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Nation-Building, Party-Strength, and Regime Consolidation: Kemalism in Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT *Despite its waning influence, Kemalism remains a compelling topic within scholarship on Turkey. In recent years, for instance, a growing literature has critically examined the policies, arrangements, and institutions that underpinned the Kemalist single-party rule (1923–46). Although they have expanded our stock of knowledge on this period and pushed scholarly exchanges beyond polemical debates, most of these studies neglect to account systematically for the origins of the regime and assess it in light of other similar cases from the global south. To address such questions, this paper classifies Kemalism within a category of national-developmentalist regimes. The Turkish case differed from these cases, however, with its low level of institutionalization, particularly its ruling party's limited organizational and mobilizational capacity. While scholars tend to focus on the coercive aspects of Kemalist rule, in reality the regime was built upon a weak party apparatus, a factor that precluded the consolidation of the regime. This paper attributes such an outcome to two factors that gave Mustafa Kemal few incentives to build strong state and party institutions at the onset of his rule, namely (1) a low level of intra-elite conflict and (2) limited popular mobilization. Due to their limited base of support, the Kemalist leadership remained vulnerable to the defection of elites, who could mobilize the popular classes against the ruling party. This paper situates Kemalism as part of a broader category of reformist regimes in the developing world. In so doing, the paper carves out an analytical space wherein scholars can analyze Kemalism in comparative light and highlight the ways with which the Turkish experience differed from other similar cases in the global south.*

Nearly seven decades after the end of the Republican People's Party's (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) single-party rule, Kemalism remains a compelling topic within scholarship on Turkey. In recent years, scholars have moved beyond traditional historiography to analyze various aspects of the Kemalist regime (1923–50), including its ruling party organization, state–society relations, economic agenda, and ethnocultural policies.[1] While they have greatly expanded the stock of knowledge, little

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effort has been made to account for the specific state and party institutions that arose in this period and to analyze their impact on the regime's political trajectory. Moreover, the Kemalist regime was far from unique in the global south and was rather part of a wider trend of nationalist movements with a developmentalist agenda.[2] Like Mustafa Kemal, nationalist leaders such as Peron, Nasser, Nehru, Vargas, Cardenas, and Sukarno came to power in the first half of the twentieth century, establishing modern state and party institutions that remained intact for decades. Yet few studies examine Kemalism from a comparative perspective.[3] How should scholars characterize Kemalism in light of other nationalist movements in the global south? What kind of institutional arrangements did the Kemalist elite develop to establish the authoritarian single-party regime? To what extent does the CHP differ from other nationalist parties in middle-income countries that have promoted a state-led developmentalist agenda?

Drawing on comparative scholarship, this article attempts to fill this comparative and institutional gap in the literature. In so doing, it places Kemalism in a broader universe of national-developmentalist cases. These regimes, despite their diverse historical, geographical, and cultural contexts, advanced a common agenda of economic nationalism, state-led industrialization, mass politics, and non-aligned foreign policy. The Turkish case, however, diverges from other such cases with its low level of institutionalization, as can be seen from the limited organizational capacity of the ruling party. While scholars agree that the regime was coercive, authoritarian, and interventionist, this paper demonstrates that in actuality the Kemalist rule was neither based on a strong party organization nor a corporatist state structure. Due to the low level of intra-elite conflict, Mustafa Kemal swiftly seized power during the Greco-Turkish War and subsequently established a nationalist regime without the need for a strong party organization. Instead, he relied on administrative and coercive institutions inherited from the Ottoman state, while enlisting support from a small coalition of civil servants, military officers, and provincial elites. Not only did this excessive reliance on the state increase corruption but it also curtailed the regime's popular base. During times of economic downturn, the confluence of low institutionalization and a weak popular base left the Kemalist regime vulnerable against opposition, at both mass and elite levels.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section reviews the existing literature on Kemalism, defining it as what is called an ideology of "national developmentalism." It introduces a new conceptual and causal framework to study the origins of Kemalism. The next section analyzes the establishment of the Kemalist regime, highlighting the low level of intra-elite conflict that accompanied Mustafa Kemal's rapid rise to power. The third section argues that faced with only weak elite resistance, Mustafa Kemal built a highly centralized, ruling party that had a weak provincial organization. The fourth section analyzes how this weak official party fared during the regime crisis that followed the Great Depression. While the article focuses on the early republican period, its argument also has relevance for contemporary Turkish politics, particularly on the question of Kemalism's political legacy. More specifically, the institutionalist hypothesis offered here offers a more plausible explanation for the CHP's

current weakness than the largely speculative and untested cultural arguments prevalent in the literature. The CHP's chronic problem of drawing support from mass voters should be attributed less to the party's secularizing agenda than its initial failure, during the early republican years, to incorporate the popular classes. The final section concludes with suggestions on directions for new research.

Situating Kemalism

Kemalism, the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic, served as the primary framework for political conduct under the rule of the CHP. Named after Mustafa Kemal, it was formulated around six principles (known in the political jargon as "arrows"): republicanism, nationalism, secularism, statism, populism, and revolutionism.[4] Kemalism, as a secular, modernizing worldview, carried a political program focused on building a Turkish nation-state. This state support gave Kemalism an inherent advantage over other ideological alternatives, ensuring its dominance for decades to come. Owing to this hegemonic status, Kemalism appropriated, co-opted, and modified a host of political ideas, just as various movements appealed to different aspects of Kemalism to conjure legitimacy for their respective agendas.[5] As each of these groups developed their own interpretation of Mustafa Kemal's legacy, Kemalism began to lose some of its ideological coherence. Not surprisingly, the scholarship on Kemalism is plagued with "conceptual imprecision."[6] Indeed, scholars of Turkish politics have described Kemalism in vastly contradictory terms: highly repressive,[7] conservative modernist,[8] right-wing corporatist,[9] self-orientalist,[10] anti-imperialist,[11] and modernist.[12] Although the presence of different perspectives is crucial for scholarly progress, such radical disagreement runs the risk of obstructing meaningful academic exchange.

Similarly, scholars are divided on the issue of Kemalism's overall contribution to Turkish political developments. Proponents of the single-party rule have argued that the Kemalist regime was committed to the liberal values of nineteenth century European politics. As such, they have claimed that the Kemalist elite did not intend to build a durable dictatorship but rather enacted authoritarian policies for developing the preconditions of a democratic order.[13] Impressed by the scale of the cultural and political reforms spearheaded by Mustafa Kemal, modernization theorists in the 1960s and 1970s generally concurred with this perspective. During the same period, by contrast, leftist intellectuals criticized the Kemalist reforms as being insufficient, but otherwise did not question their revolutionary spirit.[14] Under Ecevit's leadership, this 'left Kemalist' approach even came to power within the CHP.[15] After the late 1970s, however, the socialist circles broke with Kemalist historiography, portraying the Kemalist regime as repressive toward the popular classes and conservative in its economic agenda.[16]

The next generation of scholars built upon this critical analysis to suggest that Kemalism's anti-liberal, anti-urban, and anti-intellectual tone was not compatible with a democratic system, instead promoting a right-wing corporatist ideology.[17] In an attempt to demonstrate how Kemalism constrained the Turkish political

arena in later decades, scholars have focused on three groups excluded by the regime, namely the pious Muslims, non-Muslim groups, and Kurds. This generated a burgeoning literature on the ethno-nationalist and discriminatory economic policies of the single-party era.[18] Since the mid-1990s, concomitant with the resurgence of Islamist and ethnic-Kurdish movements, Kemalism has frequently been depicted as an elitist, discriminatory, authoritarian, and nationalist project not attuned to liberal democracy.[19] Especially in light of the electoral victory of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*—AKP), in November 2002, many scholars have similarly portrayed Kemalist secularism to be exclusionary and assertive.[20] For contemporary Kemalist intellectuals, however, Kemalism remains as the guardian of a modern, secular Turkey, though a "neo-Kemalist" variant that emerged in the 1990s has shifted its focus from the official discourse to the popular level to enlist mass support.[21] These neo-Kemalist commentators, responding to the rise of the AKP and Kurdish nationalism, have also adopted a strong anti-western and third-worldist tone, which culminated in efforts to seek closer ties with Eurasian countries.[22]

To move beyond this conceptual confusion, this paper offers a fresh approach by classifying Kemalism as an ideology of national developmentalism.[23] It argues that from the early 1920s to the 1970s, similar movements arose in several middle-income countries that were plunged into a profound crisis by disruptions in the international system of trade and heightened military conflict. The decline in Western hegemony and the subsequent collapse of colonialism left nationalist leaders in these countries with the challenge of establishing new regimes that could generate both economic development and political stability. In response, they pursued a common formula that combined economic nationalism and redistributive social policies with a strategy of state-led industrialization. To that end, they enjoyed political discretion in building institutions and distributing resources across different sectors, regions, and economic groups. Their agenda of national development, by pragmatically weaving together various ideas and strategies from otherwise conflicting ideologies, constituted an alternative pathway to modernity, distinct from fascism, socialism, social democracy, democratic corporatism, traditional autocracy, and communism.[24]

As part of this agenda, nationalist leaders established a modern state bureaucracy that adopted import substitution industrialization. This new bureaucracy helped private actors to overcome obstacles against industrial investments, including limited market size, and coordination failures. With high tariffs, national firms were insulated from international competition and given a large share of the domestic market. When private investment proved insufficient in sponsoring industrialization, government officials established state-owned enterprises and national banks. The latter was crucial in efficiently exploiting the agricultural surplus and funneling more resources to the industrial sector.[25] Nationalization of foreign companies was another strategy to expand control over the national economy and to create funds for industrial projects. In an effort to sponsor the expansion of the state bureaucracy, national governments raised their fiscal capacity by taking over areas of finance and

taxation. Finally, these leaders invested in the coercive institutions to strengthen their rule against internal and external threats, and expanded the physical infrastructure for creating a national market.

Much of the literature focuses on the notion of economic development in the non-Western world.[26] However, this preoccupation with economic growth can be delimiting in understanding change in the global south. While material prosperity was one of their primary goals, these regimes also promoted other objectives, namely national defense, mass literacy, political equality, and independent foreign policy.[27] The national-developmentalist states therefore expanded their jurisdiction over national education, healthcare, and social security. Industrialization was desired not only to spur economic growth, but also for its contribution to military defense and national prestige. They saw these goals to be part and parcel with an agenda of national development—a political project that combines state-building, economic development, and mass politics. It is this "will to transform" that markedly distinguished these leaders from traditional dictators.[28]

What united these leaders was a desire to improve the relative positioning of their countries in the international arena. In so doing, they envisioned the nation as one unified class, with its economic interests opposed to those in industrialized countries.[29] For them, the unbalanced division of labor in world economy, which produced vast inequalities between industrialized and agricultural countries, was far more important than the conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Consequently, instead of relying on class-based organizations, nationalist elites bargained with economic groups to spawn multi-class movements that could unite society—with the exception of oligarchic elements—behind their agenda.[30] This explains why nationalism, rather than socialism or communism, became a rallying point for these elites; their nationalist ideology was precisely what helped them gain popular legitimacy in the first place. For this task, however, they invested in different state and party institutions, which in turn structured their rule for decades to come.[31] Despite facing similar adaptive pressures in the world economy, however, some leaders invested in political institutions that offered corporatist representation to economic groups and subsequently incorporated them into the regime, whereas others preferred to rely on more informal arrangements based on personal rule.

Perhaps these differences can best be grasped through a cursory glance at the modernizing single-party regimes in Mexico and Turkey. At the turn of the twentieth century, both countries witnessed a revolution ending a long period of authoritarian rule under Porfirio Diaz (1876–80 and 1884–1910) and Abdulhamid II (1876–1909), respectively. Initially, the Young Turk and Mexican Revolutions spurred chaos and economic turbulence, dismantling the delicate balance between central authorities, provincial elites, and popular classes. After a decade of political instability, however, a small group of military and political leaders in both countries managed to cobble together a wide array of regional interests, socio-economic actors, and ideological factions under the umbrella of a weakly centralized, official party. While Mexican leaders incorporated the peasantry and industrial workers into the ruling party, namely the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido*

Revolucionario Institucional, PRI), their Turkish counterparts neither invested in a strong party organization nor broadened their political base.[32] Instead, the Kemalist elite eschewed mediating institutions between the state and society to spawn a limited political coalition of civil servants, military officers, local notables, and urban professionals. Thanks to the PRI's impressive organizational and mobilizational capacity, the authoritarian regime in Mexico survived well into the 1990s and enjoyed a high level of popular support.[33] In sharp contrast, the CHP had limited popular appeal and was voted out of office in the 1950 elections.

Waves of National Developmentalism: The Origins of Kemalism

The onset of national-developmentalist states was clustered temporally along major changes in the global arena spurred by large wars, economic crises, and inter-state rivalry. These dramatic episodes in world history, such as WWI, WWII, Great Depression, and decolonization, compelled national elites to challenge the old order in their countries and enact more interventionist policies. This is not to suggest that domestic factors played little role in precipitating these trends. But rather, the aforementioned events provided an impetus for change in the non-Western world, which heavily relied on world trade and acutely felt the threat of major military powers. In other words, these cases emerged against a backdrop of heightened security threats, economic conflicts, and political instability that had already weakened the old order. At such periods, political elites were more likely to challenge the old order for promoting a national model of economic development. The first wave began at the turn of the twentieth century, when, following a long period of rapid integration into the world economy,[34] excessive taxes, and rising discontent among the middle and popular classes triggered revolutionary upheavals in Russia (1905), Iran (1906), Ottoman Empire (1908), Mexico (1910), and China (1911).[35] Major disruptions in international trade during WWI further overburdened the global order, thus initiating a protectionist wave that accelerated after the Great Depression. During this interwar era, apart from the aforementioned revolutions, military and political elites also came to power with the pretext of enhancing state power and national development in several other cases, including Poland, Hungary, Greece, Romania, Thailand, and Brazil.

The Ottoman defeat in WWI spurred such a systemic crisis for the Turkish society.[36] Apart from the disastrous economic and social costs of the war, the country came under the Allies' control. The Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, IT) resigned in the aftermath of the armistice, thereby triggering a major power vacuum in the provinces. Against the backdrop of the collapsing Ottoman state, Muslim provincial elites established local and regional defense associations to maintain political order.[37] Many were former IT members, who willingly collaborated with nationalist army commanders, such as Mustafa Kemal.[38] In turn, nationalist officers relied on these local actors to draw popular support for the resistance movement. Their support was vital for mobilizing the Anatolian masses,

most of whom lived far removed from the transportation and communication networks of the empire.

Each of these resistance groups remained committed to local aims, whereas Mustafa Kemal and his entourage held an agenda of national defense. Accordingly, in 1919, Kemal co-opted these local defense associations under a single national body—Association for the Defense of Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia (*Anadolu ve Rumeli* Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti). With the support of this organization, he isolated the Istanbul government from Anatolia, compelling the sultan to hold the election for the House of Deputies. Following Istanbul's invasion by the Allies, in March 1920, the nationalists convened the Grand National Assembly, gathering local representatives from across the country in Ankara. Thus the parliament, which gave civilian actors influence over the management of the nationalist struggle, solidified the link between the military–bureaucratic class and the provincial elites.[39]

How is it that these concessions to the provincial elites did not spur further institutional development in the Turkish context? Why did these local resistance groups not turn into a strong political party with a mass organization? Part of the explanation lies in the fact that in 1920, after Istanbul's occupation, a sizable portion of the Ottoman bureaucracy defected to the nationalist cause. Mustafa Kemal, in turn, used these bureaucratic networks to expand the movement on a national scale and strengthen his own leadership. Since there was elite unity against the backdrop of foreign invasion, which then made it easier to rally the popular classes from above, Mustafa Kemal easily surmounted three distinct challenges to his leadership. First, the Istanbul government declared the nationalist leaders to be traitors, ordering their immediate arrest. Luckily for them, Istanbul no longer had the bureaucratic capacity to execute this policy; the Ankara government twice defeated the armed bands dispatched from Istanbul in the name of the Ottoman sultan.[40] Ankara was also challenged by feudal clans and tribes, which used the existing power vacuum to reverse previous administrative reforms. Given the shortage of troops, the nationalist government co-opted local militias to suppress these revolts.

Yet this strategy left Ankara exposed to what Masayuki calls the "nonconformist-type national irregulars," who had initially supported the nationalist cause but refused the centralization of power in Ankara.[41] When Kemal attempted to bring these guerrilla/partisan bands under a centralized military command, a small-scale civil war broke out that ended with Ankara's victory.[42] Third, Kemal's centralized agenda also met with the resistance of those deputies in the Ankara parliament who became acutely concerned with the power amassed at his hands. At the time, the parliament reflected the diversity of the Ottoman society with various factions and political groups, including the IT diehards, populists, Kurdish federalists, Turkish nationalists, and Muslim conservatives. Amidst wartime, however, Kemal could not tolerate such elite disunity. Therefore, he reached out to these groups with a populist program that accommodated their diverse demands and formed a parliamentary caucus, named First Group.[43]

Formation of the Kemalist State and Party Institutions

Following the military victory over the Greek forces, Kemal had little use for the increasingly hostile parliament. In 1923, he called for new elections, and reorganized the Society for the Defense of Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia into a new, hierarchical party that would purportedly unite the entire nation—the People's Party.[44] To eliminate opposition from the new parliament, he carefully pruned the list of potential candidates, removing local authorities who resisted the new party project. Mustafa Kemal then embarked on a tour of the liberated Anatolian provinces, determined to turn his military prestige into political support. This country tour enabled him to appeal directly to the farmers and merchants, who constituted a clear majority of the electorate.[45] His opponents, who were from disparate provincial backgrounds, lacked a national organization to rival Kemal's bureaucratic machine. In the end, the Kemalists scored an impressive electoral victory: only three opposition members were elected to the parliament.[46]

This electoral victory, along with the end of the military conflict, provided suitable ground for a wide elite consensus behind the Kemalist government. This was compounded by the fact that ideological schisms and partisan divides in this period revolved more around questions of secularism and national identity than class issues and redistribution. Following a decade of war, which sharply reduced production and population levels, most economic elites expected government support in economic recovery. The political debate, on the other hand, centered on the institutional characteristics of the new state. The Kemalist elite acted in a resolute and radical fashion in this matter, lest any delay would risk a political stasis and embolden their political opponents. As such, they proclaimed the republic and abolished the Caliphate in October 1923 and March 1924, respectively.[47] The national assembly subsequently adopted the 1924 Constitution envisioning a strong parliament, which provided the legal blueprint of the new regime.[48] In reality, though, Mustafa Kemal was the supreme leader, for he nominated parliamentary candidates in the elections.

Secure in power, there was little need for Mustafa Kemal to pursue a costly strategy of popular mobilization. Instead, he relied on the administrative and coercive institutions inherited from the Ottoman state, eschewing the chance to establish a strong party committed to social transformation. To ensure the military's loyalty, Mustafa Kemal appointed his rivals in the army to ceremonial posts and raised the salary of the veteran officers.[49] In 1923, the government officially moved the capital to Ankara, thus ending Istanbul's hegemony and further bolstered its political control with a new administrative reform dividing the country into provinces administered by Ankara-appointed governors.[50] In taking these steps, he was supported particularly by Ismet Inonu[51] (Prime Minister, 1923–24, 1925–37) and Fevzi Çakmak (Chief of the General Staff, 1921–44), who tightly integrated the state bureaucracy and the military into the new regime.

The main political opposition to the new regime came from within the elite ranks. Accordingly, several of Kemal's former comrades, such as Rauf Orbay, Kazim

Karabekir, Refet Bele, and Ali Fuat Cebesoy, opposed his monopolization of power and his radical reformist agenda.[52] Sidelined from power, they feared that the new regime was drifting toward a dictatorial system. Soon, those groups harmed by the capital's transfer from Istanbul—including the Ottoman establishment and the Istanbul media—coalesced behind them. However, though personally popular, the generals had neither the societal power base nor the organization necessary to challenge the regime. Initiating a military revolt against Ankara, as was frequently seen in Mexico, was also out of the question, given Kemal's popularity within the army. In 1924 Kemal eliminated this scenario by asking all generals to resign their parliamentary seats and focus on their military posts.[53] For a while, Kemal's critics used the CHP organs to constrain the government; but the Kemalist hardliners soon blocked these channels, leaving them with no other option but to resign and form an opposition party, named the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Firkasi*, TCF).[54]

Although the CHP only had a few provincial branches at this point,[55] the ruling elites possessed a clear advantage over their rivals: state resources. Even before the opposition party was formed, in the summer of 1924, Ismet and Mustafa Kemal embarked on a national tour in hopes of courting the provincial elites.[56] In a largely illiterate, agricultural society, enlisting the support of these local actors was vital to maintain political control. Accordingly, the government offered them state patronage and various material benefits (abolition of the land title, higher loans to farmers, railroad construction, etc.) in exchange for their political acquiescence, a condition they mostly accepted. Weakened by the military conflicts of the past decade, the local Muslim/Turkish bourgeoisie indeed looked toward Ankara for economic support and collaboration to seize the vast property that the non-Muslims left behind. Since the non-Muslims composed a sizable portion of the commercial elite, artisans, and urban professionals, their destruction also weakened the local bourgeoisie that could have sustained such opposition efforts.[57] Instead, the new regime was left with a rural population that was easier to control.

The only armed resistance against the regime took place in the Eastern provinces.[58] The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925, as it later came to be known, was in large part triggered by a loss of autonomy, acutely felt by Kurdish tribal and religious leaders in the East. Over the last two years, the Kemalist regime tightened its tax and troop collection, abolished the caliphate, and closed down local madrasas. To stabilize the region, the government relied on an implicit pact with Kurdish landed elites and feudal lords, who, in exchange for political acquiescence, received state favoritism and political influence. On the other hand, rival elites and religious leaders were excluded from the regime, thus giving them an incentive to mobilize their subordinate network of religious followers, tribesmen, and poor tenants. Dense tribal, kinship, and religious networks allowed Kurdish notables to overcome their collective action problems and challenge state authority through popular mobilization.[59]

The government soon crushed the revolt with a military campaign that also employed the air force. More importantly, however, this incident provided a powerful

impetus for Ankara to adopt an assimilationist agenda and to establish coercive institutions in the region that were put in charge of state–society relations. Although this was a localized event, the Kemalist majority in parliament used the revolt as a pretext to enact a draconian legislation, Maintenance of Order Law (*Takrir-i* Sükun Kanunu), which allowed the regime to outlaw almost any opposition group.[60] In the ensuing months, the government would engage in a wave of repression against the opposition media, banning newspapers and organizations, as well as closing down the Progressive Republican Party and the Communist Party. Furthermore, using an assassination attempt as an excuse, Mustafa Kemal liquidated the two main elite groups in the opposition camp just before the 1927 election: leaders of the banned TCF and surviving IT leaders.[61]

By 1926, the collegial relationships within the nationalist cadres were replaced by a clear hierarchy. At this point, few could influence government decisions. The resulting party configuration was a highly centralized organization, linking a coalition of provincial elites with state authorities for political domination. Notably, the CHP was established from above to consolidate power, in sharp contrast with the IT whose skeleton organization came into existence during the opposition years under Abdulhamid's rule.[62] From the outset, then, the Kemalist elite showed little interest in expanding the CHP's provincial organization, given their concomitant control over the state bureaucracy. Mustafa Kemal, facing no threat from below, had little use for forming a mass-party organization. He therefore tightened his control over the nationalist defense associations, purging his opponents as well as forcing many branches to inactivity. In many ways, the CHP was used by the ruling class to dampen political participation and preserve the existing social structure.

Meanwhile, Kemal's frequent interventions precluded the rise of regularized rules and procedures, thereby eschewing the party's institutional development. For example, the CHP did not have a political program for years and held its first convention in 1927.[63] Accordingly, the ruling party turned into a personalistic organization, which depended on Mustafa Kemal's strong leadership. Indeed, leadership strength was another area where the CHP sharply differed from the IT, with its collegial model of leadership. The party's 1927 statute, for instance, declared Kemal as the "Supreme Leader,"[64] granting him the authority to select the parliamentary candidates for the general elections. When the party's General Congress was not in session, all decisions concerning the party were delegated to the Executive Committee (*Parti Riyaset Divanı*), dominated by Kemal himself.[65]

While Mustafa Kemal hoped to control the CHP provincial and local organizations through party inspectors, his outreach had its limits.[66] Due to the low level of mobilization, a small group of commercial elites and landowners captured party branches in many provincial towns, thus conflating political and economic power at the local level.[67] Owing to their patron–client linkages with the popular classes, these figures retained influence over the local bureaucracy and used their political clout to shape the way government policies were implemented in their areas. To the frustration of members of the rising middle class, the local party cadres were also not inclined to expand political participation, fearing that new recruits would upset the

political balance and remove them from office. Accordingly, the membership rate remained stagnant at five percent throughout the 1920s.[68] In the absence of electoral competition, no clear mechanism existed to assess party performance and replace the local party bosses. Though engaged in radical political and cultural reforms at the macro level, the Kemalist elite thus failed in their attempts to disseminate their policies beyond major urban centers.

Patterns of Regime Transformation: Survival of the Kemalist Regime

During the Great Depression, the sharp decline in the price of agricultural commodities plunged the Turkish economy into an economic crisis. Although the relatively small size of its export sector spared Turkey from a worse slump, the country still experienced foreign exchange shortages and trade deficits. Moreover, domestic trade remained stagnant from 1929 to 1932, forcing many business and farmers into bankruptcy.[69] In response, the government came under intense elite and mass criticisms for its high taxes and deflationary policies. There was soon a popular backlash against the state bureaucracy and the CHP provincial organization, both tainted by corruption and nepotism. Although the regime's coercive capacity deterred elite splits, the growing discontent promoted what was initially an ersatz party—the Free Republican Party—into a serious contender in the 1930 municipal election.[70] The ruling party, by contrast, was not well suited to maintain elite unity and popular support at a time of crisis. Many local CHP cadres, instead of mobilizing support for the government, joined the opposition. Furthermore, in some parts of the country, economic grievances compounded the existing political problems to ignite reactionary outbursts such as the Menemen incident[71] and an ethnic rebellion in the province of Agri. After nearly a decade in power, the Kemalist elite came to grips with the unpopularity of their policies.

To counter this regime crisis, the Kemalist leadership increased state control over both the economy and society, engaged in ideological mobilization, and expanded its ranks. In short, statism became a panacea to address the aforementioned popular grievances, thereby allowing the ruling elites to consolidate the regime. First, the government built the institutional infrastructure—such as the currency board, the Central Bank and several new state banks, state-owned enterprises—that sheltered the national economy from global imbalances in the Depression era.[72] In the ensuing years, the Kemalist leadership would heavily regulate the international trade, maintain the agricultural prices above their market levels, and promote state-led industrialization through the First Five-Year plan.[73] Concurrently, the ruling class also turned their attention to codifying Kemalist ideas into an official ideology, which would then shape the policy course of the regime and attain elite unity.[74] In 1931, the six Kemalist principles were formally included in the CHP program. While this measure targeted the elites, the government also engaged in state-sponsored academic efforts to raise national consciousness through the creation of Kemalist myths, particularly in areas of Turkish language and history.[75]

Threatened by any source of opposition, the government also abolished several associations that remained independent of the CHP. This policy was more an admission of weakness than a sign of the regime's totalitarian tendencies. That is, unable to enlist sufficient popular support to control or compete against these organizations, the Kemalist elite saw their co-optation as the only strategy to survive. Most particularly, the government closed the *Türk Ocakları* (Turkish Hearths), originally established by the IT as a cultural center to propagate Turkish nationalism, whose property was absorbed by the CHP and subsequently replaced by the *Halk Evleri* (People's Houses).[76] With this campaign of political indoctrination, the Kemalist elite partly succeeded in gaining the support of the educated groups in society and mobilized a small but dedicated cadre to defend the regime. Given this elitist approach and lack of party-based mobilization, however, these efforts reached out to a small segment of the population, urban dwellers, students, and teachers, who constituted the backbone of the modern, secular society envisioned by the Kemalist elite. In contrast, the majority of the population, that is, the subsistence farmers of Anatolia, continued to remain estranged from the Kemalist cultural agenda, unincorporated to the state and party institutions.[77] Finally, the regime also expanded its ranks, albeit from the top and in a controlled fashion. Notably, the Kemalist leadership allowed some debate in the 1931 CHP convention, thereby enabling delegates with ties to the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, as well as middle-class farmers, to voice their criticisms. After the Free Republican Party dissolved itself, the CHP co-opted some Free Republican Party members such as Adnan Menderes to strengthen its ranks. Similarly, the ruling party broadened its candidate list in the 1931 election, nominating several prominent Unionists with strong ties to the local bourgeoisie, such as Halil Menteşe and Mithat Şükrü Bleda, along with a small number of worker and peasant candidates.[78]

Despite these policies, the ruling party failed to forge stronger ties with socioeconomic groups. Notably, the party's powerful general secretary, Recep Peker, strove to maintain the party's organizational autonomy—but to no avail. Since, for him, the ruling party embodied the social, economic, and political needs of society, there was no need for an alternative organization.[79] Known for his fascist sympathies, Peker considered it his mission to create this party and its ideology. At some point, however, Mustafa Kemal became concerned with this trend, quite possibly fearing that a strong party organization could give his rivals an independent base of power to challenge him directly. In June 1936, he dismissed Peker with the pretext that he "was trying to gain like Stalin in Russia control of the party for himself."[80] Instead, he left the ruling party in the state's guardianship: according to a directive issued the next day, the minister of interior became general secretary of the party and provincial governors placed in charge of the party branches in their respective provinces.[81] Peker's abrupt removal thwarted the possibility for the rise of a strong ruling party, however authoritarian, which could promote its agenda over both the civil bureaucracy and the social classes. Instead, the state–party fusion enhanced bureaucratic tutelage over the already weak CHP provincial organization, thereby limiting its institutional presence in the ensuing years.

Conclusion

This article, in an attempt to dispel the conceptual confusion in the academic literature, has located Kemalism within a category of national-developmentalist movements that emerged during the first half of the twentieth century. Like in other comparable nationalist regimes—such as Mexico, Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, Brazil, Thailand, and India—the Kemalist elite adopted a common agenda of state-led industrialization, political modernization, and a non-aligned foreign policy. Yet each of these regimes pursued such objectives through different institutional configurations. Among them, the Kemalist regime in Turkey stands out with its ruling party's low level of institutionalization and weak organization. This article attributes this phenomenon to the low level of intra-elite conflict that accompanied Mustafa Kemal's initial rise to power, which eschewed his incentive to build a robust ruling party. The choice to not invest in a strong political party, however, later constrained the Kemalist leadership's policy options. Notably, it precluded the regime from disciplining the landed elites and the commercial bourgeoisie. Since the state's ability to collect taxes from the economic elites was constrained, labor wages and rural transfers to peasants also remained low. It also left a major gap in the state–society relations, which was later filled by the opposition parties that emerged in the aftermath of WWII.

One of the main goals of this article has been to call for comparative research situating the single-party era into a wider context in world history. This exercise would allow researchers to ask more systematic questions pertaining to Kemalism, particularly its policy agenda and institutional choices. Despite the high number of works on Kemalism, many puzzles remain unsolved. The first includes the rapid electoral demise of the Kemalist regime during the late 1940s. Why did the Kemalist elite fail so remarkably in their efforts to institute a dominant party regime and remain in power under a multi-party system? What, in particular, disabled them from enlisting more popular support? Second, if low party capacity was so debilitating for a political regime, why did the Kemalist elites not invest in the CHP organization after Mustafa Kemal's death? In other words, what accounts for the party's persistent organizational weakness throughout the ensuing decades? Third, how did such a weakly institutionalized party remain politically intact during the same period? What enabled the CHP to change its ideological outlook and remain relevant in the political arena, while its more popular rivals could not attain such continuity over time? The existing scholarship would benefit immensely from addressing these questions.

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Notes

1. Koçak, *Belgelerle Iktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Firkasi*; Brockett, *Collective Action and the Turkish Revolution*; Yildiz, *Ne Mutlu Turkum Diyebilene*; Akin, "Reconsidering State, Party, and Society in Early Republican Turkey"; Atabaki and Brockett, *Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labor*; Metinsoy, "Fragile Hegemony, Flexible authoritarianism, and Governing from Below."
2. My use of the term "global south" is similar to the "semi-periphery" as used by the dependency scholars during the 1970s. In other words, I categorize series of countries that otherwise differed in their national cultures, historical legacies, religions, and geographical locations based on the similar position they occupied in the international division of labor. These cases were not fully institutionalized but nor were they consigned to the low-wage scale world economy, instead occupying a middle stratum. As such, indigenous leaders could hope to muster local resources in such a way as to initiate an import-substitution developmental model that would advance their respective countries relative to the industrialized world. Compared to more "peripheral" cases, these countries also had a higher degree of political centralization and more advanced state structures, which made this political project more feasible. While these cases frequently grouped together under the rubric of "emerging market" or "developing countries," this paper suggests that such structural similarities existed since at least the early twentieth century. I thank Asli Iğsız for pushing me to make this point explicit and help establish the connection between the two historical periods.
3. For some exceptions, see Özbudun, "Established Revolution versus Unfinished Revolution," 380–405; Waterbury, *Exposed to İnnumerable Delusions*; Atabaki and Zurcher, *Men of Order*; Angrist, *Party Building*.
4. Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics*, ch. 1.
5. For the most comprehensive anthology of Kemalism, see the volume edited by Insel *Kemalizm*.
6. Parla and Davison, *Corporatism in Kemalist Turkey*, 9
7. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*; Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*.
8. Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*; Atabaki and Zurcher, *Men of Order*.
9. Parla, *Türkiye'de siyasal kültürün resmî kaynakları*; Parla and Davison, *Corporatism in Kemalist Turkey*.
10. Kahraman, *Bülent. İçselleştirilmiş, Açık ve Gizli*.
11. Ecevit, *Atatürk ve devrimcilik*.
12. Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*; Kili, *Ataturk Devrimi: bir Cagdaslasma modeli*; Timur, *Turk Devrimi ve Sonrasi*.
13. Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*; Rustow, *Ataturk as Founder of a State*; Weiker, *Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey*.
14. Ecevit, *Atatürk ve devrimcilik*; Ecevit, *Bu düzen değişmelidir*; Avcıoğlu, *Türkiye'nin düzeni: dün, bugün, yarın*.
15. Kili, *1960–1975 doneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisinde gelismeler*; Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics*, ch. 3.
16. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*; Başkaya, *Batılılaşma, çağdaşlaşma, kalkınma paradigmanın iflası;* Beşikçi, *Cumhuriyet halk fırkasının programı*.

17. Parla, *Türkiye'de siyasal kültürün resmî kaynakları*; Kansu, "Türkiye'de Korporatist Düşünce"; Parla and Davison, *Corporatism in Kemalist Turkey*.
18. Aktar, *Varlık vergisi ve "Türkleştirme" politikaları*; Yildiz, *Ne Mutlu Turkum Diyebilene*.
19. Koçak, *Belgelerle Iktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Firkasi*; Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*. For a stimulating critique of this literature, see Alaranta, *Contemporary Kemalism.*
20. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion*; Hale and Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism.*
21. Kışlalı, *Atatürk'e saldırmanın dayanılmaz hafifliği*; Kışlalı, *Kemalizm, laiklik ve demokrasi*; Savaş, *İrtica ve bölücülüğe karşı militan demokrasi*; Manisalı, *İslamcı siyaset ve cumhuriyet*.
22. Akçali and Perincek, "Kemalist Eurasianism," 550–569.
23. For earlier attempts at classification, see Matossian, "Ideologies of Delayed Industrialization"; Sigmund, *The Ideologies of the Developing Nations*.
24. For these types, see Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*; Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy*; Berman, *Sheri, Social Democratic Moment*; Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets.*
25. Chibber, *Locked In Place*, 16.
26. Evans, *Embedded Autonomy*, Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*; Chibber, *Locked In Place*; Kohli, *State-Directed Development*.
27. Kurtz, *Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective*, 1–17.
28. Waterbury, *Exposed to İnnumerable Delusions*, ch. 2.
29. It should be mentioned that the dependency and world-systems theorists have also addressed some of these questions, especially explaining how the relative positioning of countries in the capitalist system affect their long-term patterns of growth. Indeed, this article has taken some inspiration from this approach and, in particular, shares its systemic focus on the middle-income countries as part of a larger global economy. Yet it also differs from this literature in several important ways. First, unlike these studies, this article suggests that political leaders in the middle-income countries enjoyed autonomy from market forces, both in the domestic and international arenas. It was precisely this autonomy that enabled them to address their countries' structural problems by way of promoting industrialization, social progress, and economic growth. Similarly, this article also does not dismiss the possibility that the state can become an engine of economic growth. Finally, deviating from their uniform analysis of the state in the South, this article accounts for the specific state and party structures that were established in Kemalist Turkey, with a different capacity to mobilize domestic actors than other similar cases. For more on the dependency and world-systems theories, see Cardoso and Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*; Evans, *Dependent Development*; Wallerstein, *Centrist Liberalism Triumphant*.
30. Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*, 24.
31. Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, Angrist, *Party Building*; Slater, *Ordering Power*. For an excellent discussion of the different regime types, see Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes.*
32. For Mexico, see Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*; Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*. The most comprehensive study to date on the CHP is Ciddi's *Kemalism in Turkish Politics*, which traces the development of the party, focusing particularly on the interplay between secularism, nationalism, and populism as part of its Kemalist agenda. Bila's *CHP 1919–2009* offers a less theoretical but still useful chronological account of the party during its first nine decades.
33. On the better performance of institutionalized party regimes, see Smith, "Life of the Party," 421–451; Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*; Svolik, *Politics of Authoritarian Rule*.
34. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*; Wallerstein, *Centrist Liberalism Triumphant.*
35. For these revolutions, see Knight, *Mexican Revolution*. Kansu, *Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*; Sohrabi, "Constitutional Revolutions."
36. For WWI's impact on the Ottoman Empire, see Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*.

37. For the regional congresses held in Anatolia at the time, see Tekeli and Ilkin, *Ege'deki Sivil Direnişten Kurtuluş Savaşı'na Geçerken*; Tanör, *Türkiye'de kongre iktidarları*.
38. Zurcher, *Unionist Factor*.
39. For the role strong legislatures play in incorporating the opposition forces and potential challengers into the regime, see Gandhi and Przeworski, "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," 1279–1301; Wright and Escriba-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions and Regime Survival," 283–309.
40. Mango, *Ataturk*, 275–276; Gingeras, "Notorious Subjects, Invisible Citizens."
41. Yama'uchi, "Reflections on the Social Movements," 42. Perhaps the most famous of them were Circassian Ethem and his two brothers, Resit and Tevfik. Ranchers by professions, they were one of the major power-brokers within the Circassian community of Northwest Anatolia.
42. Mango, *Ataturk*, 300–301.
43. Hanioglu, *Ataturk*, ch. 5. For more on the intra-parliamentary opposition against Kemal, see Frey, *Turkish Political Elite*, 306–323; Güneş, *Birinci Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nin düşünsel yapısı;* Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet*.
44. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*, ch. 1.
45. Uyar, *Tek Parti Donemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, 71–74; Mango, *Atatürk*, 370–376.
46. For more on the 1923 election, see Güneş, "1923 Seçimlerinde Oylar Nasıl Kullanıldı"; Demirel, *Tek partinin yükselişi*, 151–162.
47. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*, 70–91; Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, ch. 6.
48. Alpkaya, *Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Kurulusu*.
49. Mango, *Atatürk*, 393.
50. Keskin, *Türkiye'de devletin toprak*, 272–289.
51. For more on Inonu's life and career, see Heper, *İsmet İnönü*.
52. Zürcher, *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic*, Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*, 104–133.
53. Hale, "The Turkish Republic and its Army"; Sarigil, "Turkish Military Principal or Agent?"
54. In fact, a substantial group within the ruling party seems to have preferred at this point a moderate course. To prevent more resignations, Kemal briefly replaced the Prime Minister Inonu with Fethi Bey but then quickly sided with the hardliners. Mango, *Ataturk*, 418–419; Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*, 105–107.
55. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti*, 94–99.
56. Mango, *Atatürk*, 410–414.
57. Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey*; Baskan, "What Made Ataturk's Reforms Possible?"
58. Olson, *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*; Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 89–100. For the extent of collective action during this period, see Brockett, "Collective Action and the Turkish Revolution."
59. Since Kurdish tribal and religious leaders like Sheikh Said collected the tithe tax, its abolition was a major blow to their power base. I thank Ahmet Kuyas for raising this point. For the complicated political landscape of the region, see Bruinessen *Agha, Sheikh, and State*, Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State;* and Klein, *Margins of Empire*.
60. Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 100–112.
61. For an extensive discussion of these trials, see Ibid., ch. 4
62. Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*.
63. Kili, *1960–1975 döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisinde gelişmeler*, 58.
64. Uyar, *Tek Parti Donemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, 242.
65. Ibid., 243.
66. Akin, "Reconsidering State, Party, and Society in early Republican Turkey," 440–441.
67. This local bourgeoisie had a history of collaboration with Ottoman state officials in areas of tax collection, local governance, and troop mobilization. For more on these families, see Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*.
68. Öz, *Türkiye'de tek-parti yönetimi ve siyasi katılım*, 182–183.

69. Silier, *Türkiye'de tarımsal yapının gelişimi,* 47–60; Hale, "Ideology and Economic Development in Turkey," 100–117; Emrence, "Turkey in Economic Crisis (1927–1930)," 67–80.
70. Most of it came from the ranks of the urban middle class, including merchants, professionals, and civil servants. On the Serbest Cumhuriyet Firkasi, see Weiker, *Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey*; Emrence, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*; Koçak, *Belgelerle Iktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Firkasi*.
71. Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey Kemalism*, ch. 1.
72. Tekeli and İlkin, *1929 dünya Buhranında*; *Uygulamaya geçerken Türkiyede devletçiliğin oluşumu*; Barlas, *Etatism and Diplomacy in Turkey.*
73. A detailed look at the Kemalist economic policy is beyond the scope of the paper. For such a comprehensive economic analysis of this period, see Silier, *Türkiye'de tarımsal yapının gelişimi;* Waterbury, *Exposed to Innumerable Delusions*; Keyder, *Definition of a Peripheral Economy*, Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Donemi Iktisat Tarihi*; Kuruç, *Mustafa Kemal döneminde ekonomi*.
74. Kuyas, *Ideology of the Revolution*; T ürkes, "Ideology of the Kadro [Cadre] Movement"; Aydin, "Peculiarities of Turkish Revolutionary Ideology in the 1930s."
75. Behar, *İktidar ve tarih*; Copeaux, *Türk tarih tezinden Türk-İslam sentezine*.
76. See Üstel, *İmparatorluktan ulus-devlete Türk milliyetçiliği*. For more on People's Houses, see Karpat, "The People's Houses in Turkey"; Simsek, "People's Houses as a Nationwide Project for Ideological Mobilization."
77. Karaömerlİoğlu, "People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant."
78. Öz, *Türkiye'de tek-parti yönetimi ve siyasi Katılım*, 170–171; Uyar, *Tek Parti Donemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, 263–265.
79. Alaranta, *Contemporary Kemalism*, 111–120; Peker, *İnkıl âp dersleri*.
80. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics*, 73.
81. Uyar, *Tek Parti Donemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, 78.

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