' narratives are discussed, an attempt will be made to clarify, to a certain extent, how this oscillation takes place.

TREASURE HUNTERS

In this section, an attempt will be made to demonstrate, through narratives, the discursive construction of the relationship established between treasure hunting and nationalism. Before turning to these accounts, however, it will be appropriate to touch upon certain limitations related to the study.

First of all, although treasure hunting is a widespread occupation, the sheer extent of its unofficial practice is a factor limiting the acquisition of data about treasure hunting. On the other hand, the notion that law-enforcement or intelligence units have infiltrated the ranks of treasure hunters (which is, of course, true) leads treasure hunters, in this context, to keep

their distance from, to avoid, or, at best, to approach with caution, any outsider or any initiative that might expose their identity. Another matter, as treasure hunters themselves frequently complain, stems from the very nature of treasure hunting. For example, although treasure hunting can be carried out at lower cost through certain traditional methods, it is clear that this cost will rise where advanced technologies (such as detectors) are used. Beyond this, division of labor and organizational skill are quite important in this process. As it happens, the personal expenses of those who take part in the search process in one way or another, and so forth, also raise the cost of the undertaking. Treasure hunting accordingly becomes more advantageous either for those who have little to lose in any case, or for wealthy individuals who view this occupation less as a means of income than as a pastime. The fact that wealthy individuals are generally figures known within their locality and possessing a certain degree of economic and political influence (or the belief to this effect) is a characteristic that also makes it difficult to speak about them or with them. For example, the discourse, encountered in many regions, concerning persons professionally engaged in local or national politics having engaged in treasure hunting, is important in this context. Even when a person has stated, from the outset, that they themselves engage in treasure hunting, one enters, as noted above, a domain that is quite difficult to verify, given that it is constructed upon a discourse oscillating between the public transcript and the hidden transcript, and given that it is in fact a game aimed at concealing power. Accordingly, analyzing the discourse itself becomes, from the very outset, a matter in its own right.

Another matter related to treasure-hunting discourse is the limited nature of sources, for the reasons mentioned. It is difficult to say that the amount of scientific material on the subject is very extensive in either number or scope. An effort

has accordingly been made to conduct this study on the basis of the sources that exist and are accessible, and, as a result, it has been observed that discourses converge on quite basic matters, that there is otherwise little willingness to speak, and that a systematic silence prevails. Working on this subject accordingly requires a very extensive amount of time and material. In this context, it must be stated that the connection between the subjects of the sources found and nationalism is established indirectly. For example, articles have focused on the legal dimension of treasure hunting, on the matter of the destruction of cultural assets, or on the delineation of the rules and symbols pertaining to the field. As a study that treats the subject as an informal economy, Çalışkan's master's thesis, titled *Bir Yeraltı Ekonomisi Olarak Definecilik: Van Örneği* [Treasure Hunting as an Underground Economy: The Case of Van], is a work that could, in essence, fall precisely within the aim and scope of this study, but the fact that the subject is treated through the lens of "informal economy" constitutes a point of differentiation in this direction. Nevertheless, drawing upon the accounts contained in the thesis will be useful in the context of the aim and scope of this study.

Beyond all these limitations, it can be said that the greatest advantage lies in the willingness or impulse of those engaged in this activity to, in some way, "narrate and express themselves." The discourse to the effect that, although a great deal could actually be said on the subject, only a limited amount is spoken, is one encountered in various and different places. In this context, it is also difficult to have trouble finding a person engaged in treasure hunting, because, directly or indirectly, an "acquaintance" engaged in the activity emerges among the people around us in everyday life. Moreover, if we consider that treasure hunting has its own market, and a communication network that enables those engaged in this occu-

pation to seek out and find one another (for example, treasure-hunters' coffeehouses fulfill this function), and so forth, it is thought that it would not be very difficult to gain access to a person engaged in this occupation. The real issue, however, again relates to the initiative shown by the person reached as to how much they will speak on the subject. In the end, this study has striven, for the most part, to convey material through written accounts. The contribution of interviews, meanwhile, has gained importance for the purpose of reinforcing the written accounts; encountering the same content, whether written or oral, in different places and at different times, is important in showing the extent to which the discourses inherent to treasure hunting constitute a systematic or structural "construction." It is therefore now necessary to give space to these accounts.

The Construction of "Treasure Hunting" in Treasure-Hunting Discourse

First of all, it is stated that treasure hunting is an occupation pursued for the purpose of generating income in an economic sense, but it must also be stated that there are differing views on the nature of the occupation. According to Çebi and Öztürk (2012), treasure hunting is a very widespread occupation, but it increases further, in particular, during periods when the economic balance is disrupted and people become unemployed, and people from every social stratum can engage in it. They even state that they have heard that the country's greatest businessmen scan every region with massive machinery, and that television producers and presenters, too, travel around cities producing programs based on rumors of treasure (Çebi and Öztürk, 2012: 25–26). Differing views on what kind of occupation treasure hunting is can arise even within the same team; while some regard it as "working for

the sustenance of one's family," claiming that "no one is stealing from anyone's pocket," another may state that what they do, despite not stealing from anyone's pocket, is "a kind of theft" (Tahberer, 2014: 9–10). On the other hand, there are also discourses stating that treasure hunting is a distinct type and should not be confused with others. Indeed, as Özarslan (2026: 322) emphasizes, although treasure hunting is positioned outside the formal political sphere, it should be read as an informal economic practice that, through the relationships it establishes with local political actors and unofficial patrons, is covertly and continually intertwined with this sphere. Likewise, a similar approach was noted, in the first section, as also appearing in Kulaç's account. Accordingly, what the "conscious" treasure hunter seeks is what has been left by the other of the regime.

Although the sources of personal stories about how one came to begin treasure hunting vary, interaction with one's surroundings can generally be cited. The influence of family or friends is decisive in this context. On the other hand, it is also possible to encounter narratives concerning the existence, from the very outset, of a public scenario shaping the phenomenon of treasure hunting in a nationalist tone. Here, for example, although there may be a tacit understanding regarding the search for belongings left by Armenians, the matter can extend even more deeply into a kind of discourse of "the survival of the state." In Kılınç's narrative, for instance, a theme that emerges from the very first moment can be seen to be the observance of a continuity from the Ottoman Empire to the present. According to this, the gold once smuggled away and hidden by a brigand named Volçan from the Ottomans (or from Ottoman subjects) is, in essence, property of the state, and its discovery is a necessity. According to Kılınç's account, this information was obtained by his father from a friend; his father's friend, in turn, learned this information

from his colonel during his military service: the colonel counseled the troops in his regiment that this gold was property of the state and that, when they returned to their hometowns, they should search their surroundings to the extent of their capacity. He even told them, and strictly instructed them, that should they come across a find, they should contact the colonel or the authorities directly (Kılınç, 2003: 18). It is accordingly possible to see that a discourse of “state security,” set in motion through public channels, is on the one hand also supported by economic power, while, on the other, an uninterrupted conception of the state, continuing from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, is likewise appropriated by a member of the military personnel of the Republican regime. On the other hand, mention is also made of the relationship established between the holder of public authority, or the public transcript, and the other. Ultimately, it is stated that, at the foundation of the story of Volçan—a non-Muslim brigand (or believed to be one)—lies an idea of Islam and Christianity inherited from the age of empires: according to this, because a great fortune had accumulated in Ottoman hands as a result of the Silk and Spice Roads falling under Ottoman control, a band of brigands was formed, led by Volçan and with the support of the Pope, in order to weaken the Ottomans economically, and it was arranged for this band to operate within Ottoman territory (the narrative also states, incidentally, that Volçan commanded a large force of 884 men) (Kılınç, 2003: 116–117). Treasure hunting is accordingly defined, from the very outset, as an occupation carried out on behalf of the state or for the public benefit. This is because the belief manifests itself that the treasures left by non-Muslims (particularly Armenians) would suffice for the whole of Turkey (Tahberer, 2014: 15–16). In this context, there is a close relationship between the beginning of treasure hunting and the meanings, symbols, commodities and so forth “left behind,” in Turkey,

largely by Greeks and Armenians—and it is precisely at this point that nationalist discourse, too, begins. If we recall what the initial photograph prompts us to think, drawing three crescents or a swastika inside an abandoned church that has been searched in every corner points, in this context, to a shared mentality.

The “Detector” and the Treasure Hunter as Public Official

According to the accounts of those engaged in treasure hunting, the development of such a “sector” within the country in fact has a history. According to Tahberer, in the development of treasure hunting from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey, alongside the effect of the change made to the monetary system in the nineteenth century, the development of museology, together with the development of the sciences and arts in Europe, played an important role. On the other hand, the rise of museology and collecting in the Ottoman Empire, and hence the growing interest in antique works of art, also increased the demand for them. For this reason, a great many excavations, both conscious and unconscious, were carried out worldwide. By the twentieth century, coin and art-object collecting had already emerged as a hobby among ordinary people as well. Moreover, alongside the development of metal detectors, the search for treasure using detectors accelerated both worldwide and, from the 1980s onward, in Turkey. In Turkey, the liberalization of detector imports through Council of Ministers Decision No. 7/11119 of 1976 led to an increase in illicit excavation and in the theft and trade of cultural property (Kaplan, 2024: 1107). Indeed, the search for antiques, rather than for what are now thought to be legendary treasures, became even more widespread. Both meeting the demand of museums and collectors, whose numbers had increased on account of the antiques trade, and the desire of

people impoverished by underdevelopment and poverty to earn money by any means necessary, constitute the fundamental process behind the extensive spread of treasure hunting (Tahberer, 2014: 106). In this context, it can be reiterated that, when economic needs and forms of informal economy come together with the gaps created within the legal ground, treasure hunting functions as a public policy that is covertly, but by degrees, permitted.

The use of the detector in treasure hunting points, to the extent that resources allow, to a further matter—namely, that treasure hunting is being carried out in a more professional or extensive manner. According to Tahberer, it is known that not only the poor and uneducated but also, on the contrary, more socially influential individuals engage in the treasure business. For example, when discussing the features and quality of detectors, which are quite important in treasure hunting, mention is made (in a somewhat legendary fashion) of the existence of detectors capable of showing what lies underground as though on film, and it is pointed out that a member of parliament possesses such a detector. It is also pointed out that the wealthy of Çukurova became rich by this means. Likewise, it is mentioned that such a detector is possessed by a colonel serving at the General Staff, who obtained it from Americans while working with NATO and has shown it to no one; it is stated that this machine has long since been manufactured but is not sent “to us,” so that the treasures in Turkey will not be found. It is stated that the depth-integration components are removed from the machines that reach Turkey “so that they do not scan too deep.” The key element of this narrative, meanwhile, is that all of this is the “doing” of imperialist Europe and Zionist Israel; the eyes of all these countries are on the tons of gold lying beneath Turkey, yet the state remains indifferent to this matter. If the state were to take this matter in hand, it could become richer than the United States

in a single day, but because the state is already “in the grip” of the United States, no such intervention is possible (Tahberer, 2014: 49–50). In this context, the importance of technical equipment emerges once again in the sense of constructing a discourse of “nationalness.” Moreover, this time the discourse concerning the wealthy searching for treasure in a more extensive manner is also included.⁸ Having arrived at this point through the detector, an even more interesting and important narrative reaches another point that can be treated as a tactic or as the hidden transcript of public discourse. According to this, it is not the case that anyone who wishes can carry out treasure-hunting activity as they please. Otherwise, law-enforcement forces would immediately apprehend the treasure hunter. A sense accordingly takes shape that the state itself is participating, as an actor, in treasure hunting.

Treasure-Hunter Ideology

According to Certeau, as noted above, the strategy that points to a political and economic rationality has, as against tactics, a reference to a comprehensive domain. In this context, treasure hunting’s connection with the state, and, as will be recalled, the intellectual line that can be established with “the ideology of national economics,” allow us to treat treas-

⁸ At this point, the discourse concerning the “wealthy” searching for treasure can, in a way, extend even to those named in connection with the process by which Armenian property changed hands for the sake of creating a national bourgeoisie. For example, Kılınc relates that, in a conversation he had with an official while at the Sadberk Hanım Museum, belonging to the Koç Foundation, the official stated that his “boss” would fly by helicopter at a height of 500 meters, scanning the ground as he went (Kılınc, 2003: 36–37). Is the “boss” referred to here Vehbi Koç? Or, among the “wealthy of Çukurova” who, as mentioned above in Tahberer’s account, grew rich through treasure hunting, might Sabancı also be counted?

ure hunting as a strategy operating on the side of political authority. Moreover, the state—which recognizes treasure hunting as a right, which turns a blind eye where the occasion arises, which supports search activities where the occasion arises, and which, in every case, can even take a legally mandated share of any treasure found—no longer engages with treasure hunting merely in the sense of the hidden transcript of public discourse; treasure hunting, rather than being a tactic of elites, becomes an integrated “strategy” constructed with economic, political and social meanings within the scope of the nation-state.

A discourse that this strategy produces or puts into circulation within the context of banal nationalism, and that appears in nearly every narrative, is the discourse concerning “the Treaty of Lausanne, and the fact that it will expire in 2023.” According to this, although certain differences exist among narratives, there is a repeated construction of the discourse to the effect that the Treaty of Lausanne imposed a prohibition on touching underground riches. Çebi and Öztürk likewise point to a similar discourse (2012: 21). Ultimately, the theme of “Lausanne and 2023,” frequently voiced in recent times as well, takes shape, in this framework, as an ideological element attempting to link everyday nationalism with historical nationalism. Moreover, through this discourse, individual treasure-hunting activity, and even treasure as a “right,” can be read as a concession granted by the ruling class to the governed for the sake of preserving its own power.

Finally, it must once again be recalled that this ideology operates within a dialectic of remembering and forgetting. And it can also be seen that this dialectic oscillates, in turn, toward a relationship between “falsehood and reality.” For example, the following quotation from Kılınç’s narrative gains importance in this context (2003: 111–112):

...There once lived a brigand named Topal Manol. This is true. But given that markers have been found, I think of these as lies fabricated upon the truth of Topal Manol. Who fabricated them, and why, you might ask. I think that whoever fabricated these false maps did so for the same purpose that brigands like Topal Manol engaged in banditry within Ottoman territory. In those days, there was a real need to distract and wear down the Ottomans. Today, likewise, the people of the Republic of Turkey need to be kept chasing empty dreams and distracted. In this way, the people of Turkey will have wasted their energy. People chasing a dream will be unable to produce... Since a country cannot develop through the trade of illusions, I think that whoever benefits from Turkey's underdevelopment is the one fabricating these lies. And I intend to compile and record all of this in writing. Let people not chase after such false maps and waste their time and their lives in this way. As for my own wandering about: I am a village child. I was raised as a shepherd. At night, especially in the summer months, I slept outdoors, in the bosom of nature, beneath the stars. When summer comes, I miss that life. It is under this pretext that I go about roaming the mountains...

The connection Kılınç's narrative draws between fantasy-mongering, realism and development corresponds to the fundamental distinction in List's (1856) theory of national economics. According to List, the wealth of a nation rests not on the valuable objects it possesses but on its capacity to produce that value (1856: 208–209). Treasure hunting, then, stands in direct opposition to List's argument. When Kılınç is asked whether he would want to take the gold if he found treasure, he states that he would want to stuff it all into his pockets, his bag, and so on, because, in his view, it would be foolish to leave the gold behind when there are so many in need around him (Kılınç, 2003: 112). At this point, while drawing treasure

hunting toward a field of struggle among countries, even toward an imperialist field of struggle, Kılınç also exemplifies the way the discourse takes on an ideological form. Indeed, rather than a false consciousness of the sort attributed to Marx—"they do not know it, but they are doing it," it becomes possible to open the door to a relationship established with power. According to Žižek, ideology is not necessarily "false"; owing to its positive content, it may also be true. What truly matters is not what is claimed to be the case, but "the way the content is related to the subjective position implied by the process of its enunciation." This content, as the instrument of a social domination that is not inherently transparent, is compatible with the ideological moment; the relation of domination, regardless of its truth or falsity, must remain concealed in order to legitimize itself and to be effective. In this respect, a cynicism arises in the form of "lying in the guise of truth," and offering even an explanation of our relationship with power does not prevent us from pursuing this interest. It is accordingly more accurate to say, in place of "they do not know it, but they are doing it," that "they know full well what they are doing, but they are doing it nonetheless" (Žižek, 2013: 17–18). Kılınç, then, while presenting the tendency of treasure maps to mislead as a kind of master narrative and presenting himself not as a treasure hunter but, as it were, as a nature wanderer, conceals precisely his relationship/tacit agreement with power or with the dominant. Ultimately, Kılınç, although a retired teacher (having stated that he searched for treasure even before retiring), does not, despite his social status as, in particular, a teacher, refuse to search for treasure; he carries out his work more meticulously, with the aid of various tools. Moreover, the identity of "teacher," which he resumes after revealing the hidden purpose of treasure hunting or of false maps, is a status already granted to him by, and socially recognized by, political authority or the

sovereign state, and it is precisely this status that carries a legitimizing aspect, both in its use and in legitimizing the work he does. Kılınç's narrative is thus a narrative that shows that treasure hunters, too, generally "know full well what they are doing and continue to do it nonetheless"; what is at issue is the concealed conveyance of an interest-based relationship established with a "sovereign" built upon the nation-state and, where the occasion arises, filled in content by the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. And it is precisely for this reason that it is an ideologized process—one grounded, in particular, in the "banalization" of nationalism within the everyday sphere. It seems possible, in particular, to connect this relationship, established through helping those in need, to a nationalism that has become ordinary. Moreover, it is possible to view this entire process as a tactic or hidden transcript that can be developed for the sake of avoiding sanctions, alongside the relationship established with power, where and when the occasion arises, and its oversight and enforcement capacity.

CONCLUSION

In this study, an attempt has been made to show that the phenomenon of treasure hunting has a social and political context rather than being an individual, isolated activity, and an attempt has also been made to take into account the line running from the nationalist discourse that shapes its political content to its connection with the process of modernization, particularly during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. More precisely, the banal nationalism inherent to treasure hunting rests upon the process by which the ideology of national economics, as a founding idea, purges those it positions as the "other" and transfers the capital left by them for the sake of creating a national bourgeoisie.

It is also possible to see, however, that, in the shaping of treasure hunting around a national discourse, two fundamental actors essentially begin to diverge from one another. In this context, the individual treasure seeker and the treasure hunter as dominant elite or ruler take shape, essentially differentiating themselves as two distinct classes and status groups. How nationalist discourse operates in this differentiation, or how nationalism is consumed in everyday life, constitutes an important point of distinction. While the dominant classes or ruling elite, at this point, own the public transcript and operate a more historicist nationalist discourse, the individual treasure hunter, in the singular sense, rests upon a nationalism that has, in fact, already become invisible owing to their own tactics or its routine repetition. Yet it is also impossible to say that this differentiation constitutes a complete break; while the dominant classes, in order to consolidate their power, open up a space for the governed through nationalist discourse, and, in this sense, remain silent to a certain degree regarding treasure hunting's taking shape as a source of income or as a kind of underground market, they thereby grant a concession to the governed, and thus consolidate their own power as well. It is clear, meanwhile, that the government have, from the outset, moved within the domain of the discourse and ideology produced and put into circulation by the dominant elite. There thus appears not so much a complete break as a kind of contract. On the other hand, it must again be stated that the discourse the state, or public officials, as an actor directly participating in treasure hunting, sets in motion around nationalism, operates within the context of the hidden transcript of the public. In this context, it is likely owing to the immobility brought about by nationalist discourse and symbols becoming increasingly routine, and, to a degree, forgotten or invisible, that the mobilization, through nationalism, of the state against the state, or of public discourse

against the public, comes into play. Thus, while the rivalry of the dominant classes against one another operates through their own hidden transcripts, it also serves to give the appearance of a kind of “solidarity” as against the governed.

In this context, it must be emphasized once again that the treasure hunter’s nationalist ideology is shaped around “knowing why one is doing it and yet doing it nonetheless.” It is precisely this ideology that establishes the bond between the individual and the public, even if certain interruptions intervene along the way. Indeed, the construction of this ideological bond also facilitates the reconstruction, at the individual scale, of a nation and a nationalism that are forgotten or difficult to remember; practice reinforces ideology, and, through discourse, constructs it anew, again and again. Thus, an unbroken bond is established through which the ideology and “power” of authority are put into circulation among and reinforced by the governed, capable of securing its domination even in the very small moments or over individuals otherwise inaccessible to it. It is thus possible, in this context, to conclude by stating that the true function of everyday nationalism within the phenomenon of treasure hunting is to reconstruct this power anew at the individual level.

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