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The Changes Made to the Electoral Systems in Turkey and their Reflections to The Elections

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Abstract

Until 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was governed by absolute monarchy but after many developments in Europe, democracy emerged in political life of humanity once more after centuries and Ottoman Empire was also affected by these developments. On the way to democracy, the first stop was the constitution in 1876. But after a short while, it was abolished and the country turned to monarchy once more for the next 33 years. Then the new constitution was put into power and the foundation of Turkish Republic changed many things in political life. After the new constitution, Turkey went through one-party government for 27 years. Then, democratic trends in Turkey and the whole world got stronger and a new era started in Turkey with Democratic Party. Then different coup d'états came and new elections were held. But the core point in the elections became the electoral systems. While the parties in power do not want to change the system for their sake, the opposition parties all opened hot discussions about them. They mainly changed after the coup d'etats in Turkey. The political parties just made small modifications to the electoral systems and they affected the results very much. For instance, in 2002, because of the electoral system, 45% of the voters were not represented in the Parliament.

Key Words: Elections, Electoral Systems, Political Parties, Turkey

1. Introduction

The electoral systems are core points in political life. They affect the election results and in a ripple effect, many other things. In Turkey, the electoral systems were discussed much by the opposition parties and they all tried to change them so as to be beneficial for them. But the parties in power generally ignored such ideas and even sometimes made some modifications to the system so as to make it beneficial to themselves. But the radical changes were made after the coup d'états. And they affected the results of the elections very much.

2. Democracy and Elections: Related Terms and Theories

2.1. The Definition of democracy

It is one of the mostly used terms in daily life. It originally comes from Latin and is made up of two different words. The first one is "demo" which means public and the second one is "kratos" which means sovereignty or power [1]. Etymologically it comes from old Greek from the Word "demokratia" and it changed into "démocratie" in French in 1570s and came to the modern World [2]. Oxford dictionary defines it as governing of a state by the public or elected representatives [3]. Merriam-Webster defines democracy as a means of governing the state in which people elect their leaders [4].

As far as these definitions are concerned, it could be concluded that the core terms in democracy are public and elections. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln quoted about democracy as follows: "of the people, by the people, and for the people." For those times when democracy was having teething troubles, it was an explanation which could be seen as excelling those times' perceptions. But for the modern times, it could be seen as inadequate because today it is considered to include more terms such as more rights to elect and to be elected, the rivalry between political parties, the right to obtain information, freedom of thought, the right for citizens to elect on a regular basis [5].

2.2. Normative Theory of Democracy

As the history of democracy went on, two different definitions of it developed. The first one is normative theory in which what is seen as ideal through democratic processes is to be obtained. That is to say, democracy is for the people and it should meet the all needs of the citizens in the country they live in. If democracy is of the people, by the people, and for the people then the definition above should include all the meanings that the normative theory comes up with [6]. The idea that democracy should meet all the needs seems to be fascinating idea. But it has been criticized by many others because although the results mentioned are much desired, it is almost impossible to meet all the needs of the public [7]. What the normative theory idealizes here is to be handled and redefined as to be more realizable. Moreover that kind of democracy has never come into existence and it will never come [8]. This kind of understanding is nothing more than a pure ideal but it cannot be denied and people should try hard to obtain better. Because of the reason that this way of defining democracy is extremely difficult to realize, empirical theory of democracy has emerged.

2.3. Empirical Theory of Democracy

This theory bases its core concepts not on what should be but what is indeed [8]. It defines democracy according to how the modern democratic countries and their systems work. This kind of countries are also named as polyarchy in order to make distinction between ideal democracy and this kind [9]. So for a country to be named as democratic, it should keep the following features:

- The citizens should have the right to found an organization and to participate in any of them freely.
- Freedom of expression

- The right to vote
- The right to be appointed to public office
- For political leaders to have the right to compete with the rivals
- The existence of different media sources of getting information
- Free elections [9].

2.4. Electoral Systems

For the time being, democracy is considered as the best system that humanity has found up to now. This feature of democracy provides the best conditions in which human beings can develop their own talents. A democratic system provides a basis in which people can organize legally try to come to power. Coming to power is obviously possible for people through the elections. The core questions about democracy are stated as follows by [21]:

- 1) Who will govern?
- 2) How will the governors be determined and how will they govern?
- 3) How will the government be hindered to turn into a dictatorship?
- 4) How will the basic rights of the citizens be developed?
- 5) How is it possible for the people what state in the governing process?

The answer to these questions can be given through elections. The election philosophically based on the idea that humans are intelligent beings and they can decide what is right for them and what is wrong for them [10]. For all of these mentioned above, a system without elections is to be called anti-democratic.

Montesquieu pointed that in a vast country, is it impossible for all of the people to participate in the legislative processes. For that reason, people should elect their own representatives [9] So the elections are the best solution to this kind of problem. In history of democracy was seen in city states and turned out to be oblivious in time. But in modern times, it was considered as one of the best inventions of human beings [11]. According to Schumpeter, the public's participation to decision-making processes is something that is not desired because it only delays the process. So the public's participation is only desired when they elect the governors [13].

The idea of elections as developed in the world and in modern times, 261 different electoral systems are used [14].

2.5. Different Kinds of Electoral Systems

Since the elections are of the core importance in democracies, they should be done regularly in a democratic country. In an election, people choose the party in power and the opposition parties.

One important role of the elections is the stability of the government. Because it gives answer to the question "who will govern the country?" and moreover different ideas will be represented in the parliament [12]. Different electoral systems are applied to choose the members of parliament and these systems are very important because they reflect how the reflection of the number of voters will be in parliament. Because different systems come up with different numbers of representatives in the parliament so it is necessary to choose a just system [15].

2.5.1. The Systems Based on Majority

This system can be dated back to Romans and in modern times, Jean Jacques Rousseau made it a core concept in democracy [16]. The idea behind this system is that when a candidate or a party gets the majority of the votes, then they will be chosen to the parliament in that region [12].

a) Absolute Majority Method

According to this method, the candidate who gets one more than the half of the valid votes win the elections.

b) Relative Majority Method

When one gets the most of the valid votes, they win the elections. In many other types, it requires to have the elections more than once but in this method, only one election is adequate because according the motto "First-past-the post" whoever wins the elections will be chosen to the parliament [12].

c) Qualified Majority Method

In this method, the rates to be elected are pre-determined and whoever gets this rate will be elected for the parliament [16].

The systems based on majority are sometimes seen as very dangerous because the government is probable to turn into a dictatorship [16].

2.5.2. Systems Based on Proportional Representation

Since the previous system was seen as unjust and does not give the right proportion of the votes in the country, people started to think over a better system. In the end, a professor of mathematics in Denmark developed this system in 1855. Then after the first world war, it was applied in many European countries. The aim of this system is to give every political party an opportunity to represent the public according to the proportion of the votes they get [18].

2.5.3. Mixed Electoral Systems

In this system, some of the Member of Parliament are elected through the majority system and some of them are elected through proportional system. It is still used in many countries in the world.

3. The History of Elections in Turkey

3.1. The Elections in Ottoman Era

In Turkey, the concepts related to elections started to be used in the second half of the 19th century. Although these terms started to do be used in the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe, they came to Turkey very late. The exact reason behind it is the social system in Ottoman State. In Europe when everybody got the right to vote, Ottoman State did not give such a right to the citizens up to 19th century [19].

Ottoman State stayed far behind the developments in Europe and in the 19th century, they also started to see how much the European countries developed and later they themselves decided to adapt their system to the European system [20].

The reform era which was called "Tanzimat" originally was corresponding to many changes in accordance with the novelties in Europe. Although it was a westernization process, it is very difficult to say that the ottoman system could catch up with the European system [21].

The Parliament firstly opened in 1876 and it was the first attempt from an absolute power of the Sultans towards a constitutional government [22]. The first elections were held in 1877 and the rules were determined in the constitution. Some rules are as follows:

- 50.000 people will elect one Member of Parliament.
- The elections will be held in every four year.

There are some conditions to be elected as a Member of Parliament.

- To be a citizen of Ottoman State
- To be over the age of 30
- To master Turkish language
- Not to be a civil servant
- To be from the people of the region they were elected [19].

But in the same year Sultan Abdulhamit the second abolished the parliament and it could not meet again until 1908 [1].

In July 23, 1908, the Fundamental Law which is originally called as "Kanun-I Esasi" was declared and the parliament was able to meet again after 30 years. After that, the second era of constitutionalism started. This Parliament accepted a law to elect the Members of Parliament and it was used until 1942 [23].

3.2. The Elections Between 1923 and 1946

After the ottoman State fell, Turkey was founded and just several months before the declaration of Republic, the elections were held. But Republican Public's Party (CHP) eliminated the rivals and after the elections, it was about to be one-party in Turkey [24].

The next elections were held in 1927 and only some minor changes were made in the previous laws about the elections. Since CHP (It was not called a party in those years but a sect and they named themselves as a party after 1934) was the only party in the country, they were again elected to govern the country. In 1931, the elections were renewed with no major change. But 1935, there happened a huge difference in the previous year and the elections were held. That is to say, women had the right to vote and to be elected and some were chosen as the Members of Parliament. According to the new law, every male and female citizen have the right to vote if they are over 22 years old and every male and female citizen have right to be a Member of Parliament if they are over the age of 30 [24].

The elections in 1946 was a turning point for the democracy in Turkey. Firstly, it was the first election after 1923 during the Republic era to be held with more than one party. So firstly, Turkey was electing for different parties.

In January 7, 1946, some deputies in CHP such as Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes resigned from the party and founded a new one which was called as Democratic Party (DP). Then, normally the year 1947 was the exact time for the elections but the party in power (CHP) made an attempt to take them a previous date because their rival was not ready for the elections. So they won the elections that year [25].

But after this election, many arguments went on about how just were the election in that year. Since the country chose a multi-party system after the Second World War, the opposition party started to oppose very harshly and for that reason CHP had to change some settled behaviors that that they acquired during one-party era [25].

DP started to stress the point that the elections should be honest and transparency should be one of the core terms in democratic life. But until 1954, the electoral system was not taken into consideration [26].

Later, DP brought the vacant seats in parliament topic to discuss and asked for a mid-term election for these seats. The offer was accepted and the elections were held in 1948 and Şemseddin Günaltay became the Prime Minister and the government made an attempt to change the law concerning the elections. The 1950 elections were held with this new law [26].

3.3. the Elections Between 1950 and 2007

In February 16, 1950, a law passed that especially focused on the justice in elections. So it was prepared to provide "secret ballot-open count" system because the previous elections were held with the opposite idea and the opposition party rejected to it very much. It should be pointed out that the electoral system was still not be taken into consideration at that time because the problems in elections were much bigger than that for the time being. That is to say, the opposition party was seeking justice in elections [24]. As a result of this, some laws passed and a new situation was provided for the elections to be just.

As a result of between the party in power in the opposition party, the election in 1950 were held in a democratic way. The elections were exactly held on 14th May and it became the first free elections. Through the elections the public changed the party in power after 27 years and it deserved to be named a public revolution. Thus, an autocracy ended thorough elections first time in the world [24].

At the end of the elections, Democratic Party got the 52% of the valid votes which sums up to 4.241.393 and 415 seats in the Parliament. CHP got 39% of the valid votes which makes 3.176.561 votes and 39 seats. Others got 4 seats and the total seats in the Parliament were 487 [27].

After this election, CHP became the opposition party and started to seek a better method for the elections because although they got 39% of the total valid votes in the country, they only got 39 seats in the Parliament which makes almost one tenth of DP. From then on, they emphasized that that kind of system is not useful for the country and the proportion of representatives were not justly distributed all over the country [26]. After DP again won the elections in 1954, many new developments started to emerge in turkey. The inflation rate increased, Cyprus problem emerged, protests started against the citizens from Greek origin in relation to Cyprus issue in September 6 and 7. After so many troubles, the party in power started to be autocratic and tempted to change the laws about the press. In fact, they wanted to put pressure on the press and take it under control because much of the opposition was coming from that side. Later, this issue took the first place in the country for a long time [25].

In the meantime the three opposition parties came together and prepared a plan for the elections in 1957. They decided to take part in the regions they are probable to win. So in the other regions, they would not participate in the elections and support the other one. They also reached an agreement that when they got into power, they would change the electoral system into proportional representation. But DP hindered all of these plans using its power [26].

In the elections in 1957, CHP got 41% of the total votes and 178 seats in the Parliament. DP got 47% of the total votes and 424 seats. When it is compared to the previous election, it will be seen that the support of the public for DP decreased in this election because after 1954, the USA stopped financing different sectors in Turkey and the inflation rate increased and as a result of these, poverty in the country again started to be one of the core issues [24].

After the elections, the opposition parties went on with forming coalitions among themselves and tried to change the electoral system which was a clear reason for their being unsuccessful. From then on, CHP started to seek justice in elections.

DP's power came to an end on May 27th, 1960 with a coup d'état and a new era started in Turkey. The army stayed in power more than one year and they changed the laws concerning elections. They came up with a two-parliament system in which there were senators and representatives. The elections for senators were based on majority system while the representatives were based on proportional system with a law passed on May 26th, 1961.

Then the elections were held in that year and CHP 36,72% of the votes. A newly-founded party Justice Party (originally Adalet Partisi) 34,78% of the votes and these two parties gained the seats in Parliament 173 and 158 respectively. There were two other new parties which gained 119 seats in the Parliament.

In June, 1965, elections to choose the senators were held and AP got 60.80% of the total. After that election, the opposition parties agreed on changing the proportional system into national balance system and they went to new elections on October 10th, 1965. AP got 52,87% of the votes with 240 seats in the Parliament and CHP got 28,74% of the votes with 134 seats. There were some other small parties but the system hindered them to represent in the Parliament.

Before the elections in 1969, AP changed the laws and the national balance system was abolished. The Constitutional Court decided on a new system in which proportional representation took place with some changes. So it would be applied on the provincial base without any threshold. It was applied in the next three elections, namely, in 1969, 1973 and 1977.

In 1969, AP won the elections with 46,53% and 256 seats. CHP got 27,36% with 143 seats. And the other parties shared the seats as to sum up to 450 in total.

In the elections held in 1973, CHP come with some novelties. They changed the chairman after so many years. Bülent Ecevit became the new chairman and it affected the election results not in 1973 very much but in 1977.

In the elections in 1973, CHP got 33,29% of the total votes and gained 185 seats. AP got 29,82% and gained 149 seats. There were several other parties which took part in the elections an gained seats in the Parliament.

In the elections in 1977, CHP and its chairman Bülent Ecevit got a real victory and got 41,38% of the votes and gained 213 seats. AP got 36,87% and gained 189 seats. National Salvation Party (originally Milli Selamet Partisi) entered the elections with the new chairman Necmettin Erbakan and their rates went down from 11,80% in the previous elections to 8,56% in these elections. The other party which was going to be one of the dominant parties in Turkish political life was Nationalist Movement Party (originally Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) and it increased the votes in the elections. It increased from 3,37% in 1973 to 6,41% in 1977 [27].

But these election came with some surprises. In that, after the elections CHP became the party in power but AP with Süleyman Demirel formed a Nationalist Front against CHP and it could not receive the vote of confidence from the Parliament. As a result of these, there happened a power vacuum in the country. In the end, another coup d'état came in 1980 [28].

After two years, a new constitution was accepted by the public and the new rules determined for the Members of Parliament to be elected in the constitution.

In the elections held on November 6th, 1983, 10% threshold was applied. Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP) (originally Anavatan Partisi) got 45,14% of the total votes and gained 211 seats in Parliament. Since

the two-parliament system was abolished previously after the coup d'état, only one parliament was elected in 1983.

In the elections in 1987, 98% of the citizen voted for parties, which was a record in Turkish history of democracy. In the elections, ANAP got 36,31% and gained 292 seats. Social Democratic Populist Party got 24,74% and gained 99 seats. Süleyman Demirel's new party named as Right Path Party (DYP) (originally Doğru Yol Partisi) got 19,13% and gained 59 seats.

Although ANAP came to power with the two thirds of the Parliament, they had to take the next elections one year back. In the meantime, some modifications were made to the laws related to elections so as to be useful for smaller parties in order for them to enter the Parliament [29].

In the elections held on October 20th, 1991, DYP got 27,03% of the total votes and gained 178 seats and became the first party in the elections. ANAP with Mesut Yılmaz became the second and got 24,01% and gained 115 seats. SHP got 20,78% and gained 88 seats. Necmettin Ern-bakan's Welfare Party (RP) (originally Refah Partisi) got 16,87% with 62 seats.

Before the elections in 1995, some brought into the political life. Firstly, the number of MPs was increased to 550 from 450. Some debates went on about the 10% threshold but with the interference of Constitutional Court, the d'Hondt system continued in Turkey in the next elections.

Right wing conservative trends got stronger in 1995 elections. In the end, RP became the first and got 21,37% of the votes with 158 seats. ANAP got 19,65% with 132 seats. DYP with Tansu Çiller got 19,18 with 135 seats. DSP with Bülent Ecevit got 14,64% with 76 seats. New CHP with Deniz Baykal got 10,70% with 49 seats.

After the election Anasol-D coalition was founded and it continued 18 months and 11 days. The coalition parties were ANAP, DSP and DYP. Later on, the İslamist party RP came to power with DYP and it started many troubles with the army and it led to 28 February process [30].

In the next elections, the d'Hondt system was applied and it changed politics very much. It can also be claimed that 28 February process changed many things in the country and it also affected the elections in 1999. In these election DSP with Bülent Ecevit became the first getting 22,18% of the total votes with 136 seats. MHP with Devlet Bahçeli got 17,97% with 129 seats. Virtue Party (FP) (originally Fazilet Partisi and it was a continuation of RP) got 15,40% with 111 seats. ANAP got 13,22% with 86 seats. DYP got 12,01% with 85 seats.

The 2002 elections could be seen as the turning point in Turkish political life. Because of the threshold system, only two parties could enter the Parliament. Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) (originally Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) got 34,28% of the total votes and 363 seats. CHP got 19,38% with 178 seats.

In the elections in 2007, AKP got his second victory increasing the number of votes in general. It got 46,58% of the total votes with 341 seats and CHP got 20,87% with 112 seats. National Movement Party was on the increase again and was able to enter the Parliament after 1999 elections. It got 14,27% with 71 seats.

4. The Changes in Electoral Systems and its Reflections to The Results of the Elections

Electoral systems should be one of the main concerns of the law-makers. Because it radically changes the political life and many other things.

Since the electoral systems affect the elections and the results very much, the attention should be drawn to these changes and their results in the elections. The first changes was made to the electoral system was in 1950. Firstly, single-stage elections were held and an open cunt was accepted. As a result, the participation of the public increased very much and 27-year sovereignty of CHP ended [24].

After 1954, DP came up with new laws and hindered propaganda through radio but their speech was not counted as propaganda. They brought some new laws to prevent the opposition parties to come together and it could be said that they became successful [31].

The majority method was much discussed in Turkey after 1954 as DP discussed it before 1950. But DP just ignored the opposition and went on with that system. If d'Hondt system had been applied in 1957, the difference between DP and CHP would have been only 16 seats in the Parliament and it could have hindered the coming coup d'état. On the way to coup, many hot debates went on about freedom and limitation of power. The doers of the coup supported themselves that there was not democracy in the country and they put up democratic institutions once more [32].

After the coup, a new institution was prepared and accepted with 61% by the public. According to this constitution, a senate was founded to inspect the parliament and the electoral system changed. The MPs were elected for 4 years and the senators were elected for 6 years. There were some other modifications to be an MP in the constitution. Previously, the number of MPs were determined according to the increasing number of population but it was fixed to 450 in the new constitution [31].

Between 1961 and 1980, proportional system was applied and as a result of this, many political parties could enter the Parliament. In the elections after 1961, at least 6 parties could enter the Parliament [8].

With the new proportional system, many parties could enter the Parliament, which brought some drawbacks. In that, two extremist parties MSP and MHP played important role in the unbalanced coalitions during 70s although their rates were very low. As a result of unbalanced coalitions, the coup d'état came in 1980 and the army could create a tangible reason for their deeds.

After 1980, the senate was abolished and the system turned into one parliament. Another important change was the d'Hondt system with 10% threshold. Because before 1980, the small parties were playing an important role and sometimes could lock the system to continue. With the threshold, these parties would not gain any seats in the Parliament [8].

But as a reaction to this system, the small parties form coalition and went to elections in order to go over the 10% limit. For that reason, again many parties could enter the Parliament and the coalitions went on through

90s. As a result of these, the number of political parties after 1995 has increased to 16. The worst result of representation came into existence in 2002. Only two parties could enter the Parliament and their vote rate was only 58% [33].

As a result, the changes made into the electoral systems affect the result of the elections very much. And it certainly causes a ripple effect and changes many things in the country. Even the coup d'états were seen as the results of poor electoral systems. After every coup, the electoral system was changed to adapt a new situation and it also affected other things like law-making, changing the constitution, governing the country.

In 2002, because of the electoral system, 45% of the total votes could not be represented in the Parliament, which brought about new debates about the electoral systems. But the same system is still being used in Turkey. For that reason, some political parties entered the elections with independent candidates and they formed a group in the Parliament after the elections.

5. The Result and Evaluation

In democratic societies, the role of the state is to serve its citizens. It should be seen as natural that the expectation and the ideas of the citizens form the state and its way of governing. The most outstanding feature of a democratic society is being a constitutional state and reliance on the rule of law. The right to elect and to be elected should be designed for the sake of the public. Through the elections, the citizens reflect their ideas and change the government. The citizens' self-governing is only via elections. Elections could systematically be different but originally they serve for the same target. In Turkey, many different electoral systems were applied but they were not designed in accordance with the needs of the public but in accordance with the interests of the political parties.

In Turkey, the different electoral systems affected the results but it not possible to say that only the electoral systems affected the results. Economic crises, natural disasters, different trends of the voters and many other affected the elections. But the electoral systems generally determined the coalitions and the representation rates in the Parliament.

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