



*The Politics of*  
**TURKISH  
DEMOCRACY**



*İsmet İnönü and the Formation  
of the Multi-Party System, 1938–1950*

JOHN M. VANDERLIPPE



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Donald Quataert, editor



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# Introduction

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## İsmet İnönü and Multi-Party Politics in Turkish History

The presidency of İsmet İnönü, 1938–50, developed amid the crises of World War II and the Cold War, global economic and political transformation, and economic and social change within Turkey. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the scope of political debate had been narrowly defined and participation in the political arena restricted to a limited group of participants, who shared similar backgrounds, experiences, and views of the Turkish nation, its needs and its future. As the Republic's first Prime Minister, during the presidency of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İnönü had played a central role in shaping both the major political issues, and the nature of political participation in Turkey. For both Atatürk and İnönü, politicians and political debate were more obstacles than instruments to progress and advancement. Outcome was more important than process for both men, but during World War II and the Cold War İnönü found his government increasingly confronting demands to open up the political process, to accept new and different voices into the political arena, and to allow new discussion of old issues as well as the introduction of new issues.

A strong believer that caution and preparation were essential to avoid the irreparable mistakes of the Young Turk regime, İnönü had to balance demands from many in the ruling People's Party for restriction and tighter control, with demands from others within and outside the party to open debate on domestic and foreign affairs. Believing that the crisis of the war demanded greater central direction of all aspects of the economy and curtailment of political debate for the sake of national unity, İnönü asserted his own authority as National Chief, President of the Republic, and Permanent Leader of the People's Party. But new forms of domination produced new



forms of resistance, and increasing numbers of politicians, journalists, land-owners and private entrepreneurs, and academics and technocrats, representing the voices of different constituencies, pushed political discourse beyond its previously allowed limits.

Within the context of the presidency of İsmet İnönü, it is then crucial to ask, how did global and local changes lead to new types of struggles, and what kind of antagonisms did the struggles express as a response to new types of limitations imposed by the Turkish state? Also, what kind of implications did these antagonisms have for the emergence and molding of democracy in Turkey during the period since 1945?

In the longer time frame of Ottoman and Turkish Republican history, the articulation of antagonism that reached a new level of struggle in the period of İsmet İnönü's presidency carried questions first raised during the late Ottoman period, continued by the Young Turks, and brought into the Republican period by the Kemalists and their opponents, on four major concerns: (1) how to achieve economic development, and what constitutes progress; (2) what roles can, and should, the bureaucracy and the military play in economic and cultural affairs and in the electoral system; (3) what are vital national interests, and how should they be protected; and (4) how can relations with the Western powers, particularly Britain, Germany, and Russia, and later the United States be established in such a way as to benefit Turkey, without compromising its sovereignty and independence in international affairs?

In the early Republican period, during the presidency of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, politics were defined within the constraints of Kemalism, a set of ideological prescriptions regarding nationalism, republicanism, secularism, populism, reformism, and statism that were embedded in the ruling People's Party program. Even though it had its roots in the ideas of the Young Turks, Kemalism was proclaimed as a break from the Ottoman past, and as an ideology of progress for the new Turkish Republic. Thus the acceptability of any debate, and any political actor, was measured in reference to Kemalism. While struggles expressed antagonism, emerging as a response to the dominant formulation of Kemalism, they also tended to develop in continuity with the ongoing implications of the Young Turks' ideas and policies. The single-party regime enforced a singular interpretation of past as well as future, and antagonism developed between supporters of Kemalist singularity and those who proposed alternative interpretations of the past, or alternative visions for the future.

In contrast to the singularity of Kemalist ideology, opposition discourse reflected a multiplicity of views of past, present, and future. As much as the



dominant ideology is tied to political and economic conditions both at the state and the global level, so are the contesting ideologies linked to the legitimization and delegitimization of the economic and political arrangements in specific state and global contexts. Thus, from 1938 to 1950, alteration of economic conditions created contesting political voices representing different interpretations of change and progress. In this period, new interpretations emerged to question the moral validity of state-sponsored development, the legal rational aspects of policies, and the resulting systems of domination.

As Kemalism developed within the perspective of monopoly capitalism in the 1920s and 1930s, and as the power of the state and global capital generated new forms of domination during the period from 1938 to 1950, different expressions of resistance emerged. But Kemalism's focus on outcome rather than on process meant that alternative proposals also focused on outcome. Thus, in Turkey, opposition to all or parts of the Kemalist regime did not lead to a democratic process, but rather to the incorporation of new hegemony, with new personnel, imposing their own agenda in the same way as their opponents. Reform during the period of İnönü's presidency has not assured full participation in the economy and politics, confrontation of social differentiation, or freedom to express cultural plurality. In effect, it has resulted in the development of political systems separate from society, fostering politics and society as two separate entities linked by the political domination of experts, career politicians, and the military. In this context, not only do bureaucrats and career politicians control political power, but those who question the dominant ideology or group do so within the confines of a narrow discourse.

For the Turkish people, this means that the only way they can participate is through an unresponsive system, or by challenging the system itself from the outside. Examples of the latter approach include communists and Islamists. During the decades of the Cold War leftist alternatives were squashed, after which the military took on the role of taming the Islamists and forcing them to enter into the Kemalist framework.

## İSMET İNÖNÜ IN TURKISH HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

As successor to Atatürk as President and Permanent Leader of the single, ruling party, İsmet İnönü played a pivotal role in defining the meaning and relevance of Kemalism and deciding whether and how to perpetuate



Atatürk's legacy. Most historians have treated İnönü's claim of continuity with Atatürk as the logical and inevitable course of Turkish history. But history, including Ottoman history, is replete with leaders who have disavowed their predecessors' ideas and policies. The appearance of continuity between Atatürk and İnönü needs to be problematized to reach a more nuanced vision of Turkish Republican history.

Mustafa İsmet İnönü (1884–1973) was born in Izmir, the son of an official in the Ottoman bureaucracy. After a highly successful military education he joined the ranks of Ottoman officers who were discontented with the Ottoman system, and had become members of the secret Committee of Union and Progress. He served as an officer in Yemen, and in the Balkan campaigns prior to World War I, and while in Yemen he contracted scarlet fever, which left him nearly deaf and dependent on his famous hearing aid. During World War I he served at the front with, among others, Mustafa Kemal, and was promoted to colonel before returning to Istanbul to take a position in the Ottoman Ministry of War. When the War of Independence began in 1919, İnönü remained in Istanbul, but worked for the nationalist cause. Finally facing arrest, he escaped to Ankara in April 1920. During the rest of the War of Independence, he commanded the Western front, achieving major victories over Greek forces in the two battles of İnönü, hence the family name he was later given by Atatürk. At the end of the war in 1922, İsmet Pasha, as he was more commonly known throughout his later career, led the nationalist delegation to negotiate first a cease-fire, then a treaty recognizing Turkish independence and sovereignty, which was signed by the great powers at Lausanne, Switzerland. İsmet Pasha subsequently served twelve years as Prime Minister, then twelve more as President. He remained active as leader of the People's Party, and retained his seat in the National Assembly, during Democrat Party rule in the 1950s. After the military coup of 1960 removed the Democrat Party from power, İnönü was asked to return as Prime Minister in 1961. He led three coalition governments, and remained Chair of the People's Party until 1972. He remained an active force in Turkish politics until his death the following year.

During an eight-decade long political career, İnönü participated in, or influenced, every major development in Turkey's domestic and international affairs. Yet, in scholarly research and the popular imagination, İnönü has always existed in the shadow of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and İnönü's presidency has been assessed within a framework that places Atatürk at the center of Turkish history.

This "Kemalocentric" interpretation of Turkish history was proposed by Mustafa Kemal himself, in his six-day speech (Nutuk) to a meeting of



the Republican People's Party in October 1927. Kemalist historiography emphasizes the foundation of the Republic as central to Turkish history, and credits Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with the original and unique conception of the political, economic, and social reforms of the early Republican period, even though İnönü was Prime Minister throughout nearly all of Atatürk's presidency. This pronouncement defines an ideology that legitimates the interpretation of a distinctly Turkish past, by ratifying the Republican present and by proposing a nationalist-secularist-progressive model for the future. Kemalist historiography has been maintained and fostered by the force of law, as well as by the Turkish Historical Society, and is popularized through public schools, the mass media, and the Ministry of Culture. To use Jean-Francois Lyotard's term, Kemalist historiography is a "metanarrative," influencing the investigation and meaning of the past, and legitimating domination and control of the existing power structure by confining definitions of development, progress, nation, and democracy to narrow boundaries.

This work differs from existing scholarship in that it deals specifically with the period of Turkish history coinciding with İnönü's presidency, 1938–50, during which the central tenets of Kemalism faced the challenge of voices from beyond the previously accepted boundaries of political discourse. Two questions are central to this book: (1) In what ways did İnönü pursue the Kemalist agenda, and in what ways did he move away from it, or beyond it, to pursue his own "İnönü-ist" program; and (2) How did İnönü perceive the multi-party system he helped create in the early years of the Cold War—as the outcome of Kemalism, or as part of a process of achieving progress and development, freedom and justice, and equality and democracy?

İnönü's presidency can be seen as an intersection in modern Turkish history, from which two roads could be followed. Following one road would mean stifling dissent and the possibilities of any democratic development, while the other would mean opening the system to all voices of dissent and alternative views of the Turkish future. The road chosen was neither the route to complete suppression of dissent nor to truly open, representative democracy. Rather, it was a path of multi-party politics, a truncated form of democracy, the promise of which has yet to be fulfilled.

The key to understanding the period 1938–50 lies in the politics of the creation of the multi-party system in Turkey. During this period the limits of the discourse were redefined by establishing acceptable margins of deviation from the Kemalism mandated by the ruling party. Within this context, a new Kemalism emerged, updated according to the experiences



of World War II for the Cold War world, under which acceptable mainstream political parties rallied to claim the legitimacy of their own interpretation of Kemalist discourse. Meanwhile socialist and communist discourse was conceptualized as dangerous to the state, demonstrating not only the thrust of new domestic arrangements but also the emerging geopolitics of the Cold War. After July 1947 as the relationship between the United States and Turkey intensified, the confines of the relationship became clear as American policy makers revised their global strategic plans for the post-war world, and as Turkish leaders integrated issues of foreign policy and American assistance into the domestic agenda. Out of this complex connection emerged the conceptualization of the Turkish future as a "Little America." Therefore, this period was not only a withdrawal from the Kemalist notion of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World," but also from the Kemalist notion of an uniquely Turkish past, leading to an uniquely Turkish future. In the multi-party period, the reformulation of the terms of progress, freedom, equality, and justice, and thus of democracy, began to reveal the fragmentation of antagonistic struggles. While some of the antagonistic struggles were integrated into the structural hierarchies of the existing system, others from the Islamist right to the socialist left were officially marginalized and suppressed. The Turkish state did not cover its legitimization crisis with the "Band-Aid" solution of multi-party politics. Rather, this was a prelude to military interventions, weak coalitions leading to chronic instability, unequal and oppressive economic conditions, and curtailment of cultural expression. Contrary to the expectations of the people, and of the intellectuals and politicians that influenced its articulation during the period 1938–50, neither the process nor the outcome of creating a multi-party system meant the coalescence of a democratic political community. But this does not mean that new forms of antagonism cannot arise to challenge new forms of domination. Turkish politics today show that the challenge continues.



# Chapter One

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## Political Discourse and Reform in Turkey

The political discourse of the period 1938–50 developed in continuity with the political discourse of the Ottoman period, which was carried forward by the National Struggle into the Turkish Republic. Four main issues remained salient from the late Ottoman Empire through this period: defining and achieving development and progress; expanding or limiting the influence of the central bureaucracy and the military; defining nation and community, and establishing beneficial relations with the Western powers, particularly Britain, Germany, and Russia, and later the United States. The longevity of the debates over these four issues reflected continuity between the Ottoman and Turkish Republican periods in terms of the makeup of the political elite and access to the forum of political debate. But this longevity also demonstrates long-running and significant disagreements, within the elite, regarding these four main issues in Turkish politics. And while the continuity between the Ottoman and Turkish periods is striking, domestic and international changes meant that political perspectives and possibilities evolved and altered according to new circumstances.

The reforms of the nineteenth century Tanzimat (reorganization) emerged out of the growing awareness of the West and the relative weakness of the central Ottoman government, both of which presented political and economic challenges. In this period, growing military pressure from Russia was matched by increasing economic pressure from Western Europe as the Empire confronted divisions brought by separatist-nationalist movements, including the Greek Revolution of 1820–28, insurrections in the Balkans, and the growing power of Mehmet Ali and his successors



in Egypt. During the Tanzimat period, the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist system was facilitated through the terms of the 1838 Commercial Convention redefining the Empire as a free trade zone.<sup>1</sup> The Tanzimat, as a means to reorganize the Empire's internal economic and political structures, including its tax and land-holding systems, emerged from the belief among prominent reformers such as Ali Pasha and Fuat Pasha, and Ahmed Cevdet Pasha and Midhat Pasha, that the restoration of old religious and military institutions, which had given strength to the Empire in the past, would no longer meet the needs of changing circumstances. The Tanzimat, as a reform movement, reflected the changing ideas of power and progress in the minds of the administrators of the Empire.<sup>2</sup> The sense of advancement that had earlier stemmed from the expansion of territories gradually left its place to the exertion of control by a stronger central government in the shrinking Empire.

The reforms of the Tanzimat, designed and enacted by palace administrators, were aimed at modernization of the Empire's military and bureaucracy, and centralization of power for more efficient administration. Ultimately, economic development, and reform of the tax and land-holding systems were also viewed in this light. As the autocracy was strengthened, a group of intellectuals, known as the Young Ottomans (Yeni Osmanlılar), who included İbrahim Şinasi, Namık Kemal, Ali Suavi, and Ziya Pasha, emerged as its critics. Using the new device of newspapers, especially *Tasvir-i Efkar* [Description of Ideas], the Young Ottomans began to debate political ideas regarding the state, progress, nation, and relations with the West, and called for adoption of representative institutions to check the power of the Sultan.<sup>3</sup> While there were disagreements over methods, the Young Ottoman intellectuals and the Tanzimat reformers shared similar goals: to modernize the state and protect the homeland. Their arguments centered on two focal points: redefining the nation in light of the challenge of European expansion, and the role of the bureaucracy and military in maintaining and modernizing the state.

In this context one of the central issues confronting intellectuals was the role of Islam. Part of the Young Ottoman agenda was the simplification of Ottoman Turkish by excluding Arabic and Persian words and by altering the Arabic script. Supporters of language, legal, and educational reforms argued that public expressions of religion must be in a new progressive form, which would also serve to fill the vacuum left by the replacement of traditional institutions by the Westernizing Tanzimat reforms.<sup>4</sup>

As the central and provincial administrations were reformed to extend the power of the state into the provinces, military reforms were carried out



to create a more clear and effective chain of command, a more efficient use of resources, and to make the military presence more obvious in cities, towns, and villages, increasing control and easing recruitment of the population. Another function of military reform was aimed at integrating Western technology and methods into Ottoman usage. Altogether, the reforms of the Tanzimat, and reforms of successive administrations aimed at expanding bureaucratic control into the military and religion, by underpinning the military, and by weakening the influence of traditional Islam and its institutions, as well as articulation of popular religion.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to remember that the impetus for reform came from the top of the system, from the top levels of the bureaucracy, and that their purpose was to increase the power of the state. Participation in political discourse was limited and popular participation and support, was unimportant to the point of non-existence. The Imperial War Academy (Harbiye) emerged as a center for dissemination of the political plans of the Young Ottomans and later of the Young Turks. Ottoman officers and candidates came to see themselves as the vanguard of a new Ottoman Empire, which emphasized the reformed military and central bureaucracy as alternatives to the authority of both the Sultan and the religious establishment. The War Academy thus created a space for a new generation of soldiers and administrators to connect with the ideas of the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks.

Within the Young Turk discourse three loosely defined, and often overlapping, perspectives emerged regarding progress, the role of the military and bureaucracy, defining nation and foreign relations. The first perspective reflected a discourse that was nationalist, and stressed the primary role of the state in leading and developing the nation. The second and third trends were liberal, and pan-Turkist visions of the Empire's future. Nationalists represented by the Society (later Committee) of Union and Progress (CUP), led early on by Ahmet Rıza, called for preservation of the Empire, but with curtailment of the powers of the Sultan. The CUP reform agenda included separation of religion and the state, expansion of secular public education, language reform, and greater rights for women and minorities. CUP supporters called for more representative government that would respect the needs of all communities within the Empire, thus strengthening central administrative and military powers to protect against external threats as well as the internal pressures of economic dislocation and national secession, while developing the economy and culture.

One of the CUP's most prominent supporters was Ziya Gökalp, especially after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. Drawing on the work of Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies, Gökalp argued that the Turks



formed a nation (*millet*), which had a distinct culture (*hars*) centered on the peasant culture of Anatolia. But Gökâlp argued that Turkish culture had been submerged in Islamic/Arabian/Byzantine civilization (*medeniyet*), which had kept Turkish culture from developing to its full potential. For Gökâlp, the Turkish nation must maintain its culture while joining European civilization, an idea popularized under the slogan first pronounced by Hüseyinzade Ali: *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* (Turkify, Islamicize, Modernize).<sup>6</sup>

At the first Congress of Ottoman Liberals, in Paris in 1902, Prince Sabahettin led a movement to develop a liberal program of reform that would reduce the powers of the central administration, and encourage individual initiative and free enterprise as the means to preserve and restore the Empire. Sabahettin differed from Ahmet Rıza both on the role the central administration should play in directing change, and on the role of foreign intervention to promote reform. Sabahettin called for the deposition of Abdulhamid II, and supported European involvement in Ottoman affairs to assure reform of the Empire along the lines of British liberalism.<sup>7</sup>

The third line of thought among the Young Turks, pan-Turkism, developed as a counter both to the pan-Islamist goals of Abdulhamid and to the Anatolian-centered nationalism of Gökâlp. Pan-Turkism, calling for the unity of all Turks of the Ottoman Empire, the Caucasus, and central Asia, first emerged in the late nineteenth century among Tatar and Turkic intellectuals of the Russian Empire, who confronted the realities of Russian political and cultural domination. For intellectuals like Yusuf Akçura, İsmail Bey Gasprinski, and Ahmet Ağaoğlu, pan-Turkism was a means to unite diverse and dispersed Turkic populations in order to preserve political autonomy and cultural sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> For the Ottomans, pan-Turkism became an ideological weapon against division and decline only after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 had delegitimated Abdulhamid II and his efforts at pan-Islamism. For the Committee of Union and Progress, and especially for Enver Pasha, pan-Turkism offered a program for expansion of Ottoman power and for the extension of the political influence of Turks of Anatolia into the Caucasus and central Asia, against Russian interests. World War I marked the high point of officially sponsored pan-Turkism during the twentieth century, but it remained a serious alternative to nationalism and liberalism.<sup>9</sup>

Among teachers and students at the War Academy, the most influential political group was the secret CUP.<sup>10</sup> Harbiye students such as Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü, Kâzım Karabekir, Asım Gündüz, Fuat Cebesoy, Fethi Okyar, and Kâzım Orbay had the opportunity to meet and discuss issues confronting the Empire with older graduates such as Fevzi



Çakmak and Enver Pasha. Many Harbiye graduates joined the CUP, and saw the revolution of 1908, led by the CUP as a crucial movement against rotted and oppressive rule, which by restoring the constitution would solve the Empire's domestic and foreign problems. İsmet İnönü, looking back a half century later, would recall how young and naive the revolutionaries of the CUP had been in their expectations of sudden change in the Empire, and believed that their lack of caution in carrying out reform had led to unexpected, often negative results.<sup>11</sup>

While the 1908 revolution did not fulfill the expectations of the young officers and intellectuals of the Empire, it framed the four issues of progress, state, nation, and foreign relations in a new context of revolutionary transformation that remained at the center of political debate during World War I and during the War of Independence, and into the period of the Republic. As defeat in World War I appeared more and more certain, CUP leaders began to prepare for a second phase of war against Allied and Russian occupation of the Ottoman Empire, by creating an organization known as Karakol (The Guard), to accumulate arms, supplies, and personnel in eastern Anatolia. Karakol had two major aims: first to protect CUP personnel, who comprised much of the central and provincial administrations and military, from retribution for the Armenian genocide and maltreatment of minorities; and second, to prepare the ground for an independence struggle to protect the Turkish Muslim community from incursions, or claims on territory by the Allies, Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, or any other group. Working with local CUP members, religious leaders and urban and landowning elites, Karakol sponsored the formation of Societies for the Defense of Rights (Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri), beginning in November 1918.<sup>12</sup> These societies, along with the army, created a bridge tying the Young Turk period to the formation of the Republic by bringing together military/bureaucratic, religious, and landed elites, all of whom had ties to the CUP, and by tying the institutional base of the Turkish National Struggle to the political discourse of the Young Turks.

## THE TURKISH NATIONAL STRUGGLE

As the Turkish National Struggle began in the spring of 1919, political and military considerations took central importance, shaping the nature and limits of the movement for Turkish independence and revolutionary transformation, which in turn would emerge out of the war to shape the political discourse of the Republic. After returning from the Caucasian front,



General Kâzım Karabekir told other commanders in early 1919 that the only thing to do was “to go back to Anatolia, again lead the armies and work for this country’s salvation.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Karabekir left Istanbul before Mustafa Kemal, who was then seeking a post in the Ottoman cabinet. Following Mustafa Kemal’s arrival in Samsun in May 1919, and Karabekir’s subsequent acceptance of his leadership of the resistance, the initiative began to shift from civilian forces loyal to the CUP to the military, and the National Struggle came to be defined as a military struggle against Allied, and especially Greek, occupation. Defining the struggle in military terms meant acceptance of Mustafa Kemal’s leadership, and also that the religious and landed elites in the Societies for the Defense of Rights would play a secondary role in establishing goals, and setting limits on the struggle. In June 1919, Mustafa Kemal, Rauf Orbay, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Refet Bele, and Kâzım Karabekir, each representing military districts in Anatolia, agreed on a basic plan of action for a national movement against occupation.<sup>14</sup>

The following month, representatives of resistance organizations in eastern Anatolia also met in Erzurum to establish a plan to deal with the occupation. The result was a ten-point declaration that reflected the influence of Young Turk political discourse, but also established a new framework for a political discourse of independence and nationalism, which would coincide with military objectives that were being set at the same time. Claiming to speak for the nation while the Ottoman government was under occupation, the Erzurum declaration called for the assertion of the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and protection of the Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate against all claims of Europeans and non-Muslim minorities. Article four declared: “In case the central government, under foreign pressure, is forced to abandon any part of the territory, we are taking measures and making decisions to defend our national rights as well as the Sultanate and Caliphate.” The declaration further proclaimed that “this assembly is totally free of party interests. All Muslim compatriots are the natural members of this assembly.”<sup>15</sup> Thus the Turkish National Struggle would aim to establish the independence and territorial integrity of the Turkish Muslim population. But it was not to be a class struggle or a social revolution in the mold of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Erzurum declaration was reaffirmed by a national congress held in Sivas in September 1919, and formed the basis for the National Pact (Misak-i Milli) of February 1920. The National Pact defined the acceptable borders of a new Turkish state, which included Anatolia and eastern Thrace, along with Istanbul. The Arabs were left to decide their own



affiliation, but the Pact called for plebiscites in Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, and in western Thrace, which were all beyond the firm control of the nationalist military forces, to determine the makeup of the new nation. The National Pact denounced all outside interference in the country's financial and political affairs, and specifically rejected intervention on behalf of minorities within the Turkish nation, promising respect for their rights in return for protection of the rights of Muslims in neighboring countries.

First and foremost, the National Pact defined the territorial boundaries of the Turkish nation, boundaries which could be controlled and defended militarily.<sup>16</sup> Second, the National Pact offered a definition of a Turkish nation, which would be Muslim Turkish speakers of Anatolia and Thrace. This nation did not include Turkic Muslims of the Caucasus, central Asia, or the Balkans, and the National Pact made no mention at all of the Kurds or non-Muslim groups. Third, the Pact asserted a notion of national unity, making no case for class antagonisms or class interests having any place in the National Struggle.

When British forces occupied Istanbul in March 1920 in response to the National Pact, the nationalist-dominated Ottoman parliament prorogued itself and more than ninety members joined the nationalists in Ankara. The nationalists then claimed that only the Grand National Assembly, formed in Ankara in April 1920 could enact the National Pact. The emergency of the Greek invasion and advancement, followed by the British occupation of Istanbul, served the aim of Mustafa Kemal to cement a unified movement in opposition to both foreign occupation and the collaboration of the Ottoman government. For Mustafa Kemal, this unity would be forged in the nationalist military forces, and in the Grand National Assembly.

While Mustafa Kemal's control of the military struggle went uncontested, from the beginning, groups within, and outside, the National Assembly challenged his political agenda. Political opposition centered on Mustafa Kemal's personal power, and his political agenda, and the debates in the Assembly reflect both the continuing influence of the Young Turk discourse and the main debates of the subsequent republican period.

When the National Assembly began to meet in 1920, its membership reflected a diverse range of interests and beliefs. Forty percent of the members were from the military and bureaucracy, while 20% were professionals, 20% were businesspersons or landowners, and 17% were religious leaders.<sup>17</sup> Immediately the Assembly split over several issues, including the personal power of Mustafa Kemal, the relationship of the National Assembly to the Ottoman state and Turkish nation, and the ultimate goals



of the National Struggle, in particular the need, desirability, and nature of political, economic, and social reform. Many in the Assembly, including Kâzım Karabekir and former CUP supporters, feared the growing power of Mustafa Kemal. Opposition also developed among Assembly members who favored the continuation of the Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate, while challenges from outside the Assembly came from those who favored a revolutionary transformation on the model of the Bolshevik Revolution, or the pan-Turkist alternative of Enver Pasha.

After three years of struggle against their occupation, the British, French, Italians, and Greeks called for a conference in October 1922 to discuss an armistice. İsmet İnönü, as the commander of the Western front, represented the government of Ankara. As a result of the successful negotiations at Mudanya, İnönü, now as Foreign Minister, left in November 1922 to lead the Turkish delegation at the peace conference at Lausanne. İnönü and the Turkish delegation represented the Ankara government's goal of the complete recognition of Turkey's sovereignty, and the end of the capitulations.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the aim was to force recognition of Turkey as the equal of the other nations, and as the victor in the war against European occupation. The adversarial atmosphere of Lausanne, and the knowledge that his failure could lead to further disruption and struggle, seems to have convinced İnönü that since only the Turks had Turkish interests in mind, caution and strength in foreign policy had to be complemented with unity and purpose in domestic affairs.

Through the Lausanne Treaty, the nationalists achieved recognition of the legitimacy of their government and recognition of the boundaries claimed in the National Pact of 1920. The treaty recognized the abolition of the capitulations, but imposed conditions on tariffs and trade, and the repayment of the Ottoman debt. İnönü felt that even though the treaty did not give Turkey economic independence, it provided a secure political base on which to build. But, his compromise at Lausanne created disagreement and dissension in the National Assembly.<sup>19</sup> Some members focused on Lausanne to express their opposition to both İnönü and Atatürk, reflecting the division within the Assembly into two groups, and leading to the resignation of Prime Minister Rauf Orbay upon İnönü's return from Lausanne.<sup>20</sup>

Orbay's resignation reinforced already existing opposition within the National Assembly, dividing it into groups known unofficially as the First and Second groups. These two groups represented divisions, which arose during the War of Independence, based on the "Eastern" and "Western" ideals. The "Eastern" ideal, of the First Group, stood for opposition to a



Western mandate for Anatolia, and aimed to replace the Sultanate and Caliphate with a Republic. Although impressed by the efforts of the Bolsheviks, the “Easterners” were nationalists and by following the Young Turk reformers, they set their goals to establish constitutional, secular, and republican governments. The “Western” ideal of the Second Group on the other hand, supported the Ottoman order and constitutional monarchy, and aimed to preserve the Islamic foundations of political institutions. Even with this conservative agenda, the “Westerners” supported liberal economic policies in opposition to the emphasis of the “Easterners” on central control of the economy.<sup>21</sup> Kâzım Karabekir, Rauf Orbay, Refet Bele, and Ali Fuat Cebesoy led the debate of the “Westerners,” while Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü represented the “Easterners.”

On the night of October 28, 1923, İnönü and Mustafa Kemal together completed the final draft of the law declaring Turkey a Republic. Even though the National Assembly accepted the declaration the next day, they were aware of the opposition that was waiting for them. When Mustafa Kemal was elected first President of the Republic, and İnönü became Prime Minister, the First Group continued supporting the leadership of Mustafa Kemal and the reform programs of the government. The Second Group’s opposition to the Republic in favor of the restoration of a constitutional monarchy continued, and in 1924, the Second Group officially separated to form the Progressive Republican Party as an alternative to the People’s Party.

For Mustafa Kemal and his supporters, efficiency was the essential aspect of any reform program. Opposition, in the form of democratic antagonism, posed a threat to the reform agenda, which stressed outcome over process. Thus, the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1924–25, and the supposed plot against Mustafa Kemal’s life in 1926 supplied the catalysts for eliminating legitimate opposition in the National Assembly. The revolt was suppressed violently, and its leaders were subjected to summary execution or exile. The Progressive Republican Party was smeared with the taint of complicity in the rebellion, and closed down. This was followed by the uncovering of an apparent plot against Mustafa Kemal’s life, which led to the arrest and trial of several prominent military men, including Kâzım Karabekir, all of whom opposed the personal power of Mustafa Kemal in the People’s Party and in the National Assembly.<sup>22</sup> The elimination or silencing of opposition opened the possibility, and necessity, of announcing a coherent program of reform promising development and progress, national unity, and strength based on the power of the state, military, and single party.



## FROM THE YOUNG TURKS TO KEMALISM

In October 1927 Mustafa Kemal articulated his own vision of the goals of the National Struggle, and the purpose of continuing reform, in a six-day long speech to the People's Party. By outlining his views of the history of the Turkish War of Independence and the early years of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* (speech) was designed to establish his place at the center of the creation of the Turkish Republic, and to demonstrate not only the necessity of reform, but also its historical inevitability. Through the speech, he attacked heroes of the War of Independence who had become political opponents, portraying them as conservative, power-hungry, and dangerous. Thus, his speech served as the justification for establishing a single interpretation of the Turkish past, present, and future, and for suppressing alternative definitions of state, nation, and homeland.<sup>23</sup>

The various reforms of the 1920s and 1930s, and their ideological justification, have come to be known as Kemalism. Kemalism, which promised a peaceful social revolution, was a program aimed at reforming Turkey's political institutions and at developing a national economy free of foreign domination, through statist economic policies.<sup>24</sup> The elimination of the Sultanate, abolition of the Caliphate, and declaration of the Republic were followed by alphabet reform, changes in the legal codes, dress laws, and women's suffrage. Altogether, these reforms were aimed at moving Turkish society closer to the West.<sup>25</sup> Kemalism is also significant for the changes it did not advocate, such as redistribution of land or wealth, or elimination of private property.

The Kemalist approach to defining the nation was inspired partly by solidarist notions adopted from Gökalp, partly by fascist programs of the 1920s and 1930s, and partly by pragmatic considerations of the limits of possibilities in Turkey. The Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*), the Turkish Language Society (*Türk Dil Kurumu*), and the People's Party, especially through the People's Houses, served as the instruments for defining and disseminating the new national identity, and for carrying it into everyday discourse.

The first congress of the Turkish Historical Society, in 1932, marked the proclamation of an official version of Turkish history—and thus of the Turkish future. The Kemalist vision of Turkish history stressed the historic role of the pre-Islamic Turks in forming great civilizations and states, and in carrying knowledge and technology to regions beyond central Asia, including China, Europe, and the Middle East.<sup>26</sup> The Ottoman period was interpreted as one of backwardness and decline, in which Turks were



subjected to the corrupting influence of Arabs and Persians. The Congress also served to proclaim the “Turkishness” of all of the people of Anatolia, thus stressing national unity over ethnic or class affiliation. Likewise, the Turkish Language Society, from the time of its first meeting in 1932, was charged with the task of building on the change of scripts in 1928, to Turkify language and culture, by purging foreign, especially Persian and Arabic, words and developing a language for the masses of Anatolia. The Turkish Language Society served to proclaim the uniqueness and superiority of the Turks and Turkish culture. But more importantly, the language reform aimed at carrying the official language and culture of Kemalism into everyday discourse.<sup>27</sup>

The Historical and Language Societies were meant to carry the Kemalist agenda in popular culture, while the ruling People’s Party embodied the Kemalist agenda for the state. The People’s Party grew out of the CUP and the Association for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia, formed at the Sivas Congress during the Turkish War of Independence. In the winter of 1922–23 Mustafa Kemal began to discuss the formation of a party as the representative of the people. In his public speeches he stressed the “organic nature” of Turkish society and the role of a party in addressing the interests of all: “[Because it] is obvious that classes help each other and their interests are not opposed to one another, to ensure our people’s common and general well-being and prosperity the formation of a party under the name ‘People’s Party’ is being considered.”<sup>28</sup> From the beginning, the People’s Party served as an instrument of control in the National Assembly, providing a forum for debate beyond the procedural limits of the Assembly, and assuring the party leaders of majority votes in the Assembly. The single-party system was legitimated with the assertion that the People’s Party represented the entire Turkish nation. Since there were no recognized class or ethnic tensions in Turkish society, the People’s Party was defined as the party of, and for, all Turks.

In 1931 the People’s Party closed the Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths) that had been created by the CUP, and replaced them a year later with Halk Evleri (People’s Houses). In 1939 Halk Odaları (People’s Rooms) were created to spread the movement to small towns and villages. The CUP had formed the Turkish Hearths in 1911 as cultural extensions of the Young Turks, and they had been reestablished in 1924 as autonomous organizations, under the leadership of Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, the Minister of Education. In the 1920s the Turkish Hearths grew to more than two hundred and fifty branches, where lectures, courses, and social events were held to spread the secularist and nationalist messages of the Turkish Republic.<sup>29</sup>



Possibly inspired by Fascist Italy, Atatürk decided that the time had come to create a youth organization that would be under more firm control of the People's Party. The People's Houses were envisioned as spaces for continuing education, where the masses would be educated in practical skills like literacy, hygiene, and childcare, while being indoctrinated in the fundamentals of Kemalism. In practice, most members of the People's Houses were state employees, particularly teachers, and the intellectual elite of the cities dominated the leadership. The People showed little interest in the People's Houses, viewing them rather as instruments of state control and party propaganda.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Kemalist stress on outcome over process meant that the People's Houses could not serve as space for the people, controlled by the people, since this could allow the emergence of particularist sentiments challenging the universalist claims of Kemalism.

## STATISM IN TURKISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In May 1931, during its Third Congress, the People's Party adopted a program stating that the party held six main values: republican, nationalist, populist, statist, secular, and reformist. The articulation of party principles, which were incorporated into the Turkish constitution in 1937 further tying the state and the People's Party, came in part as a response to the criticisms of the Free Party (see the following section), and perceptions among the leadership that the goals and principles of Mustafa Kemal and his supporters had to be clearly spelled out for the people. Of the six principles, republicanism and nationalism were generally accepted among the politically active elite by the 1930s. Populism and reformism were diluted enough to mean little other than a stress on solidarism and avoidance of Bolshevik style revolution. Statism and secularism have proved to be the principles subject to most debate and disagreement, both within and outside the People's Party. Debate on the meaning of secularism, and the state's role in controlling the public expression of religion, remained muted in the 1930s, but emerged during the presidency of İsmet İnönü, particularly with the advent of multi-party politics. Statism, however, was the subject of serious debate throughout the 1930s, and has remained a central issue in Turkish political discourse ever since.

According to the People's Party's 1931 program: "While holding individual effort and industry as essential, it is among our important principles that the State take an interest—especially in the economic area—in the work required ... to bring the nation satisfaction and the country prosperity